

community

The New Apostolic Church around the world

02/2021/EN



Hope in the return of Jesus

Editorial
Spiritual stability

Divine service
Christ, our future

Doctrine
The end of human life

New Apostolic Church
International



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Spiritual stability

Dear brothers and sisters,

In our Second Article of Faith we profess our belief in the Son of God: “I believe in Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried, entered the realm of the dead, rose again from the dead on the third day, and ascended into heaven. He is seated at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty, from where He will return.”

This confession accompanies us throughout our lives: it constitutes the content of our divine services and our conversations. It is also an expression of our relationship with God and our living assurance and hope. We can derive three pillars of faith from this, which will give us spiritual stability throughout the year:

- Jesus loves me! He proved His love: He died for you and me.
- Jesus is the greatest! He has all the power and authority. He conquered sin, death, and hell.
- Jesus will come back! He will return soon for our salvation, for our redemption.

Dear brothers and sisters, these three pillars give us orientation and stability in life, even if things are sometimes shaken up, even if a strong wind blows in our faces.



■ NAC International

In 2021, too, let us continue to be determined: let us orient ourselves by Jesus Christ and be consistent with the will of God. Let us constantly check that everything in our lives is in harmony with Jesus Christ. And if not, let us take the necessary measures and make the required corrections.

The Lord is coming soon! This is our faith, our assurance, and our joyful anticipation.

Heartfelt greetings

A handwritten signature in dark ink, consisting of a stylized 'J' and 'S'.

Jean-Luc Schneider

| Christ, our future



Hebrews 12: 1b–2a

*“Let us run with endurance
the race that is set before us,
looking unto Jesus, the author
and finisher of our faith.”*

Dearly beloved brothers and sisters, I would like to begin by expressing my gratitude to the Winterthur congregation on behalf of all our members in Northern and Eastern Germany for welcoming us here this morning and allowing me to conduct this divine service for our brothers and sisters in Northern and Eastern Germany.

I do not know who chose the opening hymn, but I would also like to express my thanks for this. I must admit that I found it difficult to merely hum along instead of bursting into powerful song. I found this thought to be so beautiful, namely that the Lord continues to build His work: “Glorious, glorious, is the work of God!” That is His agenda for this new year too. There are many question marks with respect to what this new year holds in store for us. No one really knows, but one thing is sure: the Lord has His own agenda, and He will continue to move it forward. He will continue to pursue His plan even in 2021. I already mentioned this with respect to the past year and I will quite

deliberately repeat it for this year: 2021 is nothing more than another phase in God's plan of salvation. It began after the fall into sin—and it will only end in the new creation, when the redeemed are finally with God and when man and the creation are exactly as God desires them to be. Then there will finally be peace, joy, rejoicing, and pure delight, because everything will once again correspond to the will of God. That is the objective of God's plan of redemption.

The next event in this plan of redemption is the return of Jesus Christ. We believe firmly that Jesus Christ will return and take His bridal congregation unto Himself. He wants to grant them early access to His kingdom, where everything is exactly as God desires it to be. Then we will be in the glory of God. That is our future! We have decided for this: our desire is to participate in the return of Christ! And it is for this reason that our motto for this new year is: "Christ, our future". We believe in the return of Jesus Christ and we want to prepare ourselves for this event.

Even within the Christian world, people ask us if we really still dare to preach that Jesus Christ is coming again. And the answer is yes! This is part of our mission!

The Apostles were sent for this very reason! As ambassadors of Jesus Christ, they cannot do anything but proclaim the imminent return of Christ. This is a promise from God, which is and remains true, no matter how many people still believe in it! The truth of God's promises is not dependent on this! Just think back to the great flood! Just remember the birth of the Messiah! Think about the resurrection of Jesus Christ! How many people believed in those things? No more than a handful! But that did not bother God. He had given this promise, and He always made this promise into a reality. The same applies to the return of Jesus Christ. Christ is our future. He will indeed return, and we prepare ourselves for this event. There is absolutely no doubt about it. We believe in this!

Many people say this is just a story that the Church tells believers in order to comfort them, in order to make the present a little more bearable: "Oh, don't worry about it. Everything will be fine! Tomorrow things will be better. Just stay with us, and then you will see." We are most definitely not dreamers who take refuge in a fantasy when we do not like the reality of the present. Dear brothers and sisters, a New Apostolic Christian is not a fanatic. We are not dreamers! We are women and men of action. We are not dreaming, but have set a goal for ourselves, namely the return of

Jesus Christ. We are preparing ourselves for this. We have a plan of action, and we will continue to pursue it in 2021.

Preparing ourselves for the coming of Jesus Christ means wanting to become as God would like us to be. Our example for this is Jesus Christ. He was the one man who corresponded perfectly to the will of God. Since we want to enter into His kingdom, we must become what God wants us to be, and for this reason we take direction from this man who perfectly fulfilled the will of God: Jesus Christ. That is our plan of action. Here too the words apply: "Christ, our future". Let us become as He is in order to be where He is.

In the Bible this preparation process is often compared with a beautiful image that is frequently discussed from many different points of view, namely the image of a competition

or race. All Christians must run a race. They must face off in a competition. With this image, the Spirit of God wants to show us that our preparation for the return of Christ is not a simple walk in the park. It is anything but pleasant. It is a competition. This requires effort and strength. We must exhibit zeal and apply energy. It will not be enough to

merely register and participate. No, we must make an effort to become as God would have us be. It requires effort and work to adapt to the will of God. And that will also be the case in this year. We must constantly work on this. This sort of thing does not meet with much resonance nowadays. After all, everything has to be easy. But our preparation for the coming of Jesus Christ is not easy. It is a struggle, a race.

In any competition there is also a possibility of failure. Not all can win the race. There can be only one winner. In order to win—that is, in order to receive the crown of eternal life—we must endure until the end. Once again, it will not suffice to merely register and participate. We must compete, work, and remain active until the end, come what may. Those who stop beforehand will lose. It is hardly possible to express it any more clearly than in this image. It is a contest, a competition. Those who do not endure until the end will lose.

In the second epistle of Paul to Timothy we read that one can only win a competition if one plays by the rules (cf. 2 Timothy 2: 5). That much is also clear: when the Olympic Games are held—or when there is some other sort of competition—anyone who does not play by the rules will not win. These rules are not defined by us, however. It is God

*Jesus did not make
a mistake when He
called you. He knows
that you can make it!*

who makes the rules. It is Jesus Christ who defines them. One of the rules of this competition is: you must align your life with the Apostles' doctrine; the Apostles proclaim the gospel. Another is: you can only be saved in the fellowship of the believers; a loner will never be able to reach the goal. I will leave it at these two rules. If we do not follow these rules, we will not be able to win the competition.

"Christ, our future": He will most certainly come again. In order to prepare ourselves for this, let us become as He is. That is a competition that requires a great deal of energy. We must endure, we must work on this until the very end, and we must remain within the framework of the rules.

Here the author of the letter to the Hebrews states: "Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." Christ is our future. It is likewise He who will make it possible for us to reach this future. We will not manage this without Him. And here it says that we are to look to Jesus in order to draw our strength and gain the victory. This is also something important for this year: let us always look up to Jesus Christ. Let us look up to Him because He is the author of our faith. He has elected us. I did not decide that I would get into heaven. He was the one who initiated the action. He has invited you and me, and has given us the opportunity to be with Him forever. He did this in full awareness of who we are. After all, He already knew us before we were born. He was fully aware of what we are, what we would do, what we can do, and what we cannot do. He has decided that we will indeed manage this task and reach our goal. Let us look to the author of our faith. He did not make a mistake when He called you. He knew very well that you can make it if you want to do so. He gave His life and brought the sacrifice so that you could be redeemed. He will also give us the strength we need again and again. Let us look up to Jesus! In Him we will find the strength and the energy we need in order to compete in this contest.

This strength is a wonderful kind of power, a power of attraction. It gives us the strength to keep running. The drawing power of His love helps us in this endeavour. Look to Him! Think about His love! Think about His sacrifice! Think about His perfection! Think about His nature! Think about His glory! Whenever we take a moment to occupy ourselves intensively with the nature of Jesus Christ, it always motivates us to carry on—even when things are very difficult, even when things are very bad indeed. When I think about Jesus Christ and seek fellowship with Him, I will have no reason at all to give up. I will always have a reason to carry on because I want to be as He is—and be with Him forever! That is the solution: this is the greatest



Bishop Rudolf Fässler (Switzerland)

we can ever achieve. This is our motivation. This is our strength. Let us continually look up to Jesus Christ.

Looking up also means that we do not necessarily concentrate on the things around us, on the difficulties, on others, on all the things happening around us. Take Peter, for example, when he walked on the water: as long as he remained focused on Jesus, he was successful. As soon as he began to look at the waves and the storm around him, he lost his courage and began to sink. That is my advice for 2021: let us look up to Jesus Christ! Let us not focus on the difficulties. Let us not focus on other people—what they say, what they think, or what they do. Let us very consciously look to Jesus Christ. He will give us the strength to carry on.

Let us very consciously look to Jesus Christ and not focus so much on the things we have accomplished. He is the finisher of our faith. If we only think about the things we accomplish, earn, and sacrifice, we will never manage this.

Nor will we manage if we let our problems, weaknesses, or imperfections discourage us. He is the finisher of our faith. When we enter into His kingdom, it will be thanks to His grace. This makes us humble, but on the other hand, it also gives us hope and confidence. Our participation in the day of the Lord is not dependent on the opinion of others. It is not dependent on our accomplishments. It is pure grace! Let us consciously seek after His grace. He is the



finisher of our faith. Let us continually look to Jesus Christ and not be distracted by the difficulties or dwell on our own achievements.

Let us not focus on our needs either. Human beings tend to do that at times. We often occupy ourselves a great deal with our own needs. Then we start to feel sorry for ourselves. “Everything is so terrible and unfair. We didn’t deserve that, did we? Why do these things always happen to me?” And “back in the old days everything was much better. Today everything has become so difficult”, and so on.

This whining and self-pity—let me say this very clearly—it is nothing more than a waste of time and energy. Let us look to Jesus Christ! He calls to us and says, “Come on! You can do it!” Let His love have its drawing effect upon us! Let us trust in His love, His grace, and His omnipotence. He will complete His work. He is our future. He gives us the guarantee that we can do it if we follow Him. Christ is the guarantor of our future.

We are people of the future. But the choice we have made for our future, namely Jesus Christ, also defines our present.

If we prepare ourselves actively and always want to be—or become—as God wants us to be, this will have its effects on our lives in the present. Here too, we are not dreamers, but rather want to orient ourselves very concretely by Jesus Christ in our daily lives. Already today we want to do His will and act in accordance with His example—even in difficult times. In the past year there were many crises. Here in Europe everyone is talking about the coronavirus

pandemic. In other places on earth, there are other problems on top of this, and they are at least as bad. People react to this in different ways. Take the Christians, for example: there are some Christians who behave in truly exemplary

fashion. There really are some beautiful things to report. Here and there, however, we also see the opposite. People say that you can really tell what people are made of—what motivates them, what lives in them—in crises. And there is one thing that concerns me—not only specifically in our Church, but also among Christians in general, among those who say they are Christians: here and there I notice how big the ego—our own person, our own opinion, our own well-being, and our own interests—still is in situations of crisis. In some individuals, the ego becomes so great that Jesus

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all may be in the congregation,
we all have the same goal.
This creates unity.*



Chief Apostle Schneider celebrates Holy Communion for the departed

suddenly becomes very small. Their “I” becomes so great that they completely forget about the collective “we”. This has some very different effects and gives me pause to think.

Let us prepare ourselves for Jesus Christ, for His return. Already today we orient ourselves by the example of our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ: in every situation, no matter what it may be. The example of Jesus is very easy to describe: He was a man of love. He forgave. He helped others. He shared. He served. “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve” (Mark 10: 45). He sacrificed Himself for His neighbour and shared His suffering. That is our example, even in difficult times.

Yesterday I read something in the Bible that really struck me. Jesus was asked whether it was necessary to pay taxes to Caesar. Jesus responded: “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are of Caesar, and to God the things that are of God” (Matthew 22: 21). You are all familiar with the background here. The people were trying to set a trap for Him. And so it is not surprising that they did not like His answer at all. They had hoped He would say that they did not have to pay taxes to the Caesar. That would have made them happy. But among other things, Jesus Christ wanted to show them that we have—as is stated in our Catechism—“a generally positive relationship to the state, that is, the worldly authorities” (Catechism of the New Apostolic Church 2.4.10), and that we are obedient to the state. As New Apostolic Christians, this is something that we even profess in the Tenth Article of our creed. The commandments of God form the framework. So as long as the rules and regulations of the authorities do not violate the will of God, we are to obey them.

There are people who have asked me why I wear a mask. I answer them by saying: “Because I am New Apostolic.” That is a regulation of the authorities. My reference point for whether I should obey this regulation or not is the commandment of God—not my personal opinion, not my personal interpretation. I recommend reading the corresponding chapter in the Catechism. We follow the regulations of the authorities as long as they do not contravene the law of God. That is not my opinion. It is the commandment of God.

Even in the present we orient ourselves by the example of Jesus Christ. Once again: we are not fanatics, we are not dreamers. Until the Lord returns we remain women and men of action, and we plan for our future here on earth. After all, I do not know whether the Lord will return tomorrow or only in ten or twenty years from now. We will work until He returns. Therefore we also plan for our future here on this earth. Even in these plans, however, we involve Jesus, and we develop them on the foundation of His doctrine, the gospel. Whether in our profession, our matrimony, or the raising of our children, we adhere to the doctrine of Jesus Christ. Let us live up to His will. This applies to our relationship with earthly and material things as well. Here too we adhere to the commandment of Jesus Christ. This applies to our relationship with our neighbour: we adhere to the rules of the gospel. This is also part of it. “Christ, our future”. This is a choice we have made, and we prepare ourselves for this very actively. This requires a great deal of effort, but we will endure to the end. We draw the strength we need for this from Jesus Christ. We look to Him alone. He is the author and finisher of our faith. He is our example, our motivation. We align ourselves by Him. This has implications for both our present and the plans we develop for our future here on this earth.

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I would just like to mention one last point with regard to the annual motto I have chosen, and with which the District Apostles are in agreement: “Christ, our future”. There is a reason it does not say: “Christ, my future”, but rather “Christ, our future”. After all, the rules of God apply. It is only in the community of the believers that we can be saved. A loner will not be able to win the competition. Within the congregation, we may all be very different from one another. Our opinions, situations, and circumstances of life—all of these things are very different. But also this year, let us very deliberately concentrate on the fact that we all have the same goal, and that we must all follow the same path in order to reach it. I do not want to expand on that now. We have the whole year for that. But this is the most important thing, after all. Let us concentrate on the most essential: in the congregation—as different as we may be from one another—we all have the same goal, and we must all follow the same path in order to reach it. This creates unity.

One point that is very important to me with respect to our motto is that when we say, “Christ, our future”, we are not only talking about our own future but also that of our children. After all, we must take care of them. I can well understand parents who have younger children and who are asking themselves: “What will become of our children? What kind of future will they have? How will things go on?” Dear brothers and sisters, Christ is also their future—the future of the new generation, the youth, and the children. Even if the circumstances are completely different in every respect, one thing is certain: Christ is also their future! Christ is also the path that can lead them to this future. Christ is also the best solution for them: His doctrine, His gospel. He is also the author and finisher of their faith. The same thus applies to our children: Christ is their future!

But this can only be the case if they realise that Christ is also our future. We cannot get our children to believe that Christ is their future if they do not feel, realise, and experience that Christ is also their parents’ future. In order for them to be in a position to know that Christ is their future, they must know Christ—His past and His present. In order for them to be able to know that Christ is their future, they must also know Jesus Christ as a man: His activity and His nature while He lived on this earth. They will not see this on a screen. They will not hear this on social media. They must hear this from their parents. I thus appeal to all our parents: you do not need to preach to your children—I never did that either, and you wouldn’t even have a chance with that approach anyway—but tell them something about Jesus every now and then: “You know what? That reminds me

of a story. One time Jesus did this and that.” Just like that, in very normal conversation—so that they know that this is not only a story, but that father and mother also believe that there is such a person as the Lord Jesus and that they know how He worked on this earth. Let us simply insert this into our conversation every now and then: “Ah yes! The Lord Jesus once did this, and said that. This is what He did. That was how He reacted.” This is not only the task of the Sunday School teacher; this is a task for every parent! Let us also show our children Jesus Christ in the present and tell them: “Oh, do you know something? From the perspective of Jesus, you would have to look at it this way. If He were here now, He would act this way. He would now say this.” Once again: this is the task of the parents, not of society, not of the Church, and not of the teachers. It is the parents’ task.

This is also a message of comfort: Christ is the future of our children. In order for them to know that this is really true, they must realise and feel that Christ is also our future. Then we can impart this message to them.

“Christ, our future”—this applies to the congregation, this applies to our children, but it also applies to all other people. We know, after all, that Christ is working on giving all human beings the opportunity to be redeemed by Him. That is the objective of His plan of redemption. This is also to have an influence on our lives and on our relationships with other people. Let us never forget: the Lord Jesus also wants to gain these human beings—even if they are very bad and very evil indeed—for Himself. It is part of our mission to make it possible for others to experience the love of God. They too must learn that God loves them. And they will only be able to discover this through us. Christ is also the future of my neighbour.

CORE THOUGHTS

Our future is in Christ.

- Our goal is to be with Christ.
- In order to reach this goal, we draw our strength and motivation from Christ.
- The future that we have chosen defines our daily lives.



Free will rather than obedience

Obedience? Freedom! “I don’t want to be obedient any longer,” the Chief Apostle said and described a better way of following Jesus Christ. A divine service about the power of free will. A total of 4,500 participants followed the youth service on 15 March 2019 in Colonia in Uruguay, which was transmitted to congregations in Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay.

When children reach adolescence, they want more independence and to make their own decisions, Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider said. Obedience is a word they do not necessarily want to hear. However, it is still the Apostles’ mission to teach us the commandments of Jesus Christ. “Let us strengthen our faith so that obedience is born of faith.”

“What then are the commandments of Jesus Christ?” the Chief Apostle asked and mentioned five points.

- The Ten Commandments: “Jesus said: ‘I did not come to destroy the law.’ Read through them again. It’s worth it.”
- The commandment of faith: “We would like the Lord to show and explain everything to us so that we have proof.” Nevertheless: “We must believe in God, in Jesus Christ. Sometimes we must believe without seeing, without understanding, and without any explanations.”
- The commandment concerning access to salvation: “We must listen to the word of God and receive the sacraments. This is not a rule invented by the New Apostolic Church. This is a commandment of Jesus Christ.”
- The commandment of discipleship: “We must follow the Lord’s example and always act, think, and speak as He acted, thought, and spoke.”
- The commandment to love our neighbour: this is a two-fold commandment. Firstly, this is about love in the congregation. The members are to help and support each other. Secondly, this is about love for all of man-



Chief Apostle Schneider spent Friday and Saturday with the youth and conducted a youth service on Friday evening

kind. And that means that we profess the gospel and pass it on.

“We must keep these commandments as Jesus kept them,” the Chief Apostle said. “Our motivation is not influenced by the fear of punishment. Nor should our motivation be influenced by the fact that we want to receive a reward at some point.” Instead, the Chief Apostle cited the following attributes as motivation:

- gratitude: “Those who believe in Jesus Christ, who believe in His sacrifice, in the salvation He offers, are thankful to the Lord and keep His commandments out of gratitude.”
- freedom: “We are not subject to a foreign power. We belong to God, and only to God. We have His law.” And: “I exercised my freedom and chose Jesus Christ. That is my path.”
- love: “I don’t want to be separated from Jesus Christ. I love Jesus Christ, He died for me. I don’t want to leave Him. That is why I will first check to see what will help me remain with Him.”
- readiness: “We have a holy mission: making other people understand that there is a way other than selfishness. There is a way other than money and materialism. And there is a way other than violence and power.”
- development: “His thoughts become our thoughts, meaning we no longer need to be obedient. Being obedient means complying with someone else’s wish or will. My objective is: I don’t want to be obedient any longer. I would like the will of Jesus Christ to become entirely my will.”



CORE THOUGHTS

John 15: 10

“If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.”

Our obedience towards the messengers of Jesus is based on our faith and our love for Jesus.

Old creation, new creation: a life in conflict

Sunday, 12 January 2020: The congregation in Dundo, which lies in northern Angola, breathed a sigh of relief—Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider had come in order to make clear to them the deep purpose of faith in God. His message: “God liberates us from the work of the evil one through the work of Jesus Christ.”



■ NAC Western Germany



There is hardly a Christian divine service that does not revolve around this theme: two kingdoms opposite one another—the classic conflict between good and evil. Chief Apostle Schneider shows a way out of this dilemma.

This battle between good and evil, above and below, also has a practical side, the Chief Apostle assured his listeners: “Jesus wants to liberate us from the evil one by teaching us humbleness, trust, and love for God and our neighbour.” The Christian church today can do a great deal with this. After all, the Lord not only demonstrated to us the theory of good conduct in life but also practised it.

A life without harmony

“There has always been conflict between good and evil,” said the Chief Apostle. “By instigating human beings to fall into sin, the evil one disrupted the harmony that originally existed between man and God,” he explained. From then on, man had to live at a distance from God. Even the harmony among human beings themselves was suddenly

destroyed, because Adam and Eve had been of equal standing before the fall into sin. They had complemented one another, and each of them had felt the other indispensable. “However, sin led to division, the assignment of blame, and the lust for power, as well as envy and hatred.”

Not least of all, the harmony between mankind and the creation was also disturbed: man was to have been lord over the earth, was to have protected and cultivated the creation with love and wisdom. “But sin misleads man to attach too much importance to the riches of the earth—to the point that he sometimes becomes a slave to them. Human beings have often selfishly exploited nature and even gone so far as to harm it in order to satisfy their greed.”

Liberated from the work of evil

“It is from this evil work that God seeks to liberate us,” the Chief Apostle pointed out. Instead, He wants to lead us into His kingdom, where evil does not exist. In order to achieve this,



The Chief Apostle celebrates Holy Communion for the departed

- Jesus destroys the lies of the devil by proclaiming the truth. “His teaching reveals the true nature of God to us.”
- He has given us access to fellowship with God. “He gave His life as a sacrifice.”
- He takes away all claims of the devil against us. “He erases our sins.”
- He strengthens us so that we are able to resist the attacks of the devil. “All the devil wants to do is exploit our afflictions in order to make us distance ourselves from God.”
- He restores the unity among us by gathering us around Himself. “Only if we are one in Christ can we achieve true oneness among one another.”

Even from the evil within us

The Chief Apostle went further: “Jesus also wants to free us from our own evil works, from the evil within us, which prevents us from entering into the kingdom of God.” He offered the following examples to illustrate this.

- Adam and Eve wanted to be like God and judge between good and evil on their own. “We find this same mindset with Peter, who believed he knew better than Jesus with regard to what was good for Him. Jesus liberates from such attitudes by teaching us to be humble and submissive before God.”
- “Those who are inclined to have doubts demand signs, proof, and explanations of God. However, the Lord teaches us to trust God under all circumstances, even when we do not recognise or understand what He is doing.”
- Jesus described those who served Him for the wrong reasons as hypocrites and evildoers. “He wants to liber-

ate us from unrighteousness by allowing us to grow in love for God. Those who love God with a pure heart will serve Him without calculation.”

- He also desires to liberate us from egoism, the source of countless evils, “by requiring us to love our neighbour”. This is concretely demonstrated when we observe the Golden Rule: “And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise” (Luke 6: 31).
- “Those who love God do not attach too much importance to earthly goods or make them into idols. Our love for God allows us to appreciate and preserve the work of the Creator.”

A glance into the future

In conclusion, the Chief Apostle added another forward-looking thought to his sermon: “Love for our neighbour prompts us to distribute the earth’s resources fairly between each individual and the generations. God is preparing us to enter into His glory as firstlings. Evil will no longer exist there. He is tirelessly pursuing His work of redemption, and will continue to do so all the way to the Last Judgement. Those who allow themselves to be saved by Jesus Christ will then enter into the new creation, where they will live in perfect harmony with God, among one another, and with the creation.”

CORE THOUGHTS

2 Timothy 4: 18

“And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom.”

God delivers us from the work of the evil one through the activity of Jesus Christ. Jesus wants to liberate us from the evil one by teaching us about humbleness, trust, and love for God and our neighbour.



Talking about the great deeds of God

As part of his 44,000-kilometre trip through the South Pacific in 2019, Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider also visited the brothers and sisters in New Zealand. On Sunday, 22 September 2019 he conducted a divine service in Christchurch, which was transmitted to all the congregations in New Zealand, Australia, and Papua New Guinea.

Referring to the Bible text, the Chief Apostle said that the prophet Zechariah was addressing the Jews who had returned from their exile in Babylon. He called upon them to rebuild the temple and announced a new period of salvation. “For believers, this message of the prophet brings to expression the salvation effected by Christ,” said the Chief Apostle by way of introduction. He went on to explain that this Bible passage could be understood as a prophecy concerning the coming thousand-year kingdom of peace.

Our conviction

“Based on our faith, it is our conviction that Jesus will return. He will take His bride unto Himself, and those whom Jesus

accepts will enter into the kingdom of God as firstlings.” And then the Chief Apostle began to talk about the marriage of the Lamb and the thousand-year kingdom of peace, when the firstlings will proclaim the gospel with the Son of God: “Even if everything else remains unchanged—people will continue to be born, will live, and will die—Satan will no longer be able to prevent the proclamation of the gospel during this time period,” he said.

Our calling

It is our hope, our wish, and our will to be among those souls who return to earth with Jesus Christ and proclaim the gospel to all mankind, both those on earth and those in

the beyond. That is the purpose of our calling. That is our future. That is our calling. And that is the future for which we prepare ourselves.

Our proclamation

“We are elected and called to be part of this royal priesthood,” said Chief Apostle Schneider. And the preparation of the believers consists of proclaiming today that “God is with us”. The Chief Apostle then appealed: “Let us tell people and show them that God is with us!”

- Celebrating our encounter with God: “Let us tell people that we are Christians, and that we go to the divine services because we have an encounter with God there. This is part of our lives!”
- No fear of the future: “We are not afraid of the future! We know, we are sure: God is with us. We trust in Him. We are confident.” The people around us are to see this, the Chief Apostle said.
- Following Christ in all situations of life: “We have decided to heed the commandments of God. We have decided to love. No one can prevent us from following the example of Jesus.”
- Being grateful for our wealth in Christ: “We are rich in Christ, and our thankfulness and joy should be visible to the people around us.”
- Looking forward to eternal fellowship: “We look forward to being with Christ forever—and soon!”
- Being one with Christ: “People will listen to us when we talk about our brother and our sister. They will be able to see and hear, ‘Oh, things are different with them! They do not criticise. They forgive one another. There is no accusation or reproach.’”
- Doing good works in the name of Jesus: “Let us help those who are in need. Let us comfort those who are sad.”

Proclaiming the great deeds of God

“Let us not hesitate to talk about the fact that God is with us!” underlined the Chief Apostle, and went on to summarise: “Let us make it known that we are practising New Apostolic Christians. Let us bring to expression our trust in God, our resolve to follow Jesus, our gratitude, and our joy. Let us talk about how fond we are of the congregation. Instead of talking about the good works that we do, let us emphasise the great deeds of God, that which He has done upon us.”



The Chief Apostle ordained the District Elders Patrick Elly Silabe and Lucas Carlson Supok as Apostles for Papua New Guinea

CORE THOUGHTS

Zechariah 8: 22–23

Yes, many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord. Thus says the Lord of hosts: “In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, ‘Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.’”

We have been called to be part of the royal priesthood that proclaims the gospel to all people. We prepare ourselves for this by proclaiming the great deeds that God has done upon us.

THE CONVERSION OF SAUL

ACCORDING TO ACTS 9: 1-19

Saul persecuted and threatened the disciples of Jesus. He was even responsible for some of their deaths. One day he went to the high priest and asked him to authorise him to go to the synagogue in Damascus and capture any followers of the new doctrine and bring them to Jerusalem.



Saul set off. As he approached Damascus he was suddenly surrounded by a light from heaven. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"

Saul asked, "Who are You, Lord?"

"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

The men who were with Saul were speechless. They heard a voice but could not see anyone. Saul stood up. When he opened his eyes, he could not see; he was blind.

His companions took him by the hand and led him into Damascus. For three days Saul could not see, and he would not eat or drink.

One of the disciples lived in Damascus. He was called Ananias. Jesus appeared to him and called, "Ananias!"

Ananias replied, "Here I am, Lord."

Jesus said to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight and inquire at the house of Judas

for a man called Saul of Tarsus. He will be praying. God has already showed him in a vision that you, Ananias, will come to him and place your hand on him so that he can see again."

Ananias replied, "Lord, I have heard a great deal about this man. He has done much harm to your saints in Jerusalem. And he also has authority from the high priests to capture all those who call on Your name here in Damascus."

Jesus told him though, "Just go, for I have chosen Saul to help Me. He will preach My name before the

Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. I will show him how he must suffer for My name's sake."

Ananias went to the house, laid his hands on Saul, and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road to Damascus, has sent me so that you can see again and can be filled with the Holy Spirit."

At that moment, Saul was able to see again: He stood up and was baptised. When he had eaten, his strength returned.

A few days later, he began to teach the people about Jesus.



AT DEYVID'S IN EXÚ (BRAZIL)

Hello, I'm **Deyvid**.

This is our **church** in Exú. We can see it from our house. This is the church in which I was baptised and sealed.

My mother and my cousin are our Sunday School teachers. The day this picture was taken it was my mother's turn to take the **lesson**. There are only three children in our congregation: my cousins Fladson and Israel and I.

When it is somebody's **birthday** in our congregation, we all get together to congratulate the birthday child. We try to be kind and loving to each other and to live our faith in fellowship as the Lord would have wanted it.

This is my **family**: my father, Francisco, is a District Elder and looks after our congregation. Then there is my mother, Valdete, and my brother, Marcus, and me.

My **school** is not far from our house. I am in grade three. My mother takes me there every day. At the back of the room you can see my teacher Aparecida. My favourite spot to sit is at the front of the class, because it is too noisy in the back. The day this picture was taken I gave my teacher one of our Church magazines.



Meet my **classmates**; there are 28 of us. Two are missing...

My favourite dish is **cuscuz**, a dish that is made from steamed corn flakes. I also love fried meat, French fries, and of course pizza.



Meet Maggie. She is a **German shepherd**. Actually she is my brother's dog, but I often play with her or take her for walks. I have my own little fish. I like animals a lot.



I love to ride my bike. On this picture you can see me at Açude Itamagi, a **lake** on the outskirts of town. The area I am standing on in the picture is now full of water, because we had a lot of rain. When people talk about our region, most of them only think of drought, cactuses, and withered trees. But that is not the case! We have a rainy season and then everything turns green and beautiful again.



I have a lot of **friends**. I also love to spend time with my cousins. Here you can see us on my parents' little farm. Sometimes the harvest is good, then there is enough for the whole family and we can even sell some of the produce.





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| The end of human life

Contraception and organ transplants, the wish for a child or even euthanasia... The question of life and death is something that affects everyone directly and very personally. To give New Apostolic Christians orientation and help them make a responsible decision, an official essay entitled “The Beginning and End of Human Life” examines the matter from the point of view of the New Apostolic faith.

From the perspective of our faith, man has been created by God in His likeness and is part of both the visible and invisible creation. The spiritual nature of man is immortal. Physical life begins with the fusion of ovum and sperm and reaches its end at death.

Since the second half of the 20th century, biomedical knowledge has made it possible to intervene at the beginning and end of human life. Since man, who has been created in God's image, is particularly worthy of protection, the question of the exact beginning and end of human life arises in order to avoid violating the divine commandment not to kill. From the perspective of our faith, also of importance is the question of the point at which human life is ensouled and the point at which, in the process of dying, spirit and soul are separated from the body. Here we find a close connection to the realm of the departed

Responsible decisions and orientation

In order to help orient our members in making their own, responsible decisions, we will examine biomedical methods and possibilities of intervention at the beginning and end of human life from the perspective of our faith.

In concrete terms, when contemplating methods of contraception or artificial insemination, it should be taken into consideration whether human life is prevented from developing or whether it is killed. In this context, we will also address the termination of human life by destroying artificially fertilised ova or by aborting embryos growing in the uterus. In the field of assisted dying and organ removal from brain-dead individuals, it is important that there be no active shortening of life or, particularly, killing.

Position on the beginning of human life

community explored the beginning of human life in the previous issue. The official position of the New Apostolic Church on this is as follows:

- In order to best protect man, who is the image of God, the Church respects human life from the moment of conception and rejects any killing of this life. Such life is entitled to full human dignity.
- The exact time at which ensoulment takes place is in the hand of God and cannot be determined with certainty by human understanding. In order to provide the best possible protection to ensouled human life, the Church

assumes, however, that ensoulment takes place at the moment the ovum and sperm are joined.

- The Church accepts biomedical methods and treatments through which no fertilised ova are intentionally destroyed (that is, no selection made by humans).
- The Church is aware that there is a natural biological selection through which no insignificant number of fertilised ova (embryos) die without any human interference.
- Adhering to the position of our Church may lead to limitations upon what is medically possible. These limitations should be accepted with trust in God, because human life is given by God and must be respected as a matter of principle.

The process of dying

At the end of human life is the dying process, which ends with physical death. Depending on its causes, this process can take a long period of time or only a matter of seconds. Upon death, biological life comes to its end and the immortal soul departs from the body.





Since about 1960, comatose patients can be kept alive artificially thanks to progress in intensive care. In this context, the question of when exactly death occurs was raised anew and in an entirely different way, because it was important to determine under which circumstances life support could be terminated.

For reasons of charity, some people wish to help others even after death through donating an organ. In this context too, a new definition of death became necessary, because organs may only be removed after death, but need to be removed while they are still functional.

In order to alleviate pain during the process of dying or to relieve agony in order to allow for a death with dignity, family members and physicians may consider assisted dying. Sometimes such considerations are part of provisions for the future, such as in the form of a living will.

Today, decisions on these issues must be made within a legal framework. Support for such decisions will be provided from the perspective of our faith.

Medical perspective

Death is preceded by the process of dying, which is not a single point in time, but a gradual failure of the function of the organs down to the individual cells. Connective tissue cells, for example, can survive for weeks after brain death and cardiac arrest.

The brain is the decisive organ controlling the body. After its death, all organs and tissues inevitably die. Brain death usually occurs a few minutes after a final cardiac arrest.

In mechanically ventilated patients today, it is possible to observe a complete and irreversible function failure of the

brain, including the brainstem, while there is still cardiac activity. As a result, the criterion for death is no longer cardiac death, but rather brain death. In order to provide the highest possible certainty in diagnosing brain death, two independent medical specialists are required to carry out, at different times, comprehensive examinations.

Brain death is defined as the irreversible cessation of all brain function in the cerebrum, cerebellum, and brain stem. At the same time the cardiovascular system is still artificially maintained by mechanical ventilation.

A persistent vegetative state, which allows the patient to survive for quite a long time, is to be differentiated from brain death. It results from long-term circulatory impairment in the brain, whereby the brainstem is still able to function. Patients may have their eyes open, but cannot focus on objects. They are not able to speak or react to external stimuli. Some reflexes such as the sucking reflex and grasp reflex are, however, present.

Legal perspective

In many countries death is only legally recognised after brain death has been diagnosed by a physician in a mandatory assessment.

Religious point of view

In the context of the end of life, all religions attribute much more importance to the process of dying and to supporting the dying and those close to them through pastoral care than to the exact point of death. Regulations concerning intercessory prayer and expiation for the departed in connection with dying and committing the body to its rest are to be found in various denominations and religions.

In statements concerning organ donation or burning of the body, concepts of life after death play a pivotal role.

In the Christian faith, dying is often interpreted as the transition into the hereafter. The major Christian churches acknowledge the criterion of brain death and support organ donation. The exact point in time at which the soul leaves the body is not specified.

Position of the New Apostolic Church on the end of human life

- The exact point in time at which the soul separates from the body cannot be determined. Neither biblical witness nor any scientific procedure allows us to ascertain this. In addition, living and dying are interwoven in such a way that a clear definition concerning the exact point in time at which a soul separates from the body seems arbitrary.
- In order to best protect man, who is the image of God, the Church unconditionally respects human life until brain death and rejects interventions that attempt to actively bring about death.
- The Church assumes that the separation of soul and body takes place at brain death. Dealing respectfully with the soulless body is a tradition within many religions; this also applies to situations in which, following brain death, respiration and blood circulation are artificially maintained in order to remove organs for transplantation.

Summary

Neither the moment of ensoulment nor the moment when the soul leaves the body can be unequivocally determined. In order to protect human life, the Church assumes that ensoulment takes place at the moment of conception and that ensouled life ends with brain death. Human life must be protected and may not be actively terminated.



Left: Transmission of a video service
Below: One of many virtual choirs



A church without borders or walls

Locked church doors, divine services on YouTube, mouth and nose protection at the altar: the pandemic really shook up church life in 2020. It was the year of COVID-19. Following is a chronicle of the year's events.

It all began very gradually. At the start of March the motto was still: "Don't panic, but use appropriate hygiene." Then came the instruction to "wash hands frequently and thoroughly". And soon after: "Members can decide on their own whether to participate in divine services."

And suddenly the doors were closed

The requirements tightened sharply when the World Health Organisation declared a pandemic on 11 March: extraordinary hand hygiene was recommended. Members were asked not to attend church services if they presented any cold symptoms and were told to refrain from shaking hands or embracing when greeting one another or saying goodbye.

And then everything happened very quickly in the turbulent period between the eleventh and twelfth weeks of the calendar year: the churches in Italy were the first to shut down, then came those in Germany and Canada. This was followed by congregations in South-East Asia, South America, Niger, the Western Pacific, the USA, and the

Democratic Republic of Congo—at a rate of one region almost every day.

How the divine services reached the believers

"If the believers cannot come to the divine services, then the divine services will come to the believers." It was under this motto that the District Churches around the world began broadcasting divine services out of the blue: North America and South Africa had a bit of a head start with their streaming portals and television networks, respectively. In other places, YouTube became the central gathering point for churchgoers on Sundays. Since then, everyone has been posting the latest links on nac.today—and these remain the most frequently accessed posts to date.

District Churches in which only a fraction of the population have sufficient internet access—if any at all—had to take a different approach. In the Democratic Republic of Congo South-East, for example, ministers went from house to house to hold a brief devotional and celebrate Holy



A family joins an online service

Communion. The District Church, which is home to some 1.8 million members, even went so far as to reactivate all of its retired ministers to serve as reinforcements.

Church life withstands the crisis

Streamed divine services soon became a firmly established component of church life, which even met with interest from the media. In addition, the Church's leadership provided spiritual inspiration for the space of time stretching between Sundays, and regularly provided outlines for devotionals. And because congregational celebrations of Holy Communion had to be suspended, the three large wafer bakeries in Germany, Zambia, and South Africa reduced—and eventually ceased—production.

In the meantime, the members of the Church began to show what they were made of. Many volunteers invested their energy and free time to keep church life going. Lessons, ministers' meetings, and even the meeting of the District Apostles were transformed into video conferences. Choir practices and musical performances all took place in a virtual context. And five young Germans were even able to snatch up some start-up funding in a government-sponsored competition with their "meinegemeinde.digital" web toolkit.

The long way back into God's house

For many people, the COVID-19 crisis was just another emergency situation with which they had to deal. Countries in the south of the globe in particular have long been engaged in a battle for their very survival. The New Apostolic aid organisations around the world did their best to help alleviate the worst of these situations. This meant that helpers were now confronted by some completely new challenges which they were only able to tackle by applying some rather unusual ideas.

District Apostle Tshitshi Tshisekedi celebrates Holy Communion with a family at home because the churches are closed



Virtual choir practice: the choir master is in the church, the choir members at home

In late April, the Church leadership began to explore the possibilities of reopening the congregations, and started working on guidelines for this process. It was to take until June—if it even happened at all—before believers could physically attend divine services in many places. The number of participants was limited to make it possible for congregations to adhere to the prescribed physical distancing regulations. Since then, safety markings, protective masks, and disinfectants have come to define the picture in the naves of our church buildings.

However, in South America only about six per cent of all congregations were ever allowed to open again. And in Austria the church buildings were closed once again at the start of December in the context of a nationwide lockdown. Meanwhile, the number of Covid-19 cases is still increasing, and the situation remains tense. Yet the Church is well prepared. A minister who served along in one of the early video services summed it up this way: "It felt like a church without borders or walls."

Changes in the circle of the Apostles

There were only a few retirements and ordinations of Apostles in the second half of last year. On account of travel restrictions, the District Apostles carried these out by mandate of the Chief Apostle. Currently, 348 Apostles are active worldwide.



Above: Apostle Lionel Meyer (left) is retired by District Apostle Kriel
Left: Apostles Jonathan Karl Sturm and Arnaud Martig are ordained by District Apostle Mark Woll

A total of 250,500 ministers were active around the globe on 31 December 2020 in diaconal or priestly service. Together with the Apostles they look after 57,800 congregations worldwide. Currently there are 325 Apostles, 7 District Apostle Helpers, 15 District Apostles, and the Chief Apostle.

Ordinations

Two Apostles were ordained by District Apostle Mark Woll on Sunday, 20 December 2020. These are the hitherto Bishop Jonathan Karl Sturm (1976), who was ordained for Western Canada and District Evangelist Arnaud Martig (1971) for Central and Eastern Canada. Apostle Martig was

also given the additional responsibility of Lead Apostle for the Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, Rwanda, and Chad.

Retirements

District Apostle John Kriel placed Apostle Lionel Meyer (1955) into retirement on Sunday, 20 September 2020. Lionel Meyer had been active as an Apostle in South Africa for ten years. His retirement was carried out by the District Apostle at Barberton congregation in South Africa.

On Sunday, 20 December 2020, District Apostle Mark Woll retired District Apostle Helper John Sobottka (1956). The

District Apostle Helper had been active in Asia, Africa, and Canada for more than 17 years. Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider would have liked to come himself, but was not able to travel to Canada because of the ongoing pandemic.

Leave of absence and resignation

In October, Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider granted Apostle Baker Chakwana of Zambia a one-year leave of absence for personal reasons. Apostle Gabin Mwemena (DR Congo South-East) resigned from his ministry at the end of November for personal reasons. The international Church leader accepted his resignation.



Apostle Gabin Mwemena

District Apostle Areas

The New Apostolic Church is structured into fifteen District Apostle Areas around the world. These are led by the following District Apostles:

- Michael David Deppner (1961) – DR Congo West
- Michael Ehrich (1959) – Southern Germany
- Joseph Opemba Ekhuya (1969) – East Africa
- Edy Isnugroho (1963) – South-East Asia
- Leonard Richard Kolb (1956) – USA
- Rüdiger Krause (1960) – Northern and Eastern Germany
- John Leslie Kriel (1956) – Southern Africa
- Enrique Eduardo Minio (1960) – South America
- Wolfgang Nadolny (1956) – Berlin-Brandenburg
- Peter Schulte (1963) – Western Pacific
- Kububa Soko (1969) – Zambia, Malawi, Zimbabwe
- Rainer Storck (1958) – Western Germany
- Tshitshi Tshisekedi (1972) – DR Congo South-East
- Mark Woll (1959) – Canada
- Jürg Zbinden (1958) – Switzerland

Some of the District Apostles are supported by District Apostle Helpers, who generally work in specific countries:

- David Devaraj (1959) – India
- Frank Stephan Dzur (1959) – Canada
- John William Fendt (1957) – USA
- Arnold Ndakondwa Mhango (1957) – Malawi
- João Uanuque Misselo (1965) – Angola
- Mandla Patrick Mkhwanazi (1963) – Southern Africa
- Robert Nsamba (1962) – Zambia



Above: District Apostle Helper John Sobottka (left) is retired by District Apostle Woll; right: Apostle Baker Chakwana



In search of congregations

Alvin Witten and his wife, Jean, now live in Mozambique. They travel across the country, visiting hundreds of congregations, recording GPS coordinates, taking pictures of rectors and churches. Their to-do list has 1,326 congregations on it.



The rector and some of the members of the congregation Tacuane



Alvin and Jean Witten

Doesn't the church know where its congregations are located? Well, yes and no. While a rough overview is indeed available, a lot of current and detailed information is nevertheless missing for the congregations in Mozambique. This situation is about to change fundamentally.

They have been on the road for months now. Sometimes just the two of them, sometimes with local ministers. Sometimes by car, sometimes on foot. And when they are travelling by car, it is not always on the road: "The road between Maputo and Mocuba is just terrible. Even though this is a national road, it is broken in most areas for kilometres at a

time. For long distances, vehicles travel on the side of the road rather than on the surface, because the surface of the road is so bad." Another problem they often come across are washed out roads or bridges, something that happens often in the rainy season.

And then there are police stops. They encounter them often and they always hold you up. "Travelling in Mozambique, especially through the villages, is trying and tiring. It could take up to five hours to travel 100 kilometres," the Bishop says.

Thousands of kilometres away from home

Another challenge for the English-speaking couple is that Mozambique is a Portuguese-speaking country. "So Jean and I started learning Portuguese even before leaving for Mozambique," Alvin Witten says.



Top: While members look on, Sister Witten trains congregational rectors in how to collect and report data
Left: On the way to the next village

For the first year they lived in Maputo, which is in the south of the country. It soon became evident that this arrangement was not going to work since most of the congregations are in the centre and north of the country, Bishop Witten explains. If they were going to be effective in what they wanted to achieve, it would have to be Mocuba: some 1,700 kilometres north of Maputo. They now live in Mocuba, some 3,500 kilometres from their children and friends in Cape Town (South Africa). There is very little infrastructure in the town: no cinemas or recreational facilities. The closest shopping centre is almost two hours away, and medical facilities are almost non-existent.

Not even Google always knows the way

“There are more than 1,300 congregations spread throughout the country in the most remote places. Google does not even have the names of smaller towns registered, let alone the villages,” the Bishop says. There was not only respect for the task at hand, but also significant uncertainties connected with it. Since there were no records of congregations and no records of ministers or members in Mozambique, the only way to remedy this problem was to actually go and visit each congregation.

But even this seemed impossible. Where do you go if there are no addresses, no roads, no landmarks—just bush and paths? So when Alvin and Jean Witten travel, they take the responsible Apostle with them, who will point them in the general direction of the congregations. Somewhere along the way, they are then met by the district rector, who is familiar with the area and shows them the way. Their fate rests in his hands.

When the road ends, you continue on foot

Many times we have to park the vehicle in the field because there is just no road to the congregation. Then we continue on foot, often for kilometres in extreme heat.” Temperatures can reach 48 degrees Celsius, exhausting even for these tough travellers.

The personal contact with the members in the congregations is priceless, the Bishop says. “We love interacting with them and our brothers. We love visiting the villages and the people. They are extremely humble and live basic lives.” Divine services take place in churches made of mud or outside under a tree, for example.

As soon as they stop at the church, they are greeted by the local ministers. And before they know it they are surrounded by crowds. The members welcome them and then the discussions with the rector and district leader follow. They follow the same procedure at every congregation: Alvin and Jean Witten capture the GPS coordinates of the church building; take a picture of the building, the congregation, and the rector; gather personal details and contact numbers of the ministers; and collect and secure copies of the declaration (a document signed by the local chief or headman granting permission to use the land).

Then they show the ministers how to send required information via SMS to report attendance figures and the amount of offering. These are small steps towards putting the huge working area on the digital map. But there is still a lot to be done and there will undoubtedly be many unexpected challenges before this project is successfully completed.

nak.org: the website of the New Apostolic Church

All the latest features, and the best of the old to boot: as of the beginning of the year, nak.org, the website of the New Apostolic Church International, has been completely redesigned. A lot has happened, not only in terms of design, but also under the hood.

Visitors looking for all things official have indeed found the right address at nak.org: here they can find all the official statements of the Church leadership in their authoritative formulations. “New content, new text, more offers, and a new look”—that is how the most recent announcement summarises the relaunch: large, expressive photos, and precise information about the Church can be found under the categories of Faith, Church, Community, Media, and About the NAC.

“The thing that most distinguishes NACI’s presence is definitely its international character,” emphasises Church spokesman Peter Johanning. “No other church website offers such a global overview of activities and events on all continents. And all of this is offered in four languages: English, French, German, and Spanish.”



■ NAC International

Better searches, more results

In addition to the exhaustive *Catechism of the New Apostolic Church*, the more accessibly designed *Catechism of the New Apostolic Church in Questions and Answers* has also been made available for the first time ever. And the glossary NAC from A to Z illuminates specific aspects of daily life in a few succinct lines. The full range of this information is stored in databases. In this way, users can conveniently search for content and filter their results. District Churches can incorporate the offer on their own websites as well.

Even with all these innovations, nak.org still offers content that has been tried and tested: for example, the church

finder, which boasts information about local congregations in some 50 countries around the world—and is constantly growing—or the archive of announcements that goes all the way back to the year 2000. nak.org is the official website of the New Apostolic Church International. It provides authoritative announcements or teaching texts. Its function is to communicate information and the official positions of the international Church leadership. nac.today, on the other hand, is the online news magazine of the New Apostolic Church International. Every weekday it offers New Apostolic Christians and other interested readers material that is worth reading and knowing. The magazine helps tailor content to the needs of the user, and explains background information.



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International media

Online media have become a welcome companion in these times of restrictions and curfews. They offer us first-hand information, reading material, divine service experiences, and a sense of international community.

The new website of the New Apostolic Church International describes online media as the “marketplace of opinions”. Reaching out to people in the twenty-first century means being present on social media. This naturally also applies, and is perhaps even more relevant, to churches. And so it is that the New Apostolic Church International has its own official channels on all the major platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube—and in the four languages of English, French, German, and Spanish to boot.

Keeping social media social

However, and this is also part of the whole picture, social media can at times also be quite antisocial! Appreciation for others and respect for human dignity are not always the focus. Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider also knows a thing or two about that: “The problem is how one deals with it,” he says, before going on to mention its four great dangers, namely the inclination to create a virtual world, the tendency to overrate one’s ego, the erosion of values, and the violation of human dignity. This other side of the coin includes fake news, ridicule, insults, and hate speech. It was for good reason that the New Apostolic Church published a

corresponding guideline. It is intended to serve as an orientation guide for all members of the Church as they navigate their way through the world of social media.

Global communications opportunities

The leadership of the New Apostolic Church attaches great importance to communication in general, and it does so on all levels, whether that of the congregation, the district, the District Church, or the universal Church. The Communication Services department at the international Church headquarters in Zurich is one of five service groups that directly support the Chief Apostle and Church President. He has always called for fast, modern, international, and targeted communication for Church members and all other interested parties. In addition to the typical and more familiar platforms, this also includes the New Apostolic Church’s own offers in the way of magazines, websites, and apps.

The number of divine service broadcast by the New Apostolic Church—be it over the internet, on television, or by satellite—has also grown tremendously. The Church and media have literally become networked with one another.

DISTRICT APOSTLE MICHAEL EHRLICH:

Mercy and Love for One's Neighbour

Dear brothers and sisters,

Without question, it is part of being a Christian to turn to people in need and to help them. And that anyone can be a neighbour who needs our help. This is made clear by the Lord in the parable of the Good Samaritan. Mercy and love for one's neighbour is the meaning and nature of Jesus and must be the standard for us.

In the service of the Lord and in His spirit, much is also being done in our



congregations, especially in the difficult situation of the pandemic.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you again for all your commitment out of love for the Lord, and out of love for brothers and sisters.

With warm greetings, yours

M. Ehrlich
Michael Ehrlich

THAT SAYS THE CATECHISM

How is the love for one's neighbour to be revealed in the congregation?



That which Jesus taught His Apostles also applies to the congregation: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another as I have loved you [...] By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34-35). This instruction to His disciples thus even transcends the "golden rule".

The commandment to love one's neighbour, to support one's fellow human being and help in situations of need, should be especially evident in the congregation: "Let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10). All who belong to the congregation have a duty to treat one another with sincere compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

Questions and Answers – Question 290

NIGERIA:

Love Is Merciful

What need of a neighbour moves you to compassion (mercy)?
What act of mercy could accompany that feeling?

Mercy is giving to a person in need of food, money or materials. Mercy is loving and praying for a person seeking love and spiritual help. Mercy is keeping company with a lonely brother or sister. Mercy is meeting the need, not just feeling it. Mercy is the action God took when He felt

compassion and love for us, and acted in mercy by sending a Saviour (John 3:16).

The love and mercy of God played out in GRA Congregation of Benin North District in South Area, Nigeria during their 2021 Easter Retreat. The Congregation took the gospel to the neighbourhood and also financially empowered a sister to start a business. They also gave out ten wrappers to some poor sisters to give them hope and feel the love of the Church.



One of the beneficiaries of the wrapper



A sister receiving a support



One of the sisters who got a wrapper



Some members of the congregation express their gratitude with a wave

GHANA:

Service to God Through My Neighbour

Members of the Hohoe congregation extended a hand of love to the less privileged in congregations across the Volta North Apostle Area, with support from some brethren in the capital, Accra.

As part of the gesture, some clothing, disinfectants, detergents, and other COVID-19 protective supplies were presented to the Ve-Koloenu congregation on Thursday, April 15, 2021. The items, according to Shepherd Solomon Gottah, are intended for the upkeep of the aged and other needy persons.



Shepherd Solomon Gottah (left) presents the items

CAMEROON:

Help for Suffering People

The people in the English-speaking area of Cameroon have been suffering from the socio-political crisis for several years. The COVID-19 pandemic is making life even more difficult. Following the example of Jesus Christ in caring for people with hunger and other needs of daily life, the New Apostolic Church showed the suffering people in these difficult times mercy and charity by providing special help and protective supplies.



Great joy and gratitude to our congregations



The Apostle to visit another sick sister and presented a gift to her

GHANA:

Love for Them, Love for Me

As part of their special initiatives, the Kumasi Apostle Area, led by Apostle Amos Osei-Du, scheduled special visits to the aged, sick and the underprivileged members of the church who



Visit to a 95-year old Shepherd

have been hardly hit by the pandemic.

Some items, received from voluntary contributions and bought from cash donations from members of the Apostle Area, were shared to these brothers and sisters on the visits.

CAMEROON:

Help through water supply

In Nkol Noah (Ebogo), 70 km north of Yaoundé, a new water supply system was inaugurated. It was a resounding and colourful ceremony in Ebogo, a small farming village with an estimated population of 500 souls.

The success of the water supply project is the result of a joint effort between the New Apostolic Church and the population of the above-mentioned village. The technical part was ensured by the CARD team of specialists.



Inauguration ceremony and handover of the water supply system



Apostle Olou delivers the donation of food and sanitary equipment

BENIN:

Direct Support to Members

The effects of the Covid-19 pandemic differed from region to region. However, everyone recognizes that it has left a deep mark on humanity for many years to come. But the love of Christ remains present in our hearts and very visible in our communities. In Benin, in all the communities, direct aid has been organized for the benefit of people in difficult situations. This direct aid consists of food supplies, as well as sanitary and hygienic materials. Through this act, our brethren the closeness of Christ in a concrete way.



A young sister is happy to wash her hands



Water well in the village of Sokouhoué

BENIN:

Gift of Water Wells

Love for one's neighbour in the New Apostolic Church is lived out in various ways. For example, our brothers and sisters in Germany are constantly coming to the aid of our village populations.



Water well in the village of Adjohoun-Kollé

In various regions every year, water wells are donated to provide our village people with access to clean water. The local church is grateful for all these donations.

SIERRA-LEONE:

Love and Mutual Help

God is in solidarity with the faithful out of love and it has been manifested with the mission of Jesus Christ. Jesus has given us the standard of love and forgiveness.

The Ebola outbreak in 2014 - 2016 taught Sierra Leoneans to be in solidarity with one another. Everyone is concerned for the health of the other! We help in times of need like the current Covid-19 pandemic, which has humbled the world. Food and non-food items, together with Covid-19 preventives have been distributed.



Food and Covid 19 preventives distributed in Kissy



Apostle Braima Saffa handing over water well to Masiaka

GUINÉE:

Dedication of the school

Apostle Leno and the responsible authorities were able to inaugurate a new school in Mamou. The school was donated by the missionary organization "Human Aktiv" of the New Apostolic Church together with the Jörg-Wolff-Foundation (JWF).

The purpose of the school is to make education available and affordable for pupils whose parents or guardians cannot afford to travel to distant schools and also meet the enormous financial demands of these schools.



Apostle Leno with the management committee of the school



Apostle Leno visits a class at the school in Mamou

GHANA: An Apostle Goes Home

Apostle Samuel Arthur (rtd.) has transitioned into the realm of the departed on 20th February, 2021.

Apostle Arthur was born on 12th October, 1953, at Abowinum in the Central Region of Ghana. He was introduced to the New Apostolic faith by the retired Apostle Amoah in the year 1984. He was adopted and sealed at his home congregation, Abowinum, on 12th April 1984 by Apostle Deppner.

In 1987, the then 34-year-old Priest was transferred from his home congregation at Abowinum in the Central Region of Ghana to the upper north eastern part of Ghana. His presence and dedication saw a massive spread of the New Apostolic faith



Apostle Samuel Arthur (rtd.)

saw a massive spread of the New Apostolic faith in this predominantly Muslim area. Priest Arthur (then) lived and worked in this deprived area for the rest of his life.

His ministerial activity spanned a period of 34 years, 16 years as a commissioned ambassador in Christ's stead.

In a festive divine service at Cape Coast on 27th January 2019, Apostle Arthur was retired by Chief Apostle Jean Luc-Schneider.

Lead Apostle Oppong-Brenya said of the death of the Apostle Arthur: "As you depart from the earth and its toiling, you are surely and 'only remembered by what you have done.' May the Lord shepherd your soul to that glorious land. We shall meet again".



Apostle Arthur with some member in a deprived area



The Apostle (right) at his retirement



Apostle Arthur (second left) at Cape Coast on 27-01-2019

NIGERIA: Disney Foundation

Disney Chimhurmnanya Nwanne was an outstanding personality. She was full of life when she met her painful and untimely death on 4th February 2020, 26days to her 10th birthday. The family to celebrated her 11th birthday posthumously on 1st March, 2020 by raising a foundation in her honour. The deceased's father and Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Deacon Martins Nwanne, inaugurated the "Disney Nwanne Memorial Foundation" in the presence of the Lead Apostle Nwogu and other ministers.



The little Disney conducting Sunday School choir



Lead Apostle Nwogu (right) during the opening ceremony

SIERRA-LEONE: God Builds All

A church of about 200 seating capacity was dedicated to the glory of God in Konjoh village, Kpombali Section, Luawa Chiefdom, Kailahun District, far East of Sierra Leone.

The dedication took place by Apostle Kargbo on 11th December, 2020. The Apostle appreciated the village authorities and church members, for accepting to build such a fine church, worked along and provided some local materials especially at the start of the structure.



Brothers and sisters in front of the new church



Apostle Kargbo cutting the ribbon

South Germany: Divine service with the District Apostle

District Apostle Michael Ehrich celebrated a divine service for the district Nagold in the church from Pfalzgrafenweiler (South Germany) on 21 March 2021.

Bible text: **"For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you."**
(John 13:15)

Core thoughts: Jesus Christ washed the feet of His disciples. Slaves in the Orient usually performed this service. Aware of His soon to be sacrificial death, the Son of God was concerned to teach His disciples what their attitude should be: He humbled Himself and washed their feet. He called the disciples to follow His example and to serve in His Spirit with humility (John 13:16-17).

The Lord also calls all others to learn from Him (Matthew 11:29). Learning from Jesus means acting as He acted and adopting His nature. Jesus' life was a service on behalf of His Father for the eternal salvation of mankind.

Those who have received His spirit and follow Him are called to follow His example. To do this, it is first important to acquire the attitude of the Lord. A few concrete points may be mentioned in this regard:

- The Lord always fulfilled the will of His Father (John 4:34).
- In everything Jesus did, He pointed to the Father (e.g. John 7:16).
- Jesus acted out of love. He did not pass by the suffering and need of others (e.g. Luke 7:11; Mark 10:47...).
- The Son never sought God's own glory, but always pointed to the Father (e.g. Matthew 19:16-17).

In this attitude, the possibilities for beneficial service for the Lord are manifold, as we can learn from the account of the Last Judgement (Matthew 25:31 ...). Whoever does not adopt the attitude of Jesus cannot be accepted at His Second Coming (Matthew 22:12). Let us therefore strive for the "garment of the mind of Jesus".

