

USMB Leadership Board Report
July 2020
From David Hardt, USMB Board Chair

Greetings from your USMB Leadership Board of Directors!

To begin, I just want to say a big thank you to our USMB staff for all that they do for our conference. We have an exceptional staff: Donna Sullivan, Administrative Secretary and Bookkeeper; Lori Taylor, Executive Assistant; Connie Faber, Editor *Christian Leader*; Janae Rempel, Associate Editor *Christian Leader*; J.L. Martin, Social Media Coordinator; Don Morris, National Director.

Donna Sullivan celebrated her 30th year with USMB on July 1st. Lori Taylor will be completing her time with us (after almost 12 years) on July 31st as she retires. Please tell these two women how much you appreciate what they have accomplished for our MB family. Their work has been exemplary. Janae Rempel will add Lori Taylor's job as Executive Assistant to her current part-time role of CL Associate Editor. Janae will now be full-time, wearing two very distinct hats. Pray for her as she learns how to juggle these two important responsibilities.

We continue to focus on our three core commitments:

1. Church multiplication/evangelism
2. Intentional disciple-making
3. Leadership Development

As we work at these core commitments, we do so in coordination with Jon Wiebe and MB Foundation and our District Ministers, Tim Sullivan, Dennis Fast, Rick Eshbaugh, Dan Strutz, Aaron Hernandez and Terry Hunt. Randy Friesen, General Director of Multiply has also been involved. We've also begun having the chair of the PDC Hispanic Council, Xavier Pina, attend our board meetings as a valuable liason. Below is a quick summary, by core commitment, of the changes and/or progress that has occurred since our last convention.

Church multiplication/evangelism: In 2019 we saw another big shift in the way we will do church planting in the U.S. in the future, as Multiply experienced a de-merger with the ministry portion previously known as the C2C Network. With that de-merger, USMB also relinquished partnership with Multiply for church planting. This was a major disappointment and has now led to a process of re-design for how we will collectively do church planting in the future. This is a crucial aspect of ministry, one that we accomplish as an MB family and we need to get this right. Although we hoped to have the final details for the new church planting strategy worked out prior to this convention, that has not happened and more time is needed to create a best path forward. Be watching for news about church planting going forward.

We held several regional LEAD One events on the subject of *Gospel Fluency*, led by Ben Connelly of Saturate. These events were well received as they focused on how we can live our

lives right now with the reality of the gospel front and center. How does the gospel continue to impact our family, how does it impact evangelism and how does it impact each facet of life? Those questions were given much attention during these productive one-day events. Watch for more LEAD One events in the coming year.

Intentional disciple-making

Our LEAD initiatives (**L**eadership **E**ducation and **D**evelopment) have provided a wealth of resourcing and interactive participation for our pastors and ministry leaders. LEAD Cohorts, online meeting places for pastors, ministry leaders and whoever wants to join in, have been a huge hit with many cohorts being provided this past winter and another 8-9 that are scheduled for this fall. These cohorts last just 3 months with meetings every two weeks. Led by a leader trained in the specific content being addressed, as many as 10-12 people are in each cohort. These have allowed people from our MB family from various parts of the country to connect for meaningful discipleship/learning together. One cohort dealt specifically with enhancing disciple-making in the local church. Watch for the new list of LEAD Cohorts coming soon.

LEAD Coaching has provided top of the line life-on-life coaching for several MB pastors and leaders over the past two years. We feel that many more pastors could and should take advantage of this incredible resource. It makes a huge life and ministry difference. We encourage our churches to help fund a year of coaching for their pastor. LEAD Coaching is considerably cheaper than other sources of coaching, so please consider diving in.

Our brand-new LEAD Pods has also been a hit and listenership continues to grow. At this point, eight or nine episodes have been created. They can be listened to in the car, at home, exercising, walking, etc. J.L. Martin has helped create these and Matt Ehresman, on staff at First MB Wichita, is the host and producer for each episode. They are very well done and the content is super-helpful. It's easy to sign up to receive the podcasts as they are produced.

Developing Leaders

Our USMB website (usmb.org) is designed to not only communicate with our members but to promote communication between church staff and pastors as well as providing significant resources for our constituency. We work hard to keep the material on the website current and meaningful. You can find information including our confession of faith, BFL pamphlet series, videos and links to a wealth of training and education, including how to get connected for LEAD Pods.

Our USMB Youth has done an incredible job in providing structure and communication between Youth Pastors throughout the United States. The USMB conference has given USMB Youth additional operating budget for new initiatives. The USMB Youth chair has a non-voting seat on the USMB Board of Directors. This is important for communication and involvement.

We say it often: Our youth are our future and we *must* invest in them. YouthCon 2019 (April 2019) in Glorieta, New Mexico, was an outstanding event with many youth coming to know Jesus and others making re-commitments and some even making ministry-related decisions. We want to support USMB Youth as much as possible.

We want to have more conversations with Fresno Pacific and Tabor College as to how we can work together for developing leaders. Much work needs to be done in this area. USMB will continue to provide scholarships for internships for people participating in ministry-related short-term employment/training venues.

Our national USMB award-winning magazine, the *Christian Leader*, continues to provide extensive communication pieces, church and individual stories, feature articles and news. Connie Faber, editor and Janae Rempel, associate editor, produce a high-quality communication publication. The magazine, along with online news provided via C-Link every two weeks, keeps us well informed about the various things that are happening in our conference of churches.

The staff and the USMB Board of Directors have worked very hard to run the conference as lean as possible yet provide the services and support that our local churches and districts look for. For the sixth consecutive year, the conference has been in a positive budget position. As a conference, we continue to contribute 10% of “first fruits” from MB Foundation’s support to be used by our district ministers for distribution to pastors in their districts who are in special need or in emergency situations.

MB Foundation has been very supportive and has been a major contributor to USMB. They are leading by example and we are truly thankful for their stewardship. As we start new churches, develop leaders and become more intentional with disciple-making, our budget needs will increase as well. USMB desires to continue to be involved in church plant funding. We’re very appreciative to the churches that are contributing to USMB and look forward to those that have not in the past, to begin to contribute, so that we might continue our ultimate responsibility of helping to grow God’s Kingdom together.

You may not be aware, but USMB provides funding for ICOMB (International Community of MB); The Historical Commission; Mennonite World Conference (MWC); USMB Youth; US Board of Faith and Life; Church Planting (assessments, training, events); all LEAD Initiatives and we have representatives on the US MCC board and the Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) board. USMB is also a member of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE).

It has never been more important than now, that we all continue to strengthen our commitment to our local churches, districts, MB Foundation, Tabor College, Fresno Pacific University and Seminary, Multiply and the USMB Conference. We can have so much more impact, together!