

Report of the District Superintendent to DEXCOM

In The Alliance Canada, we speak regularly about Jesus as Sanctifier. To be sanctified is to be set apart and conformed to God's image, that we might enjoy communion with Father, Son, and Spirit. In one sense, this is God's work, not ours; He acts upon, around, and within us. We cannot transform ourselves. And yet, the sanctified life is far from passive. As God acts upon us, our response profoundly affects the depth of communion we experience.

In keeping with the Canadian elements, I frequently think about my life in terms of "seasons"—Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter. Of the four, Summer is my clear favourite; it's a time when things feel warm and look green. In the season of Summer, growth feels almost effortless, and enjoyment abounds. That said, much of the last year has felt like Winter; it's been a season of diminishing, loss, and pain. Like the Apostle Paul, I have felt the burden of caring for churches and leaders in crisis¹; on the home front, my wife and I continue to have significant troubles with our daughter.

Obviously, sanctification isn't limited to Spring and Summer seasons; often God does His deepest work in the Winter. These days, Christ has been drawing my attention to the posture of *yieldedness*; without it, the sanctification journey falters.

We cannot, and will not yield until we are convinced of God's goodness and love. Struggle is an essential part of yieldedness; it's less of a "giving up" and more of a "giving over" to the One who has proved Himself faithful and true. But despite of many evidences, we do not yield to God easily; we groan, we wrestle, we resist.

The most famous example of yieldedness comes from the Lord Jesus Himself, in the Garden of Gethsemane, before His arrest. Sweating drops of blood, Jesus prayed, "*Abba, Father... everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.*"²

Richard Foster describes this posture in the following way:

Relinquishment is our full and wholehearted agreement with God that His way is altogether right and good...The Prayer of Relinquishment is a bona fide letting go, but it is a release with hope...We are buoyed up by a confident trust in the character of God. Even when all we are able to see is the tangled threads on the backside of life's tapestry, we know that God is good and is out to do us good always. And that gives us hope to believe that we are the winners regardless of what we are being called upon to relinquish. God is inviting us deeper in and higher up."³

¹ 2 Corinthians 11:28, "*Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.*"

² Mark 14:36

³ Richard Foster, "The Prayer of Relinquishment," <https://renovare.org/articles/the-prayer-of-relinquishment#:~:text=The Prayer of Relinquishment is a bona fide letting go,in the character of God.>



This is the invitation of our Sanctifier—deeper in and higher up. No matter the season we find ourselves in, Jesus is present, loving, and strong. In every season, the Sanctifier is seeking us and conforming us that we might enjoy communion with Him.

I leave you with a prayer written by Richard Foster, simply entitled “The Prayer of Relinquishment”. May this prayer be as meaningful to you as it has been to me.

*Today, O Lord, I yield myself to you.
May your will be my delight today.
May your way have perfect sway in me.
May your love be the pattern of my living.*

*I surrender to you
my hopes,
my dreams,
my ambitions.
Do with them what you will, when you will, as you will.*

*I place into your loving care
my family
my friends,
my future.
Care for them with a care that I can never give.*

*I release into your hands
my need to control,
my craving for status,
my fear of obscurity.*

Eradicate the evil, purify the good, and establish your kingdom on earth.

*For Jesus sake,
Amen.*



In the spring of 2023, I submitted a *Strategic Plan* to DEXCOM that included outcomes and target dates. Moving forward, significant sections of this Ends monitoring report will be tied to progress being made towards the completion of these outcomes. For convenience, the bolded/numbered elements of my report correspond to the aforementioned Strategic Plan.

1. Developing new and existing leaders.

Work with the Committee on Developing Female and Male Leaders to identify and implement next steps in releasing women and men into leadership in churches and District teams.

Since our spring DEXCOM Meetings, the DFL team has committed to three initiatives:

- a) Curating a list of resources that address the common barriers that women face in leadership
- b) Addressing the obstacles that bi-vocational, ESL leaders, and women face in the current licensing and ordination process; and
- c) Developing a resource that provides best practices for parental leaves.

Facilitate a leader-development group – open to children, youth, and associate pastors – that focuses on the character, skills, and competencies required for effective senior leadership.

The first group was launched in the winter of 2023 and included 14 participants. The second group began in September 2023 and includes the following participants:

- Craig Pagens (Tenth Church)
- Sonia Friesen (Coquitlam Alliance)
- Diane Wong (Pacific Community)
- Jason Fernandes (Oliver Alliance)
- Adam Palesch (Trail Alliance)
- Nathan Sun (Fraser Lands)
- Rowell Casimong (Surrey Vietnamese Alliance)
- Jordan Culp (Cranbrook Alliance)
- Ryan McCurdy (Peace Portal Alliance)

This development group is 14 weeks in length and focuses on subjects of vision/values, theology, missiology, board leadership, finance, soul formation, managing conflict, and preaching.

Recruit and train a team to assist the Lead Team in situations that involve investigation/discipline (i.e., conflict, sexual misconduct, etc.).

- *Training curriculum identified (Fall 2023)*



Since the writing of this outcome, the National Ministry Centre has created a new role – The Director of Safe Ministry – and hired Elke Carlson. One of Elke’s strategic outcomes is to educate and resource districts when it comes to matters of inquiry and investigation. Given that she will be curating/developing training resources, I will seek to align with what she develops.

Related Matters

Church Transitions:

- New Lead Pastor at Dawson Creek Alliance – Regan Fossen
- New Lead Pastor at Trail Alliance – Darcy Rist
- New Lead Pastor at Brentwood Park Alliance– Kirk Ehrhart
- New Lead Pastor at Harbourview Community – Neil Penner
- New Lead Pastor at Lake Windemere Alliance – Terry Dyck
- Resignation at Pacific Community – Jon ImBeau

Licensing and ordination stats from March 16–October 10, 2023:

- 5 successful ordination interviews (3 men, 2 women)
- 12 successful portable licensing interviews (9 men, 3 women)
- 8 successful non-portable licensing interviews (3 men, 5 women)

CPD Foundation for Ministry Certificate Program:

- Two of five modules have been completed and they were launched in September: *Old Testament Foundations* (Beth Stovell) and *New Testament Foundations* (Paul Spilsbury).

A relaunch of the New Worker Retreat will take place in 2024.

A Lower Mainland, board Leadership training event, has been planned for November 25; Steve Schneider, Gerry Teichrob, and Dwayne Toews will facilitate.

District Office Staff Transition:

- Stacy Dryfhout has moved to long-term disability
- Kim Tran has stepped into Stacy’s role
- Sarah Parker has been hired to fill Kim’s previous role



2. New Ventures

Maple Ridge Good News Church – The strong partnership between Westwood Alliance and Maple Ridge Alliance continues and we have now crossed over the one-year anniversary. Sunday attendance has doubled since its inception. This New Venture has strong potential to transition into “Developing Church” status.

Tsawwassen Chinese Discerning Community – Due to a Lead Pastor transition, it was agreed to renew this project as a “Discerning Community” for another year. It continues to show strong potential and growth under Mark Liu’s direction.

Surrey New Life – The Surrey New Life Alliance Church successfully launched at the beginning of the summer; it’s a wonderful partnership via the generous support of Surrey Alliance.

Indo-Canadian – Regimon and Praisson Thomas continue to give leadership to a ministry focused on Indian university students; their weekly gathering is between 30-40 people. They desire to see this ministry become a CPD New Venture, but it requires partnership with a local Alliance Church. Andy is facilitating conversations between Regimon, Praisson, and the Board at Surrey Alliance; a conclusion should be reached this fall.

East Abbotsford – Talks with a potential candidate to lead a New Venture for a new East Abbotsford community have been placed on hiatus. The candidate is currently discerning another unexpected opportunity.

As Hong Kong experiences its biggest emigration wave in decades, the Chinese Christian community in Canada has provided life-giving social and spiritual connections. Several of our CPD Chinese churches have reported significant growth in attendance, primarily in their Cantonese congregations. This has created a high demand in children and youth ministries, as well as pastors and volunteers.

Churches that have reported the highest growth rates include:

- Burnaby Alliance Church
- Richmond Capstan Alliance Church
- Richmond Chinese Alliance Church
- Westwood Alliance Church

Richmond Capstan is prayerfully considering launching a new Cantonese worship platform – a congregation, within a congregation – to reach out to the Hong Kong new immigrants. This is a strategy that has recently been employed by Richmond Chinese Alliance; they have a thriving new congregation.



Unexpected Transition

In late August, Andy informed the CPD that he would be stepping away from the New Venture role at the end of November. The Lead Team and I will look to hire a replacement, but in the interim, Genghis will continue to provide coaching for our Chinese new ventures, and Dave Enns (National New Venture Director) has agreed to provide support.

Given the above reality, I will likely adjust the timelines for the following outcomes:

- *Explore new funding models for New Ventures (Fall 2023)*
- *Explore “under-churched” regions of BC for New Venture opportunities (Winter/Spring/Fall 2024)*

3. Increase Engagement of CPD Churches in International Mission.

Establish a baseline of current cross-cultural engagement in C&MA fields, measuring Seamless Link Agreements and other partnerships, trips, Global Advance Fund (GAF) and non-GAF financial investment, etc. (Fall 2023).

Lisa has done some work to establish a baseline that measures the connection of CPD churches to GAF giving, to Alliance International Workers (IWs), etc.

	2021 # of Churches	2021 % of (81) Churches	2022 # of Churches	2022 % of (82) Churches
Giving not reported	5	6.2%	5	6.1%
Giving to GAF < 1%	11	13.5%	16	19.5%
Giving to GAF 1-5%	43	53.1%	38	46.3%
Giving to GAF 6-10%	19	23.5%	19	23.2%
Giving to GAF >10%	3	3.7%	4	4.9%
Participation in Jaffray Offering	21	26%	15	18.3%
Had IW speaker in service	39	48.1%	45	54.9%
Had Seamless Link Agreement	22	27.1%	24 (+ 3 MOUs)	32.9%



Here are a few of Lisa's observations:

- Most of the churches that are not giving to GAF are very small, young, economically challenged churches.
- About half of CPD churches are giving 5% or less to GAF. This is the group in which Lisa would like to see significant growth.
- Participation in the Jaffray Offering decreased from 2021 to 2022, but she is hopeful for this number to increase in 2023. Promotion has been better, both nationally and in the district.
- 1/3 of CPD churches have at least one Seamless Link agreement with an IW. Ideally, each church would have a Seamless Link, but this is an unrealistic goal. First, we don't have enough IWs to go around, and second, many IWs don't have the capacity to take on another agreement. We need to find other ways to connect local congregations to the global work of the Alliance.

Curate a collection of sermons and field updates from IWs as resources for CPD churches. (Fall 2023)

- One of the reasons for the above outcome is the reality that we don't have any CPD IWs on home assignment this year. Lisa is gathering videos (of various lengths) from our IWs that can be used in weekend services and other meetings.
- Lisa is writing/curating content (mostly C&MA, but also some from like-minded partners) to populate the "Missions" page of the new CPD website. These resources will be organized into three categories:
 - 1) education and inspiration
 - 2) clear pathways for involvement
 - 3) stories that celebrate God at work
- Lisa has been sending a biweekly email to the "missions contact" in our CPD churches (pastors and missions committees), passing on helpful resources, webinars, service opportunities, ideas for "missions' moments" in weekend services, etc.

4. Strengthening Intercultural Fluency of CPD Leaders

Often, unconsciously, when we speak about intercultural fluency, we assume the context of a Caucasian church that needs to learn how to bridge between majority culture and ethnic minority culture(s). While this is the case, our desire is for every church, regardless of ethnicity, to grow in the area of intercultural fluency.



Beginning last spring, Genghis has been working with our Chinese and Vietnamese Churches to take next steps in this direction. While these churches do have language-specific ministries, they are often situated in multi-ethnic neighbourhoods. Further, they have growing second-generation congregations that speak English, go to school and work in multi-ethnic settings, and yet, their church expression is mono-ethnic in its makeup.

Genghis scheduled three conversations with our Chinese and Vietnamese pastors:

- June 6 – round table discussion with Lead Pastors about the challenges of language-specific ministry, and second-gen congregations
- September 15 – round table discussion with English Ministry Pastors and Lead Pastors
- November 23 and 30 – Cultural Fluency Seminars (all pastors) with presenter Cres Casimong; topics include:
 - 1) Introduction to ‘Race’ and ‘Culture’
 - 2) Broad perceptions of cultural diversity in Canada
 - 3) Understanding the importance of cultural fluency and assessing your own competence level
 - 4) Practical ways for churches to increase capacity for cultural fluency
 - 5) Promoting cultural fluency as a part of your church’s vision
 - 6) Practical ideas to develop cultural fluency in church ministries

5. Financial and Land Stewardship

Develop a theology of land document.

With significant property assets, DEXCOM needs to think wisely about how we steward the land and buildings God has entrusted to us.

As I wrote in a previous email, currently, denominations in Canada are experiencing similar challenges with respect to land holdings in the face of declining church attendance. Historically, CPD churches have largely held and managed the land and assets according to their immediate needs/wishes; while this approach has been largely effective, we are now moving into an unprecedented season:

- Land values have increased dramatically.
- Construction costs have risen exorbitantly.
- (Re)development has become very complex and our local boards are often unequipped to navigate the process.
- A number of our churches are financially strapped, making them vulnerable to predatory developers.



With our National Ministry Centre asking for the opportunity to speak with DEXCOMs, we will utilize the education portion of our upcoming meeting to discuss – among other things – a theology of land.

Related Matter (Update on Eagle Bay Camp)

In our spring DEXCOM meeting, Erin led DEXCOM in a discussion about the historical relationship between the CPD and Eagle Bay Camp (EBC). A rift grew between the CPD and the camp many years ago and our relationship has remained fractured. In recent years, we have recognized the need to address matters of risk and liability, EBC's governance structure, and how it relates to the CPD. Here's an update from Erin:

- I spoke with the EBC Board Chair, Dan Draht, multiple times in August regarding the pathway forward following the DEXCOM discussion. It was agreed to collaboratively seek legal advice on an appropriate governance structure and the liability risk for the camp, as well as get an insurance assessment regarding the liability risk involved in operating a camp.
- On August 30, Dan and I met with Luke Johnson from DeJaeger Volkenant (law firm) who is preparing a brief to outline possible solutions and recommendations.
- Mark and I will tour the camp and meet with the EBC Board on October 18.
- The response to DEXCOM's expressed desire to see EBC remain in relationship, and the affirmation that EBC's leader development aligns with the CPD's strategic priorities, has been received with great encouragement. Dan has expressed great interest and engagement in working collaboratively to find a solution.
- As noted in the past, the EBC Board is not quick to make decisions or changes, and so I recognize that this process may take time.

6. Expanding Support to Churches and Boards

Expand the role of our District Children's Ministry Partner to include volunteer children's ministry coordinators (Winter 2023)

In 2022, I made a decision to expand the role of our District Children's Ministry Partner to include the connection and development of volunteer children's ministry coordinators. The vast majority of our churches do not employ a Children's Pastor; providing support to volunteer leaders and teams is strategic in terms of ministry to the emerging generation.



I am so grateful to Carmen Kinniburgh for the excellent work she is doing in the areas of connection and encouragement, resourcing, and development. Here are a few details from Carmen's report:

- Organized a connection for Children's Ministry leaders at District Conference.
- Developed a mailing list of 66 people to whom Carmen is providing encouragement and support.
- Facilitated a June webinar for children's ministry workers on missional engagement.
- In June and July, sent personal notes to each church in the CPD. This generated ongoing connection to more children's ministry workers.
- Carmen will attend District Staff Retreat and have the opportunity to connect with our children's ministry workers.
- She will be hosting a children's ministry webinar in November, with another to follow in February.

Related Matters

- Steve Schneider has begun work on developing AGM and Nominating Committee guides; this is frequently requested by Lead Pastors and Boards.
- Paul Townsend has completed his review of the Church Treasurer Manual, and the newly edited version will be completed this fall.
- The 3 remaining organized churches that have not completed their initial full bylaws review are all in process. Vancouver Vietnamese will continue to need help, with the process slow, but the other 2 churches are expected to be complete by April 2024.
- The Bylaws Committee has met 5 times in 2023, with one additional meeting scheduled for November 27. The creation of a model church bylaws for "Developing Churches" is on the agenda for the November meeting.
- The Bylaws Committee has completed full reviews for 15 churches in 2023, with 10 more in process.
- Work continues with churches that are in their 5-year bylaw review process, and there are 5 additional churches whose reviews are due by the end of 2023.



Concluding Words

I am grateful for the opportunity to serve as the District Superintendent; the work is meaningful and challenging. I am grateful to the CPD Staff Team – they are, to a person, godly, gifted, and hard-working. In many moments, when the ministry of the district is burdensome, it is their collaboration and friendship that increases joy and peace. I am grateful to DEXCOM for your investment, your giftedness, and your prayers; with your help, the CPD continues to experience the wisdom and direction of Christ.

I am looking forward to our time together on October 23-24.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mark Peters

