

InterAct Ministries Joint Board Dialogue

Menucha Retreat & Conference Center, Corbett, Oregon
February 4, 2022

Members Present: *Brian Aitkin, Huron Claus, Randy Jackson, *Keith Klippenstein, *Daryl Kroeker, *Dave Ley, Mike Matthews, *Dave Perry, Ray Prigodich, *John Russell, Chuck Schaap, Dale Smith, and Jack Teeter.

*via Zoom

Members Absent: Sheldon Penner, Gale Van Diest.

Others Present (all via Zoom): Greg Hamilton, Canada Field Director; Steve Horsman, Alaska Field Director; and Lucas Orner, Russia Field Director (electronically, for the first part of the meeting).

Welcome

Dale Smith began the meeting at 9:10 AM by welcoming the participants. Keith Klippenstein led us in a special prayer for Sheldon Penner, who was not feeling well and was on his way to the emergency room. Dale then made several announcements, and Jack Teeter led us in an opening prayer.

Devotional

Lucas Orner shared some devotional thoughts from Haggai 1:2-9. Twice in this passage, Haggai says, "Give careful thought to your ways," which we all need to do periodically. God's word gives clear instructions on how we ought to live. Lucas also called our attention to 1 Timothy 4:16: "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them. . . ." We need to engage regularly in self-examination, because it's all too easy to engage in ministry, while at the same time not being where we know we ought to be spiritually. Lucas added that it's so encouraging to know that the Lord is always ready to help us make progress in our spiritual lives. In recent months, he himself has been encouraged by this realization.

Corporate Prayer

Dave Perry led us in prayer for this weekend's meetings, for Sheldon Penner, and for the smooth functioning of our Zoom connection, which was not working properly during yesterday's committee meetings.

Russia Field Report

Lucas Orner answered a few questions arising from his written report:

- What is a typical day like? There's no such thing!

- He's not particularly concerned about the current situation in Russia. Where they live is very distant from the western part of Russia.
- Current weather? Very cold. At this time of year, temperatures are typically -15 to -25 Fahrenheit.
- How has COVID affected the church and discipleship training? The impact of COVID on the church has been less than in the West. Churches have not had to suspend services. Among individual believers, some people are fairly cautious, others not so much.
- The attitude of the church in his area toward unreached tribal groups varies. Some believers have racist attitudes toward non-Slavic peoples. The Baptist seminary in Moscow is now doing some specialized training for this type of ministry. More cross-cultural outreach is being undertaken by churches made up of minority peoples than by churches primarily made up of ethnic Russians.
- In response to a question about Tuvans living with them on occasion, Lucas said that several months ago, 14 Tuvans were staying with them at one time.

Huron Claus led us in prayer for the Orners.

Alaska Field Report

Steve answered a few questions arising from his written report:

- He's just getting over a second round of COVID. It was clearly affecting his voice.
- The big storm that hit Alaska last month happened while they were on vacation in Texas. The staff, he said, did an incredible job of damage control, so that what could have cost thousands of dollars to repair ended up costing only hundreds of dollars.
- The field's implementation of the Novel Approach is beginning well.
- There is a need, especially for native people, for the development of a biblical counseling center. Biblical counseling, he said, is really a discipleship program, in which scripture is principles applied to various life issues.
- Requests are being received for missionaries to be placed in villages where there are churches that lack leadership. To be able to respond to these requests, more staff are needed. They could use three additional couples right now to address the needs that have been so far been identified.
- Huron Claus told Steve about a new quarterly online discipleship publication that is scheduled to launch in 2023. Steve responded that this has the potential of being of great help in InterAct's work in Alaska.
- In the last couple of lines of his report, Steve indicated that he and Jill have been on overload. How serious a problem is this? someone asked. Steve said that he and Jill are dealing with it and that Christ is providing the strength they lack. Fortunately, newer staff are taking on more and more responsibilities. Their workload is more fatiguing than frustrating, he said, because they know it's part of the process. But they're steadily moving from the storm stage to the norm stage and are hoping that within a year things will be more back to normal. Daryl reminded Steve that leadership is more being than doing—more who you are than what you do. That's what anchors a team.

Daryl Kroeker led us in prayer for the Horsmans, and also for Dave Ley's ministry with Alaska Bible College.

Canada Field Report

Greg Hamilton highlighted a few items in his written report, which was included in the board packet. Among the issues he highlighted were the following:

- This past year has been quite a journey for Greg.
- The Canada office was broken into just a week ago. A large-screen television, a computer, and a safe containing all of their electronic transfer information were taken. The safe is so heavy, however, that Greg suspects they'll never be able to get into it.
- Greg said that he's been experiencing fear—fear of the unknown. He's still adjusting to being the primary leader of the ministry in Canada. He recognizes that the opposite of fear should be faith, and he knows that he needs to continue growing in faith.
- Personnel changes have left huge holes. Joel Sewell had been the primary worldview person, and Roy Thiessen had been playing a major role in the field's biblical counseling emphasis. Both of them were 40ish, and their departure has created a large gap between the older and younger field personnel.
- The ministry among the Punjabi/Sikh people is underdeveloped. The Sikh Gurdwara functions as a community center, meeting a wide variety of community needs. A similar Christian center is really needed in Winnipeg.
- Midway Bible Camp, which is about to move to its sixth site, really needs a permanent home, and more needs to be done to increase its visibility.
- In the past, there has been insufficient promotion of missions at Millar Bible College, but under its new leadership, this is beginning to change.
- This year's field conference will take place August 15-19 just north of Winnipeg, and all board members, including those on the U.S. board, are invited to attend.

Greg then answered a few questions:

- Why did the Sewells and the Thiessens leave InterAct?
 - For a long time, Joel had been feeling frustrated. Without a team to work alongside him, he felt very much alone. His energy level had been decreasing, and he was experiencing ministry fatigue. The COVID restrictions in Canada may also have played a part in his decision to resign.
 - Roy and Laura had long been experiencing strong tension over their being so far away from their extended family, and Roy felt that he needed to make a choice between family and ministry. Also, because Cardston is predominantly Mormon, others tend to feel like outsiders, and not feeling part of the community was hard on Roy and Laura. In addition, Roy's father is in poor health. A local pastor with Village Missions and a native man have stepped in to keep their ministry going. Once Roy has completed his master's degree in biblical counseling, he'll almost surely continue in some sort of ministry. Joel, too, will likely continue to be involved in ministry, but it probably won't be cross cultural in nature.

- InterAct's church planting ministry in Calgary began in the '80s, but it pretty much ceased when Dan Mayerle became more involved in leadership. Now, however, because Dan's involvement in field leadership has been reduced and Andy Chinn has begun focusing on Calgary, this dimension of InterAct's ministry in Calgary is resuming. Currently, even though approximately 60,000 native people live in Calgary, there is no solid evangelical church for First Nations people in the city.
- Urban Fire is a discipling community built around a business (Restora), with participants living together in residential homes. Because of a need to find more potential participants in this ministry, about a year ago the Urban Fire team approached Youth for Christ. Unfortunately, however, this partnership has not developed, and the Urban Fire team is struggling.
- Greg said that given his heavy workload, he may need to hire an administrative assistant. He's also thinking about developing some of the younger field personnel, so that they can pick up some of the load. Keith encouraged Greg by reminding him of what David wrote in Psalm 143: "When I am overwhelmed, you know the way" (paraphrased).

Keith Klippenstein led us in prayer for the Hamiltons.

Discussion/Counsel from the Floor

- It was noted that Joel had actually been suffering from serious burnout for the past five years.
- Regarding Greg:
 - It was noted that because Greg is not a visionary, he sometimes wonders if he should have continued serving in an administrative role, rather than moving into a management role.
 - It was also noted that Dan is still working half time as Greg's assistant.
 - The fact that Greg's children have been in the process of leaving the nest is adding to his stress.
- Mike Matthews commented on the fact that in the reports of the field directors, there was a greater degree of negativity than usual, with Lucas talking about his recent ups and downs, Steve about his fatigue, and Greg about his fears.
 - Daryl Kroeker suggested that there is a theological dimension to this issue. We have a tendency to think that we're God's answer to the world's needs. But when we think this way, we're not trusting in God's sovereignty. Often, there are things we're doing that we shouldn't be doing. Are we willing to trust God's timing, or will we give in to frustration? We need to encourage the field directors along these lines.
 - Dave Ley reminded us that, as leaders, our number one goal should be to equip others for ministry (Eph. 4:11ff.), rather than feeling that we ourselves are responsible to do everything that needs doing. And our field directors, he said, need to practice this.

The meeting concluded at 11:55 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Ray Prigodich, Recorder
February 9, 2022