



Community of Christ

GREATER PACIFIC NORTHWEST USA MISSION CENTER

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Greetings!

Each year, as I prepare this letter, I am amazed how quickly the past year flew by, and reminded of how grateful I am for the opportunity to serve you in the role of Mission Center President. I am mindful, too, of the trust you have placed in me, and hope that I will maintain that level of trust going forward. I have been deeply blessed and uplifted by the expressions, both verbally and prayerfully, of your support.

Over the course of the last 2 ½ years, I've visited every congregation in the Mission Center, met many new friends, and am grateful of the deepening of our relationships. As a result, I am committed to being honest and frank with you about both our successes and our challenges. What I've experienced in my visits is indicative of what is happening in the Christian church throughout the United States and Canada. Attendance is declining, especially among youth and young adults; buildings need repairs, financial resources are diminishing; the list goes on....

I am so appreciative of the gifts of leadership and ministry generously shared by so many of you as you serve your congregations and the mission center. I understand very well the burdens and weight of responsibility that come with those roles. Know that I, along with our Leadership Team, are grateful for your service, and desire to support you however we can. I believe that support requires all of us to evaluate *why* and *how* we worship, and allow ourselves the freedom and permission to experiment with creative methods and new formats of worship.

In my visits throughout the mission center, I continue to see us clinging to our traditional, formal worship format (what we affectionately refer to as "big church"), believing that in order to be a "church" we must somehow worship in a pre-defined way. Consider these questions:

- Is our format of worship life-giving?
- Are we inviting and mentoring our youth and young adults into leadership roles?
- Are we *accepting* those invitations to serve?
- How do we provide a welcoming space to our visitors?

Pastor's Calendar / Checklist:

- **Now**—Share Mission Center Conference information and new business
- **Now**—Solicit names for MC Conference delegate nominations, select and announce election date
- **Now**—Discuss continuity of roles with cong. CFO and Recorder
- **Now**—Select auditors and schedule your 2018 congregational audit
- **Now**—Submit "Good News" to MC President Kim Naten
- **By Sept. 29**—Hold MC Conference delegate elections
- **By Oct. 1**—Report MC Conference delegates to Jill Brunette
- **By Oct. 6**—Submit any MC Conference resolutions from your congregation
- **By Oct. 15**—Apply for Bold Moves Grants
- **By Oct. 21**—Register online for Pastors' Breakfast at The Grotto
- **After Nov. 3**—Schedule time for MC Conference delegates' report to congregation
- **By Nov. 4**—Select and announce date for business meeting to elect congregational officers and approve 2020 congregational budget
- **By Nov. 4**—Notify MCFO of potential changes to cong. CFO or Recorder
- **By Nov. 18**—Hold business meeting to elect congregational officers and approve congregation budget for 2019
- **By Dec. 15**—Report 2020 congregational officers on Congregation Officers Submittal Form
- **By Dec. 28**—Submit approved 2020 congregational budget and 2018 congregational audit to MCFO

- Are our deeply-rooted identities as individual congregations preventing us from becoming who God is calling us to be?

Our congregations have become smaller, with fewer individuals willing to take on leadership roles, and more and more responsibilities falling on fewer shoulders. And yet the very idea of joining with our brothers and sisters in the next town or community, or even the other side of the same town, seems to be a “non-starter,” a deal-breaker, or at best, an option of last resort. *Why, my friends, is that?* Why are we fearful of transformation? If gathering together in fellowship and worship, and looking for opportunities to reach into our neighborhoods as the hands and feet of Christ is our purpose as a people, why are we so reluctant to join together with other struggling congregations to magnify the opportunities for rich and meaningful sharing? When we begin to sense that our congregations are struggling, even failing to thrive, our tendency is to continue on the same risk-free path. What if the answer lies simply in recognizing that our congregations, just like us, have a life span, and that there is no shame in accepting that some of those life spans may be coming to a close? What if we could look at these challenges through the lens of opportunity and new beginnings?

The irony here is that in reviewing evaluations from every single Reunion and Mission Center Conference, we overwhelmingly hear your appreciation for fellowship: the joy of gathering from different areas, the ministry of beautiful music shared in our hymn-singing, and the rich blessings of the body of Christ sharing together in large numbers. We LOVE being together: singing, worshipping, sharing. Imagine what we could accomplish in, and for, our neighborhoods, and experience in worship, when we step outside our congregational walls and simply come together to do Christ's mission!

Doctrine & Covenants 161:3c tells us:

Be patient with one another, for creating sacred community is arduous and even painful. But it is to loving community such as this that each is called. Be courageous and visionary, believing in the power of just a few vibrant witnesses to transform the world. Be assured that love will overcome the voices of fear, division, and deceit.

I know that there are long and difficult conversations ahead, but I am convinced that we must start taking proactive steps in addressing the future of Community of Christ, and of our mission center, a future that will serve the needs of our children, their families, our communities, and yes, even those of us over 50. The mission of Jesus Christ is what matters most for the journey ahead!

This letter is also an opportunity to provide a preview of what to expect at Mission Center Conference in early November, as well as related deadlines, information needed for the coming year, upcoming events, and other news around the mission center, including reminders to:

1. Submit your “Good News” from your congregation
2. Solicit names for nomination, elect, and report Mission Center Conference delegates
3. Submit any resolutions to be considered at this Conference
4. Register online for Pastors' Breakfast (Pastors)
5. Plan to share Conference action and news with your congregation following Conference
6. Elect/sustain and report congregational officers and approve congregational budget

→ SHARE MISSION CENTER CONFERENCE INFO AND NEW BUSINESS

2019 GPNW-USA Mission Center Conference
Saturday, November 2, 9:30 am, to Sunday, November 3, 12:30 pm
Portland Congregation, 4837 NE Couch St., Portland OR 97213

Now is the time to promote the dates and location of Mission Center Conference in your bulletins each week. (See linked flyer with full schedule.)

Conference Highlights

Our Conference theme is *Courage to Risk*. Our Mission Prayer, whether spoken or sung, has become a familiar part of our varied worship experiences and even our identity. We speak, sing, and pray these words, often by heart, because they reflect our desire as a faith community to be open and responsive to God's guidance and direction, wherever it may lead. This prayer provides the framework for exploration: How is it calling and challenging us to see through new eyes, hear through new ears, and embody our understanding of Christ's Mission? Are we ready, willing, and courageous enough to risk something new?

Our guest ministers will be Community of Christ President of Seventy (for Quorums 2 and 10, and Quorum 3 Leadership Team member) **Larry McGuire**, and our new Western Field Support Minister, **Richard Betts**. We will begin our Conference weekend with an opening worship. Our theme for this service is "Discover Where the Spirit Will Lead Us." This service is followed by our delegate orientation session during which the budget and resolutions will be presented and discussed. During the business session in the afternoon, we will sustain Mission Center officers, Council and Camping Team members, and discuss and vote on the 2020 budget as well as two Resolutions. Our new MCFO, **Donald Welch**, will be set apart at this time. We will also present and vote to sustain three World Church priesthood calls: **Fran Smith (East Wenatchee Congregation)** and **Dar Hudlow (Salem Congregation)**, each to the office of Seventy, and **Carrie Welch (Salem Congregation)**, to the office of Bishop. We are trying something new this year! The afternoon business session will be conducted in two parts, with a panel discussion in between during which we will introduce and discuss something you will be hearing a lot about in the coming months: New Expressions.

Sunday morning, Pastors/Pastor Leadership Teams and staff will gather for our annual Pastors' Breakfast at the Grotto, followed by a service of ordination and Communion (details below).

Special Events

- **Pastors' Breakfast**, Sunday, 7:30-9:30 a.m., at The Grotto: "**Grant Me Courage**" — a time of sharing with our guest ministry, mission center staff, and some of our pastors (see linked flyer for pastors).
- **Ordination and Communion Service**, Sunday, 10:30 a.m. -12:30 p.m., at Portland Congregation: "**Take Courage to Risk**" — Upon sustaining of their calls on Saturday, **Fran Smith** and **Dar Hudlow** will be ordained to the office of Seventy. **President of Seventy Larry McGuire** will deliver the Communion message.

New Business

Proposed 2020 Mission Center Budget

Enclosed with this letter is the **proposed 2020 Mission Center Budget** to share and review with your delegates and congregation prior to Mission Center conference. The proposed 2020 budget shows an overall decrease of 7% over the 2019 budget. This reduction is primarily a result of losing 1.5 full time employees (FTE) and replacing that with one fulltime (1.0) employee. Additionally, the 2020 proposed budget is supported by the 2018 Operating Surplus of \$36,470.00 which has been moved forward to supplement the income side of the budget

Your Congregation's Proposed Allocation

The total of congregational allocations to support the budget has not increased from 2019. Allocations represent 30% of 2020 budgeted income. Although allocations remain static for 2020, one should remember that allocations may vary from 2019 through use of the of the allocation formula. No congregation's allocation increases or decreases more than 10% in any one year. After applying the elements of the allocation formula for 2020, about one-half of our congregations will see an increase in their allocations, however, none will increase by the maximum of 10%.

Community of Christ Presiding Bishopric guidelines continue to recommend an eventual reduced investment draw goal of 4%, realizing that it may take some jurisdictions some years to reach that target. Making an immediate change to that level in our budgeting would mean immediate programming and personnel reductions. Expense increases and funding element decreases place us in the position of proposing an additional investment fund draw of 1.9% for 2020. This is a reduction from additional draw of last year's budget (2.4%) and is a step towards the recommended goal. The mission center leadership team and mission center council concur with taking this additional draw, but continue to encourage moving towards alignment with the recommended 4% goal. Our Pool A investments grew for the year ending June 30, 2019, at the rate of 3.96%, approximately one-half of the growth rate for the previous year. Returns for Pool A tracked with the financial markets for the first half of 2019, with solid gains in the second quarter despite a rollercoaster ride through April, May and June. Because the church is somewhat risk-averse, when we compare our portfolio to the benchmark used by our investment consultant to evaluate its performance, it generally outperforms in down markets but slightly underperforms in up markets. As a reminder, the returns on Pool A will vary year to year, but the long-term performance of the portfolio continues to exceed our benchmark.

Based on the proposed 2020 budget, the 2020 allocations are included with this letter and will be posted on our GPNW website. Find it at www.cofchrist-gpnw.org/mcconference. This information will help you plan your 2020 congregational budget. If you have questions about the proposed budget or your congregation's allocation, contact Donald Welch, Mission Center Financial Officer, at 712-310-0718 or dwelch@cofchrist-gpnw.org. *To keep allocations low for congregations with financial challenges, the budget assumes that generous congregations and individual members and friends will help to close the GPNW Mission Center budget gap with additional contributions (Congregational Generosity and Operating and Youth Contributors) to the Mission Center above their allocated giving.*

Resolutions

A resolution is being brought before the conference this year to approve a one-time contribution to Bridge of Hope (the church's retirement obligation) of 10% of the net proceeds from the sale of the Bellevue property, which closed in April, as an expression of generosity in the form of tithing. It has taken many years to finally see the sale of this property come to completion, thanks to the diligent efforts of Bill McFarlin and many others. Our net receipts totaled approximately \$786,283, so the resolution being presented proposes a contribution to Bridge of Hope in the amount of \$78,628.

A second resolution being presented to the conference this year involves the establishment of a fund intended for the eventual support of New Expressions ministries throughout the Mission Center. These monies will be set aside for supporting groups actively engaged in exploring new expressions of Christian community outside the parameters of the traditional church/congregational model. The resolution provides for the monies to be held in the General Operating Account, as administrative procedures and processes are developed over the coming year, with an update and review of said procedures to be provided at Mission Center Conference in 2020. Please note that this resolution is still in draft form as the sale on the building is likely to close in early October.

NOTE: All resolutions to be considered at this Mission Center Conference must be submitted by Saturday, October 6th.

→ REPORT MISSION CENTER CONFERENCE DELEGATES AND GOOD NEWS

Delegate Elections

If you have not done so already, solicit names now for your congregation's Mission Center Conference delegate nominations. Any member "in good standing" with membership within the GPNW Mission Center is eligible to run for delegate. Your congregational business meeting to elect Conference delegates and alternates should occur *no later* than **Sunday, September 29th**.

List all nominations on a prepared ballot, which also notes the number of delegates to elect from your congregation. Members may nominate others as "write-ins" during the business meeting and may vote for as many nominees **as can be elected**. Those receiving the most votes—up to the number of delegates allotted to your congregation—are elected. (See linked document with your updated delegate allotment.) Remaining nominees will serve as alternates, in descending order of votes received. We often are able to change alternates into voting delegates from other congregations before conference.

Immediately notify your delegates and alternates of their election, and report the names, contact information, and Conference materials order (print or electronic) of your elected delegates, and alternates (prioritized by highest to lowest votes received) to Membership Services Administrator Jill Brunette (425-207-8712, jbrunette@cofchrist-gpnw.org) by Tuesday, October 1. (Please use linked *Delegate-Alternate Submittal Form* to ensure that we receive all necessary information.) If you are unable to elect your full delegate allotment, indicate on your form whether your delegate openings can be filled by elected alternates from a specific congregation or by any alternates.

The Saturday packet of conference materials will again only be printed for those delegates, alternates, and other attendees that request one. Please be sure to indicate on your Delegate-Alternate Submittal Form whether or not each person listed would like the mission center to print a packet for them. Alternatively, attendees may print their own packet or simply download and view it electronically on a tablet or other electronic device. An electronic link to the Saturday packet of materials will be sent directly to each Delegate and Alternate, as well as including in each week's NewsBrief.

Submission of Good News

I have requested a short story (a couple paragraphs are sufficient) of "Good News" from the past year from your congregation or group for my President's Annual Report at Mission Center Conference. These can be stories about missional activities or opportunities in your neighborhoods, activities within the congregation, or stories about either congregational or members' accomplishments and notable events. Submit your short story of Good News to me (knatn@cofchrist-gpnw.org) by **Friday, September 27th**.

Sharing Conference Actions

Please schedule congregational time AFTER Mission Center Conference for your delegates to report action by the Conference to your congregation.

→ REGISTER ONLINE FOR PASTORS' BREAKFAST

Pastors, register now for our annual **Pastors' Breakfast** from 7:30-9:30 a.m. on **Sunday, November 3**, at **The Grotto**, a Catholic spiritual and event center. **Space is limited, so be sure to register early.** The Grotto Conference Center is located near Portland Congregation at North East Sandy Boulevard and North East 85th Avenue (www.thegrotto.org). Look for your invitation in this packet and again by email, and remember to register online as indicated by **Sunday, October 20th**.

**→ ELECT/SUSTAIN AND REPORT CONGREGATIONAL OFFICERS AND APPROVE
CONGREGATIONAL BUDGET**

Coordinate now with your Leadership Support Minister to schedule Pastor elections and sustain your congregational Recorder, Congregational Financial Officer (CFO), and any Assistant Pastors. Officer elections should occur by **Sunday, November 24th** (before the Advent season) to allow for sufficient planning, recruiting, and budgeting. Announce this business meeting at least two weeks in advance, no later than **Sunday, November 10**. Now is the time to discuss with Congregational Financial Officers and Recorders their desire to continue to serve in those roles for 2020. Any possible changes should be communicated to MCFO Donald Welch at least two weeks prior to your congregation's business meeting, no later than **Sunday, November 10**.

Please report your 2020 congregational officers and their contact information using the Congregational Officers Submittal Form by Monday, December 2nd. (See linked form.) **Please be sure to report election results even if there are no changes.** Also, be sure to have your congregation's 2020 budget approved by **Sunday, December 29th**.

God, where will Your spirit lead today? Help us be fully awake and ready to respond. Grant us courage to risk something new, and become a blessing of Your love and peace. Amen.

The prayer above, our Mission Prayer(edited), written by our Field Apostle Ron Harmon, provides the framework for our gatherings, our worship and our business sessions for our 2019 Mission Center Conference. These words go much deeper and further, however. Beyond just the weekend of November 2nd & 3rd, these words can guide us into our future. As we gather for our Conference, as we conduct our business meetings, elect our leaders and approve a budget, my prayer is that we open our hearts, eyes, ears and minds to the leadings of the Holy Spirit, daring to explore what is truly most important for our journey ahead. Let us not be confined to the traditions and formats of our current experience and history, but let us be willing to take risks and to experiment with what fellowship in Christian community can look like if we but have the courage to risk something new!

With blessings and gratitude,



Kim Naten, GPNW Mission Center President

Linked documents:

- MC Conference: Conference Flyer with Schedule
- MC Conference: Pastors' Breakfast Invitation
- MC Conference: Proposed 2020 Operating-Missional Budget
- MC Conference: GPNW MC 2018 Audit Cover Letter
- MC Conference: 2019 Statement of Financial Position
- MC Conference: Proposed 2020 Congregational Allocations and Explanation
- MC Conference: Proposed Resolution regarding Tithing of Proceeds from Sale of Bellevue Property
- MC Conference: Proposed Resolution regarding Establishment of New Expressions Fund
- MC Conference: Delegate Allotment and Formula
- MC Conference: Delegate-Alternate Submittal Form
- Congregational Officers Submittal Form