FOCUS MAGAZINE

WWW.CANADIANSFORCONSCIENCE.CA

Please direct your colleagues, family, friends and Church community to use the website to urge decision makers to protect conscience rights. The website is part of our overall conscience advocacy with the Coalition for HealthCARE and Conscience.

There will be more Call for Conscience campaigns in 2019/2020. Keep watch on our website and the Coalition Social Media accounts.

CMDA CANADA ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Our social media accounts keep members and the public up to date with all the latest news articles relating to faith and medicine, upcoming events, and share messages of hope and faith. Look for us on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube.

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

We also have a monthly email newsletter to keep our members up to date on current events, student opportunities, and upcoming CMDS events like our student retreats, national conference, and local speaking engagements.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

We are currently accepting submissions for our blog and FOCUS Magazine. Let us know what issues are affecting you as a medical professional or medical student. Contact Stephanie Potter at sjpotter@cmdscanada.org for more information.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

CMDA Canada has launched a strategic planning process which will culminate in a 5 year plan to be presented at the 2020 Conference in Vaudreuil-Doiron, QC. Please participate in this process by filling out the member survey at www.surveymonkey.com/r/SPFOCUS.
Editorial
GORDON WONG, DDS

I am grateful that the Lord allowed me to be the guest editor for this issue of FOCUS dedicated to dentistry. As I read the articles, I was encouraged to see God working in the lives of His people at all stages of their careers. The spectrum spans from dental students, to recent dental graduates, to practicing dentists, to retired dentists. Missionary dentistry and obeying God's call has always been close to my heart. Being open to God's call involves waiting and trusting that He will reveal His plan for each stage of our career, and He will also supply the necessary vision.

But they that wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint. (Isa 40:31)

While Dr. Elmer Thiessen was transitioning from clinical dentistry to retirement, God revealed that He had other plans for a second career in a different aspect of dental missions, namely as chairman of ICMDA. I have shared a personal testimony of God's engineering of circumstances in acceptance to dental school, oral and maxillofacial surgery residency, His calling to our community of service and eventually to short-term dental missions. Associate Staff Networker Jon Dykeman reports on his experiences reaching out to dental students to start a CMDA Canada student group at the Faculty of Dentistry. After patiently waiting for God's timing, he rejoices to see Him raise up faithful students to start the Dental Christian Fellowship. God has not forgotten His students at the Dental School situated so far off the main campus of the University of Toronto.

Recent dental graduate, Dr. Jonathan Yu, tells of his struggles being a faithful witness for Jesus, all the while completing his clinical requirements and exams. His priorities are to find time for daily Bible readings, being thankful for His grace to allow him the privilege of studying dentistry, and remembering not to forget meeting with brothers and sisters in Christ for fellowship and community. Dental student Miriam Park writes about a CMDA US dental student leadership event she attended in Bristol, Tennessee that inspired her through the testimonies of amazing speakers, as they shared the love of Christ through dentistry. It changed her life to commit to being a Christian dentist living out her Christian values. It also prompted her to ask the tough questions of what is her purpose in dental school and beyond.

Two favourite CMDA Canada National Conference presenters, Dr. Corina Gottschling and Dr. David Stevenson, present an excellent selection of insights into faith embued leadership and how they apply those principles. Dr. Cheryl Wiebe describes finally taking the plunge into volunteering overseas and how her life was changed in a very deep way. She tells about the encouragement of sharing daily experiences with team members, learning to put God first in all our thoughts and decisions, and claiming the peace and humility that only God gives. She describes a typical day on a dental mission and the gratefulness of the patients. She was the one who felt blessed. She was the one who received. We also have an article from Dr. Timothy Tam describing his family's call into the mission field, both in the city of Vancouver and overseas.

From our medical colleagues, we have three articles, one from Dr. Tim Tichelaar, one from Dr. Carolyn Watts, and one from Dr. Michelle Kwok. Dr. Tim Tichelaar is an ER physician who challenges us to examine how we spend our time in our overworked and overstressed culture. He has several suggestions, which are equal parts practical and spiritual. We were also blessed by the first in a three part series by Dr. Carolyn Watts based in part on the workshops she delivered at the 2019 CMDA National Conference in Vancouver. She weaves her knowledge as an ob/gyn with her own life story and how she experienced the care of Christ in the darkest times of her life. Dr. Michelle Kwok shares with us a report from her latest medical mission trip to Angola.

Thank you to all our dental and medical colleagues who contributed their personal testimonies, sharing how God has blessed them in their profession, careers and missions. We clearly see the Hand of the Master Engineer gently working out His plan and purpose for your lives as you obediently follow His calling. I pray that you have been touched in some small way by His grace as you read this issue of FOCUS, to be faithful to our Lord Jesus and to grow in His image. Jeremiah 29:11 says:

“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.”
CONTRIBUTORS

Dr. Corina Gottschling & Dr. David Stevenson have practiced dentistry in Kitimat, BC for over 20 years. This husband and wife team have learned much about personal growth, human resource management, and how to run a health care practice with God’s principles as its foundation. They have a passion to share what God has given to them in order to help others live and practice in an authentic way.

Dr. Michelle Kwok is a second year Internal Medicine resident at McGill University. She has been involved with medical missions previously in China, Mongolia, Angola, and Ghana, and is planning to pursue a career in global health. In her spare time she enjoys cooking and classical singing.

Miriam Park will be entering her 2nd year at the University of Toronto’s dentistry program this fall. Having completed her undergrad at the University of Western Ontario and her Masters at the University of Toronto, Miriam always knew she would go into healthcare. However, it wasn’t until she joined a medical and dental mission team to South Africa where that calling became more clear. In her spare time, she enjoys travelling, walking her dog, playing ice hockey, and playing the cello.

Dr. Timothy Tam is an expert dentist who has more than three decades of experience providing orthodontic treatment. Dr. Tam also volunteers with and co-founded the Downtown Eastside Dental Free Clinic in Vancouver, and generously gives back to the community through the Tam Foundation. In addition, he enjoys fishing and spending quality time with his wife Remy and his children Isaac, Esther, and Samuel.

Dr. Elmer Thiessen graduated from the University of Alberta’s Faculty of Dentistry in 1969. He retired after 47 years of family dental practice and has since taken on leadership roles with both CMDA Canada and ICMDA. He has been blessed to enjoy 52 years of marriage with his wife Shirley, who has been his tireless support. They have 6 children and 19 grandchildren.

Dr. Tim Tigchelaar is an ER doctor at Orillia Soldiers Memorial Hospital. He is married to doctor Sandy Tigchelaar. He has three children.

Dr. Carolyn Watts trained as an ob/gyn and worked in Afghanistan for four years before illness ended her obstetrical career and opened the opportunity for her to study theology and retrain as a writer and spiritual director. She blogs weekly at hearingtheheartbeat.com.

Dr. Cheryl Wiebe graduated from the University of Saskatchewan, Faculty of Dentistry in 2007, and obtained further training in hospital dentistry. She loves her job as a dentist and feels blessed to work with patients as a part of their health journey. Away from the office, she enjoys volunteering and spending time with her family. She and her husband can often be found on biking or splash park adventures with their son.

Dr. Gordon Wong is an oral and maxillofacial surgeon practicing in Sault Ste. Marie, ON. He has been a clinical instructor in oral surgery at the Faculty of Dentistry, University of Toronto for many years. He and his wife Melissa have 3 adult sons and are expecting their first grandson in November 2019. They both have been regular volunteers on medical/dental missions with Health Teams International (Canada) under Dr. Tom Harle. Dr. Wong plans to return to the CEML hospital in Angola in 2020 to work with Dr. Steve Foster.

Dr. Jonathan Yu is a general dentist who recently graduated from the University of Toronto. He plans to serve patients from communities of the Greater Toronto Area and Windsor, Ontario.
Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

Matthew 28:19-20
Years ago, a dentist in our building was unable to sell his practice. I intervened and bought his practice and hired an associate and later selling off the added practice to the new associate. He is an outstanding Christian dentist who has remained in our city and is a leader in our church. This dentist and his family have had a wonderful presence in our community.

A few years before I was planning to retire, another Christian dentist and colleague in our building tried to sell his practice. After a significant amount of time, I ended up purchasing his practice because he was unable to find a buyer. I then had the challenge of locating an associate to carry the workload of this additional practice. I found a new grad and hoped he would become a buyer for at least that practice or possibly that practice and mine. After 2 years, this new grad decided to leave Williams Lake and return to school to specialize.

At a CMDA Canada conference in Ontario, I approached a fellow CMDA Canada dentist about possible contacts for an associate to replace the one I was losing. He gave me the name of a young lady who was about to graduate. I contacted her and invited her to consider being my associate. She was graduating from the University of Toronto and was interested in coming to the BC lower mainland, but not up in the country. I pleaded that she come meet me and see the town and the practice. She came and checked things out. She is a fine young Christian dentist. She decided to take up my invitation to practice as my associate. It became clear that she would not consider buying a dental practice in Williams Lake. So, I had help but still no clear path to selling my practice.

I contacted a Dental Practice Broker, who was a former classmate of mine from the University of Alberta School of Dentistry. I had the practice appraised and listed for sale with this broker. My associate was willing to accommodate any transition arrangement. After nearly 2 years, while on a mission vision trip to Thailand, my broker contacted me with word of an offer to buy the entire practice. The sale worked out and I agreed to associate for the new owner for one year. I continued to work off and on for another 2 years before I retired completely from clinical practice in December 2016.

What am I doing in my retirement? That is another wonderful story!

During my time as a dental student, I became a member of CMDA Canada. I was privileged to attend monthly dinner meetings with the Edmonton Chapter. The support and encouragement from the graduates in that group was phenomenal. I realized that the ICCP, the forerunner of ICMDA, was holding a World Conference in Oslo, Norway in my graduation year - June, 1969. This coincided with personal plans to travel with my wife and a Christian medical colleague and his wife in Europe. We attended the World Conference in 1969 in Oslo. Shirley and I attended our second World Conference of ICCP in Toronto, Canada in 1972. During those conferences, I came to know that Dr. Red Warren, a Toronto dentist and member of CMDA Canada, was on the executive of the ICCP. I remember thinking how awesome an opportunity that was for him.

Over the years, Shirley and I regularly attended the annual National Conference of CMDA Canada. After one of these conferences in 2007, I was asked by Dr. Roger Gingerich, then Executive Director of CMDA Canada, if I would be willing to serve on the National Board of Directors for CMDA Canada. I became the Dental Representative on the National Board in 2008. Two years later, Dr. Gingerich approached me again and asked if I would put my name forward as a Canadian representative on the International Christian Medical Dental Association (ICMDA). At the ICMDA World Congress in Uruguay in 2010, I was chosen as an international board member of ICMDA. Then I was approached by the chairman of ICMDA to consider becoming the Chairperson for the ICMDA board of directors.

As a board member of ICMDA, I have travelled to meet face to face with other board members from around the world once a year. These meetings occurred in Manila, Philippines; Lagos, Nigeria; Seoul, South Korea; Panama City, Panama; Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; Antananarivo, Madagascar; and Hyderabad, India. As the chairman of the ICMDA board of directors, I have had occasion to travel to Dubai, UAE; St. Albans, UK; Belgrade, Serbia; Duress, Albania and Kiev, Ukraine. I am just returning from a wonderful face-to-face international board meeting and SeaChange Young Leaders training sessions in Bali, Indonesia.

The vision of ICMDA is to have ‘a Christian witness through doctors and dentists in every community in every nation’. Our mission statement is ‘Starting and strengthening Christian medical and dental movements’. What a privilege to be so very involved in a missions dimension of dentistry after retiring from clinical practice. We currently have 84 national movements in ICMDA.

We realize the privilege and blessing of being involved in this ministry. Because God has blessed us richly with good health, a great marriage, and adequate finances, I have a wonderful transition from my clinical involvement in dentistry to international ministry related to dentistry.

As I reflect on choices, circumstances and God’s many blessings, I praise God for His ongoing leading and provision. I could never have imagined so meaningful a transition from clinical dentistry to worldwide missions. Praise the LORD! 😊
Dental Missions: Following Jesus

Cheryl Wiebe

Will you come and follow me
if I but call your name?
Will you go where you don’t know
and never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown?
Will you let my name be known?
Will you let my life be grown in you
and you in me?

Hymn: The Summons by John L. Bell & Graham Maule

Early in my career, I was blessed to have the opportunity to work in a Christian led dental office and it enriched my life in so many ways. The owner of the clinic and his wife started a non-profit organization, Shine the Light Initiative, in 2010, which organized and led three mission trips per year from Winnipeg to the Dominican Republic (DR). At that time, it was a partnership between pastors and doctors in the DR, the locals in the villages that were served, and the volunteers from Canada that went on the trips. In addition to providing dental care, the group held medical clinics, led prayer groups, held life skills workshops, helped at a feeding program for children, and distributed donations brought from Canada.

I participated in my first of four trips in 2012. The length varied from 7-10 days and consisted of a variety of schedules. The volunteers would split into groups: some would help a group of local contractors build a cinder block house from the ground up, others would join in sorting and distributing donations, some would participate in community outreach, while anyone qualified or willing would join the medical and dental team at the makeshift clinics. One or two families each trip would be chosen to receive a new house either because of loss or poor living conditions in their existing house. Community outreach teams would make connections with villagers by providing education, playing with children, discussing with villagers what programs could be started to benefit the community. For example, this could include pursing making and selling, teaching gardening, etc. For the medical and dental teams sometimes we would travel clinics and sometimes we would stay all week in one village. Although travelling to a different village every day provides a larger number of people with care over a greater area, I preferred staying in one village. I found that during the week, in seeing the same people every day and meeting family members and friends, closer relationships were formed with those in the community. I value this human connection very much and believe that spiritual gift had more lasting impact than the specific dental work I performed on the patient.

A typical day in the dental clinic consisted of lots of teamwork! Everyone would help in any way they could. It was very different from a private practice setting. Instead of people working in their one role (reception, assistant, sterilization, anesthetic injections), it was a constant flow of whoever was available jumping in and performing whatever task was required to keep the patients flowing through the clinic. For example, two dentists might be assessing and treating patients, while two hygienists would be providing scaling. If one was waiting for anesthetic he or she might jump into sterilizing instruments, or helping someone hold a flashlight because their headlamp had run out of battery. One to two assistants would float around to help where they were most needed. The volume on my first trip overwhelmed me. There were often 20 to 100 people lined up waiting for assessment. Some had travelled from far away, others had been waiting since the night before. The whole tone of the day was busy, but not frantic or stressful as that pace and volume would seem back in Canada. The Dominicans taught me a lot about letting go and letting God! Unlike conditions I was familiar with, no one there was worried about deadlines (or even being on time!), they were so grateful that strangers would travel from afar to care for and connect with them. The feeling was that we would get through the amount of patients we would get through and that to practice Spanish with a local, to smile and try to connect and communicate love, were just as important as pulling a tooth or filling a cavity.

I have been keen on volunteering from an early age. After graduating from dental school I thought many times about going to volunteer overseas but kept putting it off for one reason or another. When I finally took the plunge, I had no idea that it would change me at a very deep level. Every night the whole group of volunteers would meet to debrief about the day and it was so uplifting to see people’s hearts and minds opened by this act of working together to show love and care to the villagers. Those in the group, many whom had never met before, felt close, banded together under one common goal.

Lord your summons echoes true when you but call my name. Let me turn and follow you and never be the same. In Your company I’ll go where Your love and footsteps show. Thus I’ll move and live and grow in you and you in me.

To put my faith in action by attending this trip was such a blessing and surprised me in so many ways. What I expected was that a group of people would go and provide shelter, medical and dental care, and spiritual support to those less fortunate. This was true; for example, all the positive results in one of the villages led them to change their name from Agua Negra (Black Water) to Nuevo Renacer (New Rebirth). But what astounded me was that I felt blessed, I was the one who had received! When volunteering there, I experienced such acceptance and love from the locals. They would run to give us water if we were thirsty or encourage us to take breaks or insist they carry a heavy load for us. There, I daily witnessed what it is truly like to live a life where God is first in thoughts and decisions and the peace and humility that comes from letting God lead. Matthew 5:3 says “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”. It was humbling to see that when you can’t rely on your own resources to thrive, can you trust God fully and experience certainty in all the chaos. I am ever grateful for this experience.

To find out more about this wonderful organization, visit www.shinethelight.ca.

1 The Summons, John L. Grant & Graham Maule
It’s Not About Me

MIRIAM PARK

Every year, CMDA US holds a leadership conference for dental students called Emerging Leaders in Dentistry. CMDA US pays a half of the travel expense for students to attend and then all accommodations and meals are provided for a nominal fee. Thanks to networking done by CMDA Canada staff person Jon Dykeman, we were informed dental students from Canada are welcome to attend with the same funding support CMDA US offers their own students. This year, Miriam Park, a dental student from the University of Toronto attended.

I first heard about the Emerging Leaders in Dentistry conference through an email newsletter sent by Jon Dykeman, the Associate Staff person for my school. I had attended the CMDA Canada Student Leadership Conference earlier this year, but I found I was just one of two dental students there. When I saw that this conference was specifically for dental students, I knew I wanted to come.

Although less than 30 students attended, I found that most were from dental schools in Southern USA, predominantly the University of Louisville, Dental College of GA, University of OK, and University of TX SOD. I was the only Canadian there which certainly put my team at an advantage during trivia night.

The schedule was packed with amazing speakers, who serve both as dentists and leaders in dental ministries. Hearing their stories of actively carrying out the love of Christ through dentistry was truly inspiring to me. Some of them would hold hands with patients praying for healing of their teeth, and others would start every morning through group prayer with all their employees. I have always had doubt about how God’s light could shine through me as these kinds of things are not heard of in Canadian dental offices. But I was reminded that it’s not about me. It’s never been about me.

The Lord calls us to fully surrender to Him and commit to Him. As dental students, we are uncertain about many things, but one the speakers emphasized that God’s mighty hand holds us steadfast and eventually the unknown just gets fun. Someone quoted one of my favourite hymns ‘What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear; What a privilege to carry, everything to God in prayer.’ (What a Friend We Have in Jesus, Charles Crozat Conversion & Joseph Scrivas)

What really struck me was how profound each of the speakers were in their personal walk with God. One speaker opened up her talk with a picture of a coffin. Her message was how we are not guaranteed anything. Why do we act like we’ll see our own graduation day? Teeth will rot but eternal life will not. Knowing this, she started a bible study during dental school. Many years later, a classmate told her that she had learned to understand that her most valued experiences in dental school were those bible studies. This truly inspired me to help my classmates reconcile their eternal relationships with the Father in this broken world. During the conference, we had a student who didn’t know anybody after moving to a new city for dental school. She then sent an email to her entire class announcing her faith in the Lord and invited everybody to study the word together at lunch — amazingly, 10 people showed up.

Along the same lines, I asked myself what is my purpose after dental school? There was a speaker who decided after graduation to go on...
mission trips around the world and to commit to God every penny he had left. He came home years later with less than $30 in his bank account. Most students, including myself, are eager to pay off our debts and make a salary. However, he chose the narrow gate that involved sacrifices like financial burdens and starting a family at a later age amongst many other things. When asked during the panel how he felt during those times, all he said was he found true delight and joy in the Lord. That night, I fell on my knees praying for God to show me why I exist. As I prayed, God showed me that I exist to get to know him and I do want to know him. As I learn to chase after the most important things in life, the world seems so insignificant compared to his holiness in my life.

We were shown an illustration and asked, what do you see? For a long time, I couldn’t see anything – it just look like black splotches on the page – but eventually I saw Jesus. The idea being that from this point on, once you see Jesus, that’s the only thing you can see. Having trust and obedience in the Lord transformed this speaker’s life of despair into a multitude of blessings. His son became part of the music group known as Lady Antebellum and he wrote a book about teeth bleaching and it would become the first and only book of its kind available in North Korea. Being half North Korean myself, I really felt a special connection with him for this.

I learned so much perspective about my wrongdoings and values after spending just a weekend in the presence of God and with people who have such a fire for Him. His conference changed my life. I felt incredibly blessed and encouraged to lead a life as a health professional with an emphasis on Christian values. For the first time ever, I truly saw Christian dentists as physicians that bring healing, hope, and restoration to people through physical and spiritual health. As Ephesians 2:10 says, ‘For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.’ I am not sure what the future holds, but just being called to do dental ministries is truly a privilege and brings me so much joy and contentment. I will finish with a popular saying I learned from these Southerners, which are to be ‘His hands and feet.’ This image of Jesus hovering over His humble servant at work will stay with me forever.
Being A Witness for Christ in Practice and Mission
GORDON WONG

DENTISTRY, NOT MEDICINE

While studying for my Master’s degree in Pharmacology, my supervisor approached me at one of our bi-weekly meetings and asked, “Gordon, what are your future plans?” I replied that I would like to continue on for my PhD. He immediately replied, “There are no positions for PhDs, but I looked at your marks and they’re not good enough for Medicine. I think you should consider Dentistry.” Frankly, I had never even considered applying for Dentistry until he had put the thought in my mind. A very high score in manual dexterity on the Dental Aptitude Test seemed to reaffirm this. On applying to Dental School, I received an interview and was accepted. It was in my 3rd year that I had a conversion experience and accepted the Lord Jesus into my heart. The Master Engineer had already been engineering circumstances in my life even before I knew Him, and that would eventually lead to a personal relationship with Him.

ALWAYS BE PREPARED

After completing dental school at the University of Toronto in 1981, I was accepted into a dental internship at the Hospital for Sick Children. While there, we were given a half day off each week for independent study. During one of my free afternoons, I had a chance meeting with one of my oral surgery instructors. On inquiring what I was up to, he suggested using my time to visit his hospital, which was a small community hospital called Doctors Hospital on Brunswick Avenue. While there, I met the oral surgery residents and was able to observe oral and maxillofacial surgery being performed first hand. I also met Dr. Weinberg, who was a professor at the dental school. One afternoon, as I was changing in the locker room to leave, Dr. Weinberg was having a smoke by the open window (in those days smoking was allowed in hospitals) and he asked me, “Gordie, what are you planning to do?” I told him I was planning to get a job eventually. He said, “If you go out there, you’re not coming back in here. So if you plan to apply for surgery, do it now.” It had never occurred to me to apply for surgery. So I decided to discuss the matter with the chairman of the department, Dr. Symington. After two failed attempts to get an interview with him, he finally allowed me two minutes of his time. He told me outright, “Dr. Wong, if you’re not in the top 5% of your class, don’t even bother applying.” Well, I was not in the top 5% of my class, but I applied anyway and was granted an interview. 11 candidates were being interviewed for 2 positions. Because of my last name, I was interviewed at the end of the day. I could see that the interview committee was tired. After the usual questions, “Why do you want to study surgery? etc.”, there was a lull and I thought that the interview was over. However, Dr. Symington was seated to my left side and, staring at me, he said, “Wait a minute, Dr. Wong! I haven’t asked my question. You are at the pearly gates of heaven. What are you going to say to St. Peter, to let you into heaven?” I had only been a Christian for under two years, but the question did not rattle me. I believe the Holy Spirit gave me the words to speak. I said, “I can answer that question in a secular way or a religious way.” I was then told, “Alright, start with the secular way.” So I described all that I had seen at Doctors Hospital and that I would bring these new surgical procedures to serve my community. Another lull and I thought the interview was over. Then I was told, “Wait a minute, Dr. Wong! I want to hear the religious way.” I proceeded to give my testimony just as I had learned at Campus Crusade for Christ: “I have just come into my faith and I have asked the Lord Jesus to come into my heart. I am going to follow His will for my life. I’m going to tell that to St. Peter and he is going to let me into heaven!” I was given 1 of those 2 positions to study surgery. 1 Peter 3:15 says, “but in your hearts honour Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.”

DON’T GIVE UP! DON’T GIVE UP!

As the surgical residency neared its end in 1985, the Lord led me to go to Sault Ste. Marie since this community of 81,000 had never had an oral surgeon. I took a week off from the residency at the end of June to look for a new practice site and a home to bring my young family. I drove up to the Sault with my wife’s uncle, a Hungarian architect. We found the city was booming and the main industry, Algoma Steel, was running at maximum capacity, employing 13,000 men. There were no vacancies to lease. I hired a realtor, and along with one of the dental representatives, we scoured the town and looked everywhere without success. On Friday of that week, we went back to the hotel room at about 4:00pm empty-handed, knowing that we had to return to Toronto the next day. I had not done my devotional that day, and decided that I would read that day’s devotional from Oswald
Chambers' book, *My Utmost for His Highest*. As I read through the devotional and came to the ending, I distinctly remember reading the words, “Don't give up! Don't give up!” This must have been a clear word from the Lord speaking to me, because to this day, whenever I return to Oswald Chambers' book, I cannot find those words in any of the days of the month of June.

At about 4:10pm, the realtor called me, saying that he was not able to find anything else and could not help me anymore. I said to him, “You see the space on Queen Street that was asking Toronto rates to lease, I want you to bypass the property management and speak directly to the landlord. You know who he is?” He called back 5 minutes later, and said that the landlord is offering me $3 per square foot less that what was initially asked. I offered $4 per square foot less, but he would not budge and so the agreement on the practice site was settled. Little did I know that my new landlord would turned out to be a fine Christian man and I would stay with him for 26 years. At every 5 year renewal, we would go out for lunch and fellowship in the Lord and then settle the new rates in the last 5 minutes of our talk.

At about 4:30pm, I received a call in the hotel room from a professor at the local university. I had spoken to him earlier in the week when I heard that he was going on sabbatical for a year and was looking to rent his home. However, when I called him, he had already rented his home to someone else. He said to me, “Gordon, we did a credit check on our renters and it was not favourable. Would you be still interested in coming over to see our home?” We drove over to a little bungalow, and his wife answered the door. It turned out that his wife was Hungarian and my wife’s uncle, who was also Hungarian, were so thrilled to get to know each other. The little bungalow was just what we needed and the rental agreement was settled.

In the last hour of the week, the practice site and a home to live were both provided. The Lord showed his faithfulness to His call to Sault Ste. Marie. I drove back to Toronto on Saturday morning praising God the whole way. Isaiah 40:31 says, “but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up on wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.”

**PERFECT IN CHRIST JESUS**

The daily clinical practice of oral and maxillofacial surgery brings you into contact with many different people of varied temperaments, and sometimes many difficult interpersonal situations. The Fruit of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control – is the character of Jesus expressed to other people. Our inner purity is given to us by God through His sovereign grace. However, this can be tarnished when we come in contact with other people and with other points of view. I have found that a practical way of keeping personal purity as described by Oswald Chambers (*My Utmost for His Highest*, March 26, p. 86), is to say to myself: That patient, that man, that woman, perfect in Christ Jesus! That friend, that relative, perfect in Christ Jesus! We now begin to see our patients, friends and family as God would see them.

If we react to our patients’ demands, the old sinful nature has its way again and fellowship is broken. However, if we respond to our patients’ demands, the Holy Spirit within us responds and the character of Jesus is expressed. The daily, commonplace things of clinical dental practice can be dull and boring drudgery unless the Lord touches it. Then the work always becomes transfigured and holy. Drudgery is one of the finest measures of character there is.

**DENTAL MISSIONS**

My wife and I have participated on dental teams to China, Africa, the Caribbean, Central and South America. We have found the following to be true: The key to the missionary is the authority of Jesus Christ, not the needs of men; “All authority in heaven and in earth has been given to me.” (Matt 28:18) The key to the missionary message is the propitiation of Jesus Christ for our sins: “He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but for the sins of the whole world.” (1 Jn 2:2) The key to the Master’s orders is prayer: “Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into His harvest.” (Matt 9:38) The key to the missionary devotion is our absolute attachment to Our Lord Jesus Christ: “For they have gone out for the sake of the name.” (3 Jn 7). The method of missions is that the missionary remains faithful to the call of God, with one purpose to disciple men and women to Jesus: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.” (Matt 28:19)

The challenge of the missionary is to maintain a personal relationship to Jesus. When the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in a person’s heart, the evidence of spiritual life is spiritual appetite. When we have spiritual appetite, we look for spiritual food. Our spiritual appetite can only be satisfied when we feed our minds and nourish our souls with the daily reading of the Word of God. The daily immersion in Holy Scripture is the spiritual discipline for building truth into my life.

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**Milestones**

This April, we welcomed **Alan Chettle** to our CMDA Canada team as our new Associate Staff at the University of Alberta. Alan works for InterVarsity Christian Fellowship of Canada as a campus minister at the University of Alberta. His ministry focus is working with graduate students and faculty, which feels like a natural fit with CMDA. He is passionate about helping the people he ministers to understand the richness and beauty of the Kingdom of God, because as you start to plumb the depths of Jesus’ understanding of the Kingdom, you see the hope it holds isn’t a future reality, but a present transformation, even in the midst of oppressive empire. One of the passages that influences Alan’s ministry philosophy is the Parable of the Strongman in Mark 3:27, both because the enemy has been bound and because Jesus invites us to follow Him as He rescues souls who are held captive. As we raid the places the enemy has falsely claimed, we get to proclaim, like Jesus, that the Kingdom of God has drawn near, so repent and believe in the good news.

Before working for IVCF Canada, Alan did his undergrad and Masters at McMaster University, studying Mechanical Engineering, and pursued a Ph.D at the University of Manchester, studying High-speed Aerospace Engineering. Some of the ways Alan relaxes include blacksmithing, horseback riding, playing board games, and various sporting activities.
CMDA Toronto Dental Christian Fellowship

JONATHAN DYKEMAN

"Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:4b-8)

I recently had the privilege of preaching on Acts 1:4-8 & 2:1-21. The tendency for a quasi-Pentecostal like myself is to focus on the supernatural experience of the disciples in receiving the Holy Spirit but I felt God was calling us to focus more on Jesus’ instructions to wait. No one likes waiting for things, but time and time again in Scripture and in the Church, waiting seems to be the precursor to the move of the Holy Spirit. Waiting creates expectation - expectation for God to do something. When I think of Toronto dental student ministries, I often remember how we experienced waiting before the move of the Holy Spirit.

A year into my role as Associate Staff at the University of Toronto things were clipping along fairly well. Three dedicated medical student leaders were at our main campus and another leader at our distributed site in Mississauga. We gathered at each location for weekly Bible study and had occasional events through the year.

At our CMDA Toronto board meetings, I was sometimes asked if I was able to connect with dental students. I didn’t have anything to report on but it was not for lack of interest or effort. I remember I met with Dr. Paul Zung, who had met several upper year Christian dental students through their clinical rotations. I recall him speaking of a dental student whom one of our medical students knew. Things progressed and one of our med student leaders organized a potluck with this dental student. Several dental students came. It was great to see the the fellowship. I remember asking this dental student who had a friendship with our med student leader if there was interest in having a weekly fellowship; there was some interest but, again, nothing materialized.

The following year, I met another student named Tony. We connected on a couple of occasions and had some good conversations. We chatted about the possibility of getting a fellowship going among dental students. He was also interested but nothing materialized.

If you are reading this and happen to be a Torontonian, you may know the Faculty of Dentistry building is about a block down the street from the University of Toronto campus and the Medical Sciences Building (MSB). Our medical student Bible studies take place in the MSB. It’s not a long distance but far enough to make it difficult for dental students to go within their short lunch break. However there was one lunchtime in September when two first year dental students made the trek up University Avenue for Bible study. It was great to have them… unfortunately, I didn’t get a chance to chat with them after the Bible study as they had to dash off to class.

Several prayerful weeks went by. One day, I thought, "I’m just going to go down to the Dentistry Building and see what happens, perhaps I will see someone I know or I will have a conversation with a student." With feelings of trepidation, doubt, hope and expectation, I went. I remember walking into a lobby feeling, "what the heck am I doing?" Awkwardly, I sat in one of the chairs in the lobby, pretending I had something to do there; praying that I might see a student I knew. I kept repeating the thought "What am I doing? Why are you here, Jon?" All the while, trusting God would use my efforts for his purpose. Then I saw Tony!

He saw me and asked what I was doing there. I replied, somewhat awkwardly, that I had come down to see if I could see some students. We chatted some more and off he went and off I went, feeling jubilant something happened!

Perhaps a week later, I was walking through MSB and in a flash, I saw one of the two dental students who came to our Bible study weeks ago. I made eye contact with this student and said a brief hello as we continued to walk our separate ways. I felt compelled to follow-up with this guy. I was able to get his name, Jonathan, and look him up on Facebook. I sent him a message in November asking if he would be interested in meeting for coffee. Christmas came and went... it was mid-January and we finally connected. We met for coffee, got to know each other and I asked if he would be interested in having a regular gathering for dental students. He knew other Christians and was open to this idea! I finally struck gold thanks be God.

Jonathan and three other students including a student named Marshall, who also came to the medical Bible study months before, and I met for coffee on a February afternoon in a nearby coffee shop. There have been only a few times in my life when I’ve had a profound sense of peace. The meeting with the students was one of those times. There was an openness to want to get to know each other and an openness to having regular meetings. It felt like this was something God wanted to do all along and I was simply coming alongside Him. These students were already meeting from time to time for prayer! It was such a great affirmation that I was where God wanted me to be.

Shortly thereafter, we started our fellowship meetings. I was now extremely busy running around with med and now dental meetings each once per week and working as the part-time Youth Pastor at my church. Fatigue was setting in, yet it felt as though God’s grace was sustaining me. I struggle to describe it but it was as if there was a sweet fragrance of the Holy Spirit.
Glory To God as a Dental Student

JONATHAN YU

As I look back at my four years as a dental student, I can confidently see God's grace at work. My perception of dentistry has changed completely from day one to convocation in June. Little over four years ago, I received my acceptance letter into the program at the University of Toronto. Soon, thoughts began filling my mind: being in a position of power and influence, job security, respect from society, and the fancy toys one can buy and enjoy. All of these are not inherently immoral, but they do reveal the desires of our hearts and can blind us from enjoying the true giver of all things (cf. Matt 15:19). God quickly steered me back to the calling that we have with any vocation, according to 1 Corinthians 10:31: "to do it all for God's glory." Whether you own a busy dental practice or are learning how to restore a cavity for the first time, the calling is to reflect our great God to others.

This is not an exhaustive list but some principles to glorify God during your days in dental school.

KNOW YOUR GOD THROUGH HIS WORD

Dental students often find themselves competing for time to live fruitful lives in school. We want to do well academically and create meaningful friendships with our peers and those outside of school. We tend to find ourselves either invested in knowing our trade well or spending time with friends. We study for a procedure for many hours and days in order to effectively treat a patient and achieve the best clinical outcome. Similarly, living this high calling requires investing time in knowing our God personally through knowing His written word (cf. 1 John 1-4). We must read His word in order to decipher whether our actions and motives align with His desires. Reading the Bible may seem like a burden on top of our other responsibilities but the writers emphasize its importance as a tool to renew our minds (cf. Rom 12:1-2), find delight (cf. Ps 1:2) and to lift us up (cf. Ps 19:7). Everyday we are swimming against worldly currents polluted with our selfish desires and the brokenness of others. This spiritual exercise does not guarantee worldly blessings or great academic success, but reaps the best gift of knowing our God and how to live for Him.

THANK GOD FOR HIS GRACE

Dental school is a whole new challenge. Unlike the five to six classes taken in an undergraduate semester or the flexible schedule in research, dental school demands every ounce of your energy and attention. A typical day begins very early in the morning, followed by classes and clinics and ends with reviewing for the upcoming exam or procedure for your patient. Dental school may not always be smooth sailing. For instance, patients may not appreciate your work and miss your appointments, or instructors may not be attentive to your learning experience. More often than not, you will be running low on energy compounded with frustration. How does one praise God in “every circumstance” (cf. 1 Thes 5:18) when adversity floods into our lives? Remember the God of your past and present. It is not a coincidence that you have been academically successful from a young age until now. God has graciously gifted you a seat in the program and the perseverance to undergo trials. David wrote in Psalm 118:24: “This is the day the LORD has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it.” Despite the hardships both Paul and David experienced, they confidently gave thanks because God was with them. That same God is also with us. Instead of being cynical about our situation, let’s praise God for giving us another day to live as His child to reflect His glory to our peers and instructors. Whether you are cleaning a patient’s mouth or performing a difficult procedure for the first time, praise God for His presence and that you are making a positive impact for your patients. God’s grace enables us to acknowledge our limitations and humbly rely on Him to get through the day.

JOURNEY IN COMMUNITY

Even though the mouth is a small part of the body, the intricate details from the basic sciences to the logistics of operating a clinic constitute dentistry as a field of its own. When the majority of a dental’s student life is spent either studying or seeing patients, tunnel vision may set in and you may forget that there are believers on this journey with you. In Romans 1:12, Paul and the Christians in Rome mutually encouraged each other's faith. It was a reciprocal relationship where both Paul and the other Christians gave and received. Similarly, as Christian dental students, we are meant to walk through life and training together. We are faced with many worldly temptations such as comparing our clinical progress with that of our peers, envying others’ blessings such as having good instructors or clinical cases, or succumbing to anger when situations do not play into our favour. By God’s grace, He provides other brothers and sisters in Christ within dentistry so that we might carry each other’s burdens (cf. Gal 6:2). In my own life, fellow believers and I have met up to study the Word together and prayed for each other. We celebrated when blessings arrived and encouraged one another during adversity. It is much easier to rejoice and fight temptation together as a whole. God receives the glory when you help others and when you humbly accept their help and care. If your dental school does not have a fellowship, find community at your local church or university group. This journey was not meant to be walked alone.
Life sometimes puts us in places we don’t want to be. We choose the profession of medicine because we want to help our patients live as fully as they can. Yet, we then find that laws and society have taken the practice of medicine into what sometimes seems a headlong rush into death rather than life. Likewise, the long work hours and overwhelming needs are accompanied by a weariness that makes us wonder how long we can go on.

For me, that “place I didn’t want to be” has looked like believing I was going to join a team working in a little village in Afghanistan, only to find that I sometimes was the only doctor there to serve 150,000 people. She might try to rework this opening phrase. It has looked like becoming increasingly tired and sick while being left with an excruciating decision: come home from Afghanistan, leaving the small village without a doctor, or pressing on at the cost of my own health. It has also looked like finding myself with a severe recurrence of a chronic illness that left me unable to get out of bed. My illness would ultimately force me to return from Afghanistan and end my medical career only five years after completing my obstetrical residency. Unexpectedly, it has also looked like PTSD, anxiety, and depression—which nobody wants, but which is the reality for too many of us.

When we find ourselves in a place we don’t want to be, how do we let it press us deeper into God? The answer to that question is a little different for every person, because God relates to each of us in a slightly different way, honoring the way he has made us. It’s all grace, and a lot of it is a mystery as we open our hurting hearts to God and he takes the lead in the process.

In my life, God’s gentle creativity meant that just as I was giving up my license to practice medicine, I began to experience the birth drama from a different and larger perspective. Until then, I had been preoccupied with performing my role as the obstetrician in the drama that I never dreamed it might not be my only, or even primary, role. Slowly I began to see that God’s love is so big and his desire to draw us into Himself is so great that no single metaphor is sufficient to communicate that love. God circles and doubles back, revealing himself in Scripture in all the different roles in the obstetrical drama: as mother, father, husband, doctor or midwife, even baby whom we, along with Mary, are graced to carry. Since God’s roles as father and husband are more commonly discussed, here we’ll focus on the other three.

**CARRIED**

When I lost my health and my medical career, I was no longer the doctor, the one supposedly in control, caring for others. I couldn’t even see myself as the mother, laboring hard, participating in the bringing of new life into the world. Suddenly, I was the baby, unable to cook for myself, wash my own clothes, or even sit up for long.

Though I was very familiar with the way Scripture refers to God as both father and husband, I hadn’t thought much about God as mother. That seemed a bit too strange and new age for me. I didn’t even see myself as the mother, laboring hard, participating in the bringing of new life into the world. Suddenly, I was the baby, unable to cook for myself, wash my own clothes, or even sit up for long.

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"The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And He is not served by human hands as if He needed anything, because He himself gives all people life and breath and everything else." (Acts 17:24-25)

The startling reality is that, unlike the pagan gods who depend on human service, our God serves us!

In his driven state, I needed this corrective and I keep needing it. Some months after I had this dream, my mom sent me six hundred pages of emails that I had sent home from Afghanistan. It was a huge treasure trove containing my story from Afghanistan, the following years, and how God met me in it all. I didn’t anticipate, though, the effect that reading those emails would have on me. I began reliving being attacked by a gang of wild dogs at midnight and feeling a mother of six stop breathing and grow cold under my hands during surgery. For the first time, I felt how traumatic my time in Afghanistan had been and my mind and body reacted in ways I couldn’t control. I couldn’t write. I couldn’t make decisions. I was edgy and irritable all the time and seemed to have no control over these debilitating moments. I didn’t feel safe, the world didn’t feel safe and I soon while I began trauma therapy. During those harrowing periods, this picture of being carried was where I retreated and found some rest. All the shattering that was happening in my mind and body was happening while I was safely in the womb of God. Even when I couldn’t hold it together and feel unsafe I was safe, carried in the womb of God, in a love that would never reject me or forsake me.

When we talk about inviting Jesus into our hearts, it’s easy for us to “shrink” him, to think of Him in ways that make Him seem smaller than He is. It’s true that we are the temple of the Holy Spirit; God does live in us and we live in him. Yet, our carrying Jesus within us happens within the larger context of God carrying us. That never changes. God promises in Isaiah, “Listen to me […] you whom I have upheld since you were conceived and have carried since your birth. Even to your old age and grey hairs, I will carry you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you.” (Isa 46:3-4) This is the truth of being God’s creatures: we will always be carried.

FILLED

We are small and dependent, safely carried and nurtured like a baby in the womb, yet we are also pictured as carrying Christ within us. We get to participate in God’s work in the world.

Mary lived this mystery in the most tangible way, but the mystery doesn’t end with Mary. We too are not only carried in God throughout our whole lives, but we are also grasped to carry God’s life in ourselves. The same Greek verb used to address Mary (Luke 1:28) means “to highly favor,” and is used just one other place in the New Testament, this time referring to us: “His glorious grace, with which He has highly favored us.” (Eph 1:6). And Luke, who begins his first book with the promise spoken to Mary: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.” (Lk 1:35) — begins Acts with a very similar promise given to us: “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, power to bear the life of God into the world. (Acts 1:8) And so, the apostle Paul speaks of Christ dwelling in the hearts of believers through faith (Eph 3:17) and uses explicitly obstetrical terminology when he speaks of Christ “being formed” in those to whom he is writing. (Gal 4:19)

In this sense, we not only assume the role of child, utterly dependent on God for our survival, we are also given the massive honor of carrying God’s life in us and bearing Him into the world. As much as the two seem like a paradox, they do fit together. As Jesus says in John 15, we are completely dependent and impotent on our own: “Without me you can do nothing.” Yet we are also promised, “If you remain in me, and I in you, you will bear much fruit.” We can’t bear God’s life into the world on our own any more than a virgin can bear a child without God’s supernatural intervention, but we have the promise that as we make our home in God’s love, His life will thrive in us. This picture comforts me in those frequent times when I’m aware of my smallness, limitations, and inability on my own to make a difference in the world: My job is to stay close to Jesus — to return again and again to His love, and to trust that as I make my home there, Jesus’ life will grow and flourish in me.

TENDED

In Galatians 4:19, the apostle Paul paints a picture in which all Christian believers (women and men!) are pregnant women and Christ is the baby growing inside of us. It’s an incredible privilege to carry Jesus within us. But I also know from my experience as an obstetrician walking with women through their pregnancies, that as much as they might want and love the child being formed within them, pregnancy can be frightening. Spiritual pregnancy — Christ being formed in me — has at times felt scary and out of my control too, particularly knowing that this One being formed in me isn’t afraid of calling me to come and die on my way into new life. Here I find comfort in another obstetrical image from the Psalms.

When the Psalmist’s life is threatened by enemies, he prays, “It was you who took me from my mother’s womb.” (Ps 71:6) The Hebrew text reads, “It was you who cut me from my mother’s womb,” picturing God cutting the psalmist’s umbilical cord at his birth. And when David’s sense of being abandoned by God was accompanied by physical illness, exhaustion and desertion by friends, he finds hope in the reminder that the same God who was present at his physical birth, guarding his life, still tends him: “Yet it was you who took me from the womb. You kept me safe on my mother’s breast.” (Ps 22:9)

It is quite possible that Jesus himself turned to the image of God as birth attendant for comfort. From the cross, His raw back rubbing rough wood with each word, Jesus cries the first words of Psalm 22, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” As a boy growing up in the Jewish faith, He would have memorized large portions of Scripture, and in His agony, this entire psalm may well have become His prayer. While every part of him burned — His pierced hands and feet, His dislocated joints — Jesus, along with the psalmist, may have cried that His heart had melted within Him. (v. 14) He was being torn apart, as though by “roaring lions that tear their prey.” (v. 13) For help in the tearing, burning intensity of His labor, He may have found comfort in this reminder: “Yet it was you who took me from the womb; you kept me safe on my mother’s breast. On you I was cast from my birth, and since my mother bore me you have been my God.” (v. 9-10) “In you our ancestors trusted . . . and you delivered them.” (v. 4) Into the skilled and gentle hands that had delivered Him and thousands before Him, He could commit His body and spirit.

CONCLUSION

When we find ourselves in places we don’t want to be, we can find comfort in remembering God’s strong and multifaceted love. We are safely carried, filled with God’s life, and wisely and gently tended by the One who knows how to bring to birth what is ours to share with the world.
The 2019 CMDA National Conference in Vancouver was another excellent display of CMDA Canada’s core values of faith in practice. We were engaged by powerfully moving plenaries from Dr. Sarah Williams and had the opportunity to enjoy an extensive list of excellent workshops.

We had record breaking attendance based on recent years, including record numbers of students and residents in attendance. We also had eight of our Associate Staff from coast to coast join us. They joined all of the plenary session and also had their own programming stream led by our Associate Staff Networker, Jon Dykeman.

We are grateful to the local planning committee for their dedication and hard work in producing a memorable and uplifting event.
Henry Elmer Thiessen was born in 1946 and has been married to his incredible wife Shirley Anne Thiessen. Together, they share 6 children and 19 grandchildren. He graduated from the University of Alberta in 1969 and began his practice in family dentistry later that year. He practiced for 47 years in Williams Lake, BC.

Elmer has been involved in CMDA Canada since his time as dental student and he officially joined in 1971, giving him the distinction of being in the earliest ranks of our membership. Elmer and Shirley have always made a point of trying to attend the annual CMDA Canada National Conference, as well as the World Congress of the ICMDA.

Elmer has been a member of our CMDA Canada National Board of Directors since 2008 in various capacities, including as Dental Representative, Vice President, President, and now ICMDA Representative. This last role, he takes on as part of his duties with the ICMDA, where he has served on the International Board of Directors since 2010. In 2016, Elmer was named the Chairperson of the ICMDA International Board of Directors and remains in that post.

Shirley has been a constant support through their entire marriage. She worked to help Elmer establish his practice, provided a healthy exciting home to raise their six children, and joins him more often than not while he attends the conferences and meetings required by his role on both the CMDA Canada and ICMDA boards. Shirley has attended all of the International meetings for ICMDA since Elmer’s first in person board meeting in 2011. Her tireless generosity and quick mind make her the perfect partner in the mission Christ has set before the Thiessens. The Thiessens are powerful examples of servant leadership, inspiring the next generation of young dentists to trust with boldness in the Lord’s will.
Distinguished Christian Service Award 2019
TIMOTHY TAM & REMEDIOS FU

Timothy Tam was born in Nanking, China. He was the eldest of 5 siblings. His father was an ordained Minister of the Presbyterian Church in China and his mother was a social worker and a teacher from Shangton, China. The family moved to Indonesia when the communists took over China and his father took a call to be a pastor among the Chinese speaking population in Jakarta, where he would also go on to start a Christian school.

As a dental student, Tim was most influenced by a dentist friend who invited him to various CMDA functions and activities. He later became a student member of CMDA US and joined CMDA Canada after it was founded. He met his wife Dr. Remy Fu, who was a resident in Pediatrics at Thomas Jefferson hospital in Philadelphia. They met at a Philadelphia inner city mission outreach on Sundays, where they provided care for new refugees, the medically handicapped, and the visually impaired.

Tim has a passion for ministry to medical and dental students, as well as residents. He constantly finds opportunities to reach out to them with the Gospel of Christ. He has served for many years as a mentor to dental students at UBC. He also formed a dental study club under the CMDA banner not only to impart his expertise in dentistry but, more importantly, to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ to his fellow dentists.

Tim and Remy live in Vancouver and they have 3 adult children: Esther, an endodontist, married to Kenny Feng; and Isaac and Samuel, who have dual specialties in pediatric dentistry and orthodontics. They also have two adorable grandchildren, Zachary and Sophia Feng.

Both Tim and Remy are elders of the Chinese Presbyterian Church in Vancouver. It is their hope to jump start a Mandarin worship community in Vancouver under the Presbyterian denomination.

They have both joined multiple short term medical dental mission teams with CMDA Canada and EMAS to Tijuana, Mexico, China, Vietnam, Myanmar, Indonesia, as well as in downtown Eastside Vancouver.

Most recently, they set up the Tam Foundation as a non-profit entity to provide dental anesthetic services to needy children in the province.
I first came to Angola in 2009 as an undergraduate student with a medical team and it changed the trajectory of my career. Ten years later, I am returning as a first year Internal Medicine resident. Though I came alone this time, I was quickly put to work aiding SIM missionaries who have dedicated their lives to the welfare of the Angolan people.

MEDICAL WORK

My medical base was CEML hospital (www.ceml.net). This is a mission hospital founded by Canadian surgeon Dr Stephen Foster (SIM), who bravely came to Angola during the civil war and has remained since. Together with Angolan medical intern Preciosa Bento, we saw patients for pre-natal and medicine consults. We often made educated guesses based on limited information, as patient histories were incomplete and investigations were expensive or unavailable. I slowly learned to adapt my prescribing to the local context. During these consults, Preciosa was an invaluable cultural and linguistic interpreter.

Did you know Angola has many Chinese? I tested my own linguistic ability when a unilingual Mandarin-speaking construction worker presented with what turned out to be malaria.

On my last day at CEML, we celebrated by donating blood to a brain tumour patient from Cavango who was having surgery. Thanks to God and the skillful hands of the surgery team, the patient recovered and began walking.

NUTRITION PILOT PROJECT “OPAPA YHYNYS NOKUKULISA”

“Opapa Yhynysa Nokukulisa” translates from the local language as “porridge that will make you healthy and fat.” Malnutrition in Angolan children is common and multifactorial. One of the main causes is lack of education. Often mothers will wean children with a diluted maize porridge, resulting in gross nutritional deficiencies, stunted growth, poor mental development, and increased susceptibility to infections.

Although high-calorie supplements are in the market, they are foreign-made and expensive. Our team formulated a recipe using local ingredients that could be easily made by the women. The star ingredient is a root called muçua (baobab), which is high in Vitamin C and trace minerals which is added to the porridge.

After testing the recipe with local women, we filmed an instructional video at Centro Médico Rio da Huíla (Tchambangala) to teach women both how to make the porridge as well as the importance of feeding children properly.1

UKÃI PROJECT

I had the opportunity to participate in Ukãi, a social media project formed by Angolan youth to address issues faced by local women. Drawing on my privileged experiences as a Chinese-Canadian and a doctor, my video encouraged young women to develop their personal attributes first instead of succumbing to societal expectation to marry early and have children.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Brazilian SIM missionaries Dr. Haniel and Dr Ana Eller led many community medical outreaches where I participated along with Preciosa and visiting Brazilian medical students. Some places were tours only (Ana Paula – hospital for malnourished children, Hospital Pediátrico Pioneiro Zeca) and in other places we provided free medical care.

FISTULA FOUNDATION

Many women we encountered do not receive any pre-natal care. In addition, they may become pregnant young when their hips have not fully developed in order to accommodate the passage of the baby through the birth canal. Consequently, the babies can get stuck for days and eventually be born dead. The mother can then develop a fistula with leakage of urine or faeces into the vagina which they experience as extremely shameful. At CEML, the medical staff provide free surgeries and care during the long recovery process. The nurses train the women with new skills, such as producing jewellery bags that can be sold. They are also given free housing during their stay and a monetary allowance. 1

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1 https://vimeo.com/331492359
In the province of British Columbia, there are significant disparities in oral health care. The low income, working poor, and socially disadvantaged groups, including new refugees from the developing world have an increasingly high level of dental problems. This includes rampant caries and baby bottle syndrome. The main reason for these phenomena are mainly linked to inequalities in access to oral health care. There are other barriers such as financial constraints and lack of insurance benefits for minimum wage earners, hence we continue to observe the deep and persistent poverty in addition to social ills such as the rise of homelessness and drug addiction, which contribute to poor oral care.

The British Columbia dental care benefit system is extremely limited when it comes to coverage for the low income demographic. The coverage barely offsets the cost of running a health care facility without compromising quality and standard of care as a dental practitioner, particularly when it comes to anesthetic services in dental care. Our charitable non-for-profit Broadway Anesthetic Center is a response to the need to improve access to anesthetic services in dental care to needy children in our community. Currently, there is a long waiting list for access to anesthetic services in dental care for children under the age of 4 at the BC Children’s Hospital. Healthy children over the age of 4 are not eligible for anesthetic services. They have to go elsewhere for dental restorations.

Broadway Anesthesia is a non-profit society and its local mission is to serve the public in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ through providing dental services under general anesthesia for those children who need such service regardless of their background, race, culture, or financial status in British Columbia. Our values are to serve others by giving back to the community as a witness of God’s love. This is funded by the Tam Foundation, a charitable organization accredited by the College of Dental Surgeons of BC and Canada Revenue Agency. We believe that by God’s sovereignty and His wonderful grace and mercy, we can fulfill the mandate of loving God and caring for humanity as we commanded to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind, and to love others as ourselves. We believe we are co-creators of God’s work on this side of heaven.

We also observed that dental care is one of the greatest unmet needs of the poor not only in cities right at home, but also all around the world. While even the poor have access to cell phones and the internet as tools of communications due to 5G initiatives and competitions, dental care is comparatively treated as a low priority and underrepresented in healthcare mission work. We felt called to respond to the unfulfilled need and the calls for aid from the developing world, and have taken the opportunity to engage in dental missions in Indonesia, Myanmar, Vietnam, and most recently Bali, Indonesia in June/July 2019 with EMAS and CMDA teams from Hong Kong, Toronto and Vancouver. Our team included medical practitioners, dentists, a nurse, a pharmacist, and students.

We need your prayer support as we recognize that we are all engaging in a spiritual battle day and night. Please pray for protection against demonic influences, safety of travel and health hazards. Most important of all, please pray for the awareness of God’s presence among us and boldness to share God’s message of love: the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
We live in a society that is overworked and over stressed. We have a thousand important things to do and not enough time to do them. We are up to our ears in commitments. It feels that there is just not enough time in the day to get everything done. We measure time, give excuses that we don't have enough time, give people our time, give up and give away our time. It is as if time is a commodity for our use. We spend our time on the things that we love. It is not time that needs to be managed so much as our purposes, goals and plans. We need to refocus on our first Love. We need a heart transplant to reclaim time.

I am an ER doctor. I work about 12 shifts per month and do hospitalist medicine about one month in 4. My wife Sandy is a busy family physician and works in the office about 3 days per week. We have 3 children. The oldest at the University of Western Ontario studying urban development. Our middle daughter is 17 and planning her future in nursing. Our son is 15 and is in grade 9. Our children, by the grace of God, love the Lord. We attend a community church where we are becoming active participants in the community, mission, and work of the church. We have nurtured a very small, but supportive group of friends to encourage us in life and our work. We are filled with a sense of awe, gratitude and expectation that our time on earth will be blessed by the Lord as we seek to use time faithfully.

You have heard the colloquial statements: You are what you love. Show me your calendar and your wallet and I will tell you what you love. Whether it is opening the newspaper, flipping through social media accounts, or the amount of time wasted avoiding tasks that are drudgery, the way that we spend our time reflects our values and priorities. Popular culture has provided innumerable solutions to these distractions and competing priorities. We are bombarded with ways to save, prioritize and optimize our time. We are encouraged to nurture habits, behaviors, postures, and attitudes that optimize our time and performance. An approach that looks at life this way is helpful, but it is like looking through a telescope backwards. It doesn’t help to see more clearly.

The Bible talks about time in both a temporal sense as well as an eternal sense. In Psalm 90:10 the Psalmist notes: “The length of our days is seventy years or eighty, if we have the strength; [...] for they quickly pass, and we fly away.” The author of Ecclesiastes 3 also reminds us that our time is limited. “Man’s fate is like that of the animals [...] as one dies, so dies the other.” (v19) The Bible contrasts the time and seasons of man with the timelessness and eternal purposes of God. The start of the sacred revelation in Genesis 1 starts with “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”. The Bible starts with the eternal presence of God, hovering over the waters. God was present before the beginning of time. His existence is eternal and from His will, His intention and from His word, life springs forth life. “And God said Let there be light and there was light [...] and there was evening and morning on the first day.” (Gen 1:3) The starting point of time begins with God by His word. John in his gospel John 1:1-3 reemphasizes this point “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the word was God. He was with God in the beginning.” John goes further than this by emphasizing that Jesus was with God in the beginning, He is the incarnation and embodied revelation of God. “In Him was life and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.” (Jn 1: 3-5) The Psalmist reaffirms God’s eternal presence. “Lord you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations. Before the mountains were born you brought forth the earth and the world, from ever lasting to everlasting you are God.” (Ps 90:1-2) In contrast to man who lives life with the pressures and limits of time, God is timeless and forever. That is a hard mystery to fathom. Not only is God the starting point of time to “Him a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years are like a day.” (2 Pet 3:8) Verse 9 speaks of the patience of God not wanting anyone to perish, but all to come to repentance. Philippians 2:12-13 continues this idea that we are to work out our salvation with “fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to fulfill his good purpose.”

What I have attempted to show is that time is created by God, through God and for His purposes. The purpose of time and the purpose of our time is to do the things that God does. We can see those things by God’s works and the things Jesus does. I hope now to review practical advice on reclaiming, restoring, and redeeming time.

NURTURE YOUR FIRST LOVE

Teacher what must I do to get eternal life? [...] There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, obey the commandments [...] All these I have kept [...] what do I still lack? [...] Jesus answered sell your possessions and give to the poor. [...] Then come, follow me. When the young man heard this, he went away sad because he had great wealth. (Matt 19: 17-22)

The rich young ruler asked Jesus the way to life. He was committed to following the letter of the law to the period. His problem wasn’t outward obedience, as he claimed to follow the law since birth, but in loving something more than God. Jesus asks him to give up the one thing that he truly loves. The same theme underscores the narrative of Abraham when God asks him for a sacrifice of his beloved son Isaac. I know that I have many things competing for my time and attention. I have many other loves, priorities and idols. When I think about the things that compete with God for the top spot: my wife, my kids, my career and reputation, they are all good things. They are not first things. God wants to be the Lord and King of my life! He wants to be my first thing, the thing that I think about in the morning, the last thing in my night and a constant presence on my lips and heart.

RECLAIM YOUR EMPLOYMENT

Work at times can be drudgery. We can conceive of work as being an obligation. It can be a life stealer, a time robber a sleep killer. A huge Christian tradition has conceived of work very differently. What if work is “a calling”? If we conceive of work as a mission, the place where the Lord has placed you to reclaim and restore. If we see our patients and staff as fellow journeymen in this mission, we can reignite a sacred calling.

It is one of the places, as in all our life, that God calls us to be healers and restorers. Where God calls us to be healers and restorers. It is one of the places, as in all our life, that God calls us to do the work of the Kingdom. Although I have not seen the miracles of Matthew 11: 5 “The blind receive sight, the lame walk [...] and the good news is preached to the poor,” I pray regularly that God would work through me. Time is reclaimed because work is a sacred calling.
SEE THE SACRED IN THE SECULAR

I have recently cared for a patient I’ll call K. K is a drug addicted patient who I see regularly in the ER department with overdoses. She has been labeled with the usual labels that say she is unhelpable. Staff almost always moan when she arrives. She is almost always discharged. I felt helpless to help her, but I was a man of faith and although I couldn’t promise her much, I could pray for her if she wished. I was surprised when she agreed for me to pray for her. I prayed for the spirit of God to rest on her, to heal her of sickness, to give her His heart. I asked for the Lord’s blessing on her. While she still comes in regularly, her heart toward her changed. I now see her differently. I love her and care for her as a child of the King. I found out later that she is a hard-working employee at a local Christian mission and she is reluctantly seeking Christian counselling. Unfortunately, she is far from well, but the Lord has His hand on her with Christian influence. Learn to see the streams of the Lord’s work in everything. Look to become His hands and His feet, particularly for those who are “unhelpable”.

LEARN TO SAY NO

When Sandy and I started work, we were very intentional to start in the way we hoped to finish. We limited work. Many people are confused when they talk to me about busyness. They assume that I must be an overworked, stressed ER doctor. When I tell them that I work 12 shifts per month, they are then surprised to learn that my shifts are not 12 hours long, but 9 hours. We say no to a lot of good things. Work is wonderful, more work is an obligation. We often do things out of a sense of obligation. It’s an entirely different motivation to do something out of love. Try doing something your partner appreciates because you love them and out of love. One of my favorite passages on the Bible is from Matthew 5. Jesus starts many of His statements: “You have heard that it was said,” referring to the Old Testament Law. He then finishes “But I tell you...” Jesus does something brilliant and life-transforming as He moves us from the Law, our obligation to what the true intention of the law entails — living out of a new heart. Our commitments are important, they can hold you when times are tough, but living out of our hearts is better.

PRACTICE SABBATH REST AND ENGAGE IN CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

Part of the creation narrative is the creational imperative to rest. After completing the creation and calling it good, the Lord rested. The command to set aside a day to rest is commanded in Exodus 34:21: “Six days you shall labor, but on the seventh you shall rest [...] you must rest.” The idea of rest is captured in the idea of peace or Shalom. It is the idea that the world is as God intended and we can rest regardless of the circumstances. Jesus says in John 14:27: “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.” The work of Christ on the cross has reconciled us to God, it has redeemed and restored us from our sin and provides for us peace with God. It also provides inner peace, a peace that can be found nowhere else.

HONOUR YOUR OBLIGATIONS, BUT LIVE FROM YOUR HEART

We often live life out of a sense of duty. “I should do this or I ought to do that.” I was recounting to a friend how I had done dishes one day. Participation with family chores is important to the family function, it is important to my wife and helps with the endless tasks she assumes. I was proud that I had stepped up to help. My friend responded with encouragement, and a challenge: “That’s great, but now you have to do the dishes out of love.” We often do things out of a sense of obligation. It’s an entirely different motivation to do something out of love. Try doing something your partner appreciates because you love them and out of love. One of my favorite passages on the Bible is from Matthew 5. Jesus starts many of His statements: “You have heard that it was said,” referring to the Old Testament Law. He then finishes “But I tell you...” Jesus does something brilliant and life-transforming as He moves us from the Law, our obligation to what the true intention of the law entails — living out of a new heart. Our commitments are important, they can hold you when times are tough, but living out of our hearts is better.

We do not need to be victims of time. Time was created by God for His purposes. He has given us rhythms and patterns, skills and responsibilities to restore and redeem time for His glory. We need to reclaim our purposes, goals and plans for His purposes. We need to refocus on our first love. The result is peace, the sense and place that we are where we should be.

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper and not to harm you to give you a future.” (Jer 29:11) Tellingly, a few versions prior to this, the Lord encourages the Israelites to settle, build houses, plant gardens, to seek the peace and prosperity of the city. The Lord encourages people to pray for the city to prosper, because if it prospers, the people will prosper. The city is the city of Babylon, a corrupt city, a nation that had captured the Israelites and put them in captivity. God knows our plans, He has a purpose for our life, regardless of the circumstances. He wants us to use our time to seek the peace of the places where we currently live and reclaim them by building beautiful things: houses, gardens, medical programs, families and church initiatives. His promise is peace and a knowledge that the Lord’s plans are being accomplished through us. He further promises Jeremiah 29:13 that if we seek Him with all our heart, God will be found.

There are many pressures we face with time constraints, time limits and time deadlines. Taking an inventory of the way we spend our time and a critical review of our first loves will show us whether the Lord is in the rightful place. The dishes still need to be done; the garage still needs yearly cleaning. Putting right our loves, seeing the sacred movements of God through the daily grind, learning to say no, reclaiming our employment, living from our heart, and participating community are practical ways to maintain hearts, practices and patterns that reclaim time. 

other believers and where we feel refreshed to go into the world. Christ loves the church, with all it’s faults. It is to be a visible representation of Himself. A mystery. Join a church and become part of the community. Life is not meant to be lived alone, but with others by your side.

Sometimes I ask myself; “What are your goals and plans for the Lord’s purposes?” We need to reclaim our purposes, goals and plans for His purposes. We need to refocus on our first love. The result is peace, the sense and place that we are where we should be.
Living Wisely in Our Busy World

CORINA GOTTSCHLING & DAVID STEVENSON

Be very careful, then, how you live - not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the LORD's will is. (Eph 5:15-17)

All day, every day we are making decisions - the sum total of these decisions is what we call “life”. Many times stress, fatigue, and even hunger can cause us to make decisions that steer us away from the big picture things we say we want for our lives; or worse yet, from God’s unfailing plans for us. During times of physical and mental challenge, our values and the things that are beneficial – for us and those we care about – can be sidelined. Being an academically bright person does not preclude any of us from making unwise decisions, or getting bogged down in the mire of having to make complex decisions that affect many other people.

VALUES

Time and time again, we find ourselves in conversations with physicians and dentists regarding challenges in daily practice and overall direction. Often frustrations stem from hopes and dreams that seem unclear, stalled or blocked. We find that these conversations often touch on values and how they shape the decisions we make; what we say 'yes' and 'no' to.

Values describe who we are and what we stand for. They back us up, they help guide every decision we make and define purpose — our WHY. Values determine how we “show up”, communicate, practice and lead.

Whether we can articulate our values or not, if we dig deep enough, all of us will have a practically unchangeable – programmed-in, core set of values. We often don’t realize what drives us, or makes us feel uneasy, until we do some reflective work on this subject. Discovering and clarifying what our values are can help us to understand why we are passionate about some topics, activities, causes, etc. and disinterested in others.

Clarity of our values is most urgent when we face times of great uncertainty in our lives. For example, the clinic you are working in was just sold; the hospital has a new administrator or there is a new ‘boss’; or graduation day just happened and you don’t know what to do next. When standing at these crossroads, we can feel fearful, frustrated, lost or alone.

Doing a personal values exercise to discover and clarify your top 5 values is a foundational step to building a meaningful life that will honour God and who He has made you to be. Understanding your values is an easy thing to overlook but ultimately those who can clearly define their values will have a firm grip on the rudder of their lives; rather than being tossed around by life’s competing messages and the opinions of others. Values discovery unlocks clarity regarding the specific tasks, relationships and activities that bring the most fulfillment to our lives.

There are many values assessments available online, but better still, if you have a mentor or coach, they will often be able to provide or at least point you toward a resource that will be very helpful in nailing down this aspect of your uniqueness. This will then provide you with a solid building block to lay on the foundation of your life.

QUESTIONS OF LIFE

Without consideration of individual values, it is difficult to paint a picture of what it might look like for God’s love to take shape in and through our lives. Career and family can often feel like “too much” when we face the big, loaded, important questions of life, and we are often tempted to get bogged down in ‘paralysis by analysis’ and make no decision at all. This of course can have disastrous results, as we are leaving the future direction of our lives to chance and the actions and decisions of others.

A number of years ago, we came across a video series based on a book called The Best Question Ever written by Andy Stanley, a pastor from Georgia, USA. In it, Andy shares that after studying Ephesians 5:15, he discovered what he considers to be The Best Question Ever. He lays out the practical process of making wise decisions based on asking a simple question: “What is the wise thing for me to do, in light of my past experiences, my present circumstances, and my future hopes and dreams?”

So many of the situations we face in our clinics and homes can feel very complex and overwhelming. Looking at our challenges through the lens of this simple question can often help us to unpack the complexities.

What sort of wisdom can be gleaned by looking at our past experiences? We all have experiences that have brought great joy and meaning to our lives. In contrast, we all have regrets about missteps or missed opportunities. In retrospect, many of these regrettable occasions result from unclear motives and/or negative behaviors that conflict with our values. One of the steps of gaining wisdom from our experiences is to reflect on the past and look for clues as to why certain experiences stand out as positive or negative.

Likewise, taking a step back and surveying our present circumstances can help us see some things we might be missing — things that might be orienting us toward one course of action or another.

In regards to the future, of course there is only One who knows what will come next, but take time to pray that He will lay on you heart the things that will lead you forward to His wonderful, perfect plans for you.

ESSENCE AND FORM

No discussion about making life's decisions is complete without talking about ‘essence and form’. Years ago, a dear friend of ours, Laura Lavigne, shared this concept with us and it has proven useful over and over again.

We have seen that it is woven into decision making and brings our values, wisdom, past experiences and beliefs into play.

So what do we mean by ESSENCE and why is it important? Essence is the reason behind anything we have done, or want to do, or want to attain. Not usually the off-the-cuff reason we might provide to an acquaintance, or even justify to ourselves with; it’s the driving force, the impulse that flows from what we really value, the deep desire of our heart if you will. Often we might not even realize the essence of something we are proposing until we dig deep and ask ourselves: “why does this really
Before providing an example of ESSENCE, let’s talk about FORM. Form is pretty simple; it’s a thing or action that we believe will complete the need expressed by the essence we have buried deep in our heart. It’s the solution to the problem we face, or the missing piece we believe we need.

If you have followed the above, you might be starting to realize that much of the advertising we are exposed to on a daily basis stems from this balance of essence and form. However, the advertiser is the one who wants to provide you with both essence and form. You are shown someone who’s very hungry and then quickly shown a picture of a juicy mouth-watering Big Mac with those golden arches hovering above it. Then you see the satisfied customer, happy and full. You have just been exposed to essence and form in their basic forms — the essence of hunger and the form of a burger. Of course, if you are hungry at the time, you now have a target in the form of a Big Mac. If you’re hungry later on and just happen to be driving by those golden arches, the likelihood of you pulling in is now higher.

This all seems so simple until we start to dig a little deeper and realize that perhaps millions or even billions of customers could have had their essence of hunger fulfilled by a salad with some grilled fish with half the calories and a fraction of the heart stopping fat, salt and other chemicals.

What about the stereotypical mid-life crisis? A man in his mid-fifties goes out and spends a hefty sum on a sports car and tanning sessions. The essence behind these behaviours is often that he wants to reclaim his youth and feel significant. The form of the sports car and olive skin may satisfy this essence momentarily, but there are many other ways this man could feel vital and important to others. If he took the time to understand what was driving his desire for the car and the tan, he could likely come up with some much more meaningful, longer lasting, (and even less expensive) options.

What about the two Dentists that meet at a conference and realize they both share the goal of being a co-owner of a patient-centered, Christian principled practice in the same town? This shared FORM seems very exciting and they could start to hurriedly make plans to join forces and open a dream practice together. Without digging a little deeper and uncovering their ESSENCE for doing what they are hoping to do, they won’t realize that the first dentist wants to have a practice that is big and busy and able to generate ample income to support her large extended family; whereas the second dentist wants to have a small practice that operates only 6 months of the year and all of the profits go to support her other passion — an orphanage in Rwanda. Although the FORM of co-owning a practice with another Christian Dentist is a match, each one’s ESSENCE is quite different. Understanding this from the outset will allow these two to design a very different working relationship.

Disappointment, frustration and stress usually results when we have similar forms and differing essences and assume the other person shares our essence without taking the time to clarify. Most of us can quickly think of a time when our expectations were not met and we realize we should have asked some more questions up front. Conversely, if we share an essence with another person but disagree on the form that should be taken, it’s time for some negotiation to find a form that both can agree on.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

When we are facing decisions and crossroads in our personal and professional lives, in addition to prayer, it is very valuable and biblical to dig in deep to understand the values, essences, and various forms that are available to us. Do not attempt this after a week of on-call nights, or during times of great stress or burnout. Determine how significant the decision is and then set aside the appropriate time to partner with God to discern the answers to the best question ever – an abundant life depends on it.
The Last Word

LARRY WORTHEN
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Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. (Heb. 12:1)

Dentists have made a wonderful contribution to CMDS Canada over the years. A few names come immediately to mind – Red Warren and Paul Zung from Toronto, ON, Robert Clark from Bolton, ON, Gerd Gottschling from Kitimat BC and Bob Patton from Vancouver, BC. There are of course many others. For example, two dentists and their wives were recognized at this year’s conference banquet in Vancouver: Elmer and Shirley Thiessen from William’s Lake and Tim and Remy Tam from Vancouver for their leadership in the organization, in the community and literally around the world. As an organization we are proud of what the Lord has achieved through all of their efforts.

Dentists are an essential component of the health care system. My own dentist, Dr. Chris Petropolis of Dartmouth, has really impressed me with his sincerity and concern for my dental health. When he discusses treatment options for my less healthy teeth, I feel like he is right there with me in all of the decisions we make. One gets the impression that the welfare of my teeth are as important to him as his own or his families. That kind of dedication is rare in the world today and is an important component of what it means to be a professional and not just a technician. He truly cares and this concern for patients is reflected in the approval ratings he gets from his patients. I know that he attends the Greek Orthodox Church. I will have to ask him how his faith affects the way he handles his patient interactions.

The challenges of modern dentistry can be daunting. Poor outcomes can seriously affect the patient’s quality of life, self-image, and their overall physical health. Because the government does not underwrite the costs of most dental care, patients can suffer simply because they cannot afford proper care. The most common model of providing dental care requires the practitioner to assume large financial and professional commitments to assume a practice and complex managerial responsibilities which they may or may not have the skills to master — at least starting out. Then there is the whole area of administration — keeping track of patient files and managing the many financial transactions that make up a successful private practice. These challenges can seem overwhelming at first and every new practitioner needs support and mentorship to avoid the pitfalls that will inevitably arise. Yet God continues to call Christians to dental practice to shine His light into the lives of people He brings to them for His care. It is a noble vocation. After all, challenges can be good, especially when they teach us humility and lead us to the arms of Christ for inspiration and strength.

Two of our brightest young dentists – Corina Gottschling and David Stevenson, also of Kitimat, BC have felt a call to assist other doctors and dentists who are starting out deal with some of the more challenging practice issues. Their attitude is that they want to share what the Lord has taught them in their years of practice through their successes and failures so that others may benefit from their experience. Sometimes all we need is to be able to talk over our situation with someone else who has gone through it to discern the Lord’s particular calling in our circumstances. These challenges can come at end of practice too. My wife, Dr. Linda Gagnon recently retired from family practice and the challenges she faced were significant. It was largely uncharted territory in that she did not get much helpful advice from a number of organizations she called. She did a very thorough job though and I am very proud of the way she met the ongoing needs of her patients to access their charts. By the way, the offer is open from Dave and Corina if you need someone to talk over difficult practice issues at any stage of your career. Just call the National Office and we will put you in touch with them. Let’s keep all of you in our prayers who are dealing with these difficult issues. And please remember to have reasonable expectations of your selves – just because you mastered dental or medical school does not immediately make you an expert bookkeeper, human resource consultant or marketer. This all takes time, a good team and a lot of grace! Corina is an example of a “second generation” CMDS Canada dentist who is making a difference in our organization. Corina has served on our Board of Directors for a number of years now. It was nice to see her and her husband joined by Gerd Gottschling, her dad, at our national conference in Vancouver in May.

... We want to evolve as an organization that better meets the needs of our members. The "charitable objects" of CMDS Canada can be summed up in three words: witness, serve and grow. To witness to Christ to our colleagues and our patients, serve the poor at home and in developing countries, and grow in our love and knowledge of Jesus Christ. You know how we have done this historically – through retreats and conferences, Focus, advocacy for conscience rights, Chapter development, missions work and student programs at 14 different campuses across Canada. What is the Lord calling us to now? The Board of Directors has called for a year of discernment – of prayer and listening to the Lord to ask him to reveal to us his plan for our organization.

To do that we need your help. Please pray for CMDS Canada that we will be able to discern the Lord’s will amid the noise and clatter of today’s modern world. And please complete the member’s survey at www.surveymonkey.com/r/SPFOCUS. There may be some inspiration you have about our future direction that is from the Lord that you need to share. Or you might be aware of some brilliant innovation that is thriving in some distant part of the country (or the world for that matter) that we need to hear about. We are one body after all. We assume that the Lord spreads His inspiration evenly throughout the CMDS Canada family. We want to hear from you.
CMDA Canada’s Board of Directors has called for a year of discernment – of prayer and listening to the Lord to ask him to reveal to us his plan for our organization. The first stage of this strategic planning process is to take a survey of our membership to understand where you feel the Lord is moving us. Please take our online member survey at www.surveymonkey.com/r/SPFOCUS or by scanning the QR code below with an app that reads QR codes.

Take the Online Member Survey Today

CMcDA
WITNESS • SERVE • GROW
STRATEGIC PLANNING 2020
Un Avenir Plein d’Espérance
Hope for the Future

Ésaïe/Isaiah 30:15

May 28-31, 2020
Château Vaudreuil Hôtel & Suites, Vaudreuil-Dorion, QC