

**Executive Director's Report to the Board of InterAct Ministries, Inc.
July/August 2019**

As I am sure you would expect, I do read my Bible. My usual pattern is to try to read through the Bible in a year - even though it usually ends up taking me about 15 months. Since I rarely get through in a year, I decided to read just the New Testament, Psalms, and Proverbs while finishing off last year's Minor Prophets. The extra time spent each day in the New Testament and Psalms has been a breath of fresh air. Psalms have become an increasingly rich part of my life ever since I moved into leadership. It seems like the more responsibility one has overseeing people the more meaningful the Psalms become. It has been equally encouraging to more casually walk with Jesus through the gospels and be taught by the greatest missionary of all time – the Apostle Paul.

In a twisted kind of way, I am encouraged to read of some of the tensions Paul faced as he dealt with co-workers, church leaders and church members. InterAct has those too. In spite of tensions on some fronts I do feel God is moving us forward – not as quickly as I would like but obviously at the speed He ordains. As you read the reports of the field directors and other support staff, you will get a good picture of what is happening – both in the U.S. and in Canada. In order to cut down on your reading, I am intentionally not repeating what is said in other reports. Taken together they paint a clear picture of the state of InterAct Ministries.

Currently, the U.S. office is in the middle of major personnel changes. Karen Schweitz ended her time with InterAct in May, but God blessed us with a stellar replacement in Mike Hubbard. He comes to us with a missionary perspective, having spent twelve years in Turkey as a church-planter. Mike is also trained in bookkeeping and finance. This combination of missionary experience and training in bookkeeping/accounting is a gift from God to InterAct Ministries, Inc. Although he is on a steep learning curve, he is proving to be just what that organization needs – both as a finance director and as a team member.

Another big change for the U.S. organization, and therefore me, is the loss of our communications director/development director - Thomas Slawson. He has taken a position as an associate pastor at a church in Sioux Falls, SD, and officially finished all responsibility with InterAct as of July 26. Over the past seven years he has worn numerous hats. The two most critical ones have been his oversight and development of our communication department and his contribution to donor development. The hole he leaves in our communications department will be filled by Carol, which will have a big personal impact on Carol and me. She has already begun overseeing our *InterAction* team (Bryan, Erin, etc.) until we find a long-term solution. She has the “horsepower” to manage this, but it will stretch her more than she would have chosen.

Currently the U.S. organization's growth is only keeping up with our attrition (retirements and resignations), I will be identifying and training staff for several new roles. The first-tier roles I will be filling are a development director and a mobilization director. Longer term, I will be working on identifying and training an eventual replacement for Jerry Crosby (HR and office administrator) and also a communications director. Even though our cash flow is not strong right now I am convinced that I need to spend the money necessary to put these roles in place.

In the past you have heard me speak of our need for more member care workers. I am pleased to report that Bill and Lois Twichell are now serving full-time in that role. This past May they spent most of the month in Alaska meeting with staff and building relationships. They are already proving to be a boon to both the U.S. and Canada organizations. In recent years our field directors have been carrying all the burden of member care for field staff so this should begin to take pressure off them.

After almost a decade of service in Bolivia with SIM, Dale and Debbie Kenyon are now fully back in the InterAct fold. They are going to be picking up a “coaching” role, which will include a member care component. Their focus will be with our missionaries serving in Manitoba, both those working with First Nations and with East Indians. In addition to this regional coaching responsibility they will be doing mobilization in schools and churches in the U.S. It is great to have them back on board.

Another big picture piece is the addition of George and Harriet Walker, formerly with Ethnos 360 (New Tribes). This amazing couple has been used by God to plant a church in Papua New Guinea that became a church-planting movement. After “frontline” ministry overseas the Walkers became some of the primary trainers for New Tribes. I look forward to using George in missiological training roles within InterAct, Inc. and InterAct Canada. We are also working on arranging teaching opportunities for George at various Bible schools with the goal of recruiting workers (Millar College of the Bible, Peace River Bible Institute, Alaska Bible College and Frontier School of the Bible, etc.). George will be joining former InterAct missionary and Inc. board member, Mike Matthews, as we introduce and implement *A Novel Approach* across our fields.¹

Each of our field directors has given you a good report of what is going on in their respective area of responsibility. All three of them are doing exceptional jobs. If you knew the details of the load they carry you would be amazed – and appreciative! The most encouraging part for me is that they continue to walk with God and hang on to Him for the strength to do the job to which they have been called. I am blessed to serve on the team with them.

Jerry Crosby continues to do an excellent job juggling the many pieces required to run the U.S. office. With the shortage of staff in this office he is a critical player.

A concern for InterAct, Inc. is our continuing decrease in revenue. We are not at the problem stage, but I don't want to see us get there. We have had increases in spending in Alaska this year, primarily due to having a new maintenance man fixing and repairing things that have been neglected in recent years. We also have inordinately high salary cost for the size of our U.S. organization (Crosby, Hubbard, Slawson, etc.). Our income has been diminished by the retirement of four missionary units in twelve months and the departure of another (we receive a 10% assessment from staff). Coupled with the poorly performing markets for the past 3-4 years, and in some part to our adjustment of investment parameters, we have lost more than \$100,000 annually for the last few years. Please don't hear me imply that this is desperate situation. In fact, the argument could be made that we should not have such a large “nest egg,” but it does make me nervous. I felt it was appropriate to bring it to your attention and let you know that I am taking steps to correct the situation. Management spending is being monitored and is being curtailed where reasonable. I am looking for projects that will advance our ministry mandate that can be sent out as appeals. This summer we more than tripled the size of

¹ A model for unpacking host culture stories to determine worldview making possible clear gospel communication and biblical discipleship. – Please ask. ☺

our InterAction mailings. I am also pursuing a development director and a mobilization director – both of which will initially create more expense but should ultimately result in increased income.

Carol and I made the decision in the spring that we would spend July through October working out of Oregon. We will still be traveling but will stage out of Oregon instead of Alberta. With the current staffing and financial issues in the Boring office it is important that we be there as much as possible. The needed changes will not happen unless I am there to manage them in a more hands-on manner. So, for now we are short-term residents of the one room apartment at the office.

Carol and I are tired, but we are doing OK. At our last JMAC gathering Jack Teeter made the comment that I am a “team builder.” Although I have enjoyed building team with the Field Leadership Team, I am finding it very difficult to build team in multiple, distant locations simultaneously, especially with the administrative load of running two organizations. Right now, the U.S. office team needs rebuilding and that requires “high touch,” something difficult to do remotely. So, for now we are sojourners. We are both happy to have the opportunity to serve. We are also confident that what we are doing is not about earthly ease but about serving faithfully for His glory!

On that note, let me thank you for your service to the staff of InterAct and to us personally. We are blessed and encouraged by your service on our behalf!

For His glory,

Dale Smith

I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Philippians 1:3-6 NIV.