

Alaska Field Report
January 2011
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The Dominican Republic is not the best place to be writing a field report in January, as there is way too much beauty to take in, which is very distracting as I try to focus! But since this report is due the day after my return, it became necessary to start my report here. I realize the great sorrow that everyone feels for me in taking time away from coral reefs, clear aqua blue water, sandy beaches, palm trees and my son-in-law's jovial family. But I will press on!

The Alaska Field has been and continues to be of great concern for many who are passionate about InterAct Ministries, including myself. Huge obstacles still exist but we believe we are making progress in turning our "Titanic" away from the eminent danger that was ahead of us. Signs of change from an aging missionary force to a younger one can be seen in the addition of Rebecca Bell and Kristen Heritage to our field. And another young couple with two small children is planning a trip to Alaska, as they pray about God's will for InterAct Alaska for their lives. Other young couples that live in Alaska are under consideration and praying about joining our organization.

Other signs of change are in Fairbanks as an Athabaskan leader by the name of Harry Hafford has already started assuming pastoral leadership in the Native church that we have had the privilege to pastor for the last 20 years. Much time will be required to mentor and finish the process of preparing him for that role. He has also become a strong leader and administrator in the Native strategy group. If I am able to give up the 24 hours per week dedicated to the Borough Recreation position special needs people, that would be a the greatest change and relief for me personally. Otherwise I am unable to keep up with daily tasks. Although I must admit that this contact with these special people, brings much joy to my personal life, and I would miss them.

Other changes that are forthcoming and will not be so pleasant for those missionaries that have been in their comfort zone for many years are changes in hospitality. The ATM (Alaska Team Ministries) has met and tried to think "outside of the box." We feel it is necessary for hospitality to have a ministry role, but a lesser role than before.

By "letting the main thing be the main thing" (which is: a culturally relevant church transforming every community in the North Pacific Crescent) it has become necessary to rethink the use of our facilities, not for the purpose of what is good for the missionary, but what is good for the main ministry. Because we do not have deep pockets financially (a very trimmed and lean Alaska field budget) and so few available people for ministry, strategy must be linked to shifting physical resources and current staff.

With that in mind, I introduce the topics of STRATEGY FOR THE ALASKA FIELD:

1. HOSPITALITY – The Hospitality Ministries in both Anchorage and Palmer are in need of staff to carry on these ministries. In recent years, hospitality had become a larger

ministry of InterAct Alaska than in decades prior. As I understand it, this was an effort to make good use of the Lazy Mountain campus, rather than having it sit empty, and allowing several on staff to use their gifts of hospitality, which they felt passionate about. I think we all agree that all of us feel very grateful for those who made InterAct Alaska's hospitality ministry so available to so many for those years.

The ATM felt it wanted Hospitality to continue in both places, but as we lay out plans for using the LM facility as a training facility with other partners, hospitality will take a lesser role, as the Lord guides as plans are implemented for this new vision.

For now since InterAct has less need of large hospitality facilities and has a revenue budget shortage, the ATM felt the best decision is to rent the duplex in Anchorage, retaining a small portion of it as needed for hospitality for our missionaries. We also felt at this time, that it would be practical to make use of another missionary hospitality apartment just down the street from the duplex on Chevigny, that a dear Christian couple wants to make available for missionaries. As, in time, both sides of the duplex is rented, this will result in securing another place for one of our long-time career missionaries to live and most likely supplementing her rent with some of the revenue made from renting the duplex.

2. **EVANGELISM - GROUP STRATEGY VERSUS AN INDIVIDUAL STRATEGY-** A Group evangelism strategy is different from an evangelism strategy that wins and disciples one person at a time. The problem with winning and training one person at a time, in our target group of Alaskan Natives, is that often, as we have seen from years past, our results can be initially great with many responding to the Gospel, but eventually cultural ties will often "win" and will draw the individual person back into his/her past group culture. The person will somehow be defeated by the Enemy and will not be able to live an effective life with Christ alone without accountability and support. Isolation from their native people group is the worst kind of torment. So being a leader or a Christian that requires one to go "solo" or be a "lone ranger", so to speak, is not as effective for long term results. Therefore, future strategy needs to consider how we can move an entire group towards leadership and growth in Christ together.
3. **CHURCH HUB AND TEAM STRATEGY:** Previous strategy has been to identify villages for ministry and develop a plan to reach that particular village. We believe with our resources and current staff that the best strategy is to focus on church hubs and team ministry. The Fairbanks team is an example of missionaries working together to make the Native church strong and sustainable, but more importantly the church is also a place for training and equipping missionaries for ministry to other locations. The isolation factor for missionaries is removed and as missionaries are trained and given practical experience in Native ministry, then they can be launched into another ministry and create another church hub. The next church hub that we want to focus on is Kodiak. The bottom line is this; if strong and sustainable Native churches do not exist then

effective Native ministry will not exist. God's plan is that His church be the "oasis" for spiritual nourishment and launching ministry. Surprise, it is the biblical way!

4. **MENTORING MEN FOR MINISTRY:** In light of the group strategy mentioned above, we are starting a pilot group of men in the Fairbanks Native Bible Church that will mentor men for ministry. There is a tendency to think that all training must happen at a training site or on a Christian campus in some distant setting. Local and practical training must be considered that gathers a group of men and moves them through a training grid for Christian leadership. Worldview must be considered and put under the microscope in order to separate false beliefs (both cultural and religious) from true biblical beliefs. We have been putting together and using a training manual that can be shared as a model for future groups.
5. **GENESIS GROUPS AND TRAINING:** We are excited about Rebecca Bell coming back to InterAct and being our Genesis Process Coordinator. Rebecca and the field director will develop a strategy for taking the program to the villages with a plan to start house churches from the Genesis groups. The first strategy which will take time is to train a group of Native people (both men and women) to be group leaders that are passionate about the process. Another possibility on the horizon is the starting of Transformational Living Centers (TLC) for people transitioning out of the prison system and back into society and using the Genesis Process as the program for that transition. Rebecca is well schooled in both Genesis and TLC. Great caution will be used as background checks, guidelines and boundaries will be drawn to help put broken lives back together. The TLC model is perfect for transformation and real change as the Genesis counselor lives with and daily mentors people who want to change and help others reproduce our investment.
6. **PARTNERING:** Partnering has already begun with discussions with groups such as the Covenants, Moravians, Native New Life, C.H.I.E.F., Lutheran Missouri Synod, Workers in the Harvest, Freedom Journey, SEND, the Vine, and other smaller Native ministries. Two big undertakings are in the making from two different groups. In Anchorage, I joined with a number of organizations to discuss and begin implementation of training for short-term workers who come to the field with no understanding of Native ministry in Alaska. We believe that SEND, with their Summer Missionary Program (SMP) is the best prototype for this kind of training for short termers. The greater undertaking will be the training of long-term missionaries that is culturally specific. In both cases the Lazy Mountain campus in Palmer is being considered for the training site.

We (InterAct Ministries) initiated a Native strategy group that was meant to serve as our advisors for field strategy. It was felt that one of the problems in our history as an organization is that we have often developed the strategy and then asked Native leaders to come alongside of us and bless our plans. This Native strategy group has said we will pray and develop strategy and you can come alongside and help us implement

the strategy. We are taking on a new role as their partner, but we must at the same time follow the mandate God has given us. We are in discussion with C.H.I.E.F. (Huron Claus) as to how we can utilize their expertise in discipleship and training. We are also in discussion with a Native leader in charge of extension training from the Northwest (David Sternbeck). David is with the Lutheran Missouri Synod organization and is vitally interested in what we will do with training.

7. RECRUITING: If a news paper for Alaska missionaries existed it should read, “Fresh young blood needed”, as the major headline for Alaska. This will do more than anything, to help move our field forward as God brings a new vision for InterAct Alaska. As the field director, I spend much of my time talking to prospective recruits, as I know this will pay rich dividends for the future of InterAct Alaska.
8. ATM PRAYER RETREAT AND PRAYER FOCUS: In order to be led by the Lord and know with any kind of certainty what the Lord has in store for Alaska, we feel like we need to seek the face of God in prayer. Since the ATM is vital in decision making, we want to make sure our decisions are in the Lord’s will. Therefore we want to focus in prayer by way of a prayer retreat this coming year. We also plan to start a prayer focus on specific villages with specific issues and people that we can distribute mission wide.

MISSIONARY REPORTS FOR ALASKA

Julia McDonald (Palmer) is traveling to Kodiak for a month to help Linda and Alan Ross with their spring Hearts Going Toward Wellness event. She also has a cousin there with Parkinson’s disease who needs some special attention and extra care. She is updating some Bible Studies while she is there. Her health is improving after a battle with cancer. For a volunteer missionary she still serves the Lord with a mighty zeal and a servant’s heart.

Tim and Larissa Zook (Fairbanks Native Bible Church) recently gave birth to their second child, a little boy named Elliot Raymond (8lb 7oz). As they minister to the youth they have a sizeable youth group but more importantly they have a spiritually motivated group. Larissa recently finished a Spiritual Warfare study which was well received by the group. She also leads a Genesis Process group with the ladies. Larissa also serves on the ATM and the Native Strategy group. Tim drives the church van and is still adventurous with outdoor ministries, and disciples many young men during outdoor activities.

Brian and Missie Deshane (Fairbanks Native Bible Church) -- Brian is leading Tuesday evening Bible study, often leads the testimony time in worship, and preaches when needed. He and Missie are teaching a younger elementary Sunday school class together. Missie is leading a Genesis Process group for two Native ladies. Missie is also leading a Genesis Group for the ladies and some administrative duties for the church. They are a great fit for Native ministry, but still have a lot of growing to do in pastoral ministry. Brian will be in the Mentoring Men for Ministry group.

Dave and Kay Henry (Fairbanks Native Bible Church) are always active in Native events, funerals, gatherings of any kind, and hospital visitation. In the Native church they have a ministry to the elders which they have known for a long time. Dave serves on the ATM and brings much wisdom and worldview insight to the group. As money and health allow they plan to continue to make trips to Siberia to maintain relationships with Native friends there.

David and Marci Joseph (Fairbanks Native Bible Church) -- David is the team leader and pastor of the Native Church. He also works 20 plus hours in a government job with the handicapped, and is the Alaska Field Director. His role at present in the church is to come alongside and mentor men for ministry and lead the church council. It is a transition time to be releasing the church and carefully putting it in the hands of indigenous leadership. Marci teaches an older elementary Sunday school and leads children activities in the church. She also acts as the church secretary and as David's administrative assistant. She also serves as David's administrative assistant for the Alaska mission field.

Alan & Linda Ross (Kodiak) -- Linda is serving on the ATM and providing good wisdom to the group from a Native perspective. Alan continues to have some health issues but all-in-all is doing well. He leads the worship at the Native New Life meeting and they attend the Kodiak Bible Chapel. They find themselves at the moment very busy in preparation for the next HGTW event coming up in the spring.

Rhaylene Abbey (Kodiak) is leading two bible studies for women. One group of ladies is a group of girls that she taught when they were little girls during the days when she was at Port Lion. The other group is a Native New Life group, and both are studying the book of Hebrews. She is active in Native New Life and attends the Kodiak Bible Chapel.

Shirley Morgan (Anchorage) is recovering from knee replacement surgery. She is currently discipling a Native girl who recently came through a divorce. She is working with Native New Life in the organization and administration of the upcoming Native Musicale.

Dennis & Celesta Richardson (Anchorage) -- Dennis pastors the Hmong church in Mountain View area. He is desperate for workers in the church for all the ministries like children, youth, and social ministries. They are having two services on Sunday with a meal between the services. His kids, Sarah and Seth are active in the church and serving the Lord. He has two more classes at Faith Bible Seminary (Lafayette, IN) before he receives his degree in biblical counseling, as well as 50 hours of supervised counseling.

Ed White (Palmer) continues to struggle with health issues. At one time he would say that he had bad days and most recently he has been having bad weeks and relies on our prayers for his survival. His motto is "I do what I can when I can." He continues to pursue a website for Alaska, and he has been instructed that it must be done extremely well and that all aspects need to be approved by InterAct leadership.

Rich & Kathy Voran (Palmer) -- While Doug Prins is on special assignment in Michigan, Rich has been overseeing properties. The main water pump was out and he came to the rescue for those

on Lazy Mountain. He is working with engineer Ken Hunt trying to meet DEC regulations for the water system on the property. Hopefully the matters will be settled by the end of summer. There may be some sizeable costs if it is required that we have to put in several above ground water tanks in the basement of the resource center.

Rebecca Bell (Palmer) recently came back to InterAct as our new Genesis Program Coordinator. She is very bright and well schooled in counseling people with addictive behaviors and well versed and convinced about the effectiveness of the Genesis Process. She is working with the field director to dream a dream for GP. She and the field director are discussing the possibilities for a Transformational Living Center (TLC) and a one year residential treatment center for those in recovery. She is also working on her masters in counseling from Liberty University.

Lisa Michael (Troy, Alabama) is excited about getting back to Alaska for a viable ministry with InterAct and Alaska Bible College (ABC). Currently ABC is preparing for an extension campus in the Palmer area and Lisa would be working with others in that expansion. We're also talking with her about being the face of hospitality for the Lazy Mountain Campus and not having to do all the hard labor involved in that ministry because of health reasons. She works well with groups coming to Alaska and loves the InterAct family.

Dave & Sally Hill (Chignik, AK) are church planters on the Aleutian chain. They have been outside all winter in South Carolina involved in a custody battle for their little grandson Eli. The court system there is very chaotic, as Eli has now been assigned his fourth social worker and each time they go to court it is a different judge that presides the case. They plan to return to Chignik when the case is settled. They are speaking in churches and presenting their ministry in Chignik.

George & Judy Richardson (Wasilla, AK) are providing member care for a variety of people in and outside the mission. Judy is leading a Genesis Process group with Native ladies. They are mentoring a Native couple from Kotzebue who have a ministry called "Workers in the Harvest." This Native couple has tremendous leadership potential and influence in western Alaska and is praying about coming into our organization. George and Judy will be traveling to village of Ruby to mentor Don and Annie Honea.

Doug & Marlin Prins (Palmer) have been in Michigan on special assignment, speaking in churches and visiting supporters. Doug has been busy remodeling the duplex in Anchorage and the small house on the Lazy Mountain campus for Rebecca Bell to live in. Doug and Marlin are very active with multiple ministries at the Lazy Mountain Bible Church. Doug has been leading a Genesis Group for men.

Win & Gracia Stiefel (Glennallen, AK) -- Gracia works well with a group of Athabascan women and is developing materials for worldview studies. Win is driving a school bus for added income. We have already discussed the idea of relocation.

John & Norma Hammond (Palmer, AK) -- John works with Phil Cobb in the Video Department. He films Native New Life at Change Pointe and makes video productions. Norma's health is precarious at times and they do what they can at their age.

Phil & Margie Cobb (Palmer, AK) -- Phil works in the video department and is a big help and advocate for Native New Life. He is currently on special assignment, raising support, and assisting his mother who is very ill. Margie and the kids are in Alaska while he is away. Margie has been offered a full time position with benefits and her involvement as bookkeeper and computer assistance may be less with InterAct.

Barney Furman (Palmer, AK) is plugging along working on the history of InterAct Ministries. One day we will look back with great appreciation for the man who worked diligently to record many details of our ministry as an organization.

Virginia Maillelle (Anchorage, AK) works at the Anchorage Food Bank with Julia McDonald. She could use your prayers as her family is always in a struggle or crisis of some kind. Virginia struggles financially and is often taken advantage of by her children.

“When He saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to His disciples, the HARVEST IS PLENTIFUL BUT THE WORKERS ARE FEW. Ask the Lord of the harvest therefore, to send out workers into His harvest.”

Observations then and now:

The workers were few then and also now.

The Harvest was plentiful then and also now.

The Lord was the same then as He is now.

It was His harvest then and it is His harvest now.

AS A RESULT OF PRAYER, He sent workers then and He shall do so now.

We cannot grow lax in our responsibility to seek God's face for workers in His harvest and He will not be lax in His commitment to send them our way! We must ASK in prayer!

FOR HIS GLORY, we live and serve,

David Joseph

Alaska Field Director