

# The Center for Medical Mission's *e-Pistle* January 2012

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Happy New Year! I trust your New Year has gotten off to a great start including finding time to sit down to write out your personal, professional, practical, family and spiritual goals for the year. I was reminded on Sunday that if we don't set goals we surely won't achieve any. I confess I have not done this yet, but I hope to this weekend. I hope you will take the time to do it also. I know it is helpful and we all have things we would like to achieve. Let's take the time to plan how to reach those achievements.

Have you heard the news?

We're excited to announce the growth of the Dental Ministries, CMDA's newest outreach ministry. Dr. Jeff Amstutz recently joined CMDA as the Vice President for Dental Ministries, Peter E. Dawson Chair of Dentistry. With this new ministry, CMDA has a great opportunity to influence many more dentists across the country to better integrate their faith into their professional and personal lives. In the coming months, Dr. Amstutz will be focusing on greatly expanding our ministry, services and resources for our dental members, as well as intensifying our outreach in dental schools across the country.

Are you looking to get involved? Are you interested in more information? Do you know any dental professionals or students that would greatly benefit from our new, enhanced resources? Visit [www.cmda.org/dentist](http://www.cmda.org/dentist) and stay tuned for more information. Email <mailto:dental@cmda.org> if you'd like to get involved or have any questions.

**Included in this month's e-Pistle are:**

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I trust you will find it informative and encouraging.  
Susan

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**Oiling the Gears - Section VI: Personnel Issues**  
by David Stevens, MD

The devil is not in the details. He is in the midst of a group trying to cause disunity, knowing that when individuals come together so much more can be accomplished for the kingdom. He hates concord, coherence and congruence or to put it more simply, harmony. Instead he wants to sow discord, dissent, disputes and divisions to make you and everyone else miserable.

The reason people hate their job is either they don't think they are doing something significant or they don't get along with the people they work with. The ongoing friction of being rubbed the wrong way day after day leads to open conflagration or an announcement that someone has resigned and taken a new job. The more staff turnover you have, the less gets accomplished.

This problem of disunity is more likely to occur in intense work environments, like healthcare, where good teamwork is crucial. In that case, it's more than just your staff who suffer. Lack of collaboration and cooperation causes patients to suffer more and even die.

Yet, we are often too busy with our medical or dental duties to pay attention, much less foster solidarity among those we work with and supervise. That is a dangerous and destructive mistake. In the long run, our time and attention will be consumed with trying to put out a forest fire that we could have handled easily with a cup of water when the flame was small.

The key is for your group to work in one accord. What can you do to make this happen?

1. Put fresh oil in the gears --- regularly. I went to a Christian boarding school for high school and didn't own a car until after I graduated from college. Dad let me borrow one of his cars my first summer in college when I sold books door-to-door in Illinois. When I came back in late summer to start another academic year, Dad casually asked, "When did you last change the oil on the car?" I had never maintained a car so my response was a question with a tone of chagrin, "You are supposed to change the oil?"

As a leader, your job is to decrease friction in the motor of your ministry by pouring oil in the gears regularly. Your attitude and interest in your individual staff serves as a great lubricant. Get to know people as personally and intimately as you can. Ask about their families, hobbies and life outside of the workplace. You want to build a bond between yourself and those you work with. If you have a large staff, you may even need to write down details to keep them all straight. Try to do this with all of your staff members, but especially with your leadership team. Pray for their needs. Send brief notes of encouragement. Think of creative ways to say thank you for their labors and to help them accomplish their work.

2. Let everyone know the rules of the game – In the early 1990s, I was in Calgary, and was invited by the director of Samaritan's Purse-Canada to go to a hockey game. I had no idea what "off-sides" or "icing" were, nor did I know the difference

between “checking” and “charging.” I didn’t begin to enjoy the game until he explained what was going on so I understood the rules.

It is the same in the workplace. Each member of your staff needs to know the rules, so you need to outline those rules in a staff policy manual. All employees need to know what their responsibilities are through clear job descriptions and standards of performance. They need to know how they well they are doing via ongoing informal and formal feedback through one-on-one regular meetings with their supervisor and a periodic formal evaluation. Once everyone knows the rules, they know how to function well in their roles.

3. Train your brains – It is your responsibility to make sure your people have the training they need to do their jobs well. There is nothing more frustrating than having a responsibility and lacking the knowledge or skills to do it. On the other hand, learning new things stimulates your mind and brings satisfaction. It keeps you from being bored, provides a sense of accomplishment and avoids inordinately focusing on interpersonal relationships.

I was well-trained in medicine when I went to the mission field, but had no concept how little I knew about fulfilling my missionary role well. Looking back, what I found most satisfying was learning new things. During my 11 years in Kenya, I learned about management, administration, governance, foundation grant writing, construction, project development, milking a cow, raising chickens, water containment, drip irrigation, running a greenhouse, operating a shortwave radio, starting a nursing school, writing computer programs, being a leader, snorkeling, computerizing a hospital, firing someone, building a hydroelectric system, running a meeting, making a movie, playing squash, being a tour guide and the list goes on and on.

Stimulate your people with on-the-job training, in-house continuing education and formal outside training opportunities. The work you are doing is too important not to train your employees.

4. Recognize people’s accomplishments – It is human nature to want our achievements to be recognized. Work hard to catch your people doing good things and compliment them. Pass on comments people share about their work by placing a comment box in your facility, doing a written feedback survey with your patients or doing some sporadic oral interviews as patients leave. Recognize people for their years of service and personalize it the best you can. We recognize employees for each five years they serve with us with an escalating level of recognition. I write a note to each employee and we give each one a significant gift that grows in value at each anniversary. We have our staff members nominate and then vote on the “Staff Servant of the Year.” We give merit bonuses to outstanding achievers.

Interestingly, the staff members pour their gratitude back to us to an embarrassing degree and have lots of fun doing it. On Boss' Day this year, the theme was "Don't get used to it!" and they spoiled my Senior VP and me all day by chauffeuring us to work in a Cadillac, serving us tea and crumpets and giving us massages. They even created articles expressing their gratitude and printed them on the front and back pages of a newspaper that they gave to us to read with our morning slippers and cups of coffee at our desks. Each department created their own "event" to pamper us. But at each event throughout the day, they reminded us, "Don't get used to it."

Create an atmosphere of inordinate gratitude and recognition to pour a fragrant oil on your team. Have a goat roast or some other sort of feast, organize contests and get your staff involved in recognizing each other's accomplishments.

5. Communicate to connect – This morning we had a "town meeting" during our regular chapel time. On a quarterly basis, I set aside that time to give my staff an overview of what is going on and to assess where we are as an organization. I relate facts, but brag on individual and department accomplishments. I work hard to give them the big picture and show how their individual parts are making a difference while mixing it with humor and some stories. Informally, this happens all the time through sharing prayer requests, monthly reports and notes from members, as well as having individuals come and share how CMDA has impacted their lives and through our publications which we internally circulate.

Good communication is the grease in the wheels of your organization that helps you keep from wearing out your bearings. It takes time, but it is well worth the effort. My talk this morning was recorded and is being sent to staff members who were not in attendance.

Also look for formal and informal ways for your staff to communicate with you and other leaders in your organization. People are less likely to get frustrated when they have channels to vent their concerns, and you won't get blindsided by a blowup when you didn't even know there was a problem.

6. Schedule some laughter – Make memories together by scheduling some fun times. Don't worry; you don't have to think up what to do. Just set a small group of your most imaginative staff loose with a date and a budget, and tell them to be as creative as possible. You are looking for unpredictable fun and laughter wrapped around some meaningful moments.

Our Christmas party this year lasted four hours. We dismissed work early and the party committee wowed us. We laughed, shed a few tears and had our hearts moved. Everyone was asked to come to the party dressed in a Bethlehem costume. To make it easy, we borrowed costumes from a local church for those who didn't have time to create one. We had a random ornament exchange to pick our prayer partner for the year, made paper figures to put in the manger

displays that served as our table centerpieces, played Christmas story trivia with prizes (An extra half day of vacation is a wonderful motivator!), had a progressive Christmas play with members of the audience being picked to perform, enjoyed great food, listened to good music, received a Christmas message and much more. Staff are still talking about it and sharing the pictures on our staff website.

That event and other fun times throughout the year coat our relationships with Teflon.

7. Be predictably unpredictable – Everyone likes a pleasant surprise. You have to be more creative when you have patients to take care of, but look for ways to show your staff you care. Last Thursday, we invited our staff to come to the lobby, bring a bowl and get some popcorn. This morning after chapel, we celebrated this month's birthdays with homemade sweet rolls served in the kitchen. At Christmas, our finances did not allow us to give a large bonus, so we gave each staff member an extra day of vacation just before the regular holidays.

Yes, we have our traditions, but we also work hard at being unpredictable so staff members don't get bored or see something as a new entitlement. Some of this unpredictability focuses on individual staff members as well as just a department or the whole group. It might be a lunch out, a card when someone is ill, flowers after the death of a loved one or a gag gift.

Lest you think all we do is play, I should mention that our staff members are very high performers. Pouring oil in the gears takes some time and a little bit of money, but it avoids costly repairs or unfixable breakdowns. When combined with seeing and dealing with interpersonal problems early and a high expectation that people are expected to love one another, it leads to great achievements. Best of all, people are having fun getting there!

How can you put some oil in the gears?

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## **Cura Animarum**

by Rev. Stan Key

"Hold Papa's hand while we cross the street," I said to my three-year old grandson as we stood on the curb of a busy intersection. "There's lots of traffic, and you need to hold on tight."

As the light turned green, I extended my index finger and Jaden took hold. But as we stepped briskly into the street, I felt his grip weaken as his attention wandered to the trucks, buses and motorcycles all around us. Before I realized it, he had let go and was lagging behind. "No, Jaden! Hold my hand. This is dangerous."

Absentmindedly, he grasped my finger again. But after a few steps, he let go as he bent down to examine a flattened bottle cap lying in the crosswalk. Raising my voice, I stretched out my finger a third time. “Jaden! Hold on!” Obediently, he wrapped his tiny fingers once again around my finger but, as we stepped onto the opposite curb, he stumbled. Though trying to hold on, his strength was simply not equal to the demands of such a big step.

By this point, I realized my mistake. “Here, Jaden. Rather than you trying to hold my hand, let me hold *yours!*” I wrapped my fist around his entire wrist and forearm in a vice-grip that let him know he would never get out! The remainder of our walk went smoothly as we both discovered the difference between his grip... and mine.

Friend, have you discovered the difference between your grip on Christ and Christ’s grip on you? Paul talks about the two grips in Philippians 3:12. *I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.* Paul knew which grip came first. He had no illusions about which grip really mattered.

Perhaps this week you have discovered that the bumps along the road of life have caused you to stumble and fall. Perhaps your grip on Christ has loosened as the things of this world have attracted your attention. I have good news! His grip does what yours cannot. Your hold on Him may waver. But His hold on you is strong as steel. Relax. Stop trying so hard. Trust Him. Let Him wrap His mighty hand around yours. He never lets go!

*My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.* (John 10:27-28)

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### **Possible Resources?**

<http://www.limbsinternational.org/> I have recently become aware of an organization that is helpful in supplying lower limbs for those who need them – Limbs International. I am not familiar with them personally but a missionary shared the link so I believe it is a good one. Learn more at the URL above.

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### **Forward Focus**

by Judy Palpant

#### **Christ be with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me...--St. Patrick**

Today I threw away our 2011 calendar—a thin volume, thick with living. I paged through it briefly--recalling birthday parties, weddings, concerts, vacations, appointments—then pitched it.

Holding on to the past impedes forward motion. “Remember Lot’s wife,” Jesus says. Who can forget her? She is infamous. Permanently paralyzed. Petrified. A salt block.

A theologian friend once told me Lot’s wife and her family were already in Zoar, the place of safety, when she did her death-dealing look back. Urged at dawn to hurry and leave, they hesitated. So the angels grasped their hands and led them out of the city. Once more, they were commanded, “Flee for your lives! Don’t look back, and don’t stop anywhere in the plain! Flee to the mountains or you will be swept away!” Again, Lot lingered. He negotiated for Zoar to be the safe place, not the mountains. The angels agreed and said the rain of destruction on Sodom and Gomorrah would not begin until they reached their refuge.

Not on the road, not along the way, but from her place of shelter, Lot’s wife disobeyed, turned, looked beyond her husband, toward home. She pined for the possessions, the people, and paths of the past.

I was sorely tempted to do the same in 1980 when we reached Lugulu, Kenya. Not just a single year represented by a calendar, but a lifetime—thirty-two years of living in America—begged for more than a backward glance. Yearning for family and friends, I wanted to look past the strangers around me, the different language and ways of doing things--to draw the familiar lifestyle back within my reach.

But during orientation with the Mennonite Central Committee, we were warned, “Upon arrival, unpack all your bags—both physical and emotional. Don’t leave even a small one packed or you will be tempted to leave.” They knew the unpacked bag symbolized a hesitancy to establish new cultural roots, holding on to the past. It could paralyze—just as it did Lot’s wife.

Lugulu was God’s will, a safe place for us. Still, the move forward posed challenges. Reluctance and homesickness dogged my feet, my heart and mind. Thankfully, our three young children forced me to maintain momentum. In the process of daily living, I adjusted, acquired the language along with new acquaintances. In time friendships deepened, the new ways of living grew familiar.

I’m back in America now. All our children and grandchildren came home for Christmas. With such a brimming cup, why do I hesitate here on the threshold of 2012? Change will come. Joys and sorrows amidst new activities.

My sister once repeated a quote she’d heard: “Don’t look back or you may trip over what is in front of you.” I thought of this when I dropped her off at the airport yesterday. Pulling her luggage, she turned to give me one more wave. Turning back toward the door, she nearly plowed into the steel post holding the “unloading only zone” sign. We all face these same risks from an importune backward glance.

Awake, my soul. Face forward. Continue “a long obedience in the same direction”--as Eugene Peterson titled his book. “Press forward to take hold of that for which Christ took hold of [you].” (Phil. 3:12 NIV)

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## **Missionary Singles Issues: The Ticking Clock**

by Dr. Ron Koteskey

The following conversation could take place between two unmarried missionaries who are not contented with their singleness and know each other very well.

Pat: “I’m beginning to wonder if I’ll ever get married. I’m already 39 and even if I got married today, I’d be over 60 when my oldest child finishes college.”

Chris: “That’s nothing. I’m 39 too, and within a few years I may not even be able to have a child at all, even if I did get married.”

Both Pat and Chris are keenly aware of their ticking biological clocks.

### **Male and/or Female Issue?**

Both men and women get older, so these clocks are issues for both; however, they tend to be a greater issue for women than for men for three reasons.

- Menopause. Usually somewhere between 40 and 60 years of age women gradually stop menstruating and are unable to bear children. This is why Abraham and Sarah both laughed when God said she would bear a child (Genesis 17:17 and 18:12). Drastic hormonal changes also occur at this same time. Although some people talk about male menopause, men may father children into their 80s, and hormonal changes slowly decline all during adulthood with no drastic changes at any particular age.
- Ratio of single women to single men. Among long-term missionaries today there are far more single women than single men. These ratios vary widely by agency, field, and team, but they often range from 3:1 to 7:1. With so many more women than men, it is less likely that women will find spouses while serving in a host culture.
- Genetic birth defects. Nearly everyone has met someone with Down Syndrome. The incidence of this defect increases with the age of the mother. At age 30 the chance is one in 1000, at age 35 the chance is one in 400, at age 40 the chance is one in 100, and at age 45 the chance is one in 30. Although the incidence also increases slightly each year with the father’s age, the increase is trivial compared with the mother’s age.

What is a woman to do if she wants to marry and have children? Likewise, what is a man to do? Here are several options with some of the major advantages and disadvantages of each.

### **Meet someone in the agency**

This is often an excellent way to meet a spouse. People serving in the same agency are likely to have much in common. They usually have a similar call to service, similar values, similar beliefs, and both want to serve cross-culturally. All of these similarities, along with many others, are likely to lead to a strong marriage where both spouses are very happy in their marriage. Since there are so many more single women than single men, it is a great advantage for men.

Conversely, this fact is a great disadvantage to single women who want to marry and have children. For example, suppose an agency has three single women for every single man. If every single man marries one of the single women, then two thirds of the single women will remain unmarried. Those are not very good odds.

### **Meet a national in the host country**

Some single missionaries marry nationals living in the country where they are serving. The major advantages of this kind of marriage are that both have a common concern for the culture in which they are living, and often both are interested in serving God in that country as well. It is especially good for third culture kids (TCKs) who have grown up in that country or one with a similar culture.

The disadvantages include the deep cultural differences individuals often have on some important issues, such as male vs. female roles or honesty vs. saving-face. These differences may be very difficult to live with. The single woman may be attracted to the macho male in her host culture but may not like the way he dominates her after marriage. The single man may be attracted to the way the woman in his host culture avoids hurting anyone but may not like her lying to him to save face after marriage.

When children come along, more differences occur.

- Your children may not really know your parents, their grandparents.
- Family members, such as grandparents and cousins, may not be able to communicate well with your children.
- You may not celebrate your culture's holidays and observe its traditions.
- You may have to explain jokes and/or ask for them to be explained.
- Your children may grow up with a different set of cultural assumptions than you have.
- You may experience discrimination because of the ethnicity of your spouse.
- Your children may grow up with gender roles you do not approve of.

### **Meet someone in the passport country**

When single missionaries marry someone from their passport country, they both bring the same cultural values they hold on important issues, such as male vs. female roles or honesty vs. saving-face. When they have children, their children will then internalize some of these same deeply held values themselves and have strong ties to their relatives in their passport culture. Of course they will become TCKs, so they will also internalize some values from the host culture.

The major disadvantage to marrying someone from back “home” is that person may not be willing to serve in another culture. Individuals may say that they are willing to go wherever the single missionary is called, but they may not want to do so after the marriage takes place. Single missionaries need to consider how strong their call to serve in another culture is.

### **Meet someone on E-harmony.com**

After many years of teaching psychology, counseling, administration, research and writing at Fuller Theological Seminary, Neil Clark Warren founded e-harmony .com. He uses his “29 dimensions of compatibility” to match singles on the basis of common interests and deeply held values. Millions of singles fill out the survey, and then they are matched with others who score as being compatible with them.

The advantage to this is that if the test is correct and everyone tells the truth about themselves, single missionaries meet people who have many important things in common with them. Of course, it only matches singles with others likely to be compatible, and then the couple must spend much time with their match and with each other’s families. E-harmony is just an introduction.

The disadvantage is that not everyone is honest in what they say when taking any such instrument. Although many may answer the survey with complete honesty, some others may bias their answers toward what they would like to be, toward what they would like in a mate, or just tell outright lies. There is no way to screen people filling out surveys on-line or even be sure that they did not have a “friend” fill it out for them. Caution is the best advice.

### **Remain Single**

Both Jesus and Paul advocated remaining single. Jesus gave three reasons people did not marry and ended by saying that those who could accept it should do so (Matthew 19: 10-12). In 1 Corinthians 7 Paul made eight positive statements about remaining single (verses 1, 8, 26-27, 32, 34, 38, and 39-40). Remaining single and contented in your singleness is pleasing to God, and it is far better than marrying the wrong person.

Likewise, both Jesus and Paul realized that not everyone could live the single life. When his disciples suggested that it would be better not to marry, Jesus said that not everyone could accept this (Matthew 19:11). Paul said that marriage would help people avoid immorality, that people who could not control themselves and burned with

passion, and that a man acting improperly toward his fiancé should marry (1 Corinthians 7: 2, 9, and 36).

Paul advised Timothy specifically about widows who should and should not remain single. He said that only widows over 60, faithful to their husbands and known for their good deeds should be put on the list of widows cared for by the church (1 Timothy 5:9-10). However, he said that widows under 60 should not be on the list because their sensual desires would make them want to marry. Paul said that he counseled these younger widows to marry, to have children, and to manage their homes (1 Timothy 5:11-15).

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