

To the Florida Mission Center November 11th, 2023

Greetings

The Florida Mission Center (FMC) Leadership Team greets you in the name of Christ and hopes that you, your families, and loved ones are well. We affirm that God is with us and continues to bless us as we journey together in Christ's name. The Mission Center (MC) Leadership Team strives to facilitate World Church communications to leaders, support congregational leaders, and provide a vision for the future of the MC. We are privileged to journey with you.

2023 has been a year of change for the Florida Mission Center. There is a new mission center president team made up of Heather Dixon, and Lisa and Paul Houk. Lisa Houk will also be the new MC Financial Officer (MCFO). We have all been learning the ins and outs of mission center leadership and are eternally grateful to Debbie Bartlett for her wisdom and guidance as we learned.

Support Ministries

Heather, Lisa and Paul want to personally thank congregational leaders for your willingness to provide needed ministry; we hope you have been richly blessed. We are also fortunate to have a full-time youth minister, Serena Tankersley, working for the MC, and administrative support minister, Debbie Bartlett. Seventy Jacob Blakesley volunteered to be the Mission Center Invitational Support Minister (MCISM). They provide communication, outreach ministry, planning and support that greatly help move the MC forward.

The FMC Council, comprised of members from around Florida, meets online regularly. They bring insight, give voice to how the Holy Spirit is moving throughout Florida, and help shape what the MC is to become. We again affirm that God and God's purposes are sure and will not fail.

The MC continues to provide worship via Zoom the 2nd Sunday of most months. A MC worship planning team is responsible for scheduling and developing our gatherings and we thank them for all their efforts.

The Youth Ministries Council also meets regularly to strengthen the youth camping program and offer ideas and support for youth activities throughout the year. You will hear more good news in a separate youth ministries report.

Mission Center Activities

We are finally almost over the turmoil that Covid inflicted on our gatherings – congregations are meeting in-person regularly and enjoying the joys of in-person interactions. We continue to

embrace the benefits of technology necessitated by Covid – Zoom is allowing people unable to travel or not near a local congregation to participate in church services and conferences. We were also able to provide leadership training via Zoom with our Nuts & Bolts gathering in May. Youth worker certification training has also been given in person and via Zoom.

Apostle David Nii and President of Seventy Larry McGuire visited the MC in August. They made it to many congregations and enjoyed the fellowship and ministry of saints.

Participation in in-person mission center activities continued to improve this year. The Winter Reunion, Memorial Day Retreat, Junior Camp, Jr. High/Sr. High Camp, Graceland Spectacular delegation, and the Women's Retreat all saw increased numbers. Unfortunately, the Labor Day Celebración retreat was canceled due to Hurricane Idalia.

Many participated in an online book review of *Radical Hospitality: Benedict's Way of Love* by Lonni Collins Pratt. Our continued participation in online events has become the new norm and expands our outreach ministries.

The South Miami congregation continues their Loaves & Fishes ministry currently reaching 120+ families each week. The Tarpon Springs congregation has continued to experience growth this past year. Jim Brougher will share their good news in a separate report.

Increased communication is very important to the Leadership Team. We want to get the good news that is happening in congregations out to everyone in the Mission Center. That is why we restarted the quarterly newsletter in July, and have encouraged everyone to sign up for Church Updates.

Heather, Lisa and I tried to make it to as many congregations in the mission center as possible this fall. And if we haven't made it yet, don't worry – we will get to you. The members of the mission center are very important to us because you are where the people meet the mission field. And we want to make sure you know that you are appreciated and valued.

In Other News

With an increase in online giving and change in envelope giving, the MC is asking and reminding congregations to continue to promote contributions toward 2 Cents a Meal, campership giving days, and Deerhaven, whenever possible.

After Hurricane Idalia, the MC contacted congregations concerning their well-being. Thankfully none of them suffered any damage.

The Hands and Feet of Jesus

The Leadership Team has chosen the theme “We are Companions on the Journey” for 2024. We have also developed a new vision and mission for the MC.

Vision: We will walk together as companions on the journey to bring Christ to all people.

Mission: We will bring Christ to all by being the hands and feet of Jesus. This will be accomplished through providing training, leadership and resources needed to build discipleship and shape a vibrant community for all.

There are certainly challenges ahead of us. Some congregations are aging and getting smaller. But where some see challenges, we see opportunities. Our congregations are filled with experience and wisdom. There are members anxious and willing to pray for the Holy Spirit to lead them to new expressions of worship and ministry. We invite you to read Doctrine and Covenants Section 155:6-8. Verse 8: *The call is for workers in the cause of Zion; therefore, neither tarry, nor doubt that I am. I know your perplexities and I am aware of your uncertainties, but if you will call upon my name my Spirit will go before you into whatsoever place you are sent and I will continue to bless you as you have need.*

Our love and caring blesses and is life-giving to others! May we continue to work together as the hands and feet of Jesus in this time and place.

Thank you for your faithful support in 2023 and we look forward to a blessed 2024.

In Christ,

Your Mission Center Leadership Team: Heather, Lisa, Paul, Serena, Jacob and Debbie.