



CHIROPRACTIC (GENERAL)

Looking Back: Christian Chiropractors Association Celebrates Its 60th Year

In 2013, the [Christian Chiropractors Association](#) (CCA) is celebrating 60 years of ministry to the chiropractic profession and the Christian community. Its roots can be traced back to 1951 and 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 little 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 his dream of chiropractic services for those with leprosy and other tropical diseases, Dr. Mattie Carswell Stephens was inspired that something had to be done 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 put their heads together and prayed. Through many discussions arose the concept of a Christian chiropractors 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 60 years now, has been in existence to provide fellowship and community for Christians within the profession, service opportunities for those wanting to give back to their communities and to other countries through mission trips, and in general, being the voice for Christ in chiropractic.

The Progression of CCA 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 intent was to simply provide 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. With the success of these efforts came the expansion of the support to include personal, "hands on" involvement by CCA members.

It was in the January 1963 issue of *The Christian Chiropractor* that the idea of short-term missionaries first came up. At that time it was noted that the Christian Medical Society had sponsored 14 of its members as short-term missionaries. While the medical community had the support of "65 pharmaceutical and [surgical](#) supply companies,"we knew the CCA members would have to pay their own way. There was tremendous support for the CCA to commit to this project, and several foreign missionary chiropractors asked for some CCA members to come to their field to work with them.

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 to 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.

The journey 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. The greatest result, besides touching the lives of many individuals, was that the CCA had a far deeper appreciation for and understanding of missions in underdeveloped areas of the world and could prepare to serve them in a productive way.

At the association's annual convention in 1971, the CCA voted to officially develop a short-term mission program, as by that time several members had already completed short-term assignments. From this very humble beginning, the short-term mission outreach of the Christian Chiropractors Association has grown tremendously. In fact, it is now the largest ministry of the organization. Several hundred members have gone into more than 100 different countries around the world. Many have gone several times, and some continue to go each year.

When those serving have the support of local resident missionaries and/or church pastors, there is already an avenue of communication and connection with the local residents. Short-term mission teams can usually plan on an average of 100 to 150 contacts per day, per doctor. Not a lot of leisure time, but plenty of labor, which is its own reward.

In 1984, the CCA scheduled its first trip to Montego Bay, Jamaica, combined with a church group out

of Pennsylvania. While on this trip, the group was able to serve in many schools, orphanages and churches. Over the past 28 years, the CCA has sent two or three teams of six to 16 doctors, wives and support personnel each year. The word *chiropractor* has become almost synonymous with *Christian* in the Montego Bay area. We have found that this Jamaica experience is an excellent "boot camp" for those who are considering a first mission trip.

The Jamaican people speak English, so there is no language barrier, and they are most appreciative of anything the Americans can do for them. This ministry with the people offers a cross-culture experience, which most short-term beginners need.



Drs. Glenn Hultgren, Harry Kalsbeek and Glenn Stillwagon in Hong Kong during their worldwide mission tour in 1968.

In 1992, Rev. James Weber, CCA missions director, received an invitation to take a team to the 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, many doors have opened, as churches, pastors and Ukrainian Christians have invited our members into their homes and communities. The CCA has sponsored several teams each year with dozens of chiropractors as well as medical doctors, nurses and other health professionals. Several of our members have been there many times and have developed a real bond with the Ukrainian people.

In the early years of the CCA, it was impossible to find a mission organization that would allow a

doctor of chiropractic to serve with their organization and use their professional training as part of that mission activity. The professional jealousy (on the part of the established medical personnel) was so strong in those years that some of our members were prevented from practicing chiropractic, and some were expelled from the mission for practicing chiropractic. Now, 60 years later, it is impossible to find enough DCs to fill all of the requests that come from individual missionaries and mission societies for both short-term and resident missionary status.

If you would like to learn more about the CCA or read the book detailing the history of the association, please contact our home office and information will be sent to you at no cost or obligation. We will be gathering in Alexandria, Va., this June to mark this significant milestone at our annual convention.

Article submitted by the Christian Chiropractors Association. For additional information including opportunities to serve on a short-term mission, [click here](#) or call 800-999-1970.

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