

***The Faith and Health Consortium***  
An Initiative of the Interfaith Health Program  
Rollins School of Public Health  
Emory University  
Atlanta, GA



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**Interfaith Health Program**

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### **Introduction**

The Faith and Health Consortium (FHC) is a collaborative project which began in November 1997 with five sites in the United States, where an agreement exists between a School of Public Health and a School of Theology or a Seminary, including involvement with schools of nursing, medicine, and other health sciences whenever possible, and always with community partners. The FHC has expanded to include a site in Cape Town, South Africa, and has documented exploration of interest in Bangalore, India. During the past three years more than 25 requests have been received from faculty and community leaders engaged in faith and health teaching, service and research projects asking to be considered for inclusion as a FHC site. A major development this past year has been a paid consultation for the development of a FHC Site in Minnesota where the infrastructure is now being developed that includes three institutions, a health services corporation, a seminary and an academic health sciences center with seven schools and a center for spirituality and healing, located in a land grant state university.

Each FHC Site has had a working group made up of faculty and students from the participating theology and health sciences schools and community leaders engaged in faith and health work. All FHC Sites have developed mission statements and goals to guide their work locally, as well as nationally through networking with other FHC Sites and organizations, such as presentations at professional conventions, and publications in professional journals, congregational communication networks, and electronic and print media. Each Site has programs that include interdisciplinary course development, research, service projects and conferences and forums that investigate the faith and health connection. A thematic analysis has been done of the mission statements of the FHC Sites.

This report will focus on accomplishments during the year 2000, including outcomes and recommendation of the three-year project.

### **Public Health/Theology Leaders Meeting**

A think-tank group of 30 leaders convened at the Fetzer Institute on May 8-10, 2000, to explore the meanings of faith and health as expressed in the disciplines of theology and public health and to look for ways to increase collaboration in building healthy communities. Representatives from the FHC sites were invited to participate. Two major outcomes were the need for a case statement on faith and health and transforming leadership development in theory and practice that engages integration of faith and health concepts. Since then the case statement has evolved into the development of an open letter containing key consensus points that will be circulated through selected publications and media resources for critique and action. Two leadership needs were identified, with one being the need for joint leadership training and development for currently practicing leaders (perhaps a joint leadership institute). The other was the need to influence the “pipeline” or existing infrastructures responsible for the formation of new leaders (particularly “notable centers of influence”).

### **Faith and Health Symposium**

This meeting was a pre-conference of the Public Housing and Primary Health Care conference, sponsored by Health Resources and Services Association (HRSA), and held in Washington DC on October 25, 2000. This was a direct outcome of the Public Health and Theology Leaders Meeting and provided a venue for broader dissemination of the work of these leaders and engagement with both faith leaders and health providers through workshops involving topics such as health ministry and leadership formation models (FHC).

### **Strong Partners Phase II Publication (not the correct title)**

This publication included the report of the October 1999 meeting where foundation and FHC representatives discussed topics related to faith and health community infrastructures, research, evaluation models and resources. In addition the publication provides contact information on all participants and invited foundations, and a summary of evaluation protocols used by selected foundations that fund faith and health projects.

### **FHC Site Reports**

Brief reports will follow that focus on recent outcomes and significance of the total project.

1. Bay Area FHC---A semester course, *Community Health, Wholeness and Spirituality*, open to students in the Graduate Theological Union, and the University of California/Berkeley, was co-taught by a theologian and a public health leader. The course included basic theory regarding what constitutes personal and community health, followed by discussions of how faith community perspectives can enhance public health. Relationship with a local congregation was established where students became involved in health promotion and discussions related to the theoretical aspects of the course. The FHC and both schools are committed to offering the course again.

Other activities included a meeting of researchers, development of a *Brown Bag Lunch Series*, professional papers and a book on spirituality and health by FHC members, and beginning dialogue with physicians who want to look at the physician role related to faith and health.

The most significant project outcomes were the ability to have faith and health become the theme of the 99<sup>th</sup> Annual Earl Lectures and Pastoral Conference at Pacific School of Religion and offering a faith and health course sponsored by a state university and a private consortium of seminaries through the FHC Site.

2. Pittsburgh Area Consortium of Faith and Health(PACFAH)---Three forums, *Faith in the Practice of Medicine, Faith and Health in the Workplace and Neuroscience and the Issue of the Soul*, were sponsored by PACFAH, with each forum drawing between 25 and 30 participants. PACFAH has been a dialogue partner

with an event, *Enabling Congregations to become Neighborhood Intervention Centers for Families in Crisis*, that was sponsored by Metro Urban Institute. Funding is being sought for a major conference on *The Interface of Faith/Spirituality with Health/Medicine and Social Capital*.

A Speaker's Bureau is almost complete and will be published in a brochure with other PACFAH offerings for the community.

Several PACFAH are involved in a multidisciplinary training project includes many departments and schools of the University of Pittsburgh ---public health, nursing, social work, medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, and law---plus Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh Pastoral Institute, and two other colleges in the area. The focus is on development of a multi-professional model for addressing complex concerns in target area in the community.

The most significant achievement resulting from the project has been the network of relationships that has served as a springboard for enduring projects in the metropolitan area. The FHC has been a think-tank where people connect across boundaries and encourage each other in their community work. The networks are the most important because they endure and evolve., according to Dr. Martha Robbins, professor at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary and leader of PACFAH.

3. St. Louis FHC(STLFHC)---In collaboration with Deaconess Foundation and Incarnate Word Foundation, they held the inaugural conference April 10-13, 2000 that focused on ways to enhance the mutual commitment of the faith and health communities to healing and wholeness. Approximately 400 pastors, health professionals, students, lay leaders, participated in workshops and heard presentations by nationally known speakers including Martin E. Marty of the University of Chicago and Gary Gunderson, director of the Interfaith Health Program.

One of the goals of the St. Louis Site is exploration of evaluation strategies for faith and health projects. This year they contributed to the evaluation of four community health initiatives done in partnership with congregations.

Two courses were taught by FHC faculty with FHC foundation and community partners. In the courses they work with professional students and practitioners from law, social work, public health, and nursing to teach methods for working in community and partnering with faith communities.

Publications related to partnering with ecumenical community organizations, congregations, and faith based community organizations are:

Homan, S.M., Homan, K.B., Domahidy, M., Unnerstahl, J., Starkloff-Morgan, S.  
 "The Catholic Secondary School Climate - Forming a Culture of Nonviolence and

Healthy Relatedness," Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice. Accepted and forthcoming, Spring, 2001.

Homan, S.M., Baker, P.A., Rohrbach, S., and Kinney, R. "Safe Beginnings and Bright Futures for At-Risk Babies," submitted to the American Journal of Public Health, November 15, 2000 (not yet published).

University activities that have benefitted from work and relationships in the STL FHC include:

- Submission and receipt of a Lilly grant. Institute for Faith, Learning, and Praxis: Linking Faith with Vocational Choices - A PROPOSAL TO THE LILLY ENDOWMENT Program: Theological Exploration of Vocation 2001 Phase One: Planning Grant, submitted by the Provost, in conjunction with faculty around the University, including STL FHC members Mary Domahidy and Sharon Homan.
- The opportunity to give visibility to the academic work of the STL FHC by Sharon Homan at the National Jesuit Commitment to Justice Meeting (Santa Clara, October, 2000), and as a member of the SLU Justice Committee, and Mission Committee of the SLU Board of Trustees.

Participation of SLU faculty and STL FHC coordinators, Sharon Homan and Mary Domahidy, on various faith-based foundation, housing, and community boards has broadened the network of FHC connections.

Challenge: They are not sure they have a real identity. The Consortium pulled people together, but not everyone says this has occurred because of STL FHC. Their vision is to strengthen their identity.

The most significant accomplishment of the project thus far is building relationships--among hospital conversion foundations, with the 2 university entities (School of Public Health and the College of Public Service), and with the 2 seminaries (Aquinas Institute and Eden Theological Seminary). They now call upon one another both formally and informally to assist with a wide variety of activities. For example, the university was invited by Lilly Foundation to apply for one of their theological grants. Dr. Homan knew the Aquinas Institute had experience in this area, so she got in touch with them for help in applying for the funding

4. South Carolina FHC (Palmetto FHC)---A public health course that focused on social justice and community health and included community action and participatory learning, was presented at APHA by a student and faculty member. The FHC co-sponsored or contributed to two major conferences in 1999; no new events were held in 2000.

The most important long term outcome would be the research the FHC did in collaboration with SC Christian Action Council and the Turning Point Initiative of the SC Dept of Health and Environmental Control. The surveys and the follow-up in-depth interviews provided a much better understanding of what churches were doing, but, more important, how faith communities view their mission in relation to personal and community health. A better understanding was gained of what is important to faith communities and how public health can serve and be served by them. The critical issue is respect for the mission and values of the faith communities, which includes: acknowledging them as a partner who participates in planning and setting goals and designing programs; evaluating efforts in terms important to them; and treating congregations not as a means to public health's end or as convenient source of volunteers or study subjects, but as having value for who they are and what they do quite apart from public health's agenda.

Other significant accomplishments include:

- The conferences they sponsored or co-sponsored which were designed to share what had been learned and to learn from the people attending. "We learned from them, probably more than they learned from us."
  - The support the FHC provided for development of curricula at the College of Nursing and at Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary.
  - The collaboration with the Turning Point Initiative Faith and Health Work Group in making recommendations to build the infrastructure in both public and private agencies and groups to provide support for the faith and health movement and facilitate collaborations.
5. Atlanta FHC---During this past year this FHC Site was undergoing leadership change and transition of the Interfaith Health Program from The Carter Center to Rollins School of Public Health at Emory University. As a follow-up to the Scholar's Meeting, a meeting was held on May 1 with key representatives from Emory university, Interdenominational Theological Center, Morehouse School of Medicine, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Columbia Theological Seminary, Beulah heights Bible College, St. Joseph's Health System, DeKalb County and Fulton County Health Departments, and Georgia State University, to discuss the question, *How does the intellectual capacity within the academy and the community build the knowledge base needed for the faith and health movement?*

An interdisciplinary graduate course, *Health as Social Justice*, with students enrolled from public health, nursing, theology and law, was taught by the Interfaith Health Program staff.

Interviews were conducted with selected faculty and administrators At emory University to learn about interest in and current endeavors that deal with the integration of faith and wholeness or health factors. From this analysis a strategic document of action for the Interfaith Health Program at Emory University was

developed. Among the actions is a proposed multidisciplinary faith and health graduate major to be jointly sponsored by the schools of public health, theology and nursing. Another proposed program of study will be designed to capture the untapped potential of returned missionaries so that their international and community experience and interest in faith and health may be directed toward leadership in continuing faith and health work based on public health and theological course content and research knowledge.

### **Summary Comments regarding Project Outcomes**

1. The Faith and Health Consortium was designed as a three year \$800,000 project of which \$200,000 was provided by the Templeton Foundation. Despite the fact that no additional funding was secured, the project continued with major accomplishments.
2. A national network of FHC Sites exists, each with its own local unique characteristics, yet all have engaged in interdisciplinary curriculum development, research, and service projects involving community partnerships.
3. All the Sites have noted the value of the productive relationships which endure and evolve pushing forward the boundaries of the faith and health movement for the purpose of building infrastructures that enhance the public's health by engaging the full potential of faith communities.
4. The Interfaith Health Program website and listserv have been enhanced by the FHC through listing of best practice models and syllabi that relate to faith and health. The plan to post a webpage for each FHC Site did not materialize although a template for submission of data was developed. It was not feasible for most of the Sites to engage in this activity at the present time.
5. Interest remains high from other potential Sites to join the Consortium. Two international Sites have been explored with the one in Cape Town, South Africa currently in development.
6. A second version of the FHC model is currently underway in Minneapolis with many promising features that include inclusion of funding resources and development strategies.
7. The systematic review of the literature was not accomplished mainly because funding sources were not realized despite the acceptance of the proposal. This need is still apparent in that a companion to Koenig's handbook is needed that captures the current state of the knowledge base that focuses on the faith and health infrastructures and shalom, that includes health, wholeness and social justice.

