

The Global Adventist Dental Connection

Christian Dental Professionals, United to Advance God's Healing



Edition #4
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YOU ARE AN IMPORTANT PART OF GOD'S WORK ON THIS EARTH

YOU CAN COLLABORATE WITH HIS CHURCH TO FURTHER HIS KINGDOM

WHAT YOU DO FOR PATIENTS IS NOT ONLY HEALING AND EVANGELISM BUT THE TOUCH OF GOD'S HAND

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The Global Adventist Dental Connection

Introduction from the Editor

Varied Needs Require Varied Missions

I hope you find this **Global Adventist Dental Connection** to be something that you value and want to share. You can share it easily by sending this link to any dental professionals you know: <http://www.dentalmissionsda.org/subscribe.html>. Sharing the link would be a kind service to us and to them.

Sharing is mission. Sharing our blessings, our resources, and the Good News is mission. Sharing what we can do to improve health is a mission, and one at which dentists and dentistry is very good. I am constantly impressed that dentists in general are so generous with their time, their money, their skill, and their knowledge. It is wonderful to be part of this profession!

Of course, a Christian has another strong motivation to share and that is the spirit that inspires this issue of the **Connection**. Various people and various needs prompt various responses – all are mission. The theme of “Varied Needs Require Varied Missions” was actually begun in the last **Connection** newsletter (see prior issues at <http://www.dentalmissionsda.org/>) in an article written by Dr. Greg Mitchell in which he described his private practice as a mission. While this is only one aspect of mission it is the path to missions that is open to most of us.

I found the stories in this issue to be fascinating and inspiring. It is so good to see how God acts and the effect on the recipients as well as the

‘missionaries.’ They come to us from Adventist dental schools in Brazil, Argentina, and the United States as well as from a private practitioner from California and a mission dental clinic on the island of Saipan. We know we could share many, many others from many, many locations and that, I think, is the point.

We wish you many blessings and much happiness as you chart your own course and work with God on your own response to the needs of our world.



Editor: Doyle Nick

A Knock on the Door

It was a warm, lazy Sunday afternoon in Northern California. I had just finished doing some chores around the house and was relaxing in the overstuffed leather couch when my doorbell rang. I ambled to open the door. Little did I realize that that one single act would change my life for years to come!

I opened the door and there in front of me stood the Pastor of a local struggling Evangelical Church. “*God told me to ask you for money to build my church!*” he blurted! “*I have*

been in prayer for 40 days. God told me to ask for money from three people. One is the local Sikh who owns a large vineyard next to the church. The other is the owner of a large Ford dealership and the third one is you!” he proceeded to inform me. “*Both of them have already contributed and you are next on the list!*”

The demand caught me by surprise! I did not own a vineyard and neither was I the owner of a large Ford dealership. For that matter, I did not even own my own dental practice. I was a simple dentist working hard and saving money for my retirement. The Pastor was not a Seventh-day Adventist! His lifestyle, day of worship, and theology were different than my own! The demand was ridiculous! The amount was huge! *It was in the six figures and would be almost all of my saved retirement account!* Should I just say *no* to him? I wondered if it was a prank that was cooked up in some prayer hall. But these people knew the power of prayer! What if it was God using this man to launch my quivering faith?

There was only one way to tackle this request. Take the request and seriously submit it to God. So I told the pastor to give me seven days to pray about it. My wife and I prayed. We each asked for five signs. In some strange way all the signs came true, almost immediately, except the last one. This last one would require tremendous faith



on my part. *It would involve me stepping out in faith!* It would involve me parting with my precious retirement! I told God that I would give this money in faith and He, God,



Nursing School in Gimbie, Ethiopia

should double it and give it back to me within two weeks. It is not easy to part from one's money, especially if it is your retirement! It may seem strange but I was strongly impressed by God and I called the

pastor and gave him my retirement. We prayed over it. He was happy. I was troubled. You see, when you step out in faith, something happens. You begin to see as God sees and you begin to experience blessings that only God can give!

Five days passed and on the sixth day my CPA called me. She told me that due to some strange reason I had a very large refund coming from the IRS! Amazingly it would be exactly the amount that I had asked of God, almost precisely double the amount that I had given to the evangelical pastor that Sunday morning!

We received the refund in seven days and I called *Adventist Health International* to talk with Dr. Dick Hart. He suggested several large projects for us to sponsor. In time the funds were used to build a Nursing school in Ethiopia, a much needed TB/AIDS ward in the Sub-Saharan country of Chad, a 40 room nursing school in Zambia, and in Cameroon a nursing school dormitory was fully furnished. God's



Security team in Chad

plans for the work by the Seventh-day Adventist church in Africa are huge and so his requirements are big as well! We were very pleased with how God used the money which was, after all, His.

So what would you do when God knocks at your front door on a lazy Sunday morning? I hope you answer Him. You see, God used an evangelical Pastor to cause a Seventh-day Adventist dentist to step out in faith and we have so much enjoyed being involved! We have had the privilege of serving hundreds of patients in Sao Paulo, Brazil, Costa Rica, and in a secluded leper colony in Zambia, and in Chad where we were thanked personally by the wife of the president. We built a pastor training center in Tbilisi, Geor-

gia and funded 300 ABN satellite dishes on churches in Russia. We are thrilled to be sponsoring a student who will become the one of the first, if not the first, Zambian, Adventist dentist as well as Dental Student studying at Adventist University of the Philippines.

How can I finish this article unless I mention a true missionary that God used in Ethiopia in my early years to nurture me and whose influence was significantly responsible for the direction of my life? Dorothy Pulley is a widow who decided to help those in need in Africa. She served as a volunteer missionary and lived on the small stipend that was allotted her by the church and she used the funds from her husband's life insurance to sponsor several students from Africa, one of which was me. For years I looked forward to the flowered, monthly check from this kind and generous missionary.

Those checks followed me all the years of my struggling and turbulent college life and helped me pay school bills. God used this kind and sacrificial widow to carry on His work and to help prepare many



others to carry on His work, as well. She was God's Finger touching humanity. And today, her torch has been passed on to me and to others whom she so unselfishly helped!

So what about the evangelical pastor that began all of this for me? He built his church and today that congregation has grown from a membership of forty to one thousand people, meeting every Sunday. They baptize people into God's Kingdom on a regular basis and they serve the underprivileged and the marginalized. Their love for God is palpable. Their prayers are powerful. Their love for Jesus is contagious. Their church, the church that I funded, is a refuge for the broken and it is filled with God's Spirit! They support Seventh-day Adventist missionaries in Africa. They have provided water for thousands of people by digging wells for the poor in Africa.

When God knocks at your front door, and he will, I urge you to open the door and put Him to the test! I did and so began the ride of my life!



Sam Thomas MDiv. DDS PhD is a dentist in Reno, NV. He is a graduate of Walla Walla University, Andrews University Theological Seminary and Loma Linda University School of Dentistry. He is the author of "Heaven's Short List - The Miracles of Jesus the Son of God." Xulon Press 2014. He, along with his wife Hannah, continue to provide dental care to thousands in Africa. Their passion is World Missions

A Special Mission for a Special Need

The Saipan Adventist Dental clinic is a consistently effective and successful Adventist dental clinic in the Northern Mariana Islands. For more than 40 years it has served the people on the beautiful island of Saipan. Every workday the clinic is the venue for many people to become more comfortable, healthier, better able to smile, and more likely to know about God. I have had the privilege of being part of its ministry and mission.

This story, however, is one of a different kind of mission. The service reported in this story, may be unique to Adventist mission dental clinics but the spirit of that service is not.

It was the evening of August 1st, 2015, exactly one month to the day after I had arrived in Saipan to work at the dental clinic. I was spending



the evening at the home of some of the missionary teachers, playing games with the church youth while it stormed outside. It had rained most every day since I had arrived and since it was rainy season this was not unexpected and even the forecast of a category 1 (weak) typhoon didn't worry us. When the storm seemed to subside a bit I drove back to the clinic compound where I was staying. As I pulled into the driveway, the wind picked up again and a large palm tree crashed down directly behind me. Later that evening we lost power, not unusual on the island. About midnight the storm



broke and we began to go outside and survey the modest damage in the immediate area. Even though the wind had quieted we heard in the distance a roaring that convinced us we were standing in the eye of a typhoon; Typhoon Soudelor which had been upgraded to a Class 3 typhoon with 105 MPH winds. We were truly protected by angels that night. With the type of storm, the speed of the winds, the amount of debris in the air, we were all fortunate to be in the church compound that was surrounded by a dense jungle area that protected us from the brunt of the storm. After a night of trying to control water from flooding the floors, the sun came up and we got a much better idea of the damage

caused by the storm. We were unable to call anyone due to the power loss, and it became obvious that there were no telephone or electrical poles standing on the entire island. The thick jungle surrounding the compound was totally denuded of leaves and every tree had had the top broken off. We could see the ocean and many other places that had never been visible from that place before.

We began to walk down the street and found it blocked

by fallen trees and so begun our unique mission, our unique service. For the next two weeks we did dentistry, at most ½ of each day. We joined the people of the island, the police, the prisoners from the jail, workers from public utility companies, church members, others from the clinic, other churches, and many others from the community. We worked our way down one street to another and on down that street and then another. The owner of the car dealership which had been destroyed used his forklift to help. There were power poles to remove and, because many wooden houses were destroyed, there were many people who needed a place to sleep and food to eat.

That working together was a wonderful testament to the goodness of people. We became friends with many people from all walks of life that we would otherwise not have met. I myself first met my future wife during those trying days of working together.

As people labored shoulder to shoulder, slowly, too slowly, a semblance of normalcy returned. It was three long months before most areas had power restored and even longer for some other common functions to be resumed. Those 3 months were chaotic and trying. We all did what we could to help church members repair or rebuild their homes, and Adventist Community Services helped train



church members to run a food pantry for victims with the other churches/denominations on the island. Groceries were limited because ships could not enter the damaged port for a while. We had to eat dry goods, or fresh things from the jungle or store, but they would quickly rot. Most people had no running water and we became accustomed to taking baths in the ocean or with rain water, as the compound could only have enough fuel to run the generator 1 hour each morning and evening. It was mainly dedicated to keeping the clinic running as much as possible. The clinic in particular was a great symbol of our church's resiliency and willingness to help those in need during a difficult time. Things were still difficult though; pumps could not run at full power to give us air or suction regu-

larly, the generator would overheat and shut off, often in the middle of an involved procedure. Even through this rough time, patients still trusted us to complete their treatment using, as was sometimes necessary, only the light coming through the window.

I see this as a testament to the impact the church has had on the local population. The clinic is well known amongst the people and its excellent reputation is better now than ever. Being a responsible and positive part of the community, bearing one another's burdens, helping in whatever way is needed, these things were, are, and will continue to be the unique mission of Saipan Adventist Dental Clinic.



By: Tom Schaffer, DDS

A Story of Caring

I wrote his story, as it was told by Maximillian de Leon, a dental technician in Argentina who, along with some dentists, is often found in underserved populations providing free dental care. The last time I saw Max at one of these events he had all of his laboratory employees there as well a large amount of equipment and he was making removable treatment partial dentures and complete dentures for people who had presented for extractions or other treatment. He gains great satisfaction in making people's mouths look whole again and he often sees that wonderfully satisfying result in the form of a newly beautiful smile. Dr. Doyle Nick

After a long and extremely busy weekend dedicated to caring for people who otherwise would have not been able to receive dental care, we were driving back, too late and too tired. We stopped at a street stall to buy some take-away food and were happily back in the car and on our way again when Marcelo, one of our group



could not help himself but shouted out, "Stop, we have to go back!" At the stall we had been served by a teenage girl (it turned out she was 16 years old) with many missing

and carious teeth and it seemed unbearable to leave her without helping in some way. When we got back, she was very happy to hear we were concerned about her oral health and appearance. After the dentists looked at her, they agreed that unpacking all of the mobile equipment and trying to tackle the complexities of her care were not possible where we were so we had to settle with promising her good, free care if she could come to our university town and spend some time getting things done.



She showed up the very next day, thrilled with the prospect of our help. We found her a place to stay with one of the local families and started to arrange her dental treatment. We discovered she was stuck in a dead end job selling food on the streets for her Uncle, on his terms. She also lived with him and was subjected to abuse by him and that made us extremely sad. At the same time we were learning about her, she was accepted into the family where she was staying, and learned



during family worship and observation about God and our world view.

Over the next few days, her teeth were cared for, her missing teeth replaced, and she learned to take care of her mouth. She metamorphosed into a pretty, smiling, cheerful young lady who seemed immediately to gain confidence and self-esteem. It was with

very mixed emotions that we said goodbye to her as she made her way back to her home.

Back in her home town, with her new dignity, and attractive smile, she quickly got a new job, moved to her grandmother's house away from her uncle and enrolled in high school. She is presently studying in a program for electrical engineering and has her own family including a young daughter. A recent entry on her Facebook page praises God for his many blessings to her. Her partial denture is still making a difference in her life!

What a joy it is to be used by God in his plan to heal his children and change lives! We are so blessed that He involves us in his plans.



Max de Leon

Service at Loma Linda School of Dentistry: It's in our DNA

The Loma Linda University School of Dentistry (LLUSD) motto - "Service is our Calling"- resonates deeply with those of us who walk the corridors of Prince Hall, the school of dentistry building. It's almost as if a "service gene" was part of our "DNA." A profound manifestation of this calling is our service learning program.

Service learning was woven into the fabric or, perhaps I should say, "CRISPR-ed into the DNA" of LLUSD since its inception in 1953. The members of the National Association of Seventh-day Adventist

Dentists (NASDAD) at that time felt it was a unique principle that aligned well with the endeavors of the Church, University, and dental profession. Today, the principle remains highly relevant and appropriately aligned with the purpose all three entities.

Access to oral healthcare is a tremendous challenge for many. The unmet need for dental care exists locally, regionally, nationally, and globally. It is always one of the most frequent requests from local schools, community clinics, one-time outreach events, health fairs, and community projects. Our students, staff, and faculty all engage in some form of voluntary service to help provide for the needs of those who are in our ever-expanding circle of contacts.

Most alumni with whom I have had the pleasure of interacting throughout the years express their appreciation for the service learning program, indicating how it has impacted them



personally and altered their own "DNA" and perspectives. Not only are these experiences often remembered as a highlight of dental school, they often set the course for a professional life which interacts positively with the graduate dentist's community and with people in need. Stories that students tell, from local clinics, California Dental Association





Cares, Monument Valley, as well as various international locations scattered far and wide, all demonstrate the impact of LLUSD's service learning emphasis.

Many of our students and alumni recall leaving on their first service learning trip thinking they would tremendously impact the community in

which they were immersing themselves. However, the opposite effect almost always transpires. When they return to school, they speak of being the ones most affected and subtly altered. These experiences are best summed up by a simple statement: "I received far more than I gave." In fact, it is because of this impact that many continue to sign up for additional service learning adventures.

In his Great Commission address (Matthew 28), Jesus encourages his followers to "go and make disciples of all nations." The book of Revelation mentions seven times (Rev 5:9, 7:9, 10:11, 11:9, 13:7, 14:6, and 17:5) the concept of reaching out to "every nation, tribe, people and language." As Christian believers whose priesthood is dedicated to being ministers of health, we too are commissioned to go forth. We meet needs as did Jesus by healing the sick and those in pain and demonstrating his love and compassion through the kindness and excellence of the care we provide. In this way we demonstrate our own discipleship

and draw others to Him. Occasionally some have questioned our commitment to service learning. In fact, some comments reflect concern that this integral part of LLUSD is expendable. I can assure you that LLUSD's commitment to service learning is strong and vibrant. Servant leaders are who we employ and train. Almost as if we were moths with a tropistic attraction to the light of a lamp, we attract those who are willing to place others first and foremost. In times of change—and we have plenty of change going on at LLUSD—it is important to revisit and reassert our bedrock principles and to hold firmly to them as they guide our direction. Service learning is one of those guiding beacons of light. Service Learning will continue to be a most important part of Loma Linda's outreach and education; It is after all in our DNA.



Dean, Robert A. Handysides, D.D.S.
Loma Linda University School of Dentistry

A Future Dentist Discovers Mission

Mission was a major motivation behind my decision to study dentistry. I was brought up in a community where people are usually involved in mission trips and, since I was a teenager, I felt called to serve. I am of Arab descent so I feel especially attracted to service in Arab countries. Especially inspiring was a close family friend, who used to tell us about his missionary experiences as a dentist in many parts of the world. From these stories, I realized how useful dentistry could be in mission.



Choosing the school from which to receive dental training was a challenge. I had always studied at an Adventist school and my desire

was to keep on studying in a Christian environment; but in Brazil there wasn't an Adventist college that offered a dentistry course. Then I learned that plans were being made to open the dental program at Faculdade Adventista da Bahia (FADBA), the Adventist College at Northeastern Brazil. God guided me to go to that school, which provides the students with not only academic knowledge but a better relationship with God. The following year I was delighted to find myself there, taking dentistry.

During the vacation after the





first year of dental training I had the opportunity experience, first hand, mission service in Lebanon, the country from which my maternal grandfather immigrated to Brazil, and where I have many relatives. Never before had I had such an intense dream as that of travelling to my family's country! But I couldn't afford it! So I started to pray and look for the necessary means. God sent generous people who helped this dream come true. In January, 2017, together with a group from the Núcleo de Missões do Centro Universitário Adventista de São Paulo, Campus Engenheiro Coelho (Mission Center of UNASP-EC), we travelled to the Middle East.

The mission experience in Lebanon was amazing! This little country is part of the 10/40 window – that region of the globe with the smallest number of Christians – and has ¼ of its inhabitants made up of refugees.



Given this reality, we worked in a project developed by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in order to help children of refugees' families. The project maintains The Adventist Learning Center, a school where these children can study and learn English. It's a kind of informal education center for children who have great difficulty trying to attend the official Lebanese public schools.

Besides helping during classes and recreational activities, I was able to practice the little I knew about den-

tistry. Speaking in English, I gave children of various ages instructions about prevention and dental hygiene. Even though I sometimes I needed someone to translate into Arabic, I have never seen children so excited about a speech on prevention! Some were so appreciative that they gave me kisses and hugs during my explanations. After each speech, the children had a supervised tooth-brushing session with an oral hygiene kit which we gave to them free.

Another experience that left an indelible impression on me occurred when I visited a refugee family living in extreme poverty. The father of one of the children at the Learning Center found out I was taking dentistry and immediately gave me a flashlight and asked me to examine his mouth. Because of dental pain he was unable to eat well

and he had lost a lot of weight. This made him worry that he had cancer or some other disease. I felt so helpless because I knew I could do nothing and that made me more aware of how



great a need there is for quality dentistry and dentists willing to be of service.

After this mission experience, I returned to Brazil with a very strong desire make the best of the coming years dental training and to learn everything that I can about dentistry, my future career. I look forward to becoming a skillful and knowledgeable dentist and I hope someday to go back to that place and truly help those people. If I have so many experiences during such a short visit to Lebanon, imagine how much more I will have if I spend my life dedicated to mission. This experience increased my desire to use my profession to serve my neighbor wherever I am, whether in my home country or overseas. What really counts, after all, is to take God's love to each person I can meet. That's why I invite you my fellow dental students, to work to have an experience such as the one I had. I can guarantee you that it will add more purpose to your life.



By: Nahida Sarhan
3rd Year Dental Student at Bahia Adventist
Collage (Faculdade Adventista da Bahia)

Worldwide Dental Mission Opportunities In SDA Mission Dental Clinics

Globally, there are about 120 Seventh-day Adventist-owned dental practices around the world. Some of them could benefit from your expertise and collaboration and you will benefit from the experience.

Here are some current opportunities

Long-term Service

Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo - SDA Dental Clinic needs a regular Adventist dental missionary in the Adventist Dental Clinic. This clinic in the capitol city of Democratic Republic of Congo and has the potential to attract the most influential and discerning people in the country. A dentist with skill, vision, and a sense of adventure can make a tremendous difference in God's work in this area.

Saipan SDA Dental Clinic – In 2018 a capable dentist will be needed to commit to a five-year posting on the beautiful, island paradise of Saipan. The position of Dental Director would be a good fit for an experienced, dental leader. The Saipan practice is one of the most vibrant and consistently effective clinics in the Adventist dental system and a number of skilled professionals work together there.

Guam Adventist Clinic – The very active dental clinic in the Guam Polyclinic would be a very enjoyable and rewarding place to spend some years providing needed dental care and working with like-minded professionals. Guam is a beautiful Pacific Island in the Northern Mariana Islands.

Grenada – An entrepreneurial dentist will soon be needed in this newly rebuilt, renewed and equipped Adventist dental practice on the Island of Grenada.

Gliese, Togo - Needs a volunteer dentist who could serve for several months, preferably a year with room, board, and stipend provided.

Short-term Service

Yaoundé, Cameroon – This dental clinic has been in the healing business for forty years. All of the dentists are from Cameroon and they would enjoy having a self-supporting volunteer to volunteer and work with them for one or a few months.

AMEN, Maranatha, World Health Dental Organization, Helping Hands, and many other similar organizations are often in need of able and willing volunteers to make important, one-time and short-term programs successful. These organizations have websites that inform volunteers of needs, schedules, and other details.

Burundi Union Mission July 6-21, 2018 - 4 Medical Camp Meetings in 4 Big Cities in the central Africa country of Burundi – for more information contact Dany Ntihakose, Burundi Union Mission, Health Ministries Director, via email at ntihdany@yahoo.fr

For More Information about any of these opportunities & others, please contact Doyle Nick at 909-558-4607 or NickD@gc.adventist.org.

The editors would like to recognize the contributions of several skilled individuals

We would like to thank the following generous and capable individuals for their contributions to this newsletter. Volunteers responsible for translations include:

Russian - Nadezda Ivanova

Portuguese - Priscilla Costa

Spanish – Luis Mendez

Katie Layon, MBA contributes proof reading and editing as well as layout skills. We appreciate the contributions of the whole General Conference Health Ministries Team as well as those of Loma Linda University School of Dentistry.



Priscilla Costa, DDS, graduated from LLU IDP, originally from Brazil, works in Ukiah and Monterey, CA.



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