

InterAct Ministries
Executive Director's Report to the Board
August, 2011

Toward the end of Luke 24, we read of the disciples walking with Jesus along the road to Emmaus. When Jesus finally reveals Himself to them they spontaneously respond, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?" As I read through the reports from InterAct's three fields I felt that same kind of excitement and thrill – my heart burning within me! Each report showed clear vision and strategic leadership by three men of God. Thomas and his team are thinking outside the traditional box and are continuing to move forward with innovation and insight. David has clearly caught the vision for the current mission paradigm taking place around the world and is making excellent application of that thinking to the Alaska context. Dan is seeing God continue to build a team of key leaders and is wisely leading them toward greater focus and effectiveness. Please indulge me in my effusiveness for these three men, but my confidence in the future of InterAct was greatly rejuvenated just reading these reports!

As I give these rave reviews to the three fields, let me assure you this is not meant to cast a hint of a negative reflection on the rest of the Executive Leadership Team (ELT). Roy Martin, Jerry Crosby, Diane Schoming and I are part of the support team that makes it possible for these fields to move forward. We exist to empower them in and see them succeed with frontlines ministry. Each member of this support team is fulfilling his/her role and doing so with effectiveness and excellence. As you will see from our clean audit, Roy continues to do a stellar job in handling InterAct's finances while continuing to wear a host of other hats around the Boring office. Jerry is doing fine work in moving the HR department forward while picking up other essential office functions such as resident IT specialist, proofreader and general manager of a multitude of miscellaneous details. Diane is really "growing into her shoes" in the development arena. Though she came to us with minimal development experience, she has blossomed into an excellent representative of the organization. She is also bringing in a growing amount of capital for the organization.

InterAct's ELT is not yet functioning like a true team, but we are closer than we were last year this time. Each member is playing a significant part of "our" success. Not everyone fully realizes the truth, "the whole is greater than the parts," but we are getting there. David's success is contingent on the whole. Dan's success is contingent on the whole. Thomas's success is also contingent on the whole. No part of this team can succeed without all of us pulling together and supporting one another. Like the Body of Christ, we are learning to trust one another and work together.

One of the things executive leadership should bring to a board is an update regarding movement toward accomplishment of organizational goals. Are we moving forward, backward or just holding our own? Let me speak to that.

Of significant concern for organizational sustainability is our financial situation. As you will see from Roy's reports and that of the Finance & Audit committee, InterAct is still doing very well financially in the midst of otherwise difficult financial times. This is largely due to Roy's careful management of InterAct resources and the wise use of resources across the organization.

Another area that determines long-term viability is the increase or decrease in staff numbers. Jerry appears to have a renewed interest in seeing the critical arena of mobilization move forward. As David and Dan have mentioned in their reports, we have two couples who are in the process of applying to become organizational members, one in Alaska and one in Canada. Both of these couples are the result of recruitment that originated from the field. A third couple is presently doing a summer internship in Canada and is very interested in working long-term in Native ministry in Canada - very likely with InterAct (a lot hinges on this summer's experience). This couple was the result of Boring initiated recruitment. Another missionary, Amy Sell of Anchored Warriors, has recently joined the InterAct Canada team. Amy was also the result of field initiated recruitment. If recent history demonstrates a dependable pattern, our best recruitment continues to be that which is initiated and supported by the fields.

Although my role in mobilization is relatively minor, I am personally engaging in this process at several levels. Carol and I have visited in the homes of both John & Jenn Tramm in Minnesota (Alaska) and Brock & Anna Jamieson in Chicago (interns in Lethbridge, AB – originally from Toronto). In addition to making contacts in various churches and engaging at numerous levels with those already in the "pipeline," I am committed to spending time this next year on two Bible college campuses – Columbia International University in Columbia, SC and Peace River Bible Institute in Sexsmith, Alberta.

The bottom line: we are seeing a degree of success in mobilizing new staff in the front door of the organization, but we are continuing to be creative and focused on this need at both the macro organizational level, the field level and at the personal level.

A third area of big picture concern for any organization is in relation to accomplishment of strategic goals. Each of our fields is operating in a relatively autonomous manner in the arenas of strategy and placement of personnel. The field directors have given a good report of what is happening in their particular areas of responsibility. My role has been one of seeking to inform, challenge and encourage. Gently encouraging thought and direction without coercion is a challenge. One specific step I have taken is to ask all our field directors to read Tom Steffen's newest book, *The Facilitator Era*. This is a simple initiative to move our organization toward a more facilitative role on every one of our fields.

Looking across the organization as a whole I see a few areas of challenge. It comes as no surprise that Alaska continues to be a primary area of concern. David is doing a good job in spite of ongoing consequences from previous leadership, limited time to apply to the field director role, numerous outside distractions (work, a church-plant, health issues, etc.) and broken trust. As already mentioned, he is bringing vision and strategic direction. As he learns the scope of his role and further develops concrete plans for his field, we need to stand with him by supporting every viable business/ministry plan possible. The Alaska field is in need of a fresh infusion of vision and as this vision becomes tangible it will need support and funding. Let's stand behind them in every feasible way.

Member care is another area of critical concern for InterAct Ministries. Across the scope of the organization we have people who are grieving, folks who are feeling abandoned, folks with financial crises, family crises, interpersonal conflict issues and much more. Although leadership would like to step in and pastor those they lead, it is often not possible or practical. Most InterAct leaders are already overworked and taking extended time wearing a "pastoral care" hat means leaving critical leadership/management items undone. As we seek to bring a younger generation into the organization, we are bringing in young people who have more "baggage" than their predecessors. They are looking for mentors who have time to walk with them through the "issues" they carry even as they minister. I am convinced that InterAct needs a qualified individual to oversee/direct an organization wide member care department. I would be happy to talk with you if you know of any mature, trained, cross-culturally experienced member care types who are willing to raise support!

One of the ongoing challenges I personally face is that of being on the road so much of my time. Although a small part of my time this past six months has been personal (personal support raising or personal time off), most of my time on the road has been on Interact business. Below is a partial list of InterAct travels that have taken me away from home:

- Six work weeks in the Boring office (travel on both sides)
- Board meetings in Oregon
- Phoenix with Sheldon Penner to ECFA seminar on board governance
- Trip to southern ID for Tom Hook's funeral
- Meetings in southern AB regarding mobilization strategy/planning
- CrossGlobal Link's ENGAGE conference in Chicago
- An upcoming trip to AK for board meetings and AK conference.

In six months this amounts to approximately half my time on the road for the organization. This is not a problem in itself. In fact, this is actually a little less travel than my first twelve months in this role. The challenge is not having someone dedicated to caring for my administrative needs. The magnitude of my responsibilities makes it virtually impossible to fulfill my job description without adequate administrative support. I am not sure if this administrative help should be

associated with the Boring office, Canada office or neither. Of one thing I am sure – additional administrative help is essential.

Another area that needs to be clarified is the limits of autonomy given to each field. Many who attended the Ad Hoc committee meeting (Fall 2009) left thinking that InterAct was going to function as three separate organizations. The reality of a centralized budget precludes total autonomy of the fields. I have endeavored to lead so that each field functions with full autonomy in regards to field strategy and field placement. These choices have implications for the budget and therefore have built-in limitations. Some mission organizations have an administrative fee that goes to the US office (or Canadian) providing administrative support services, and another service fee is collected and used exclusively from the field and by the field. At any rate, further discussion may be needed in the future.

One area for future planning is determining the means to bring the Field Leadership Team (FLT) together two to four times a year. Due to budget constraints it was not included in the budget, but hindsight has convinced me that it is essential if we are to see good strategic momentum and ministry advancement.

As you will read in Thomas's report, the Russia team is very excited about the possibility of moving into a whole new people group. Historically the board has been apprised of movement in the direction of a new people group ministry prior to its showing up on a budget. Thomas and I are working together in examining the viability of moving into a new people group in light of the current team's inexperience in church-planting and their extreme dispersion. Since making this kind of move will require significant organizational resources and energy we are seeking to move forward with wisdom.

While on the topic of Thomas, let me give you a "heads up" about a change that is in the works. Prior to our last ELT meeting, Thomas and I began dialogue about moving them to the Boring area to step into an additional role. Without stepping away from his current responsibilities as Russian Field Director we are looking at moving him into a role that would include various "public ministry" type duties. Although the job description is still somewhat ambiguous, I plan to have him involved in both limited mobilization and limited media (social, print, video, etc.) responsibilities. I'll keep you posted on how this progresses.

Years ago I came to the conclusion that one of the most critical areas of growth needed for any leader is the ability to deal with "messiness." Working with people is messy. Working with missionaries who raise their own support package is messy. Messiness is raised to a whole new level when working with people who have enough backbone and stick-to-itiveness to raise the necessary money to get to the field and then to stay there. God is daily teaching me how to survive and thrive in the midst of much messiness. I have the privilege of working with an incredibly gifted and committed leadership team. I am also privileged to work with some of the choicest servants of the King. If you get the impression that I really enjoy the opportunity to

serve in my current capacity you are absolutely correct. Many days and many moments I question whether I will be able to move the organization to the place God would have us go, but I always come back to three anchors:

1. I serve alongside a great leadership team – each carries a critical part of the job
2. I am part of an organization that is comprised of some of the finest people on the earth
3. I am on assignment from the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. He leads – I follow.

I just can't think of a place I would rather serve!

Thanks to each of you who have been so patient in continuing to break in a new executive director. I am definitely still in process. Please feel free to speak into my life. All I ask is that you be gentle. ☺

Thanks for your contribution to the organization at every level – in prayer and finances. As board members you are an integral part of all that is accomplished for eternity through each member of the staff!

God's best to each of you.

Respectfully submitted,

Dale Smith, Executive Director