



Community of Christ

CHRIST'S MISSION, OUR MISSION

Letter about Leadership Transitions

September 8, 2015

To the church:

I want to provide important information about World Church leadership transitions. A letter of counsel with additional details will be submitted to the 2016 World Conference. I am announcing some anticipated changes now, so planning can continue with this information in mind. These transitions are in addition to the early retirements of Susan Oxley and Jim Poirier already announced.

The information in this letter follows much prayer, deliberation on the future, and consideration of personal situations. It is always a blessing to experience the gentle, yet persistent, guidance of the Holy Spirit in such matters.

World Church Officer Releases

With great gratitude for their many years of service, I announce the following World Church leaders will be released from their roles at the 2016 World Conference:

Becky L. Savage will be released from the First Presidency. Sister Savage is called to the office of evangelist. She will be assigned to lead Wholeness and Pastoral Care Ministries.

J. Andrew Bolton will be released as an apostle and granted retirement from church employment. He will continue to minister as a volunteer high priest, serving Christ's liberating mission in many ways.

David R. Brock will be released as presiding evangelist and granted early retirement from church employment. He will continue to serve as an evangelist with a particular emphasis on teaching and mentoring spiritual-formation ministers.

Stephen M. Jones will be released as presiding bishop and granted early retirement from church employment. He will continue to serve as a bishop with an emphasis on leading mission-funding development.

First Presidency and Presiding Bishopric

Over time the church has become an exceedingly complex organization. Discussion has occurred for several years about ways to integrate some World Church leadership roles and functions for more efficient planning, decision-making, and implementation. We also have explored how to reduce the number of general officers needed to fulfill responsibilities.

There is historical precedent for some integrated roles in church leadership. Alexander Hale Smith served as a counselor to the president and presiding evangelist from 1896–1902 during the presidency of Joseph Smith III. Also, Presiding Bishop L.F.P. Curry served as a counselor to President F.M. Smith from 1938–1940.

I have prayerfully considered various possibilities, church priorities, and needs. After careful consideration, the Spirit provided confirmation of the following direction:

Stassi D. Cramm will be released from her role as an apostle. She will be reinstated to the office of bishop. She is called to serve as presiding bishop to fill the projected vacancy in that office. Stassi also is called to serve as a member of the First Presidency to fill the pending vacancy in that quorum. Until then she will continue to serve as an apostle with the added title of presiding bishop and First Presidency member designate.

The Council of Twelve

Vacancies in the Council of Twelve have been created by early retirements from church employment. Another vacancy will be created by the expected retirement of J. Andrew Bolton. I have prayerfully considered church needs and the desired composition of the Council of Twelve, according to projected assignments. Now it is timely to present the following information:

Robin K. Linkhart is called to serve as an apostle and member of the Council of Twelve Apostles. She will be released from the Council of Presidents of Seventy at the next World Conference. Until then, she will continue to serve as a president of seventy with the added title of apostle designate.

Lachlan E. Mackay is called from his ministry as a seventy to serve as an apostle and member of the Council of Twelve Apostles. He will continue to serve as coordinator of Historic Sites with the added title of apostle designate. Lachlan's Council of Twelve assignment will include directing Historic Sites and related ministries, as well as other responsibilities.

The Presiding Bishopric

The Presiding Bishopric will be reconstituted at World Conference. I have thought extensively about the gifts and business skills needed in the Presiding Bishopric to fulfill its financial-management responsibilities along with its stewardship of all church assets. I am thankful for the Spirit's direction, which permits me to present the following calls:

Steven E. Graffeo, currently serving in the Presiding Bishopric, is called to continue as a counselor to the presiding bishop and member of the Presiding Bishopric. His role and responsibilities in the Presiding Bishopric will be expanded.

Michele K. McGrath is called to serve as a counselor to the presiding bishop and member of the Presiding Bishopric. Michele will continue to serve as director of Finance with the added title of Presiding Bishopric member designate. Director of Finance also will be a major part of her responsibilities in the Presiding Bishopric.

Presiding Evangelist

Recent words of counsel summon the Order of Evangelists to emphasize “spiritually forming communities of disciples and seekers that live deeply and generously in Christ’s Spirit.” Building on current efforts, further development of spiritual formation and blessing ministries for individuals, households, and congregations are priorities for the presiding evangelist. As I prayerfully considered who should serve as presiding evangelist, I received confirmation of the following call:

Jane M. Gardner is called to serve in the priesthood office of evangelist and as presiding evangelist when the vacancy in that office occurs. As presiding evangelist, she will continue to have responsibility for worship, hymnody and music, and Temple Ministries. She also will work closely with the First Presidency and others to help the church experience the fullness of blessings God offers through the sacraments. Jane will be released from her role as president of the Quorum of High Priests at World Conference. Until then she will serve in her current responsibilities with the added title of presiding evangelist designate.

Conclusion

I am grateful for the devoted service of those who will retire from church employment. I am equally thankful for the responses of those preparing to accept new callings. Through managing retirements and integrating leadership responsibilities, the number of World Church officers has been reduced, resulting in decreased expenses.

Vacancies remain in some World Church quorums. I am prayerfully considering the advisability of filling these vacancies. Under current circumstances, this must be done in ways that do not increase expenses and, if possible, reduce expenses. I invite the church to pray with me for divine guidance about what is needed and possible.

As a reminder, this is an announcement of information to assist ongoing planning and facilitate leadership transitions. Before World Conference, I will release an official letter of counsel about World Church leaders with additional information for formal consideration by the Conference.

I want to encourage everyone to come to the June 4-11, 2016, World Conference in Independence, Missouri. It will be a special time of spiritual renewal, community-building, important decision-making, and discernment of God’s will. Those who gather in the spirit of preparation, expectation, love, and hope will experience life-changing blessings.

In closing, I pray that the light of Christ will be our constant companion as we go with hope into the future. God is leading the way!

In Christ’s Peace,



Stephen M. Veazey
president of the church