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for today's Christian nurses
& midwives

spotlight



- stories of hope
- being a force
- hope in an age of uncertainty



spotlight

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editorial: force for hope

We're coming to the end of our 'force for hope' recruitment campaign, where we've been raising the profile of the fellowship and growing our membership.

Praise God we're now up to 460 members, and we're having our first in-person NAMfest event this Spring.

We genuinely believe that we are stronger when we're connected together. Not just to be a 'cosy club', but to be active in bringing hope to our workplaces, our patients, and colleagues. In this edition of *Spotlight*, you'll find stories of hope from a range of workplaces. These are written by nurses and midwives starting out in their training, right through to those that have retired.

In the New Living Translation of Romans 15:13 it says, *'I pray that God, the source of hope will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.'* That's my prayer for you. I couldn't put it better myself. I pray that these testimonies, devotions, and prayers would draw you closer to your source of hope. So that when you go to work or lectures, you'd be filled to the brim with hope, slopping it about and dripping it on everyone you meet. Together, let's leave hope sodden footprints all over the UK and beyond.

Bex

keep updated

Keep up to date with our events at cmf.org.uk/nurses/events.



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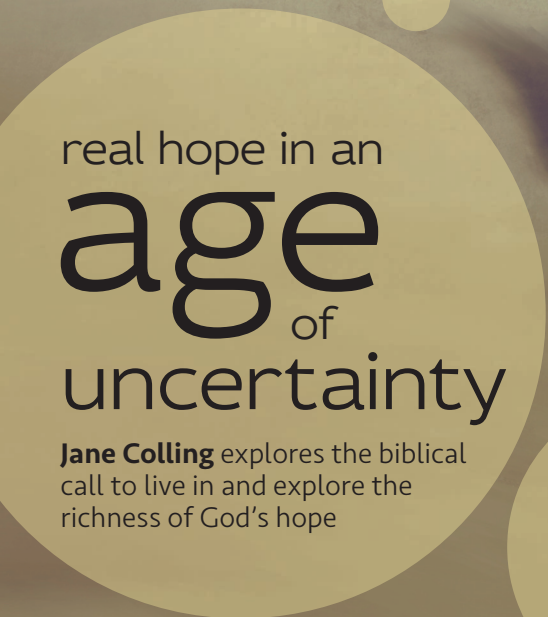


Bex Lawton, CMF Associate Head of Nurses & Midwives

is a paediatric nurse in Oxford, CMF's Associate Head of Nurses & Midwives, and CMF's 'Poet in Residence'



Bible



real hope in an
age
of
uncertainty

Jane Colling explores the biblical call to live in and explore the richness of God's hope



With the start of a new year with new challenges, I was prompted to think about hope. What is hope for us as Christian believers? Hope is confident expectation and a desire for something good in the future. Hope is never negative – it is profoundly positive and expectant. If we were to paint a picture of a hopeful person, they would most likely be looking upward and outward with arms outstretched in expectation that they are about to receive something good. So it is with Christians – we can put our hope in a God who is steadfast and reliable, who does not change like shifting shadows,¹ but who is constant and faithful.

what did you first hope for when you came to Christ?

Hope of salvation and forgiveness. Hope of eternal life and a life lived in right relationship to God. Maybe we hoped that God would speak to us and that he would listen to us. Though we may have seen some of these hopes fulfilled in our Christian journey so far, there is still much more to be fulfilled. Hope is a journey. Hope is dynamic and active, always moving on. Hope is intentional. In Hebrews 6:18 the author talks of Christians being those

'...who have fled to take hold of the hope set before us...' Hebrews 6:19-20 goes on to assure us that, *'We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where our forerunner, Jesus, has entered on our behalf.'*

Many Christian songs express this hope: *'My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness.'*²

hope in God is worth sharing

If we are convinced by this hope, shouldn't we share this hope with others? Especially in a world that seems quite lacking in tangible hope. In 1 Peter 3:15, we are challenged: *'But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect...'*

If we find it hard to share our hope in Christ, it may be helpful to think back to the reason you first put your hope in Christ. What first made you turn to Christ? How is life different for you now that you have a secure hope in an eternal and loving Father God?

In speaking out your experience of the ways in which God has fulfilled his promises to you,

hope means taking risks – entering upon a path of which we do not see the end

his Word will be powerful and meaningful to those you share with. As we speak out with confidence what we know to be true, God will make his Word effective. Isaiah 55:11 reminds us, *'so is my word that goes out from my mouth: it will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it'.*

hope in God is secure

Our hope can be feeble at times, it can wax and wane. The psalmist cries out in desperation, *'Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Saviour and my God!'* (Psalm 43:5) It is good to remind ourselves that God's relentless purpose moves on with or without our hope. A little like a storm-tossed boat in the harbour, anchored and secure, but still moved by the tides and

buffeted by the winds. Yet because our anchor is secure, no amount of buffeting can loosen the anchor. Another hymn comes to mind: *'Will your anchor hold in the storms of life ... We have an anchor that keeps the soul, steadfast and sure when the billows roll, fastened to the Rock that cannot move, ground firm and deep in the Saviour's love'.*³

Using the concepts of faith and hope interchangeably, Hebrews 11:1 states, *'Now faith is confidence of what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see'.* Hope means taking risks – entering upon a path of which we do not see the end. As Evelyn Underhill wrote *'Hope believes in the God of the future, as well as the past'.*⁴

Think of hope as a bird taking wing, setting out in the wind, trusting it will be held up by the air, and safely landing upon the distant branch. Watch the bird take off in utter freedom and self-abandoned trust that their wings of hope and the air God provides will work perfectly together to deliver them to a place of safety.

hope is relational

God has placed his hope in us – and in turn, we may place our hope in him. Are we willing and

expectant to see the fulfilment of God's promises in the world because his hope is in us? *'See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.'* (Isaiah 43:19) God makes the impossible, possible as we put our hope in him.

God makes the impossible, possible

Finally, in Romans 5:5, Paul says, *'And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us'.*

in summary:

- Our Christian hope is secure because it is fixed on the unchangeable, faithful character of God.
- Our Christian hope is worth sharing, so be ready, be gentle, be respectful.
- Our Christian hope is relational – God has invested his hope in us. In turn we may place our hope in him.

- Our Christian hope should be proactive, intentional, and dynamic – we can be in the 'business' of hope with God and his eternal purposes for a hopeless world.

prayer

Lord you are all love – and you love me.
Fill me with godly hope, I pray.

Thank you for your faithfulness, your steadfastness, Lord, for your promises, and for your Word.

Most of all Lord, thank you for Jesus, the Hope for the World. Teach us to walk daily with our hope unashamedly in him. Amen 🌸

Jane Colling works as an Advanced Nurse Practitioner in a general practice, and is also currently working for CMF as a Peer Support Coordinator

references

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A close-up photograph of a Black woman in a light blue medical uniform, looking out a window with white blinds. Her hand is raised to her chin in a thoughtful pose. The background is softly blurred, showing the window blinds and some outdoor greenery. The overall mood is contemplative and hopeful.

poem

overflowing
with
hope

Bex Lawton on the power
of hope softening our
hard hearts

In Romans 15:13, New Living Translation,
it says:

'I pray that God, the source of hope will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.'

Not overstretched. Not overrunning.
Not overworked, over, and over again

But overflowing with confident hope

Can I confess that hope can sometimes seem
like a dangerous thing?

Because it might open me up

Open me up to disappointment or let-down
It makes me feel vulnerable

But then I read in Proverbs that hope deferred
makes the heart sick

Hope deferred makes the heart sick, and if
that's the case, I need to be referred to
my God quickly

Before my heart gets hard, calcified with
cynicism, necrotic with pessimism

Before hopelessness spreads and I become
a sarcastic soul

Joyless, dark humour, with a sharp and bitter
tongue

I need to be seen by the Great Physician before
I become a weary old nurse

Paralysed by doubt

Always expecting the worst

Resigned, accepting the worst

Forgive me Lord!

And I pray that you, being the very source
of all hope, would fill us today

Like the sun on a sudden hot day in winter

Would you flood our hearts again?

Would you stream in through the slats
of office venetian blinds

Stream in through waiting and clinic room
windows

Into bays and cubicles and onto wards into
labs and theatres

Into our community and into people's homes!
Light us up!

Thaw frosty scepticism

Soften hard ground

Let what has lain dormant, buried deep down
and unseen

Let it stir again

Let's see what new life might emerge

Fill us with hope again today we pray, amen. 🙏



rest

stories of
hope
for...

district nursing

Mikah Parsons finds
strength and hope
in the psalms

As I travel about on my rounds as a District Nurse, I often have the pleasure of driving around the countryside, visiting small villages, finding myself on some bumpy farm track leading me to my next patient. I get to see on a daily basis God's beautiful creation. With spring now upon us, I thoroughly enjoy gazing at the daffodils lining the verges and watching the lambs frolicking in the fields. What a blessing!

I get such a lot of satisfaction and enjoyment from the job the Lord has led me into. It is at times like these when Psalm 16:5-6 (New King James Version) comes to mind: *'O Lord, You are the portion of my inheritance and my cup; You maintain my lot. The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; Yes, I have a good inheritance.'*

And yet I am often reminded of this verse, and not just when the day is going well. Even after a particularly busy or mentally exhausting day, this verse is no less true. In verse nine it goes on to encourage us to *'rest in hope'*.

On some particularly trying days, which we will all experience at some point or another, we can find rest in the knowledge that our hope is in the Lord. We are secure knowing it is he who will supply all our needs, especially as he is faithful in all his ways. I can have true rest and a steadfast hope knowing he will provide me with the strength to provide nursing care for my patients one day at a time, even on the busiest shifts.

And he can do the same for you too! His Word promises that, *'Blessed are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord their God.'* (Psalm 146:5)

Such a peace and joy we can know because the Lord is our inheritance and our help. 🌿

Mikah Parsons is a Specialist Practitioner District Nurse in Worcestershire

wonder

stories of
hope
for...

becoming like
little
children

Victoria Hutchinson finds signs
of hope in childlike wonder

As I pace the wards, hemmed in by the 'Walls of Work' and the shabby bay that needs more than a lick of paint, out of the corner of my eye I see a frustrated, tired patient scowling. I find myself asking the question: can hope be found along the busy, dusty corridors of daily life? In the demands on my time and the drain on my emotions?

My glance can only reach so far. There are curtains drawn to slice up the room and windows of frosted glass to blind my sight.

And so, I look down and see my sensible shoes. ECCOs, just like the ones my grandma used to wear. She'd have been so proud of who I'd become. We never saw it coming – midwife me with my tired but comfortable, ugly feet.

My thoughts drift inwards. Is hope within? Can she be found hiding there inside? But right now it's all empty. Hope and her friends have not

settled there. No joy, no gladness, no wonder. Just a list of things to do.

I catch sight of a young child as he bounces onto his mother's bed. A sharp intake of my breath as I see a painful wince flashing over her face, and then it's gone. Courageous woman. The three-year-old is a big brother now and he's proud. Uncertain, I can see, but proud of his newly acquired status.

He's clutching something tightly in his hand. I watch as he unscrews the lid and dips in the red, plastic wand. He draws it out glistening and shiny and brings it eagerly but carefully to his mouth. He pushes out his lips into a whistling shape, then sucks in his breath and gently blows. Slowly. Slowly. Slowly. The bubbles, like transparent glass, form and float and rise. He is smiling excitedly, delighted to show his baby sister. Look! Look! Look! The pockets of captured air, like illusions, are rising. Magical round rainbows. Up. Up. Up. He is shaking his mother's arm and pointing. He wants her to look. She does. And so do I. We look together. We look up.

And there, in my looking up, I find hope. 🍁

Victoria Hutchinson is a recently retired midwife



students



stories of
hope
for...

new student groups

Jacob tells us about his new student nurses and midwives group

My name is Jacob. I'm in my second year studying adult nursing at Oxford Brookes University. There are approximately 70 nurses in my cohort, studying at the satellite Swindon campus. When Tatenda, another student nurse, and I became friends we quickly realised we were both Christians. One day, I reflected that it would be nice if we had a Christian Union (CU), so we prayed privately.

It seemed like God wanted this to happen too. A church member put me in touch with CMF, which led to Tatenda and I meeting Bex Lawton. It was encouraging to share our

vision, pray together and feel energised to get things started. We did various bits of advertising, including giving notices before each year group in the lecture hall, and so our new CU in partnership with CMF was born!

We've been going for a couple of terms now. Our group is well attended and has a diverse mix of nationalities, which is great. Our sessions consist of worship, sharing, prayer and an episode of a Bible study series. One of our best attended sessions was entitled 'nationality speciality' where students prepared a dish from their home countries. We had food from Africa, India, and Europe. I brought jam scones with clotted cream as



a British representative – delicious! Some of our group members have said:

'For me, being in a group of people who have a common goal is so encouraging to my faith.' Tigi

'Since starting university, the CU group has encouraged me and support through our learning journey at Oxford Brookes. Most importantly, I've made some genuine friends.' Rose

'Faith brings about community and community brings Christian together to worship. It's the joy I see in us when we come together to worship that strengthens me. This faith has shaped the decisions I make towards caring for all.' Gabriel

In this term we're using the new nursing and midwifery toolbox video series I helped create. We had contributions from various CMF groups around the country, so I'm excited about how this will unfold. In our last gathering we finished with a time of worship and each group member shared a prayer. It is wonderful to provide a platform in university for students to be able to worship, pray, and share fellowship together. Please pray for continued blessing and guidance of our Oxford Brookes (Swindon Campus) CMF Christian Union. Or, as it's easily abbreviated, our OBUSCCMFCU! 🍀

Jacob is a student nurse studying at Oxford Brookes University.



faith



stories of
hope
for...



learning disability nursing

Kim Woolnough finds the simple, strong faith of a patient challenges her source of hope for her patients

'**T**hey think I'll be able to start walking soon nurse', a young man with learning disabilities proclaims whilst showing me his make-shift drum kit to use

in hospital. His loud, bubbly voice echoes through the ward. He seems oblivious to the extent of the damage to his body caused by a rare infection that almost cost his life. Worried calls come in from his family wondering how he will cope on the ward.

On paper his needs appear highly complex. But in person, as I sit and listen to this remarkable young man who has had a tough start – not made easier by his learning disabilities – I am struck by his simple and beautiful faith in God and joy in meeting new people. When finalising his discharge plans, I felt compelled to reassure him that we were doing all we could to get him fully better so that he could go home.

there is another who is not in uniform...in the business of...restoring those in our care

He grinned as if he had knowledge of a secret sauce ingredient that no one else knew. 'Well', he beamed 'you don't have to worry about that nurse, because Jesus of Nazareth is going to do that for me'.

It stopped me in my tracks.

The confidence, conviction, and security that he placed in knowing his Saviour Jesus would 'come through' for him was so powerful.

It also served to gently nudge off its pedestal the responsibility we often feel to make everything better as nurses and midwives. Thankfully, there is another who is not in uniform but is in the business of healing, guiding discharge plans, and ultimately restoring those in our care. Hallelujah! 🎉

Kim Woolnough is a learning disability nurse working in Oxford.

suffering

stories of
hope
for...

Ukraine

Rosie Housman finds remarkable signs of God's grace and care in the most traumatic situations

We use the word 'hope' on a daily basis. 'I hope you have a good day', 'I hope there's no traffic', 'I hope you feel better soon',

'I hope it doesn't rain'. We say these phrases so often that we can forget what a valuable word 'hope' is. It can start to feel a bit empty, as if we are just keeping our fingers crossed or leaving things up to chance or circumstances.

In 1 Peter 1:3, Peter talks about something different: *'he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead'*.

A *living* hope. Living things are active, moving and thriving. Through Jesus' death we receive salvation and are gifted this incredible hope, which gives us freedom to live, knowing that one day we will dwell with Jesus in heaven forever.

This hope was particularly poignant for me last year when I joined a Christian disaster relief team in Ukraine, six weeks after the start of the war. We were based in central Ukraine, providing medical care for internally displaced refugees passing through the city. Each person had their own experience and story of suffering since the start of the war.

One of the first patients I looked after had been caught in a missile attack on a railway station. Although she had shrapnel wounds to her body, the psychological distress she experienced from what she had seen was far greater. We were able to sit and be present with her in her grief.

Another elderly man had been rescued by his neighbour from their bombed-out apartment

block in Mariupol, where he had been alone for so long that he had terrible pressure sores. Miraculously, we found him a place in a local care home. For others who came through the doors, it was a case of playing games and bringing smiles to the faces of their traumatised toddlers, or simply chatting with scared teenagers.

Seeing the grief, despair, and uncertainty in each individual we cared for challenged all of us to keep looking to Jesus and trusting that, despite the deep suffering and desperation around us he, is our ultimate, living hope. As Martin Luther is said to have said, *'When we look around and wonder whether God cares, we must always hurry to the cross and we must see him there'*.

As nurses we see so much suffering and sadness, but also much joy and laughter. Whatever situation we encounter at work, in our churches, communities or families, we have the profound truth that Jesus loves us and is dwelling in us. What an incredible perspective to live by! 🌟

Rosie Housman is working as an Emergency Department research nurse in South London.

HDU

Esther Hughes shares the story of a patient's slow recovery that gave her a new insight into hope in trying circumstances

As a nurse or midwife, it's a privilege to walk alongside our patients in their journeys, which are sometimes long and painful. It's an honour to witness light break through into dark and difficult seasons. One of my patients on the High Dependency Unit (HDU) had a long stay with us, and boy, it felt hopeless at times! By God's grace, over time, we began to see glimpses of hope in her

and from her. Even though being discharged to a care home was not what she wanted, she said goodbye to her temporary HDU home with much more hope than she came to us with.

Until her admission to hospital, Julie (pseudonym) was in full-time work and was able to do most of the things she wanted to. Over a few short weeks, she had become acutely unwell, was rushed into hospital, and

required emergency surgery and admission to intensive care. She was on multi-organ support with multiple teams assessing and treating her. Through many tests, scans, and reviews, shock and questions mounted for Julie and her family.

When she came to HDU, Julie was dependent on a non-invasive ventilation (NIV) mask 24-hours a day. She was anxious and withdrawn whilst we cared for her varying needs: ventilation, feeding, medications and personal care. Progress felt very slow and Julie was demotivated for rehab, whilst reticent to accept her current state. Our care had to be at Julie's pace, led by her.

Bit by bit, she let us into more of her thoughts and feelings as she processed loss and change. Gradually, we built-up trust with her and she accepted more input. Each day, she said a few more words to the clinical team, she managed a few more minutes off her mask, and a few more mouthfuls of food. The small steps of progress became ones of success and hope.

It was a momentous day when Julie sat in a chair for the first time in months! She had re-learned how to use her hands in the ways she loved: to read, to connect with friends, to be independent with her meals.

We were finally able to talk about the hope of

going home, although it was clear this 'home' would look very different to what she'd come from. After a lot of discussion, a care home was allocated – not necessarily forever, but the best place for her next steps.

Emotions were bittersweet. Julie was apprehensive about learning to trust staff in a new environment. She was hopeful of progress and possibly being able to go outside, whilst grieving her previous life. She was thankful for the life-saving treatment she had received whilst being resentful of the care she still required. I was struck by Julie's hope for both getting stronger and for being able to accept this new chapter of her life. She reminded me that each of us can find blessings in the toughest situations.

I am so thankful that Jesus offers us a living, eternal hope that can never perish, spoil, or fade. That one day everything will be restored. There will be no more crying or mourning or care homes or hospitals. As nurses and midwives, we can witness glimpses of hope, and great strength, in the journeys of those we care for. We can hold onto Christ who gives us strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow. 🌸

Esther Hughes is a staff nurse and works part time as a CMF Staff Worker for nurses and midwives

witness

stories of
hope
for...

salvation in the linen room

Mary Hopper recounts her first encounter with God in a most unexpected setting

In the 1970's, Sundays were respected and honoured in UK hospitals. Every Sunday, in the afternoon, the chaplains came round and would go to each bed, introduce themselves and ask whether people wanted prayer. Whatever the beliefs of patients, the chaplains were happy to contact leaders of other faiths. If a patient had no faith that was fine; the Chaplains would still offer to pray for them.

The interesting thing was that you couldn't help but hear what was happening all around the ward. Back then, we had very long, open-plan wards with twelve beds each side. Nothing was secret. People used to think that when you drew the curtains it was confidential! But you could hear everything – just like today! God was present on the wards, and no-one thought any more about it. There was also a beautiful chapel.

At any time during the week, as well as on a Sunday afternoon, those who were mobile enough and wanted to, could attend services.

In my fourth year of training, in 1972, on one particular Sunday afternoon, a Salvation Army group came to the ward. One of the ladies, who I'd seen previously and said hello to, asked me, 'Are you ready?'. I remember joking back, 'Ready? I'm ready for anything'. 'Good', she said, 'I think we should pray'.

The only place to pray privately and not leave the ward was the walk-in linen cupboard, full of sheets, blankets, and towels. So we went in there. And on that day, in the linen cupboard we prayed together, and I committed my life to the Lord and knew his salvation in a real way. 🌸

Mary Hopper is a retired nurse, midwife, lecturer, and missionary who went on to live and work in Zimbabwe for 15 years. She currently works in the UK as a Counsellor.



resurrection



stories of
hope
for...


resurrection hope

Bethany Fuller on the bits that don't get taught at university

My patient died today. She was so desperate for healing and had been crying out to God from her bed when she became too weak to stand. We had prayed together and acknowledged God's ways were so often beyond our human understanding. And now he had taken her.

As I was gently washing her body with my colleague, I had an odd feeling, like it wasn't quite real, like she was still there. But of course, I knew she wasn't. I fleetingly wondered where she was and what she was seeing in glory. And then I began to marvel that one day she will be resurrected. I thought of the women going to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body and the reality of what an astounding thing it is for God to raise someone from the dead. Worship welled

up in my heart again as I thought, one day – in my flesh – I will see God.¹ What a miracle. What a mind-boggling statement that is, in my flesh I will see God. In that moment, in the presence of sorrow and death, God brought the realisation of the eternal hope of the resurrection close to my heart.

God's ways are not our ways, for he is sovereign and utterly good and tender towards us, his precious creation. As my colleagues talked about this patient and her faith, which she had so willingly displayed for all to see, I bowed the knees of my heart in the presence of our awesome King and worshipped him for our eternal hope of glory in Christ. 

Bethany Fuller is a staff nurse in Surrey and CMF's Peer Support Coordinator for Newly Qualified Nurses and Midwives

1. Job 19:26



interview

a little
life,
a mighty hope

Bethany Fuller interviews a friend,
Nina Turner, about how God used the
short life of her baby, Eli, to bring
hope and truth to people.

Bethany: It's a privilege to know Eli's story already. Thanks for sharing it with our Spotlight readers. Tell me when you first knew something was wrong.

Nina: When I went for my check, just before my due date, I was told I had high blood pressure and my baby had an irregular heartbeat. The midwife advised me to go to hospital.

How did God help you during this time?

God provided the right people at the right time to talk to me because I was fighting at every stage. Previously, I had home births and minimal intervention. Now they were inducing me and doing an emergency C-section.

But looking back, God had prepared me through a friend who said, 'God does not promise to deliver us out of a situation, but he says he will deliver us in that situation'. I clung to that.

How did it feel when they told you Eli's condition was life-limiting?

It wasn't until Eli was born that we knew anything was wrong, but when they told us he had two life-limiting conditions, pontocerebellar hypoplasia and Edward's Syndrome, it just felt surreal. We couldn't take it in.

When the doctor explained it, they said that

there was a mistake in Eli's DNA, but we do not believe God makes mistakes. I remember thinking, 'thank you for telling me that, but it is in God's hands'. We knew God had a reason for this.

Tell us about a miracle you saw God do in Eli's life.

The fact he even made it to birth is miraculous. Most babies with only one of these conditions die in the womb. So God helped us understand that this was for his glory. Also, the part of his brain which regulates breathing had not developed, so when they took him off the ventilator and he breathed, the doctors were shocked. They didn't expect that to happen. It was the first of many chances to witness in the NICU and tell staff we believed the Lord commanded Eli's first breath and would command his last. We told them how many people were praying.

The Bible equips us for anything life throws at us. It says, '*In all things God works for the good of those who love him*'. (Romans 8:28) The bigger picture is often outside of our comprehension.

During Eli's time in the NICU you saw God working in the staff. Tell us more.

Friends were giving us scriptures and we

started to write them on Post-it notes and stick them on Eli's incubator. Doctors and nurses would talk about it and would come to see his incubator, sometimes walking across the hospital specifically to read the scriptures. It made us stronger because it was God's grace and mercy. I can't cope with it because it is just too amazing.

Eli died when he was four weeks old, but four days before that he was discharged from hospital and you got to spend time with him as a family at home. How important was this to you?

It was the most important thing. It was a miracle he was discharged. Initially they couldn't wean his oxygen without his breathing stopping and they thought he would die that day. So, I asked if we could keep him on high flow oxygen until the end of the week and after back-to-back training, oxygen was set up at home, and with the support of two hospices, unbelievably we were transferred home in the NICU ambulance within just two days. They said they had never done that before!

Since then, one of the doctors said that he now knew that there is something higher out there and something was working on our side. We told him who that higher power is!

People will ask how a parent can go through what you did and still remain joyful and hopeful. What would you say to them?

In *The Pilgrim's Progress*, there is a deep, dark, never-ending pit of despair. I used to pray that Jesus would pull me out quickly when I fell in. It was the most anguished, dark place. At one of our worst times, we met a Christian nurse in NICU. She was excited to meet us and thought it was such a privilege. She told us to look at all the truth we had written on the Post-it notes on Eli's incubator. We started clinging to that truth again and God brought us out of the pit again.

I know you believe that Eli's life was ordained by God, what impact has it had on your family and wider circles?

It has made heaven very close and real. We can look up and go, yes, this is not our home and Eli is home. You couldn't want more for your child. This makes us smile and brings us joy. It was a privilege that God thought we could be Eli's parents. People could see God at work, and he gave us the strength to tell them that it was him helping us. In God's grand scale, it's not about how long your life is, but how powerful it is. That's why we started to call him Mighty Eli because his little life had a mighty impact.

Thank you so much for your honesty and sharing with us, Nina. 🌸

scripture

there is
one body
AND
one spirit,
just as you
were called to
one hope
when you were
called

EPH 4:4



being a
force

Onahi Idikwu explores how we find God's strength at work in our weakest moments

A quick search on Google will reveal that being a force requires strength or energy to produce movement or an action. It is an active thing that can yield hope when applied well. For some, being a channel of hope in your home or workplace is exciting, whereas others may be filled with dread and reluctance. I feel a tension between these two realities, my heart leaping at the thought of being used to bring positive change. But like

a weighted blanket, residual tiredness is not far behind, sapping my energy.

How force-like do you feel right now? If you feel ready and enthused, then praise God. However, a lack of enthusiasm does not limit God. Being used as a force is not dependant on our ability but on his. If, like me, working as a nurse or midwife has left you feeling desperately exhausted and hopeless at times, then let's explore together how God used four

desperately hopeless men not only to bring deliverance and hope for themselves, but to the nation of Israel.

This unusual account is found in 2 Kings 7. The people of Israel are in the middle of a war, and with the capital city of Samaria surrounded by enemy armies, the people are experiencing a savage famine. It is in that crisis that we find four men with leprosy facing a dilemma. As outcasts in their society due to their illness, they reason that if they go into the city they will die. If they stay sitting outside the city, with no access to food, they will also die. So, they decide all they can do is surrender to the army of the Arameans. If the enemy kept them alive, then they would live. But if they were killed, then they were no worse off than what would inevitably happen to them if they did nothing.

The incredible thing was that when they reached the edge of the camp, no one was there. *'For the Lord had caused the Arameans to hear the sound of chariots and horses and a great army...'* (v.6) They had thought an unconquerable force was against them and fled, leaving all their food and goods to be enjoyed by the four men. After helping themselves to a much-needed meal, these four men with leprosy returned to the city to

alert the gatekeeper of the good news that starving Israelites could get lifesaving food from the Aramean camp. God used four distressed men to miraculously provide for a nation.

The force these four men exerted was not restricted by their disability but rather was wholly dependent on God's great power and will. In the same way, our weakness and lack of influence does not limit God's hand. As children of God, we have his Holy Spirit in us to propel life into each area of our lives and work.

It is also key to note that these men, though few in number, were still a community. Through them God was able to bring hope to a hopeless situation. No matter how isolated we may feel, there is a physical and spiritual body of believers around us. It is within the context of this community that God can use us to be a force for hope in any and every situation he has put us in.

Are there three or others in your workplace or across your city with whom you can join and pray together? 🙏

Onahi Idikwu is a paediatric and neonatal nurse and a CMF Associate Staffworker building up Christian nursing and midwifery networks across London.



Europe

hope for NCFI

Pippa Peppiatt puts our UK fellowship in its global context

I love this verse from Revelation 7:9, which describes heaven as a wonderful, multinational place, with everyone worshipping the Lord together: *'After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.'*

We've talked in this *Spotlight* about the strength of being a united Christian community of nurses

and midwives in the UK, **A Force for Hope**. But there's an even bigger picture too!

Did you know that as a member of CMF you are also a member of Nurses Christian Fellowship International (NCFI)? CMF is the UK arm of this global fellowship.

NCFI began in 1958 when a Scottish nurse, Johan Allen, began to search out countries where there were Nurses Christian Fellowship

(NCF) groups and bring them together for mutual benefit and support. There are now nurses and midwives connected from over 30 nations – that’s quite a few ‘nations, tribes, people and language’!


We’re part of the NCFI region of Europe, and through my time serving on the NCFI European committee, a few things have struck me:

- Europe is a very diverse region, culturally, politically, and economically. Yet despite this and the differences in language and nursing traditions, nurses and midwives in Europe are connecting and trying to support each other.
- Most of the stronger Christian nursing fellowships are in the Nordic Countries (Finland, Denmark, and Norway), the UK, and in Spain. These countries are also the more secular and wealthy nations, with well-developed nurse education and training, but where Christianity is increasingly marginal. Growing and sustaining Christian fellowships in these busy, secular climates is a real challenge.
- We are blessed that we are seeing real growth in our fellowship in the UK. This is by no means the norm for other countries in the region. We thank God and aim to pray and support other countries who are struggling.
- In Eastern Europe, nursing is slowly developing a professional identity, but is still poorly paid with low status. Yet in many of these nations, the churches are strong and growing. As more of Eastern Europe joins the European Union, more nurses from the East are working in the West and the North. Our desire is to help the East developing their own supportive communities for Christian nurses and midwives and connect those leaving to work in the West with Christian fellowships in their host countries.
- How much we can learn from each other, be blessed by each other’s experiences and prayers, and truly be strengthened by journeying together.

Our own CMF dreams are reflected in these words from the NCFI website (ncfi.org) that describe it as *‘wanting to share with nurses the hope we have in relationship – with God, our colleagues, and the individuals and communities where we work and serve. We celebrate the hope and light of Jesus Christ that can never be extinguished but is certainly made stronger by being a **force for hope** together.’*

Or as others might say: **¡Una fuerza para la esperanza! En kraft til håp! Toivon voima!** 🍌

Pippa Peppiat is CMF Head of Nurses & Midwives.



security

keep us afloat

Bex Lawton on being buoyed
up in life's storms

In Hebrews 6:19, the hope for our souls is described as an anchor, firm and secure. But lately, it seems to me that God's hope doesn't so much Anchor us down, as holds us up.

His hope keeps us afloat.

Now hopelessness?

That's heavy.

It feels like lugging around lead boots on your feet. It's sure to drag you down
And sink you to the bottom of the sea.

If that's you today

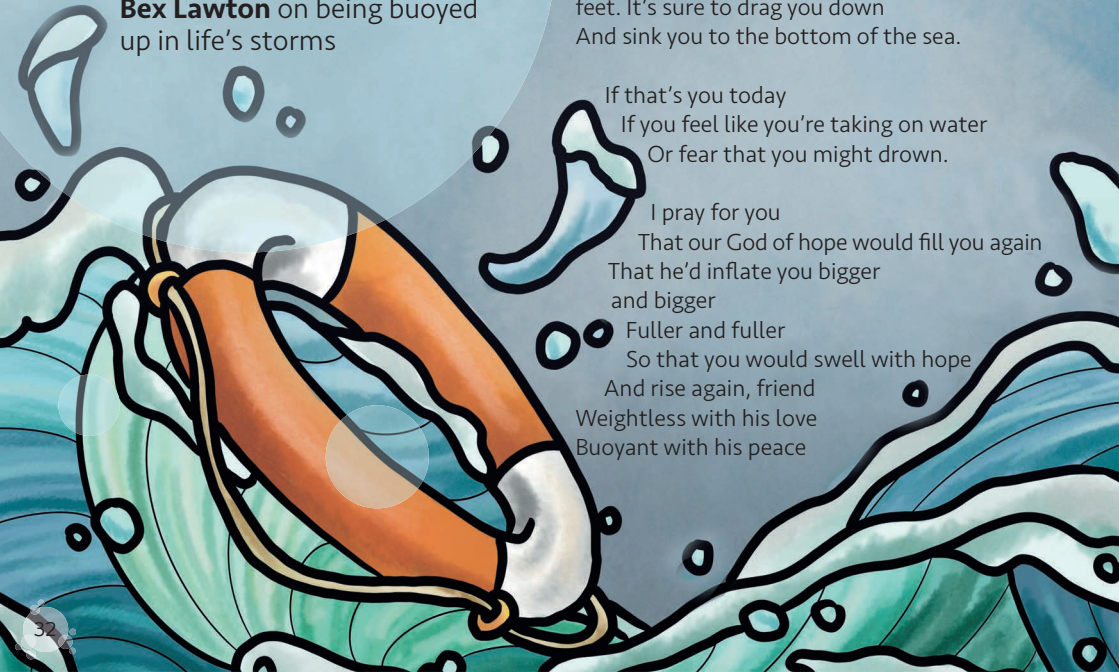
If you feel like you're taking on water
Or fear that you might drown.

I pray for you

That our God of hope would fill you again
That he'd inflate you bigger
and bigger

Fuller and fuller

So that you would swell with hope
And rise again, friend
Weightless with his love
Buoyant with his peace



That you'd bob, bob, bob, about with joy
 Dancing across the surface of the oceans deep
 Undeterred by the storm-tossed waves
 Yes, I pray that God's hope would keep you afloat.

And please, know that you're not some
 isolated boat
 or dinghy lost in the vastness of the ocean.
 There is an 'us' out there on the waters
 with you
 And we're all holding onto this hope too,
 you know.

Let 'us' be tethered to hope
 Let 'us' be tethered to hope
 With fisherman's knots, taut and
 uncompromising.
 Together we are a great body of vessels
 Together we are a great fleet for him

Propelling one another into love
 Driving one another into good action.
 Some voyaging overseas
 And others in harbours closer to home.
 All of us adventuring
 We rescue other sinking ships
 We drag people out of the water
 We share out hope and see them filled too.

Weightless with his love
 Buoyant with his peace
 Bob, bob, bob, about with joy
 Dancing across the surface of the oceans deep
 Undeterred by the storm-tossed waves.

Yes, together is better
 We weren't meant to do this on our own
 Together we are a Fleet
 Together friends, we can be a force for hope. 🌊

Bex Lawton, CMF Associate Head of Nurses & Midwives is
 a paediatric nurse in Oxford, and CMF's 'Poet in Residence'

Illustration by **Sarah Louise Bedford**



liturgy
toolbelt

liturgy for running water

Bethan Mills adds to your liturgy toolbelt prayers for filling water bottles and washing hands

Bethan Mills is a paediatric nurse in Manchester

LITURGY FOR running water

As I fill my bottle at the start of my shift,

'Father, you are the spring of living water. You are true refreshment, eternal joy and rest. May my soul thirst for you today, may I be a woman [man] drinking from the spring of water that wells up into eternal life.'

As I wash my hands for the first time:

'Jesus, you have washed away my sin and guilt, you have made my soul clean forever. Whoever believes in you, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them. May my clean, grateful, satisfied heart point others to the rivers of living water they too can wash in, they too can drink deeply from and be satisfied.'

For the fifth time:

'Lord, you made the sea and rivers and washed the feet of those who would betray and forsake you. May my clean hands, my grateful thirsty heart, my faltering words, flood my patients with your life-giving love.'

As I help the parent at the end of their tether wash their poorly child:

'Father, this family is passing through deep waters. They are looking for water in broken, empty cisterns. Please lead them gently to streams of living water.'

As I refill that bottle, tired and thirsty, seven hours left to go:

'Father, thank you for your promise of soul rest and refreshment.'

Hand washing for the tenth time:

'Lord, may the brokenness and suffering in this world make me thirst for a world made new, when the water of life will flow from the throne of the Lamb.'

At home, showering and praying for my patients, my colleagues, my managers, and the whole broken, wonderful system:

'Father, please may the thirsty and unclean know that they can be satisfied and be washed forever in your life-giving water. May we, your people, be like trees planted by streams of water, rooted and delighted in your word, your truth, your promises.'

Amen. 🌊

further reading to
guide your prayers:
Psalm 1, Psalm 42,
Isaiah 49, Jeremiah 2,
John 4, Revelation 22



come join us



CMF Nurses & Midwives works to:

- Grow disciples of Jesus in nursing & midwifery
- Encourage praying Christian groups in workplaces
- Advance global partnerships for health and wholeness
- Walk with you throughout your career
- Advocate for the marginalised and promote Christian values

its not too late
cmf.org.uk/join