

CMF salutes two stalwarts

Serving the master

John Alford

John joined the staff of CMF as Office Manager in 1990 at the time of the liberation of Eastern Europe and the break up of the Soviet Union. Throughout the 1990's, the growth of Christian medical groups worldwide was phenomenal, as doctors and medical students came to faith in countries previously closed to the gospel. One of the most pressing needs was for good Christian medical literature.



John Alford

John was not a writer, or an editor, but he made the writings of Christian doctors accessible at a time when needs were immense, doors of opportunity were wide open, and the internet and the associated spread of the English language were making the world a global village. He made an enormous contribution in helping CMF embrace and make the best use of new systems and technology and managed the production and distribution of journals and newsletters, booklets and books, brochures and CDs, tapes and webpages.

I expect that John will get quite a pleasant surprise when the Lord shows him the fruit of his labour: reaching literally thousands of Christian doctors and medical students, not just in the UK but in over 50 countries around the world, secondary school students in 3,000 British schools, and over a million visitors to the CMF website. People whom he never met, and who probably had never heard his name, but who have benefited from what he did.

Rather like Jeremiah's scribe Baruch, John didn't seek great things for himself, but sought rather to make others great. Not least among these were members of CMF's student journal committee. Many remember his patience, practical help and attention to detail when often hard pressed by his own deadlines and his generosity in helping some of them to become the great Christian medical writers of the future.

All of us in the office have special memories. For me what will live is seeing him just a week before he died when he popped in just to be sure that everything was OK. He was pale and short of breath and obviously unwell, and yet cheerful and enthusiastic. What I will treasure most is the way he spoke about his children Matthew, Beki and Peter of whom he was so immensely proud.

One of John's last projects was a book on Christian healing. For reasons that will probably remain a mystery to us, God chose not to heal John in this life. But now John is in the presence of the risen Lord and Saviour he loved and sought to serve and his healing is complete. It's perhaps a poignant reminder that Jesus did not come ultimately to empty the hospitals but to empty the graveyards.

Peter Saunders is General Secretary of Christian Medical Fellowship

John Reader

An American friend was walking up the gravel drive of John and Thea's home when he noticed a blade of grass poking through, and teasingly remarked, 'however did you allow that to grow in the wrong place?' No- one who has seen John's immaculate gardens, his highly organised garage or him working on the house in his spick and span boiler suit could have the slightest doubt that any practice or organisation would be run with the utmost efficiency and care.



John Reader

Unlike so many people, John combined attention to detail with a broad vision and international perspective. He never failed to see the wood for the trees. He combined high personal standards with sympathetic partnership and teamwork, efficiency with compassion and an infectious sense of humour.

John qualified from Liverpool University Medical School in 1957 and was among the last but one group to be called up for national service. Returning to civilian life he worked in general medicine and clinical pathology but realised that he wanted to look after the whole patient rather than become highly specialised. So he entered general practice. John started in a two-person partnership in Marple in 1965 and stayed there for 29 years. The practice grew from two to five partners. He knew and was loved by the whole community and one of his former patients remarked 'I always had the utmost respect for Dr Reader' and that could be echoed a thousand times.

He joined CMF as a second-year student and was on the executive committee as a junior doctor. Later he became chairman. He showed his organisational skills early on, starting conferences in northwest England and later national conferences. He was already exploring wider horizons as the International Christian Medical and Dental Association (ICMDA) was developing.

In 1992, two years before he retired from practice, John and Thea became joint general secretaries of ICMDA. The work grew. The bedroom in their Cambridge home was soon too small, so an office was found. When they took over there were 26 member countries and contacts in eight others. Eight years later there were 44 and links with 36 more. John visited 23 different countries, many of them with Thea.

The last World Conference John and Thea attended was in Durban, South Africa. There were 800 delegates from 57 countries. It was a moving experience to hear singing to African rhythms in a packed conference hall. John was already looking forward to a far bigger international conference, with 'a great multitude that no one can count', not 57 nationalities but people 'from every tribe, people and language', singing before Christ's throne.

Alan Johnson is Emeritus Professor of Surgery in Sheffield and CMF President Elect