**GWA Mission Directors Zoom Forum Summary**

**August 13, 2020**

The following mission directors met via Zoom for an hour and half conversation: Andrew Gale, Church of God Ministries; Verne Ward, Nazarene; Gerry Coates, Free Methodist; Dennis Jackson, Wesleyan Church; Tami Swymeler and David Mann, Missionary Church; Michael Tipton, CCCU; and Ron Duncan, GWA.

The purpose of the conversation was to ascertain the status of each entity considering the pandemic. All the participants have a relationship with one another from previous meetings, so it made the zoom meeting personal and warm.

The major take a ways revolved around funding personnel(missionaries), national churches in country, the change in future encounters with national leaders, and innovative strategies that have emerged.

For the most part funding has remained steady with a few exceptions. Because most travel budgets have been reduced, the delta between income and expenses has been lowered. The concern around funding is what happens in the next six to twelve months. Will the funding stay up with the potential job cuts and unemployment within the USA? Because there is lag time between church’s income and what they give to national work, several felt we have not seen the real downturn in giving that is coming. All rejoiced with those whose income stream has improved.

Two major concerns for missionaries: morale and getting to the field. Missionary service is lonely and isolated by description so when contact with those in your sphere of influence is limited or nonexistent, then morale can become an issue which must be addressed. Obviously, short term missional trips have been curtailed so the contact of missionaries with these groups has added to the morale question and the lack of progress on projects. The virtual capabilities by all have increased exponentially and will play a greater role in the future.

Missionaries who have been unable to go to their field of service has resulted in some terminations, resignations, and others who have adapted to their circumstances. The challenge for now is in recruitment.

Several reported the leadership within the countries has stepped up and taken on assignments. Many of USA leadership are presenting via virtual platforms to countries where they were to make presentations. This make be one of the items to receive conversation in the future and impact the way missionary activity is done. We will probably see some form of a hybrid model going forth: some on location and some virtual.

Strategies on funding and planting are seeing some innovations or changes within the respective systems. For instance, a greater reliance on individual donors versus a local church is being discussed by those who rely mainly on church donations. Church planting is focusing on house churches. Free Methodist report in Latin America 300 house churches since December of 2019 and because of the pandemic they have created a virtual leadership model that has 900 persons involved. An emphasis for several has shifted from church planting to discipleship making.

There was also important conversation on virtual training and how the various entities might share in this endeavor which would reduce duplication.

There are more unanswered questions for the future, but most are adapting and trying new ways to spread the gospel.

Whether we have an in-person Forum meeting next year is left open, but certainly another virtual meeting is recommended and encouraged.

Respectfully submitted,

Ron Duncan

Executive Director GWA