

## CMF at 70 – a new era

Mark Pickering looks back to look forward

**70** is a significant number in the Bible.

It often indicates completeness, such as the 70 descendants of Jacob,<sup>1</sup> the 70 elders of Israel,<sup>2</sup> or the 70 years of a traditional human lifespan.<sup>3</sup> This year in June, CMF will celebrate its 70th anniversary. Our inception in 1949 was just one year after the birth of the NHS itself. We'll be marking the occasion in several ways – at National Conference in May, at the AGM on 15 June and in our summer publications. We are also preparing a video celebrating how God has faithfully kept CMF through every step of these last seven decades. We'll be remembering some of the people and events that have shaped us as a fellowship of Jesus's disciples in healthcare, whilst looking forward to the challenges and opportunities of the coming years.

Biblical commemoration is never just a sentimental nod to nostalgia, remembering the good old days with fondness. It always has a regenerative and futuristic element to it. In celebrating the Passover, the Israelites recalled God's mighty acts when he rescued them from slavery in Egypt. Yet even today, modern Jews end the celebration with 'next year in Jerusalem!' – a cry for God's restorative action, infused with Messianic hope. For believers in Jesus, each time we take communion, we not only look back in gratitude to Jesus's saving sacrifice, but we are inspired in the present to live for him with renewed focus. It urges us to look forward to his return in glory as we 'proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.'<sup>4</sup>

I took up the reigns as CMF's fifth chief executive on 1 March, after a seamless three-month interregnum during which John Greenall and Graham Sopp led the Fellowship. Prior to that, Peter Saunders served for 27 years with CMF, nine years as Student Secretary followed by 18 years as Chief Executive. Peter has been a tower of strength at CMF and has taken the organisation forward in many ways. Yet Peter would be the first to acknowledge that he, like all of us, stands on the shoulders of those who have gone before. We are all part of the body of Jesus on earth, stretching back 2,000 years to the days of the first disciples, and founded on Jesus himself, our rock and firm foundation.



CMF has been a lifeline to me throughout medical school, during my junior doctor years and in my life as a GP. Every step of the way, it has been the medium through which I've been encouraged to live and speak for Jesus. I have learnt what it means to live as a Christian who is also a doctor, and I have been given opportunities to serve, to partner with, and to train others in doing so. More than that, it has given me so many precious friendships; both with those who have walked the road a little longer than I have, whose wisdom and experience I can draw on, but also with those younger than me, to whose lives I have been able to contribute. CMF has been like a family to me and to many others.

As CMF celebrates God's goodness to us throughout our first 70 years, there is much on the horizon; perplexing challenges in society and healthcare that we need his wisdom in approaching; suffering of mind, body and spirit in our patients that we need his sustaining power in responding to, and incredible opportunities that we need his courage and vision in grasping.

Will you join with us as we launch out in faith into a new era? Can we 'Connect, Grow, Speak and Serve' together as we unite and equip each other to be more effective servants on the worldwide multidisciplinary team led by the Great Physician himself?

Let's make this a year of recommitting ourselves to serve God through his calling to us as healthcare professionals. CMF is a fellowship of thousands of individuals and we all need each other to fulfil his mission. Is there an event you could come to? Is there a local Catalyst Team you could join? Could you give your time or resources to help support CMF and our members through writing, mentoring, or through one of the other myriad opportunities there are?

We're in this together – let's look back in gratitude, look up in the present, and look out for the opportunities that God will give us, as we serve him in the next exciting chapter for CMF that he is writing through each of us.

*Mark Pickering is CMF Chief Executive*

### references

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| 1. Genesis 46:27 | 3. Psalm 90:10         |
| 2. Numbers 11:16 | 4. 1 Corinthians 11:26 |