

InterAct Ministries Joint Board Dialogue

Menucha Retreat & Conference Center, Corbett, Oregon
March 3, 2023

Members Present: *Brian Aitkin, Huron Claus, Randy Jackson, Daryl Kroeker, Mike Matthews, Sheldon Penner, Dave Perry, Ray Prigodich, Chuck Schaap, Dale Smith, and Jack Teeter.

*via Zoom

Members Absent: Dave Bedford, Keith Klippenstein, Dave Ley, and John Russell.

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

Welcome

Dale Smith began the meeting at 9:00 AM by welcoming the participants.

Devotional

Mike Matthews led us in a devotional time focused on the sovereignty of God, as illustrated in the final chapters of Genesis. He began by quoting something Gale Van Diest shared with us not long before his passing: "God is sovereign; he loves me; therefore I can trust him."

First, God's providence is evident in where Joseph was (Dothan) when his brothers decided to throw him into an empty cistern. Dothan was situated on an international highway, with a great deal of traffic, increasing the likelihood that he could be sold as a slave, rather than left to die, and that he would be taken to a different nation (Egypt – Gen. 37).

Second, although Joseph would ordinarily have been executed for allegedly attempting to rape Potiphar's wife, Potiphar clearly respected Joseph and spared his life (Gen. 39).

Third, by being settled in Goshen, where few Egyptians lived, the Israelites were able to maintain their racial purity and avoid assimilation (Gen. 45:10).

Fourth, as Jacob blessed his sons (Gen. 49), he indicated that the One who was to save the world would come from Judah's line, not Joseph's. God orchestrated all these things.

Mike said in conclusion that he believes the U.S., given its steep decline in morality, will soon come under God's judgment, since every American institution is infected. He also believes that the church will be purified during this time. When this happens, we will be able to look back at the story of Joseph as a reminder of God's sovereignty. We know who God is. He is in control. He is holy, just, and sovereign over everything.

Prayer

Several members led in an extended time of prayer, thanking God that he is indeed sovereign and asking him to guide us as we meet.

Russia Field Report

Lucas Orner began his presentation by applying to his own uncertain situation what Mike said about God's sovereignty. He then answered a few questions:

- He noted that although there is much uncertainty about the future, he has seen God's hand at work in his ministry.
- He said that when he and his family were departing from Russia last year, he was asked about what he does, and for about 40 minutes, he shared very openly about his ministry. This did not produce any negative ramifications, and he and his family later had no problem getting back into Russia after being gone for two and a half months.
- The tense situation in Russia has resulted in many people visiting churches and coming to Christ.
- He and his family have not once experienced any hostility from local people because they are Americans.
- The men who have been mobilized to fight in Ukraine have been primarily from smaller towns and villages, rather than from urban areas.
- The fear that gripped many people at the beginning of the conflict with Ukraine has largely faded away. People are now accepting the situation as simply the way things are.
- The sense of community among Russian believers is stronger than that which is typical in the West. Members of Russian congregations really think of one another as family. This is especially true of those who are members of minority groups, whom ethnic Russians typically look upon as outsiders.
- Many people have expressed surprise that the Orners returned from the U.S., rather than remaining in the West, as so many other foreign missionaries have done.

Jack Teeter led us in prayer for the Orners.

Alaska Field Report

Steve Horsman commented on several of the items in his written report:

- It is possible, he said, although not definite that more SEND missionaries will be transferring to InterAct.
- He talked a bit about the communities that have recently said that they would like a missionary to locate there. In those communities, buildings are available for services and houses are available that could be used as parsonages. Historically, some of these communities have been heavily Orthodox and there has been strong resistance to the establishment of an evangelical presence there, but that attitude is changing.
- There is a clear need for the counseling center they hope to establish. A lot of counseling is already taking place.
- There has been a pattern of youth dropping out of the Christian community after high school and not reappearing until they are middle-aged, but several staff members have been developing vital and successful youth programs.
- The LEAD program is very much needed, but it has been difficult to find someone to take over the leadership of the program from the Horsmans. Steve and Jill have too many other things on their plate to be able to continue directing the program.

Steve answered a few questions:

- Who from those small communities is requesting that missionaries be sent to live there? Is it government leaders, chiefs and council members, members of the public, believers who are already there, or who? All of the above, Steve said.
- Steve is nearly 70, but he plans to continue in ministry as long as he still has the energy to do so.
- Steve said that it has been difficult to get some of our missionaries—especially the newer ones—to write out their goals and minister in accordance with them.

Chuck Schaap led us in prayer for the Horsmans.

Canada Field Report

Greg Hamilton began by noting the increase in ministry activity as the pandemic has begun drawing to a close. He then highlighted several of the items in his written report:

- On a recent trip to Alaska via the Alcan Highway, he stopped in the Yukon and observed that there are a number of communities there in which there are probably some believers, but no church.
- Some of our missionaries are being resistant to the idea of worldview ministry. Greg is working on ways to address this problem.
- Syncretism is a major problem in Canada, and there is much controversy in the larger Christian community over what can and cannot be accepted from the traditional culture. There is a great deal of pressure in schools and elsewhere for First Nations people to go back to the old practices—ironically, including practices that are not indigenous to one's own tribal group.

Greg then answered a few questions:

- The Kenyons are now based in Tennessee, but they are still traveling periodically to Bolivia and Alberta (specifically, to Bonnyville).
- Midway Bible Camp is presently located on land owned by a mining company, but an entirely new property development (Site 6) is under consideration as a new location. The site, which is on so-called crown land, consists of about 30 acres. We would take possession of the land under a 20-year lease, after which there would be an option to purchase it.
- Many second-generation First Nations young people—particularly those living in urban centers—are struggling with who they are, and syncretism is common.

Mike Matthews led us in prayer for the Hamiltons.

The meeting concluded at 11:55 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Ray Prigodich, Recorder
March 10, 2023