Mark Pickering reflects on this year and looks forward in hope

T here is an old joke that says the light at the end of the tunnel may actually be another train coming to run you over!

It can feel like that at the moment when we’re firmly in the third wave of Covid; though vaccination has made a huge difference, who knows what the winter will bring? And we’re nowhere near catching up on all of the appointments, operations, and screening that were pushed back during recent lockdowns.

There are some significant cultural and societal shifts underway that will impact the lives of Christian healthcarers. The BMA’s shift to neutrality on assisted dying; back and forth court rulings about the use of transgender puberty blockers in children; court battles over the rights of disabled children in the womb; attacks on GP’s over face-to-face appointments.

The list goes on, and it often feels like swimming uphill.

It’s easy to dwell on the challenges and the negatives, which are often very real. But I am heartened by some genuine shafts of light shining brightly through the darkness. As I write, we are entering the light at the end of the tunnel – well, another light at the end of the tunnel. The nurses and midwives team at NAMfest in 2021. In May, the first-ever NAMfest (Nurses & Midwives’ Festival) was a massive success that we hope to repeat in 2022 (in person, God willing!). We passed our 400th nurse/midwife member in early September. We start the autumn with nurses and midwives’ groups in over a dozen locations and growing.

We are looking for a new Associate Head of Nurses & Midwives to continue Georgie Coster’s excellent work as she moves on to pastures new (see the ad in this edition of CMF News). It’s an exciting time to join this rapidly expanding ministry!

And in the public policy arena, despite the challenges listed above, we are working with some great people to stand up for the values of God’s kingdom in the world of healthcare. We work with parliamentarians in the All Party Parliamentary Group on Dying Well (dyingwell.co.uk) and with many members and partners on our working groups; in global health advocacy, transgender, beginning of life, assisted suicide and clinically assisted nutrition and hydration. Several members contributed so positively to the debates at the BMA ARM in early September (see News Review in Triple Helix), and numerous members are active in the Our Duty of Care campaign on assisted suicide (ourdutyofcare.org.uk). Thank you all for your contributions – in person, in giving, and in prayer – it is making a real difference.

So, as we look ahead, we have many encouragements to take with us. 2022 will doubtless present many new challenges, some of which we cannot foresee. Some great things are coming up, like the Student Conference in February and the National Conference in April. Both conferences will hopefully be back in person at last – please keep praying for that! But we also can look back and see that however tough things may be, God has not forgotten or abandoned us. We can see his hand at work throughout the trials of the last 18 months.

Let’s acknowledge the hardships and the toll they have taken on us, as well as the challenges we have yet to face. There is time for lament and remembrance. But let’s finish the year with hope, looking forward to all that God is doing, not just in and through CMF, but in so many areas of our own lives, communities, and workplaces.

‘I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us…if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.’ (Romans 8:18,25)

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