



Christian
Veterinary
Mission.

Summer 2017

The Journal of Christian Veterinary Mission

Christian Veterinarian



Cultivating A

Missional
Heart
at Home

Contents

Summer 2017

In this Summer Issue of the *Christian Veterinarian*, we're focusing on what it looks like to use your skills to serve in your own communities. You don't have to travel to another country to glorify Christ through veterinary medicine and we'll show you a number of ways you can bless others in your own backyard.



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Cultivating a Missional Heart at Home

written by **Dr. Kit Flowers, CVM President**



We rejoice in the vision of the CVM theme verse as we start a new fiscal year.

“How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who announces peace, and brings good news of happiness, who announces salvation, and says to Zion, Your God reigns!” Isaiah 52:7

Please join us in the coming 12 months on our journey to explore this verse and to purpose to be those beautiful feet to the place where God has called each of us.

So many stories in the CVM family are the ones of those who serve with beautiful feet right here in our own backyard. Many have shared testimonies of their outreach to their staff, clients, and members of their own community. We pray that you will be inspired as you read some of those stories in this edition of the journal. As you read consider how you might share your testimony with us.

Many have served with CVM in ministry models to others within the profession of veterinary medicine. We have a full schedule of ministry opportunities at

Real Life Real Impact Seminars, Training courses, CVF fellowship groups, CVM City CVF Groups, Professional Conferences and e-learning modules. Please purpose to join in with your beautiful feet!

We are also blessed to hear the amazing stories as we reach out through the profession to our world in short-term and long-term missions. Is God stirring your heart to consider next steps in mission calling? Let us know, we can help!

We each are called to bring good news, to announce peace, the bring good news of happiness, to announce salvation, and to say, Your God Reigns!

Dr. Kit Flowers
CVM President

So, You Can't Go?

written by **Steven F. Swaim, D.V.M., M.S**

In its forty years of ministry, Christian Veterinary Mission has been truly blessed by the Lord in its endeavors to minister to the spiritual and physical needs of people around the world. Reaching people through the profession, veterinarians, veterinary technicians, and veterinary students have gone on the mission field as short-term volunteers and have answered the call to serve as long-term field staff.

Yet there are dedicated Christian veterinarians, technicians and veterinary students who, for one reason or another cannot participate in short or long-term missions. However, they strongly endorse the cause of CVM and would like to support those who are called to serve overseas. The reasons for not going on the field vary. For example, health restrictions of themselves or family members they are responsible for are primary reasons for not going on the mission field. Some may have the feeling of not being called to go on the mission field.

"ALTHOUGH I CANNOT GO, HOW CAN I SUPPORT THE WORK OF THOSE WHO GO ON THE FIELD?"

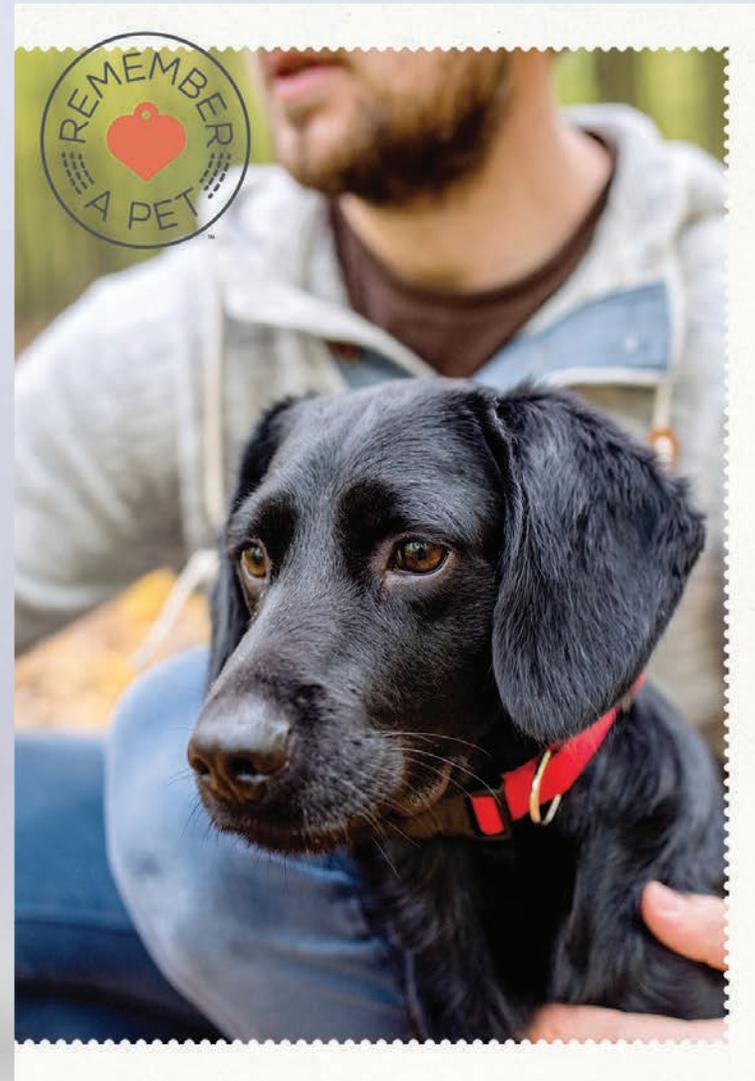
Among these people, the question may arise – "Although I cannot or do not feel the call to go on the mission field, how can I support the work of those who go on the field?"

The first thought that comes to mind may be financial support. Such support is certainly at the top of the list for providing backing. Prayer support is another means of upholding the missionaries. However, there are other ways to support missionaries, and asking God to reveal these is in order. God has given those who belong to Him gifts, talents, and abilities that can be called into

play to help support Christian Veterinary Mission work. This issue of the Christian Veterinary Mission Journal has articles explaining how they used their gifts, talents and abilities to provide support for Christian Veterinary Mission work. As people read these articles and pray for wisdom in what

they might do in place of or in addition to going on the mission field, God may reveal to them ideas they can develop into ways to support Christian Veterinary Mission work.

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Serving In An Ordinary Life

written by **Dr. Page Wages**

As veterinary professionals, we wear so many hats and juggle many roles. In addition to our roles in the veterinary industry we are mothers, fathers, aunts, uncles, sisters and brothers. We serve in our church and communities, many of us own farms or properties we must manage, and we have commitments to our families. We may be single parents, caring for our own elderly parents, or caring for sick family members. But beyond those hats, we also wear that hat of being a Christian. So the question lies, while juggling all of our roles, how can we live out the call of the Great Commission? In Matthew 28:19 Jesus says “Go and make disciples of all the nations,” but how do we accomplish that while still managing everything else on our plate?

First and foremost, the most important recognition is that yes, we are veterinary professionals...but you must ask yourself the following question: Are you a veterinary professional who is also a Christian? Or are you a Christian who happens to be a veterinary professional?

If it is the latter and you feel called to serve but not called to go, then that is your calling! It is not wrong to stay instead of going into the jungles of the Amazon, or onto the freezing tundra of Alaska, or to the depths of Mongolia to share the Gospel! God has written on each of our hearts what our calling is. What is

your God-given calling and where is your mission field?

For me, it is every day. God uses our ordinary lives to do extraordinary things! Think about the stories from the Bible. Who did Jesus hang out with? The high government officials, or the religious leaders? No. He chose to be with fishermen and tax payers, with the cripples, and servants. Just ordinary people. When He rose from the dead and was on earth for 40 days...did He go to Herod and Pilate and show them they were wrong? No, he served breakfast to his disciples and visited regular people. God uses ordinary people, like you and me, to do extraordinary things!

So, how can I serve without going? There are so many ways that you can serve in your local communities, churches and with your practice. Let me share with you some ideas:

You could invite friends, clients and/or coworkers to church, at least at the holidays, and then continue to ask each week. Be persistent. I had one staff member who I knew was struggling some, and I would always ask if she wanted to join me for church on Sunday. After about a year of asking, she came, and then she continued to come...because she found something she realized she was missing.

You could volunteer your time and skills with a rescue organization or assist with the local county in having low cost Rabies clinics.

When you talk about your problems with others, don't hesitate to share that you have been praying about it, or when talking to a client about a sick pet, offer to pray with them for their pet. I have talked to veterinarians who offer to pray with every pet they euthanize, and while that may sound scary, very few clients declined.

Try to keep a positive attitude and show your friends and coworkers what it means to be a Christian. If a stranger just walked into your practice and then the one down the road, would they notice a difference between the two and how you interacted with them?

Don't be afraid to tell people about being a Christian. It's ok to step out of your comfort zone and take that chance. How is your life different from others? Do not lose hope when praying for a friend, family member, or client. It is ok to send a note or tell someone you are praying for them.

If you go on a short-term trip, hang the pictures from your trip on the wall with a sign to ask about your trip. If you know the person, show your love for them and perhaps ask to pray for them. Eventually they will get curious and come back to you with questions. We keep all the books from our mission trips on the front counter, and clients ask about them all the time. If you haven't gone

on a short-term trip, the next idea could be a great alternative.

Sponsor a veterinary professional through CVM and hang up their information on the wall in your practice. Or you could put up some of CVM's Workplace Ministry

"GOD HAS WRITTEN ON EACH OF OUR HEARTS WHAT OUR CALLING IS."

Tools posters in your clinic. We hang the professional posters in our clinic and will collect donations from clients who want to support our mission efforts.

When you are doing things with others take the time to pray before a meal. It sends a strong signal.

In my practice we have a culture where we don't swear. If someone swears, a quarter is deposited into a piggy bank. This "game" has curbed any new staff and doctors from swearing and helps us all be mindful of the words we are using.

Model for the rest of your loved ones, your commitment to Christ by attending church regularly. Make it a priority! Model your servant leadership by tithing your time

and talents and being a part of church. Talk about what is going on at your church and invite others to come with you. Forward your calls during that time with a message on your phone that you are in church and they can call an emergency veterinarian or reach you after a certain time.

Take the time to study the Bible and pray alone every day. Keep your focus on Him! I had a friend tell me once that when she got busy and wasn't studying the Bible every day, she would get cranky!

Take the time to study God's Kingdom through a course or class offered. Continue to learn to equip yourself for the time you are called to take part in a specific task. The Perspectives course on the World Missions Movement is excellent and you can look online to see if there is one in your area. The Chalmers Institute has an online course on the book *Helping without Hurting*. Liberty University and others have online classes as well. I recently took a Conflict Management class through Liberty and have used my new skills in the workplace and have some amazing results! Never stop learning and growing in your knowledge of God's call on your life.

God has given each and every one of His children a dream, which is a calling, and the skills and talents needed to fulfill that dream. Look at Joseph and Abraham in Genesis, David throughout the Old Testament, Peter and Paul in the New Testament, and the many others throughout the Bible.

Sacrifice your practice, your patients and clients, and your relationships to Him. Step out of your boat of comfort, like Peter did in Matthew 14:22-32, keep your eyes on Him and you will see extraordinary God Moments every day. At the end of every day, I like to record my highs (good things), lows (things that didn't go as I thought), and God Moments (things where I saw God). If you are looking for God in an ordinary life, you will find Him. Every day. It all starts with a willing heart and arms and feet that will serve. Join me in serving our extraordinary God through every ordinary day.



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Ministering to Clients in their Grief

Drs. Kelley and Bryant Phillips strive to use their veterinary practice to make an impact for the kingdom of God. They have found that one of the most powerful ways to demonstrate Christ's love is a small gesture they make after a client loses a pet: sending a Remember a Pet memorial card.

Bryant and Kelley Phillips first heard of Christian Veterinary Mission's pet memorial card program while they were part of a CVM fellowship group at Auburn University together. Excited by the vision and mission of CVM, when the pair married they decided to make CVM a part of their life together. They began going on short term trips and using the Remember a Pet memorial card program (then known as Lovelines) as soon as they opened their practice together as a way to support CVM. However, it quickly became more than a way to donate to veterinary missions.

The Phillips receive thank you cards every week from clients who have been touched by a Remember a Pet card. Using this program has opened up opportunities to talk about CVM and the Phillips' short term mission trips, and serves as a tangible illustration to clients of how much the Phillips love Christ.

The process of losing a pet is often emotional

and not an easy time for a vet to demonstrate God's love in a tangible way. When Kelley and Bryant have a client lose a pet, they send a donation to the Remember a Pet program, which in turn sends the client a card letting them know that a gift has been made to CVM in memory of their pet.

By the time the card reaches the client a few days later, it's often a surprise to clients that

"REMEMBER A
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the Drs. Phillips are still thinking of them, and that they cared enough to make a memorial donation. Clients have shared that the card reminds them of how much the Phillips and their clinic care about them,

about their pet that is gone, and about loving God by being a part of the work he's doing through CVM.

Some clients have begun giving to CVM themselves, or have shared the card with friends, who then seek out the Phillips' clinic because they see value in having a vet who consistently demonstrates compassion, even after a pet has died. Even clients who aren't believers have expressed their thanks for the cards, saying they feel touched that the Phillips care enough to make a donation on their pet's behalf.

"Because of our contributions through Remember a Pet," Kelley says, "We have many clients who... feel a special connection because they know we care, they know we

love them, and that we loved their pet. But more importantly, they know that we love the Lord."



Supporting Those Who Go

written by **Dr. Fred Van Gorkom**

Let me tell you about my wife, Vicki, and I's good friend Patti. Our friendship began in 1983, when I went to Ethiopia. One of the things she said to me upon meeting was, "Hi! My name is Patti. Our family wants to support a missionary long term. We want a lifetime friendship, not just a year or two. What do you think?" Over all these years our friendship, and their partnership has never wavered. God used friends like this family and many more, to bless us through the years as we serve.

Two years after I began serving in Ethiopia the Lord brought my future wife Vicki to the country as well. In our time overseas we have many fond memories and experiences. Vicki always says that I first told her I loved her while we autopsied a dead cow! We fell in love while serving, we raised 4 kids in the bush, and were honored to be part of the team God used to plant churches among the people groups of southwestern Ethiopia. Now we are blessed to mobilize others to serve in the Lord in even more countries and ministries. Through all of this God has faithfully provided for all of our needs through friends like Patti's family for 34 years and counting.

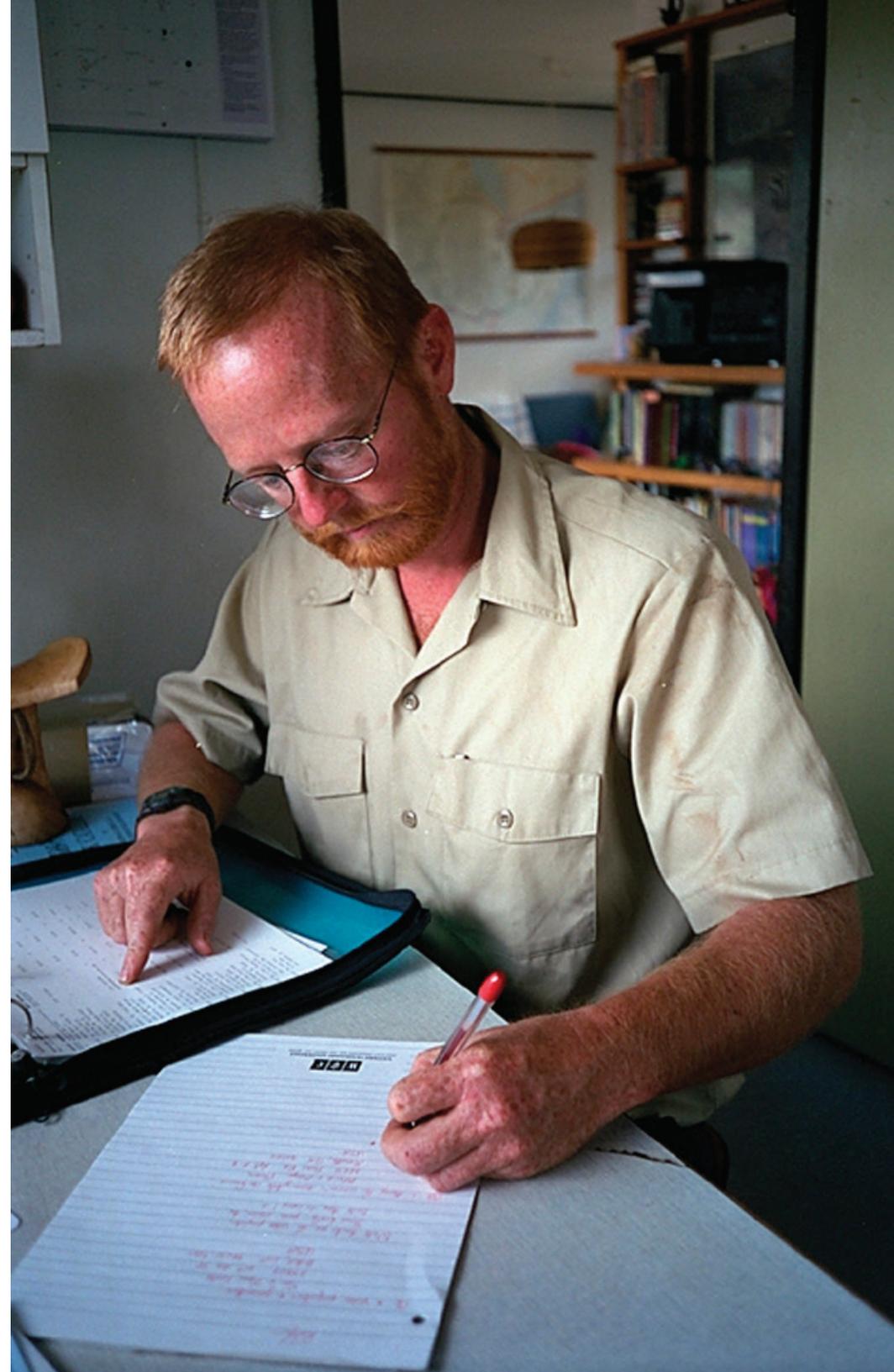
Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me, he should deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow me." He commanded, "Go into all the world, preach, teach, disciple."

But what if you don't get to go in person? What if you are called to serve in your own community but want to still partner with ministry happening overseas?

Then you help others to go as He enables you; help send, equip, encourage, and pray. Invest in what God is doing through calling others. When you partner with those who go you see prayers answered and your own prayer life grows. You are able to see what God brings them through and your own faith grows too! You see life from a different perspective and your troubles diminish in comparison. You lay up treasure in heaven, forever—instead of temporary things on earth. Jim Elliot said, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to keep what he can never lose!"

I recently talked to a friend of one of our CVM field staff and he shrugged, "Ok, we can do \$100/month to support her. That's easy. That's just one night out, once a month."

Mark visited East Africa and came back claiming, "We need a vet for the people there!" In God's timing, we already had one family raising support to go. Mark was such a blessing and provided matching funds, and now the family has launched into ministry in East Africa. God used Mark's partnership to help move His kingdom forward.





A church leader flew half way around the world to encourage us and pray with us while in Ethiopia and we were so blessed! Another time, a man named Tim came to paint our missionary house. No matter that his size 13 foot went in the paint bucket once; he was a blessing and a joy. Another blessing was that my sister's church sent a 5-gallon bucket full of thoughtful gifts for Christmas each year and they were delivered by hand to Ethiopia!

My mom and dad duplicate about 50 copies of our most recent prayer letter and to this day, at age 93, my mom hands them out after church the next Sunday. Who'd decline? "Of course I'll take one!"

"WE HAVE BEEN SO BLESSED BY OUR MINISTRY PARTNERS THAT SUPPORT US!"

Some supporters sent care packages. (Did you know you can enclose one unsweetened KoolAid in a normal letter and not even have to add postage? Made our water taste better!) While others are prayer warriors! We could almost tell when we hadn't

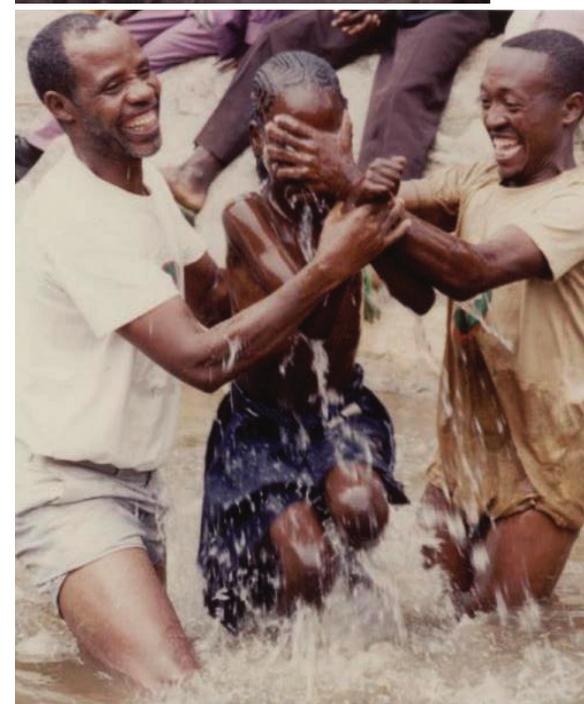
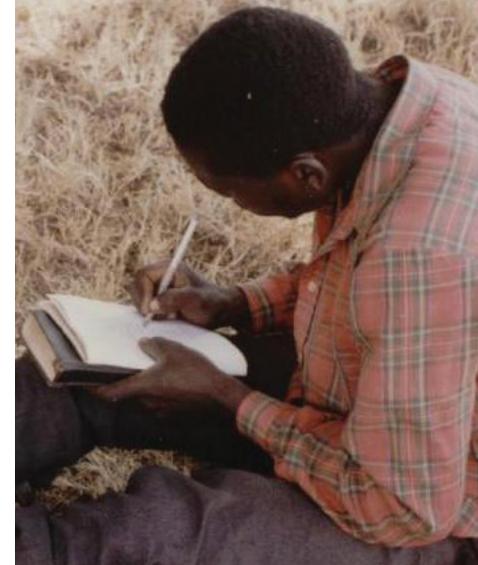
written for a while and the prayer support waned. Things started going more whacko than usual! Doctors half the world away consulted on medical issues. Veterinarians scratched their heads with us over diseases that aren't even in the textbooks yet.

And when we came home for furlough some ministry partners even loaned us a car; twice we were even loaned an RV. Many hosted us in their homes; one church

provided the Lazarus House—resurrected from being condemned so they could use it for missionaries. A dentist fixed our teeth for free; a doctor only charged what insurance would cover. Once when we visited the States, one of our supporters, Ann, sent us on a scenic railroad trip and then our supporter Mary took us to the zoo.

As we have served over the years, both in Ethiopia and here in the states we have been so blessed by our ministry partners that support us! They have even influenced my prayer letter writing. Patti once reproved me, "Fred, stop writing like everything is always rosy; we all know it's not true. Be real. Then we know how to pray."

So, if you can't go or are not called to serve overseas then invest in the work God is doing through others. There are many ways to be a part of the ministry that is happening around the world! Your partnership may be financial, but please pray, encourage, write, send care packages, loan your car, share your guestroom, and champion the ministry—you are a part of it!



How Can I Help?

written by **Steven F. Swaim, D.V.M., M.S.**

There are professionals and students who for a variety of reasons cannot participate in short or long-term missions. I happen to be one of those veterinarians. Upon graduating from Kansas State University's College of Veterinary Medicine I practiced for nine months. I then served in the U.S. Army's Veterinary Corps for 2 years, and then practiced again for one year. After all of that, I decided to return to academia. The return involved getting a M.S. degree in small animal surgery and medicine followed by teaching and doing research for 38 years at Auburn University's College of Veterinary Medicine.

During those 38 years my Christian activities included teaching a Sunday school class, directing the men and boy's ministry program, serving as deacon, and attendance at Christian Veterinary Fellowship meetings at the college.

But then at 54 years of age, I began to notice motor neurologic difficulties in my legs. After a neurologic work up, the neurologist diagnosed me as having Charcot-Marie-Tooth's Disease – a progressive familial distal limb peripheral neuropathy.

I later retired from Auburn University, but wanted to continue my work for the Lord. I still had a strong interest in veterinary medicine so what better way to serve than be involved in Christian Veterinary Mission? However, with my progressing neurologic motor deficit in my legs, I could be a danger to myself and others in working with livestock on a mission trip. Thus, the question became, "How can I help?" After thinking and praying about it, the Lord revealed some answers to me. He had given me gifts, talents, and abilities that I could use to support CVM.

During my veterinary student days, army days, and practice days, God had developed within me a strong interest in small animal surgery. This was reinforced in my teaching days when I was involved in doing neurosurgery, wound management and reconstructive surgery.

**"USE YOUR GIFTS
AND ABILITIES TO
SERVE CHRIST."**

In my early retirement days, my wife learned about a wood carving club and encouraged me to join, which I did. Again, God instilled in me an interest and ability. The result has been carving caricatures of animals and people (mainly veterinarians) in veterinary-oriented cartoon situations. These, along with

carved wall hanging plaques of the veterinary staff of Asclepius and college emblems are given to Christian Veterinary Fellowship groups at Kansas State University, Auburn University, University of Missouri and University of Nebraska. The students auction/raffle them to make money for mission projects.

Another way I support CVM is through writing. Royalties and sales income from two kinds of books are sent to the organization, designated for the Student Outreach Ministry (e.g. Real Life Real Impact). Since retiring, two surgery textbooks have been published. In addition, a "fun" book has been published – humorous and human interest short stories of veterinary-oriented events during my career. Sales income from a second "fun" book, which is not veterinary-oriented, also go to CVM.

My 38 years of teaching at Auburn's College of Veterinary Medicine, put me at ease in giving oral presentations and lectures to students. Thus, I have given presentations at Real Life Real Impact conferences over the years. Presentations to regular meetings of Christian Veterinary Fellowship groups at Auburn, Kansas State, and Oklahoma State have also been given. My main topic has been, "Finding God's Plan For Yourself" – a topic of interest to students preparing to enter the profession.

In 2014 Dr. John Nelson, the Kansas Chris-

tian Veterinary Mission state representative, and I felt lead to develop a Christian Veterinary Mission group of veterinarians and veterinary technicians in south central Kansas. At present the group consists of 7 veterinarians that regularly attend our monthly meetings. The meetings consist of a meeting at a restaurant in Derby, Kansas. Over a meal, those present enjoy fellowship and share prayer requests. Following the meeting, a list of prayer requests and praises is distributed to the members for that month.



Do you have gifts, talents, and abilities that you could use in place of or in addition to going on mission trips that you could use to support Christian Veterinary Mission work? Hopefully, this article and those of the other authors in this issue will stimulate thoughts and imaginations that will result in advancing the work of Christian Veterinary Missions.

CVM's Mission Is...

to challenge, empower and facilitate veterinary professionals to serve others by living out their Christian faith.

WHAT WE DO

Our purpose as an organization is to walk alongside Christians in the veterinary community whose desire is to bring glory to God through the use of their professional skills. It is our honor and privilege to pray with, talk with, encourage, equip, mentor and provide resources and opportunities for men and women to follow God's call in their life, whether serving in their own community or cross-culturally.

Animals are a bridge to relationship. Whether at a clinic in urban America or, the countryside of Mongolia, a veterinary school in Bolivia or the Cherokee Nation, relationships are formed over the care of an animal. Trust is built, hearts are shared, and a seed is planted for the Kingdom of Christ.



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ISAIAH 52:7

HOW BEAUTIFUL
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ARE THE FEET OF HIM
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PEACE