



Community of Christ

CHRIST'S MISSION, OUR MISSION

First Presidency Statement Update to COVID-19 Virus Pandemic 21 May 2020

The First Presidency has continued to monitor the progression of COVID-19 and the recommendations from professional health organizations and local governments. While health organizations continue to express caution, local governments are beginning to relax stay-at-home orders and make provisions for businesses and churches to reopen with modified in-person gatherings. The Presidency has been prayerful in how to guide the church in this next phase of reopening of society.

After consulting the World Church Leadership Council, which provides a global perspective, we are offering the following recommendations:

1. Guidelines for reopening in-person congregational gatherings will be shared with mission center officers within the next week. We are advising congregations not to feel pressured to immediately reopen in-person gatherings. Caring for the welfare of the most vulnerable in our congregations and communities continues to be a paramount principle we uphold during this pandemic. Careful consideration must be given at the local jurisdictional level before any plan or action is implemented to reopen in-person gatherings. Apostles will work with mission center officers on next steps.
2. Based on the continued risk for the spread of the virus, we are recommending the cancellation of camps, reunions, vacation Bible schools, and other extended large-group gatherings during July and August. Many mission centers already have done this. With the added challenges, risks, and cost to implement safety guidelines, it is advisable to cancel these events to protect the children, youth, and adults.

If a mission center believes it is in a low-risk jurisdiction and the local government allows for day or overnight camps, the mission center president can request an exception for Community of Christ camps or rental groups. Any exception will need to demonstrate how it will meet the guidelines we have established for congregation in-person gatherings. The Office of General Counsel also has developed an Event Use agreement that can be considered during this pandemic. A request for an exception will be submitted to the field apostle, who will consult with the Presiding Bishopric and director of Field Ministries.

All World Church sites will remain closed to the public and World Church-sponsored events canceled through at least 31 August 2020. This includes the Temple Complex, Peace Pavilion, and all historic sites.

We understand that our recommendation to cancel camps will place increased financial pressure on many campgrounds. For this we are sorry. But based on the concerns and recommendations from the leading health organizations, and our core principle to care for the welfare of all human life, we believe the decision to cancel camps is wise and responsible during this pandemic.

We continue to hold all the church in our prayers as we endeavor to learn from this life-changing experience. Thank you for all the creative ways you are sharing your ministry and service that has offered wonderful blessings to many. Together, let us collectively persist in our hope and prayers as we patiently, but responsibly, plan for the opportunities to be with one another in-person.

The First Presidency