

To the Florida Mission Center,

October 15th, 2020

Greetings

The Florida Mission Center Leadership Team greets you in the name of Christ and hopes that you and your families are well. We affirm that God is with us and continues to bless us as we journey together in Christ's name. Though our in-person gatherings have been few this year, we know many have connected with local congregations and other worship and ministry opportunities within the mission center and the world church. We thank you for your courage and the willingness to explore new technologies and forms of connectedness. We continue to receive the blessings of community.

COVID Response

Year 2020 started in familiar ways with a successful Winter Reunion and Youth Retreat in late January, early February. As COVID increased and in-person gatherings ceased, our focus shifted to developing, supporting, and coordinating online Sunday services. Criteria for resuming in-person activities was established through ongoing communications with world church leaders. County COVID statistics were gathered and monitored in response to congregations requesting reopening. All congregational rental agreements and agreements for facilities used as polling places were updated for safe usage. Multiple Zoom meetings were conducted to communicate new information, assist congregational leaders in making wise and safe decisions for their congregations, and troubleshoot many difficult situations. Emergency budget planning and operational changes were implemented to meet new contribution levels.

Invitation Support Minister

In the midst of the pandemic and social isolation, our Mission Center Invitation Support Minister, Peter Smith, helped members connect with one another through Coffee and Conversation, a Saturday morning Zoom gathering. This has been a time of laughter, a time of sharing memories and life stories, and a time to create community through conversation. Members from around Florida (and even Michigan) have joined in! Peter also joined with fellow Seventy Noelle Gaffka from Michigan to lead worship and the sacrament of Communion on August 2nd with over 150 participating in this service.

Youth Ministries

Following the Youth Retreat at the end of January, summer camps were unable to meet in-person. First-time ever virtual camps were developed and offered for each age group to help connect youth during this time. The Youth Ministries Council elected a new Chair, welcome and thank you, Laura Moose. The council meets regularly, striving to find ways to help youth encounter God and connect with each other. Youth Ministries Leader Serena Tankersley has worked with other youth leaders to offer Church School, chats, and scavenger hunts for the various age groups via Zoom.

Additionally, online classes for the Certified Youth Worker Program will be offered soon for those interested or in need of this course. Priesthood members that have not taken this in the past year should sign up for the class. Those working with youth are required to complete the class and take a refresher course annually. Those in church leadership are responsible for implementing Child Protection Policy, an Administrative Course is also available. If you or your congregation's leadership have a need for this course, please contact Serena Tankersley at 404-452-5619 or sktankersley55@gmail.com.

Congregational Recorder Training

Mission Center Recorder Debbie Bartlett conducted Recorder Training in late March. This was the first attempt at a virtual training class and the feedback from attendees was incredibly positive. The mission center hopes to also offer Financial Officer Training virtually in the future.

Florida Mission Center Council

With the support of Apostle Barbara Carter, the mission center presidents, Ken Campbell, Mark Dixon and Chuck Petz, are organizing a Mission Center Council. The council will be comprised of members from around the mission center and will be advisory in nature. It will assist FMC leaders in developing the work of the mission center, and may also give programmatic, leadership, and spiritual advice. We are excited about this opportunity to draw the circle of leadership wider.

The Hands and Feet of Christ

Even though some regular objectives and goals of the mission center will not be accomplished this year, 2020 has been busy and challenging finding a way forward during the COVID pandemic. The leadership team has done its best to lead, support and assist the Mission Center during these difficult times. We are aware that many have felt loneliness from lack of personal contact with your church family and have struggled with other challenges the COVID virus has brought. We do not know how long this will continue but encourage you to reach out to others in your congregation and the mission center who may be feeling the same way. Our love and caring blesses others, even through letters, phone calls, video chats or Zoom meetings. May we continue to work together as the hands and feet of Christ in this time and place.

In Christ,

Your Mission Center Leadership Team: Ken, Chuck, Mark, Serena, Peter, and Debbie