

The *Paul Harrison Award* was instituted to honour medical graduates or post-graduates of CMC Vellore, who, through their outstanding and selfless contribution in the field of healthcare, have been able to uphold the motto of the institution, *'Not to be ministered unto, but to minister.'* The awardee for this year, by his exemplary life, embodies the very word *'service'*, having spent over 2 decades bringing hope and health to remote and forgotten parts of the world.

Fam Siow Leong was born in Malaysia. He grew up in a home and community where there were no medical personnel. Caring for his sick grandfather kindled a spark to one day serve as a doctor. He received that opportunity when he joined Christian Medical College, Vellore, sponsored by the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) Church in Malaysia for the MBBS course. What struck him most about CMC were his teachers: He says *'...I wondered how, with their achievements in medical sciences, they could be so humble and pious. As I watched them, my character was unconsciously moulded by the principles that governed their lives. Indeed, by beholding, we are changed.'* On completion of his undergraduate medical training in 1986, he returned to Malaysia, where he worked for four years in the SDA Hospitals in Kuantan and Penang. From 1992 to 1996, he trained in surgery in the UK, obtaining the Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons (Glasgow). Subsequently, he returned to Malaysia, where, soon after, a letter changed the trajectory of his life.

Fam received a request from a missionary doctor in Nepal, whom he had met in the UK. The doctor told him of the pressing need for a surgeon in his mission hospital, urging Fam to make good his promise to serve in Nepal at a time of need. Fam could not recall ever having made such a promise, but decided to go to Nepal to help, and *'taste the life of a missionary.'* That decision was his epiphany, setting him off on the road less travelled. Nepal, Andhra Pradesh, twice to Malawi, Zambia, Nigeria and, currently Western Uganda - no place has been too inhospitable or too isolated for him to lay, at the Master's feet, his surgical skills and a willingness to serve.

Fam is a gifted surgeon. His surgical experience is considerable and encompasses a wide spectrum, from simple surgeries to complex ones, over a range of specialties such as general surgery, urology, orthopaedics, obstetrics and gynaecology. He uses the best available care in the settings he works in and provides holistic care, including spiritual nurture. Even when patients come 'too late' to be cured of their physical malady, they still receive healing through the compassionate care he provides. Fam brings a deep sensitivity to his role as a surgeon that enables him to look beyond mere illness to the whole person.

He extends himself beyond the hospital as well. He has tirelessly raised funds for these hospitals and for ordinary things -like a bore-well- that have transformed lives and communities. His home is always open; his table is always full of people that he feeds. He has often used his own resources to support students in their education and help patients for their treatment. Far from seeking recognition for himself, Fam points everyone to Jesus, the Great Healer. Whenever possible, he has declined administrative duties so that he can focus on service.

However, it has not been easy. His experiences comprise legendary stories, fit for recounting around the campfire: spending a night in a broken boat, in the pouring rain on the River Zambesi, with crocodiles lurking around; extending a helping hand to a stranger, only to discover he was a convict with murderous intentions; travelling six to eight hours in the jungles to reach his hospital; working, while being seriously sick with malaria, and then praying that God would keep him alive till another doctor came. And then there are the places to which he has brought his service, places that seem like a civilization away – areas of poverty and low agricultural productivity, inaccessible, with rampant malaria, tuberculosis and parasitic infections, HIV/AIDS, malnutrition.....

His simplicity is striking, for as a colleague puts it, Fam asks for nothing, *'beyond a little food to give him energy to serve, a place to lay his head at night and a few clothes he can use'*. In today's

materialistic and fickle world, there is a poignant relevance of his life. And the source of his remarkable life, Fam humbly says is Christ: *'He who was rich in heaven's priceless treasure, became poor, that through his poverty, we might be rich. By all that Christ has given me, I am in debt to those less favoured, and thus I am to minister to them.'*

It is this synergy of simplicity, humility and deep faith that find expression in this life of extraordinary service that we honour today, in the hope that it would inspire all of us to see that a life lived in service of God and others is truly worth living.

In recognition of his outstanding contribution to the global community and the health of the most disadvantaged and marginalised, the Christian Medical College, Vellore is proud to bestow the Paul Harrison Award for 2017 upon its illustrious son, Dr. Fam Siow Leong.