

**Executive Director's Report to the Boards of InterAct Ministries  
January/February 2019**

***"Disappointments are inevitable; discouragement is a choice."***

Charles Stanley, Life Principle #20

<sup>17</sup> Though the fig tree does not bud  
and there are no grapes on the vines,  
though the olive crop fails  
and the fields produce no food,  
though there are no sheep in the pen  
and no cattle in the stalls,  
<sup>18</sup> yet I will rejoice in the LORD,  
I will be joyful in God my Savior.  
<sup>19</sup> The Sovereign LORD is my strength;  
he makes my feet like the feet of a deer,  
he enables me to tread on the heights.

Habakkuk 3:17-19a NIV

This year we have felt some losses across the organization. We have also had good cause for great encouragement. On good days I love my job. On the bad days I love it a little less – and I choose to apply the principle, ***disappointments are inevitable; discouragement is a choice*** and choose to rejoice in the LORD and to be joyful in God my Savior! God has moved us forward in 2018 but not without our forward motion being contested. Through the ups and the downs we have been faithful to our calling – loving people to a closer walk with Jesus while step by step becoming more like Him.

When I was initially asked to step into the role of executive director it was with the understanding that I would be the figurehead of the organization but for all practical purposes each field would be basically autonomous. I did not see this as tenable in the real world but there were valid reasons for the concept being presented. Rightfully, each of our fields do operate with much autonomy, but not independently. They are all separated geographically, politically and by very different ministry contexts. A high degree of autonomy is appropriate. Fortunately, we have very capable leaders at the helm of each field. My role is to supervise these highly competent field leaders (field directors) while also seeking to serve them. I also work with the staff in our two offices to help them serve our three fields. I am blessed to have “top drawer” leadership that are competent and committed, assuring that micromanagement by yours truly is not needed.

Among the many responsibilities that surround me, I find one to be essential - seeking to be a spiritual role model to the organization. How am I doing on this? Nowhere near as well as I would like! I seek to spend significant time in the Word and in prayer every day. I am thankful for God's grace and often believe that He may have put me in a leadership role in order to make sure the refining fire burned very hot in my life. By His grace I am learning to be more connected to Him as well and more dependent on Him. I continue to be a work in progress. Even though I know I have not reached the goal of sanctification in this life (He will finish that work in glory), I continue to challenge our leadership teams and those we are mentoring with this principle: ***We will never be any more effective as missionaries***

*than we are as men and women of God.* Personal time in the Word, time in prayer and other “habits of grace,” will always be the foundation of any effective missionary. So I seek to model this and also continue to beat the drum to our staff of the importance of their own walk with the Master.

## **FIELD LEADERSHIP**

As you have perused the reports you have likely sensed the organizational ups and downs experienced in 2018. We have a new team member in Russia, but the field still struggles to acquire significant momentum. Seeing new staff in Russia continues to be an uphill battle. At the same time, Lucas is doing an excellent job of continuing to hold things together and cast vision for much broader ministry expansion into “unreached” and “lesser reached” people groups of Siberia.

As the new field director in Alaska Steve has done a stellar job in building a sense of family and continues to cast vision for InterAct’s future roles in that state. The U.S. HR report shows that we lost three missionary units to retirement there and we lost one family to discontent. At the same time we have two new units on the field and two more appointee units, and two couples making application. But through it all, Steve, with Jill at his side, is making good headway in rebuilding our most broken field. A leadership/advisory team has been put in place by Steve and is proving to provide excellent counsel and support. We aren’t “out of the woods” yet, but we are seeing significant forward motion.

Dan’s report did not sugar coat reality on the Canada field. This year we lost three valuable couples. This is a big disappointment to all of us, myself included. I personally recruited two of the departing couples and was a key player in the third joining the ministry. We also lost two singles for personal reasons. But God is using Dan and these losses to bring greater focus to the field. As was mentioned in the summer report, 2018 has also brought two choice new couples our way from other organizations, both of whom are serving in support roles in Alberta. Good things are happening with the launch of the Urban Fire team, with the entire team now on the field except one member. A vision for greater effectiveness in discipling is being led by Dan. New vision for equipping Canada staff with the necessary tools to identify and unpack language and worldview are in place. Dan has pulled together an excellent leadership team (Greg Hamilton, Roy Thiessen, Cohle Bergen, Jim Hamilton and himself) that helps to share the leadership load while providing a leadership development venue for working with them. Organizational focus on this field is better than it has been in years. In spite of the painful personnel losses of this past year Canada continues to be well led by godly leadership and is advancing in ministry.

I would be remiss not to mention two personnel windfalls that will ultimately bless all our fields. Former U.S. board chairman, Bill Twichell (and Lois), have moved into full-time Member Care ministry. Although his health has slowed him down, once he is through the present health crisis they plan to be do member care with all our fields and offices. Obviously this is limited by being just one couple and by budget resources, but they are already filling a vital need. The other new couple with which we have been blessed are George and Harriet Walker, of Ethnos 360 (formerly New Tribes) and Worldview Resource Group. George has not only been a friend for over a decade, he has also served InterAct Canada as a consultant for at least a dozen years. George will be stepping into the much needed role of training director for all of InterAct.

## **MISSION, VISION AND VALUES**

Casting vision for the organization is one of those elusive things with which I have an “on again, off again” relationship. At times I feel like we have been given all the vision we need in Scripture and at other times I find myself crying out to God, asking Him to show me where He would have us go. At the highest level (lowest level?) of the organization I believe we have clear macro direction for the whole organization in our Mission, Vision and Values. From our “values” in particular I have sought to move our leadership team toward a growing vision to disciple disciplers. Because our values also speak of the centrality of the local church I have been a pit bull in insisting that a disciple who has been “taught to obey all things” means among other things, that they have instilled within them a vision to reproduce reproducers while also carrying a vision to gather as church. I continue to beat the drum of learning the heart language, culture and worldview of the people we seek to reach.

Our missionary staff are part of the InterAct team because they have a heart to reach some segment of the least reached and under reached populations across the North Pacific Crescent. Most of the new folks coming our way are doing so because they see InterAct’s heart to bring the Gospel to these populations. They also see an organization that is growing in its knowledge of how to do this well. Almost all of the younger folks knocking on our doors are doing so because they see we really are living out our value of relational ministry – both within the organization and to those we serve. For the most part, the organizational vision I cast for our organization is firmly embedded in our Mission, Vision and Values (Is there an echo in here?). Godly, growing, God-dependent disciples working relationally with under reached peoples, with a heart to make more, godly, growing, God-dependent disciples who are investing relationally in others is the short-term goal (Did you get all that?). The ultimate goal is disciples gathered in churches – churches that have the vision to make more disciples and start new churches. Phew! Sorry I just made you read all that. But that is my vision, and it is the same as before.

In spite of the consistency of our vision, why does InterAct’s ministry look so different across the places we serve? Simple answer – We have a common vision across the organization but we have a host of strategies to accomplish it. Granted, our values impact and fine tune what those strategies look like, but there is incredible room for creativity among our fields, regions and local contexts.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES**

Now let’s look at some of the administrative details. The U.S. organization has had a poor year financially. Due to market losses, reduced organizational giving, an increase in required office subsidies and diminished cash flow from administration fees (retirements, resignations), InterAct U.S. lost approximately \$200,000 of depth in 2018. This kind of loss would not be sustainable long-term and I have taken steps to correct this trend. In August I assigned Thomas Slawson as our new development director. I am confident that in this role he will help us find new funding through grant writing as well as spurring donors who have moved to the sidelines. As mobilization efforts continue to ratchet up we should see more full-time missionaries coming on board and therefore bringing their 10% assessment fees into the organization.

As was inferred by the statement above, mobilization has a connection with InterAct’s cash concerns. No staff, no assessment income – and of course no staff would also mean no reason to exist! But after having explored options within the organization for a recruitment director I have come to the reality that I will need to look to an outside hire to fill this role. That takes money. So we are back around to the

need for a strong development department. In the meantime, Sally Cross has been assigned the role of being a “high touch” relational connection with all prospects connecting with them by phone, website or personal contact.

I have been challenged with the resignation of the administration director in Canada and the pending resignation of the finance director in the U.S. office. Neither of these are insurmountable hurdles but both come with challenges. Dan has spoken to Wes’s departure. Karen has mentioned her June 1 departure in her report to the Inc. Finance and Audit committee. Roy told me yesterday that he knew when he hired her that once her husband retired he didn’t expect her to continue working for InterAct. She is right on schedule. Her loss will be deeply felt as she is a joy to have around. At the same time it does provide opportunity and impetus to find someone to more comprehensively take over as our new Finance Director, fielding greater responsibility than Karen has felt comfortable taking on. Please pray for me and the teams of both offices as we adjust to new realities and seek the right people for long-term office service.

InterAct continues to be overseen by two excellent watchdog organizations keeping us accountable in areas of finance and administration: the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability in the U.S. (ECFA) and the Canadian Council of Christian Charities (CCCC). This fall we successfully completed our triennial onsite evaluation with the CCCCs and Dan and I also completed a one day training seminar with the ECFA on biblical board governance. Both organizations continue to oversee, encourage and resource our ministries.

Obviously, there is always more to say than you want to read. So I am going to end this report sooner than I might have while at the same time inviting you ask questions.

### **AN ITEM FOR DISCUSSION**

One of the items I am asking both boards to wrestle with, since both orgs have a stake in the issue, is whether it would be wise for Carol and me to move to Oregon. In spite of the recent resignations, and a key resignation with Wes, the Canada organization is presently in a stronger position than the U.S. organization. There is good leadership in place. The office loss is being covered. And the field as a whole is much more aligned in vision and strategy than it has been for a while. On the U.S. side, Alaska is in good hands with Steve and Jill on site, and Russia is doing well in spite of their small numbers. But the U.S. office was in need of attention before Karen submitted her resignation. Her notice only ratchets up the need for more hands on involvement to build a long-term team for that organization. I cannot see a good way to do that without physical presence. Am I looking forward to the time, mess, cost and life change this will require? Not really, but Carol and I are agreed that it is best for the organization and hence we are willing to consider moving. It goes without saying that if this is approved there will need to be significant discussion regarding the financial commitment and oversight responsibilities of both organizations. Does this trigger any questions for anyone? I sure hope so!

### **CONCLUSION**

My service to InterAct continues for two key reasons: First, because Carol and I both feel called by God to be here doing what we are doing. Second, because we are both passionate about seeing God increasingly made famous across the areas of the North Pacific Crescent (NPC) we serve. (I guess there is a third reason – because you allow me to serve in this role!) I am excited every day to be investing in

each of my direct reports, whether field leaders or office staff, to train and facilitate their success in spreading the Gospel across our area of responsibility. My goal is to expedite the process of making disciples who have been taught to obey everything He commanded (Matthew 28:18-20).

Thank you for the privilege of allowing me to serve this amazing organization – an organization filled with so many amazing servants. I am regularly humbled by the quality of godly men and women who make up our ranks. I want to go on record as thanking the truly selfless field directors who are daily “taking hits” in their leadership roles. Also, those serving in offices roles go largely unnoticed and unappreciated until things go wrong. I am thankful and humbled by the sacrifice of leaders serving on the fields and in the offices. And thanks to each of you who serve as board members, voluntarily giving your time and talents to these two organizations. I am blessed to serve shoulder to shoulder with each of you!

Serving at the pleasure of the board,

Dale Smith  
Executive Director

**Bonus material - once again added as a reminder.**

**Purpose Statement:** InterAct Ministries exists to make disciples among least reached peoples in cooperation with like-minded churches and organizations.

**Vision Statement:** InterAct Ministries desires to see reproducing disciples impacting communities across the North Pacific Crescent.

**Core Values:**

- Scripture – Authoritative and sufficient for life and ministry
- Relationships – Loving God and loving people
- Cross-cultural ministry – Recognition of worldview and cultural implications in ministry
- Whole-life discipleship – Walking with disciples through all stages of life and growth
- Gathered believers – Recognize the centrality of the local church
- Commitment – High priority on long-term ministries. Flowing out of these statements are several other statements that guide our strategies and day to day ministries.

**Core Ministries:** evangelism, discipleship, counseling, training, leadership development (From InterAct archives)

**Core Strategies:** determined by the field (From InterAct archives and practice)

**Our Desire:** To see fully developed disciples among each people group we serve who have formed into local bodies of multiplying disciples (churches) across the North Pacific Crescent. (This is my heart – to see fully trained disciples gathered.)