



CHIROPRACTIC

Christian Chiropractors Association Celebrates 70 Years

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- In July 2023, the Christian Chiropractors Association (CCA) celebrated 70 years of ministry to the chiropractic profession and the Christian community.
- Short-term missions is now the largest ministry of the organization. Several hundred members have gone to more than 100 different countries around the world.
- For additional information, including opportunities to serve on a short-term mission, visit: <http://www.christianchiropractors.org>.

In July, the Christian Chiropractors Association (CCA) celebrated 70 years of ministry to the chiropractic profession and the Christian community. Its roots can be traced back to 1951 at Palmer Chiropractic College. At that time, a student, Frank Torok, saw a need for some type of Christian witness on the growing campus and formed the Christian Student Fellowship Club. Little did he, and the others who joined him, realize how far their small Bible study group would reach in its impact on the world for Christ.

From Bible Study Group to Global Organization

At the 1953 Lyceum, Dr. B.J. Palmer invited Dr. Robert Thompson to speak “in the tent” regarding his service as a missionary in charge of a leprosarium in Ethiopia. From among those who heard Dr. Thompson’s dream of offering chiropractic services for those with leprosy and other tropical diseases, Dr. Mattie Carswell Stephens was inspired to help in this endeavor.

She contacted the newly elected president of the Christian student group, Glenn Hultgren, to enlist support and help. Together, Mattie and Glenn brainstormed and prayed. Through many discussions, the concept of the Christian Chiropractors Association formed – an association that could focus on Dr. Thompson’s project and be an avenue of service worldwide and across the

profession.

From these humble beginnings, the CCA emerged and, for 70 years now, has been in existence to provide fellowship for Christians within the profession, service opportunities for those wanting to give back locally or globally through mission trips, and in general, being the voice for Christ in chiropractic.

Progression of Mission Outreaches

After the formation of the CCA in 1953 and the approval of the organization's charitable status, this committed group of doctors purposed to use the gift of chiropractic to make an impact around the world.

Originally, the CCA provided equipment to DCs who were serving in some capacity with a recognized mission agency. By offering support, the benefits of chiropractic were being introduced in countries that had not previously had the privilege of experiencing this type of health care.

By 1963, there was a desire to expand the ministry to include more "hands on" involvement by CCA members. Unlike the Christian Medical Society, whose short-term missionaries had the support of 65 pharmaceutical and surgical supply companies, the CCA members would need to pay their own way if they were to participate. Even with that challenge, there was tremendous support among the membership for the CCA to commit to missions.

In 1967, the CCA Board of Directors voted to send representatives to do a worldwide survey of missions, visiting those practicing in other countries, and assess which populations would be receptive to chiropractic care, be able to benefit from receiving care, and reside in a location where our members could return to offer their services. Dr. Glenn Stillwagon of Monongahela, Pa., Dr. Harry Kalsbeek of Castro Valley, Calif., and Dr. Glenn Hultgren of Fort Collins, Colo., were chosen to go.

This worldwide trip began in January 1968 in Mexico and ended in March. In all, the trio met with 353 missionaries in 25 countries and served with 35 different mission societies on 75 mission stations. Within three years, CCA members were serving on short-term assignments.

From this very humble beginning, the short-term mission outreach of the Christian Chiropractors Association had grown tremendously. Short-term missions is now the largest ministry of the organization. Several hundred members have gone to more than 100 different countries around the world. Many have served multiple times.

In 1984, the CCA scheduled its first trip to Montego Bay, Jamaica. For 35 years, the CCA sent 2-3 teams of six to 16 doctors, their spouses, and support personnel to Jamaica. In a similar way, in more recent years, the CCA has partnered with Cleveland University in Kansas City, sending two teams per year to serve in the Dominican Republic.

These teams are composed of members of the Christian Chiropractors Association, students in the clinical treatment phase of their education, and a faculty advisor. Teams typically treat 200-250 patients per day; not a lot of leisure time, but plenty of labor and experience, which is its own reward.

In 1992, Rev. James Weber, CCA missions director, received an invitation to take a team to Ukraine. The old Soviet Union was no more, and a new sense of freedom had come to the people behind what had been the Iron Curtain.

Jim organized a team of about 15 CCA members and associates, and they traveled the length of the country on a cruise ship on the Dnieper River, stopping in about 10 cities along the way. In each city, they had the opportunity to visit churches, meet pastors and speak to Ukrainian Christians.

From those contacts on that trip, the CCA has sponsored several teams each year in the late '90s and early 2000s with dozens of chiropractors, as well as medical doctors, nurses and other health care professionals. Several CCA members have been there many times and have developed a strong bond with the Ukrainian people.

Dr. Jim Spertzel of Biglerville, Pa., assisted with sending two young people through chiropractic school, who returned to Ukraine upon graduation and now practice in the Cherkassy area. With the onset of the war, the CCA has continued to financially support these two resident chiropractors in Ukraine as they work closely with injured military personnel and Ukrainian refugees passing through their area.

Editor's Note: Article submitted by the Christian Chiropractors Association. For additional information, including opportunities to serve on a short-term mission, visit <http://www.christianchiropractors.org> or call 800-999-1970. If you would like to learn more about the CCA or read the book detailing the history of the association, please contact the CCA home office for information.

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