Sowing by Grace
Demonstrating and proclaiming the Truth with compassion

Remberering 20 Years!
1996-2016
“For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.”

(Hebrews 6:10)
Looking back now, we can truly say that God, through His grace, “enriched in every thing to all bountifulness,” causing us to give “thanksgiving to God.” (II Corinthians 9:8, 11)

When Grace Dental Mission began 20 years ago, Dr. Jack and Jennifer Mitchell were burdened to minister to the dental needs of missionaries overseas and in the U.S. on furlough. Wherever the Lord called, Dr. Jack and his dental assistant wife packed their suitcases and portable dental equipment, hopped on an airplane or loaded their car, and traveled to serve others. Their theme verse from the third epistle of John—“that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth”—has been emblematic of their desire to help missionaries reach the lost with the gospel. This faithful dental missionary couple began what is today a mission organization that sends teams of medical and dental missionaries to the far corners of the globe.

What started in the 1990’s as dental care to missionaries and their families soon expanded into what was then a new ministry called “dental evangelism.” Their experience showed field missionaries that a dental clinic in a remote village could draw as many as 100 patients per day who waited for hours while a missionary or national shared the gospel with the crowd and counseled new believers.

Twenty years later, Grace Dental and Medical Missions is engaged in medical and dental evangelism efforts in Mexico, Africa, Asia, Micronesia, the Philippines and some countries that restrict access by Christian missionaries. What’s in store for the future? By God’s continued grace, a fully staffed medical clinic in West Africa will open in 2017, a new church will grow in Samar, Philippines, and promising opportunities will develop for medical and dental teams to go to countries where the God of the Bible is not known.

I hope that the following article by “Dr. Jack” will help you to rejoice with us as we look back at what God has done in the past 20 years. The other articles in this issue will update you on the Benin clinic, the growing church in Samar, and the challenges we face as we train nationals to participate in medical outreach.
It was early in 1996 when we made plans for our second foreign excursion as a family to Papua New Guinea (PNG) to help missionaries who were serving faithfully there. Two years prior to that, we had spent a month in the West African country of Senegal, treating the dental needs of many missionaries. We thought we would never travel overseas again. We were seeking God’s direction for how we could serve Him when we were asked to go to PNG. We readily agreed. Little did we know that our four weeks in that country would ultimately lead to twenty years of ministry with Grace Dental and Medical Missions. It was during that PNG ministry that both Jennifer and I saw that we could use dentistry to bring needy people in contact with the gospel! The question was, “How do we do it?”

Trying to find the right vehicle to do the ministry that we felt God would have us do proved very frustrating. We sought counsel
from a number of godly men and mission administrators, but it didn’t seem like anything fit. Finally, our good friend Henry Heijermans said to me, “Jack, you need to start your own mission.” My answer was an emphatic “NO!” I didn’t know the first thing about starting a mission agency.

Well, with the gracious prodding of brother Heijermans and much prayer, Grace Dental Mission was started in October, 1996. We started slowly, but it wasn’t long before we began to see the spiritual impact of the mission in a number of countries. Our goal has always been to put the gospel first and dentistry (later medicine as well) second. I believe God has blessed that ministry philosophy. We started to see the potential impact on church planting, first in Mexico and later in Cameroon, West Africa. As time went on, we expanded the mission and changed the name to Grace Dental and Medical Missions (GDMMissions). Including medicine in our evangelistic clinics greatly increased the number of people who heard the gospel during our ministry time.

One of my personal goals from the beginning was to see the mission come to the place where it would continue functioning long after God took the Mitchells home. I believe God has granted that desire and as I write this article today I have confidence that the mission is in a place to function for many years to come, if God so chooses.

We now have an office staff that keeps the day-to-day operation of the mission running smoothly. We have several other full-time missionaries faithfully serving in different places and in different capacities. We have associate missionaries who come alongside to fill evangelistic medical teams on a regular basis. We have a medical clinic that God built in Benin, West Africa that will open full time in 2017. And we just sent our first full-time overseas medical missionaries off to language school. They will serve in Benin following completion of their studies in France.

Twenty years! Who would have thought that God could transform an emphatic “NO!” into twenty years of taking the gospel to spiritually needy people in over thirty countries around the world. To God be the glory!
Our first ministry in Mexico began over fifteen years ago with a contact suggested by Pastor Dick Mercado of Mexican Gospel Ministries, Inc. (MGMI) in the city of Hermosillo (pop. 600,000+) at a Bible Institute. This began a fruitful, Biblically sound relationship that has flourished over the years.

Annual team trips for dental evangelism joined with students from the Ebenezer Bible Institute and Seminary (IPES) for effective outreach where every patient at the clinic heard the gospel in one-on-one, personal conversation.

We cannot overemphasize how important working with Bible students over the years has set the positive tone for our outreach in Hermosillo and its surrounding neighborhoods and districts. We have seen hundreds of people saved, thousands of contacts identified for follow-up, and at least one new church established as a direct result of our dental evangelism partnership with IPES. Following are some testimonies to the effectiveness of this fruitful relationship:

“I couldn’t count how many lives were touched and how many souls came to faith through their efforts, but I’m sure there will be much rejoicing in Heaven as a result. Thank you to Grace Dental and Medical Missions for all their service rendered from the heart!” Keith Huhta, past IPES Director

“GDMMissions, after each visit, leaves national pastors with many new contacts for follow-up, and the team members leave believers with the desire to see them return for a future visit. Their testimony and passion for seeing the Gospel spread is an encouragement to me.” Daniel Wokaty, IPES Seminary Dean

“The ministry of GDMMissions has given us the opportunity to see God work through the diversity of vocations that God has given His children. Dr. Mitchell and his team clean teeth in preparation for Christ to clean their souls.” Josué Guzmán Velasco, IPES Academic Dean

“We have seen people saved through their participation, believers encouraged and excited to serve the Lord. Doctor Mitchell’s dental visits have provided opportunities for service for our Bible college students and brethren of the churches, not to mention the excellent dental

by Michael Vetter, Editor
care his team has provided.” Ronald Cochran, IPES Director; Pastor, Iglesia Bautista Emanuel

One notable outreach began in a public park in the San Bosco neighborhood with our dental clinic working under a tarp for shade, students sharing the gospel with patients and curious onlookers, and other students teaching a children’s Bible class with puppets. A few people were saved and eager students filled out fifty registrations for follow-up. When we returned the next year to San Bosco, there was a Bible study in a nearby home and a Saturday children’s activity in the park. A year after that the Bible study group was in search of a place to meet on Sundays. Over a year later a local church (Iglesia Bautista Esperanza Viva) began services in an adjacent neighborhood. This local assembly continues growing spiritually today. We praise God for the part He allowed us to have adding to the Body of Christ!

“Thank you for your sacrificial love; thank you for your hard work; thank you for loving our Mexican people. Thank you for your love for the same Savior Jesus Christ. Our love and appreciation are with you!” Pastor Manuel Acedo, Iglesia Bautista Esperanza Viva

We ask that you pray for this pattern of medical and dental evangelism to be repeated in the future wherever He leads us in the coming years.

Winter 2016
Partnering with Nationals in Medical Ministry

by Dr. Chuck Hurlburt, Medical Director
The Benin clinic ministry represents a unique opportunity for medical evangelism. From the outset, it has been a true partnership between American missionaries and Beninese Christians who are members of a local church in the village of Boiffo in which the clinic is located. This partnership carries many advantages for the anticipated medical ministry. It also presents several challenges that must be recognized and overcome in order to succeed for God’s glory.

As a unique partnership, the Benin clinic will operate as an outreach of the local church in Boiffo. As such, it will support evangelism in the area with a long-term perspective. The local church desires to proclaim the gospel message to its neighbors in the village and to those in nearby villages. The clinic ministry will offer medical services which will in turn draw many to the campus to experience the spoken and written witness of the gospel of Christ. The local church can effectively follow up with these contacts and provide further spiritual ministry. The simple fact that the local church will be directing the evangelism minimizes many of the cultural and communication barriers often present in cross-cultural ministries. We anticipate that God will do great things through this partnership!

We must also be aware of challenges when medical care uses a cross-national team approach. The clinic team will consist of medical professionals and clinic staff from GDMmissions and from members of the local church. Challenges arise when there are differences in culture and training, as well as communication. Cultural differences are manifested in varying levels of understanding of good health care, different belief systems and biases, and variations in the role of general medical care in the social structure of a developing country. There are also variations in the levels of medical training of the staff. Standards of care are often different from what the average American expects. Lack of basic services and resources in many parts of Africa also limit the amount and extent of medical care available to the individual. The structure of medical services is not what many are used to in our American system. Potential problems can also exist relating to communication between the caregiver and patient. The language barrier is an obvious difficulty. There are also cultural differences in understanding and implications that fall from that. American medical care places a high degree of importance on communication which is not always present in other systems.

As we look to this unique opportunity of medical ministry in partnership with our brothers and sisters in Christ from the local church in Boiffo, we also understand the great privileges and advantages that are before us. We are eager to see how God blesses and uses this ministry. We also embrace this opportunity with full realization of the challenges as we work with our fellow Beninese believers in this exceptional opportunity that God has set before us.
Sowing by Grace

S ending equipment and supplies to the Benin clinic has been a step-by-step lesson in trusting God for His faithfulness and gracious provision. God knows the end from the beginning. But, if you’re like me, you’d like to know how the lesson will end so you can start your journey with more confidence. But that’s not how faith works! Someone once said that, “Faith is not trusting God from A to B. Faith is trusting God from A...”

Many of you have been following construction of the Benin Clinic building over the past few years and rejoicing with us to see how the people, materials, supplies, and funds have come together in ways we could not have foreseen. God is so good!

Dr. Steve Boutrus and his wife Kat are in French language school preparing to move to Benin and open the clinic in 2017. A critical milestone for the clinic in advance of their arrival was a large shipment of clinic supplies and personal household items for them and another missionary family. For more than a year, we have gathered donated and purchased materials ranging from large items like hospital beds, to non-perishable medicines, to quantities of hospital supplies such as sterile gloves, dressings, syringes, face masks, and countless other items for a remote clinic. The container was packed as tightly as possible so items would not shift and be damaged.

The 40 ft. container left the parking lot of a local church in mid August, 2016 destined to go by ship from the port of Boston to a port in Spain and then on to Cotonou, Benin. We were told that the trip could take as long as nine months. Everything depended on the container not being lost (like airline luggage, it happens sometimes!), damaged, or held up by customs agents upon entering Benin. Our prayers for the container’s swift and safe arrival were answered! Little did we know that this was only one step in God’s lesson plan.

The next test of our faith was clearing the container, which held contents with a replacement value of almost $100,000, through Benin customs so it could be
trucked north to the other end of the country. Our agent in Benin said that the customs charge could be as much as 30% of the value. We prayed to the LORD who said of the world’s riches, “The silver is mine, and the gold is mine.” When we heard that the charge was closer to 10% than 30%, we saw God meet that expense almost immediately! The truck with the container began the 430-mile drive over uncertain roads to the village of Boiffo. Some of us thought that the most difficult part of the journey was over—not so!

The one-day drive became two and then three. Sixty miles from Boiffo, the tired truck broke down after the potholes and the hot sun finally battered its worn tires into submission. Missionaries and volunteers in Boiffo poured a concrete pad for the container’s final resting place, while others welded a steel “road grader” to smooth out some of the more challenging terrain that pretended to be the road. The temperature was 100 degrees when the truck finally arrived at the village where scores of believers and villagers helped unload the container’s contents in the afternoon sun. The empty container finally slid off the truck onto the pad!

Isn’t it always the case that when we look back on God’s step-by-step faithfulness we wonder why we couldn’t have trusted Him more? We know that He is the God of all Goodness and loves to bless His children. “See...” we say to ourselves, “next time we will trust Him more.”
GDMMissions needs your prayers. To keep you informed we publish regular reports and notices via e-mail. Sign up at signup.gdmmissions.org. After inputting your e-mail address in the sign up box, you will be prompted to choose which type of communication you would like to receive including the Mitchell’s, or Bell’s newsletters, and ministry opportunity bulletins for medical and non-medical personnel. **Sign up today.**