

Community of Christ

Pastoral Letter to Greater Pacific Northwest Mission Center April 21, 2015

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Greetings in the peace of Jesus Christ. As we continue our journey as a resurrection people, I am grateful for the many evidences of the Holy Spirit promised by Jesus to his followers. As I shared with committed disciples and leaders at your recent pastor retreat, I was also deeply grateful for the many ways the Spirit is moving in our midst.

I am writing to share important information about the future of leadership in the Greater Pacific Northwest Mission Center (GPNW) as a result of budget challenges facing our global church. As we move to bring expenses in line with revenue by July 1, 2016, we are faced with the reality of having significantly less resources to fund ministers and leaders across the USA and globally.

The majority of our mission centers in the USA have one world church-funded minister, with close to a third of our mission centers having no world church funded ministers. GPNW currently has two full-time world church funded ministers. After December 31, 2015, world church funding for the mission center president position will no longer be available.

GPNW has been blessed with strong leadership and a gifted staff that provides high quality support to pastors, priesthood, disciples, and congregations in the mission center. Friends, I want you to know that the benefits of a full-time competent mission center president is very evident when I contrast your mission center to others who do not have full-time competent leadership. This mission center is focused on providing formational opportunities and direct support to pastors, priesthood, disciples, and congregations, and it shows in how you respond to the mission of Christ in your local areas.

As the Apostle for the Western U.S.A. Mission Field, I see potential for *continued* growth and development of disciples and our congregations if we take the appropriate steps now to provide for future leadership of the mission center. As you know, effective June 30, 2015 Kathy Sharp will be retiring in response to the early retirement opportunity offered by the church late last year. There is of course no way to replace Kathy, but we can work together to ensure there is a competent full-time mission center president in place to build on the foundation Kathy and her team have built over the past several years.

I have been in conversation with Kathy Sharp and Bill McFarlin to evaluate the capacity of mission center assets to support a full-time mission center president. Initial analysis indicates there is capacity to support a full-time mission center president for at least the next three years. As a result of this analysis, Kathy Sharp will be calling a special mission center conference toward the end of June to consider setting aside funds for a full-time mission center president.

I strongly support this proposed action and will work with Kathy, Bill, and other leaders to ensure we find an excellent mission center president for GPNW if funding is approved by the special mission center conference. Effective July 1, 2015, I will serve as interim mission center president to oversee the leadership transition for GPNW and will remain as mission center president until we have a person in place ready to lead.

I have asked several individuals to support me as an interim leadership team including Steve Pomeroy, Stacie Simmons Bates, Mike Bessonette, and Bill McFarlin. They will also serve as the advisory team in selecting a new mission center president with the addition of Sean Langdon. Although the position will be funded by GPNW, it will still be a world church appointed position. I will work closely with the advisory team in selecting an individual that will continue to build on what is already in place for leadership, ministry, training, and congregational support.

More information about the special mission center conference will be forthcoming as mission center president Kathy Sharp works with her team in developing the details of the funding proposal and conference.

In spite of our recent financial challenges, I continue to see great missional opportunity before us. We are being called to become Christ-centered communities of invitation, hospitality, justice, and peace that reintroduce our neighborhoods to the living Christ and the community that bears his name. We truly live in a defining moment of history where we can either withdraw in the shadows of our fears or move forward boldly in the light of our divinely instilled call and vision.

May we be blessed by the assurance and disruption of the Holy Spirit prompting us into God's unfolding future.

In Christ's Peace,

Ron Harmon
Apostle, Western USA Mission Field