

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In late April I had the opportunity to share with mission center staff, pastors at Lewis River Campground, and members gathered at Southridge Congregation regarding financial challenges facing the church globally. Information was shared yesterday with the mission center regarding these meetings. Due to the complexity of world church finances, I am writing this letter to ensure there is clarity regarding our current financial situation and the path forward. This letter and a document from the Presiding Bishopric entitled "Explanation of Reasons for Budget Deficit" (included with this letter) should be used as the official explanation when sharing with members and friends. I highly recommend the Presiding Bishopric's statement for those who seek a more detailed explanation of our current financial challenges.

In summary our current gap (\$3.9 million) between income and expenses is a result of several factors:

- Our contributor base has been declining in recent decades. This coupled with economic factors has resulted in a decrease in tithing income.
- Endowment income and earnings on investments have also not grown as planned due to a variety of factors including the economy.
- Expenses have increased more than expected in a number of key areas including employee benefits and post-retiree medical benefits.

The growing gap between income and expenses occurred over time. The World Church Finance Board meets yearly to approve the world church budget for the coming fiscal year. Ongoing financial challenges, including a growing gap between income and expenses, were discussed and strategic decisions were made to focus on increasing tithing income while managing expenses. While some progress was made, the gains in tithing were not sustained. Expenses continued to increase at an accelerated rate leading to the growing deficit.

As conveyed in the Presiding Bishopric's statement, world church leaders have taken specific steps to close the gap between income and expenses and to avoid deficits in future years. One of the results of reducing the deficit is a significant reduction in staff funded by world ministries mission tithes. As I have shared in a previous communication we will no longer be able fund mission center presidents in the U.S.A. due to staff reductions. You will be considering locally funding your new mission center president at a special conference on June 28th.

The real solution to our financial challenges is to become an invitational people that generously invite others to the peace of Jesus Christ experienced in community (i.e. our congregations). In addition, significant efforts continue to increase alternative sources of revenue to fund the vision and mission of the church globally. As always, we encourage you to consider your true capacity in giving to the church, both locally and to World Mission Tithes.

In the midst of our current financial challenges I have great hope for our future as we discern, embrace, and risk living into our identity and calling as Community of Christ in a separated world.

In Christ's Peace,

Ron Harmon
Apostle, Western U.S.A. Mission Field