



Following Christ in global health service

The call for papers for this third issue of 2018 was “Following Christ in Global Health Service.” The editors hoped for submissions that illustrated how Jesus’ life and ministry inspired, guided, and empowered specific efforts in global health. Professor Christopher Grundmann provides a scholarly and thoughtful review in *Christ as Physician* of how efforts for physical healing were intrinsic to Jesus’ ministry. That is, He became known as a physician as early as the second century of the Common Era. Practicing medicine, especially in countries receiving missionary outreach in more modern times, was in the imitation of Christ and helped to reinforce the corporeality of salvation. This is relevant to our own day in light of our prevalent cultural Gnosticism and reductionism.

Part of following Christ’s character is to practice the highest ethics. Two contributions in this issue have to do with teaching and implementing ethical decision making in the training of young physicians cross-culturally. Eric McLaughlin and Alyssa Pfister have developed a case-based approach to ethical decision making that is relevant to a rural African context in Burundi. The approach combines the principles of beneficence, non-maleficence, autonomy, and justice with the uniquely Christian principles of sanctity of life, stewardship of creation, the fall, suffering and death, miracles, the sovereignty of God, grace and mercy, compassion, and hope. The paper gives examples of the cases used, a framework for case discussions, and examples of several themes that, with experience, help facilitate learning. Kate Thomas and her colleagues describe a challenging case report dealing with an apparently incompetent and unethical medical resident in a training program in East Africa. The

challenge involved maintaining integrity in the training program while dealing with the restraints imposed by the local culture and professional relationships. Meeting this challenge, they show how an established stepwise approach helped to manage the various conflicts.

Jesus integrated a spiritual world view into everyday life amid social, physical, and political challenges of His day. An original article by Jason Paltzer describes the results of a survey of Christian public health training programs to determine the extent to which a Christian world view can be incorporated into such trainings. Thematic analysis of the results demonstrated significant success in integrating biblical values into some areas of understanding, but challenges in doing so in other areas, calling for further research.

Jesus demonstrated love for one’s neighbor as the fulfillment of the law, and this included the foreigner. Two submissions reference Judith Lasker’s 2016 book, *Hoping to Help: The Promises and Pitfalls of Global Health Volunteering*. Professor Laura Montgomery provides an evaluative review of the book, commenting on both its strengths and weaknesses. Rebecca Houweling and Barbara Astle provide a case study of an effort to apply the principles suggested by Lasker to an ongoing, multiyear short-term mission effort in Nepal. Robert Mitchell describes research being conducted by the Church Agencies Network Disaster Operations (CAN DO) to provide a theological basis for disaster risk management in the South Pacific.

The incarnation speaks of the sacredness of human life in the body, and the atonement speaks of the sacrifice and unity which is borne out in the body. In her poem, *God in a cup*, Martha Carlough reflects on the two disparate worlds of a missionary



– life back home and in the context of Nepal – brought together by the common experience of the sacrament of communion. Poet Sarah Larkin offers *What is the cry of my heart?* - a collective reflection from the 7th Triennial Micah Global Consultation on integral mission and resilient communities in Philippines in September.¹

Following Christ is a widespread and diverse phenomenon as the gospel is contextualized in various global cultures. This is demonstrated in a conference report about the XVIth World Congress of the International Christian Medical and Dental Associations where two of our journal editors presented a session on research and publishing in August.²

The challenge for Christ-followers going forward will be to identify and retain their distinctives, to share those distinctives clearly in a pluralistic world, to retain the best practices of quality service based on biblical and scientific evidence, to hold to the highest virtue and deontological ethics, and to extol the supremacy of Christ for the health of nations. This will be vital

especially as the Global Conference on Primary Health Care was held in October in Astana, Kazakhstan, 40 years after the Christian Medical Commission-influenced Alma-Ata Conference.³ Caring and access is more important than ever before in this world of disparities, climate change, disasters, displacement, epidemics and conflict. Caring among the nations with compassion, engagement, integrity, resilience, wisdom and hope is following the way of the Messiah.

References

1. Micah Global [Internet]. Micah 7th Triennial Consultation. 10-14 September 2018. Tagaytay City, Cavite, Philippines. Available from: <http://micahgc2018.org>
2. International Christian Medical and Dental Associations [Internet]. XVI World Congress. 21-26 August 2018. Hyderabad, India. Available from: <http://icmda2018.org>
3. World Health Organization. Global Conference in Primary Health Care. Astana, Kazakhstan. 25-26 October 2018. [Internet]. Available from: www.who.int/primary-health/conference-phc