

Pastoral Letter to the Church in the United States

April 14, 2016

Dear Friends,

Greetings in the grace and peace of Jesus Christ.

We are grateful and encouraged by the generous financial response of a grassroots effort in the church in recent weeks. Although the response has lessened the number of position reductions, the impact was significant.

These reductions have resulted in the loss of outstanding ministers, leaders, and friends. We pause to recognize their important contribution to the mission of the church in many places. We recognize that words are inadequate to express the depth of our appreciation and sorrow at the loss of their contribution through full-time ministry. Official announcements regarding individuals impacted are being shared through Human Resource Ministries.

This communication provides further information as a follow up to Scott Murphy's letter dated March 31, 2016, where he outlined a new field organization for the U.S.A. Due to our current financial realities it became necessary to set aside the U.S.A. Model for Mission presented in the fall of 2015. Specifically, the following aspects of that model will no longer be supported:

- Five mission expansion teams with world ministries tithes funded staff and volunteers to support mission initiatives across the U.S.A.
- World ministries tithes funded administrative support ministers to support volunteer mission center financial officers.
- World ministries tithes funded mission support leaders to support volunteer mission center presidents.
- World ministries tithes allocation of \$10,000 to each mission center to support expenses of volunteer mission center officers.

Scott Murphy as director of Field Ministries worked with the U.S.A. apostles to define six fields. As mentioned in his letter we believe this change will provide greater responsiveness to missional needs and opportunities in mission centers with volunteer leaders or locally-funded staff.

Each field will have an apostle dedicated solely to mission in the United States and a field support minister. Mission Center presidents will work directly with the field apostle assigned to their field. The field support minister will provide administrative support to mission center financial officers regarding fiscal, risk, and legal issues associated with mission centers, campgrounds, and congregations. In addition, the field support minister will provide other support and ministry as capacity allows. Each field support minister will report to the U.S.A. bishop and as a team they will support the needs of the church across fields based on the gifts of team members. David Nii will continue to serve as the U.S.A. bishop.

The U.S.A. apostles will have specific field assignments and functional assignments as outlined below:

- **Central USA Mission Field**—Janné Grover, apostle designate
Field Support Minister: Barb Borkowski
Mission centers: Central, Central Missouri, Far West, Gateway, Midlands
Functional assignment: Disciple and Priesthood Formation Ministries
- **North Central USA Mission Field**—Robin Linkhart, apostle designate
Field Support Minister: Denise White
Mission centers: Cedar Valley-Nauvoo, Inland West, Chicago, Headwaters, Lamoni Heartland, Prairie Bluffs
Functional assignment: Restoration-heritage seeker ministry
- **Northeast USA Mission Field**—Lachlan Mackay, apostle designate
Field Support Minister: Dena DeVormer
Mission centers: Chesapeake Bay, Eastern Great Lakes, Mid-Atlantic, Michigan, New England
Functional assignment: Historic Sites, sacred story
- **South Central USA Mission Field**—Linda Booth, apostle
Field Support Minister: Moana Faana
Mission centers: Rio Grande, Heart of Texas, Coastal Bend, Oklahoma, Ark-La-Tex, Mid-South
Functional assignment: Communications, president of the Council of Twelve Apostles
- **Southeast USA Mission Field**—Barbara Carter, apostle
Field Support Minister: Craig Lenfestey
Mission centers: Alabama-Northwest Florida, Brush Creek, Florida, Gulf, Kentucky- Indiana, Southeast, South Central States, Bountiful, Western Ohio
Functional assignment: secretary of the Council of Twelve Apostles, Ecumenical and Interfaith Ministries, Spectacular and IYF
- **West USA Mission Field**—Ron Harmon, apostle
Field Support Minister: Bill McFarlin
Mission centers: Greater Pacific Northwest, Sierra Pacific, Arizona, Rocky Mountain, Pacific, Southwest International
Functional assignment: president, Pacific Southwest International Mission Center; USA Team lead, Leading Congregations in Mission

Presidents of Seventy John Wight, Karin Peter, Keith McMillian, and Larry McGuire will partner with apostles in supporting invitation and witness ministries. Their specific field assignments and quorum structure will be announced at a later date.

The U.S.A. apostles, presidents of seventy, and U.S.A. bishop will meet periodically as a strategic leadership team to collaborate across fields and pursue the following three missional priorities:

1. **Share the Invitation to Christ's Peace (Doctrine and Covenants 163:2)**
 - How do we envision and support invitation (i.e. to all the dimensions of Christ's peace) as a way of living?
 - How do we respond to Spirit-led opportunities to engage with Restoration-heritage seekers who are searching for a spiritual home?

2. Embrace and Live Our Identity in Community (Doctrine and Covenants 163:1)

- What formational resources and support will help us go deeper in living our “core identity” as Community of Christ?
- How do we inspire and equip our priesthood and leaders to provide local support, formation, and training?

3. Explore New Pathways for Connection and Response (2013 Words of Counsel)

- How do we create new pathways for persons to engage and generously respond to our mission initiatives?
- How do we connect with individuals under the age of 50 and provide innovative opportunities for volunteer and financial response?

After providing for basic administrative and mission support needs, remaining dollars were allocated to positions based on the three priorities above and include the following areas:

- Leading Congregations in Mission
- Restoration-heritage seeker Ministries
- Graceland University Campus Ministries
- Chattanooga Congregation Ministries
- Washington D.C. Congregation Ministries
- Generosity and Mission Under the Age of 50
- Open Table

There were many more impactful ministries we desired to fund but did not have the resources at this time. U.S.A. apostles and field support ministers will be working with mission center leaders to identify alternative sources of funding or volunteers who can support these important ministries. It is also important to note that these areas of ministry do not include specific ministries funded by local mission centers.

In times of challenge we can either withdraw and attach ourselves to the familiar or fully embrace our divinely instilled call and vision. Dedicated volunteer disciples, priesthood, and leaders have always been the foundation of our movement. Week after week congregations of diverse sizes and shapes gather, invite, and extend transformational ministries to lessen unnecessary suffering in so many ways.

We are humbled and deeply grateful for the sacred privilege to work along side you in the mission entrusted to us all. We are fully aware of current realities but also confident in the Spirit that lifts our sights beyond present challenges to future possibilities. We are on a spiritual venture and with your help seek the guidance and empowerment of the Holy Spirit each day.

May we continue our journey to live fully into our identity and calling as communities of Christ in a world longing for meaning, healing, and connection is our prayer.

In the Peace of Jesus Christ,

Ron Harmon, Linda Booth, Barbara Carter, Robin Linkhart, Lachlan Mackay, Janné Grover
U.S.A. Apostles and Apostle Designates