

## Executive Director Report to the Board(s)

July 2021

As I write this, the U.S. office is shut down due to a COVID-19 outbreak. Mike Hubbard and Erin Bruzda have both contracted it and overlapped with several of the staff working in the office. To prevent further spread I closed the office and those who are well enough to do so are working from home. In spite of the current setback, it is beginning to feel like we are coming out of our COVID limitations. Many of the people in the organization have felt the restrictions more than those of us in leadership. Except for travel to Canada being limited, my job has changed relatively little through this past year and one half. A major part of my senior leadership role has always been carried out via phone or computer – which can be done from almost anywhere. Face-to-face presence has been largely replaced by Zoom. The meetings go on. The impact of this limited person-to-person, physical interaction will only be fully measurable in the days ahead. Since we know that God is in complete control, we know that COVID didn't catch Him by surprise. Although the impact on my job has been somewhat minimal, it has required adjustment and creativity by our staff. And they have rallied. I think the biggest learning for all of us is that we don't make ministry happen. We work hard and seek to work wisely, but we all need to depend more fully on Him for "success." Among other things that means more dependent prayer to the One who is in control!

As you will read in the field reports, ministry continues to happen across the areas we serve. Siberia is seeing advancement in outreach to the Buryat people through Frankie and Ira Emrick. Shawna Hess continues to disciple and counsel Buryat women in the church in Ulan Ude. Lucas Orner continues to lead his team, minister with Tuvans who frequent their home, disciple local men and advance a strategy to penetrate further into unreached groups like the Buryat. He is quite encouraged by the organizational acceptance of a young couple who plan to be on the Siberia field in another year.

Alaska continues to have a busy time of growth. This field is healthy and advancing under the leadership of Steve Horsman. Many new staff are recently fielded or are soon to be fielded. Between training existing and new staff (biblical discipling and A Novel Approach), Steve and Jill have kept quite busy. With the new counseling center initiative and the bush village initiative also on the burner there is a lot happening on the Alaska field. Seeing this turn around under Steve's leadership is extremely encouraging to this executive director.

The many new people in Alaska has triggered a review of our current pre-field training. When I stepped into my current role in 2010 we no longer had an organization wide pre-field training program. In order to fill that need I made a decision requiring new staff to attend the four week pre-field training program at Center for Intercultural Training (CIT) in North Carolina. There were several options available, but this one seemed to meet several key criteria: quality trainers, cost and brevity. The fact that former InterAct Alaska Field Director, George Schultz, was the program director was a definite bonus!

When we realized that we had twelve missionaries in Alaska that needed training, and that we have a primo training director on staff now, George Walker (cross-cultural church-planter with two decades experience as a trainer for New Tribes/Ethnos 360), we decided to look at a one-time training in Alaska. The plan is to offer four weeks of training spread out from October 2021 through May 2022. Doing our own training offers the advantage of InterAct instructors being the primary voices heard by these new staff. We not only control what is taught but we will build relationships and credibility with them. Also,

because all the staff in this cohort are in Alaska or near Alaska, there should be significant savings for the trainees. The big downside – those InterAct instructors who will be doing the training already have more than enough to keep them busy. So now we have to figure out what we will stop doing so we can prepare for and then teach at this training event. Our plan is to try this for this one Alaska cohort and evaluate whether this is something we should do in the future.

In Canada, ministry has been hit harder by Covid-19 than our other fields. Our career staff faced the challenges brought on by Covid-19 restrictions, including an inability to meet, visit or run most of the camps. Mobilization for Canada was negatively affected as well. Being unable to recruit at schools made it all but impossible to identify students who might be interested in our summer EnGage program. The reality is, even if we had people knocking at our doors to do a summer ministry, there were not open doors to do so. In the midst of all the other challenges we faced in Canada, we had a change in field leadership and a full blown case of COVID-19 for the entire Hamilton family. Overall, it has been a challenging year for Greg to step into this new leadership role. In spite of the difficulties, he is doing an excellent job and is learning quickly. He came into this role with a level of experience and exposure that should serve him well. He is rising to the occasion and I am confident that he will continue to do so as the level of challenge increases. I am looking forward to spending time with him later this month (August).

Leadership transition has been identified by our primary leadership team as our current organizational “911”. I have no doubt it was a bit scary when the joint boards asked me to step in as executive director eleven years ago. You had never seen me in this role and yet you trusted me to take on this responsibility. God has been gracious and we haven’t self-destructed as an organization.

Once again, change is inevitable and is fast approaching. Both Steve Horsman and I are in our late sixties. Our tenure will not be indefinite. The U.S. office has only one person younger than 60. Hence the rationale for prioritizing succession planning. Toward that end I have engaged an organizational consultant to look at our infrastructure, ministries, placement and personnel. This will offer an outside perspective regarding how we might posture ourselves for future succession. The man we are using is Roger Orner, a missionary kid who grew up on the mission field, got a degree in Bible as well as training in business. He served in industry for his career and now serves with a missionary support organization in consulting and pastoral care. To date he has wrestled through a plethora of InterAct documents and has interviewed InterAct’s key leaders. I will be updating you on this project at our winter meeting. Roger has a vested interest and concern for InterAct as his son is Lucas Orner.

Ultimately, succession of the executive director is the board’s responsibility. Though I am seeking to do all I can to identify and invest in prospective successors, I am not seeing a lineup of people looking to step into this role. In an attempt to broaden the prospect pool I am looking at alternate structural options, alternate office locations, etc. I encourage the board to wrestle with this question as well: “Who will be the next executive director?” Although I am not planning to step down in the next year, having a plan in place will facilitate this transition process whenever it ultimately happens.

One of the items that you will see on the Canada Field Report and on the Canada board agenda is a discussion about a partnership with Youth for Christ in Calgary. This has some potential challenges but it also carries the possibility to significantly move the Urban Fire ministry forward.

In my **August 1, 2015** Board Report I laid out several points to identify where I was seeking to lead the organization(s). Dropping back six years may seem strange but most of what I do is over the long term. I will use these earlier thoughts as a springboard for what is happening now and add a comment or two related to how these goals have been or are being accomplished.

**1. Continue to encourage, resource and challenge field directors toward development and implementation of InterAct's Mission and Vision, contextualized for their context.** Even though we have seen changes of field directors on each of the three fields during my tenure, the men who are currently at the helm are doing an excellent job in owning and implementing the "mission, vision and values" of InterAct Ministries. All their field values and strategies flow out of these.

**2. Grow the capacity of the organization through increased mobilization efforts (including prayer) and donor development. To move forward in accomplishing our mandate we will need many new workers, many new people to pray and many new financial partners.** With our Mobilization Director, Andy Chinn, in place and active, we now have good infrastructure for advancing our recruitment/mobilization efforts. Andy has developed a team of two extremely relational ladies to work beside him. Together they are proving very effective in being "high touch" with inquirers and applicants. Although COVID has largely shutdown school visits they continue to regularly and relationally follow-up with a host of contacts.

Our efforts to grow capacity also includes developing our income. Toward this end, Chris Olson continues working part-time as our development manager (the rest of his time is spent in "communications"). Chris is growing in his development role but it takes time to build the relationships necessary to excel in this job. Our communications team is also proving a boon for development. God has blessed us with very effective members of this team and they are doing an excellent job of highlighting the work of InterAct. As they tell the story of what God is doing through our efforts we are seeing many surprise gifts being given. Thank you Lord!

**3. Continue to develop in our ability to tell well the stories of what God is doing across the North Pacific Crescent.** This was already discussed in the previous paragraphs because of its strong connection to development.

**4. Re-establish a Member Care department with skilled and experienced care givers to minister to our current staff and the new staff we are trusting God to provide.** COVID has definitely thrown a monkey wrench into member care efforts over the last year and one half. With our Member Care Director located in Wyoming, traveling to visit most of our staff has been difficult. I believe Twichells will continue to be a part of the solution but I am actively looking for long-term member care solutions that will be able to take us into the future.

In Alaska, we are developing a relationship with Mark and Rose Mowery, who have started their own missionary member care organization. They are already providing encouragement and informal pastoral care with our staff. I'll keep you posted how this develops.

**5. Advance our understanding and practice of good discipleship methodology.** All of the primary leadership team continues to advance a vision for discipleship. It is something InterAct has always done as part of training new believers, but we still find it easy to get sidetracked with

“program.” The value of investing deeply with a small number of people does not make great prayer letter fodder. A program, even doing church, is needed but it can easily divert time, energy and focus away from going deep in discipleship with the few. We continue to beat the drum for the need to intentionally disciple disciples who have the vision to disciple disciples – even while doing “program.” Does it look like we believe making disciples is primary?

There are two other areas that have clearly moved forward in the arena of discipleship. The first place is in biblical counseling. For those who are less familiar with this model, it would be easy to see this as simply a way find solutions for people’s problems. Although a life problem is what usually causes one to look for help, biblical counseling is much more than simply seeking to relieve someone of their symptoms. Rather, for the biblical counselor, it is a means to bring God’s perspective into the discussion, introducing His solutions. Counseling done this way is always discipleship.

The other area of advancement is in the arena of A Novel Approach (ANA). This tool is proving to be significant step forward in helping the missionary understand the worldview of the people with whom he works – as well as the unbiblical assumptions imbedded in his own worldview. Through this process he learns to more effectively present the gospel, as well as the best ways to teach new believers what spiritual growth looks like from a biblical worldview. We are seeing ANA being effectively used in a small way in Canada while also being launched field-wide in Alaska. Mike Matthews, on our Inc. board, is leading that process. Though he is presently being treated for stomach cancer, we are fervently praying for his healing.

**6. Establish accountability across the entire organization through comprehensive implementation of an Annual Ministry Plan system.** Working on this. I am committed to working more closely with our field directors to implement either an Annual Ministry Plan system (including semi-annual review) or a Six Month Goals system (with a progress check at three months).

**7. Challenge our staff to a growing relationship with the Father while doing ministry as the natural outgrowth of a grateful heart for all He has done.** This is coming along. We have always had godly men and women serving with InterAct Ministries. I continue to remind all of our staff (beginning with me) of the priority of doing ministry from a “full cup” of spiritual refreshment. I believe each of our key leaders are living out the reality of being men of the Word and prayer, walking in intimate relationship with the Father. This modeling is trickling down across the organization.

**8. Establish and support Jerry Crosby as the Director of the U.S. office, overseeing day-to-day operations at this important center.** Remember, these eight items were from a 2015 report. This one is less pertinent now that I am living in Oregon.

That should be enough to give you an idea of the “state of the organization(s)”. Please feel free to ask more for clarification or expansion on anything mentioned – or missed.

I continue to count it a privilege to serve you and this organization. The support I feel from you, as well as the support I feel from the management team, make this job much more enjoyable. Thank you!

A grateful steward,

Dale Smith

*And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. II Timothy 2:2 (NKJV).*