

# crash call:

an urgent appointment with the living God

*Jo Lovell reports on the 2010 National Student Conference*

**W**hat is our motivation for living differently amongst our friends and course-mates at medical school? What is the vision towards which we strive? Whom do we serve and why do we serve him? Amidst the busyness of any medical student's life, as we juggle study, placements, friends, church life and family, it's easy to forget the answers to these questions. And yet how wonderfully God provides for his children! The National Student Conference weekend gave us the opportunity to leave the commotion of every day life; to listen again to God's truth in all its fullness, and to see its impact on the whole of our lives.

The atmosphere of the first evening was brilliant. More than 300 students from the UK were joined by others from as far afield as Tajikistan, Russia and Georgia. Looking around the conference hall, I was thrilled to know that each of us had come wanting to know more about our great God, and how we can serve him in our lives as medics. Meeting other students



over meals, in seminars and in review groups was a wonderful chance to chat and share experiences of what God was doing around the country both in our own lives, and in the lives of those around us. I also took the opportunity to chat to 'grown-ups' - real doctors with stories to tell, and wisdom to draw from!

For students like me who are largely ignorant of what goes on in the CMF world, I was glad of

the chance to hear about who was who on the CMF staff, and what was what in the work they do. The 'Newsround' on Saturday morning was our opportunity to be both informed and encouraged by the work of CMF, for example the Christian values promoted by CMF in the public arena. We were also challenged to consider the positions we are each placed in, and how to use them to serve the living God. I was amused to learn that the Student Conference Committee reps considered their role of service to God and us to include leaving us each a Valentine's Day gift to find outside our doors on Sunday morning (14th February)!

We were blessed by having Terry Virgo (founder of the NewFrontiers church network)

with us and teaching us from God's word. He challenged us to look at the way God worked through the life of Moses, who 'By faith... regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt because he was looking ahead to his reward'.<sup>1</sup> He showed us that living by faith, like Moses did, was to live for what we do not yet see; the unseen riches of heaven diminish the appeal of the seen riches of this world. To understand this is to be freed to live joyfully serving the real King, motivated by the knowledge that Christ is a better inheritance than the passing 'pleasures of sin'.<sup>2</sup> On Sunday afternoon, we were shown from Exodus 15 that the natural reaction to seeing who God is and what he has done is a song of praise - with our lips and in our lives.

This faithful teaching formed an effective backdrop to the topics covered by the seminars. Ranging from 'Medical Mission' to 'Psychiatry' there was plenty of choice, and plenty to get one's teeth into! I for one took the opportunity to ask all the questions I had stored up on my clinical travels, and sought to understand the Christ-honouring response to the

issues Christian medics face every day. I was so encouraged to be able to chat to older, wiser medics, who were well thought-through on issues the Christian doctor faces, and the way their faith impacts the way they practise.

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One particular issue I had been mulling over before arriving at the conference was that of the new wave of support for legalising 'assisted suicide', which has recently emerged in the British press. I hoped that the conference would provide me with the chance to quiz a Christian doctor on the right response to this controversial issue; I was not disappointed.

I had a wonderful chat with Kathy Myers, a consultant in palliative care in Hertfordshire, who ran a seminar entitled 'Caring for dying patients'. She helped me to learn again that whilst the argument for dignity in dying was a powerful one, we as Christians point to true human dignity; not derivative of what we can or cannot do, but rather that which is given to us being made in God's image. She gave me some wise advice in how to defend the Christian view that this kind of value deserves the best kind of treatment we as doctors



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more reflective than energetic by this time, so I opted to join the discussion around the film *'The Village'*, directed by M. Night Shyamalam. The new Head of Student Ministries, Giles Cattermole, enthusiastically encouraged us to engage with the message, themes and ideas presented in the film, and we had a great discussion.



Listening to Kevin made me realise how little I trust God to do his own work; I want to see results immediately! Kevin is clearly a man who has served the Lord over many years, and has seen him work in the lives of his patients in the most amazing ways. 'Sometimes', he told us, 'we have to do the work of clearing the ground of rocks and tree stumps, before it is ready to be ploughed and sown and harvested. Our job is to sow the seeds, whenever we can; God's job is to make them grow.'

The result of four seminars, three Bible addresses, two evenings, and one conference address is zero energy left! A packed weekend indeed, but I left feeling refreshed by the truth of who God is, the plans he has for the world, and the ways he can and does work through people like me. I pray that God will continue to teach me during the busyness of my student days that my motivation, my vision and my service is all for his glory, and in the name of his Son.

can offer. From her own experience, she offered both spiritual and utilitarian examples of what this care looks like.

All this was brought together beautifully by the Conference Address given by Kevin Vaughan on Saturday afternoon - 'Sharing Christ with Patients'. Kevin is CMF Head of Graduate Ministries and was previously a GP in Birmingham and missionary doctor in Africa. He carefully unpacked the biblical concept of sowing seeds, as described in parables like those in Mark 4.

On Saturday evening, various activities were provided for the delegates; the ever popular Ceilidh, a quiz, a film and discussion, and a praise concert led by Colin Brown who had led the music during the conference. Having spent some free time during the afternoon going for a jog with some students from Manchester, I was feeling a little

Thanks to all who made it possible!

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### REFERENCES

1. Hebrews 11:24a, 26
2. Hebrews 11:25