

# ePistle

CMDA.org/CAHM

October 2022

## Introduction

by Judy Palpant  
Editor

Clapping and singing African children did not line the road when Sam and I arrived at a mission hospital in Kenya in 1980. Nor was the traditional warm African handshake of welcome forthcoming. Strife reigned. Contentions simmered between staff and administration. Medications and supplies disappeared as discontented employees helped themselves. Nurses often arrived late to work. Empty IVs dangled uselessly next to patients needing attention. Some in leadership suggested the facility should be shut down.

Before email and cellphones, we wrote letters home on blue air forms asking family and friends to earnestly pray for us and for the hospital. We could not lift or throw off this dark and heavy blanket of disfunction and disunity ourselves.

As the new medical officer in charge of this mission hospital, Sam spoke at a staff meeting, “For whom are you working? Why are you here at a mission hospital?” He went on to challenge them, “If you don’t share our common purpose of serving people in the name of Jesus, then you need to go elsewhere.”

This became a turning point. People reported to duty on time. Order and respect returned with a common vision. Hope was restored toward the common good and great calling of Christ.

Unity grew consistently as the local Bible teacher, Mama Rosoa, led the multi-denominational and multi-tribal staff in daily devotions focused on the Word. We also invited the head of the hospital to our home for tea once a week providing opportunity for problem solving and vision casting. How “good and pleasant” it was to watch unity of purpose grow with improved care for physical needs and attention to spiritual well-being.

The theme of this publication is unity, grace and forgiveness—the sacred trinity for healthy mission communities. May the stories and articles in this publication be inspirational as you pursue peace.

## Pearl



*“I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”  
Ephesians 4:1-3, ESV*

## *Missions Minute*

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Hear from Dr. Bob Carter about how healthcare missions has opened doors for helping faith communities in Kenya provide care and grace for people living with HIV, cancer and COVID. God is on the move!



CMDA'S WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

## *Divided*

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by Al Weir, MD

*“So the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth... That is why it was called Babel...” (Genesis 11:8-9, NIV).*

This was his first trip back to the clinic after COVID-19 had thrown him into the hospital. He is patient, friend, African American and follower of Christ.

“Thank God you survived that,” I offered.

“I do thank God,” he said. “I know that He was the one who brought me through it.”

He wore an interesting black t-shirt, on which he had asked a friend to inscribe:

*God made us all human*

*Race disconnected us*

*Religion separated us*

*Politics divided us*

*Wealth classified us*

And on the front pocket was printed one word, “God.”

It's amazing how we have separated ourselves as human beings, though we have far more similarities than we have differences. The same God created all of us in His image.

We are miraculously alike in form and molecular structure, in dreams and aspirations, in knowledge of good and evil, and in sin.

It is this sin that separates us, the desire to be our own masters depicted in Eden, and the scattering born from pride depicted at Babel. Because of sin, that which we pursue to satisfy our dreams has led us to competition and distrust. We have turned from God and are thus required to seek our own security, stealing it from others when the world has such a scant supply.

Though implied by my patient's shirt, neither race, nor religion, nor politics, nor wealth are evil in themselves. It is our sin, distorting the pursuit of each, that separates us and causes us to be distrustful of each other. As C.S. Lewis puts it in *Mere Christianity*, "Pleasure, money, power, and safety are all, as far as they go, good things...wickedness, when you examine it, turns out to be the pursuit of some good in the wrong way."

We claim the goodness of that we seek, ignoring the sin of our method to accomplish it, thus separating ourselves from those who hinder our desires. Therefore, the key to unity is the destruction of our sin, and that can only be accomplished through the One who died to unify us all in the Father who loves us all.

*Dear God,*

*Cleanse me of the sin in my life that prevents me from loving those who interfere with my dreams.*

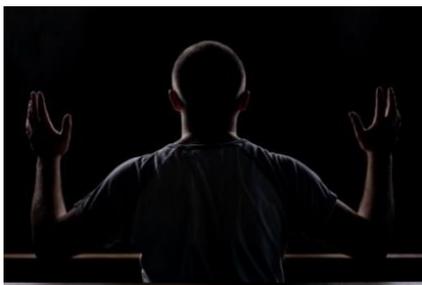
*Amen*

## *Give Thanks for the Past. Stay Awake in the Now.*

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*God is weaving His story. Paul tells us to "continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving" (Colossians 4:2). Thanksgiving helps us to be grace-centered, seeing all of life as a gift. It looks at how God's past blessings impact our lives. Watchfulness alerts us to the unfolding drama in the present. It looks for God's present working as it unfolds into future-grace.*

—Paul Miller in [A Praying Life, Connecting with God in a Distracting World, page 187](#)



## *Unity: A Forgotten Virtue*

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by Grace Tazelaar

*We Are One in the Spirit*

*We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord x2*

*And we pray that all unity may one day be restored.*

Refrain

*And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love.  
Yes, they'll know we are Christian by our love.*

*We will walk with each other; we will walk hand in hand. X2  
And together we'll spread the news that God is in our land*

*We will work with each other; we will work side by side. X2  
And we'll guard each one's dignity and save each one's pride.*

*All praise to the Father, from whom all things come,  
And all praise to Christ Jesus, his only Son,  
And all praise to the Spirit, who makes us all one.*

I first learned this song in 1970 on my first CMDA mission trip to Honduras as a senior nursing student. It was a tumultuous time. The Vietnam War was raging, Martin Luther King, Jr. had been assassinated, the subsequent race riots had come close to the hospital in Chicago, Illinois where I was studying nursing and demonstrating Kent State University students had been killed by the Ohio National Guard. We longed for unity, peace and love.

I continued my education at Wheaton College, and we sang it often. This year I returned to campus for my 50th reunion. Life has not changed much during the intervening years. A COVID pandemic resulted in divisiveness and incivility over mask wearing and immunization, a Russian invasion of Ukraine revealed war atrocities that were unimaginable and the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis led to protests across the country. We continue to long for unity, peace and love that seem so elusive.

The theme of **unity** occurs over and over in Scripture. The first time I read John 17 with understanding, I was overwhelmed when I came to this passage:

*“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete **unity**. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me” (John 17:20-23, NIV).*

I realized that as Jesus was preparing to die for my sins, He prayed this prayer for me! He was praying that Christians could share in the “oneness” that Jesus the Son, God the Father and the Holy Spirit shared. **Unity** is the mission model that Jesus desired for His disciples and His church to make Him known to the world. Since sin entered the world, it's been on an opposite course of divisiveness, hatefulness, pridefulness and injustice. So He knew the world would take notice of the model of unity.

My Wheaton college roommate was a Messianic Jew who taught me that the word “shalom” has a much richer meaning. In the Christian nursing metaparadigm, we refer to shalom as being closely related to the concept of health.

*“In the Christian worldview, the nursing metaparadigm begins with God. God created the world (environment) and everything in it. God created human beings (persons) and placed them within this created environment, to live in shalom (health). This kind of health allows the person to live at peace in a God-centered human community with a sense of physical, psychosocial, and spiritual well-being. Nursing then works toward wholeness or shalom among individuals and the community.”<sup>1</sup>*

As I have sought to restore persons and communities to better health, I have kept this definition in mind. It is not enough to just restore the body physically. I must also take into consideration the relationships that person or community has spiritually, socially and environmentally. This requires an interdisciplinary team of people working together.

I've come to learn that God does not intend for us to be all things to all people. That is a good way to burn out. God uses teams to refine our characters. Working in teams, however, requires a servant heart; both giving and receiving a lot of forgiveness; acknowledging the expertise that other team members bring to the table; and humility. I confess that I often fail to submit to God when He tries to refine my character, especially when He uses a troublesome colleague. I'm so grateful that He is patient with me while being persistent, loving while not giving in to my protests, and able to redeem my mistakes when I fail. As the church, we are divided over gender issues, political issues, worship style, race and what it means to be evangelical as just a beginning list of conflicting differences. Our disunity does not model a good representation for the gospel message that we, as the Lord's ambassadors, desire to bring to the world.

Thankfully, God does not expect us to achieve godly character on our own. We have been gifted with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to help us on our journeys, the Scripture to provide authoritative guidance and the Incarnation of Christ and the life He lived as an example. These are costly gifts that required sacrifice, suffering and death. Unity among Christians may also be costly as we are called to sacrifice our pride, suffer the ridicule and disdain of a culture influenced by the Evil One and even put our lives on the line for the sake of the gospel.

On the way to the cross, the Bible tells us that Jesus steadfastly headed to Jerusalem knowing what lay ahead so that He could fulfill the eternal plans to provide a way for us and His creation to experience shalom in its fullness in the kingdom of God. May we follow in His footsteps, keeping our eyes on Him, listening to the Holy Spirit and sharing His love with others in unity.

<sup>1</sup> Shelley, J. A., Miller, A. B., & Fenstermacher, K. H. (2021). *Called to Care: A Christian Vision for Nursing*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. p.40



#### **About the Author**

*Grace Tazelaar, MS, RN, continues in a volunteer capacity as the Missions Director for Nurses Christian Fellowship following her retirement in 2015 from NCF/InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. For the past 10 years, she coordinated the healthcare programming for InterVarsity's Urbana Student Missions Conferences.*

## ***Grace and Forgiveness in Healthcare Missions***

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by **Suzie Snyder**

J was a scrawny schoolboy growing up in my Maasai bush community, spending most of his time herding sheep. He had learned English in grade school, so like all the teenage boys who knew English, I depended on him heavily for translation help in the villages and mobile clinics. He seemed brighter than most, and his father assured me he had promise. J was ambitious and wanted to go to nursing school. I envisioned possibility.

Even though I was a long-term missionary doctor planning to serve 10 to 20 years, I knew I wouldn't be on the field forever. If the Maasai clinic system that my mission team had built would survive, I needed national partners, Maasai Christian clinicians to keep the work going. Hiring nurses in the early years was a challenge. Those from other tribes, I later found out, were often prejudiced and would belittle my Maasai patients, berating them openly or passively overcharge them or simply ignore requests for assistance. The reputation of the clinics suffered as a result. I learned that we needed Maasai nurses, those who knew the language, the culture and the people of the community. At that time, very few Maasai in my community finished high school much less went to college or professional school. Higher education was a pipedream few of them could afford, so sponsoring young Maasai through school seemed the logical choice. It was a long-term commitment, first to put children like J through high school and then through nursing school. It was also an expensive commitment. I could only afford to sponsor one or two children per year. I paid the

school fees for each student with the understanding that after completing school, they would have a job in the mission's clinic system. J was chosen as one of the brightest and most committed.

J was thrilled and studied hard. He made high marks and was very proud of his accomplishments. For his graduation ceremony, I took a truckload of people including my entire family, his parents and as many brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles and cousins as could squeeze into my Landcruiser for the six-hour drive to Kijabe. The ceremony lasted for hours with speeches, music, dancing and feasting. J was grinning ear to ear in his crisply ironed white shirt and multiple flower leis about his neck.

After graduation, J was stationed at one of the remote clinics, and he flourished. He took pride in his work. He made house calls graciously and provided excellent care. The community loved him. On my clinic rounds, he would often pull out a newspaper clipping featuring himself after successfully delivering triplets. He wanted to expand the ambulatory dispensary into a maternity ward, but I didn't have the resources to do that.

A couple years later, my Maasai clinic administrator came to me with sad news, "We have a problem with J...he has left." I was dumbfounded, "Left? What do you mean...left?" His answer stunned me, "J has left our clinic and opened his own private clinic a block away."

The news slowly sank in. Not only had J left my employment, but he was working as my competition! Betrayed! I felt betrayed. I was disappointed in J and felt my money, time and resources had been wasted on him.

My investment was lost.

But was my "gift" of education truly a gift, or did it have strings attached? I had expectations that were not filled and hopes that were dashed. I thought J would be happy serving and living in his home community. I hadn't understood his dreams or realized where his ambitions would take him. Perhaps he had not either.

He left without saying goodbye. I never saw him again. A dear friend and colleague vanished. A year later, his clinic was closed, and I heard he had taken up residence at a safari camp and was learning how to be a hot-air balloonist, which I felt was a sorrowful waste of his nursing degree.

Eventually, I had to make a decision. Would I bid him farewell, even within my own mind if not face-to-face, and would I do so with anger, disappointment and hurt...or with grace? Would I wish him his "just rewards" or would I wish him well? Would I forgive him even though he never asked for forgiveness?

Lessons I learned from this experience:

1. Moving forward, new graduates signed a contract, committing them to work two to four years in the clinic system to "pay off" their education expenses. Grace can also include fairness.
2. Very often the people I go to serve don't behave the way I want them to. Especially if they are not believers, why should I expect otherwise? Even if they are believers, they are people, flawed people, just like me, and as such, they are guaranteed to disappoint me at one time or another.
3. Sometimes the people I serve are not grateful and may even abuse me, my money or my resources. But I'm less likely to feel taken advantage of if I remember that my money and time are not really mine to begin with. Those resources belong to God, and I am simply a steward.
4. Sponsoring children through school—the gift of education—is one of the farthest-reaching gifts we can give. Besides sharing the good news of Jesus, education is one of the strongest tools to end the cycle of poverty. But I learned, as with J, my job was to put the child God placed in my hands through school; what they did with their education was between them and God.
5. Justice is God's business. God will make things right in His timing. That's not my job.

6. Forgiveness is not something I should expect others to ask for but is something I must give. Not only because God commands it, but because I need to forgive in order to make my own heart whole.



#### **About the Author**

*After med-peds residency at Vanderbilt University Med Center, Suzie was a medical missionary serving the Maasai people in Kenya, East Africa for 15 years with Christian Missionary Fellowship. She is currently an ER physician in Columbus, Ohio.*

## **Announcements**

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### **5:11 Groups**

Our next round of [5:11 Groups](#) will be launching in January. Here you'll find support and encouragement from fellow workers as you discuss challenges and opportunities unique to healthcare missionaries. The groups meet biweekly for 12 sessions. Our pilot cohort groups are just wrapping up, and the feedback we've received has been great. Participating is free. Please indicate your interest by filling in your information on our website. Email [cahm@cmda.org](mailto:cahm@cmda.org) if you have questions.

### **ICMDA World Congress**

Please plan to attend the [17th ICMDA World Congress](#) in Arusha, Tanzania, June 20-25, 2023. Encourage others from your host country to come as well! The theme is "Serving with love in a hurting world," with sub-themes focusing on calling, compassion and hope. Around 1,000 healthcare professionals and students are expected, representing over 100 countries.

### **Post-Residency Program**

In their efforts to expand the missionary physician pipeline and facilitate transition from medical training to healthcare missionary, Samaritan's Purse is looking to provide U.S. based residents, medical students and pre-meds a brief Zoom presentation about their [Post-Residency Program](#). This is an incredible opportunity to go and serve for two years in a mission hospital right after finishing training, with full financial and logistical support provided by Samaritan's Purse and World Medical Mission. Please let your younger colleagues know about this opportunity. Please contact Leigh Hamilton at [LHamilton@samaritan.org](mailto:LHamilton@samaritan.org) to set up a time or if you have any questions.

### **Global Missions Health Conference**

[GMHC](#) is fast approaching. Sign up today. We'll see you in Louisville on November 10-12.

### **Bridges: Christians Connecting with Muslims**

This [award-winning series](#) equips Christ followers to connect with Muslims. It is a six-session multimedia training that helps Christians understand the crisis in the Muslim world and its impact on Muslims today. The first three sessions explain the religious framework and the next three sessions inspire Christians to share the greatest news ever told. The Messiah has come to save all people! The Bridges Study will give you practical ways to share the gospel. It is now in multiple languages and can be downloaded from the website.

### **INMED**

The Institute for International Medicine has several training courses that you'll find helpful in updating or expanding your skill and knowledge base for providing medical care in majority world settings. They offer in person, virtual and asynchronous classes, depending on the subject material. [Click here](#) to access their academic calendar.

### **Equip International**

[Missionary Medicine for Physicians](#), provided by Equip International, is another excellent training course geared specifically toward physicians and advanced practice professionals serving in more austere environments. Their next offering is November 14-18 in Marion, North Carolina.

## **CAAPS**

If you've made it to the end of this newsletter, perhaps you'd like to sign up for another! The Christian Academy of African Physicians distributes a regular newsletter highlighting opportunities, good work and people you should know about if connected with healthcare missions in Africa. Email [AfricaCAAP@gmail.com](mailto:AfricaCAAP@gmail.com) and let them know you'd like to subscribe.

## **Remedy23**

Mark your calendar for [CMDA's Remedy23 conferences](#)! If you're in the U.S. and can join us, please plan to attend Remedy23 West at California Baptist University on February 24-25, 2023 and/or Remedy23 East at Liberty University on April 14-15, 2023. Our theme is Healthcare on Mission. Exhibitors are welcome!

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