



Community of Christ

GREATER PACIFIC NORTHWEST USA MISSION CENTER

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Greetings!

The purpose of this letter each fall is primarily to provide updates and reminders regarding typical “end of year” activities. 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, including reminders to:

1. Submit your “Good News” from your congregation
2. Submit any resolutions to be considered at this Conference (due Oct. 10th, including Resolutions for consideration for World Conference 2022)
3. Plan to share Conference action and news with your congregation following Conference
4. Determine whether your congregation is ready and interested in holding an in-person or Zoom-based business meeting to elect 2021 officers and approve the 2021 congregational budget **OR** prefers to defer these decisions until congregation can gather in person, likely next year

BRIDGE OF HOPE UPDATE

As was announced in early July, a team has been formed to focus on addressing and identifying how this mission center will meet the target we’ve been given toward fully funding the church’s retirement responsibility, known as the Bridge of Hope project. The current balance necessary to raise, as a denomination, is \$44 million. Our target contribution, over the course of the next 3 ½ years, is \$3 million. To date, we have contributed approximately \$500,000 of that goal, but we have a long way to go. As you should know by now, funds that have not been raised, worldwide, by January 1, 2024, will be borrowed from the Affiliated Investment Pool monies. Those are the savings/investment accounts held with World Church which were “frozen” at 65% of their March 2019 balances. Our challenge, as a denomination, is to raise the necessary funds in other ways, through fundraising, asset sales and generous contributions, without having to borrow against our savings accounts.

Pastor’s Calendar / Checklist:

- Now**—Share Mission Center Conference information and new business
- Now**—Discuss continuity of roles with cong. CFO and Recorder
- Now**—If not completed already, select auditors and schedule your 2019 congregational audit; it’s not too early to begin preparing for your 2020 audit either!
- Now**—Submit “Good News” to MC President Kim Naten
- By Oct. 10**—Submit any MC Conference or World Conference resolutions from your congregation
- By Oct. 15**—Apply for Bold Moves Grants
- By Nov. 4**—Notify MCFO of potential changes to cong. CFO or Recorder
- By Nov. 8**—Hold business meeting to elect congregational officers and approve congregation budget for 2021, **OR**, alternatively, notify MCFO of deferral of annual congregational business meeting
- By Nov. 13**—Report 2021 congregational officers on Congregation Officers Submittal Form
- By Dec. 28**—Submit approved 2021 congregational budget and 2019 congregational audit to MCFO

I am asking you, as a leader of your congregation and in this mission center, to consider including in your 2021 budget and beyond, an annual gift to Bridge of Hope from your congregational AIP account. Remember, this retirement responsibility represents the sacrificial ministries of many World Church appointees we knew and loved during our lifetimes. Many of them still live here in this mission center. How better to express our deep gratitude for their sacrifices than to generously share from our own abundance? Abundance which, in many ways is, at least in part, a result of the hard work and commitment of World Church appointees over many decades, here in the Pacific Northwest!

RETURNING TO IN-PERSON GATHERINGS

You will recall receiving a large packet of information by email late last May, with guidelines and various checklists and forms to use when we are once again able to gather in person in our congregations. This includes an application for re-opening the congregation. This application should be completed with the help of your Leadership Support Minister, and submitted to a member of the Leadership Team. While a couple of congregations have begun to gather again, many have chosen to wait until statistics indicate it is safe to do, and/or a vaccine is available. Be assured that online worship and fellowship opportunities will continue to be offered indefinitely. It has become clear how important and valued this experience has been for so many of our friends and members throughout the mission center and well beyond. I believe we are glimpsing the future of what it means to truly be a community of disciples of Christ when I see over 300 faces each week, smiling, laughing, sharing, worshiping together from great distances, experiencing our Oneness in Community.

MISSION CENTER CONFERENCE INFO AND NEW BUSINESS

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

2020 GPNW-USA Mission Center Conference
Saturday, November 7, 10:00 am, to Sunday, November 8, 12:00 pm
Via ZOOM

Conference Highlights

Mission Center Conference will be held on **Saturday, Nov. 7th** this year, via Zoom. As your Mission Center Leadership Team discussed the options, we agreed that thanks to our many worship and fellowship opportunities offered over Zoom since the pandemic began 6 months ago, our mission center is adept and familiar enough with this platform to successfully conduct the necessary business of the mission center this way. We will be exploring different voting applications and tools, and will provide training prior to Conference on how to use them. Another significant change to this year's Conference is that we will move to a **Non-Delegate** Conference, meaning all members in good standing may attend and may vote on the business presented. This decision has been approved by our Field Apostle Ron Harmon and the First Presidency, due to the special circumstances resulting from the pandemic.

Our Conference theme this year is *"Claiming our Prophetic Voice."* It may sound cliché at this point, but we are in unprecedented times and face an uncertain and unknown future. We have talked and explored for the last several years about what it means to be a prophetic church in the 21st century, and now find ourselves with unlimited opportunities to truly experiment with and practice becoming something NEW. In order to move into the future, we must not shy away from the opportunities on our doorstep in favor of "returning to normal!" NOW is the perfect moment to step into a new

expression of our calling, with faith that our identity as a prophetic people is shaped and guided by the Holy Spirit.

Our guest minister for Conference this year is our Field Apostle, **Ron Harmon**.

Saturday's Conference schedule will include a Business Orientation Session at 10:00 a.m., followed by a lunch break, and our Business Session from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. that afternoon. The Business Session will include sustaining of Mission Center officers and committees, approval of the 2021 Budget and at least 1 resolution (detailed below) for consideration. More details will be available in NewsBriefs in the coming weeks. On Saturday evening we will have the opportunity to share once again in a mission center wide Talent Show so be watching for details as to how to sign up to share your talents!

Sunday's schedule will include a Zoom-based Pastor's Breakfast (bring your own!) for pastors and mission center staff, as well as our closing worship service featuring **Apostle Ron Harmon** as our guest minister. Pastors and Mission Center Staff – be watching for an Eventbrite invitation for the breakfast in the next couple of weeks!

The Saturday Bulletin will be provided electronically at least 2 weeks prior to Mission Center Conference. If any member of your congregation needs a printed copy, please be prepared to provide that for them.

Special Events

- Saturday evening, the Mission Center will host its 3rd Mission Center Talent Show, emceed once again by Jason Keese. More information will be announced in upcoming NewsBriefs, so if you feel called to share your talents, stay tuned!
- Sunday morning: Pastor's Breakfast, 8:00 a.m., via Zoom; come prepared (with your own breakfast!) to share in spiritual formation together and hear words of encouragement and hope from our Apostle, **Ron Harmon**.

New Business

Proposed 2021 Mission Center Budget

Enclosed with this letter is the proposed 2021 Mission Center Budget to share and review with your congregation's members prior to the Mission Center Conference. The proposed 2021 budget shows an overall increase of 3% over the 2020 budget. This increase is mostly accounted for by simple cost of living expenses associated with human resource benefits—primarily health insurance. Your MCFO is working on alternative measures that will bring down that expense and eliminate this growth. At the time of this writing, however, we thought it would be wise to budget conservatively in case he is unsuccessful. Other specific increases and decreases on budgetary line-items will be fully explained in the MCFO's report to the conference. The 2021 budget is supported by a 2019 Operating Surplus of \$38,224.00 which has been moved forward to supplement the income side of the budget.

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 2.3% for 2021. This is an increase of additional draw of last year's budget by 0.4% and is admittedly a step away from the recommended goal. Nevertheless, 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.

GPNW's investment draw is based on a 5-year average of the Operating Investment fund, a fund that is largely invested in the World Church's Affiliate Investment Pool (AIP). GPNW Pool A investments grew for the year ending December 31, 2019, at the rate of 5.27%. This was a short, 6-month fiscal year, while world church transitioned from a July 1-June 30 fiscal year to a January-December calendar/fiscal year. 2020, however, is proving to be a more interesting year as first quarter earnings lost approximately 16%. Those losses have subsequently been mostly recovered, but all who watch the markets are anxious about the remaining months of 2020. 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 (as well as the performance of standard stock measuring tools).

Your Congregation's Proposed Allocation

The total of congregational allocations to support the budget has decreased from 2019 by \$3,816.00, or 3%. Allocations represent 27.6% of 2021 budgeted income. Although allocations decrease for 2021, one should remember that allocations may vary up or down from 2020 through use of the of the allocation formula. This formula uses 2019 contribution data to paint the most up-to-date picture of your congregation's financial situation. According to this formula no congregation's allocation may increase or decrease by more than 10% in any one year. After applying the elements of the allocation formula for 2021, one may observe that 19 out of 30 GPNW congregations will see a decrease in their allocations, and 11 will see an increase (though not by more than 7.26% at the most). One congregation, Fairbanks, is being removed from the allocation list because as of 8/31/2020 the congregation dissolved in order to create a small group.

Based on the proposed 2021 budget, the 2021 allocations are included with this letter and will be shared in the Friday NewsBriefs and eventually on our website. This information will help you plan your 2021 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 (*linked below*) is being brought before the conference this year to approve the establishment of a fund intended to provide emergency financial relief to jurisdictions within the mission center (i.e., congregations and campgrounds) who may experience significant financial hardship and need assistance to meet their annual budget. We anticipate that several of these jurisdictions may be in this position by the end of 2020 or in the first part of 2021 as a result of the pandemic. For background, the mission center received a significant amount of funding through the Federal Payroll Protection Program (PPP) and it is our understanding at this time that such loans are forgivable. Unfortunately, we will not know for certain whether ours will be forgiven until very close to the date of Mission Center Conference, or even after Conference, so while we are presenting the resolution now for your review, there is a possibility that it may be amended or even withdrawn by the time we gather for Conference should we receive more information in the interim.

NOTE: All resolutions to be considered at this Mission Center Conference must be submitted to the Mission Center Leadership Team by Saturday, October 10th. This includes resolutions to be considered for submittal to the First Presidency for World Conference in June 2022.

It will be extremely helpful, and appreciated, if questions about the budget or those Resolutions provided in advance be submitted prior to Nov. 7th. This will allow the Leadership Team to prepare PowerPoint slides to share during the business meeting so that we can answer your questions in advance. Similarly, if you

anticipate presenting any amendments to either the budget or any pre-submitted Resolutions, please provide the language for your amendment in advance, if possible, or have the exact language you wish to propose ready to present at the time your motion to amend is made.

REPORT CONGREGATIONAL GOOD NEWS

I have requested a short summary (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 (knaten@cofchrist-gpnw.org) by **Friday, October 2nd**.

SCHEDULE OR DEFER CONGREGATIONAL BUSINESS MEETINGS TO ELECT/SUSTAIN AND REPORT CONGREGATIONAL OFFICERS AND APPROVE CONGREGATIONAL BUDGET

Because of the pandemic and the challenges of holding business meetings in person, congregational officers have the option of deferring their congregation's annual business meeting to elect pastors/officers, sustain your CFO and Recorder, and approve your 2021 budget until such time as you can gather in person, if you wish. In this case, 2020 officers and the 2020 congregational operations budget are carried over until such time as the congregation is able to gather in person to hold a business meeting to elect officers and approve a budget for 2021. However, many congregations have been gathering via Zoom, for worship and fellowship, and are comfortable with this platform, so may choose to hold their annual business meeting in this way. Finally, if your congregation wishes to hold its business meeting in person before the end of the year, please work with your LSM and submit an application to the Mission Center Leadership Team for approval. Even if you are not applying to come back for full time, weekly worship gatherings, you may request approval for a 1-time gathering to conduct the congregation's business. Please contact your Leadership Support Minister to discuss these options.

To summarize, there are three (3) options for holding your annual congregational business meeting if you are not already approved for gathering in person for worship:

1. Defer your meeting until such time as you can gather in person, likely sometime in 2021;
2. Hold your business meeting using Zoom, Microsoft Meetings, WebEx, or other virtual platform; or
3. Request permission for a 1-time, in-person gathering this fall; refer to Congregation Re-Opening Guidelines provided last May; all restrictions and requirements for gathering would still be applicable.

Please report your decision regarding your 2020 business meeting and 2021 congregational officers using the Congregational Officers Submittal Form by Friday, November 13th. (See *linked form*.) Additionally, see the sample letter template to congregation members (*linked below*) which can be tailored to fit your circumstance.

With blessings and gratitude,



Kim Naten, GPNW Mission Center President

Linked documents:

- MC Conference: Conference Flyer with Schedule
- MC Conference: Proposed 2021 Operating-Missional Budget and Explanation
- MC Conference: 2020 Statement of Financial Position
- MC Conference: Proposed 2021 Congregational Allocations and Explanation
- MC Conference: Proposed Resolution regarding Establishment of Emergency Fund
- 2020 Congregational Officers Submittal Form