



Faith Connections on Mental Illness

FCMI

FCMI Annual Meeting and Board Retreat

Personal Summary and Observations

These are not minutes, but are Kim Batson's reflections on the 6/3/23 meeting in an attempt to memorialize/capture the flavor and spirit of the day.

Summary

The FCMI Annual Meeting and Board Retreat was held on Saturday, June 3, 2023, from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm in the St. Theresa of Calcutta Room at The Catholic Community of St. Thomas More, Chapel Hill, NC.

With all but one board member present, it was a glorious first full in-person gathering after nearly 3 ½ years of Covid-driven Zoom meetings. The allotted four hours flew, bookended by joyful greetings/a timetable busting ice breaker at the start and tabled agenda items for next time at the end.

Acknowledgement and Confidentiality Agreements (which are now stored in DropBox) were collected at the sign-in station. Following the Meditation (Krisha) and Icebreaker (Anne) in the **Board Retreat Part 1**, session, the group watched the FCMI PowerPoint Inspirational Slide Show and discussed updating the presentation. Deby then recounted FCMI's History, Mission, and 2023 Accomplishments.

During the **Annual Meeting** segment, words of appreciation were offered for Leslie Cenezy (Co-Chair) and Connie Holleman, who had recently resigned due to other life commitments. Two new board members were unanimously elected: Paul Burgess and Mary Trip. A slate of officers was also unanimously approved: Chair – Kim Batson; Vice-Chair – Barbara Hall; Secretary – Elizabeth Barber; Treasurers – Nancye Bryan and Hugh Tilson.

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Connecting across faiths in mental health ministry



Meeting Virtually on the 2nd Monday of the Month
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The **Board Retreat, Part II** reconvened with Housekeeping/Organization reviews. Kim provided a high-level review of DropBox, where (ideally) all final FCMI documents are stored, and urged that everyone follow “Branding” best practices and avoid “orphan” documents by consistent use of our Logo and Letterhead (or at least the key information contained therein) in all written and electronic communications. Deby highlighted major points from the Bylaws, Charter (Articles of Incorporation), and Board Expectations documents. Nancye and Hugh displayed/discussed the balance sheet/budget, including verifying that State and Federal forms required of Non-Profit entities have been properly filed.

Before the break, Deby and Hugh were extolled for their years of dedicated service to FCMI and presented with gift cards to Angus Barn. At the 2022 Annual Meeting, Deby had stepped up and agreed to serve as Co-Chair for one year, essentially reinvigorating a weary core group of volunteers and preventing the potentially imminent cessation of operations for FCMI. Hugh was lauded for his long-term, ongoing, and highly professional service as FCMI’s treasurer.

Following the **Break** (and excellent celebratory cake provided by Maryanne, who also secured the meeting space and set up the slides for viewing), the group got down to the business of **Defining Goals and Direction** for the 2023-2024 program year. Anne led a SWOT exercise (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats). Maryanne provided hard facts and data related to mental health trends in the United States.

The **Final Work Product** was seven yellow flip chart sheets that captured the essence of Board members’ thoughts on **SWOT** issues impacting FCMI: Internal (**S**trengths, **W**eaknesses) and External (**O**pportunities, **T**hreats).

Those concepts were woven into the “**Brainstorming**” sheet, leading to the distillation of FCMI’s two major Areas of Focus for 2023-2024: 1) **Youth Mental Health** and 2) **Suicide Prevention**. *Trauma* and *Access to Care* were identified as themes that transcend both Foci. To clarify, FCMI will not restrict itself (including Connectors’ programs) only to these topics. However, they would be the primary topics considered should we sponsor, co-sponsor, or create our own conference/special event.

Preferred **Strategies** going forward rely heavily on getting back to basics – CONNECTING!! We are Faith Connections on Mental Illness and we need to re-establish those basic bonds. Updating and detailing the Connectors’ list; contact name and emails for various types of communications; meeting personally with same; etc.

It all boils down to **Deliverables** – what do we have to offer to individuals and faith communities? What tangibles do we provide to bolster their mental health preparedness efforts? With retreat time running out, we agreed to convene a sub-group to expand on the outline.

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I'll end as I started – what a glorious gathering! Let's keep this momentum going. I've detailed the attendees below, some highlights of the getting to know segment, and included images of the yellow flip-chart sheets.

Attendees

Ten of the eleven board members were present, thus constituting a quorum (50% required). Cindy Bucy was unable to attend. Paul Burgess and Mary Tripp were unanimously elected to the board during the meeting, bringing the total number of board members to thirteen.

Board Members:

Elizabeth Barber, Kim Batson, Paul Burgess, Nancye Bryan, Deby Dihoff, Barbara Hall, Anne Kelly, Krisha Miller, Marianne Mitchell, Hugh Tilson, Mary Tripp, Julie Worth.

Special Guests: Barbara and Gove Elder (FCMI founding members)

Getting to Know You

Anne led a “Getting to know each other icebreaker,” many of which enthralled and inspired listeners – especially Paul’s past (but not really past...) desire to be Batman (to swoop in and save the day!). An impressive number wanted to be ballerinas, with Anne touting the benefits of remaining a life-long dancer.

Gove’s recollection of gathering flora in the woods and replanting into a lovingly tended hodgepodge garden at his home was a delightful metaphor (foreshadowing) of the seeds of faith and service he has spread throughout his life, from a missionary in Thailand to refugee resettlement volunteer, to personally going to Chapel Hill area faith communities door-to-door spreading word of free NAMI programs, leading up to his co-founding role in Faith Connections on Mental Illness. And Barbara (Elder) – sweet as cotton candy yet steady as steel Barbara – had no ambitions at all until she met and married Gove at a tender age (!) and bloomed with him in service to others (missionary, teacher, co-founder and still fierce champion of FCMI and all it stands for) for SIXTY-TWO years (and counting).

P.S. Gove went back to his childhood home to find the love garden, without his tender ministrations, was totally empty, barren. But he likes to think that rather than simply dying without care and cultivation, it took off for parts unknown via wind, birds, bees, etc. and is actually scattered in many different pieces to many different places. Let it be so for all of us.

Respectfully submitted,
Kim Batson
6/4/2023

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Strengths

Strong connection to a FC
 Historical strong rep
 Strong Commitment → Combat Stigma
 Members Connected to resources
 Stayed true to mission
 Good structure → dropbox, logo, how-to
 Financial resources
 Diversity
 Personal connection & lived experience

Weaknesses

Solicitation → lists, needs org (spreadsheet)
 Lack of connections
 Weak attendance → lack targeted
 Communication (list)
 lack of cross-training
 Technology → QR codes
 Board recruiting challenges
 Lack of PR
 Social Media challenges
 Younger Cohort
 Conference Manager (AHEC)

Opportunities

Heightened MH awareness
 Use of remote tech → Zoom etc
 Access to Community events/groups
 Developing relationships → NAMI etc
 Access to national org - Alliance UCC
 Mini-conference c Pastors → Duke Divinity
 c deliverables/structure for MH ministries
 Training & Ed - Spiritual First Aid
 MHFA, QPR, Living Works
 Youth* → per data

Threats

↑↑ Suicide rates
 Political divisions
 Stigma (self, multi-factors)
 ↳ Misperceptions Re: MH (mass shootings)
 *News
 Declining Youth membership in Faith Communities
 Declining donations
 Costly conferences
 Challenges with sustaining memberships

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BRAINSTORM

Conference - Manageable
 Youth? - smaller
 spirituality
 Solicitations - update

Conversations w Clergy / B
 update web page - testimonial
 Report MHFA each meeting
 More development in Att'ies
 or task force groups

Gather youth pastors - train MHFA
 Develop Youth Board - serve / present
 - PR Piece - social Media / Outreach
 Formal proposal to Community Agencies
 Connectors - increase participation
 - Spiritual Support Groups
 - More committees w WISE Congregations
 - Finding out "what works" in other congregations

Focus / Themes

* Youth
 Suicide as Conference theme
 Presentation
 TRAUMA
 Access to Care

Strategies

- Meet w Youth ministers
- Update Connectors' list
 - emails, names, contacts
 Admin. @ faith communities
- Segmenting Connectors List
- BOD members Reach out
 Youth Ministers for blog
 entries

Deliverables

- Finding out "what works"
 in other faith communities
- What evidence based resources
 are Available??
- AMHFA - VMHFA - 65
- QPR - Suicide Prevention 1.5
- Spiritual First Aid - 8 sessions
- Eliciting blog submissions
- * 6 submissions blog
- * First Aid Classes # TBD
- * 1/2 day Conf + Workshop
 2023 & 2024

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