

# ***Lessons from the Birth of Medical Mission***

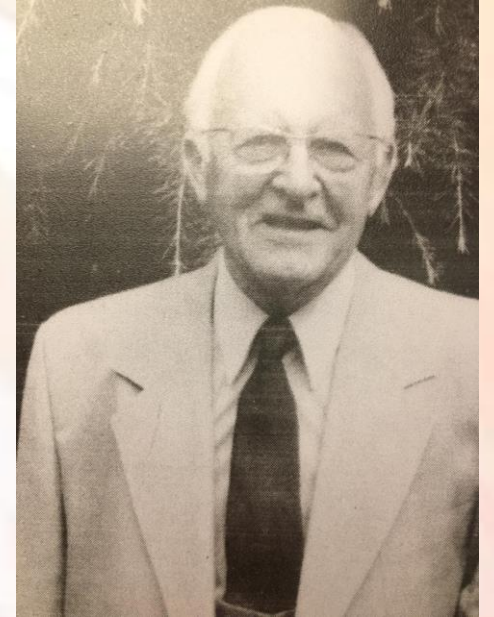
**Dr Mark Pickering  
May 2023**



**Uniting & equipping Christian doctors & nurses  
to live and speak for Jesus Christ**

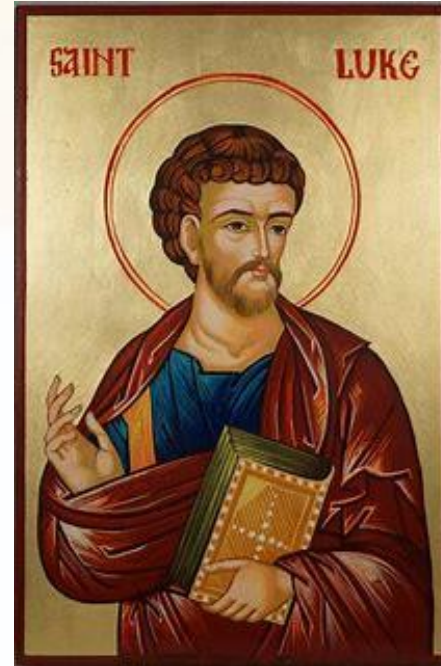
# Why Think About History?

- The **Christian medical movement** goes back to 1830s
- We are all descended from those early pioneers
- **Douglas Johnson** – ‘It is inexcusable in a Christian to neglect history.’
- **Peter Saunders** – ‘History repeats itself... It has to, because no-one ever listens!’
- ***Lesson 1 – Learn the Lessons of History***



# Christian Doctors – a Long History!

- **Dr Luke** – companion of Paul
- Ancient **Hospitals**, eg St Thomas' (13<sup>th</sup> C)
- Great individuals
  - **Thomas Sydenham** (1624-1689)
    - 'English Hippocrates'
    - Treating plague victims, risking his life
  - **Edward Jenner** (1749-1823)
    - Vaccination
- **Lacking a *movement***, post-Reformation



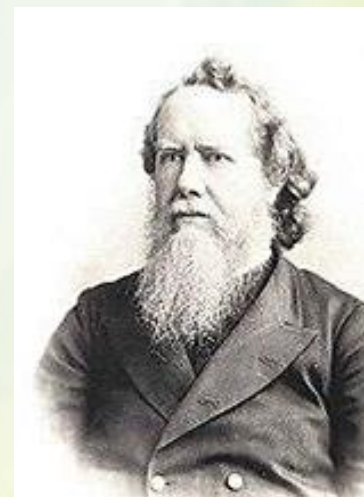
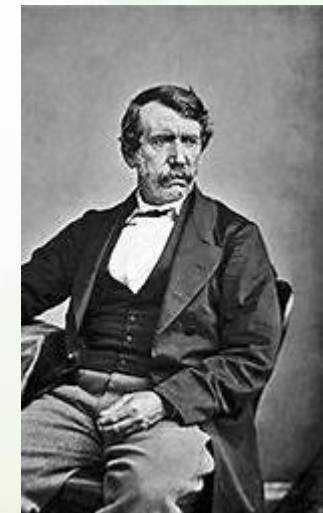
# Early Missionary Doctors

- **Jesuits** – eg Japan/Philippines 16<sup>th</sup> C
- **Dr Caspar Schlegelmilch** - India 1730
  - Danish-Halle mission – dead in three weeks!
- **Dr John Thomas**
  - Partner of **William Carey** – Bengal 1793
  - Ship's doctor, converted in Calcutta
  - Bengal, not Tahiti!
- **Dr John Scudder** – India 1819
  - Founded dynasty of medical Scudders
  - Granddaughter **Ida** – **Vellore College**
- **Key individuals** – not a *movement* yet.



# Sowing the Seeds of Change

- **Karl Gutzlaff** – Thailand/China 1820s
- Basic medical knowledge – not a doctor
- Realised compassionate healthcare communicated more than words
- Spread concept of **‘medical mission’**
- Inspired **David Livingstone, Hudson Taylor** and other early pioneers
- ***Lesson 2** – medical mission was once ‘new’ and ‘strange’. Someone had to invent it. What might the Lord do through us, through you?*



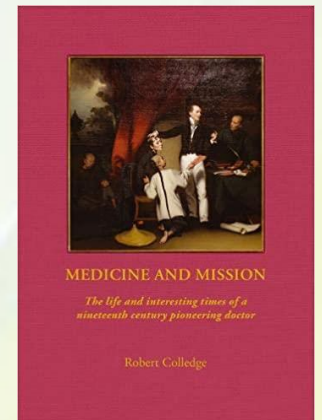
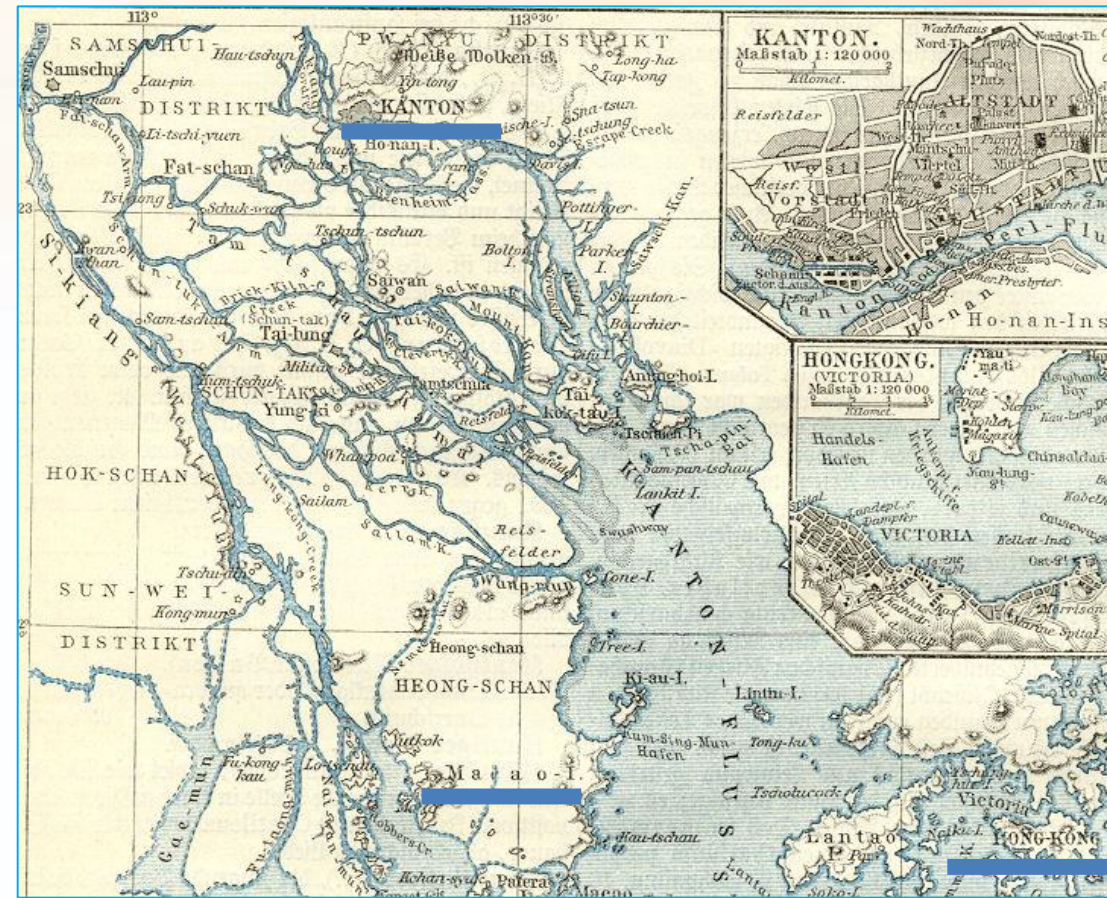
# Changing World, Changing Medicine

- **1800s** – growth of Western **Empires, trade, military**
  - Increased contact between USA/Europe & Asia/Africa
  - Many *problems* caused by this, but also *opportunities*
- Like **Paul and the Roman empire** – travel/communications
  - Christians came with them
  - Diplomats, traders, military, missionaries, chaplains, doctors
- **Western medicine** advancing rapidly
  - Real opportunities to reduce suffering as never before
- **Lesson 3** – *external forces & changing times bring new opportunities – be watching and ready – ‘horizon scanning’*



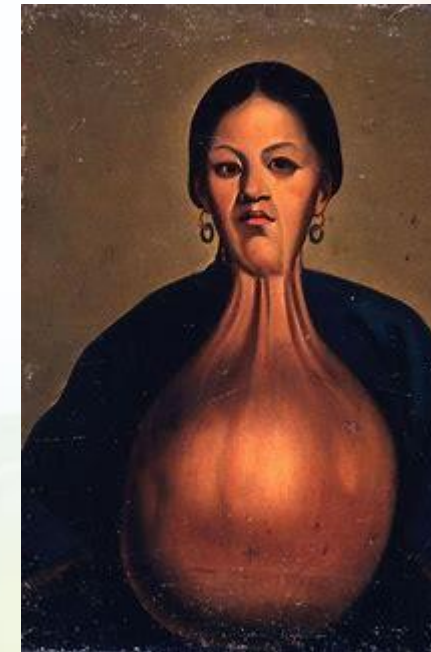
# Revolution in China

- In 1820s-30s, Western trade with China was only permitted in **Canton** (Guangzhou)
  - Also nearby was Portuguese colony of **Macau**
  - **Hong Kong** not under British until 1842
- Early missionaries there, inc vaccination
- **Dr Thomas Richardson Colledge**
  - Worked for East India Co. – good salary, free time
  - Opened eye hospitals, Macao 1827, Canton 1828
  - Chinese healthcare less skilled in eye disease then
  - Particular impact in treating these feared diseases
- **Lesson 4** – *we never know what opportunities our career choices will bring – make them in faith, trusting the Lord.*



# The Movement Begins – Dr Peter Parker

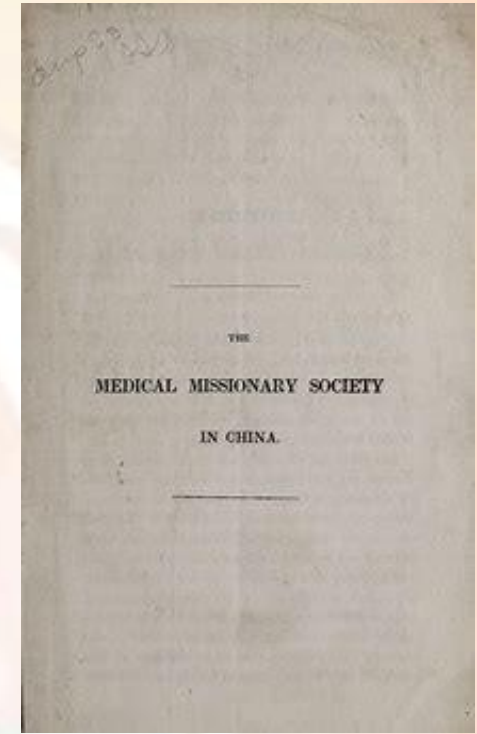
- **New breed of ‘medical missionary’**
  - dual-trained in theology and medicine
  - specific aim to be ‘medical missionary’
- Inspired by Gutzlaff, through his mission board
- Came to **Canton 1834** – met Gutzlaff and Colledge
- **Opened eye hospital** – still going today!
- Also dealt with **ENT** and **tumour removal**
  - Lam Qua paintings - Guy’s Hospital/Yale





# The Movement Takes Shape

- Parker, Colledge and others formed the **Medical Missionary Society in China** in 1838 – the world's first!
  - Brought in local business community – medical mission was good for trade, good for international diplomacy
  - Printed appeals in UK and USA, calling for 'pious physicians'
  - **Colledge left forever in 1838**, weeks after MMSC formed, never to return.
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- *Lesson 5 – God does amazing things with timing and bringing people together*
  - *Lesson 6 – Good ideas usually need organisation to become great ideas that last*



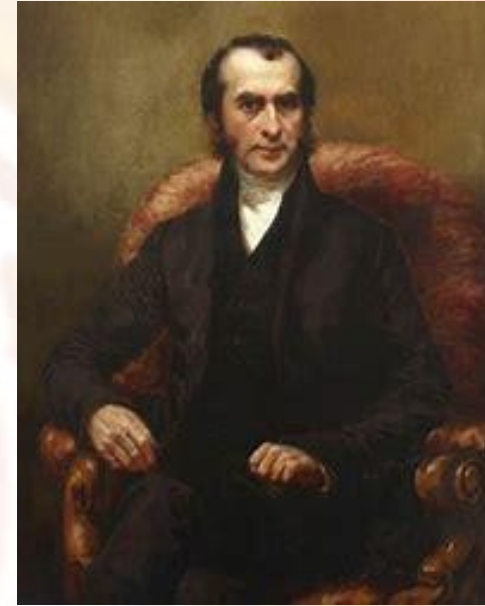
# Problems are Opportunities in Disguise

- Dark forces of empire and trade - **opium sale and addiction**
  - Chinese authorities resisted, British govt forced it on them
  - **First Opium War 1839-1842**
  - Treaty of Nanking - Hong Kong to Britain
- **Forced Parker to leave Canton 1840**
  - Flung his influence worldwide, Cf Paul in prison
  - To **USA, UK and France** – promoting and raising funds
- Led to creation of **two separate medical mission orgs** with very different outcomes
- *Lesson 7 – Bad forces and bad situations can be used by God to bring about great good.*



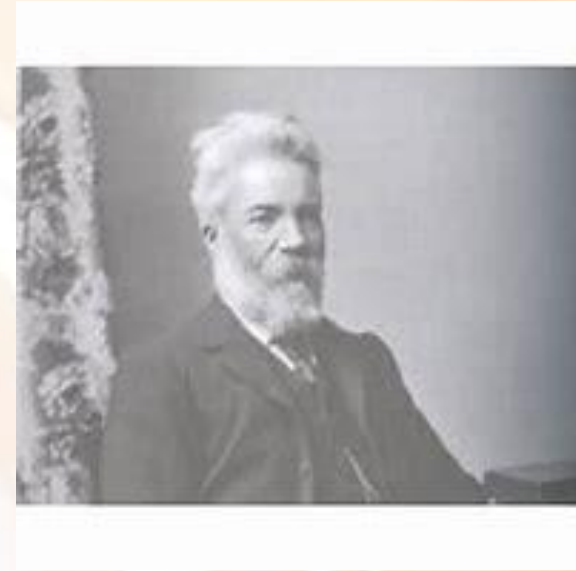
# Syrian Medical Aid Association 1841-1847

- From Parker's visit to **London**
- **Thomas Hodgkin** - secretary
  - Quaker, pathologist at Guy's – lymphoma!
  - Keen supporter of medical mission and indigenous peoples
  - Eg Canada and Liberia
- Early success, wealthy backers
  - sent two doctors to **Lebanon and Damascus**
- Too far, too fast – hadn't anticipated complexities
- **Evaporated by 1847**, Hodgkin in debt
- *Lesson 8 – Great ideas can go horribly wrong if the details aren't thought through.*



# Edinburgh Medical Missionary Society 1841-....

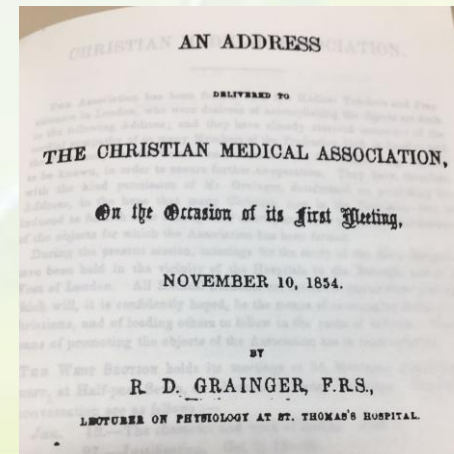
- Parker in **Edinburgh** – committee formed EMMS
- Promoted **concept**, raised **funds**
  - supported existing ventures (MMSC and SMAA)
- Supported **students**, built slowly and steadily
- **Kaloost Vartan** – EMMS student – **Nazareth Hospital**
- Both EMMS and Nazareth are still going!
- *Lesson 9 – Building slowly with the next generation can produce lasting results*



**EMMS**International  
Health for Today, Hope for Tomorrow

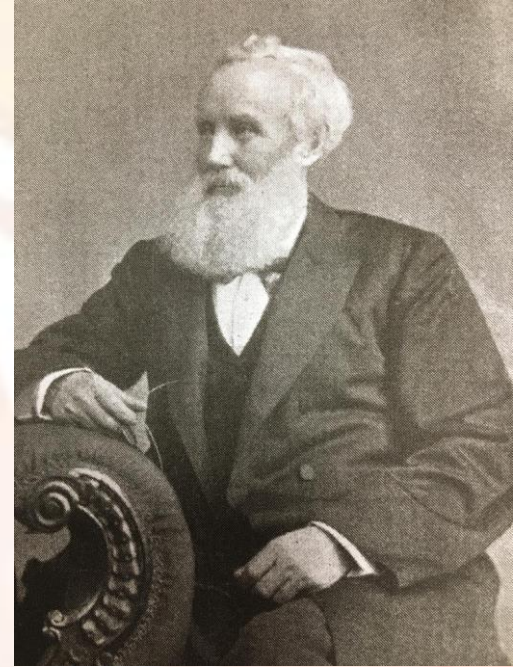
# One Good Movement Encourages Another

- Student Bible class, **Guy's Hospital London, 1849**
- Spread to other med schools 1853, students reached out to doctors
- **Dr Golding Bird** prepared by God, answered letter in *Brit Med Journal*
- Gathered colleagues, formed **Christian Medical Association in 1854**
- **EMMS committee** heard & wrote to encourage him
  - *received hours before key meeting of doctors*
- **First ever full 'CMF'** – medical mission and discipleship hand in hand
- God's amazing timing –
  - Golding Bird launched CMA months before he died at 39
  
- **Lesson 10** – *Retain your focus, but encourage others to realise their vision*



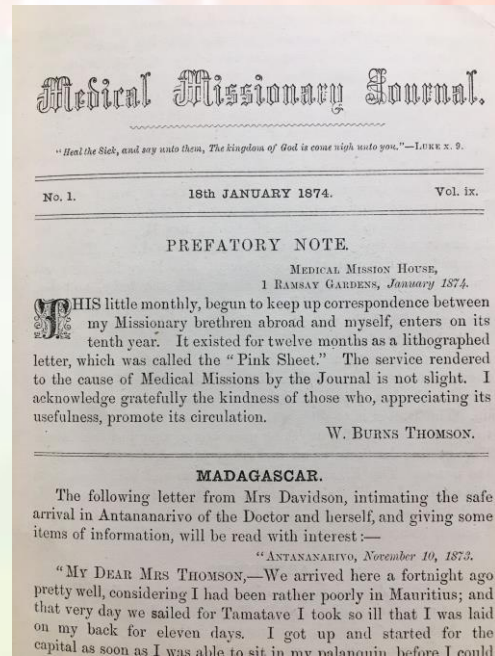
# Home Medical Mission - 1

- **Dr William Burns Thomson (WBT)**
  - realised value of medical mission – switched from theology
- Christian-run **dispensary** Edinburgh - 1853
  - WBT became superintendent under EMMS
- Generations of **students** trained in medicine and evangelism
- First 'lived out', then **housed and mentored** by WBT
  - Massively better results and retention
- Many of them became overseas medical missionaries
  - Dr Vartan in Nazareth
- **Lesson 11** – *Build community, marry theory and practice – result = dynamite!*



# Home Medical Mission - 2

- Edinburgh 'mother institution', WBT the driving force
- Replicated in **other cities** during 1860s-70s
  - Glasgow, Aberdeen, Liverpool, Birmingham, London
- Thousands of poor patients were treated and heard gospel in **inner-city slums** before the National Health Service in 1948
  - Also a great model for mission dispensaries in **many other countries**
- WBT travelled and wrote – ***Medical Missionary Journal***
  - sharing letters, projects, encouragements
  - uniting former **students**, informing **supporters**
- ***Lesson 12 – Good ideas can often be replicated – communicate & share the vision!***



# Mission Dispensary to Mission Hospital

- First medical mission in London 1871
- Second in 1874 – **Bethnal Green**
  - by 1877 this had become a hospital
- **Mildmay Mission Hospital**
  - trained **nurses** (my Mum!) & **doctors** for mission field
  - treated patients, shared gospel
- Survived the arrival of the National Health Service
  - became world leader in **HIV care**
  - now reinvented for **Covid rehab** and **homeless step-down**
- **Lesson 13** – *Good ideas can grow & adapt – do the small things well, and the bigger things will follow*





# The London Medical Mission goes global!

- **Dr George Saunders**
- Christian military doctor
  - **Crimean War** 1850s – helped by **Florence Nightingale's** care!
- Retired to London 1871 – ran **London Medical Mission**
  - Fun fact – now London's oldest fish & chip shop!
- From there launched **Medical Prayer Union** 1874
  - forerunner to CMF
- Also launched **Medical Missionary Association** 1878
  - London version of EMMS for 126 years
  - **merged with CMF** in 2004.
  
- ***Lesson 14*** – *With God, you can change the world in your retirement!*



# The lenses of History and Scripture - 1

- Early medical mission full of **amazing stories** of service, sacrifice and **God's providence**
- Yet in the 21st C, much seems dated & uncomfortable
- Early missionaries all **white men** from **Europe and USA**
  - Many **indigenous assistants** often forgotten and unnamed
- Inextricably linked to the problems of **empires, trade and war**
- Right to **reappraise** this in the light of history
  - avoid patronising '**Western Saviour**' assumptions and practices
- **Scripture** reminds us we are a **global community**
  - we *can* operate with **global humility**
  - don't throw out the baby with the bathwater!



# The lenses of History and Scripture - 2

- Medical mission has **evolved**
  - **national churches** & health services
  - **educational partnerships** eg PRIME
  - partnerships between **national ICMDA movements**
- **Lesson 15** – *Be willing to re-evaluate through history and Scripture – adapt & evolve, but retain the best!*



**Christian  
Medical  
Association of  
India**



**PRIME**

# Further Resources on [www.cmf.org.uk](http://www.cmf.org.uk)



[Lessons from the Archive 1 -  
Golding Bird and the Christian  
Medical Association](#)



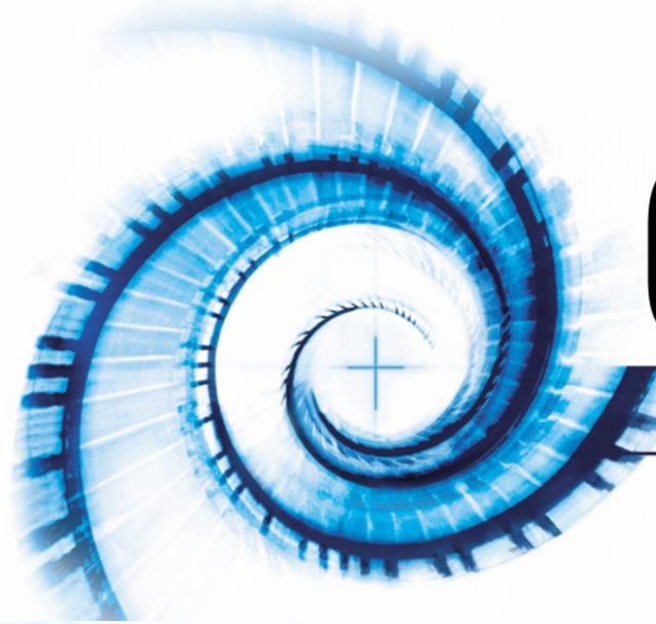
[Lessons from the Archive 2 -  
The birth of modern medical  
mission](#)



[Lessons from the Archive 3 -  
Christian influences on the modern  
nursing profession](#)

**Questions?**

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# CMF

Christian Medical Fellowship

**Uniting & equipping Christian doctors & nurses  
to live and speak for Jesus Christ**