

## The faithfulness of God

Final thoughts from Peter Saunders after three decades of service to CMF

**W**hen Kirsty and I left New Zealand bound for Kapsowar Hospital in 1989, with two boys aged eight months and three years, we were planning to be 'career missionaries' in Africa. A taste of healthcare mission in the Kenyan highlands only intensified that desire and leaving home, friends and family seemed a small price to pay for the adventure of practising medicine in a developing world setting, where our surgical and paediatric skills made a real difference to people's lives.

Cross-cultural mission training at All Nations College in Hertfordshire brought us to the UK later that year. Being with 130 students from 37 countries as the Berlin Wall came down and huge new areas of the world opened up was both frightening and exhilarating. I had begun to think it might be more strategic to teach in an African medical school and mentor nationals. But doing surgical locums in British hospitals to pay our way through college opened my eyes to the fact that Britain itself was a mission portal, where people from every country under the sun were coming to study and train.

A few weeks before finishing college in 1991, with child number three on the way and Kirsty asking in which continent we were going to be serving in three months' time, I began to doubt. I remember telling my tutor that I felt I was swinging on a vine across a dark chasm, not knowing if there was anything on the other side, or if I had sufficient momentum to get back to where I had jumped from. And to make it worse I had my whole family with me. Had we misheard the Lord? Was it all a big mistake?

When the *CMF Newsletter* came through the door advertising the newly created post of Student Secretary, Kirsty was sure that this was it. It was obvious, she declared, that everything in my life up to that point had prepared me for this moment. I couldn't see it. Why had I spent 15 years training to be a missionary doctor if God was



asking me to give up surgery, turn my back on Africa and live in England? A serious wrestling match ensued.

But the more I thought and prayed about it I began to sense God's new direction. By the time of my interview I was able to say that working with CMF discipling medical students was like treasure in a field. I'd sell my whole life for the opportunity.

Looking back now over 27 years of ministry with CMF – eight in student ministry and 19 as CEO – I have no regrets. It has been an immense privilege to serve a generation of students and doctors and to see them grow in their faith and seek to serve our wonderful Lord and Saviour. After living my first 30

years in New Zealand my next 30 have taken me to over 50 countries and gained us many Christian brothers and sisters all over the world. And as Kirsty and I start this new adventure with ICMDA, we look forward to serving new and growing fellowships in over 80 countries and beyond.

Of course, it hasn't all been easy. Medical and spiritual needs are huge, hostility to Christian faith and values is growing and we all face the personal struggles of living in a fallen world this side of glory. But Christ's promises are sure and his victory is certain. And the day when his kingdom comes in all its fullness draws steadily closer.

*'Truly I tell you,' said Jesus, 'no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for my sake and for the gospel will fail to receive a hundredfold in the present age – houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and fields, along with persecutions – and to receive eternal life in the age to come.'*

(Mark 10:29–30)

That has absolutely been our experience. God is faithful.

*Peter Saunders is CMF Chief Executive*

## Looking forward

**W**e are now in the third year of our five-year 2020 ACTIVE Vision with six main strategic priorities - Advocacy, Communications, Training, International Partnerships, Volunteering and Evangelism.

Integral to this is the mobilisation of members under the direction of our new National Field Director, John Greenall and the building of a strong volunteer workforce in four main areas: Regional Catalyst Teams, Deep:ER Fellowships, Associate Staff Workers, and other opportunities.

These changes are really starting to bear fruit. Over the last three years Catalyst Teams have been established in six regions to stimulate local ministry; fifteen junior doctors and students have so far been engaged in our one year Deep:ER ministry training programme; five members have served as Associate Staff Workers and many others have been involved as speakers and trainers. All these people have given their time voluntarily to serve the Fellowship.

In addition:

- 24 students, nurses and juniors have now completed our 18-month Global Track preparing them for the challenges of cross-cultural mission

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## Looking forward

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- Sixteen new nursing student groups have been established throughout the country
- We are rising to meet the huge ethical challenges of assisted suicide, any-reason abortion and transgender ideology
- Exciting new resources in film, blogs, podcasts, videos and social media are coming on-stream

### Needs going forward

The board and senior staff have prayerfully considered what we need going forward to maintain momentum and streamline our ministry and have identified five priorities.

- Senior Advocate (four sessions) – a doctor to take on our departing CEO’s role in media and public policy strategy
- IT Support (six sessions) – a skilled specialist to help us clear backlogs in income processing, membership administration and website development
- Administrator (ten sessions) – to provide much needed support to our Head of Nursing, Head of CMF Global and National Field Director
- Pastoral Associate (four sessions) – a senior doctor to coordinate pastoral support for members nationwide
- Evangelism Associate (four sessions) – a senior doctor gifted in evangelism to run training and events aimed at reaching colleagues for Christ

### Significantly stretched

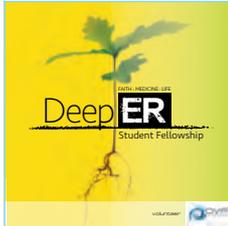
We are encouraged but still feel we are only scraping the surface. We also face huge new challenges, with Peter Saunders moving on as CEO after 27 years with CMF. The search is currently underway for his successor. We are also significantly stretched, especially in the areas of administrative and IT support for our ministry staff. We need a to develop our ministry and admin staff to support the growing volunteer opportunities we are developing with members.

There are big financial challenges too. We are projecting a deficit of over £80,000 this year – over 5% of our annual budget of £1.5million.

## Volunteering

Opportunities and updates

### Deep:ER



This year we welcome five new Deep:ER Fellowship participants who will be with us to be trained and gain experience in Christian ministry:

- **Morenike Da Silva** – Intercalating Student at Bristol (Global Health) working with the Global and Student departments
- **Mary Odonkor** – Intercalating Student at King’s (Philosophy) administrating our SYD 1 International Student Leaders’ Conference
- **Emily Cullis** – year-out medical student from York working with the Central Services Team to produce a staff intranet
- **Lavinia Miries** – Junior Doctor from London working with the student team editing an edition of *Nucleus*
- **Kelly Hibbert** – Junior Doctor from Birmingham working in Public Policy on a range of advocacy projects

If you’d like to join us next year check out [cmf.org.uk/volunteer/deeper](http://cmf.org.uk/volunteer/deeper)

### Catalyst Teams



We have six Catalyst Teams up and running in West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, SW Scotland, Mersey, Inverness (Highlands and Islands) and north

London. Each is developing local ministries to Christian doctors and nurses.

If you’d like to hear more about starting a team where you are, please contact [volunteer@cmf.org.uk](mailto:volunteer@cmf.org.uk)

### Associate Staff Workers (ASWs)



James Howitt



Esther Chevassut

CMF currently has two ASWs, Dr James Howitt and Esther Chevassut, who ‘drop a day’ to serve medical and nursing students where they live. We are recruiting to fill a team of ten ASWs in the next year, five for medical students and five for nursing students. Please pray that God would raise the right people and spread the message – perhaps it could be you?

### Esther shares a day in her life as an ASW



Esther Chevassut

I begin my CMF Associate Staff Worker day by meeting with Pippa over a much-appreciated coffee, after a few long day-shifts on the ward. Pippa and I share about our weeks – including personal life, work and CMF. Pippa updates me on recent projects in the CMF Nursing Department and asks me if I’ve had any responses from nursing and midwifery students at a university we’ve been communicating with about meeting as a group for the first time. Pippa and I pray about this as well as praying over plans discussed for upcoming conferences and meetings.

I head home and set up my laptop ready to skype into the Deep:ER session, in which the Deep:ER volunteers meet fortnightly, share and pray together and look in-depth at a theological or ethical subject. James, another Associate Staff Worker, leads us in a great discussion about multi-disciplinary team working, exploring what makes this effective and challenging in healthcare practice, and how we can approach this in a Christlike way. I share some of my experiences working in a team during my first ten months of work as a staff nurse.

I head out to a local cafe for lunch with a student nurse from Southampton who is one of the co-leaders of the CMF group here. It’s a joy being able to share with each other and to listen as she shares of the challenges of her current placement but how God has been faithful.

I print off a few copies of a very helpful *CMF File*, which has aided my preparation for tonight’s CMF meeting in Southampton, and some lyrics for the worship songs the group have planned for. The meeting is a very precious time, sharing some of our experiences of mental health, both personal and from exposure on placements. It’s helpful hearing advice from different perspectives. We round off with worship time and prayer, plus puddings, in the lovely home of our host – a retiree nurse herself.

As I head to bed, I reflect on all the conversations and meetings I’ve had today. I am so grateful for the opportunities I have had and give these situations to God in prayer.