

October 5, 2020



## Interim President Update

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### Here to Serve

Paraphrasing the words of Jesus (Mark 10:45), “I am not here to be served but simply here to serve.” I am humbled to be entrusted with this interim assignment. I did not expect to be here; but here we are. I sense all of us are living the phrase, “I never saw that coming.” But yet, we remain faithful, obey and depend on the Spirit on our journey. Sometimes I reflect on my personal walk with Jesus and see my calling through the lens of the verse, “one who is faithful with little will be given more responsibility.”

This may sound cliché at this point but like a hockey player recently said, “This is not about me. We are a team. I love this team and it takes the whole team.” This is all about Jesus, His Kingdom and our collective obedience to His call and purposes. We are all here to serve. This is the fundamental posture of the National Team. This must be the fundamental posture of the Church and its leaders in our communities. This is the way of Jesus.

### Interim Assignment

The primary responsibility of an interim leader is to “prepare the way.” Our National Board has asked me to lead the National Team and denomination in preparing the way for our next General Assembly (April 29 – May 1, 2021). The Board has given me one over-arching mandate: to work on EMCC organizational and relational stability. To that end, I extend my ear and right-hand of fellowship. I commit to leaning into my organizational and team-building strengths.

Like you, the National Team is endeavouring to steward the resources you have given to us through this pandemic. Thanks for every kind gift toward our Common Cause and World Partners. We have prayerfully and carefully revised our budget and are monitoring expenses monthly. We are working on a projected reduced budget for 2021, yet believing by faith that God will surprise and bless all of us as we are faithful.

From an organizational standpoint, there are a number of systems and processes that are long due for a tune-up or an overhaul. During this interim period, we plan to “work on” the organization. This will include addressing challenges that we have faced related to our databases, annual reporting, credentialing, structures, policies and procedures. Not glamorous stuff, but necessary components of our infrastructure that will help us to serve you better.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we need to talk together (even if by Zoom). The intent is to facilitate conversations around a number of matters - loose ends and questions that remain on our EMCC family table. It would be helpful to have some of those conversations together prior to Assembly. My first assignment is to prioritize those conversations.

## **Shepherding**

I bring my shepherd-heart and bent to this assignment. I am determined to encourage our National Team in their work. They are here to serve and I will seek to serve them. We all have picked up extra assignments during this pandemic. I will continue to serve as a Regional Minister to ten of the congregations under my previous RM care. I am grateful for Claran Martin, Brian Archer and Lynn Dietz as they provide additional RM support to the rest of the churches that were under my RM care.

I am excited by the development of Regional Minister assistants across the country - pastors voluntarily serving pastors. If ever there was a specific period of time for our shepherding gifts to rise, it's now. Our people need it. Our pastors need it, big time. Across the country, we are managing incredibly challenging situations – relying on God's infinite wisdom, provision, emotional and spiritual filling. He is our Good and Great Shepherd. This is my call for us to continue to pray for each other, support and shepherd one another.

## **Updates**

It is my intention to send out monthly interim progress reports to keep you current on what we are working on to serve you. We will continue to provide a quarterly e-newsletter to celebrate what's happening across our church family. We are planning to facilitate some Zoom roundtables together, in advance of Assembly.

## **Being Me**

I understand these are not the circumstances I, or any of us, had expected. I remain thankful for the passion and work of President Kervin along each of the EMCC presidents that have preceded him. When I began ministry in 1990, I had the privilege of being mentored by Rev. Mark Bolender. He served as the volunteer-president of the newly merged EMCC. Recently we corresponded, and his simple words to me again were... “John, just be you!” And so, that is my commitment to you – to be the person and leader that God has shaped me to be. Thanks for your trust. Thanks for your prayers. Be assured of my prayers.

## **Traction**

Please do not view this interim period as a “pause” or a “stall” in our momentum. We are making strides. Over the past decade, God has been inviting us to shift from simply seeing ourselves as just a denomination of churches, to becoming a Kingdom multiplication movement: disciples making disciples, leaders developing leaders and churches multiplies churches of all shapes and sizes. Movements are marked by persistent prayer (His Kingdom come) and grass-roots disciple-making (that is, every disciple embracing the life of following Jesus, being sent to bless, invite and help others to follow Him). Movements are accompanied by the miraculous, and propelled by a challenging yet inviting message of gospel truth. At the red-hot centre of a movement is passionate spirituality, radical community and mission-everywhere zeal (see The Book of Acts).

Even in the midst of a pandemic, in the words of Isaiah 35:3 (NLT), “With this news, strengthen those who have tired hands and encourage those who have weak knees.” Together let's participate in this movement of God.

Here to serve,

John Cressman  
EMCC Interim President