

InterAct Ministries Joint Boards
Executive Director's Report
February 3-5, 2022
Menucha Conference Center, Corbett, OR and Cyberspace

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. Proverbs 3:5-6 NIV.

Writing these reports is one of the hardest things I do and yet one of the most productive – at least for me. It is a time of review, both of where InterAct has moved forward and where we have regressed. The reflection necessary for writing this kind of report provides both accountability and challenge to improve my stewardship of this organization. I also find every report results in encouragement as I see God's faithfulness and recognize the hard work of our missionary force.

Each one of our three fields has seen challenges and change over the past six months. Russia is seeing more interest than we have seen in recent years, with four individuals hoping to do EnGage! this summer, including one InterActer from Alaska going for a ministry visit. A couple, the Constanzas, are raising support for full-time service in Siberia. Due to escalating Covid and political concerns we are unsure if we will be able to send any of them. Despite the challenges, Shawna H was able to make it back to her Siberia home in January. As Lucas's brief report indicates, ministry in Russia continues. We have prayed for workers, now we need to pray for entry and freedom to minister.

InterAct Alaska has seen significant advance since our last gathering. Steve's report reflects the busyness that marks their lives – busyness, that humanly speaking, is a big part of this advance. Horsmans have had many prospective missionaries divinely dropped on their doorstep and they have been effective in lovingly welcomed these new recruits into the organization. It was delightful to be part of the "new staff training" of 13 green recruits in October on the Lazy Mountain campus. Maybe just as exciting is a two-hour phone conversation this week with an organizational leader in Alaska looking for another organization for himself and several fellow missionaries. God is doing an amazing job of sending people to InterAct Alaska. It feels like a lot of prayer is going before us. Thank you, Lord!

As you have already heard, Dan Mayerle stepped down as field director of the Canada field in February 2021 to transition back to a church-planting role in Calgary, AB. After serving many years as Dan's assistant, Greg Hamilton was ready and willing to step into the shoes vacated by Dan. Greg brings excellent administrative skills and a solid biblical perspective to his leadership. Though this has not been a painless transition, he is rising to the challenge of this new role. As you will read in his report, he is feeling quite stretched. Still, I am confident that he is developing a leadership pace that will be sustainable as he learns those things he can delegate or let go.

Possibly the most exciting thing on the horizon in Canada is the prospect of Midway Bible Camp moving to a new property. The plan is to both develop a four-season office/retreat centre building while initiating summer programming at the new site. This project is in the proposal stage and the Canada board will be wrestling with its viability. One of the things that gives me great hope is having Morgan

Serger leading the charge on this initiative. I believe he has the horsepower and connections to bring it into reality.

To facilitate upcoming transitions, I contracted with consultant, Roger Orner, to assess our structure as we move toward succession, both mine and other leadership roles. One of Roger's key observations was the number of direct reports I carry and the complexity of leading two separate organizations. A recommendation was to seek a "chief operations officer" (COO) for the U.S. office. This was something I had tried ten years ago, with either Roy Martin or Jerry Crosby in the role. I ended up abandoning the plan due to office staff pushback. The context of our current office has changed significantly, and initial conversations make it clear that everyone would happily follow Jerry as our short-term COO. Assigning Jerry to oversee the whole office operation would also take three, possibly four, direct reports off my plate. The downside is that he plans to retire in a little over a year. Moving Jerry into this role will also create a structure that is more reasonable for the person who will follow me. Making this change should give the U.S. office the same kind of autonomy and empowerment enjoyed by the fields. A future executive director would not be tied to a specific location, like the U.S. office. He could conceivably be an Alaskan leading from Alaska or a Canadian leading from Canada. When the change is official, Jerry's first assignment will be to help identify his successor and train him prior stepping back. It gives some peace of mind knowing that "retirement" for Jerry will not be "abandonment." He intends to work at the office, but with a reduced time commitment.

Unless something changes, the U.S. office will continue to have a difficult time finding supported missionaries to serve in Boring. There are several reasons, one of which is that our office is not on one of our ministry fields, but in the "Lower 48." People are generally not interested in raising support to work in a mission office located in North America. We also don't tend to have missionaries who need to "come home" from the fields they serve. Rather, most of them are already home in Canada and Alaska, so they end up finishing their ministry careers where they have ministered all along. Another reason is the mindset of a younger generation. Increasingly they are looking to either pay their own way or be paid for their services. The idea of raising support, especially for a ministry in their own culture and context, does not create much interest. I believe a key solution is to recognize this challenge and seek to raise funds organizationally to cover the necessary salaries. You might recall, when I hired Chris Olson, he was assigned half-time to a communications role and half-time to development. Five months ago, he told me he could not do justice to both and asked to be released from development responsibilities. It was a good call, but it leaves me needing a development director. So that process is underway, this time for a full-time person. Change happens.

There have been several personnel changes over the past twelve months. Retirees Nadine Gillespie, Russ Arnold and Kay Henry were all promoted to the presence of their Lord. My predecessor in this role, Gary Brumbelow and his wife Valerie, officially retired from InterAct. A loss that is being keenly felt in on the Canada field is the departure of two excellent missionary couples, Roy and Laura Thiessen and Joel and Amanda Sewell. We grieve the loss of their partnership in ministry. Another change is Travis Harms, who has moved from a full-time role in northern Manitoba to a volunteer role.

One of the housekeeping details I would like to suggest is that of moving our board meetings forward by approximately one month, both the joint board meetings and the "summer" meetings. There are several

reasons for asking for this timing change. Weather complications frequently haunt our current February dates. Moving to the end of February or the first of March reduces the likelihood of encountering bad weather. It also provides our financial people more breathing room in preparation of budgets, year end receipting, etc. The summer meetings are complicated by Canada conference, high costs due to summer tourism, very busy summer schedules for field directors, etc. Moving both dates forward by a month will save money, make our finance people happy, and lessen the Executive Director's grey hair.

As mentioned earlier, these reports are a good time for me to reflect. It is good to review and give glory to God for what He has done, despite Covid, political tensions, aging staff, mobilization challenges, etc. We have continued to focus on relational ministry across every area we serve. Spiritual growth is observable across every member of our leadership teams. I cannot take credit for this for many reasons, not the least being the frustrations of limited face-to-face connection. It seems like the challenges being faced by our field directors and other InterAct leaders has caused them to look with greater dependence on our Father. This increased faith has led to an overflow that is spilling across our staff and continues to those to whom we are called to minister. It may be hard to quantify, but it is happening. Thank, you Lord!

InterAct's vision and methodology have changed little over our 70-year history. We continue to prioritize relationships, walking shoulder to shoulder with those we serve. This year we again look for fresh ways to accomplish our God-given mandate—make disciples, gather and reproduce. 2022 will see expanded training in the best methods for communicating the gospel through better worldview understanding and chronological teaching of the Word. Attention will be given to training both staff and those we serve to become more skilled in communicating Scripture's answers for life's challenges. Growing committed Christ-followers among the next generation will be a priority. We dream of growth among our whole-life discipleship programs and youth ministries across Canada and Alaska despite current pandemic limitations.

At the top of my 2022 list remains the commitment to be a growing lover of Jesus that overflows with His love! If my passion spills over to challenge the daily lives of InterAct's missionaries, and that passion spreads the aroma of Christ across the North Pacific Crescent, I will consider 2022 to be an excellent year. (The last two paragraphs were stolen from my "blurb" at the end of our last InterAction. They stated what I wanted to say so why try to re-create the wheel.)

Thank you for the privilege to serve!

Dale Smith

He told them, "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.