

Paul Wadson shares the vision and ministry of the Morecambe Bay CMF Catalyst Team

BRINGING HEALTHCARE TO THE FEET OF JESUS



key points

- The NHS needs a compassionate, healing Christian presence as it deals with internal and external stresses.
- Christian health professionals cannot do this alone – we need one another.
- Working intentionally and prayerfully together in obedience to Christ, we can have a transformational effect on our workplaces and communities.

If you were to ask someone on the street one word they would use to describe Christians, what do you think they would say? Kind? Compassionate? Loving? I think if we are honest, there would be a mixed response. In fact, we might hear negative words such as ‘judgmental’ or ‘intolerant’.

In Luke 4:22, we read: ‘*All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips.*’ It is unfortunate that Christians can be known more for what they are against than what they are for.

In John 1, Jesus is described as ‘*full of grace and truth*’ (John 1:14). It is important to engage, and speak truth into ethical issues, but how can we also be known for our grace?

In Luke 5, we are told of a disabled man being lowered down through the roof to the feet of Jesus.¹ It’s just so dramatic. You can imagine the four men trying to get him to Jesus, but the way in is blocked, mainly it seems by the Pharisees and Teachers of The Law, the ones with a reputation for being judgemental. The friends aren’t deterred, they think outside of the box and lower the man through the roof. Jesus hears a sound and sees the man being lowered down. He ‘sees their faith’, declares the man is forgiven and demonstrates his authority to forgive by healing him.

My story

I qualified as a GP in 2005, and work in a practice based in Carnforth, Lancashire. I have recently become the Catalyst Team Leader for Morecambe Bay CMF which formed a year ago.

I love this healing story of Jesus because it sums up what the Morecambe Bay CMF Catalyst Team, is all about. I love the NHS. It has a dedicated, compassionate workforce, but in a lot of ways it is like the disabled man on the stretcher – needing healing. There are a lack of resources, high levels of stress and burnout and escalating issues of bullying. There are systemic issues related to poor communication and sometimes strained relationships between primary and secondary care and between management and the workers on the ground.

The Morecambe Bay team’s tagline is to **bless, serve and bring hope**. We want to bring healthcare itself to the feet of Jesus to be healed and transformed and create a more compassionate, hope-filled culture. There are obstacles, like the crowds at the doors in the Luke account, but there are also ceiling breaking solutions, and Jesus is leading the way.

So how did our story start? I had just moved from being a salaried GP to a partner in my practice and was struggling with several issues, including a stressful, working environment, poor morale and some bullying. I remember going to my house group

and telling them that I was really struggling and thinking of resigning. An elderly lady in my group said she would commit to praying that the Lord would bring a Christian colleague into my practice to pray with. Three months later, through a very unlikely turn of events a new GP called Andy arrived. I felt a bit like I was in a Bond movie when I said to him, stroking my imaginary cat: 'I've been expecting you...'

We started to meet regularly to pray for each other and for God to turn the practice around, which he did in a series of events that still staggers me to recall.

Around that time, I approached a local Methodist minister and we set up a Listening Service in the practice, which was a way of helping the practice deliver more whole person care. In busy practice, we often don't have the time to listen fully and therapeutically to our patients. We had a CQC visit which rated the Listening Service as being 'Outstanding' and we shared the model with neighbouring practices to help them set up their own services.

From this, I learned that God responds when we cry out to him and about the transformational power of Christians gathering in their workplace to pray and support each other.

Not long after this my vicar encouraged me to go on a CPAS weekend to explore ordination. This was helpful in that while I didn't feel I was being called to ordained ministry, I did feel I had a clear call from God to form 'new centres on the edges'. I shared this with my vicar who encouraged me to focus on forming 'church on the edges' from within my role in healthcare.

So, a year ago, a few of us got together and formed the Morecambe Bay CMF (MBCMF) group. This group is very multidisciplinary in that we have had practice managers, receptionists, pharmacists, physios and OTs meet with us.

The group has an inward focus to support one other and explore together what it means to follow Jesus together in our workplaces. But we also have an outward focus, centred on serving, blessing and bringing hope to local healthcare.

Morecambe Bay Catalyst Team

However, we have only recently become an official Catalyst Team. When John Greenall (CMF National Field Director) came to share the concept with us, amazingly we found we had already formed a kind of 'proto-Catalyst Team' organically through the Holy Spirit's influence. So, when John told us about the vision for Catalyst Teams, it fitted like a glove, and we felt that we could benefit from the support and leadership of national CMF.

As a group, we gather together monthly, usually getting 20-30 people, alternating between a breakfast session with a relevant theme (eg. Parish Nursing, Culture of Joy, Dealing with Conflict) and a social (e.g. walk in the lakes, BBQ's etc.). We have a camping trip coming up in September, although some of us will be glamping!

We set up a Facebook group (Morecambe Bay CMF) which has over 100 members, we have a

WhatsApp Bible in a year group, and an *Anam Cara* (soul friend in Gaelic) monthly book club.

We have been encouraged by our members saying that they feel the group is helping them connect their faith better with work. There have been several workplace-based prayer groups set up, both in GP practices and the hospital, where people are gathering to support each other and pray for their workplaces and patients.

So, what next? We want to continue to unite and equip Christians in healthcare to live and speak for Jesus Christ and to allow Jesus Christ to live and speak through them to bring healing and transformation to healthcare.

We have plans to run a Saline Solution course in Lancaster and to invite students. We have a team member who is focussed on allied health professionals who has the aim of bringing OTs, nurses, physios and others into the fold.

We are keen to connect with people who aren't CMF members. We have recently been authorised to advertise in the Trust and the GP news bulletins.

We have a particular concern for the growing workplace stress levels, particularly among junior doctors and nurses, and we are exploring how we can offer support. One idea was to put on a dinner for the new arrivals to the hospital with a talk on well-being at work. Another suggestion was to start a regular Bible study group for hospital workers to support each other and their colleagues. These are just a few ideas to encourage fellow Christians working in healthcare.

I have come to realise that all health and healing have their origin in Jesus. Healthcare is his instrument and he wants more than any of us to bring healing and wholeness through it. The amazing truth is that Jesus asks us to partner with him. He wants us to lay healthcare before him, so it can be healed and transformed so that it is fit for purpose. The other amazing truth is that we, the church, his body, are his hands of healing and transformation by the Holy Spirit. *'...for it is God who works in you to will and to act to fulfil his good purpose.'* (Philippians 2:13)

I'll leave you with a few questions to consider:

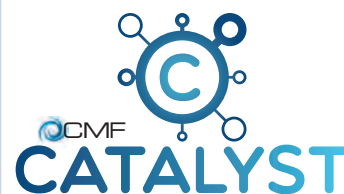
- What does it mean to bring healthcare before Jesus? What can you do? Can you gather with other Christians in your workplace? (If you don't know any Christians, pray for the Lord to bring you one.)
- What does it mean to be the hands of Jesus in healthcare? What would it look like for God's kingdom to come through us? Ask God to give you a vision of what this looks like, then commit to partnering with him to make this come to pass.

If you want to connect with us, look at our Morecambe Bay CMF Facebook page or email us on morecambebaycmf@gmail.com

Paul Wadson is a GP in Carnforth, Lancashire and Catalyst Team Leader for Morecambe Bay



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For more information on Catalyst Teams and setting one up in your area, visit cmf.li/Catalyst or email volunteer@cmf.org.uk

reference

1. Luke 5:17-16