

Alaska Field Report

August 1, 2015



Life has been interesting in the Arnold household the last few months. At the beginning of March Debbie and I let the congregation in Bend know that we would be ending our ministry at Fellowship Bible Church on July 31, 2015. And, at that time we would be moving to Portland, transitioning to a full-time status with InterAct. The announcement created some excitement as it exposed a genuine wolf within the Body. And, as it turns out, I left for Alaska the afternoon of that same day. The elders did a great job of handling the situation and we are now moving toward an orderly transition. God has provided for the church in some truly sovereign ways. We are grateful.

As with any move, there are all kinds of pressures. Managing the dual roles has carried its stressors, but the end is near! Our house was on the market for ten days and is scheduled to close on September 3rd. It is our plan to rent for a time prior to reentering the market on the other side of the mountains.

An overview of life...

I've continued to spend a week a month on the ground in Alaska. My focus has been on spending time with our members, attempting to get a sense of their lives and ministries. Al and Gretchen Strawn have been incredibly generous and make their basement apartment available when I'm in Southcentral Alaska. This is a great help.

Typically I leave Sunday evening after church responsibilities. I'm generally back home by 7 pm Saturday. As the church responsibilities are left behind, I'll be heading up most likely on Tuesday and returning the following Tuesday or Wednesday. This will give opportunity to be a part of churches in various locations. I'm looking forward to the increased freedom that will be part of this new chapter in life.

Ministry on the ground...

LEaD: The first year ended with the four students expressing deep gratitude for the program. Steve and Jill Horsman did a superb job of crafting a program that took the participants on a journey—some of it in life skills and there was a significant spiritual component as well. Looking forward to the next session, there will be no increase in the number of students served. Additional personnel will be necessary before than can happen.

In March a summit was scheduled to deal with the governance issues of the LEaD consortium. Participants from each of the sponsoring organizations was present. The time was led by Dr. Larry Perkins. He is the past president of Northwest

Baptist Seminary and was a guiding presence in the development the ACTS seminary program at Trinity Western University. Several seminaries participate in the ACTS consortium. The desired outcome of the Summit was an MOU that will guide the program. I served as the InterAct representative during the Summit.

The two-day summit was valuable; Larry did a great job facilitating it. The Memorandum of Understanding is not yet complete. The governance team continues to meet monthly to work through what remains. The team is composed of up to two people from each organization (InterAct, Alaska Bible College, Alaska Freedom Journey, Alaska Missions Connection, Evangelical Covenant Church of Alaska). However, each organization is allowed only one vote. All decisions must be unanimous. During our June meeting, Jill Horsman was asked to be the Program Director for LEaD. The group meets again July 20th.

While there is great potential good in the LEaD program and its cooperative organization, there are areas that need particular attention. Among them are the following:

1. InterAct has far greater exposure in every way than any of the other partnering organizations. While it is our privilege to serve God and others, we also have commensurate responsibility.
2. During the startup phase, InterAct committed funds to underwrite the program. This is not a viable long-term solution. We have been doing the accounting and are in a place of making sure the bills get paid. The LEaD budget for this coming year was based entirely on the projected contributions of the students. However, the assumption there was for six students. If there are four, projected income drops from \$42,000 to \$28,000. Additionally, only one of the four students contributed the full amount this past year.

During the Summit, I was able to get agreement on how to handle deficit situations. If that occurs, all the partnering organizations agree to actively attempt to raise additional funds until the situation is resolved. Everyone agreed that this was a reasonable plan.

3. The governance group has no mechanism to seek permission for employees of a partnering organization to serve in a staff capacity. For instance, if the group determines that Jill Horsman is to be the Program Director, that decision is made assuming that because InterAct is at the table, we are okay with it. I wasn't sure what to do with this.
4. There is a potential conflict of interest with me serving on the governance team. I am the supervisor for InterAct Alaska personnel (in this case, the LEaD Alaska Program Director). Yet I'm also a member of governance team. Whoever is on the governance group needs to be able to represent the interests of InterAct.

I'm grateful for what is happening with LEaD. There is a clear belief by some that a residential discipleship program is necessary. It is good for us to be involved and have a role. Godly wisdom is necessary.

Village ministry:

- Ruby—John and Jen Tramm have been asked by the Ruby Church and village to stay on. They have consented to do that. God has blessed them with a unique ability to love and learn. I also admire their ability to not be pressured to do things that are not going to be helpful over the long haul. There is a leadership partnership that is very healthy and appreciated by the people.
- Chignik—Dave and Sally Hill are both Outside. Sally has some health issues that defy identification. They hope to get some answers so they can return. Before Dave came in for conference, he winterized the house in case they were not back before winter. They appreciate your prayers.
- James and Shannon Miller are in the process of developing their discipleship ministry to remote villages. James was able to use his plane to assist when there was a death in Shageluk. As a result, he developed some relationships and is looking to take his family out to Grayling and get some Bible studies going there. The summer fire season has made it difficult to get things started. But, they continue to prepare.
- Port Lions—the trip out there in April was a profitable time. The fact that I knew a number of those who had gone before was a plus. There are issues between some of the people and the current pastor. I'll be heading out for a couple of days in mid-July. There is great interest in somehow reconnecting with InterAct. While it is unclear what that might look like, there is deep appreciation that their voice has been heard. They have committed to cover the costs of any trip made down there. It is my opinion that this body has great potential to be a great light in its community and to be a model of what a church can look like post-missionary in a rural location.

Urban Ministries—

- Fairbanks Native Bible Church: Not much to update here. Harry Hafford continues to move into a primary leadership role. He expressed that his need to work to support himself may well be what Native leadership looks like, rather than being supported by others. Tim and Larissa Zook are great models of this as they serve with the youth there.
- SonRise Community Church: Dennis and Celesta (and family) continue to look forward. Dennis has identified several young men that he intends to

develop for future ministry there. Absolutely loved visiting there in March!

Lazy Mountain Campus—The campus was full to capacity during the Alaska Field Conference. While I was very aware of the steep learning curve, it seemed to go well. The two elders from our church here in Bend and their wives came to prepare the meals; that was a great addition. And, there were things I took away that will help in years to come.

We had a couple join us who felt God may be leading them to be involved with InterAct in Alaska. Following Steve and Jill's report on LEaD, they came right over and said, "We can help! We want to apply." They have completed their application and your prayers are requested.

Doug Prins is ready to move out of his role on the hill. I'll be having further conversations with him to find ways to make that happen.

Looking ahead...

It will really be nice to be down to one job. While I've enjoyed the relational side of my responsibilities, learning the organizational culture has had its moments. I assumed that my history in the State and in ministry gave me a larger platform than has proven to be true.

Debbie and I remain convinced that God has prepared us to do what we are doing. It is our desire to approach the task with humility and grace. Truly, everything would be easier if we were living in Alaska. It is my belief that this can be overcome. I am asking the Lord to give the wisdom to know how to love and serve each of our people, to craft healthy ministry partnerships with them.

There are some things that I believe God wants to do in the State that aren't currently in place. InterAct has the history and I am believing that together some of these new things will come to pass. I thank you for your support and partnership in the gospel.

For His church,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve and Jill", written in a cursive style.