

The History of Christian Pharmacists Fellowship International

by

WARREN E. WEAVER

The Christian Pharmacists Fellowship International (CPFI) was officially incorporated in Virginia in 1984, after many years of prayerful planning and meetings. In some sense, it is easier for me to relate the development of the organization from my perspective. Consequently, I have elected to write this as a personal journey that led me to other persons who had similar visions of the future for a Christian Pharmacy organization.

Beginnings

It was in 1973 that I came to know the Lord in a personal way. Soon after, I saw there were many organizations engaged in efforts to evangelize specific segments of the population. My personal ignorance of such organizations that existed outside the church to which I belonged made this a new and exciting world—the world of “marketplace” ministries! (As I reflect on this, it is incredible, even today, that so many churches seem to be unaware of Christian organizations and activities outside their

own denominational boundaries.) The exciting thing about these organizations was that most were non- or interdenominational in their approach to evangelism.

During this time, two major Christian organizations trying to evangelize students were operating on the campus of the Medical College of Virginia (MCV) in Richmond, Virginia, where I worked and lived. Moreover, there was a large nonaffiliated Christian group made up of students from medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, nursing and other allied health professions who were looking for a group.

I soon learned that one of these organizations was the Christian Medical Society (CMS), which today has been enlarged as the Christian Medical and Dental Society (CMDS). On the MCV campus, a large group of medical and nursing students was talking about reviving the Chapter of CMS that had once operated there. To help them, they invited the Atlanta staff member of CMS, Sid McCauley, ThM, to Richmond. I had served as a contact with their administration for the informal MCV group and had shared with them my own Christian experience. I had never heard of

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any Christian pharmacy group for students. Thus, I assumed that CMS probably had some kind of membership for pharmacy students since nurses and dentists were eligible for membership.

When Sid visited my office, he was obviously embarrassed because there was no provision in the CMS for pharmacists or pharmacy students. In retrospect, it is understandable since CMS was formed in the 1930s to facilitate short-term missionary trips overseas for physicians. Then, they did not perceive pharmacists necessary for their endeavors. Through their personal contacts with the pharmaceutical industry they had assembled a reasonably adequate supply source for medications and related medical supplies needed to support their efforts overseas. In fact, this supply source became so efficient and large, it was later spun off as a separate entity known as MAPS, the largest supplier in this country. Sid concluded his visit with me by offering me a one-year free subscription to the CMS Journal. Subsequently, I was invited to speak at the state medical meeting where CMS sponsored a breakfast.

First Fruits

During the seventies, a large number of these special interest groups (marketplace ministries) were already operative and many more were being formed. In my search, I did discover that the Catholic church had a group for pharmacists, but they were not very visible. In all my travels around the country, I had never heard of them. However, my CMS connection did stimulate me to consider the possibility of something like a breakfast or luncheon at a state or national meeting. In 1978, I spoke with the executive officer of the Virginia Pharmaceutical Association about holding a Christian event. Subsequently, a luncheon was held in Virginia Beach with a local dentist as

the speaker. This first event was followed by a series of breakfasts held almost yearly at the annual meetings. The attendance ranged from 15–70 through these years. I learned later, after CPFI was formally organized, that some states in the South did have a Christian activity or some kind of religious event at their meetings, especially if their groups were meeting on Sundays.

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Following the success of that first Virginia venture, I spoke with the executive secretary of the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACP). He approved the scheduling of an early morning coffee at the 1979 Denver meeting. There, a physician and a pharmacist from Navigators* shared how their Christian walks had helped their individual practices.

The AACP event then continued to function regularly beginning with the next breakfast held in Boston the following year. It was at that breakfast that Douglas Stewart, PhD, University of Toronto, Canada, told me that this event was an answer to the prayers of a

group of their faculty members of which he belonged. During that same year, a faculty member at MCV told me that he had heard an announcement at the Midyear Clinical meeting of the American Society of Hospital Pharmacists (ASHP) asking for a group to meet for prayer. I subsequently learned that this person was Joel A. Oliver, PharmD, the chief pharmacist at the City of Faith Hospital, Tulsa, OK. In 1981, I wrote to Joel asking him to help arrange an event at the New Orleans ASHP. At almost the same time, I learned from Rodney D. Ice, PhD, dean at the University of Oklahoma of a former faculty member of his, Kay See-Lasley, MS, who had told him of her interest in starting a Christian group for pharmacists. I later wrote her and discovered she had already put together a general statement of faith and some ideas on the functions of such a group. It was apparent that the Lord was working in many of His people in pharmacy! This was a source of great encouragement to me and others who were already gathering at pharmacy meetings.

The New Orleans event led to a continuation of meetings held at the ASHP Midyear Clinical Meetings. During the early eighties, we tried a series of noontime and evening meetings, but attendance was sparse. In the mid-eighties, we adopted a four-morning series of continental breakfasts, each with a different speaker. All these events required some coordination and contacts with hotels, associations and speakers. Because of my interest in this, I had maintained a mailing list of attendees at each of the sponsored events. I undertook the scheduling of these meetings and notification of persons who had previously attended. At the 1983 meeting, we discussed incorporation and Roger J. Lapp from Clearwater, Florida, offered to edit a newsletter for our new organization. This offer of help along with our attendance lists provided the nucleus for a membership organization.

*The Navigators is a nondenominational, evangelical organization that equips Christians in their ministries through small group discipling and study of scriptures. Their material is excellent and available in most Christian bookstores.

Charter Members

The organization was formalized in 1984 with its charter in Virginia. The chartering board consisted of seven persons: Warren Hall of Waco, Texas, Roger Lapp, Joel Oliver of Tulsa, Oklahoma, Kay See-Lasley of Lawrence, Kansas, Harry A. Smith, PhD, of Lexington, Kentucky, Mark D. Wright of Tulsa, Oklahoma, and me. I served as executive director and treasurer, while Harry Smith took on the yeoman's job of reducing all of our efforts to bylaws and procedures. In 1985, Robert J. Re-cobs of Montclair, New Jersey, was elected as our first president. He held the office until 1989, when he was succeeded by Roger Lapp. In 1992, Fred M. Eckel of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, took over as president and held the office until 1994, when he was succeeded by Keith W. Allhands of Bennington, Indiana. In 1985, John T. Ell-gen of Golden Valley, Minnesota, was elected as secretary-treasurer. He was succeeded as treasurer by Jack Parrish of Chester, Virginia in 1992 and held that office until 1993 when I succeeded him. I was succeeded by Laurie Schulze of Roseburg, Oregon as executive director after holding that office since CPFI's founding. In 1994, Fred Eckel assumed this post.

Board Meetings

Our most important CPFI board meeting was probably the formation meeting in Tulsa in 1984. This was followed by board meetings for three years in Lawrence, Kansas. In 1988, board meetings were held at our annual meetings and have continued since then. Because the activities of the Fellowship had increased, it became necessary to have interim board meetings, so during the 1992-93 year, the board also began meeting between annual meetings. The first of these was held in Richmond and subsequently in Chapel Hill.

In 1987, Roger Lapp noted at our board meeting that it was time for us to have our own annual meetings separate from the meetings of other pharmacy



CPFI President Keith Allhands prepares to reconvene 1995 Board Meeting in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Vice President Laurie Schulze is on left.



During a break at the 1995 Board Meeting in Tulsa, Oklahoma, CPFI Treasurer, Warren Weaver lends some wisdom to Executive Director Fred Eckel (left) and Secretary Trent Tschirgi (right).



Two CPFI Board Members try to resolve a problem at 1995 meeting in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Jack Parrish makes a point to Dan Teat on left.



During a break at the CPFI Board Meeting in Tulsa, Oklahoma, Brenda Langston, administrative director, lets Fred Eckel, executive director, know that he has only a few minutes left to pay his dues.

organizations. Up to this time, our board meetings had not been well attended when they were held independently of, or at meetings of other groups.

Annual Meetings

In 1988, we held the first annual meeting of the Fellowship in Orlando, Florida. For the first time, we had continuing education (CE) sessions with accredited CE along with our meeting. This was a giant step forward! Fred Eckel took responsibility for organizing these programs, which have proven to be unique, inspiring and encouraging. In 1989 and 1990, we met in Wilmore, Kentucky, at Asbury College and the Board resolved at that time to continue to meet at Christian retreat centers or colleges. In 1991, we met at Scarritt-Bennett Conference Center in Nashville, Tennessee, and then two successive years at Campbell University. Beginning in 1992, Dan Teat took over the primary function of developing the CE program. In 1994, the meeting moved to Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois, and in 1995, to Tulsa University in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Our largest attendance at any annual meeting was about 125 men, women and children at Asbury College in 1990. Attendance at the CE sessions over the years has averaged 35-60 persons. For the first time in pharmacy, sessions were offered which integrated explicit and implicit Christian concerns and principles with professional subjects. Until 1991, accreditation of the CE sessions was through the University of North Carolina; since then it has been through Campbell University.

Expansion

As the organization grew in size to more than one thousand members, with a mailing list of two thousand, the business functions began to take on major proportions and a part-time secretary was employed. She worked in the CPFI Office, which was located in my home, for two years. Finally, in

1992, an office was rented and a new secretary was hired who worked 20 hours per week. All the materials stored in my home were moved to this new facility and I began a regular half-day in the office. The activity had become just about a full-time job for me and it was evident that a new arrangement was necessary. In 1993, after considerable debate, the board elected to move the office to the campus of Campbell University in Buies Creek, North Carolina. It is now housed in one room in the basement level of the pharmacy school building.

At the same time, the Fellowship had to make another important decision because the membership had grown. The general philosophy had been to maintain our programming, planning, and activities through volunteers, rather than to try to develop a staff of full-time persons. With this no longer possible, the Fellowship made the decision to hire a full-time person as Administrative Director. Brenda Langston was hired in October 1993, and has held the position since then. She handles the business and related activities of the Fellowship. We specifically elected not to have a full-time paid pharmacist in this role. Our perception was that Christians within the profession should be the driving force of planning and making the plan work.

Financial Growth

As a membership organization, we have had a nominal "membership fee" (really a contribution), of \$20 per year. The actual operating costs of the Fellowship have been about \$50 per year, per member, and the additional funds have come through gifts from the membership. The board voted to increase the annual membership fee to \$35 per year beginning in April 1995, and raised the contributing, supporting and sustaining gift memberships to \$125, \$250, and \$500 respectively. Over the years, the Fellowship has accrued an operating balance equal to about six months' expenses. With a membership of about one thousand, income and expense have been in the \$40,000 to \$50,000 range.

Keeping the membership fee at a nominal level has been possible only because so many people have generously donated their time to the Fellowship to see that the publications, meetings, programming and other planning necessary to the function of a viable organization are done. Our IRS 990 filings or other budget data, and our tax exemption certification, are available to any member on request.

Regional/National Exposure

It has been interesting to watch the progress and development of the organization over the past 15 years. The general focus of meetings has been to demonstrate the application of Christian principles in all that we do, and how to share the gospel with other pharmacists and patients. This has led to an expansion of activities at state and national meetings. Several states now have or have had functions at their



At the 1995 CPFI Annual Meeting in Tulsa, Oklahoma, President Keith Allhands (center) has fellowship with Secretary Trent Tschirgi and Vice President Laurie Schulze.



Two executive directors break bread together at 1995 CPFI Annual Meeting in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Former director Warren Weaver, on left, discusses issues with current Executive Director Fred Eckel.

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state association meetings including North Carolina, Virginia, Texas, Kentucky, Illinois, Pennsylvania and South Carolina. In addition, state and regional hospital groups have held similar functions as CPFI members took leadership roles in organizing these activities. Also, meetings have branched out nationally to include the annual meeting of the ASHP, NARD and APhA.

Student Chapters

As students attended or heard about these functions, they began to ask about student chapters. Student chapters have operated or are now operating at many schools of pharmacy; included are the universities of North Carolina, South Carolina, Arkansas, Kentucky, Illinois, and Maryland, and the University of the Pacific and the Medical College of Virginia.

International Expansion

One of the most rewarding aspects of the development of CPFI has been the international activity. We learned that there were pharmacist missionaries throughout the world. Altogether we identified more than 40 persons in the field either currently or in the past. It was not surprising to hear from them

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in the early days and have them write that "I thought I was the only pharmacist missionary in the world!" We found out that third world pharmacists had very few resources, so most of them who became members of CPFI were supported by American missionaries. Activities in Zaire and Nigeria have led to an affiliation of CPFI with the Nigerian Fellowship of Christian Pharmacists and a chapter of CPFI was established in Zaire.

Financial Outreach

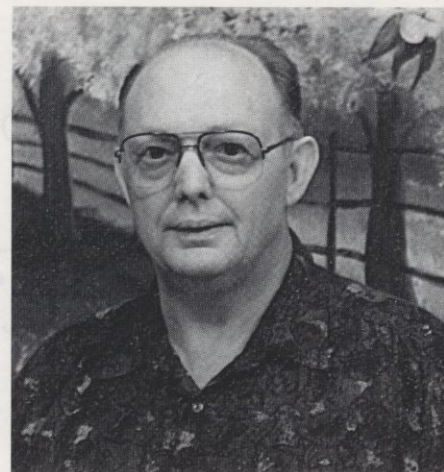
From the beginning, the Fellowship elected to tithe a portion of its income to various outreach programs. One of the programs initiated first was support for pharmacy related projects for pharmacist missionaries. Some of these

projects supported one-time purchases of equipment, educational improvement programs and other pharmacy activities. We also initiated a student scholarship program in 1991. Support was offered to students who were trying to obtain clerkship experience in missionary or similar Christian locations, or who were interested in writing a scholarly paper integrating subjects of specific Christian interest with pharmacy practice. Rev. Jerry Lester of San Diego, California supplemented our own resources with a five-year annual grant of \$1000 a year in support of this activity.

Publications

With the founding of our organization, we established a set of purposes and beliefs that were published periodically in the quarterly newsletter. (These statements are printed on the inside front cover of this issue.) Roger Lapp edited the newsletter for many years and was succeeded five years ago by Major James E. Thompson of Morristown, Tennessee. For a time in 1987-89, Kay See-Lasley edited a Prayer Guide, which was published twice a year for members.

Besides our newsletter, which was first published in 1984, our board felt that a Directory of Fellowship members would be most helpful. Our first Directory was published in 1990 and our second in 1992. The relocation of our office recently has delayed publication of the Directory until this year. During Roger Lapp's term as president, he proposed that we publish a



Major James E. Thompson, editor of the CPFI Newsletter.

journal in addition to our newsletter. This activity was delayed as we sought appropriate editorial supervision and the necessary resources to undertake it. Harvey Whitney assumed the role of editor and the Fellowship hopes to publish at least one issue each year.

The Future

We look forward to serving the Lord for many more years and hope to continue to grow as He leads us. We stand in awe of His greatness and how he used each one of us for His divine purpose in forming this group. Perhaps we do not know each other or have much in common except that we love Him and wish to serve Him with "both feet running." May He bless you richly as you continue to serve in your profession.∞