



**Andrew Fergusson**

is a retired GP and served as CMF General Secretary from 1990 to 1999 and CMF Head of Communications and Public Policy from 2007 to 2011

**Andrew Fergusson** shares his memories of serving as CMF General Secretary in the 1990s.



# 40 YEARS ON CMF IN THE NINETIES

## key points



- After years of medical practice and involvement with CMF as a student and a junior doctor, the author joined the staff team at CMF under the second General Secretary, Keith Sanders.
- Emerging communication technologies, alongside rapid social, political, and spiritual changes in the UK and worldwide, significantly changed the environment in which CMF ministered during the nineties.
- Despite these and many other challenges, under God's good grace, CMF has grown and developed under successive leaders to become a Christian fellowship across the professions.

## references (accessed 05/03/24)

1. This thread - [bit.ly/48FULf9](https://bit.ly/48FULf9) - debates the role of the Fax machine in organising the Polish Solidarity movement during the communist crackdown in the 1980s and 90s. This article goes some way to explaining how the Pope and Ronald Reagan got Fax machines into use across Poland: Schneider K. Reagan and Pope Reportedly Conferred on Poland. *New York Times*. 18 February 1992. [nyti.ms/4c0HeSe](https://nyti.ms/4c0HeSe)
2. Christian Action, Research and Education - [care.org.uk](https://care.org.uk)
3. [acomchristian.org](https://acomchristian.org)

joined the staff of CMF in April 1989 as Assistant General Secretary to Keith Sanders, taking over as General Secretary when he retired in October 1990. From the beginning, he gave me four portfolios: students, juniors, literature, and the Medical Study Group, while keeping general admin, missionaries, and ICMDA for himself.

During ten years as a GP at Brook Lane Medical Mission, I had already been active on CMF's Junior Doctors Committee and the Medical Study Group. I had written several book reviews, so I knew how CMF worked. In my first month, I had *carte blanche* to meet as many people and institutions as I wanted, and among my visits was a day with Douglas Johnson (affectionately known as 'DJ') and his wife. I would be drafting his obituaries a few years later.

The office team were great, though several age-related retirements had to occur, and technology was beginning to change everything. The new Fax machines sent text quickly around the world (and arguably, helped speed up the collapse of Communism),<sup>1</sup> word processing was arriving, and something called the Internet was almost in sight.

DJ always used to say, *'If you take care of the students and the literature, the rest will take care of itself'*. Dialogue 89, an evangelistic roadshow to students, was underway as I arrived, and over the years, it morphed into the Confident Christianity programme. Towards the end of the decade came the Saline Solution course in being an effective witness to Christ.

Regarding 'literature', DJ's son, CMF chair Alan Johnson, pressed me to improve the appearance and content of our publications, but I had to ask his advice and permission for CMF to respond to the first BBC request to do a live broadcast. Over-prepared, I drove to BBC Radio Bedford to debate for an hour with the then-leader of the Voluntary Euthanasia Society. Great fun! And I think we won. That was the first of now countless radio and TV broadcasts by members and staff as more and more medical issues highlighted the rapid changes in Western culture and the need for a thoughtful Christian response.

But, following a generous gift, it was the appointment from January 1992 of Peter Saunders as the first full-time CMF Student Secretary that marked the real take off for CMF becoming a significant player in national life, often in collaboration with other co-belligerents. Realising that the campaign against legalising euthanasia and assisted suicide needed more than reciting the Sixth

Commandment, CMF effectively founded and funded HOPE – Healthcare Opposed to Euthanasia. National and international broadcasting and campaigning took up much of my stint at CMF.

CMF was, therefore, sometimes working with the Roman Catholics, and I have great respect for my many friends there. We also became more and more involved with the Evangelical Alliance and its coalitions ECOS (Evangelical Coalition on Sexuality), ECOD (Evangelical Coalition on Drugs – looking at alcohol and other substance abuse), and ECONS (Evangelical Coalition on New Spiritualities and the Occult). Previous tensions with other organisations around the charismatic movement were slowly resolved.

With my experiences of 14 years working in the NHS with other health professions and being saddened by the demise of the Nurses Christian

Fellowship, I have always wanted to see a multidisciplinary Christian organisation in the UK. I am glad about what is now happening in CMF with nurses and midwives as full members. But CMF will always remain a 'Fellowship', however else we may change in the future!

Discussions with the Medical Missionary Association took a long time to lead to a full merger, but the annual Refresher Course (now the Developing Health Course) that we jointly ran was always an absolute joy

and privilege to attend, meeting many great saints working overseas.

From 1998 to 1999, I became convinced it was time for me to move on. Full-time executive leaders were usually doing so by that point. So, I gave the statutory three-month notice but said I would do six months if necessary. In the end, I did twelve months and left with no named successor. I had long meetings with half a dozen potential leaders, but for none of them was it the right job. So it was that Peter Saunders eventually agreed to take over, which he did ably until 2017, after which he took over as General Secretary of ICMDA in 2018. The rest, as they say, is history.

I had a portfolio career for five of the next seven years: I was elected a member of the General Medical Council, was a medical adviser to CARE,<sup>2</sup> chair of Acorn Christian Healing Foundation,<sup>3</sup> a writer, a speaker, and a church leader. After taking up a year-long ethics post in the USA, Catrin and I returned to the UK, and from 2007 to 2011, were I took up the post of CMF Head of Communications and Public Policy.

I retired from paid work at age sixty, and I am grateful for all CMF colleagues, members, and the fascinating thousands of God's people I have met around the world. Thank you, Lord. ◉

CMF will  
always remain  
a 'Fellowship',  
however else  
we may change  
in the future!



SCAN FOR MORE