

President's Address: Lessons and Life in the Wilderness



My garden is often my inspiration for these addresses in the Three-In-One magazine, and this addition is no different. I'm writing this in that glorious sunny spell in March/April, when the garden suddenly bursts forth with shoots and flowers, signalling the change of the seasons.

I am reminded too that our own lives have seasons and undergo change.

- You may be in the Spring of relative youth, just embarking on the early years of your dental career, excited but also at times daunted by the responsibility of your role.
- You may be in that Summer time of life when perhaps your family grows just at the same time as your career develops or becomes more demanding, where you find yourself juggling both and dropping balls!
- Perhaps you are in the later stage of your career, where you are comfortable in who you are and what you can do, seeing and enjoying the fruits of your hard work and labour – the Autumn season of life.

- Then around the time of retirement, our Winter season, we perhaps reduce or drop our clinical work, dropping our leaves, only to find that we are that “sandwich generation”, when we are caring for elderly, ailing parents or providing childcare or support to our adult children and grandchildren, or perhaps all three at the same time. Here once again, we can find ourselves feeling like we ought to be able to put all things right and fix things, only to find that the rule book has been rewritten and we don't have the latest edition on our bookshelf.

And yet, for each of these seasons there is knowledge and wisdom, comfort and guidance to be found, if we know where to look: the living word of God, through prayer or in prayer with others, helped by the loving kindness and compassion of others who have already walked the same path.

Even within each of these seasons of life, there may be a micro-climate, our very own climate change/crisis or spiritual season:

- Times of drought, dryness and wilderness, of temptation and isolation.
- Perhaps a deluge or storm of external forces we cannot stem or control, swept or blown along by a current or wind.
- The heat can at times leave us feeling burnt or singed, exhausted and lacking in energy, and making us fearful.
- The cold can make us retreat into ourselves, to the familiarity of our own comfort zone, isolated from others and God.

Chances are that we will all experience something of the above at some time in our lives, so how do we navigate our way through it, from the wilderness back to Eden?

There are many stories in the Bible where people found themselves in the wilderness. These times in the wilderness were also a time of:

- Testing: of depending on God for our needs – the manna and the quails, fresh every morning, just sufficient for the day, just like mercy and grace.
- Learning: of revelation and direction – for Moses and the burning bush.
- Encountering God: in the isolation, for restoration - the still small voice of God for Elijah, now available to us as our wonderful counsellor.

It is still Lent as I write this and so let me focus on Jesus' time in the wilderness. Firstly, Jesus entered the wilderness after his baptism, not, as a consequence, for something he had done wrong. We read in Matthew 3:17: And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well

continued overleaf...

pleased.' Yet it was still necessary and formative for Jesus to go into the wilderness, and in his low times I am sure he drew on those words for comfort and reassurance.

What testing and learning did Jesus undergo?

- "Man shall not live on bread alone" (Matthew 4:4). Don't define success or orient your life around material gain; instead feed on the word of God.
- "Do not put the Lord your God to the test" (Matthew 4:7), for he has demonstrated his love for us, all the way to the cross.
- "Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only" (Matthew 4:10). This is the first commandment and sets the conditions and prerequisite for us to follow the rest.

Why does God put us in the wilderness?

- It can be a humbling and testing time for us.
- Here, God may withhold that which we have come to depend on instead of

Him - perhaps our own strength and stamina.

- This is a place of preparation, not permanence; a place of listening, reflection and even repentance.
- For development and preparation for what is ahead.

How do we find our way out of the wilderness?

- We are to trust God in all circumstances, for he works all things to the good of those who love him, according to his good purposes.
- Turn away from our silence, ourselves and those things we rely on and instead turn to God in prayer for our spiritual nourishment.
- We enter the Lord's gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise, so let us be thankful in, and even for, the wilderness.

However, God doesn't want to leave us in the wilderness, alone and distant from Him and others. We read in Isaiah 51:3: "For the Lord comforts Zion; he

comforts all her waste places and makes her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song."

And in Psalm 139: 7-10: "Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast."

The seasons of the year, the seasons of our lives, and the seasons in our spiritual walk, are not permanent. Some seasons are cyclical, others are linear. All bring new challenges and opportunities. Acknowledge whatever season you are in, listen and learn from God in the waiting, blooming where you are planted, even in that dry and rocky place.

Karen Paterson
CDF President

CDF prayer, pastoral and peer support teams are available if anyone wants to chat. You can email the prayer team confidentially at prayer@cdf-uk.org or contact the pastoral support team in confidence at pastoralcare@cdf.uk.org. If you would like peer support, please email peersupport@cdf-uk.org and indicate the area in which you would like support or have a question.

Please be aware that CDF does not offer a professional counselling service or mentoring scheme, but we are happy to informally listen, chat and, if you wish, pray with you or for you, and signpost you where appropriate to professional services.

Snapshots



A feature looking at the difference Jesus makes to our work in dentistry. CDF member Heather Blair kindly agreed to be

interviewed for this edition.

What stage are you at in your studies? I am currently in my second year studying as a Dental Therapist at Glasgow Caledonian University. Although a student at "Cali", I spend most of my academic week at the Glasgow Dental Hospital as well as placement at local

outreach centres and hospital departments.

What does your desk window look out on? My window looks out onto a busy main street in Glasgow called Sauchiehall Street. This is in stark contrast to my "study" window at home which faces the beautiful River Clyde and I often see the Waverly Paddle Steamer passing by.

What are some of the things you enjoy about your studies and what are some of the challenges? I love the hands-on practical dentistry, especially now that my year has moved on from phantom head training to "real" patients. I enjoy the interaction with the patients and the nurses. I just need to be careful not to chat too much! As with any university

course the studies and exams are always a stressful and anxious time, that is when I hold onto Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

How does your Christian faith impact your studies day-to-day? I try to live out my Christian life on a day-to-day basis remembering the phrase, "what would Jesus do?" He is my comforter, counsellor, guide and Saviour at all times.

Do you have a particular bible verse or song that God has been using to speak to you recently? Our family scripture verse is Jeremiah 29:11 but I also love verse 12, as it says, "then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will

listen to you". What a comfort to have a loving heavenly Father whose phone is never engaged. My current go-to Christian song is "Holy Forever" by Chris Tomlin.



Scan to hear 'Holy Forever'

How can we pray for you and others in your particular areas of dentistry? Please pray for other students of my age to come along and attend the Glasgow branch of the CDF. More young fellowship would be very encouraging. Please pray for my studies and exams. I managed to go to Uganda on mission last summer with Mission International and would love to get future opportunities once qualified. Thank you.

CDF Scotland Day Conference



The Scottish CDF Conference was held on Saturday, 8th March at the Madoch Centre, St Madoes, which is just outside of Perth. It is a church/community centre with wonderful facilities, including an auditorium, café area, and even soft play.

There were 50 delegates attending from as far afield as Aberdeen and Cumbria, including several families, dental students, therapy students, young dentists, not-so-young dentists, and retired dentists - an age spread of over 70 years! It was a time of renewing old acquaintances and making new ones.

The speaker for the day was Rev. Ian Birch, the Principal of the Scottish Baptist College. He encouraged us from Hebrews 4 and 11. It was a very timely message focused on rest. In the morning, he started in Hebrews 4 by reminding us how great and gracious God is - how He is a faithful God worthy of praise. He is the Creator God who created rest. Ian highlighted that work isn't everything. God Himself should be our focus and the goal of our lives. We should rest in God, taking time in His presence and obeying His commands. In the afternoon, Ian encouraged us to flourish in faith from Hebrews 11. If we are safe and secure in God, then we should be

living a godly life, visible to all those around us. Things won't always be easy or straightforward, but we need to live for Him, taking the opportunities given to witness to others.

As well as the talks, there was space for group discussions and prayer together, as well as uplifting praise times led by the group from Dundee. There was plenty of time to chat over coffee and mealtimes, getting to know one another better.

There were reports from the CDF groups which meet in Dundee and Glasgow Dental Schools, along with numerous mission reports, including Debbie Hardyman (Madagascar), Simon Stretton-Downes (Liberia), Chris Southwick (Burundi), Hope Centre (Glasgow), Island Reach (YWAM Mercy Ship, Madagascar), and a report from Heather Blair and her trip to Uganda.

In all, it was a very encouraging day when many friendships were made and renewed, contacts were made, and many were uplifted. The day finished with 25 staying on at the end to share a fellowship meal. We look forward to the conference again next year and hope that more will join us.

Mark Taylor

South Wales Regional Group Gathering



"Living for Jesus in the Workplace: A Calling Beyond Cavities"

The South Wales CDF group met at the home of Brian and Ann Ritter in Lisvane, North Cardiff, for a curry and rice lunch on Saturday, 15th February. Nineteen people attended to hear CDF Connect worker, Lynne Smith, present "Living for Jesus in the Workplace: A Calling Beyond Cavities."

CDF President Karen Paterson travelled to join us on the direct train from Nottingham to Cardiff. An answer to prayer—the train was on time! Lynne, her husband Keith, and their daughter Isla then collected Karen from Cardiff Central Station. This was really appreciated.

People's satnavs were challenged to get us all seated at 1 pm-ish in the home, for a time of fellowship and a great lunch, provided by Ann and her team. After some lovely desserts and hot drinks, we moved to the lounge to hear a message from Matthew 5:13-16 about being salt and light in our workplace.

Lynne gave a short reflection on the application of these verses in our daily lives. This encouraged others to explain how living for Jesus prompted them to have a transformed view of the working day. Lynne then got everyone involved by leading a discussion on the three questions she introduced at the start:

1. How did you choose a dental career - was it a vocation or just work?
2. How do you witness to Christ in the surgery?
3. How do you keep your focus on faith in the 9-to-5 day?

Lynne and Karen both shared their own paths into dentistry, which led to others sharing their stories. Karen then highlighted the advantages of being a CDF member and, along with Margaret Reynolds, offered support to younger members and guests.

A very worthwhile gathering was enjoyed by all.

Geoff Roberts

Our Trip to Liberia – 24th to 31st January



With Simon and Grace (second from left), Tony and Ann and their grandsons

Since joining CDF UK, Prince and I have often viewed the pictures and videos shared by Simon and Grace Stretton-Downes from Trinity Dental Clinic (TDC) in ELWA, Monrovia. The time finally came for us to visit this facility in person. The primary purpose of our trip to Liberia was to stand alongside our missionary friends and witness first-hand the incredible work that Simon and Grace have done to establish and grow both Trinity Dental Clinic and the Liberia Dental Therapy School (LDTs). While Simon and Renju treat patients and train the therapy students, Grace contributes by teaching anatomy, and Serin provides orthodontic care.

A highlight of the trip was learning that senior CDF members and experienced African missionaries, Tony Giles and his wife Ann, along with their grandchildren Jacob and Caleb, would also be travelling to Liberia and Guinea at the same time for their annual dental mission trip. Tony and Ann have visited TDC at ELWA Mission Hospital in Monrovia and Hope Clinic in Guinea for several years to offer dental care.

Upon arriving at ELWA hospital, the reality of entering a secure, guarded facility hit

us. We were warmly welcomed at Oceans Guesthouse by Simon, Grace, Renju, Serin, and their children, Nathaniel and Jonathan. The hot sun and the sweat running down my face were a stark but appreciated contrast to the freezing January weather back in the UK.

Grace graciously gave us a comprehensive tour of the ELWA hospital, chapel, TDC and the container classrooms where LDTs lectures and training take place. We had the pleasure of meeting the current group of graduated therapists, some of whom now work at TDC, as well as Simon's new students. Renju's students happened to be on a week's break.



from l-r: Nathaniel, Renju, Jonathan, Serin, Ann, Tony, Julie and Prince

Our mornings were spent at TDC, where Tony attended to patients scheduled for possible surgery in Guinea. Patients of all ages, suffering from severe facial swellings and dental conditions rarely seen outside textbooks, came for treatment. Many of these cases had worsened due to long-term neglect and



limited access to dental care in remote areas. Witnessing the struggles of these patients made me reflect on how fortunate we are to have accessible healthcare in the UK - something often taken for granted.

Despite facing poverty and financial challenges, the local people radiated simplicity and warmth, always ready with

a smile and a greeting. Traditional beliefs and the need to provide for their families and educate their children often took precedence over dental care. Our missionary friends shared numerous stories of how God had provided for them at just the right time.

What began as a simple mission trip turned into an eye-opening experience, revealing God's hand at work through the dedication of these missionaries - a true gift from God, reminding us to recognize and appreciate His grace and mercy each day. After a week at ELWA, we left feeling blessed and humbled, reminded of the hymn: Count your blessings, name them one by one, and the Bible verse: "In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

Julie John



Rugarama Hospital Uganda: Glory Tumwebaze Update



I am delighted to bring you this update from Uganda. CDF has previously supported Glory by covering her fees for the first semester at Makerere University, Kampala. She has now completed her degree course and graduated with a BSc in Dental Laboratory Technology - the only female student in a class of 11 - all while welcoming her third child in Kabale last August (2024).

Glory now plans to equip the dental laboratory at Rugarama Hospital to provide dentures and crowns for her patients, eliminating the need to send impressions by bus to a lab in Kampala, which can take several days. We have connected her with Den-Tech, a dental laboratory equipment charity recommended by Dentaaid.

We were invited to attend the graduation ceremony on 14th January 2025 at Makerere University and seriously considered travelling to Uganda for the event. It was an exciting week for the family, as Baby Barton Matzika was baptized on Sunday, 19th January at St. Peter's Cathedral, Kabale. We were disappointed to miss the celebrations.

Our prayers are with Glory, Ambrose, and their young family as they continue their dental work at Rugarama Hospital and Kabale Hospital. Baby Barton has now been enrolled at the Rugarama nursery, while Glory works in the dental department and newly equipped dental laboratory.

Chris Barton

New CDF Conference Venue for 2025 and 2026



Having recently returned from a site visit to Highgate House, I'm excited to offer this as our conference venue for the next two years (at least). Highgate is centrally located in Northamptonshire, not too far from Hothorpe, and is just the right size for us to have exclusive use. This provides us with a safe space for families, as there will only be us and Christian Conference Trust staff on site. There is a children's indoor play area, gym, sufficient outside space to kick a football, as well as nice seating areas, fantastic dining space, great meeting rooms - all surrounded by lovely countryside.

In addition, Highgate House has some beautiful smaller historic meeting rooms, which provide us with huge flexibility for our programme, as well as offering lots of space to chat with new and established friends or curl up with a book.

As well as the usual packed programme of mission partner updates, our AGM, worship, and opportunities for various forums, we have two great speakers lined up for 2025. Peter Dunn, European Director of Biglife, will speak to us about *"Who, what, and how being a disciple of Jesus looks like in today's world."* Professor John Gibson will present both our clinical lecture and our guest charity talk.

John will speak from personal experience on the difficult topic of suicide. The clinical lecture will focus on how we could possibly save a life in our professional and personal lives. In sharing about the work of the Canmore Trust, John will explore the questions

we face as Christians on the subject of mental ill health and suicidal thinking, and how this can impact our faith and church life, as he explains the work of the charity he and his wife set up following the loss of their son Cameron in 2019.

It's a sad fact that suicide is now the leading cause of death in men under 50 years old in the UK, but it is still quite often a taboo subject, with little or no teaching on it. That is why the trustees are confident that we have the prayer and caring capacity among us all at the conference to learn more together about how to help and better understand those we care for. Both speakers promise to provide lots of food for thought.

Please see the flyer enclosed with the Three-in-One for further details - and book early to avoid disappointment! Rates have been kept as low as possible and, for 2025, are all subsidised to some extent. If you are able to contribute to either general conference expenses or the bursary fund, please consider doing so. There are also a few stunning premium rooms available with amazing views for a supplement!

In addition, please do contact me if finances are tight and this is a factor in being able to join us - that's what the bursary fund is there for, and I'm always pleased to see what I can do to help.

I look forward to welcoming you to Highgate House on 17th October 2025. (Also, remember to save the date for 2026: 9-11th October!)

Victoria Graham

Conference Secretary
confsec@cdf-uk.org



For online booking, scan this QR code or go to www.cdf-uk.org/events

My Dental Elective Journey: Faith, Service and Growth

As a dental student, I was blessed with an incredible opportunity this summer to experience dentistry in two very different settings: Roxas City, Philippines, and Harare, Zimbabwe. This journey was made possible by the generous support of the Christian Dental Fellowship (CDF). As a Christian, my faith has always been the cornerstone of my life and work. This elective was not just about refining my clinical skills but also about witnessing God's glory and serving others through my vocation. I would like to share the experiences, challenges, and profound lessons I learned during this time.

Part One: Roxas City, Philippines

Arrival and First Impressions

My journey began in Roxas City, known as the seafood capital of the Philippines. I travelled with seven classmates under the guidance of Electives Asia, led by April Yusey. It was my first time in Asia, and the vibrant culture, warm people, and beautiful landscapes left a lasting impact. The language barrier was a challenge, but I quickly learned that love transcends words. A smile, a kind gesture, and patience allowed me to form deep connections despite the differences. As 1 Corinthians 13:7-8 reminds us, *"Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends."* This scripture came alive during my time in the Philippines, as I witnessed how love and humility can break down walls and foster connections, even when words fail.

The people of Roxas City are materially poor but rich in faith. Their Catholic culture was evident everywhere, from statues of saints to the large images of Christ in public spaces. Their unwavering faith, despite daily struggles, reminded me of Romans 12:12: *"Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer."*

One experience that stood out to me was a visit to a massive statue of Christ that we came across while driving back from our clinical duties. The statue was surrounded by the Stations of the Cross, and I took this opportunity to share the Gospel with my classmates. As we walked

from station to station, I explained each one's significance in the Christian faith, culminating in the moment when Christ declared, *"It is finished"* (John 19:30). Standing at the foot of the final station, I found myself overwhelmed with emotion as I reflected on the depth of His sacrifice and love. I could only pray that the seeds of faith planted in my classmates' hearts during that moment would take root and grow over time.



Statue of Christ in Roxas City

This encounter left a lasting impact on me. It reminded me of the importance of living out my faith openly and courageously, seizing every opportunity to share the love of Christ with others. Sometimes, God places us in unfamiliar environments not just for our growth but so that we can be His light to those around us. *"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden"* (Matthew 5:14).

The faith of the people reignited my spiritual passion, reminding me that true wealth lies not in material possessions but in a deep relationship with Christ. Their resilience in the face of adversity inspired me to live with gratitude and perspective, remembering that, *"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord"* (Colossians 3:23-24).

Challenges and Reflections

Working in Roxas City presented several challenges. The hospital's resources were limited - old dental chairs, poor lighting, and a lack of modern equipment. Despite these constraints, the experience became invaluable. I performed numerous extractions, including complex cases with broken roots and difficult angulations. Each procedure sharpened my clinical



My clinical team in the Philippines

skills, especially in improvising with limited resources.

A key area of growth was managing anxious patients. Many locals had never received professional dental care, and I quickly learned the importance of patience, reassurance, and clear communication. By the end of the two weeks, I felt more confident in handling anxious patients and extractions, a skill that will serve me well in my future practice.

Working in such a resource-constrained environment honed my adaptability. Without modern luxuries like suction systems, I learned to rely on teamwork and creative solutions to ensure procedures were safe and effective. Observing the resilience of the locals, despite their hardships, deepened my faith. James 1:2-4 came to life: *"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance."*

This experience not only improved my clinical skills but also instilled in me a deeper sense of purpose in serving others. I left Roxas City with a renewed commitment to be a compassionate, adaptable dentist, committed to making a positive impact, no matter the circumstances.

Part Two: Harare, Zimbabwe

Homecoming and Professional Growth

After my time in the Philippines, I returned to Zimbabwe, where I had the privilege of shadowing Dr. Wayne Manana, a renowned maxillofacial surgeon in Harare. This experience was particularly

meaningful, given my interest in oral surgery. Dr Manana performs complex surgeries, including cleft lip and palate repairs, for underprivileged patients. Many of these surgeries are funded by charitable organizations, particularly the United Methodist Church, which has been instrumental in supporting his work.

However, my time in Zimbabwe also exposed the stark divide between the wealthy and the poor in my home country. While shadowing in both public and private settings, I witnessed a heart-breaking reality: those in the public sector struggle to afford even basic medical necessities like CT scans or antibiotics. Meanwhile, the private clinics I visited catered to patients who could afford luxury treatments, sometimes for non-essential procedures. This sharp contrast brought a deep sense of sorrow and frustration as I saw how access to healthcare in my nation depends so heavily on financial standing.



In theatre with Dr Wayne Manana in Zimbabwe

Returning to Zimbabwe at this stage of my life, with a more mature perspective, the inequality struck me harder than ever before. Seeing people from the most vulnerable backgrounds forced to choose between their health and their daily survival was heart-wrenching. Yet, amidst this brokenness, Dr Manana's dedication stood as a beacon of hope. Despite earning enough to lead a lavish lifestyle, he chooses to dedicate much of his time and resources to serving those in need. His work reflects the teaching of Matthew 25:40: *"Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."*

Dr Manana's selflessness challenged me to reflect on my own aspirations as a dentist. I have always been drawn to oral

surgery but witnessing his approach to service reshaped my understanding of what it means to use one's skills for a higher purpose. It inspired me to consider how I, too, can serve others with humility and compassion, aligning my work with my faith.

This experience reminded me that our talents are gifts from God, are not for personal gain alone, but for the benefit of others. As 1 Peter 4:10 encourages us: *"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms."* Dr Manana exemplifies this scripture, using his expertise to uplift the marginalised and restore dignity to those who have lost hope. The time I spent shadowing him will forever remain one of the most impactful parts of my elective. It wasn't just about observing surgical techniques; it was about learning what it means to live a life of service, to blend professional excellence with a heart that seeks to glorify God through giving back.

Family Time and Personal Reflections

Returning home also gave me the opportunity to reconnect with my family. Spending time with loved ones was a reminder of the importance of balancing professional goals with personal relationships. I thanked God daily for the blessing of family and for the support they provided during my studies.

Throughout this elective, my faith was central. In moments of doubt and fatigue, prayer provided the strength I needed. The kindness and resilience of the people I encountered, both in the Philippines and Zimbabwe, were constant reminders of God's grace and mercy.

This journey taught me the value of humility, gratitude, and service. The challenges I faced became opportunities for growth, and I am reminded of Philippians 4:13: *"I can do all things through him who gives me strength."*

Conclusion

I am profoundly grateful to CDF for making this elective possible. Your support has not only enriched my professional skills but also deepened my faith and understanding of what it means to serve others in Christ's name. I hope to carry

these lessons forward in my future practice, always striving to be a beacon of God's love and compassion in the world. As I look back on this journey, I am filled with gratitude and awe at how God has worked through me and the people I encountered. I pray that He continues to guide me in my path, using my skills to heal and my heart to serve. Thank you, CDF, for this incredible opportunity. May God bless you all.

How You Can Pray

As I conclude this reflection, I would love to invite you to join me in prayer for the places I visited and the people who touched my heart.

For Roxas City, Philippines:

- Pray for an improvement in the healthcare system, that resources would become more accessible to those in need.
- *Lift up Electives Asia*, that their work continues to flourish, providing students with opportunities to witness and contribute to meaningful change in the region.
- Ask God to pour out His Spirit upon Roxas City and the Philippines as a whole, sparking revival and drawing people closer to Him.
- For the Gospel to be heard and received by many in the country.

For Zimbabwe:

- Pray that God would hear the cries of His people, show mercy and bring healing to the nation.
- Lift up Dr. Manana, that he may continue to find strength, resilience, and provision as he selflessly serves those in need.
- Pray for those who struggle financially to access healthcare, that God would provide for them and make a way where there seems to be none.
- For the Gospel to be heard and received by many in the country.

Your prayers mean so much, and I am confident that God, in His perfect timing, will bring transformation and hope to these communities. Thank you for standing with me in faith and for lifting these requests to the Lord.

Muchara Mahachi

Interview with James and Anna Hunter



James and Anna, along with children Max and Phoebe, are relocating to Liberia this summer to serve with the mission organisation SIM. James will be working at Trinity Dental Clinic and teaching at the Liberia Dental Therapy School and Anna is looking forward to helping wherever she can, alongside caring for Max and Phoebe.

Tell us a bit about yourselves: I'm a general dentist working in Perranporth, Cornwall, and Anna is a stay-at-home mum caring for our children, alongside a few volunteering roles.

How did you both meet? We were both freshers at Exeter University studying Theology. We started dating in our first year, and I quickly fell madly in love. In my second year, I proposed, and we were married the summer after we graduated. In my final year, it dawned on me that I needed to find a job to support our new family, but I wasn't sure what I wanted to do or how to use my theology degree. I ended up making a complete career change and decided to become a dentist! We lived in Cardiff while I was studying, had Max during my fourth year, and then moved to Cornwall the year after I graduated, where Phoebe was born.

How do you relax as a family? We're fortunate to live in an incredibly beautiful part of the country, so we spend as much time outdoors as possible, especially at the beach. We enjoy walking and playing cards in cosy pubs. Max is already getting into surfing, and I'm slightly obsessed with spearfishing!

Why have you decided to go to Liberia? When I began my dental degree, I became a student member of the CDF, which introduced me to the work of their mission partners. This gave us a more tangible sense of what mission work could look like for our family. We both held onto this vision throughout my studies and during the early years

of raising our children. About 18 months ago, Anna and I both felt the Holy Spirit gently nudging us to consider mission work again. We prayed together and subsequently applied to SIM. We were offered several locations where dentists were needed, but ultimately, we felt God drawing our attention to Liberia and the work being carried out by Dr. Simon Stretton-Downes. As Christians, we are called to follow Christ—not just in our words, but in our actions (1 John 2:6). Jesus walked in compassion, meeting people in their suffering, healing, restoring, and addressing both physical and spiritual

needs. That's the example we strive to follow. Proverbs 3:27 also speaks to us: "Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to act." With God's help, we feel that He has equipped us with the skills and training needed to make a difference. We believe He is calling our family to Liberia, and we are ready to step forward in faith to serve there.

What can we pray for you? We are aware that we are trading a comfortable life for one that will come with many more challenges, and that can sometimes feel daunting. We pray that God will continue to grant us His peace and guidance, giving us a clear sense that He is leading our steps. We want to echo Moses' words in saying, "If Your Presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here" (Exodus 33:15). We would also appreciate prayer for strength and energy to handle the many practical tasks involved in our move, and for the grace to maintain a strong marriage and a happy family despite the stresses of this transition.

Visit www.thehuntersinliberia.co.uk for more information and ways to pray.



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Annica with our volunteer physical therapist, Orianna, after free surgery with Mercy Ships.

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Deadline for the next issue of Three-in-One is 1st July 2025. Please send contributions to Naomi Wilson: editor@cdf-uk.org

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