

InterAct Ministries Joint Boards
Executive Director's Report
February 4-6, 2021
Cyber Meeting

This report will be covering my oversight of both organizations, InterAct Ministries, Inc. and InterAct Ministries of Canada. When we met last summer by Zoom and conference call I never expected we would be meeting this way again in February 2021. COVID-19 limitations continue to be our reality.

Welcome David Ley to the U.S. board, Randy Jackson and Dave Perry back to the U.S. board, Brian Aitken to the Canada board and Daryl Kroeker back to the Canada board. It is good to have new blood on the boards and also good to have the board history provided by the men who are back. Thank you for serving the organization and also for being willing to be part of the team that keeps me in line.

As the one employee of each board, I assume it will be beneficial to know a few pertinent details about my life along with details about the organization(s). When we met last summer Carol and I had sold our house in Alberta, our possessions were in three storage units and we were living in the InterAct office apartment in Oregon. Since then we have purchased a townhouse in Sandy, Oregon, and we are in the drawn out process of getting settled. COVID has not allowed us to travel to Canada or Alaska so we have focused our face to face energy on strengthening and moving the U.S. office team forward.

As the ones giving me oversight and accountability, it is appropriate that I share with you where I am seeking to lead InterAct. Even though you will hear details of what is happening on the fields from the field director's reports, you need to know where I am leading. I will describe my leadership in terms of "themes." **Discipleship** is a strong theme that flows directly out of InterAct's mission (purpose), vision and values statements. Seeking to do a better job at making disciples is a strong focus as I work with the leadership teams. Challenging our leaders to **prioritize growing as disciples themselves** is always on my agenda. Finding ways to be more effective in discipling others is continually brought to the front, with a **biblical counseling/discipling model** being one of the best ways we have found to challenge people's growth in the Word. We currently have four missionaries enrolled in Master of Arts in Biblical Counseling programs and many others regularly taking training in how to apply the Word to the issues of life and spiritual growth.

If you hang around me long you will hear a repeated refrain, "Pray for workers for His harvest fields." **Finding, training and fielding the right missionaries** is a significant theme of my leadership. Having a **full-time mobilization director** is a significant piece of that focus. Preparing these new recruits well is also part of my heart – preparing them with the **spiritual foundation to thrive** and also putting the necessary tools in their hands for ministry.

Developing a **mentoring** program for these new missionaries is a means to accomplishing this end. Significant movement in online mentoring and training is enhancing the development of younger leaders. Encouraging **use of worldview tools** like A Novel Approach is also a part of my leadership thrust. Having our missionaries trained to tell the gospel story in a way that is clearly understood by the host culture is near to my heart.

Encouraging **“team”** is a theme that I have preached since I was Canada field director back in the 90’s. I continue to challenge my leaders to build ministry teams. Oh yeah, I think I may have seen a pattern for something like teams in the New Testament. Hmmm.

Another major area I am seeking to move InterAct forward is in the dual areas of **communications and donor development (fund raising)**. These two areas are really two sides of the same coin. As we tell the story of what He is doing through our ministry, people become excited and want to partner with us – whether through praying, or giving or even going. I am continuing to **strive to tell His story well, to a larger and larger slice of the evangelical community**. Toward this end we have added Chris Olsen to our team as Communications and Donor Development Manager. Carol continues to be somewhat AWOL from her original role as my administrative assistant, in order to fill another role I needed covered – Director of Communications. She has done a stellar job in this role but we are looking forward to Chris increasingly picking up the pieces of communications, freeing her to better assist me with the host of details I carry. Our new communications manager is already moving at warp speed and we are already seeing a larger profile on social media. He is also working hard to get up to speed in the whole area of development. Time will tell, but it appears he will be a wonderful long-term addition to the team, working to tell our story in a variety of new ways.

Change is inevitable, and 2020 brought lots of change. Last year this time, between field and office, I had eight direct reports. Following these meetings I will have three new direct reports, one of which is a leadership change. Chris Olsen is now added in his donor development role as is Andy Chinn, our new Mobilization Director. Those of you who have been receiving the updates I occasionally send out will have heard that our Canada field director, Dan Mayerle, is stepping down. Greg Hamilton will assume this role shortly after the board meetings and Dan will eventually be putting priority on First Nations ministry in the Calgary area. For now, the plan is that Dan will assist Greg, somewhat like Greg did for him, but with less time available for doing so. We continue to work on leadership development for the Canada team. These changes will require extra time from me as I direct, learn to work with and train new men in new roles.

In mobilization, we have had a challenging fall. COVID did not completely shut us down, but almost. With unknown pandemic limitations possible for the summer, it is hard to promise a summer internship to schools this year. These internships have been one of our best portals of entry into InterAct, allowing students to do legitimate ministry while exploring to see if we are the organization with whom they would like to serve. We may still be able to offer internships to students in their country of origin, but this constitutes a major limitation. Even being allowed on a college campus has proven difficult to impossible. We were able to send a team to the

mission's conference at Frontier School of the Bible. One of our missionaries, George Walker was invited to be their keynote speaker and all reports say he did an amazing job. Since we were only able to physically get on one campus it was a boon for us that it was one that has already provided InterAct with several missionaries. Andy Chinn, in spite of significant challenges to recruiting, is doing a great job in building a team that is very "high touch." Every contact is immediately called and followed up on, with many of the contacts being disciplined via technology. This kind of care and attention being given to prospective missionaries is exactly what the Field Leadership Team (FLT) had envisioned as we prayed and looked for the God-prepared person to lead the mobilization charge. Numerous schools have hosted our mobilizers for online mission conferences and workshops. Not the same as face to face contact but we trust God is using even the limited cyber connections we have used.

One of the great encouragements for me is seeing God bring people to our doors. We regularly pray for workers for the harvest (Luke 10:2), and God keeps surprising us by sending people our way. We are still being as diligent as possible by looking for workers at schools, chatrooms and every other creative way we can conceive. But it seems like our best recruitment is just doing a good job of showing "high touch" and lots of love to those who come knocking on our doors. There are currently three individuals in the pipeline to serve in Canada. Alaska has fielded three new units in 2020 (five missionaries) and has four units in the pipeline (seven missionaries). Even Siberia has one in the pipeline. All I can say is – thank you, Lord!

Alaska

In preparation for this report I just finished rereading Steve Horsman's Alaska field report. For more than a decade InterAct has struggled in Alaska. Today, God is working in this state in ways that are very encouraging. Steve and Jill have been faithful – faithful in doing the right things, working hard and looking to God to advance His heart through them. But the job is not done and I am happy to say that God is obviously not finished with InterAct in Alaska.

Steve likes to say that he is seeking to move the field forward on two parallel tracks – **A Novel Approach (ANA)** and **Biblical Counseling**. In order to advance the former, they have begun to integrate both into their "onboarding" of new missionaries. You have heard about ANA before in earlier reports, but for those who are new, it is described by Amazon this way:

In **A Novel Approach**, Michael Matthews provides a comprehensive framework for a story-based **approach** to worldview analysis and subsequent evangelism.

Be sure to ask fellow board member, Mike Matthews, to further unpack details. Or, go on Amazon, buy the book and read it. (What is my commission, Mike?)

Biblical Counseling is nothing new arounds the fields and office of InterAct. Steve, and actually each of the other field directors, is advancing a practical methodology to apply Scripture to the issues of life. The primary tools God left us with for ministry are His Word and His Spirit. Biblical Counseling seeks to use the tool of the Word of God, guided by the Spirit of God, for

discipleship. The Alaska field continues to find creative ways to train staff in more effective ways to advance application of the Word to life.

Ministries in Alaska currently include:

- two men pastoring in Anchorage (Derr and Richardson)
- one couple working with Hearts Going Toward Wellness in Kenai (Ross)
- a counselor seconded to New Hope Counseling Center in Soldotna (Mole)
- a couple serving in Grayling (Dalton)
- a couple pastoring in Copper Center (Paull)
- a couple in Glennallen/Copper Center (Stiefel)
- a couple working with Native youth in Fairbanks (Zook)
- one man assigned to maintenance at the Lazy Mountain campus (Gerber)
- one very busy field director and wife (Horsman).

Two “field advancement projects” are currently being developed in Alaska. The first one is a vision to use InterAct’s Lazy Mountain campus as a short-term residential counseling center. As Steve recently explained in a report he submitted, “While we do not expect formal counseling to characterize our ministries, we look to a Counseling Center as one way we can connect with individuals on the road system and provide greater support to our village ministries.” I am confident that using our 140 acre campus to minister to crisis needs among Alaska’s Native people is a door opener for longer term discipling and church planting in the state. Much work ahead!

A second “advancement project” is development of a Professional Educators Partnership in Alaska. Implementation would involve placing trained Christian educators in villages alongside church-planters/church facilitators. Our hope is that finding and fielding adventurous Christian teachers who will be fully funded by the state should be much easier than finding prospective missionaries who face many months or years raising the requisite support. The goal would not be to replace frontline missionaries with teachers, but to strengthen the impact and sustainability of both by being co-located - team. Although not a new idea I believe it is one with great merit – one that has the potential to have a synergistic effect. Jill Horsman comes with many years of experience that I believe greatly heightens our possibility of effectively launching and maintaining such a program. Much work ahead here too!

Summary

State of the Alaska field – strong and growing.

Russia

Although this field continues to be our smallest field numerically (three missionary units), it is by far the largest geographically and the least reached. In spite of significant energy already being expended to recruit new missionaries for Russia, new workers for this field have only

trickled in. Lucas continues to pray for laborers and would love to be part of the solution, but because of the great distances involved (Siberia), his hands are largely tied. Currently he is home on Special Assignment, connecting with supporting churches and telling what God is doing in his part of the world. COVID-19 has largely nixed Lucas's ability to recruit while back in the U.S., but God decided to do what Lucas could not – bring prospective workers to him. A young man named Micah, contacted InterAct, asking about ministry in Siberia. Lucas made a beeline to meet him, even though it meant driving two states away. The result is a young recruit in the pipeline (application in hand) who has a relationship with a young lady who is also tracking for overseas ministry. We'll see what God does. In the meantime, many of us are praying for God to raise up a host of workers to be part of His overripe harvest field of Siberia!

Unknowns continue to mark ministry in the vast reaches of Russia. Lucas states:

While I cannot control how the pandemic or politics impacts the Siberian field, God has placed it on my heart to seek clarity on where he is leading our team. With Frankie and Ira now an established couple in our team and the possibility of someone in the pipeline, we are planning to meet as a team this summer in hopes of pursuing clarity of the needs in the surrounding regions and people groups, setting strategic goals to work toward as a team, and compiling specific needs to which we can recruit more workers.

Summary

State of the Russia field – steady and faithful – seeking workers!

Canada

The Canada field is facing the same kinds of struggles that are being faced by each of our fields – an inability to do the relational, face-to-face ministry that makes us InterAct. In spite of the challenges, the Canada team is continuing to do ministry. Granted it is different than last year this time, but it is evolving as our missionaries are finding their COVID groove. Significant ministry is being accomplished via tools such as Zoom, both discipleship among host peoples as well as training with our own staff. Canada is making the best of the situation in which they find themselves.

A large number of our personnel are invested in summer camps and ministries like Urban Fire. Because of governmental restrictions, these ministries have been limited significantly. Although many attempts are being made to minister in new and creative ways, these kinds of ministries may never look the same in the future. Our staff working in these ministries are thinking outside the box to figure out ways to evangelize and disciple Native youth in spite of the current challenges. One thing is for sure, it forces us back to a less programmatic model and increasingly toward a more relational focus. We are looking to Him for guidance going forward!

Of course the big change ahead, new leadership stepping in at the field director level, is going to mean different foci in the coming days. This is not a bad thing. Every leader works within his

strengths and he brings those strengths to his role. Applying new strengths to a leadership context inevitably moves things to a new level. Dan Mayerle has done a stellar job in leading the Canada field and I am indebted to him. He is a great friend and a man I greatly respect. I grieve losing him to this role but I am confident that he is following God's direction. Greg and I have a wonderful relationship as well but it is relatively new in comparison. I have complete confidence that Greg is ready for his new role and will even build on the solid foundation he is inheriting.

One of the challenges Greg will need to work through is leading a team that is spread across half of the North American continent, with a minimal leadership team. Added to that challenge is the complexity of ministry to three very distinct people groups. Building infrastructure will need to be a priority as Greg leads into the future. I believe he is the man to help us do that.

I think the most encouraging thing I see with the Canada field is the growing spiritual maturity of the leadership team. This is increasingly obvious in every conversation I have with them. The men and women are walking in the Word - spending significant time each day with the Lord. Prayer is more and more evident in the gatherings around the Canada organization. Using the Word as the primary tool of ministry marks these guys and gals. Granted, we have many younger and less spiritually mature staff members, but the good news is they are seeing modeled what it means to walk with increasing intimacy with Jesus. I have no doubt that this younger generation of missionaries are following leadership in becoming more and more committed to being Jesus to those they serve.

Summary

State of the Canada field – Solid and ready to both pioneer and partner.

So the last thing I want to touch on is the encouraging turn around in finances in InterAct Ministries, Inc. You would have heard of the challenges the U.S. organization had for the past two to three years. God has seemingly reversed that trend and this past year, Covid-19 notwithstanding, both organizations are in a solid financial position. I'll spare you the details as you will hear reports from your respective finance committees. Again I'll just say – thank you, Lord!

Carol and I continue to enjoy serving you, the staff of InterAct, our partner constituency and the Lord of the Harvest!

Blessed to serve,

Dale Smith

The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Luke 10:2 (NIV).

InterAct Ministries' Purpose/Vision/Values Statements

Purpose (Mission) 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 across the North Pacific Crescent. (This is a Dale addition – but fully trained disciples will gather. Gathering as “church” is a key part of “teaching them to obey all things...”)