

Community of Christ

Greater Pacific Northwest Mission Center-USA

Dear Friends,

As the time draws closer for our mission center implementation, we want to affirm to you our optimism and sense of God's Spirit guiding our process in the past year as staff and district/stake leaders have met with you in your congregations. We want to share with you that with very few minor changes, mostly in regards to border congregations in Central Washington District wishing to join our mission center, we have experienced considerable support for the draft proposal for our mission center. It will therefore be submitted to the World Church Leadership Council by mid-August for their study and action in September. If you wish to view the final proposal, it will soon be available on our mission center web site at www.cofchrist-gpnw.org. As many of you are aware, we now anticipate holding our organizing conference for the mission center in early November and start mission center operations January 1, 2004

We're very optimistic about the things you've shared over the past several months. We're optimistic because of the great potentials we see developing over time as staff positions are reconfigured in order that staff and their expertise are brought into a closer and more direct relationship of support to each congregation. We see this support being for the purpose of engendering growth and fostering a sense of mission that can carry us forward into an invigorating and sustainable future.

Simply said, fifty percent of persons in any given community are without a church home. Seventy percent of those individuals regard faith and religion as important. Interesting, as well, is that ninety-five percent of persons choosing to affiliate with a church do so because of friendship they enjoy with someone in that congregation. They stay involved because they find the church to be a safe, warm, loving, accepting community. Obviously, the task therefore is to extend ourselves, individually and collectively, toward building relationships into our communities in creative, resourceful ways that convey a sense of welcome, invitation, and meaningful engagement. It will be the job of our staff to help congregations identify and build on such opportunities.

Our intent, therefore, within mission center is to support every congregation in assessing what they envision for their congregation in order to be viable into the future given their resources, generosity of spirit, and the community in which they are located. One concern we have heard often in the past year, particularly in relation to congregational assessments or allocations for the mission center operating budget, is fear that the church will use this transition to close down congregations that are declining and struggling financially.

As we have shared before, we are committed to bringing every congregation forward into the mission center and will ensure that this happens. As we have also said, times are changing in the church. Congregations, with the assistance of mission center staff, will over time be taking greater and greater responsibility for progress with their mission into

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their community as we pursue our present day calling from Christ to be a people in pursuit of peace, reconciliation, and healing of the spirit who promote communities of love, joy, hope and peace.

World Conference 2002 clearly established through our new stewardship guidelines, ***Tithing: A Disciple's Generous Response***, that all of our resources need to be engaged toward furthering the calling and mission of the church into our communities. Congregational resources will need to focus less on doing things as they have typically been done and more toward identifying and securing a viable future. Some will no doubt feel this to be a daunting, challenging task, however almost any congregation in any community can secure a viable future if a vision can be cast and pursued in terms of what God desires that congregation to do and become within the community where it's located. To that end, mission center support ministers will be actively helping you.

The path will not always be easy nor the way always clear but it will be our intent to help each congregation determine the horizon to which it is called if but a few are willing to make the journey.

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