

**Duncan Steed** shares the faith lessons he has learnt through his foundation years

# PEACE & HOPE AMID DESPAIR & SUFFERING

**Triple Helix: Where do you live?**

**Duncan Steed:** Currently between Portsmouth and Northern Ireland.

**THx: What's your job?**

**DS:** I've just finished my two foundation years at Queen Alexandra Hospital in Portsmouth. I am also a medical officer in the Royal Navy and am about to start my three years of general duties, beginning with Officer training at naval college.

**THx: How are you involved in CMF and what does that look like?**

**DS:** I help to lead the Wessex Junior Doctors' group. Before the pandemic, we were meeting monthly in a local consultant's home. Wonderfully, we were able to continue our meetings online during the lockdown. Recent topics included conscientious objection, humility, and palliative care, as well as the impact of Coronavirus on the developing world.

**THx: What's the best thing about CMF for you?**

**DS:** I consider CMF to be a real provision of God's grace to me personally. It's the place where you get to know your Christian peers locally and build friendships and community together. It's where you meet inspiring, faithful servants of Christ who impart their wisdom and share their experience of careers devoted to serving him and their patients, and who are honest about the challenges of all this whilst remaining faithful to him. It is where I have been confronted with the big medical ethical issues of our time and heard wisdom and biblical exposition in response.

The annual CMF conferences have featured all of the above and more. I have had the joy of hearing Tim Chester and John Lennox, amongst others, preach God's Word, our greatest help in our stand for Jesus and the greatest power for being impactful for him in all that we do and say.

**THx: What encourages you day-to-day?**

**DS:** A regular source of encouragement is seeing the faithful and bold witness of some dear Christian colleagues in Portsmouth. A registrar who bravely professes Christ and chats to all colleagues (consultant or junior). A research nurse who intercedes for the hospital every day in the ground-floor chapel. Seeing others live for him in the midst of an incredibly busy and hectic environment is a wonderful and timely reminder of who I am really serving, helping me keep my priorities in perspective.

**THx: What difference does your faith make to you as a doctor?**

**DS:** Chiefly, following Christ gives me peace and hope amid often overwhelming despair and suffering. An early memory of starting on colorectal as an F1 was just how devastating, and terminal many patients' diagnoses were. The COVID-19 pandemic caused me to

experience a similar level of despondency. To which our supremely compassionate Lord speaks these wonderful, hope-inspiring, despair-banishing words:

*'In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.'* (John 16:33b)

Oh, how we ought to take heart. Christ has overcome! To know and trust in the overcoming power of Jesus Christ gives me the strength to live amid such sorrow. To know he has overcome the grave and defeated death gives me hope. This strength and hope are not of my own creation, but a gift God has given us, his people, in order to live faithfully and boldly for him and to declare his gospel message of salvation in our words, our conduct, our compassion and our many daily sacrifices at work.

**THx: How have you grown spiritually since starting medicine?**

**DS:** Medicine has given me such a stark and profound realisation of just what Christ has done for me. When our Lord declares he came not for the healthy but the sick, it becomes clear just how perilous and hopeless my own spiritual condition was before his intervention on the cross. Being a doctor has helped me to understand the depths of my own brokenness in sin whilst aiding my understanding and delighting in the glories of Calvary and how wonderful our rescuing Jesus really is. Our Great Physician, stricken to make me whole. This has fueled my desire to serve in church and help others to encounter Jesus in his Word. God, by his grace, has shown me the joy and mutual encouragement to be enjoyed by his people meeting together as his family.

**THx: What top tip would you give to other Christian junior doctors?**

**DS:** Church. Church. Church. Please, I pray, make church a priority. I have seen far too many friends fail to do so and suffer spiritually as a result. You will not be able to attend every Sunday morning and mid-week small-group meeting. But keep your Sundays free wherever possible. Plan your zero-days and annual leave on the assumption that you're going to some sort of church meeting. Please don't make it an optional extra, make it the bedrock of your life wherever you happen to be. I can't even begin to explain how sustaining and glorious church has been to me these past two years. As a regular reference point of grace when you've had the most demanding week ever; as a routine time of plugging into the Word of life and worshipping the living God with others; as a means of being prayed for when you are struggling with patient deaths on the ward and when you are utterly exhausted and fatigued. And so importantly, as an opportunity to serve your Christian brothers and sisters. We have such a unique and God-given opportunity and gifting to serve and lead in local churches. I implore you to be faithful and be prepared to make sacrifices, be that of time or finances in order to serve God and advance his local church.