Dear friends,

Greetings in the peace of Jesus Christ. The last 15 months have been challenging as we navigated unchartered territory during a global pandemic. From the beginning our guiding principle has been to protect the most vulnerable in our congregations, towns, and cities by following the best available science. We began this journey knowing very little about COVID-19. Our initial guidelines reflected Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations that included the suspension of in-person gatherings as a key mitigation strategy to slow the spread of the virus.

On March 3, 2021, President Biden announced every U.S. adult would have access to a vaccine by the end of May. Although there was reason for great hope, the CDC urged caution and strict adherence to mitigation strategies including mask wearing, social distancing, and the avoidance of in-person gatherings. We began March with 60,000 cases per day and significant uncertainty regarding the spread of new variants.

On March 11, 2021 we updated our guidelines for Preparing to Reopen In-person Congregation Gatherings. These guidelines followed the same principles and criteria listed above with an added provision that in-person gatherings could begin as the infection rate dropped below 10 infections per 100,000 population. The updated guidelines also reflected the most current and available CDC guidance.

As vaccinations are now readily available across the United States, infection rates decline, and the CDC issues more frequent updates, we feel it is time for field apostles to step out of the reopening approval process and fully rely on mission centers and congregations taking appropriate precautions and actions. This will enable more responsive decision making as local conditions change. Mission center presidents will work with pastors to jointly evaluate changing conditions and plans for reopening. Field apostles and field support ministers will remain available to support mission center presidents as decisions are made and will provide consultation should special circumstances arise.

The guidelines issued in March continue to provide helpful and safe guidance for in-person gatherings. As CDC, state, and local health department guidelines are updated they should be integrated with the March 11, 2021 updated guidelines. Continue to follow the principle of doing what protects the most vulnerable in your congregations and communities.
For those who are able, we strongly encourage vaccination as a responsible choice for the welfare of all. We also urge caution as you prepare to gather in person. Continue to monitor the CDC website at www.cdc.gov for updates and infections rates in your county at https://globalepidemics.org/key-metrics-for-covid-suppression.

As conditions improve across the U.S. we look forward to sharing with you in person and online as we provide multiple ways to gather and embody Christ’s mission of justice and peace in our world.

In Christ’s Peace,

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Ron Harmon
Robin Linkhart
Lachlan Mackay
David Nii
Arthur Smith (Mexico-Texas MC)
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