

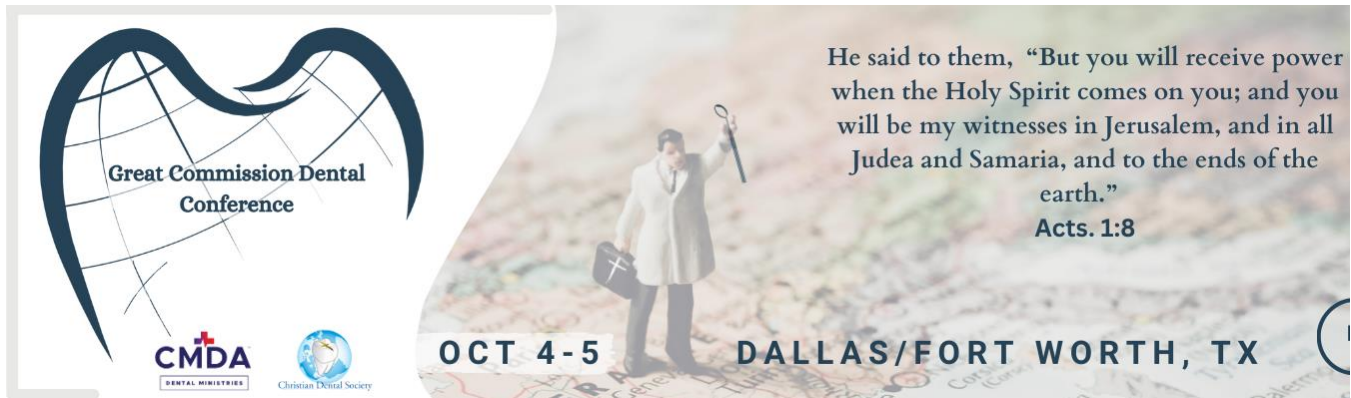
## Christian Dental Society News-Brief June-July 2024



If you have not made plans to attend the inaugural Great Commission Dental Conference (GCDC) on October 4-5 in Dallas, Texas, please make your reservations soon! CDS members are intimately involved with the planning and executing of the GCDC conference and the CDS yearly, in-person Board meeting will be held at this location.

**Over thirty presenters** will speak on a wide range of topics, including short-term mission trips, long-term ministry, teaching trips, private practice ministry, community clinic involvement, missionary dental equipment, funding missionary activity, and more. There will be something for everyone at this meeting, including sweet fellowship with other like-minded people from across the country and around the world. All dental personnel and students are invited to join this unique meeting of Christian dental professionals! There will be CHE offered and the food is provided with the registration.

Check out the event website: <http://cmda.org/gcdc> to review speakers, note the schedule of activities, and register. You can see the beautiful church venue and sign up for the great Wyndham hotel, which offers free shuttle and breakfast, which are very close to the DFW airport.



**The CDS will have the 2024 in-person CDS Board meeting at the GCDC on Thursday evening, October 3, from 5:30-8:30 p.m. at the Wyndham DFW Airport Hotel.** If interested in learning about the CDS, you are invited to attend and please let Dr. Bob Meyer know at [bdmeyer@comcast.net](mailto:bdmeyer@comcast.net). The CDS Board believes that you will be blessed by attending the inspiring and encouraging GCDC conference. Consider joining others who seek to transform the world for Christ through dentistry. CE credit will be available.

The CDS is currently working to revamp and modernize the CDS website. God has brought the CDS another Christian web manager and organization to help with the website. Day One (whose name comes from Genesis 1:1) is a dental, marketing group who are Christian-owned and operated. They are upgrading the current operating system, which is outdated, making it more user-friendly. As Mark and Susan Curtis did, **Day One will run the site for free as a ministry to our Lord**, which is a huge blessing.

Mrs. Tina Land (her last name has changed from Wendel), the CDS Executive Secretary, who has worked 30+ years for the CDS has moved from Sumner, Iowa to Cedar Falls, Iowa to be near her daughters and to live in a larger city. **The new CDS postal mailing address** is now: Christian Dental Society, Attn: Tina Land; 1403 State Street #4 in Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613. The CDS phone number and e-mail will remain the same.



Pastor Rowe's House adjacent to the Jamaican Student Dental Clinic after Hurricane Beryl

**The CDS-supports the Jamaican Dental Mission program initiated and run by Drs. Jim and Sue Carney** has taken student dental mission teams as large as 47 on approximately 8-10 trips a year with dentists, dental students, hygienists, pre-dental students, assistants, and others from all over the USA and Canada. Pastor Rowe and her family have been an integral part of the program from its beginning 20 years ago. Pastor Rowe has helped facilitate the building and management of the 18-chair dental clinic, which has sponsored over 150 trips and served well over 35,000 patients.

This year, six teams have already gone. Unfortunately, at least two of the team trips had to be canceled due to Hurricane Beryl on July 20-27 from UNC and Colorado and on July 27-August 3 from Texas A&M. CDS prays that future, planned trips from Oregon in September and Florida in December can go. Pastor Rowe's house sustained major damage and the CDS has set up a designated fund to help with repairs if anyone would like to contribute by sending funds to the CDS in the name of Pastor Rowe or for the dental clinic. The church is fine and the dental clinic just had water under the bottom of the clinic door. However, the 1000-gallon black tank with water on top of the clinic blew off and landed near the neighbor's house. Clean-up will probably require some plumbing repair and a new tank. All the houses on the beach where the teams stay have sustained major water damage.

**This News-Brief's highlight mission story** features a long-term, dental missionary family living and serving in the Middle East for years. To protect the ministry and safety of this dedicated family, we are excluding their names. This is a fascinating story from

Antakya, Turkey included in their recent news-letter. It describes how God is opening unexpected doors for these missionaries to the Alawite people.



Damage in Antakya from the Earthquakes in February 2023

The long-term dental missionary said, “I had a very meaningful trip to Antakya, Turkey last month, where I was to visit and help the earthquake victims in that region. There were significant, back-to-back earthquakes in the area on February 6, 2023. A magnitude of 7.8 hit the region at 4:17 a.m. Less than 12 hours later, an aftershock at 7.7 hit the area again. The casualties were close to 60,000. People are still suffering from the damage and destruction. Almost all the still-standing buildings and apartments have ugly, dangerous, vertical cracks. There is still so much debris from fallen buildings all over the city.

I landed at Gaziantep Airport and a local brother picked me up at the airport for a three-hour drive. While on the road, I heard him speak Arabic with his friend on the phone. It was interesting, but I figured that he was a Syrian refugee. Curious, I asked him how he knew Arabic, and he replied that he had spent 14 years working in Kuwait. ‘No wonder his Arabic was very fluent,’ I thought.

We arrived at the hotel late at night. Since we’d skipped dinner, I was hungry and grabbed a light meal at the hotel restaurant. I heard the customers speak Arabic to one another and with the waiter. I assumed that they were tourists from an Arabic country. Returning to my hotel room, I asked the front desk receptionist why some people spoke

fluent Arabic. He replied that it was their native tongue! His first language was Arabic, and most people in the area spoke Arabic as their first language! What a surprise!

In the morning, we set up our dental clinic and began treating patients. I realized that some of the patients spoke Arabic quite fluently. Their accent was somewhat different, but I figured that since they were Syrian refugees, they had a different dialect than Jordanian ones. However, on the second day, I knew that these were not Syrian refugees. Later that day, I learned that in 1938, Turkey had seized control over this area and incorporated it into its territory.

Hence, these people were of Syrian descent even though they were all Turkish citizens. On the third day, there was a blackout during the treatment, so I came out and chatted with the church's assistant pastor. He appreciated our medical outreach and said, 'Thank you so much for coming and helping these Alawites.'

I asked in surprise, 'Are these patients Alawites?'

He replied, 'Yes, they are 100% Alawites.'

I said in great amazement, 'These patients are all Alawites? Oh, my Lord!'

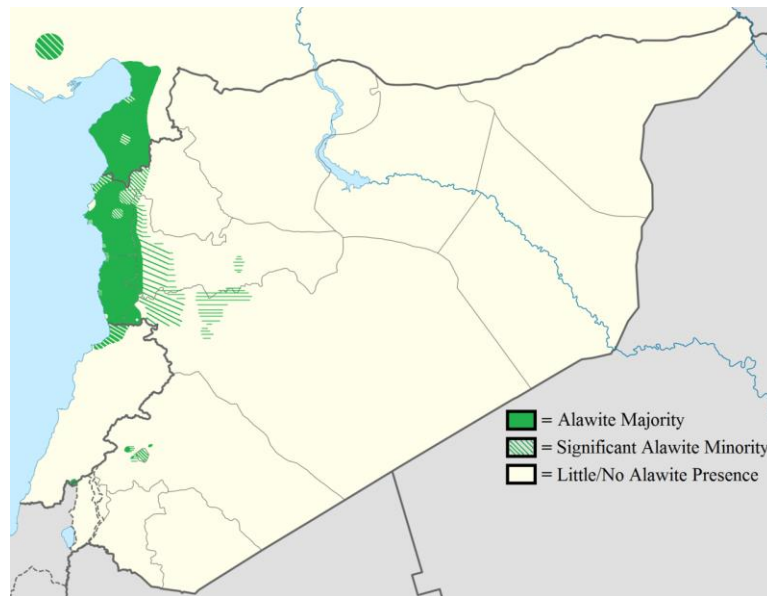
There is a little backdrop to this story. Two weeks before this trip to Turkey, my family attended our organizational retreat in Cyprus. One of the main themes at the conference was the unreached and unengaged people groups. There were pictures of frontier people groups on the walls of the meeting hall, and we walked around and prayed for each people group, stretching out our arms and pouring our hearts over them. I sensed a strange affinity towards one of the groups during the conference. They were called Alawites. Before this conference, I had never heard of them. During and after the meeting, I asked to learn more about them.



Providing dentistry to the Alawites in Antakya, Turkey

Alawites originated from Syria in the ninth century. They are part of the Shia sect of Islam. They are followers of Ali, the fourth caliph of Muhammad and they consider themselves Muslims. However, their belief system is far from the Islamic norm as Alawism is very syncretic compared to Sunni or Shia Islam. The following are several interesting points. • They are often called Nusayrites. • They believe that all people were stars in the world of light but fell from there due to disobedience. • They must be reincarnated seven times before they once again return to the stars. • If they are sinful, they will be reborn as Christians until they complete their atonement. • Infidels—or

nonbelievers of Allah—will be reborn as animals. • Females are excluded from reincarnation. • God incarnated, seven times in human history, the following persons: Abel, Seth, Joseph, Joshua, Asaf, Simon Peter (Jesus’s disciple), and Ali. • Ali was God’s last incarnate. • Alawites do not believe in daily prayers that other Muslims are mandated to do. • Instead of stating, ‘There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet,’ they testify, ‘There is no God but Ali.’ • There is a form of Trinity in their religion. • Alcohol is permissive. • Alawites believe they are the chosen people of God. No others can become Alawites. • Both Sunni and Shia Islam have persecuted Alawites for the reasons above.



The idea of unreached groups grabbed me even more after the retreat. My interest in Alawites also grew to the point that I wondered if it was from God. I prayed to God to show and guide me clearly as to what He desires in me. That was when I went to Antakya, Turkey, and discovered I was in the land of Alawites. No wonder I was shocked! I asked for clarity and He showed clearly!

Certainly, it does not mean we will pack everything and move to Turkey tomorrow. However, I think God wanted to highlight His heart concerning the lost, frontier, people groups which include the Alawites. They are spread in the coastal regions of Turkey, Syria, and Lebanon. Until recently, there had been no Alawite believers in this area. However, only churches came to help when the earthquake occurred—according to the testimony of an Alawite during my visit—and they are stepping into church one by one. The pastor mentioned that the church is now full of Alawites, though not all are believers. What a wonderful thing this is! With the infliction of a painful earthquake came the hope for salvation. I see God is at work to make the impossible possible!”

This dentist, who works with unreached and unengaged people groups also shared some interesting statistics and thoughts to ponder that are worth sharing.

The world's population is about 8 billion with 193 countries as member states of the United Nations. However, there are many more than 193 nations. We often think a nation is a country, but not precisely so. A nation, by definition, means a large body of people united by common descent, history, culture, or language inhabiting a particular country or territory. In other words, a nation is a "people group," not a country (like the Alawites).

According to [www.joshuaproject.net](http://www.joshuaproject.net), there are approximately 17,000 people groups in the world. Out of these, about 10,000 are considered "reached groups." Of course, there still are many lost people in the reached groups. However, the lost can easily access Christianity through surrounding, believing friends and relatives, local churches, and other resources. The remaining 7,000 people groups are considered "unreached people groups" or UPGs—approximately 40% of the world population. They have less than 2% of Jesus followers and they cannot self-sustain their beliefs without help from churches outside. Most of the time, members of these people groups have not had a chance to encounter any Christians or gospel.

The passage above from Revelation 7:9-10 does not state "from every country." Instead, it says, "every nation, tribe, people, and language." Jesus also commanded His believers before He ascended: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations." The word "nations" shows up again. The Greek word for nation is "ethne," which means an ethnic people group. It would have been a much easier command if Jesus had told His disciples, "Therefore, go and make disciples of all countries" (Matt 28:18) and "Then the end will come" (Matt 24:14). By comparisons of numbers alone, it is 193 vs. 17,000!

Given the enormity of the task, Christians should use their resources and manage their logistics wisely. However, the current distribution of efforts is shockingly imbalanced, with 97% of world mission activities flowing into already-reached areas, while only 3% goes to unreached areas. This highlights the urgent need for a strategic reallocation of resources to reach the unreached, who often reside in challenging territories. Among the unreached people groups are "unengaged people groups" (or "frontier people groups"). Less than 0.1% of them are followers of Jesus. About 60% of the unreached people groups are frontier people groups. Most of them have never heard the gospel and will not have any chance to meet a Christian. The reason may be geographical challenges—it is simply too hard to get there—or cultural or political. Some countries strictly forbid one from converting to another religion by disowning, beating, persecuting, and/or killing. The culture and customs are extremely controlling and stifling, so getting close to or entering these groups is severely hindered, if not impossible. Only with God's help is it possible.

Language can also be a substantial obstacle. The people are often bilingual. They use the primary language the country prescribes while speaking their own tribal or ethnic language in their homes and communities. For instance, using Jordan as an example, all



Jordanians speak Arabic as it is the country's primary language. However, many people groups have immigrated—or existed from long ago—and retained their culture, ethnicity, religion, and language. There are Bedouins, Shishans, Sharkhas, Domani, and Druze who all speak different dialects or ethnic languages. While acquiring one language can take many years, gaining a second language can significantly discourage expatriate workers.

To recap, 40%, or 7,000 people groups worldwide, are still “unreached.” 60% of these 7000 people groups are “unengaged” or “frontier people groups.” The frontier people groups account for 25% of the world's population. Hindus and Muslims make up most of the frontier people groups. Geographically, most of these people live in India, the Middle East, and North Africa. Churches send only 3% of their resources to the unreached areas—less than 1% to the frontier areas. Consider that 97% of all missionary resources go to the already-reached areas. Please consider channeling more efforts and resources towards the unengaged people groups.



Global Medical Missions Conference in Irving, California

CDS exhibit booths at major dental meetings continue to encourage and assist many toward missions. This year, CDS has exhibited in Denver, CO, Boston, MA, Atlanta, GA, Portland, OR, St. Paul, MN, San Antonio, TX, and the Global Medical Mission Alliance (GMMA) in Irvine CA. The GMMA conference was a very uplifting, spiritual medical mission conference. Upcoming trips include Houston, TX, the International College of Dentists in Nashville, TN, the GCDC in Dallas, TX, the ADA meeting in New Orleans , and the GNYDM in NY city.



Dr. Diane Meyer at the GMMA Conference, CDS Exhibit Booth

The CDS continues to regularly help many dental teams with missions. The CDS leadership truly appreciates all members for their support and looks forward to continued service as a volunteer organization for our Lord through dental missions. The CDS hopes to see everyone at the Great Commission Dental Conference on October 4-5 in Dallas.

"Jesus saith unto him, I am  
the way, the truth, and the  
life: no man cometh unto the  
Father, but by me"  
(John 14:6).

**JESUS**