



## More than the pandemic

It is fitting for this issue of the *Christian Journal for Global Health* to come to you just before Christmas. We remember the birth of the Christ child, God with us. God with us not just in the ordinariness of human life, but in the calamities, defeats, and suffering entailed in that ordinariness. The coronavirus pandemic, as well as myriad of other human afflictions, is a reminder of those aspects of life. Surely the greatest spiritual lesson of the pandemic is that we are not the masters of our own destiny. The pandemic is a rebuke to the hubris of our age – that human knowledge is the remedy for all ills. Responses to the pandemic have exposed the fissures in our societies as well. While the healthcare community has responded heroically to the challenges, churches have served as a much-needed solace and source of health information, as well as, at times, sources of spread. Some who consider faith non-essential and are antagonistic to it have proposed severe restrictions to much-needed fellowship.

In the providence of God, we are able to rejoice at the arrival of effective vaccines to prevent SARS CoV-2 infection, the world-wide calamity that has dogged us for nearly an entire year. The vaccines come out-of-time, as it were, having been developed, produced, and tested with a speed that is astonishing. Hopefully, they will enable this devastating infectious disease to be put behind us. If that proves to be possible, it is salutary to ponder what is able to be anticipated and to appreciate the perspicacity of someone like Dr. Jono Quick, whose book, *The End of Epidemics*, foresaw in 2018 what came to pass in 2020. For additional insights, we are pleased to feature in this issue a guest editorial by [Dr. Quick](#) which surveys some of the challenges that the release, use, and equitable global distribution of the vaccines hold for us, as well as the Christian responsibility to follow the data for both

individualized whole-person care and community care as acts of love for our global neighbor.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted systemic vulnerabilities, health inequities, and the ongoing diseases and conditions that continue to threaten individuals and populations. The response to the pandemic has affected the global economy and exacerbated hunger and extreme poverty. Progress in global health to control the remaining poliovirus, HIV, malaria and tuberculosis has also been tragically impaired due to the pandemic.<sup>1</sup>

Two original articles describe efforts to evaluate health needs for chronically impoverished villages and then to train Christian health workers in the ways to most effectively service those needs. [Claudia Bale](#) reports that the results of surveying Guatemalan villages for health needs and barriers to health produced a variety of themes that provided guidance for the organizations seeking to meet these needs. [Sneha Kirubakaran](#) and colleagues evaluated a short course in global health from Australia that sought to prepare Christian health workers for international service.

This issue features three reviews. [Samuel Adu-Gyamfi](#) and his colleagues from Ghana completed an extensive systematic review of the role of missions in Sub-Saharan Africa, finding that although the scope of work changed over time, the aim of sharing the gospel motivated work in a broad scope of activities in development, education, and healthcare which continues to be relevant. [Omololu Fagunwa](#) from Nigeria provides a history lesson based on original source documents on how the 1918 influenza pandemic affected the growth of Pentecostalism in Africa. [Alexander Miles, Matthew Reeve, and Nathan Grills](#) from University of Melbourne completed a systematic literature review showing evidence of the significant effectiveness of community health workers in dealing with non-communicable diseases in India.



Two commentaries offer fresh approaches to persisting healthcare issues. [Richard Thomas and Niels French](#) describe the population health model and explain how it is particularly suited to a role in the future for mission hospitals and to address a variety of global health concerns. [Melody Oereke, Kenneth David, and Ezeofor Onyedikachukwu](#) from Nigeria offer their thoughts on how Christian pharmacists can employ a model for prayer, faith, and action in their professional calling. The coronavirus pandemic has required healthcare and aid organizations to come up with creative solutions to completely novel circumstances if they were to be able to continue their ministries. [Daryn Joy Go](#) and her colleagues from International Care Ministries describe their employment of social networking technologies in the Philippines to continue their work in extreme poverty alleviation as well as spiritual nourishment despite lockdown conditions and severe limitations on travel and communication.

Finally, [Pieter Nijssen](#) reviews *Creating Shared Resilience: The Role of the church in a Hopeful Future*, by David Boan and Josh Ayers. In our world of short-term gain and short attention spans, resilience is a commodity in tragically short supply. Pastor Nijssen's discussion helpfully

expands on an ongoing discussion of how faith and justice must be integrated in any faithful gospel ministry and how this, itself, promotes resilience in the face of crises.

We call our readers' attentions to our current call for papers, [Environmental Concern and Global Health](#). Our stewardship of the earth and its resources was part of God's first command to Adam and Eve and an important aspect of human flourishing throughout the Bible. That stewardship has implications for global health that deserve study and explanation. Click on the link to the call for a list of the subjects we hope to see in submissions on this topic and many others within the unique and broad scope of the journal.

During this season of both widespread challenge and enduring hope, we pray for peace on earth, and good will to all people.

## References

1. Mandavilli A. 'Biggest monster' rebounds. Science Times. The New York Times. 2020 Aug 4. [updated Sept. 23, 2020]. D1, D5. Available from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/03/health/coronavirus-tuberculosis-aids-malaria.html>



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