

Couple have plenty to smile about

Back in the summer, Simon and Grace Stretton-Downes led a dental outreach – their biggest trip yet – to an area of Liberia that is almost entirely Muslim.



Simon and Grace Stretton-Downes have been serving at the Eternal Love Winning All (ELWA) Hospital in Liberia's capital Monrovia for the past four years.

Simon leads the team at Trinity Dental Clinic, while Grace works, some of the

time, as a nurse at the hospital. Periodically, the couple travel to rural communities to show Christ's love by offering free, basic dental care.

There are currently only a handful of dentists and dental nurse practitioners to meet the vast dental needs of Liberia's five million population – a place where people die from infection caused by dental abscesses.

The couple are sent by St Gregory's Church, Crakehall, North Yorkshire, and this June, embarked on their biggest dental outreach trip yet.

The team headed north to Voinjama, a town up in the far north of Liberia, just a few miles from the border with

Guinea. As the crow flies, it is only 163 miles – but 250 miles by road. On a good day, it is a ten-hour drive; on a wet day two to three days, but the team were able to avoid the gruelling road trip and board a one-hour Missionary Aviation Fellowship (MAF) flight.

The last leg was a 45-minute drive to Barkedu, a small, dusty town and home to the Manya people, who are almost entirely Muslim with just a handful of believers in Jesus.

Every day, the team walked to the Government



Outreach team Daniel, Charles, Wannie, Simon, Musa, Grace and Winifred about to board an MAF plane

Health Clinic, where they set up portable dental chairs and laid out their 'field kit', washing the instruments in the 'palava' hut and using a pressure cooker on a charcoal burner to sterilise them!

Although there were only 12 patients on the first afternoon, numbers soon grew and more than 150 patients were eventually treated, with some even having to be turned away on the final morning.

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LIBERIA

A F R I C A

Some patients had endured pain for months or even years. Several attributed their dental infections to a curse from a local witch. With permission, each one was prayed for, and an evangelist colleague Musa, himself a former Muslim Imam, shared the good news about Jesus with them while they waited – some even came back a second time to hear what he had to say. What an opportunity!

At the same time, Grace carried out diabetes screening for those aged over 40 and gave them much-needed dietary advice in pictures and with translation.

Please pray

That the lives of many individuals and communities will be transformed through the dental outreach trips.

For wisdom as Simon and Grace seek a longer-term solution to meet Liberia's dental needs.

For John Mark Sheppard as he heads an SIM project to translate the whole of the New Testament into the Manya language. He is aiming for completion by the end of 2021.

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“The team worked their socks off and many Manya heard the good news and saw it demonstrated,” Grace says. “It was so satisfying to see those we have trained take responsibility for treating their own people and being an instrument of God’s blessing.”

THE FINAL SCORE

12 patients with 22 extractions	Day 1
30 patients with 104 extractions	Day 2
69 patients with 186 extractions	Day 3
40 patients with 122 extractions	Day 4

TOTAL

151 patients with a massive 434 teeth extracted



Simon's OBE 'surprise'



As well as the success of their latest outreach trip, Grace and Simon celebrated the news that Simon was awarded an OBE in the Queen's birthday list for 'services to dentistry in Africa'.

Simon helped plan, equip and train staff for the new Trinity Dental Clinic, which opened in March 2019 (The original, smaller clinic, established in 2008 was demolished during re-development). Another Liberian staff member is currently studying for a dental degree in Kenya.

In a country where there is a serious lack of dental care, Simon has also launched plans for a dental therapist training school to equip and support students to work in rural regions of Liberia where there is currently no dental care. This has involved discussions with the Liberian Ministry of Health to gain appropriate permissions, as well as Universities in both Liberia and the UK. It will be a significant investment of time and resources.

Simon says, “Receiving this honour came as a complete surprise, I thought it was a scam when I first received the email. However, the whole Trinity dental team is delighted that they have been recognised in this way. We pray it will bring greater awareness of the dental needs and facilitate the plans to respond to them.”

“I thought it was a scam”

Meet our workers

Praise God for our latest workers being mobilised into global mission. Do keep them in your prayers and if you would like to be a prayer partner of any of them individually, then please sign up on the SIM UK website at www.sim.co.uk/prayerpartners



MEXICO

Maribel Easton

Sending Church: Thornton Heath Evangelical Church, Croydon.

Where are you serving? Mexico.

What are you doing? Supporting the work of the Predica Vida Bible College, as well as serving in the local church.

Pray: Pray for those who will be attending the bible college, that they will apply what they have learned and not go back to bad habits. Pray for the churches in Mexico that they may be feed with sound doctrine and biblical teaching. Pray for my husband David's Spanish to improve nicely; for guidance in regard to our children's future education and for our visas process to go smoothly.



MADAGASCAR

Joel & Joyce Chin

Sending Church: Eden Baptist Church, Cambridge.

Where are you serving? Madagascar.

What are you doing? Anaesthetist Joel and Joyce, a GP, are serving on the medical team at the Good News Hospital in Mandritsara.

Pray: For Joel's specific role in helping to set up the hospital's high dependency unit. Please pray that we can be up to speed with language learning, and for our children to adapt well.



THAILAND

Martin & Juliet Thompson

Sending Church: Emmanuel Church Oxford.

Where are you serving? Thailand.

What are you doing? Working with Sports Friends.

Pray: For us as we learn a very challenging language; as we deepen relationships with the Sports Friends team and as Martin seeks to apply his mentoring skills and gifts to a Thai context. Also, please pray for our children as they settle into a new school and living in Thailand. Please pray for Juliet as she helps the family connect with the community and searches for opportunities to serve.

