

SEPTEMBER 2021

Christian Health Care Newsletter

Ted Pittenger hands off Samaritan leadership to Mark Zander



Mark and Kathy Zander with Shari and Ted Pittenger (Samaritan/Tyler Sellers)

Almost 30 years to the day since Ted Pittenger presided over the incorporation of Samaritan Ministries International, he will be handing the reins of leadership over to Mark Zander, who has been serving as Samaritan's Senior Strategic Planning Advisor.

Mark will become Chief Executive Officer and President effective September 6.

After seeing God work through Samaritan Ministries these past three decades, Ted is confident that direction will continue under Mark's leadership.

"I'm trusting God and would like all of you to trust God to lead Samaritan Ministries," Ted said at an August 12 staff meeting at which the transition was announced.

Ted will remain chairman of Samaritan's Board of Directors, working

continued on page 13

Samaritan™
MINISTRIES

In This Issue

- 2 Noteworthy
- 3 Q&A with Mark Zander
- 5 30 years of missional, Bible-driven ministry
- 7 Member Spotlight:
David and Becky Servant,
Heaven's Family
- 10 Missional medicine
Making primary care primary
- 15 Prayer for the Persecuted Church
- 16 The Doorpost
We cannot outsmart God

Member Letters:

HELPING OTHERS
FOR THE GLORY OF GOD

We are so very blessed to be a part of this sharing ministry. As the checks started coming in, it was a reminder of how when we send our monthly Share, another family is blessed and spared the angst of medical bills not being paid. It is wonderful to know that we are helping another family for the glory of God.

**Katherine
MINNESOTA**

Christian Health Care Newsletter

Rob Waldo
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Michael Miller
EDITOR

Ray King
EDITOR EMERITUS

Julia Ekstrom
COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

Andie Dill, Brittany Klaus,
and Kathryn Nielson
CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Nan Doud, Tim Krahn,
and Holly Kuntz
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Ben Hawkins
DESIGN

David Nielsen
ILLUSTRATION

Follow us

 @samaritanministries

 @samaritanmin

 @samaritanmin

Contact us

newsletter@samaritanministries.org
PO Box 3618, Peoria, IL 61612
telephone: 309-689-0442
telephone (toll free): 877-764-2426
fax: 309-689-0764

The Christian Health Care Newsletter is published monthly by Samaritan Ministries International, a 501(c)(3) charity. Subscriptions to the Christian Health Care Newsletter are available to non-members for a suggested donation of \$12 per year. The information provided is for educational purposes and is not meant as medical advice.

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Noteworthy | From the Editors

In September 1991, the founding Board members gathered at my dining room table to sign incorporation papers for Samaritan Ministries International. We didn't know where God would take this new health care sharing ministry, but we were confident that He would use it in the best way possible.

I can now look back on 30 years of praying and trusting as I prepare to hand over leadership of Samaritan as its President and CEO to Mark Zander. Those 30 years have been filled with awe at God's faithfulness as He brought us through crises and growth. We have shared more than \$3 billion in medical Needs since 1994!

None of that could have happened without God's protection and mercies, or without answered prayer.

I will continue to be involved with Samaritan Ministries as a member of the Board, as well as with other projects. I make this transition with full trust in the Father's faithfulness to guide Mark and the rest of the leaders here. Please pray for me in this new season of life, for Mark and Samaritan's leadership team, for our Board, and for all our fellow members!



Ted Pittenger
**FOUNDER AND
PRESIDENT**

Helpful Resources

▶ Facebook.com/groups/samaritanmin

Reach out to other members in our Facebook Group

▶ Important emails

Medical Needs: needs@samaritanministries.org

Sending or receiving Shares: membership@samaritanministries.org

Your membership: membership@samaritanministries.org

▶ Health Resources App | Dash.SamaritanMinistries.org

- Compare quality and cost of health care services in your area using Healthcare Bluebook. Receive a \$250 reward when you submit a screenshot showing you chose a green fair-price provider.
- Use MediBid to receive bids from doctors for tests or treatments you are seeking.
- Email a medical professional or call a nurse (free), or call a doctor who can write a prescription (\$25).
- Access discount tools for prescriptions and lab tests.

▶ Writers guidelines: samaritanministries.org/writers-guidelines

Q&A with Mark Zander

New Samaritan CEO shares his faith journey and the blessings that Christ has shown to him along the way

Mark Zander is the new Samaritan Ministries Chief Executive Officer. We asked the longtime corporate executive several questions in order for you to get to know him better.

Samaritan Ministries: Mark, tell us a little bit about your family.

Mark: I've been married to my wife, Kathy, for 30 years. We have three boys: Ben 26, Sam 23, Gabe 20. Kathy is an amazing mom who stayed at home with the boys throughout their upbringing. Ben is an accountant/CPA working in Chicago, Sam works in a hospital and is applying to physician assistant graduate schools, and Gabe will be enlisting in the Navy in early October. We lived in Waunakee, Wisconsin, for 25 years prior to moving to Peoria.

Samaritan Ministries: Could you share your faith journey?

Mark: Kathy and I grew up in strong Catholic families in our formative years. When we started our family, we followed family tradition by enrolling our boys in Catholic elementary school. As the years went on, we felt God calling us to a deeper personal relationship with Jesus Christ and a deeper personal experience with His Word. We found these deeper experiences with Jesus in the Evangelical Free Church, where we were born again.



Kathy and Mark Zander (Samaritan/Tyler Sellers)

Our Christian faith had always been at the center of our family, but the love, mercy, and saving grace of Jesus truly became alive and active in our lives when God called us to meet Him and love Him personally in the Evangelical Free community. Our boys are all Christians, each on their own unique walk with the Lord. As the Apostle Paul said in Philippians 3:12, we are certainly

not yet perfect but we press on as a family to reach a perfection that can only be obtained through the saving grace of Jesus Christ. We love the journey the Lord has set before us and are energized to serve Him and the Body of Christ through this new role at Samaritan and in any role He calls us to in the future.

Continued on page 4

Samaritan: What do you like to do for fun?

Mark: We love the outdoors, whether that be walking our dog, riding bikes, hiking, boating, fishing (even ice fishing), or hunting, which are all activities we grew up doing in Wisconsin.

Samaritan: What does success look like for you?

Mark: Using the gifts and experiences God has blessed me with to serve Him and to serve the Body of Christ wherever He places me and to do so to the very best of my ability.

Samaritan: What is one of the kindest things someone has ever done for you?

Mark: Jesus Christ loved me, wiped away my sins, and gave me eternal life, even though I deserved none of it. Jesus loving me, even knowing my many flaws and shortcomings, is the gift that means everything to me.

Samaritan: Who are some individuals who have positively influenced your life?

Mark: Not sure if this is a trick question, but, without a doubt, Jesus Christ has been everything to me in my life and the only role model that I have ever aspired to emulate. Along that journey, a great friend and elder at our church, Mark Schweiger, has disciplined me and helped me grow in spiritual maturity in so many ways over the last 25-plus years.

Samaritan: What virtue do you want more of in your life?

Mark: Without a doubt it's

wisdom. There are so many non-Biblical worldviews at work in today's culture attacking our faith and our families. Constantly seeking and growing in God's wisdom is essential to navigating the pressures of the world and staying focused on His truth as the eternal compass.

Samaritan: What is something new you recently tried and loved?

Mark: Let's go with a food. Kathy loves Brussels sprouts. I refused to participate in her Brussels sprout experiences. But she finally got me with bacon and baked, seasoned Brussels sprouts. My life will never be the same.

Samaritan: What is the most meaningful book or verse of the Bible to you and why?

Mark: My first deep experience with the Bible happened in college in a Navigators Bible study I attended. The focus of the study was the Gospel of John. That book and that study were the beginning of me building a deep personal relationship with Jesus Christ and His Word.

Samaritan: What is the best piece of advice you've received?

Mark: I was raised in a family that placed a high level of importance on humility. Feeling or behaving with a sense of self-importance or seeking attention for one's accomplishments as a way to feel superior in some way was not acceptable. Jesus came to us as a humble servant, even though many expected the Messiah to be a king. Biblical and family teaching calling me to humility is the best advice

I've received, and I have tried to pass that along to my boys.

Samaritan: Could you summarize your work history before Samaritan?

Mark: Thirty years in secular business as a general manager working for large, medium, and small companies with a strong focus on servant leadership and developing people based on the gifts and experiences God has blessed them with. I was constantly learning and growing as a faith-based leader in a secular business world that was for the most part godless and motivated by earthly treasures.

Samaritan: Why did you want to work here?

Mark: God has blessed me with so many wonderful learning experiences across the years, including both successes and failures. For most of my secular business career, however, I've felt like something was always missing and wondered, is this really where He wants me to be? God's plans are always right and good, and now I can look back and see that through the ups and downs, He was preparing me for such a time as this, a time where I could use all the gifts and experience He has blessed me with to join Samaritan and serve Him, serve the Body of Christ, and help build His Kingdom all for His Glory. To say this is my dream job is an understatement. What an amazing gift He has blessed our family with through Samaritan, and, as always, we will rely on Him to guide us through this journey step by step. ♦♦♦

Leadership transition

Reflections on 30 years of missional, Bible-driven ministry

Ray King looks back at Ted Pittenger's original vision for Samaritan and how it still guides leadership today



by Ray King,
Editor Emeritus

From its inception, Samaritan Ministries has been a missional, Bible-driven ministry, with Christian discipleship woven into the practice of health care sharing in Christian community. Ray King, one of the early leaders of Samaritan Ministries and currently the Editor Emeritus of Samaritan's newsletter, reflects on why Christian discipleship has been so important throughout Samaritan's history.

IN THE EARLY 1970s, Ted Pittenger, who would later found Samaritan Ministries International, was involved in the Navigators, a person-to-person and small-group disciple-making ministry, at the University of Illinois. Through the Navigators, Ted first experienced intentional, personal discipleship—establishing a pattern for how he would put into practice his deep desire to be used by God to accomplish His work.

Ted worked with the Navigators for a while and then spent three years on staff with Campus



Ted and Shari Pittenger and three of their children around the time of Samaritan Ministries' founding.

Crusade for Christ (now Cru) at University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. At a training session, he learned that about 80 percent of American Christians became believers before age 18, meaning that the first 18 years of their lives was a strategic time to reach them. Ted began to feel pulled toward ministry to and through families more than toward ministry with college students.

"I thought maybe families are the more important thing—raising up godly mothers and fathers so they can raise up godly children," he says.

Ted left Campus Crusade in summer 1981. Not knowing what

else to do for the moment to support their growing family (his first child, Meg, had been born in 1980), the Pittengers moved to central Illinois, where Ted eventually established Pittenger Paint and Paper, a painting and wallpaper company.

I met Ted through an organization of home educators in the Peoria area. I had also been involved with the Navigators at the University of Illinois and was self-employed, so we had a lot in common. Eventually I began working for Ted in his business and,

Continued on page 6

while we painted, we would listen to talk radio and discuss leading our families and making disciples to reach the world for Jesus Christ.

During this time, Ted told me that he had joined a health care sharing ministry that he was excited about. I was skeptical and offered my “expert” opinion about what I considered the likely pitfalls of that approach. Ted had been in conversation with a local attorney, Brian Heller (who later became and still serves as General Counsel for Samaritan Ministries), about starting a new health care sharing ministry. Brian also was clear about the likely regulatory challenges such a ministry would face.

Yet, knowing these hurdles, Ted continued seeking God about his desire to establish another health care sharing ministry.

Finally, one evening five of us met with Brian around Ted and [his wife] Shari’s dining room table to sign the incorporation papers for Samaritan Ministries International. Our desire was that Samaritan Ministries would be a health care sharing ministry committed to making disciples of Jesus Christ that applied everything Jesus commanded to every aspect of our lives. We even hoped that at some point, God would bless this ministry by expanding it to the Body of Christ internationally, which is why the ministry includes “International” in its name.

From a human perspective, we recognized that the vision we believed in was not only bold but impossible without God. We knew we weren’t wise or strong enough, or “connected” and experienced enough to accomplish it

Samaritan’s Purpose:

To glorify God by growing and equipping disciples of Jesus Christ to love God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love and care for their neighbor as themselves.

(Matthew 28:18-20, 22:36-40; Mark 12:28-30)

Samaritan’s Mission:

To redeem health care by helping the Body of Christ love one another through sharing each other’s health care burdens, while experiencing authentic Biblical community.

(Galatians 6:2; Philippians 2:3-4; Romans 12:10,12,13,15; John 13:34,35)

(1 Corinthians 1:26-31). We were also trying to do something that most of society would view with caution, at best. It wouldn’t be until businesses like Uber and AirBnB became popular that society at large would embrace the idea of what is now called a “sharing economy.”

But community sharing was God’s idea and has been a part of the Church from the beginning for nearly 2,000 years (Acts 4:32-37)!

It was our heartfelt desire that God would allow Samaritan Ministries International to be a part of Jesus’ work of making disciples of all nations and building a worldwide Church that the gates of hell would not be able to withstand. Our job was simply to depend on Jesus Christ and be faithful to what we believed God enabled us to do, to honor Jesus and do things Biblically, leaving the results up to Him.

God worked through Ted to call others to join the mission of Samaritan Ministries. One way Ted’s humble style of leadership is reflected in Samaritan Ministries International is that the ministry emphasis is not on strong personalities of the leaders but on the work of the Holy Spirit through the work of Samaritan members at the grassroots level.

It is the faithful Samaritan members—disciples of Jesus Christ who are committed to obeying all of God’s Word in every facet of their lives—who advance God’s mission every day. By God’s grace, there are now more than 280,000 Samaritan members, and it is our prayer that God would continue to bless this ministry—and use you—to strengthen this community and draw many more to serve for His glory. ♦♦♦

Member Spotlight

David and Becky Servant: Heaven's Family

by Kathryn Nielson



Heaven's Family

Web: HeavensFamily.org, DavidServant.com

Phone: 855-333-2211

Email: info@heavensfamily.org

Facebook: [@heavensfamily](https://www.facebook.com/heavensfamily), [@davidservant](https://www.facebook.com/davidservant)

YouTube: [youtube.com/heavensfamily](https://www.youtube.com/heavensfamily),
[youtube.com/DavidAServant](https://www.youtube.com/DavidAServant)

THROUGH HEAVEN'S FAMILY, David and Becky Servant serve "the least of these" and expand the Kingdom of God at the same time.

A change in direction.

In 2002, after 24 years of pastoring churches in the U.S. and preaching in some of the world's poorest countries, David prayed, "Lord, if there is anything I'm not doing that I should be doing, I'd like to know what You think about my ministry."

"Quite frankly and quite embarrassingly, I thought the Lord would say, 'Oh, you're doing a great job,'" David says.

Instead, though his teaching ministry was fruitful and growing, the Holy Spirit led him to Matthew 25:31-46, the parable of the sheep and goats and serving the "least of these." David realized that many in his congregation, including himself, fell short in this area. This conviction drove him to resign from his church and, with Becky, start

Heaven's Family.

The ministry's goal is "to provide a way for Christians, like the folks in the Church who are living in what we often call Disneyworld—the United States—to connect with people who Jesus identified as the least of these, people who were truly members of His Body and suffering pressing needs," David says.

They started small.

Their first ministry was helping children at an orphanage in Burma, most of whom weren't orphans but had been sent to the institution because their parents believed that life there was preferable to one of inescapable poverty. Rather than continuing to fund countless orphanages, they hired six trained social workers to aid in the process of reuniting children with their families and to provide additional resources in the hopes of eliminating the natural default of institutionalization.



Becky and David Servant (supplied photo)

Continued on page 8

From there, God brought others to the ministry who identified with the mission and grew it to what it is today: a partnership with indigenous pastors and organizations caring for people in 40 of the world's most impoverished countries.

"We add value to what they are already doing by doing good with the resources they already have," David says.

U.S. missionaries, as well as indigenous workers with small ministries, are the kinds of ministries with which Heaven's Family partners. Funding bigger, established organizations is not only redundant, he says, but also opens the door for questions about where the money is going.

"We want donors to know that the maximum amount given is going to the actual need," David adds.

Covering their bases.

The ministry employs just 20 staff members, most of whom work remotely in the United States running the 20 focused ministries Heaven's Family is involved in. Those ministries help with critical health care, disaster relief, discipling, victims of sexual violence, widows and abandoned women, and several other needs.

"We cover a pretty wide gamut of needs out there," David says.

Expanding the Kingdom.

"We always try to focus on our suffering spiritual family members, but we certainly have done a lot of projects that also serve those who don't yet know the Lord," David says. "Our core Scripture and core value is to serve the least of these, but it's also to expand the Kingdom. Those are the two main components.

"We won't ever become a Christian humanitarian organization. We believe that we're called not only to obey the great commandment of loving one another but also the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations, so we try to keep that balanced."

Their ministry to refugees, started by Becky, is an example of serving nonbelievers. With a heart for refugees, Becky began working with Christian agencies that were placing refugees in the United States even before Heaven's Family was started. In fact, she was a house parent to two of the boys who were featured in *God Grew Tired of Us*, a documentary about some of the Lost Boys who came from Sudan and were placed in David and Becky's home city of Pittsburgh.

"We recognize that if all we do is meet pressing needs of people

Why Samaritan Ministries?

WHEN DAVID AND Becky Servant of Heaven's Family were looking for a health care sharing ministry to be a part of, "we knew there were several choices," David says.

As it turns out, Tony and Felicity Dale, then of The Karis Group, had worked with all the health care sharing ministries and recommended Samaritan to David and Becky, saying that it was the best based on several criteria.

"We have certainly have had that confirmed," David says.

David had a mini-stroke a couple of years ago. Thankfully, he recovered completely, but

treatment was expensive.

"I shared my Need and got help from all over the country, and it worked beautifully," David says, noting the Samaritan website's ease of navigation and clear direction in how the process works. "Our experience with Samaritan has been great."

Two of their children are Samaritan members as well. Their children have had more Needs than David and Becky and have also enjoyed good sharing experiences.

"We can't say enough good about it," David says. ♦♦♦

who don't know or believe in Jesus, we've just sustained them a little bit longer on the earth but haven't done anything for them for eternity," David says. "The flip side of that is that dead people can't hear the Gospel, so we have to feed people and keep them alive after a disaster to give them a chance to hear the Gospel. All of these things give us an opportunity to show the love of Christ and to get people's attention by our love."

In fact, HeavensFamily.org is brimming with stories of how God has enabled him to help countless people with varying needs all over the world.

In a way, Heaven's Family resembles the health care sharing model: connecting those with necessary resources to provide for pressing needs around the world—in this case, to the tune of \$3 million a year.

"It's not hard to acknowledge that the Lord has orchestrated the whole thing, because it would have been beyond our ability and even comprehension that it was going to grow like it has grown," David says.

Teaching in semi-retirement.

These days, with a competent staff at the helm, David has been able to "semi-retire," meaning his work week is a normal 40 hours rather than the 60 he was working in the beginning when just he and Becky were doing everything at Heaven's Family. His role now is general oversight of the ministry, giving him more time to teach, which he says is his real calling and which he does much of through DavidServant.com.

David attributes a lot of the

support for Heaven's Family to the exposure he has gotten through that teaching ministry. Funding is provided by a donor base of about 1,500 people from 49 of 50 states and 40 countries where people have caught the vision of serving the least of these and expanding the Kingdom.

He uses his book *The Disciple-Making Minister*, which has been translated into over 32 languages, to train pastors all over the world in making disciples. His YouTube channel (youtube.com/DavidAServant) features over 1,400 videos on Christian living. The website DavidServant.com is a compilation of over 20 years of teaching on stewardship, marriage and family, leadership, and a host of other topics. Coupled with his travel to over 80 countries logging just under 1 million miles on one airline alone, Heaven's Family has caught the attention of those whom God has called to be involved financially.

Growing needs surpass available funds.

The heartbreaking side of a ministry like Heaven's Family is that there is no shortage of needs, and funding isn't equal to the needs. The directors of the various ministries must decide which to attempt to meet. Often those that are a "go" still must wait on available funding. Specifically, there is a backlog of people waiting for water wells to be dug.

David says the irony is that as needs are met, more are made known. The ministry is bombarded with calls, emails, texts, and Facebook messages asking for help, but many of them are from people

he does not know. Funds are only distributed through a rigorous vetting process. He doesn't rely on photos, emails, or even receipts on how money is spent to meet that need.

"You have to go on the ground and stay for a while and watch very closely to make sure you're not getting scammed," David says.

David further cautions anyone who gets an email or Facebook message requesting help to refrain from sending money unless they can actually travel to the country of the supposed need, meet the person making the request, see the ministry in action, and talk to other Christian leaders about that person.

Despite the concerns, there are far more reasons to celebrate all that God has done through Heaven's Family.

"We feel like we're just getting started," David says.

How you can pray.

- "For God's continued and increased blessing on ministries so that we can do a better job at glorifying Him and expanding His Kingdom and meeting the needs of the least of these," David says. "His blessing is the key. We know that God blesses His plans, not ours."
- For God's wisdom. "We don't want to do anything that is not His specific will." ♦♦♦

Kathryn Nielson is a Communications Specialist at Samaritan Ministries.

Missional medicine: making primary care primary

Timely, affordable access to good primary care helps patients, enables doctors to know them better



by Mark Blocher,
Christian Healthcare
Centers

Part 2 of 2

IN PART 1 of this series, I made the claim that modern medicine suffers from mission drift, that it has strayed from its core mission of caring for the sick. Patient care has taken a backseat to other objectives, especially the seemingly insatiable drive for revenue capture. Too much of modern medicine is designed around the payment, not the patient.

I also argued that the U.S. health care system has become increasingly secular, even hostile, toward the long-held Judeo-Christian values that have been the moral foundation of Western medicine. This drift guts the soul of health care—that is, compassionate, merciful caring for the sick.

Consequently, the time has come to create a distinctively Christian health care system that restores the soul of health care. Christian doctors need an onramp to practice medicine as a medical ministry, where they can freely live out the Gospel in ways that benefit

their patients. There also needs to be a safe harbor for patients to be cared for by doctors who will be unapologetic advocates for them. This month, I broadly describe how the vision of “missional medicine” works at the primary care level, and how a Christian health care system can be a blessing to members of health care sharing ministries.

Primary care

There is no well-functioning health care system in the world not built on the foundation of exceptional primary care. Unfortunately, primary care does not work well in the American health care system. Modern primary care forces doctors to push patients through appointments quickly by ordering lots of tests and referrals to more specialists. No system can ever have enough specialists, surgical centers, or world-class technolo-

gies to compensate for not having a solid primary care model as its foundation.

Christian Healthcare Centers (CHC) was created to be a model that makes primary care primary. Primary care doctors provide upwards of 80 to 90 percent of the medical services the average person receives each year. They are like the conductor of an orchestra who blends the contributions of other musicians to make beautiful music. Likewise, the primary care doctor is essential to coordinating a continuity of care that benefits patients. Just as a good orchestral conductor needs to know each musician and her capabilities, a good primary care doctor must know her patients well; not just their medical history, but what is important to them and their family.

No one disputes the claim that timely, affordable access to good

There is no well-functioning health care system in the world not built on the foundation of exceptional primary care. Unfortunately, primary care does not work well in the American health care system.

primary care benefits patients and reduces overall health care expense. The goal of a missional health care system is to keep people at their best, not just see them at their worst. Truly missional medicine strives to care for the whole person, not merely treat symptoms, because missional physicians see patients as beings created in God's image, not merely a collection of biological parts and organ systems. Although many secular medical professionals speak of being "holistic" and caring for "whole" persons, modern health care as a system falls short because it does not subscribe to a Biblical view of personhood.

CHC's mission is to provide exceptional medical services to the Body of Christ and the local community, guided by Biblical values. We work to keep God's people healthy so they can minister to one another and to the world. As a witness to the world, CHC also provides its services to non-Christians, where doctors have opportunity to speak Biblical truth into the lives of lost individuals in ways they could not if they worked in a secular medical office.

To facilitate this vision of missional medicine, we strive to make primary care affordable, convenient, and personal. This means broad use of telemedicine; timely access to necessary in-person appointments; same-day or next-day sick visits; 24/7 availability of our doctors by phone, text, or email; onsite X-ray, labs, medication dispensary, ultrasound, and Biblical counseling; and helping patients with referral appointments for specialty services—all



(iStock)

for the cost of a monthly cell phone bill, with no co-pays or deductibles. It is like having a doctor in the family. This basic model is common to practices called direct primary care, although many DPCs do not include the Christian focus.

Since opening in 2017, our patient population has consistently grown each month, drawn from every conceivable demographic. Patients from 32 Michigan counties use CHC as their medical home. Our patient census includes many households that also belong to health care sharing ministries such as Samaritan. It surprises us how many of these patients have not been seen by a doctor for years before they joined us. Many of their children had not been to a doctor since they were born. They typically avoid seeing a doctor until they are sick. As a result, many simply use urgent care centers or hospital emergency rooms for their health care, both of which are expensive.

Missional medicine aims to not only reduce the inconvenience and expense of accessing timely

medical care when it is needed but also helps people avoid a need for it by encouraging routine wellness checks and making preventive screenings a priority. Patient history is vital to making correct diagnoses, and the only way a doctor can know a patient well is to spend time with them. That is why CHC provides 30-, 60-, and 90-minute appointment times and why our patients are able to contact their doctor via phone, text, or email without having to churn through a phone tree.

Accessible, personalized care is an essential component of missional medicine.

Since many of CHC's staff belong to SMI, helping the Samaritan family "bear burdens" by protecting our own health and that of our fellow SMI members is important, keeping the SMI family from sharing more medical expenses for conditions that could be avoided. In 2020, Christian Healthcare Centers saved patients over \$1 million that

Continued on page 12

they would otherwise have spent out-of-pocket.

For example, the most common reasons people go to an emergency department are abdominal pain, acute respiratory symptoms associated with severe colds or flu, and minor lacerations requiring sutures. Treating these in the ED is extremely expensive. CHC handles these cases easily in the office, using our own X-ray, ultrasound, and medical staff.

What do those services cost CHC members? They are included in the membership fee. Having the right equipment and qualified personnel to use it enhances timely access to care and controls the cost.

Specialty care

With primary care as its foundation, a Christian health care system also utilizes specialists to care for medical needs that exceed the scope of primary care.

For example, in 2019 CHC added obstetrics and gynecology services and is in the process of building a new facility where half the space will be devoted to medical specialties to provide many in-office procedures and outpatient surgeries within a Christian environment. This facility will provide primary care on one side of the building and procedures such as colonoscopies on the other. Bundled pricing not only provides faster access to quality specialty care for patients, but it also benefits sharing ministries by reducing shareable expenses.

In keeping with CHC's life-affirming mission, CHC's OB/GYN Dr. Shannon Madison not only

provides personalized women's health services for CHC patients, but, through the organization's Healthy Tomorrows Maternity Program, provides maternity care for abortion-vulnerable women referred by pregnancy care centers. Dr. Madison is able to perform a number of procedures in the office, thereby improving timely access and reducing cost.

Dr. Ted VanderKooi, who, with his family belongs to Samaritan, is one example of the missional physician working in the mainstream of health care.

As a general surgeon, Dr. VanderKooi provides low-cost, bundled fees for many procedures and surgeries that would otherwise cost patients or their sharing community many thousands more. As a committed Christian with 25 years of experience, he has tried to be missional in his work but found it increasingly difficult to do so within the "big box" health care system where he worked. A model like CHC provides a platform for him to serve patients better, to be more professionally fulfilled, and to enjoy a better work-home balance. He is representative of a growing cadre of Christian physicians who are determined to restore the soul of health care by practicing missional medicine.

From the beginning of the medical care journey to the end and at all levels in between, health care that is based in Biblical values and acknowledges God's sovereignty brings healing of body and soul. ♦♦♦

Mark Blocher and his wife, Julie, are Samaritan Ministries members. He is a bioethicist and co-founder and CEO of Christian Healthcare Centers based in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

From the beginning of the medical care journey to the end and at all levels in between, health care that is based in Biblical values and acknowledges God's sovereignty brings healing of body and soul.

with the Board to provide governance and oversight supporting Samaritan's faithfulness to its mission for decades to come. Mark will be President and Chief Executive Officer of the ministry.

From the beginning, Samaritan Ministries has been a community centered on Jesus Christ, and Jesus will continue to be at the center of everything Samaritan does.

"Our mission is to redeem health care by helping the Body of Christ love one another through sharing each other's health care burdens, while experiencing authentic Biblical community," Ted says. "By God's grace we've been doing that for all these years, and that's what we're going to keep doing under Mark's leadership."

Mark sees his leadership as continuing this mission.

"I'm really fortunate because Ted has done an amazing job building this ministry," he says. "The Lord has used Ted to build a really solid foundation and Christ-centered culture.

"The way I'm looking at this is that Jesus is the leader of Samaritan Ministries," Mark continues. "My role as CEO is to serve Jesus and our amazing members and staff in every way I can. I think if that happens, the challenges that are inevitable in any organization will take care of themselves, because, ultimately, Jesus is at the wheel."

Mark was hired at Samaritan as part of a CEO-succession process that started more than three years ago. Through this process, the Board decided to hire Mark but, initially, not as a replacement for



Mark Zander and Ted Pittenger (Samaritan/Tyler Sellers)

Ted. Since Mark was an external candidate, the Board wanted to see beyond his resume, references, and interviews.

"We felt like Mark had the business acumen that we were looking for, the humility and the commitment to Christ—and that he was the right choice," Ted says. "This was also a major decision for us—perhaps the biggest in the past 30 years. We really wanted to discern the Lord's will, and the Board recognized that they didn't know Mark as well as they wanted

in order to select him as CEO. So, we actually invited Mark to come on staff in a different position among our senior leadership team, while I remained serving as CEO. That gave us an opportunity to get to know Mark better.

"When Paul talks about deacons in 1 Timothy, he says to let them first be tested and then let them serve. Bringing Mark on staff in a different role gave us an opportunity to see what he could do in

Continued on page 14

terms of the business and ministry acumen and then see what his spiritual life was like in practice.

"He's the real deal."

Mark says that he took a job at Samaritan with no assumptions about becoming CEO.

"I just knew very strongly in my heart that God was calling me to serve Him here at this ministry and it's like, 'OK, Ted offered me this role and I'm taking it,'" Mark says. "I knew I wanted to be here and I really thought God wanted me to be here, so I just put my head down and went to work."

During that time, the Board was able to get to know Mark better and see how Samaritan's senior leadership team served and led together with Mark as a peer.

Shortly before this year's June Board meeting, Ted sent out an email to the Board suggesting it may be time to revisit Mark's role.

"I was talking to Anthony Hopp (Vice President of External Relations) one day and told him that maybe it was the right time to put Mark forward again. I started asking the Board members if they thought it was the right time."

The Board voted in June to make the change.

Although Ted will no longer be CEO, he won't be going very far. Mark says Ted will keep his office at Samaritan's headquarters, and, as a Board member for life, he'll also continue to be involved in setting the direction for the ministry.

As Chairman of the Board, Ted says he would like to be more involved in cultivating relationships with donors to the ministry and finding ways to help increase donations to various funds in Samaritan.

"God has allowed Samaritan Ministries to do so much good for the Body of Christ, and I want to get that message out to more individuals and organizations who can join this work financially and in prayer," Ted says.

He also will continue to work on Board development, focusing on Board recruitment, education, and governance.

"One of the things I started a number of years ago is visiting the Board members in their 'habitat,' their home setting," Ted says. "I might continue to do that as well to look at some ways we can do additional spiritual and leadership development with the Board members."

Mark says that as CEO he will benefit from what Ted has achieved since Samaritan was incorporated on September 11, 1991.

"Samaritan has a purpose, mission, and values that aren't just words on a wall or words on a plaque like many of the places I've been," Mark says. "Samaritan actually has people everywhere—in our hallways, in our meetings, in all our interactions—who are trying to live out that purpose, that mission, those values. That is so unique compared to everywhere else I've worked in my life. It's amazing to be at a place where it's actions, not just words."

Knowing that only God knows the future, Mark hesitates to make promises, except for one:

"I promise to members that we're going to always operate with Jesus Christ at the center of everything we do, and that our staff will always bring a servant's heart and Christ's compassionate love to

everything we do."

But he also is confident that the members will continue to carry out their part of Samaritan's mission.

"The essence of the Great Commandments, which Jesus talks about in Matthew 22:37-39, is loving God and loving our neighbors," Mark says. "The thing that's so great about Samaritan Ministries is that I see those Commandments lived out across our membership. Every day, Samaritan members are loving each other through difficult times. I see our staff loving God and loving each other through challenges. It's real. It's not just words on a page or on a website. God is at work throughout the ministry.

"Coming in to any organization, you don't really know what you're going to get, but to experience this has been simply amazing."

Despite the social challenges of COVID-19, Mark has been able to listen to almost 100 members talk about what they like about Samaritan and what they see as opportunities for improvement.

When asked what may change at Samaritan, he says that "it's easier for me to predict things that aren't going to change."

"One, God and His Word are going to continue to be at the center of everything that this ministry does," Mark says. "My role is to ensure that happens.

"The second thing that's not going to change is this ministry's wonderful member-to-member ministry—members directly caring for other members, directly sharing each other's burdens. It's who we are and what we're all about." ♦♦♦

Prayer for the Persecuted Church



Displaced Christians in India (Morning Star News)

Animists drive several Christian families into jungle

More than 50 Christians, many of them physically beaten, have been forced to flee their homes in the village of Sikapai, India, and seek shelter in nearby jungles, Voice of the Martyrs-Canada reports. Tribal animists are being blamed for the attacks on the eight Christian families. After other Christians in nearby villages received similar threats, they also fled their homes and joined the other Christians. *Pray for provision for these Christians and for new, permanent homes in areas free of harassment. Pray also for encouragement in their faith and for spiritual healing.*

Students kidnapped from Nigerian Baptist high school

Dozens of students at a Baptist high school in Nigeria were kidnapped on July 5, International Christian Concern reports. Gunmen, believed to be Fulani militants, entered Bethel Baptist High School in Damishi and ordered students to lie down on the floor, then started shooting. More than 30 students escaped by the next day, but at least 80 were still missing. *Pray for safety for the students and their spiritual well-being. Pray also for their unconditional release.*

Ministry-training leader in Belarus arrested

A Christian woman who leads a ministry training center in Belarus with her husband was arrested without warning on July 9, VOM-C reports. At last report, no formal charges have been filed against Maria. Her husband, Ivan, and their children do not know her location. *Pray for Maria's safety and freedom, as well as for their ministry.* ◆◆◆



Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.

HEBREWS 13:3

Our brothers and sisters in Christ around the world are being persecuted for the sake of the Gospel. We need to remember them in prayer and action.

Each month, we will provide updates and offer prayer points gleaned from a variety of sources. Please use them in your prayer time and possibly to seek other ways, small or large to supplement our prayers with action.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE PERSECUTED CHURCH:

International Christian Concern
persecution.org
800-422-5441

World Watch Monitor
worldwatchmonitor.org

... let him become a fool that he may become wise.

1 Corinthians 3:18b

THE DOORPOST

DEUTERONOMY 6:4-9; 11:18-21



Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their craftiness," and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile."

1 CORINTHIANS 3:18-20

MOST OF US WANT to avoid being thought of as fools, yet the passage above tells us that becoming a fool is the first step to becoming wise.

If we want to have true wisdom, we must be willing to become fools in the eyes of those who trust in the world's wisdom, no matter how powerful, prosperous, or wise they may seem to be.

We may be told that following Biblical principles cannot lead to success. We must not deceive ourselves. The wisdom of this world is folly with God and will not bring true success.

In Isaiah 55:9, God says, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." Proverbs 14: 12 warns, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death."

The first step to becoming wise is becoming a fool. We cannot outsmart God.



For the Kingdom,
Ray King

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ray King".