

Interim Executive Director's Report to the 2022 Annual Meeting

I began my duties at the end of 2020 with the goal of learning the functions and rhythms of River City Faith Network. I spent much of the first half of 2021 dealing with matters related to the sale of RCFN's Moss Side Avenue building and moving the office to our current location. Last October we celebrated the seventieth anniversary of Richmond Baptist Association at RCFN's Annual Meeting.

Several significant accomplishments mark our seventy-first year. Doing what should be routine may not seem significant, but learning and doing routine things makes it possible for RCFN to function normally. We continued to restructure the annual budget, something started in 2021.

We clarified the various sources of income that make RCFN's ministries possible. RCFN would not have the ministries we offer without the missionaries and support staff members who lead our ministries. We would not have missionaries, ministries, or even have RCFN without the prayers, financial gifts, and volunteers who make all our ministries possible. Gifts from RCFN churches make up a significant portion of our funding. Some of the money goes to RCFN's overall work. Some goes to specifically designated work. Over the years some churches have closed and established endowments, sharing some of their endowments' income with RCFN and/or its ministries. Beth Wright and the Camp Alkulana Support Team work hard to raise financial support for our camp ministry through fund-raising events and grants. Monetary gifts and gifts of backpacks, clothes and toys, food, and other gifts support the community ministries of our centers. I think everyone on our staff does their part to use the money and other gifts wisely, effectively, and even frugally. We want you to know we steward every gift to stretch the money as far as we can. We also want you to know, if we had more, we could meet more needs.

We clarified where the money comes from, and we clarified where we spend the money we receive. As a result, I can report that we spend 39% of our money to hold four summer sessions at Camp Alkulana and provide Alkulana RVA, the camp's ministry the rest of the year. We spend 36% of our money to provide ministries to persons in need through our three community ministry centers. Of that amount, Church Hill Christian Wellness Center and Oregon Hill Baptist Center use 11% percent each. The remaining 14% percent provides the ministry of South Richmond Baptist Center which has its own building. The final 25% provides for the ministries that operate out of our headquarters. The ministries that operate out of our headquarters provide direct support to RCFN churches and their leaders, facilitate the work of our camp and community ministry centers, and administer RCFN's operations.

RCFN's Board of Directors routinely meets six times each year. Our Board acts for RCFN between our Annual Meetings. The Board includes our officers, support team leaders, and at-large representatives from what we call "core" churches. We have a strong Board who take their duties seriously and serve RCFN well.

Part of my work has focused on helping RCFN have the structure it needs for this time in its life. Our Board appointed a team to review and recommend revisions to RCFN's Bylaws and our related Policies and Procedures. The Board endorsed the recommended revisions to the Bylaws, and messengers will consider their approval at the 2022 Annual Meeting. The Board has the authority to amend RCFN's Policies and Procedures and did so at its September meeting. Each of these actions will help RCFN function more effectively.

We have other routine improvements in the works. At future meetings RCFN's Board will consider revisions to our Employee Handbook among other things.

Support Teams aid of RCFN's ministries and have representation on our Board. In May we held a joint training event. This event helped all who attended to understand their respective roles better, to understand how the work of the Board and the Support Teams complement each other, and to plan work for the year. We expect to produce training guidelines for future Board and Support Team members based on the event held last May.

The masthead on our monthly newsletter says "Working together until Metro Richmond is...TRANSFORMED." Each issue has information related to our ministries. I enjoy reading the articles our missionaries share about their work. Sometimes we hear about a church project or ministry. If we routinely keep each other *informed*, I think it will help us work together to *transform* our community with the Gospel, however we share it.

In 2021 our Board commissioned a project to look at RCFN's future. Dr. James Hamacher, who leads Middle District Baptist Association, served as our consultant. The Board noted his conclusions and followed several of his suggestions. This year our Board arranged for RCFN to participate in the Prism Process in 2024. The timing allowed for RCFN's Executive Search process to conclude before the Prism Process begins. By participating, RCFN will join with similar bodies in a cohort of peers. Simultaneously each of the associations or networks will look at itself and make strategic decisions related to its future and how it ministers.

We had waited until we were settled in our new office facilities to plan a dedication service and open house. Winter weather interfered with our plans. We held the dedication service on May 1, a year after moving our offices from Moss Side Avenue in Richmond to Emerywood Parkway in Henrico.

As in other years, we saw the departures and arrivals of several RCFN church leaders. Tom Ficklin, pastor at Woodland Heights and Southampton Baptist Churches, retired for health reasons, and we share that loss with those he led and pray God's blessing on Tom. We also share another church's loss. When Howard Germany retired from his duties as pastor of Carlisle Avenue Baptist Church and moved back to Georgia, RCFN lost a friend who had served as one of our leaders. We welcome his successor, Tom Williams. We also welcome William Gunter as the pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church (Penick Road) and Anita Laffoon as the pastor of Ginter Park Baptist Church.

Two more leaders will step down in 2022. Nancy King has served as our Ministry Placement Committee leader for some years. She also led the ad hoc committee that reviewed and recommended revisions to both our Bylaws and our Policies and Procedures. During her tenure Nancy has devoted countless hours to River City Faith Network. How do you acknowledge such a gift? "Thank you, Nancy" hardly seems adequate. If I interpret the Bible correctly, Nancy has demonstrated the kind of faithful service that will follow her after she has stepped down and will receive its own "Well done!" in eternity. We thank God for her and all she has done to help RCFN.

We also thank God for Cecil Chambers and all Cecil has done to lead us. Cecil has served RCFN in several leadership roles. He will conclude his current role leading our Personnel Committee when he finishes his work as pastor at Skipwith Baptist Church at the end of the year. Cecil was the person who phoned me in August of 2020 to ask if I would talk about serving as RCFN's interim executive director when Mike Robinson retired.

I count it a joy to work with leaders like Cecil and Nancy and all the others God has allowed me to work beside at River City Faith Network for twenty-three months. I count it a joy

to work with leaders like Bob Thompson and Joyce Clemmons and other Board members. I count it a joy to work with every RCFN staff team member. Volunteer colleagues and staff colleagues, all of them have demonstrated ability and faithfulness that I find inspiring. Together, as Hebrews 10:24 says, we have spurred one another forward in God's love and good deeds.

I thank God for Cecil's phone call. I thank God for assigning me the duty of helping bridge the interim between what RCFN and Mike Robinson did together and what RCFN and your next leader will do together.

When I trained RCFN's Executive Search Committee on December 9, I left the room confident that God has assembled a team worthy of their task. They have led River City Faith Network to the candidate God has prepared to lead you next. Chaired by Philip Turner, the team which included David Bailey, Phyllis Baskerville, Joyce Clemmons, Bill Duganne, Louis Jones, Richard Martin, Mary Palmer, and Bill Rusher came together as one, followed God's leadership, and announced Maria Lynn as the person God sends to lead RCFN now. I commend the members of the Search Committee for doing what God sent them to do. I commend Maria Lynn as the servant God sends to lead you and the other capable servants God has sent to serve as RCFN's staff team members and volunteers. I commend each and all of you to God's care and to the holy service God gives you to do.

I will stay connected to River City Faith Network as a member of Huguenot Road, one of the churches that form RCFN. We have a rich history in God's service. I look forward to what God will call us to do together in RCFN. It will be more than any of us could do alone.

I count it a privilege to have served Christ alongside you. I will count it a privilege to keep on doing that.

—Steve Allsbrook, Interim Executive Director