



Community of Christ

ARIZONA MISSION CENTER

November 15, 2025

Dear Arizona Mission Center,

For more than a year now, we in Community of Christ have been focusing on hope. Our most recent World Conference was a special moment in the life of the church, both with the ordination of Stassi Cramm as our President/Prophet, and with the spirit of collegiality and unity that filled the halls, sanctuaries, gathering spaces, and even the conference chamber. News doors of hope opened and many stepped through with a sacred yes. As I've traveled around the church in the days, weeks and months since the conference, I have sensed a spreading of that new hope.

Even as I remember the conference with fondness and look to the future with great hope, I realize that there are some who continue to carry the burden of concern and weariness for the church and its future. For those of us who have witnessed the aging and shrinking of our congregations, the seemingly endless calls for increased generosity, and the sadness of loss from the passing of loved ones to the loss of sacred spaces, hope seems limited at best. Honestly, I find there are times when hope is hard to find or even imagine when I am caught up in similar circumstances and surroundings, often doing the same things. However, I find that when I have the opportunity to travel to new places and build new relationships with new people ... when I get to just sit and listen to the stories of our older members and friends ... or when I spend time engaging the unfiltered imaginations of children and youth, hope is often reignited.

Such has been the case with my new responsibilities with you, the people of the Arizona Mission Center. For some of you, it feels like the same old thing, but for me, I see new things being attempted, opportunities being explored, invitations being shared, people being fed, needs being met, and yes, campgrounds being raised from literal ashes by a group of committed, loving people. I know there are uncertainties that come with new leadership and difficult conversations, but there is no doubt in my mind that the Spirit is present and will lead us in the ways that God has planned for us... "plans for [our] welfare and not for harm, to give [us] a future with hope." (Jer 29:11b)

Though my home is far from Arizona, a part of my heart is here with you, and I will journey with you as your companion and friend, advocating on your behalf, and empowering you to continue to make Christ's mission a reality in the places you live and serve. Thank you for being you, and for letting me journey with you.

Blessings,

Blake J. Smith
Arizona Mission Center
Interim Mission Center President