



# Community of Christ

CHRIST'S MISSION, OUR MISSION

## Letter of Counsel about World Church Leaders

6 September 2022

### Preface

*This letter of counsel presents anticipated changes in World Church leadership confirmed at this point that will be effective at World Conference. These transitions and calls have become evident through the guidance of the Holy Spirit during mutual discernment with other quorum and council leaders. Providing this counsel now allows more time for transition planning. It also allows for those called to become aware of ongoing strategic World Church leadership discussions.*

*I am grateful for the dedicated service of those approaching retirement or transitioning from present responsibilities to new ones. I appreciate loved ones who supported their ministry. I give thanks for the willingness of others to assume major responsibilities during these demanding and unpredictable times. Likewise, I am thankful for the Holy Spirit's wisdom and guidance in providing for the leadership needs of the worldwide church.*

*This letter presents counsel for World Conference consideration and action. The Conference is asked to act on the calling statements. Background information is provided to help the church become more familiar with the persons named and the gifts they will bring or have brought to their callings.*

*In addition, I am aware of others being prepared throughout the world to offer World Church leadership in the future as needs, opportunities, and circumstances permit. I am grateful for the assurance this awareness brings.*

To the Church and the World Conference:

**Stassi D. Cramm**, having served with exceptional skill as presiding bishop since 2016, is released from that responsibility so she can lead emerging strategic initiatives. She will continue as a valued member of the First Presidency.

Gratitude is expressed for the leadership Stassi brought as presiding bishop during an especially demanding time. This required her to make and advocate for extremely difficult decisions for the long-term good of the church. She bore the burdens of her responsibility with unusual strength, integrity, skill, and accountability as evidenced in her leadership of the Bridge of Hope project and prudent planning of worldwide ministries budgets and reporting among other roles.

Freed from heavy responsibilities as presiding bishop, she will focus her ample giftedness, knowledge, and experience on achieving church priorities and mentoring other leaders during a decisive time in the church's life. Her responsibilities in the Presidency will include supervision of the Presiding Bishopric in addition to other major responsibilities.

### **Background**

As a church employee, Stassi served as a member of the First Presidency—a role in which she continues—and as presiding bishop, member of the Council of Twelve Apostles, counselor to the presiding bishop, and regional administrator and stewardship commissioner. As a self-sustaining minister, Stassi served as a Sunday School teacher, youth choir director, congregational finance officer, youth camp and reunion director, pastor, and district stewardship commissioner.

Before church employment she worked as a flight-test engineer. She earned a PhD in organization and management from Capella University; master of arts in religion from Graceland University; master of arts in organization management from the University of Phoenix; and bachelor of science in general engineering from the University of Illinois.

**Ronald D. Harmon Jr.** is released from the Council of Twelve Apostles and the office of apostle after serving nearly 18 years in that calling so he can lead emerging strategic initiatives. He is called to the office of bishop and to be the presiding bishop.

Ron's ministry as an apostle has been significant, especially his ability to communicate and implement Community of Christ identity and mission in diverse and changing contexts. Beyond his awareness, his leadership has resulted in positive impacts that will be carried forward by his colleagues in the Council of Twelve Apostles. As president of the Council of Twelve, Ron's presiding and intercultural consensus-building skills were a blessing.

Ron has an array of ministerial and organizational leadership gifts, equipping him to serve in various World Church leadership roles. As the presiding bishop, he will join his passion for mission with responsibility for increasing the church's capacity to fund worldwide ministries, especially through the growth of endowment funds and developing new sources of church income.

Ron's professional background in organizational design and strategic process improvement during a time of necessary decentralization of certain business, human resources, and financial functions are vital to the church's effectiveness throughout the world. His collaborative leadership and decision-making style will serve him well as he assumes major new responsibilities.

### **Background**

As a church employee, Ron served as president of several mission centers and as an apostle. He was assigned to the Northeast USA and Western USA mission fields as an apostle. In addition, Ron has served as president of the Council of Twelve Apostles since 2019. He also directed the Leading Congregations in Mission and Living the Mission Prayer initiatives. As a self-sustaining minister, Ron served as a counselor to the district president, pastor, and district stewardship commissioner.

Before church employment, Ron worked as vice president for Administrative Services and member of the executive council at Graceland University. There he oversaw Human Resources,

Information Technology, and General Operations at the Lamoni and Independence campuses. Previously he worked as chief human resources officer for a large hospital where he was responsible for strategic leadership for productivity benchmarking, diversity training, recruitment, employee-benefits design, and core human resources operations. He began his career working for several financial services organizations before leading an employee benefits consulting firm servicing small to medium size employers.

Ron has a master of arts in organizational management from the University of Phoenix, a master of arts in religion from Graceland University, and a bachelor of science in business administration from Bowling Green State University.

**Barbara Tooze Carter**, in response to her request, is released from the Council of Twelve Apostles and the office of apostle after faithfully serving nearly 10 years in that role. Her apostolic witness, compassionate ministry, and sensitivity to those marginalized have blessed the church in important ways. She has been instrumental in helping the church embrace the fuller meaning of its name.

As an advocate for those often overlooked by others, she always presents an authentic witness of Christ. Her involvement in ecumenical and interfaith ministries provides a strong network of relationships and respect for the church on which others will continue to build. Her service as apostle to Spectacular and the International Youth Forum (IYF) has enriched those vital youth ministries.

Barb has requested and will be granted the honor of retirement from World Church employment on a date to be determined following World Conference. The Holy Spirit has born witness that Barb is called to the office of evangelist. In that ministry, she will continue to bless the church as she focuses her unique gifts on facilitating experiences that will make the love of God for individuals, groups, and all creation evident. Many will be blessed.

## **Background**

As a church employee, Barb served as a volunteer contractual appointee regional stewardship commissioner. Then she served as a World Church appointee minister assigned to the South-Central States Region as stewardship commissioner. She was ordained a bishop in 2006. Barb's church service continued as San Francisco Bay Stake president, Sierra Pacific USA Mission Center president, and as an apostolic assistant.

She was ordained to the office of apostle in 2013. In that calling she was assigned to the Southeast USA Mission Field, Spectacular, International Youth Forum, and as ecumenical and interfaith officer. She also served on the National Council of Churches Executive Committee as finance chair (2016–2021). After attending Graceland University, Barbara completed her master's in education in counseling and was employed by the State of Oregon, Department of Justice, as a Citizen Review Board member. She also served as a self-sustaining regional stewardship commissioner.

**Steven E. Graffeo**, in response to his request, is released as a counselor to the presiding bishop and member of the Presiding Bishopric. He served with unparalleled dedication and skill for 10 years in that calling. The church is grateful for his ministry.

He has requested and will be granted the honor of retirement from church employment on a date to be determined following World Conference. During Steve's service in the Presiding Bishopric, he competently fulfilled many major responsibilities related to the financial trustee and temporal stewardship roles of the Presiding Bishopric while serving as a minister of compassion and sensitivity to human need. He also helped expand the reporting capabilities of the bishopric to three languages in ways not previously experienced by the church.

Through determination, strategic patience, business savvy, professional networking, and innate gifts he successfully managed complex transactions to sell church investment properties at amounts over assessed values. The church will be blessed by his work for generations. Steve will continue to serve as a bishop following retirement and has volunteered to support the work of the Presiding Bishopric as needed.

### **Background**

Steve has been employed by the church since 2004. As a church employee, he served as French Polynesia Mission Center financial officer, assistant to the director of Field Ministries, Human Resource Ministries director, and as a member of the Presiding Bishopric. In the Presiding Bishopric he held responsibilities related to the World Hunger Committee, Historic Sites Foundation, Human Resource Committee, World Church Investment Committee, Gift Acceptance Committee, real estate investments and sales management, capital-projects management, oblation and disaster-relief management, risk management, and security and facilities management.

Before being employed by the church, he worked as director of administration for a major Midwest law firm.

**Angela Alt. Ramirez de Hernandez** is called to be an apostle and a member of the Council of Twelve Apostles. Angela's ministry and leadership is a continuation of the faithful devotion of the women who steadfastly stood by Jesus at his crucifixion and were the first to be witnesses of his resurrection. Her ministry is characterized by Christ-like love for all, with particular sensitivity to those suffering injustices. Angela brings a unique combination of ministerial, leadership, administrative, and financial management experience to her calling. She works collaboratively to unite congregations and mission centers across cultural, language, and economic barriers.

Despite budget limitations, she has led church expansion through establishing congregations that are examples of Community of Christ identity and mission. Angela coordinates in-person and online ministries to reach Spanish-speaking people beyond geographic boundaries. She is a key leader of the annual Latin American Peace Colloquy. Her ministry, witness, and leadership as an apostle of the peace of Jesus Christ is vital to the church's future as outreach opportunities among Spanish speakers increase. The church will be blessed greatly by her giftedness, experience, and voice.

### **Background**

Angela serves in the priesthood office of high priest. As a church employee she has served as the Dominican Republic Mission Center president and mission center financial officer. She currently serves as assistant to the apostle assigned to the Caribbean area and the Mexico/Texas Mission Center. Previously Angela served on the Expanded World Church Leadership Council that was instrumental in

developing the Enduring Principles. She has presided over the Spanish Language Caucus at World Conference and led discussion on wealth and poverty.

She has provided ministry in various self-sustaining leadership roles in the Dominican Republic. They include youth secretary, Bible school leader, secretary of the national church, leader of an emerging congregation, and as a pastor.

Before working for the church, Angela was a high school Spanish teacher. She also worked for a real estate company.

Angela has a degree in economics, a professional certificate (*licentiate*) in biblical theology, and education as a technician in accounting. She has completed Community of Christ International MEADS (Ministerial Education and Discipleship Studies) courses.

**Shandra Karine Newcom** is called to be an apostle and member of the Council of Twelve Apostles. Shandra will bring Christ-inspired enthusiasm, creativity, and deep love for the church to her ministry as a bold witness of Jesus Christ.

She is a tireless advocate for people who are oppressed, misunderstood, or overlooked. She expresses deep concern for youth and young adults, while not overlooking the needs of all. Shandra has provided future-oriented-leadership as president of several mission centers. She is called to give particular attention to the emergence of innovative, relational, mission-focused expressions of the church that model the vision of Community of Christ in today's dynamic world. Her steady willingness to stand in difficult social spaces as an advocate for justice and peace is faithful to the passion and vision of Jesus Christ.

## **Background**

Shandra serves in the priesthood office of high priest. As a church employee, Shandra served as president in several mission centers. She also served as Graceland University campus minister, Congregation Support minister, Theology Task Force member, SITE (Seminars in Theological Education) coordinator, Spiritual Formation specialist, youth and young-adult minister, Mission Leadership Team member (Living Congregations in Mission, Discover and Live Your Future, and Living the Mission Prayer as a Way of Life), and covenant community facilitator. Before church employment, she worked with women and children in transitional housing and at LifeSource Hospice.

Shandra received a master of social work from the University of Denver, a master of arts in religion (social change) from Iliff School of Theology, and a bachelor of philosophy and religion from Graceland University.

**Willem F. van Klinken** is called to serve as a counselor to the presiding bishop and member of the Presiding Bishopric. Wim will bring vital skills, professional preparation, and broad international experience to his responsibilities in the Presiding Bishopric. His passionate commitment to the church's worldwide mission, coupled with his non-profit organizational and financial-management competencies, will bless the church.

Wim balances the exacting demands of financial prudence and accountability with openness to new opportunities to increase the church's capacity to support mission. This capacity is enriched by the experience he brings from his international business and information systems design career and service as a self-sustaining mission center and congregational financial officer.

### **Background**

Wim serves in the priesthood office of bishop. As a church employee, Wim works as chief information and technology officer and director of Business Operations at International Headquarters and as a volunteer Midlands USA Mission Center financial officer. Previously he served as apostolic assistant for the Central USA/Michigan Mission Field, director of International Headquarters, and as Europe Mission Center President.

Born in the Netherlands, Wim speaks Dutch, Frisian, German, and French. He was a successful entrepreneur, having started several information-technology companies. He studied economics at Erasmus University (Rotterdam) with an emphasis on business management information systems. He also studied music and did post-graduate work in business administration, asset management, and completed the European Comenius Course at the Academy of Management at the University of Groningen. He received a master of arts in religion from Graceland University and a master of public administration from the University of Missouri-Kansas City. Wim has been an adjunct faculty member of the department of Public Affairs at UMKC's Henry W. Bloch School of Management, where he has taught financial accountability and policy development at the graduate level. He is a senior fellow at the Midwest Center for Nonprofit Leadership.

**Carla K. Long** is called to serve as a counselor to the presiding bishop and member of the Presiding Bishopric. This calling provides opportunity for her to combine her exuberant personality, gospel enthusiasm, pastoral gifts, and intercultural sensitivity with her ability to collaboratively solve complex problems through her critical and mathematical-thinking skills. She is encouraged to apply all her ministerial giftedness to transforming ideas into realities that will accelerate the forward movement of the church.

While relating well to all ages, she has the ability and personality to connect with younger generations, engaging them as whole-life stewards in support of the church's local and worldwide ministries. She also is called to continue her strong advocacy for Aaronic ministries that support families of all types as essential to forming communities of generosity, justice, and peace.

### **Background**

Carla serves in the priesthood office of bishop. As a church employee she was the financial officer in the Sierra Pacific USA Mission Center and then in the Western Europe and Eurasian Mission Centers. As a young adult, she ministered as a World Service Corps volunteer in the Philippines and Australia. Most recently, she served as a Latter-day Seeker Expansion minister in Utah, including as pastor of the Salt Lake City Congregation. Before church employment she worked as a teacher of algebra and geometry.

Carla received a bachelor of arts degree in mathematics and education from Graceland University. She received a master in education from the University of Missouri-Kansas City and

subsequently taught education classes there. She has completed the master of arts in Christian ministry from the Community of Christ Seminary at Graceland University.

## **Conclusion**

*The releases from ministerial and leadership responsibilities will be effective at World Conference but do not require Conference action. The calls will be presented formally to the World Conference for approval according to established procedures.*

In the peace of Christ,

Stephen M. Veazey, president