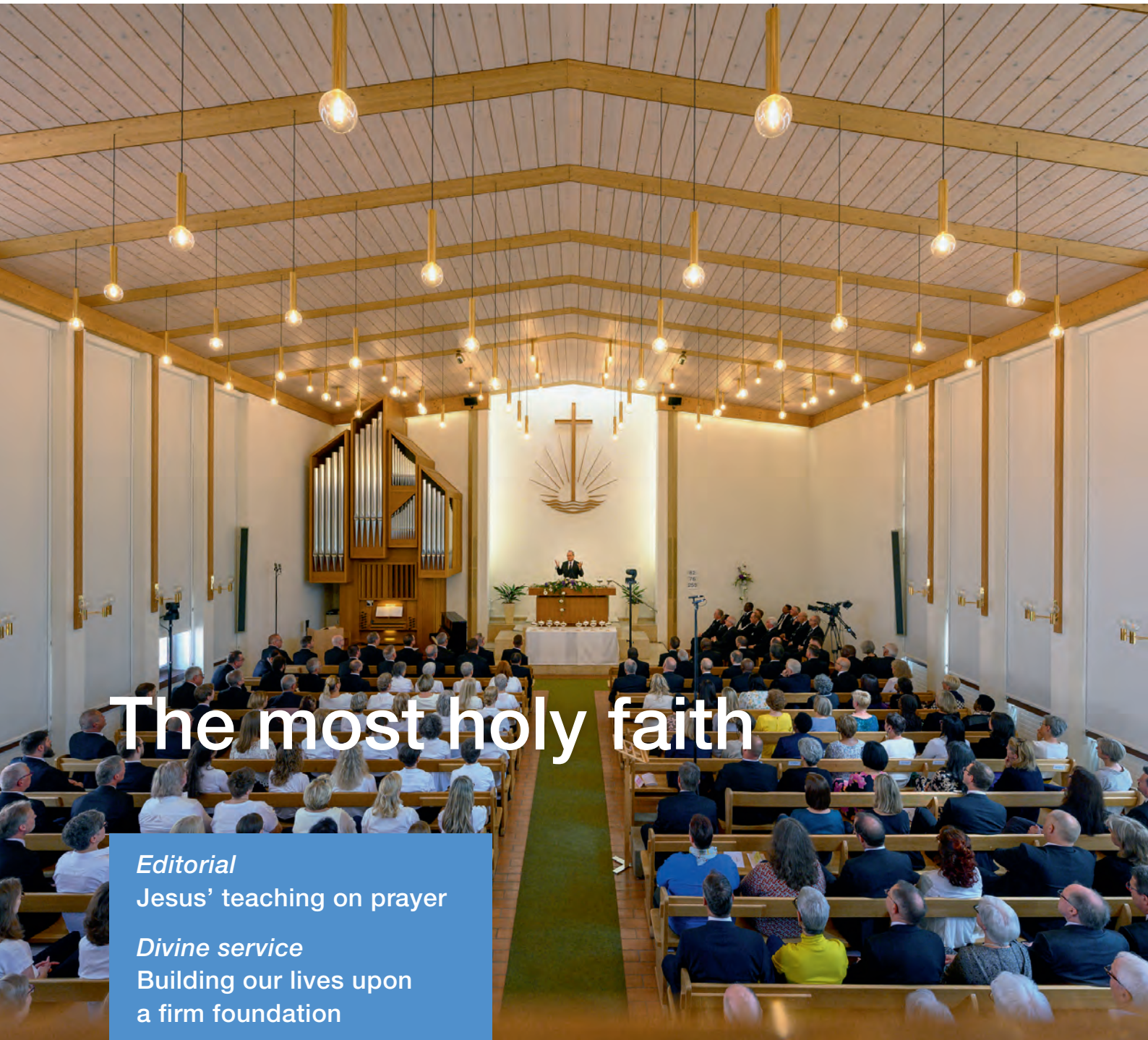


community

The New Apostolic Church around the world

04/2024/EN



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Jesus’ teaching on prayer



NAC International

Our focus this year is on prayer. And our motto is “Prayer works!”

The disciples once asked the Lord how they should pray so that their prayers would have an effect. Jesus explained to them how they should pray and, in the process, taught them the Lord’s Prayer. This prayer, which comes from the Lord Jesus, is still important for us. For it to work, we need to know the words and pray them as Jesus taught us. However, we must not only say the words that Jesus Christ taught, but also pray these words in the mind and spirit of Jesus.

We come to God our Father in prayer and say, “Your will be done.” This petition may seem odd at first because we believe and know that God is omnipotent.

God is all-powerful. He always does exactly what His will dictates. Therefore we don’t need to pray for God to do what He wants. He always does what He wants. After all,

He is omnipotent. We are not praying that God can do His will, but are in fact praying that we can do the will of God.

Every person must decide: am I going to do the will of God or my will? This is what this petition means. We do not pray, “God, do what You want.” Rather, “Let me do Your will.”

Heartfelt greetings

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a vertical line that curves to the right at the top, then loops back down and to the left, ending in a horizontal stroke.

Jean-Luc Schneider

Building our lives upon a firm foundation



Jonas Spengler, Bernhard Holdener



Jude 20

“But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit.”

Dear brothers and sisters, it was not only the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that took place on Pentecost. This event was also the beginning of the activity of the Apostles in the power of the Holy Spirit. It was in this power that Peter proclaimed the gospel. He preached that Jesus Christ is the Messiah sent by God, who died for us, rose again, and ascended into heaven. Jesus also announced that He would come again and save those who believe in Him, who are baptised and who have received the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is a good way to summarise the Pentecost sermon, the first sermon of an Apostle in the power of the Holy Spirit.

As we heard in our Bible reading (Acts 2: 36–43), three thousand people believed and were baptised as a result of this sermon. The early congregations continued steadfastly in the Apostles’ doctrine and the preaching of the gospel. Over time, however, heretics emerged here and there, and they began to spread a doctrine that was no longer consistent with the doctrine of the Apostles. And then the Apostles and other responsible ministers, such as Jude,

had to say: “Do not listen to them! Remain steadfast in the doctrine of the Apostles. Stay with the gospel! And it is not enough for you to adhere to it. You must also build up your lives on this faith. In other words, you must live your lives in accordance with the gospel, in accordance with the doctrine of the Apostles. And this is just as important for us today too. Today too there are such heretics. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, which we have received, we are also capable of distinguishing between the spirits, recognising heresies, and rejecting them. The Holy Spirit helps us with this through the sermon, through our ministers, and through prayer.

Jude writes here that it does not suffice to merely believe in the Apostles’ doctrine. We must rather also build our lives up on it. In very concrete terms this means that the gospel, the doctrine of the Apostles, is to define all of the decisions we make in our daily lives. There is a great danger that our faith might become too theoretical. Perhaps we are indeed New Apostolic Christians who believe in the gospel and in the doctrine of the Apostles, but this faith only has a loose influence on our decisions in life. In reality, we simply do as we please. That is dangerous for our salvation. It is for this reason that the Holy Spirit tells us: “Watch out! It does not suffice to believe! Rather, this belief must also produce something.” There can be various reasons why this is no longer the case. I would like to mention two of them: perhaps we are disappointed because that which we believed did not materialise, and because everything turned out differently than we had imagined. Or perhaps we are unsettled because things have changed and new things are being preached that were not preached before. We ask ourselves, “Well, if that is no longer true, why should the rest still be true?” This is a phenomenon that I have noticed. Some of our members are unsettled when they realise that something that was taught in the past is different today.

Jude sums up the message for today as follows: build up your lives on your most holy faith. We must focus on our holy faith. This holy faith is that which comes directly from God, the Father, from the Holy Spirit, and from Jesus Christ. Why do I say this? Because our personal faith is multifaceted. It is based, first and foremost, on the Bible, the gospel, the doctrine of the Apostles in the biblical sense, not on their preaching of today, but rather on the way in which the Apostles of that time preached the gospel and wrote it down. That is the basis of our faith.

But other things have also been added over time: first of all, our upbringing. Many of us were raised in the New Apostolic faith. Our parents, our predecessors, the ministers, gave us advice and guidance on how to offer in order to be blessed, or on how we should pray in order to be blessed, or perhaps even on how we need to behave. There is a whole range of things that we all learned through our upbringing.

Then we grew up and gained experience and realised that if we handle things that way and go about things this way, then God will indeed respond and help. That is something very beautiful, a great legacy.

Our faith is also based on the many sermons we have heard over the decades. This includes the interpretation of various Bible passages and images that are familiar to us, that have simply become a part of us, the stories that we have heard. All of these things have become part of our faith and that is also something very beautiful. It is part of our wealth of faith.

Build up your lives on this most holy faith

And finally, there are the promises we have received: don’t worry, you will get well, God will help. We could say a lot about how often we received such promises. We experienced that the

Apostle or the Priest told us something and it came true. We prayed and believed, and God helped. That is the whole corpus of our faith.

However, this is not to be equated with our most holy faith, because in all of the above, that which comes directly from God is mixed with that which comes from human beings. I do not mean to diminish this at all—it is very valuable. However, one must also acknowledge that it is not valid everywhere and for all people in the same way. We even experience this ourselves. Five times we did things a certain way and everything worked out. But it didn’t work the sixth time. Why? We were promised something, and we believed, we prayed, we did everything we were told to do, and that which was promised was not fulfilled. In some countries, things are handled one way, and in others, they are handled in a different way. But the word of God is always valid at all times and in all places. Here Jude gives us the advice that we should focus on our most holy faith, namely on that which truly comes from God and is fully valid for you and the whole people of God at all times and in all places, namely the gospel, the doctrine of Jesus Christ, as it is preached by the Apostles.



*God is love.
He desires the salvation
of humanity.*

These fundamental elements of our faith are summarised in our creed, in the ten Articles of Faith. That is what comprises our most holy faith. We believe in God, the almighty Creator. Nothing is impossible for Him. He does exactly what His will dictates. We believe in Jesus Christ. We believe in His mission, in His death, His resurrection, His ascension, and in His return. We believe in His doctrine. He has revealed God to us as He truly is: God is love. He desires the salvation of humanity. We believe in these things! We believe in the Holy Spirit, through whom God is present on earth today. We cannot see Him, but we can certainly perceive His activity.

We believe in eternal life. The salvation that God will grant us is the eternal fellowship of humankind with God. We can attain this as firstfruits and already enter into the kingdom



of God at the return of Christ. For others there will be an opportunity to receive salvation and eternal life in the kingdom of peace. One day all people who are saved will live in fellowship with God in the new creation. And we also believe that we need the church of Christ in order to attain this salvation. It is indispensable. We need the sacraments.



We need the Apostles sent by Jesus Christ, and we need the ministers designated by God who have been endowed with part of the authority of the Apostles.

That is our most holy faith. Absolutely nothing about this has changed over the last years. It is valid all around the world—in Africa just as in America—everywhere. Let us build up our lives upon this foundation. Let us allow our faith in these elements, which I have now reduced to five, to guide our decisions in daily life.

What does this mean? First of all, it means that the word of Jesus Christ must always hold more weight for me than anything anyone else tells me. I trust in the omnipotence and love of God, come what may. This becomes clear very quickly when it comes to making decisions in daily life.

The result of my belief in eternal life is that eternal fellowship with God in His kingdom is the most important thing for me. It always has the highest priority. But even today I want to be with and near Jesus, and to have fellowship with Him. That is what determines my decisions in life.

If I truly believe in the teaching of Jesus, the result is that it

will always be very important to me to heed the commandment to love God and my neighbour. I have often said this in the past, but it is so important: loving God means that everything we do for God we do out of love for Him and not out of any sort of calculation.

Let me come back to the good advice we were given. That is all well and good. I simply have a little problem with the fact that sometimes there is still a bit of calculation behind it: if you do this, then God will give you that. But that is not love. We are supposed to grow in love, and learn to love as Jesus loves—namely without calculation. When we do something for God, when we keep His commandments or serve Him, then it should only be for one reason: because He loves us, because He gives us so much, because He has already given us so much, and also because He still has so much to give us. This love should be what guides our decisions. And there we still have some room for improvement.

And of course, I love my neighbour! The love we have for our neighbour is also to define our lives. At times this love is a little too theoretical. Often it merely consists of a lot of words, but unfortunately very few actions. In Africa there is a nice story that illustrates this.



District Apostle Edy Isnugroho

A clergyman asks a man, “Do you love your neighbour?” – “Well, of course,” answers the man. “So if you had two houses, would you give one of them to a poor person?” – “Yes, of course. I love my neighbour.” – “So, if you had two cars, would you give one of your cars to a poor person?” – “Of course I would. After all, I love my neighbour.” But when the clergyman asks the man, “If you had two coats, would you give one of your coats to a poor person?” the answer is, “No.” – “Why not?” the clergyman asks. The man answers, “Because I have two coats.”

This is just a little story from Africa, but it has a lot to tell us. I do not want to say more on the subject. All I ask—and I include myself in this—is that we take some time to think about this. Words are nice, but some very concrete actions are also important. It is part of our most holy faith. We believe that Jesus Christ expects us to love God above all other things and to love our neighbour as we love ourselves. This needs to take concrete form every now and then.

One last thing. We believe that the church, the Apostle ministry, the sacraments, and the ministries are indispensable for attaining salvation. Dear brothers and sisters, let us decide once and for all that the Church is there for our salvation. Naturally, there are also material elements such as construction, organisation, and various activities. This

District Apostles Rainer Storck, Kububa Soko, Michael Deppner, Peter Schulte, and Michael Ehrich (left to right)



District Apostle Enrique Minio

is all well and good, and even important. But if we belong to this Church and attend the divine services and serve as part of the congregation, then it is primarily because this is necessary for our salvation. Everything else is definitely secondary. Annoyance over secondary matters should not lead us to stop going to church. The church is not just some organisation or a nice club. It has been given to us by God so that we can attain salvation. That is our belief. Let us

Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider during the 2024 Pentecost service in Lucerne, Switzerland



hold on to this. And this faith is to determine our decisions. Let us focus on the creed and on the most holy part of our faith. Everything else is nice, important, and valuable, but it is not to be seen on the same level as our most holy faith. Let us focus on this.

God will help us with this and has equipped us with a beautiful means of doing so, namely prayer. Our Bible text talks about “praying in the Holy Spirit”. Why? Because it all belongs together. To do one, we must also do the other. If we pray to Him in the Holy Spirit, God will help us to focus on and build ourselves up on our most holy faith. It is the almighty God, the God of love, who desires our salvation above all else. If we pray to Him, the Holy Spirit will tell us: “Don’t forget what God has done for you, don’t forget what He is doing for you, and what He will still do for you! That is already a great accomplishment. The Holy Spirit tells us that we are to focus on eternal life. So if we pray in the Holy Spirit, our prayer will primarily be, “Dear God, strengthen my faith, help my unbelief, strengthen my love for you, and strengthen my love for my neighbour.”

We pray for our neighbour, especially when it comes to salvation, “Dear God, help me to be an instrument in Your hand so that I can contribute to the salvation of humankind. We do not try to tell God what He is supposed to do with our neighbour, but we do ask Him to help our neighbour

attain salvation. The last plea that we bring to God under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is, “Lord, come soon!”

That is the message for today. Let us focus on the fundamental elements of our faith. They are to define our lives and our decisions. We find help from God when we pray in the Holy Spirit. May I express a wish? It would be a good thing if the officiants in the coming divine services were to pick up on these thoughts once again and continue to develop them, even if they are not written in the *Divine Service Guide*. It is very important to me that this message really penetrates every heart.

CORE THOUGHTS

- The Apostles preach the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit.
- We believe in their doctrine and build our lives upon it.
- Guided by the Holy Spirit, we praise God, ask for His grace, intercede for the church, and implore the Lord’s return.



■ NAC Argentina

| Lasting joy in our hearts

In a divine service in Argentina, Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider said that we always have a reason to rejoice. This is because God loves His children as He loves Jesus. He explained how this manifests itself and how we can share in this joy.

Easter had just passed when the Chief Apostle conducted a divine service in Sarandí in Argentina on 4 April. The central focus of the service was Easter joy. He recalled Jesus' resurrection and the encounters we can still have with the Risen Lord today. "And now Jesus stands before me, and it is truly my wish for all of us that we can experience the presence of our Lord in word and sacrament tonight," he said in his opening words.

As the Father loves the Son ...

The Chief Apostle used examples to illustrate just how much God the Father loves His Son:

- He protected Him and took care of Him. When Jesus was hungry, God provided food. When He needed comfort, God sent angels to comfort Jesus.
- God said to Jesus, "You are My beloved Son." He told Him this when He was baptised and repeated it on the mount of transfiguration.

- Jesus was able to experience the love of His Father. He said, "If I ask My God, My Father, for something, He will give it to Me. He answers My prayer."
- God did not spare Him from suffering and death, but He was with Jesus in suffering and death, and gave Him the strength He needed to overcome suffering and death.
- Out of love for Jesus, God raised Him from death and gave Him a new body, the resurrection body. He gave Jesus all power on earth and in heaven and led Him into His kingdom.

... so He loves all His children

And now Jesus says to us, "As the Father loved Me, I love you." The Chief Apostle said, "And that's just incredible because Jesus was perfect." Unlike human beings: "We are far from perfect. We are weak sinners. We have promised God a hundred times that we are going to do this or that.



District Apostle Enrique Minio and his wife, Esther, receive a blessing on their fortieth wedding anniversary

And we haven't done it." And yet Jesus provides us with what we need for our daily lives. He protects us. Through His sacrifice, the sending of the Holy Spirit, and by sending the Apostles, He has given us the possibility to become a child of God. And through the Holy Spirit He tells us: "You are My beloved child." And we can experience this love of God. He answers our prayers because He loves us. The Chief Apostle said that just as Jesus was not spared from suffering, believers today are not spared either. "But through His word and through Holy Communion, He gives us the strength to overcome suffering." And there will be further proof of God's love in the future: "Out of love He will give us the same resurrection body, the same glory that He gave Jesus."

How we can remain in God's love

There is only one condition: "You know how much I love you, remain in My love," Jesus said. The Chief Apostle explained what this means:

- We must believe in God's love. And that means we must trust Him.
- No matter what happens, our first concern is to preserve our love and our relationship with Jesus Christ. We need to be close to Him. We need to experience His presence and His nearness because we love Him and want to remain in this love.
- Our motivation to serve the Lord does not depend on success. We don't do it for others, for our own glory, to be successful, or for a salary. We do it because Jesus loves us and because we love Him.

- If other people hurt you, attack you, harm you, then continue to remain in the love of Christ. Continue to pray for their salvation, even and especially for your enemies.

What joy means

"And if we do that, the joy of Jesus will abide in us," the Chief Apostle promised. "The joy of Jesus consists in the fact that God the Father is always with me." The Chief Apostle explained what we can rejoice in today already. The first point is that Jesus said, "If you do the will of My Father, if you keep the Commandments, then I will come with My Father and abide with you, and you will experience our presence." Our joy is that although the devil wants to judge us, he has no reason to do so because our sins have been forgiven. Sure, we suffer from evil, we suffer from all that happens in the world, but His joy dwells in our hearts: at the end of the story, Jesus will be victorious! The marriage feast with Christ will take place soon and then we will be with Christ forever.

"Of course, we don't feel like singing a hallelujah every day," the Chief Apostle admitted. "Sometimes we weep and suffer. But that does not stand in the way of the joy of Christ that lives in our hearts. Because this joy remains, no matter what happens. This joy does not depend on what is happening in our lives now. And at the return of Jesus Christ, our joy will be absolutely perfect."

CORE THOUGHTS

John 15: 9, 11

"As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full."

Jesus loves us as His Father loved Him, even if we are not as perfect as He is. Let us remain in His love by demonstrating faith, obedience, and love for our neighbour. Jesus gives His joy to those who love like Him.

Divine treasurers

God has entrusted His people with precious treasures. We must preserve them, also for those who come after us. It sounds like a huge task. But don't worry, the Holy Spirit will help us.



Left: Chief Apostle Schneider in Singapore on 14 March. Below: District Apostle Helper David Devaraj



“What is this precious treasure mentioned in the Bible text?” the Chief Apostle asked and went on to answer the question. It is the gospel of Jesus Christ. “It is the great message that the Son of God came to earth, became man, suffered, and died for the salvation of humankind, and that all those who believe in Christ can be saved. This is the biggest treasure imaginable.” The Apostle ministry too is such a precious treasure: “The Apostles teach us in the right manner, dispense the sacraments, and prepare us for the return of Christ.” And the sacraments are precious because God has delivered us from original sin, has given us the Holy Spirit, and made it possible for us to enter the kingdom of God as firstlings. Another treasure is that we can take part in divine services and can celebrate Holy Communion together. And then there is the fellowship of believers, the Chief Apostle said. “We are not alone. We are part of the church of Christ, we are part of the community of believers, the children of God. And even if there are only two or three of us, it is such a blessing to have brothers and sisters who share

our faith, who fight the same battle as we, and who pray for one another.”

Preserving the treasure

The Chief Apostle went on to explain how this treasure could be preserved:

- “We need to keep the gospel because there is a risk that we will forget it and then it will become less important to us in our daily lives. The whole gospel is important, not just the part that is convenient.”
- “What about eternal life? What about the preparation of the bride of Christ? Preserve the Apostle ministry. I am not talking about the person, I am talking about the ministry.”
- “Protect the sacraments. For the sacraments to unfold their effects, you must believe and be willing to do the will of God, and allow yourself to be prepared for the return of Christ.”
- “We are all human, nobody is perfect. There is always something that happens in the congregation, and the



devil wants to use it to destroy our unity. But we have been given this treasure, namely the fellowship of God's children, which we want to keep and protect."

The Bible text says that the good things, the treasures, have been entrusted to us. That means we must guard them. "We must make sure that others can share in them. Make sure that the next generation can receive them, that they can participate in the gospel, the apostolate, the sacraments, and the fellowship. Let us make sure that they can get all of this, that there are still people who serve God, who can comfort one another, and who can be taught and sanctified."

There is someone to help us

"God has done His part," the Chief Apostle said. "Now, however, we must do something. We must utilise the Holy Spirit who dwells in us to defend and keep these treasures." The Holy Spirit reminds us of the teachings of Jesus: "It is nice to remember what Christ did and said, but it is useless. The Holy Spirit's task within us is to tell us what it means for us in our daily lives and to help us use the teachings and actions of Jesus to make our decisions." The Holy Spirit reminds us that we are children of God: "When we go through difficulties, when we don't understand God, just allow the Holy Spirit to talk to us in our heart. The Holy Spirit tells us that we have been baptised and sealed. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ is still valid." Jesus Christ has called us. He loves us, the Chief Apostle said. The Holy Spirit draws attention to the needs of our soul: "The Holy Spirit tells us: your soul is hungry; your soul needs peace, forgive-

ness, and blessing." The Holy Spirit also tells us how to pray: "To protect and keep the treasure it is important that we know how to pray," the Chief Apostle said. And then the Holy Spirit admonishes us to walk the path of love: "The best way to express our love for God is to do good things for our neighbour. Be kind to your neighbour out of love for God. The Holy Spirit always tells us that the most important thing is that we remain united."

The central message of the divine service was: "Let us allow ourselves to be guided by the Holy Spirit, who dwells in us."

CORE THOUGHTS

2 Timothy 1: 14

"That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us."

God has entrusted us with a great spiritual treasure. It is important that we preserve it and pass it on. We can do this with the help of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.



The secret of preparation

The goal of all Christians is to be ready when Jesus returns to take His own to Himself. Peter once wrote that one needs to be spotless and blameless for this. What exactly this means the Chief Apostle explained in a divine service in South Africa last year.

“We gather today to commemorate the fulfilment of God’s promise to send the Saviour for us and for all human beings,” Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider began the divine service on 10 December 2023 in our Dinwiddie church near Johannesburg, South Africa. “That means that we remember what happened, but it also means that we think about what it means for us personally.”

“Honestly, it makes no sense to believe in God if you do not believe in eternal life,” the Chief Apostle said. “It makes no sense to believe in Jesus Christ if you do not believe in His return.” Many Christians only follow Jesus for earthly reasons. “And if you follow Christ for earthly reasons only, sooner or later you will be disappointed.”

Spotless before God

“This morning’s Bible text gives us clues as to how we can prepare for the return of Christ.” It says that we must be found without spot. The Chief Apostle explained that it would be a completely misleading if we were to take this to mean that we must be perfect and can no longer commit

sin. “That is not possible for a human being,” he said. Instead, being spotless means that all of our sins have been forgiven and that we have been justified by grace.

“Let us make every effort to have all our sins forgiven and to be justified by grace,” the Chief Apostle urged. God grants grace to those who

- recognise that they are sinners and depend on grace: “We acknowledge that we are sinners because we recognise the perfection and glory of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”
- plead for grace: “When we plead for grace, it is not because we are afraid ... It is only an expression of our love for Christ and our strong desire to be with Him.”
- are humble: “Being humble means that we accept God as our Lord.”
- fight against sin and evil: “Even if we will not manage to become perfect, we cannot just put up with our weaknesses.”
- make an effort to forgive: “And the fifth and final point to obtain grace is to be willing to be reconciled with your enemies.”

Blameless in trust

Even Jesus was not spared suffering. “God loves us as He loves Jesus Christ. He protects and provides for us, but He does not spare us from all suffering. He will, however, make sure that we as poor human beings will be able to enter the kingdom of God.” That is why we can trust in God.

Blameless in love

The Chief Apostle warned that there is a danger of our becoming lukewarm today. He said that a lukewarm believer serves God as long as it is easy and pleasant. “But as soon as it becomes difficult and unpleasant, he or she says, ‘I can’t do that.’” Those who serve God half-heartedly do so as long as it is interesting and profitable, the Chief Apostle continued. But as soon as it becomes unpleasant and uninteresting, and no longer brings any benefits, they say, “Sorry, I can’t do it.” He urged the congregation, “Let us serve the Lord and love Him from the bottom of our hearts.”

He went on to say that we must not become lukewarm in our love for our neighbour either. Paul said, “And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another.” God’s love was poured out in our hearts when we received the gift of the Holy Spirit. “Has it grown since then?” the Chief Apostle asked. “Have we become more tolerant in recent years? Do we accept that God loves all human beings as much as He loves us, even if they are totally different? Do we accept that God is merciful to all human beings?” If our love for one another has increased, we are blameless before God.

The Chief Apostle’s recipe

“To put it in a nutshell, our goal is the return of Christ. We want to be prepared and are making every effort. Let us specifically make every effort to have all our sins forgiven and to be cleansed by grace. Let us acknowledge the glory of God and our imperfection and be aware that we need grace. We plead for grace not because we are afraid of something, but to express our longing. We humble ourselves before God and accept His teaching and guidance. We are still willing to improve and change, and we want to be reconciled with our neighbour and even with our enemies. We want to become blameless. We believe in God’s love and His word, and we trust in Him.”



District Apostle John Kriel (left) went into retirement in this divine service. Chief Apostle Schneider appointed District Apostle Peter Lambert (right) as his successor

CORE THOUGHTS

2 Peter 3: 14

“Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless.”

We are preparing for the return of Christ. We do everything we can to be justified by grace. We trust God, we love Him with all our heart, and we strive to grow in love for our neighbour.



DAVID PLAYS THE HARP FOR SAUL

ACCORDING TO 1 SAMUEL 16–20

King Saul had sinned. He realised that God was no longer on his side. In fact, God had already chosen a new king. Saul was afraid and in a bad mood. His servants went in search of someone who could play the harp to cheer the king up. Someone told them about David, and this is how David came to the king's court.

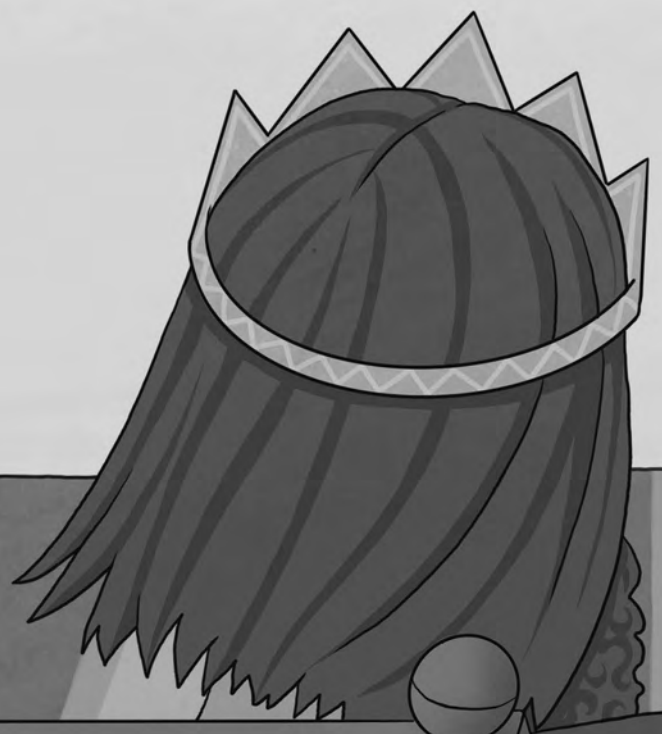
Every time King Saul was in a bad mood, David played the harp for him and cheered him up. The king liked David.

Then David defeated Goliath. And King Saul became jealous and envious of David because David

was a good fighter, and the Israelites said, "Saul has slain thousands, and David ten thousands."

David was the new hero, and the people liked him better than the king. God had also chosen David as Saul's successor.

Saul became angrier and angrier, and one day in a fit of rage he hurled a spear at David. David managed to dodge the spear



twice. But Saul wanted to kill David. Jonathan, Saul's son, interceded for David with his father. "He has always fought for you, he defeated the giant Goliath, he has never harmed you. Why do you want to kill an innocent man?" Saul promised his son that he would not harm David. Once again, David returned home victorious from a battle. Then it happened: the king forgot his promise and threw another spear at David while he was playing the harp for him. David just managed to dodge it.

He fled and escaped that night.



AT MAKAFUI'S IN ACCRA, GHANA

Welcome to West Africa. Here in Ghana many children are named after the day of the week on which they were born. Afua, for example, is a girl who was born on a Friday. My name is **Makafui**, though. It has nothing to do with the day of my birth. It means "I want to praise God".



One of the ways I praise God is through music. I play the violin and play in our orchestra at church.



In Ghana, around seven out of ten people are Christians. This picture with some of the members of my **congregation** was taken outside of our church building.



Here in Ghana, the first nine years of schooling are compulsory for all children. Those who want to continue their education afterwards have to pay school fees. But even with school being compulsory, one out of every three children cannot go to school. In the villages in the northern part of our country, for example, there is a lack of school buildings and facilities. And in the big cities many children live on the streets while others have to help support their families and go to work. I attend a Christian school. And I like **Sunday School**.



Football is a big thing here. I love to play too. Luckily, I can always kick the ball around with one of my brothers. If I am not outside then I play video games.

Meet my family. My mother's name is Gifty and my father's is David. He is on the right in the picture. And then there are my brothers Selase (15) and Eyram (13), and of course me. I am eleven years old. My mom works as an administrator and my dad is the president of a company.



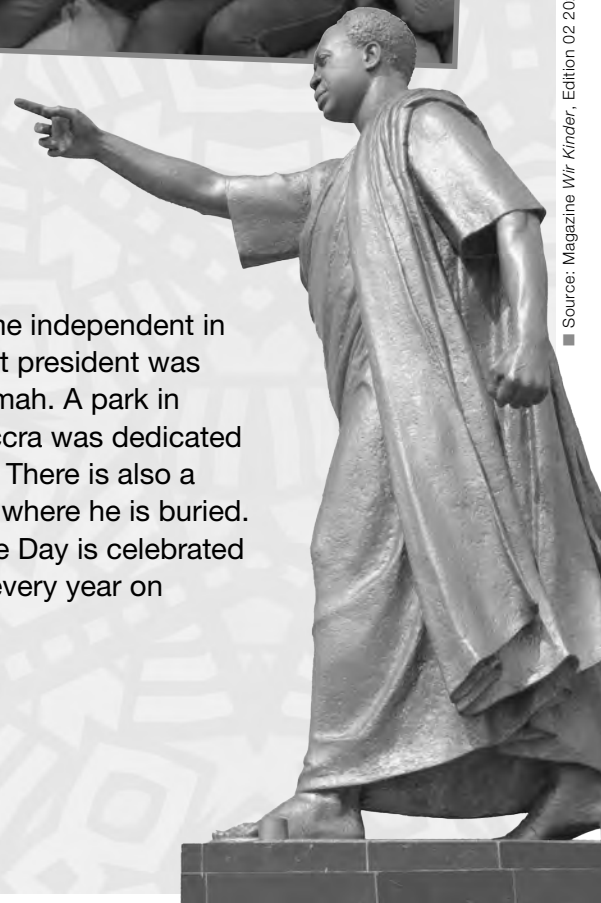
We live in **Accra**, which is both the largest city and the capital of our country. Accra is right on the coast.



Ghanaians prefer to eat all of their meals warm. I love yam fries with pork chops. We sometimes have that at home.



Ghana became independent in 1957. Our first president was Kwame Nkrumah. A park in downtown Accra was dedicated in his honour. There is also a **mausoleum**, where he is buried. Independence Day is celebrated in a big way every year on 6 March.



| Beyond human life

What is the situation of human beings in the beyond?

When and how is salvation offered to the dead?

Answers based on the New Apostolic faith were given in a doctrinal essay by the Chief Apostle.

The Holy Spirit has been active in the church to bear witness to and glorify Jesus Christ since the first Pentecost (John 16: 14). It was thanks to His authority that the first Apostles were able to accomplish the mission entrusted to them by Jesus. Jesus promised them that the Spirit would help and remind them of His words at the right time (Matthew 10: 20; John 14: 26). This is what happened when Peter had to appear before the council. The Spirit reminded him that Jesus said: “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14: 6). And He gave him the courage to tell the Jews that faith in Jesus Christ was the only way to salvation.

The Holy Spirit is still active in the same way through the present Apostles. In accordance with the mandate they received from their Sender, they proclaim to all of humankind that God desires their salvation and that the only way to obtain it is to believe in Jesus Christ and to follow Him. After Jesus’ victory over death, the message of salvation is addressed to both the living and dead (1 Peter 4: 6).

Human beings in the beyond

At the time of death, the soul and spirit leave the body to enter the beyond. The body dies, but the personhood of the deceased continues to exist. We believe, and this is one of the peculiarities of the New Apostolic faith, that the departed retain their freedom of decision: they can freely decide for or against Jesus Christ.

The situation of humans in the beyond depends, on the one hand, on their proximity to or distance from Jesus Christ and, on the other hand, on their degree of guilt, which only

God can measure. To convey these different situations, the Bible uses different images. In 1 Peter 3: 19–20 it speaks of “the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient”. Jesus said that there were many mansions in the Father’s house (John 14: 2). And sometimes we speak about different realms. The term “prison”, which is often used in this context, should not be taken literally. This image simply refers to the fact that these departed remain prisoners of sin and are therefore unable to come close to God. Likewise, the notions of mansions or realms do not mean that God groups or confines all the departed with the same profile, as it were, in the same place: liars with liars, murderers with murderers, and so on. God does not classify humans into categories; He considers each individual as a unique person! All we can say is that the situation of the departed depends on their relationship with Jesus Christ and their degree of guilt.

Salvation is being offered today

Salvation in Christ, both here and in the beyond, is a grace that God grants to whomever and whenever He wants. He gives those whom He has chosen for salvation the possibility to recognise the gospel. The departed who have this grace must decide to accept the gospel, believe in Jesus Christ, receive the sacraments dispensed by the Apostles, and follow their teaching in order to be redeemed.

Let us bear in mind that the amount of time spent in a realm has no bearing on the salvation of the departed. Just because they have suffered long enough in a “prison” does not mean that they will automatically be saved. There is only one way to come to God, and that is faith in Jesus Christ.

When receiving the sacraments, Christ liberates the departed as He liberates the living: those baptised with water are liberated from original sin and can come closer to God. Those who have been baptised with the Spirit receive the promise of eternal life and the possibility to enter the kingdom of God as firstfruits. The worthy partaking of Holy Communion allows them to have fellowship with Christ and to develop in the image of Christ.

When He returns, the Lord will take to Himself the elect who have allowed themselves to be prepared by the Holy Spirit both here on earth and in the beyond. Their soul and spirit will receive a new body, the resurrection body, with which they will enter into God's glory.

Salvation will be offered in the kingdom of peace

Because God desires the salvation of all human beings, and this salvation can only be obtained through Christ, He will make it possible for everyone to have the opportunity to freely decide for Christ. During the kingdom of peace, salvation will be proclaimed to all people, both the dead and

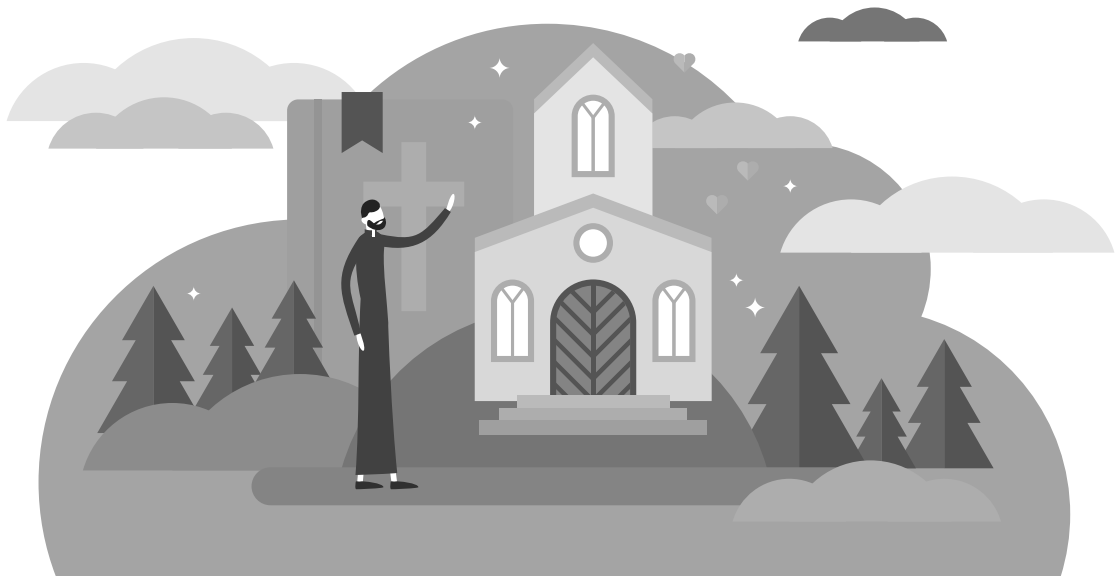
the living. Everyone will be able to follow Christ. At the end of this period, the evil one will be given one last opportunity to tempt mankind. In full knowledge of the facts, everyone can and must then decide for or against Christ.

At the Last Judgement, all those who followed Christ will become inhabitants of God's new creation. The others will be permanently separated from God.

Let us also consider this:

- If human destiny were definitively sealed at the time of a person's death, a large part of humanity would have no access to salvation in Christ.
- A teaching that says that God in His great goodness can save human beings without them having to believe in Christ is incompatible with the mission that Jesus entrusted to His Apostles. The Apostles cannot proclaim a teaching that would contradict that of Jesus.
- The doctrine of the thousand-year kingdom of peace is based on the conviction that God wants to give all of mankind the possibility to be saved through faith in Jesus Christ.





VectorMine/stock.adobe

How God protects the church

Following the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, Apostle Peter became the spokesman for the Apostles and delivered a speech that inspired three thousand believers to be baptised. He did so by virtue of the special powers that Jesus had conferred upon him.

In Matthew 16: 18–19 we read as follows: “And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

The church is indestructible

Jesus Christ reveals here that His church is indestructible: it will continue to endure despite all of the attacks of the forces of evil! Let us accept this message with faith and allow it to penetrate deeply into our hearts. We do not have to worry about the survival of the church of Christ. The Almighty is watching over it. Christ will lead His work to perfection.

We must note, however, that this applies to the church of Christ, and only to the church of Christ. Jesus is not talking about the church in the sense of an institution endowed

with its own structure and properties, nor of all the activities familiar to us in our congregations. The promise of Christ concerns only that which constitutes the essence of His church: the preaching of the gospel, the dispensation of the sacraments, and the fellowship of the believers. However, it was to His Apostles that Jesus entrusted the mission of preaching the gospel and dispensing the sacraments. The promise concerning the survival of the church thus goes hand in hand with the promise Christ made to the Apostles: “And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28: 20b).

Priority is given to that which endures

Christ also gave His Apostles the power to loose and bind (Matthew 18: 18). According to chapter 7.6.2 in the *Catechism of the New Apostolic Church* “this formulation speaks to the fact that the Apostles, together with the Chief Apostle, comprise the spiritual leadership of the church, and that they decide on the ordinances of congregational life”.

The mission that Jesus has given the Apostles to lead the church must be fulfilled in the light of the promises that He has made concerning the church and the apostolate (Matthew 16: 18; 28: 20b). More than ever, we must give priority to that which is called to endure until the return of the Lord: the preaching of the gospel, the dispensation of the sacraments, and our fellowship. These priorities must be reflected in all the decisions we make concerning the allocation of our human and financial resources.

Peter the rock is our example

Jesus designated Peter as the rock at a very specific moment, namely after his profession of faith: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16: 16). Later, Jesus gave Peter the mission to strengthen his brethren. However, He also took care to make it clear to him that he was going to stumble, and that the only reason he would be able to keep his faith at all was that Jesus was praying for him (Luke 22: 32).

After His resurrection, Jesus Christ asked Peter: “Do you love Me?” Three times, Peter responded to Him in the affirmative, thereby also confirming that he had indeed changed (John 21: 15–17). He was no longer the one who had expected a reward for his service (Matthew 19: 27), nor the one who had denied the Lord three times (Matthew 26: 69–75). It was only after having been assured of Peter’s love that the Lord entrusted His flock to him (John 21: 15–17).

By designating Peter as the rock, capable of resisting the forces of evil, Jesus gave Peter to us as an example. Nothing can separate us from Christ if, like Peter, we

- have a strong faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God;
- are humble, in recognition of the fact that we owe our salvation to Jesus;
- are genuinely motivated by love for Christ.

The Petrine office

Matthew 16: 18 can also refer to the Petrine office, that is, the ministry of the rock: “Thereby the Son of God created an indissoluble relationship between the ministry of

the rock and His church. The ministry of the rock and the church of Christ have been given to mankind for salvation in Jesus Christ” (CNAC 7.6.6). Jesus Christ has promised to watch over His church and His Apostles. The establishment of the Petrine office is one of the measures Jesus took in order to protect His church from the forces of evil.

“The office and tasks which the Lord entrusted to Apostle Peter are today discharged by the Chief Apostle. Thus he too works to keep the oneness among the Apostles as requested by the Lord (John 17: 20–23) by strengthening his brethren, that is, the Apostles (Luke 22: 32). He tends the lambs and sheep of the flock of Christ (John 21: 15–17). The office of the Chief Apostle functions to keep the doctrine pure while developing it further, opening up new insights, and uniformly spreading the testimony of faith. The Chief Apostle also lays down the order within the church. These tasks comprise the authority of the keys of the Chief Apostle ministry” (CNAC 7.6.6).

At the Council of Jerusalem, Peter preserved the unity of the church by admonishing its leaders to focus on the essentials (Acts 15: 6–11). The decisive issue for the salvation of the Gentiles was to believe in Jesus Christ, not to obey the precepts of Jewish law. In our time, the Chief Apostle must see to it that the Apostles and the Regional Churches they lead remain united, despite their different cultures and traditions. He does so by emphasising that which is truly essential for salvation.

The Chief Apostle must also tend the flock of Christ by acting like a good shepherd. In particular, he must see to it that all the sheep of Christ have what they need for their salvation. In order to do so, he promotes solidarity among the various components of the church.

One last thing. As we know, Peter was far from being perfect, and Apostle Paul did not hesitate to remind him of this (Galatians 2: 11–14). But Peter’s weakness did not prevent Christ from blessing His church through him. We can be certain: Jesus Christ will lead His work to perfection despite the imperfection of His servants!

(From a doctrinal essay by the Chief Apostle)

Where two or three thousand are gathered

A divine service with over 7,000 participants, a concert with around 2,000 performers, and a Church Convention that takes over an entire city. These major events continue to have an impact, whether on a small or large scale or as a catchy tune.



A service with more than seven thousand young people in Lusaka in Zambia



NAC Zambia



According to Hebrews 11: 1, what role does faith play in navigating adversity through prayer? Young people answered these and similar questions in a quiz. They came together at the Olympic Youth Development Centre in Lusaka, Zambia on 20 April for a two-day youth event. District Apostle Kububa Soko had invited the youth from the Lusaka West, East, and Central Apostle districts. It was the highlight after two weeks of cleaning and scrubbing.

On Saturday, the young people worked out the meaning and importance of prayer based on our annual motto, the Catechism, and the Bible. Then there were quizzes to test their knowledge on various subjects of the doctrine. The programme also included workshops on other spiritual and doctrinal topics, such as the importance of the divine service. On Sunday, District Apostle Kububa Soko then conducted a divine service for more than seven thousand young people. As Bible text he used John 15: 9–11: “As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. 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. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.” Special was that nine couples received a blessing on their engagement. A choir of 400 young singers provided the music for the service.

The young people had prepared themselves for this youth service with charity activities that took place two weeks



■ NAC Northern and Eastern Germany

Up to 15 soloists took to the stage for the pop oratorio *Himmelreich*



■ NAC Northern and Eastern Germany

before the actual service. And in these two weeks they cleaned a total of ten health care facilities, painted two health care facilities, distributed donations to prisons, donated food hampers to aged members, and cleaned the homes of some aged members. They called the event “Charity by 5,000 Youths” because it had been expected that fewer would lend a hand.

By the way, the answer to the quiz question is: “Faith serves as a foundation for hope, providing assurance even in challenging circumstances when navigating adversity through prayer.”

Heaven is open to all

Around 1,500 singers, a hundred instrumentalists, 15 soloists, and a conductor gave over 11,000 spectators the feeling of having come a little closer to the kingdom of heaven at two concerts. It was the biggest musical event of the New Apostolic Church of Northern and Eastern Germany since the pop oratorio “I am”.

Some time after “I am”, District Apostle Rüdiger Krause approached conductor Gerrit Junge, who is also head of the district’s music department, and asked him to organise another such event. With the vague idea of making something about the Beatitudes, he and composer Sigi Hänger first locked themselves away to brainstorm in peace. Together with composer Christoph Oellig and director Benjamin Stoll, a story was created about the privileged Marc, who involuntarily and temporarily becomes homeless and finds out what life on the street is like. Marc gets to know some homeless people, their freedom, and how hard life on the



■ Jens Lange

street is and learns that God’s miracles go beyond death and that the kingdom of heaven is also open to him.

After many regional rehearsals and a large dress rehearsal, the musicians were able to bring Jesus’ words from Matthew 5: 3–11 into the present day on 20 April in Hamburg and on 27 April in Erfurt (both in Germany). They did this with various musical genres from rap to pop to classical music.

Although the project originated in the New Apostolic Church, it is ecumenical. Not only because three denominations are represented in the closest planning team alone. The Council of Christian Churches in Germany supported the pop oratorio from the outset. Not all choristers are members of the New Apostolic Church. “This is very important to me,” says Gerrit Junge, “because this is not a message of the New Apostolic Church that we want to take out into the world, but a Christian and, above all, value-orientated one.”



Divine service with District Apostle Michael Ehrich and a surprise visitor, Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider



CC - Spindler

With lots of music, but also with a touching story and support from many helpers, the almost two-thousand-year-old Beatitudes were brought to life.

Come to Karlsruhe

Faith had a firm grip on the city of Karlsruhe in Germany over Ascension. The colours blue, orange, pink, turquoise, purple, green, and violet could be seen everywhere in the city over the long Ascension Day weekend this past May. The colours were also used in the logo with the cross and on the scarves that the participants of the Church Convention received in the welcome pack, among other things. This created a feeling of togetherness on the way to the various events that were offered over the weekend.

The motto of the South German Church Convention was “Come Here”, and with over a hundred events and free admission to the zoo and the city’s museums, there was plenty to do over the four days. There were concerts, panel discussions, lectures, and various booths spread over the city. So people not only came into contact with brothers and sisters from their own district or with members from other parts of Germany, but also with interested passersby. Ecumenism was not only the focus of major panel discussions with representatives of the World Council of Christian Churches (WCC) or Father Anselm Grün. Visitors could also visit the WCC booth on the market square and engage in ecumenical dialogue. Or they could queue for a WCC sweet. In the Garden of Religions, people even engaged in interdenominational dialogue.

District Apostle Michael Ehrich conducted the closing divine service with the Bible text from Psalm 66: 5: “Come and see the works of God; He is awesome in His doing toward the sons of men.” The good works of God are the creation and mission of His Son, whose good works are an example for believers: look up to God, do His will, and serve in humbleness.

This marked the end of the Church Convention and the participants were called upon to “Go forth!” and spread the joy and infect others with it. On a smaller scale, for example, a sticker on the market square near the stage, where bands, choirs, and orchestras impressed many random visitors over the weekend with their performances, it said: “It’s nice here, but have you ever been to a divine service of the New Apostolic Church?”



Many New Apostolic bands performed on a stage in a park in the city that was open to the public

CC - Spindler



Oliver Rütten

Activity of the Spirit and love of neighbour

“Congregation of the Future” is the name of a European project group. One question is so fundamental that it has now been raised by the International District Apostle Meeting.

Since April last year, the project group has been working on various aspects of the topic “congregation”. One of these is: What is the task of a congregation? What resources and infrastructure are needed for this? And what are the criteria for founding, maintaining, or closing a congregation?

Assembly in a double sense

“The nature and duty of the Christian congregation in the spiritual”. This is the title of a paper that was on the agenda at a conference of Church leaders in Zurich, Switzerland in May this year.

First, the paper looks at biblical designations and examples: the New Testament term *ekklesia*, for example, covers both the church as a whole and the individual congregation. This includes the assembly of Christians in the local congregation, as well as the community of all Christians in all places and at all times. And from the New Apostolic per-

spective, this incorporates believers from this world and the beyond.

Irrespective of person

The paper also talks about the congregation being a community of divine service in which the reality of God is experienced through sacrament, prayer, and preaching. The congregation is also a spiritual space in which faith is to be developed, experienced, lived in practice, and cultivated under the activity of the Holy Spirit.

The paper emphasises that the congregation is not defined by external factors such as its building, the number of members, musical activities, or other congregational celebrations. Rather: “The strength and credibility of a congregation is measured by the activity of the Spirit that believers can experience there and the brotherly love that characterises the coexistence of its members, irrespective of person.”



| Backstage at the Church summit

Manuela van Husen walks down the hotel hallway with a crowbar in her hand. She is on a special assignment. Here is a look at all that is involved in organising a District Apostle's Meeting and what goes on behind the scenes.

The District Apostles meet twice a year: once at the head office of the New Apostolic Church International (NACI) in Zurich, Switzerland and the other time at alternating sites in Europe, Africa, America, Asia, or Australia, depending on who is hosting the conference.

If the meeting takes place in Zurich, the preparations begin a full year in advance with the booking of a hotel. It is not possible to get around 25 rooms at short notice, especially not on dates like Pentecost. The location of the hotel is decisive, explains Manuela van Husen, the Chief Apostle's secretary: centrally located between the airport, the NACI building, and the place where the Pentecost service will take place on the Sunday.

And then the detailed planning begins. Who will be arriving when and by which means of transport? Where, when,

and what will there be to eat? Who needs which invitations to apply for their visa?

Spring cleaning at the head office

Pentecost in Zurich means extra work for Roger Mattenberger. He normally makes sure that the conference and break rooms at the NACI building are suitably furnished and gets them shipshape. But this time it is spring in the northern hemisphere so he also wants the grounds to be spotless. That means weeding, cleaning the pond, and scrubbing the tiles. "Nobody expects this and nobody probably sees it, but it's important to me."

More than one meeting

For Simon Heiniger it is time to deal with the content of

the various items on the agenda. Among other things, he oversees project management at NACI. The agenda comes from the Chief Apostle or from previous sessions. Often the international president of the Church initiates a matter, the District Apostles deliberate about it, and additional information or preparatory work is required. As a result, the same topic comes up several times. “It is good and important that the Church leaders have the time and the protected space to discuss things—perhaps even controversially—in peace.” This is how Heiniger, who is also head of communication services, explains an effect that not only affects decision-makers in the Church.

Frank Stegmaier is also busy drawing up an agenda. He is the head of administration and finance at NACI. His field is the Delegates’ Meeting. Although it overlaps with the District Apostle Meeting in terms of personnel, the topics here are not of a spiritual nature, but of a decidedly organisational nature.

Monday: The first District Apostles and their assistants arrive. It is not just the Americans and Australians who have more than a twelve-hour trip. The route from South Africa to Europe usually goes via Dubai.

The countdown is on: Roger Mattenberger picks up the minibus from the car hire company at nine in the morning. He has to be at the airport by half past nine. Meanwhile, Manuela van Husen rushes down the hotel’s hallways. If someone has forgotten their mobile charger, no problem. That can be solved easily. The key for the suitcase is still at home? This is a job for a crowbar.

United in word and deed

The meeting is in full swing. Samuel Mueller is glad that he has been able to translate the necessary documents in advance. He would rather interpret a divine service than a District Apostles’ Meeting or even a Delegates’ Meeting. Because he is more familiar with the language of church matters than business matters.

It is three o’clock in the afternoon. Mental fatigue sets in. The interpreter begins to yawn in his booth. Surprised, he puts his hand over his mouth. Because all the District Apostles and their assistants who are listening to him over headphones suddenly start yawning too.

Simon Heiniger cannot afford to be tired, not yet. Around midnight, he and Sam Mueller can be found in the hotel lobby fingers flying across the keyboard of a notebook. The consultations today went well. A draft resolution is needed for tomorrow.

He still has a few days ahead of him before he can throw himself on the sofa at home on Sunday afternoon for a short breather before Monday calls with more work. Writing minutes, carrying out orders, and preparing documents for the next session. Indeed, everyone involved agrees that as one conference ends, the next one begins.



Behind the scenes of the session of the International District Apostle Meeting in May 2024: Frank Stegmaier, Samuel Mueller and Simon Heiniger (left) and Manuela van Husen (above).

In the margins of the District Apostles' Meeting

Smiley faces on blue T-shirts. There is more to this than is immediately obvious. Here is the story of what these T-shirts and 22 women from all over the world have to do with a children's home and a daycare centre in Romania.



Twenty-two women from all over the world came together on Friday, 17 May 2024 in the church in Zurich-Hottingen, Switzerland wanting to do something meaningful by bringing a little joy into the life of some children. And this is the idea that NAK-Humanitas, the relief organisation of the New Apostolic Church Switzerland, came up with.

A charity at work

At the beginning, the women were introduced to the work of the foundation. NAK-Humanitas supports social and humanitarian projects in Switzerland and in countries served by the New Apostolic Church Switzerland. The foundation's aim is to create a permanent improvement in the lives of the people who benefit and create prospects for them in a difficult life situation. On top of this, humanitarian aid is provided in war zones and disaster areas around the world.

The women were then shown pictures of the daycare centres in Răzeni in Moldova and Zăbrani in Romania, and the Casa Pinocchio children's home in Zăbrani.

A haven for children

A long-standing partner organisation of NAK-Humanitas is Kiru Children's Aid Romania. The organisation based in Basle in Switzerland, with which NAK-Humanitas works closely on the foundation's own projects in Romania and Moldova, has been supporting children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in Zăbrani for many years, for example by becoming active in the children's homes there. There was no daycare centre at the beginning.

The NAK-Humanitas Foundation has been running a daycare centre in Zăbrani since 2013, which it set up together with Kiru Children's Aid Romania. At the beginning, some



Festivities to mark the takeover of the Casa Pinocchio children's home

25 to 30 children from socially disadvantaged families were cared for here after school; today there are around 40 children. The children receive a warm meal, they can play, and receive help with their homework. But there is more to it. The caregivers aim to pass on values to the children and prepare them for a good life in society. For example, they helped the children develop a disability etiquette by inviting wheelchair users to the daycare centre. These people told the children about their life stories and even taught them how to manoeuvre in a wheelchair.

The Casa Pinocchio children's home was taken over by NAK-Humanitas at the end of 2018. It was previously state-owned, but the Romanian government no longer wanted to run it. Since the charity had been supporting the institution for years, it was decided to run it themselves. The eleven children at the time were orphans or could not live with their parents for the time being. The initial period after the takeover was tricky, partly because it coincided with the Covid pandemic. Quarantines lasting several weeks and Covid infections among children and caregivers made things difficult for a time. However, thanks to the tireless commitment of the caregivers, everyday life finally returned to normal and the home became a real home for the children, where they receive security, love, and appreciation. They can play to their hearts' delight and do sports. They receive help with their schooling and further education, and are supported in planning their future.

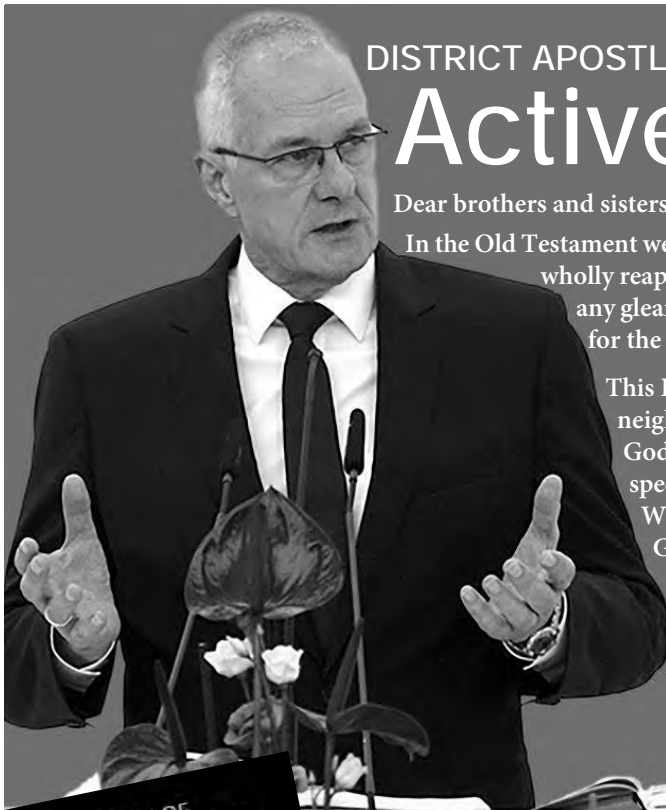
Charity

In recent years, several campaigns have been organised by committed members of the Church for the children in Zăbrani. In October 2020, for example, young people from several districts in Switzerland helped to collect second-hand furniture. They loaded it into a van that was then driven to Romania. The furniture, which was used but still in good condition, was donated to the children's home and day care centre. Young people from Switzerland also organised benefit concerts to raise money for the day care centre and the children's home.

Now, as part of the District Apostle Meeting in May, there was a campaign to create a little joy for the boys and girls and make their day. The church's multi-purpose rooms were converted into an art studio for this purpose. Light blue T-shirts and yellow fabric paint were provided for the wives of the District Apostles and their assistants. They had a great deal of fun painting smiley faces on the T-shirts, hoping to bring big smiles to the children's faces in Romania.



Children from the children's home and the daycare centre in Romania



DISTRICT APOSTLE MICHAEL EHRIKCH:

Active charity

Dear brothers and sisters,

In the Old Testament we read: “When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field when you reap, nor shall you gather any gleanings from your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and for the stranger: I am the LORD your God.” (Leviticus 23:22).

This Bible verse calls for active charity: We must do good to our neighbours and give something of what we have received from God. We can do this in many different ways, including through a special sacrifice.

When we help our neighbours, we also show our gratitude to God for everything we have received.

I thank you very much for your special sacrifice.

With warmest regards,

Yours

Michael Ehrich



THIS SAYS THE CATECHISM

What is the commandment to love one's neighbour?

“You shall love your neighbour as yourself” (Mark 12: 31; cf. Leviticus 19: 18).

Questions and Answers –
Question 285

What does the commandment to love one's neighbour demand?

The commandment requires human beings to treat all other human beings with love. It sets clear limits to egoism. In the parable of the Good Samaritan (cf. Luke 10: 25-37), Jesus illustrated that loving one's neighbour involves being merciful and acting accordingly. Just how seriously Jesus meant these words can be inferred from His exhortation to even love one's enemies.

Questions and Answers – Question 286

SIERRA LEONE:

Thanksgiving and Fellowship

The 2024 Thanksgiving Service prompted New Apostolic members to prepare to glorify God.

In addition, brothers and sisters brought their thanksgiving offerings in various forms: vegetables, fruits,



The altar is decorated with fruits

animals, envelopes with money, etc., to grace the occasion. The letter from District Apostle Michael Ehrich was the point of reference, reminding brothers and sisters of their obligation to recognise God's beautiful creation in order to glorify His majesty.



Bring and share - fellowship at Goderich



At the 50th anniversary bazaar, the sisters present the District Apostle with fruit as a sign of gratitude to God



Thankful and joyful ministers after the Thanksgiving service

NIGERIA:

Thanksgiving Sunday

"Bless the Lord, O my soul and forget not all His benefits" (Psalms 103:2). This is one of the scriptural thoughts of New Apostolic Christians in Nigeria on Sunday, 6th October 2024, as they joined other brethren globally to appreciate God for His benevolence, love, grace, and providence. It was a day of collective thanks, bringing special thanks offering, helping the needy and having fellowship together to appreciate God for another Church year as we look forward to God's help in the days ahead as Christ carries. Moreover, it's a special year of the Church in Nigeria, celebrating God's grace in the 50 years of existence.



Thanksgiving at Ikeja-Lagos congregation

GUINEA:

True gratitude

The Thanksgivings of this year, 2024, are celebrated under the theme of this year's motto 'Prayer works', bringing much joy and hope. Like Abel (see Genesis 4:4), who gave thanks with all his heart. Just like Noah (Genesis 8:20) who also did it out of gratitude after being saved from the flood with his family and other creation. Our life on earth is an undeserved grace. The brothers and sisters expressed their gratitude by remembering all God's blessings in their lives. Let us remain faithful and grateful to God until the imminent return of our Lord Jesus Christ.



Altar decorated with the gifts of the harvest

GHANA:

We praise and thank God for His care

In the New Apostolic Church, Thanksgiving Day is a Sunday on which the believers reflect on their lives, giving thanks to God and praise to His majesty.

This is celebrated every year on the first Sunday in October with a special divine service.



Sunday School: "Oh Lord we present to You our offerings"



Rear view of the on-going Thanksgiving Service at Accra Osu



Congregation of Foyer d'Azovè after the Thanksgiving service



Altar decorated with the gifts of the harvest

BENIN: Grace offerings

It is with great joy and gratitude that the children of God come with a special offering of thanks to God in the month of October each year. Once again this year, one could feel the great fervour in all the New Apostolic congregations throughout the country. God's works are marvellous in our lives.

We want to be a source of joy, happiness and hope for others too.

Our thanksgiving offerings testify to our love for God and for our neighbours.



Cocotomey congregation of Cotonou

TOGO: United in gratitude

The brothers and sisters celebrated Thanksgiving Day under the theme "Recognizing the greatness of God". This Thanksgiving was not limited to prayer. In keeping with the tradition of solidarity, the participants shared a meal and strengthened the bonds of fraternity.

Prayers, offerings and a fraternal meal: a celebration of mutual help.

A special offering was also collected, testifying to the commitment of the faithful to support the charitable work of the Church. This gesture of generosity will be used to help those in need, reminding us that gratitude to God also translates into concrete action towards our neighbours.



Participants shared a meal



Young sisters preparing the altar with natural offering



Members of Franceville congregation in front of the altar

EQUATORIAL GUINEA: "Thanksgiving"

About 500 brothers and sisters gathered in the central congregation of Bata, to celebrate together the feast of thanksgiving for the harvest. In his preaching, the local Apostle, Salvador Mitogo Obiang, asked the assembled congregation not to neglect the eternal spiritual by worrying about the material, which is transitory. He encouraged the congregation to pay special attention to the spiritual goods, existential for the salvation of the soul,

which God offers us freely in every divine service. In addition, he advised to thank God more and more for them, not only with words, but through our actions - also in love for our neighbour.



A sister welcoming Apostle Obiang

GABON: Special thanks

As every year, the brothers and sisters of Gabon celebrated the day of Thanksgiving with joy. In a special way, they thanked the Lord for all the blessings received by bringing a special offering of gratitude for all the gifts concerning the body, soul and spirit. Thus the congregations expressed their gratitude by bringing to the house of God financial sacrifices, fruits and various agricultural products. After the divine services, food was offered to orphans, widows and the elderly as a visible manifestation of love for one's neighbour.



Apostle Alain Serge Leghanza



Thanksgiving in Djibouti

DJIBOUTI / ETHIOPIA: Gratitude in focus

The congregations in Djibouti and Ethiopia celebrated Thanksgiving as an significant church event focused on gratitude and communal worship.

This celebration is an opportunity to reflect the blessings in the form of natural and spirituals gifts. Despite the poor economic situation, the brothers and sisters brought their offerings to the Lord's house with gratitude and joy.



Thanksgiving in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)



Joyful ministers after the divine service in Douala-Bassa

CAMEROON: Sacrifice of gratitude

On October 6, the New Apostolic believers in Cameroon expressed their gratitude to God by bringing Him their offerings. At the end of the various divine services, the



Altar decoration in Douala-Bassa

fruits placed in front of the altar as decoration were purchased and the money from the sale was presented as an additional sacrifice of gratitude.



AFRICA: Africa Conference

This year's Africa Conference under the leadership of District Apostle Michael Ehrich took place on Friday, 4 October 2024. The District Apostle had invited the Lead Apostles responsible for the countries of West and Central Africa as representatives of pastoral care. In addition to Apostle Benjamin Ohene-Saffo (from Ghana, responsible for Ghana) and Apostle Geoffrey Nwogu (from Nigeria, responsible for Nigeria, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon), the two new Lead Apostles Vincent Yedenou (from Benin, responsible for Benin and Togo) and Apostle Marc Leno (from Guinea, responsible for Guinea, Ivory Coast, Liberia and Sierra Leone) were invited for the first time. The recently retired Apostle Hans-Jürgen Bauer, who had cared for some of the countries in East and West Africa for many years, once again enriched the group. In addition, District Evangelist Lothar Heim took part as administrative manager of the District Churches in West Africa, as well as Apostle Martin Rheinberger, responsible for the seminar work and linked via Zoom.

BENIN: Passing Away



Bishop

Olou Wahounwa André

On Monday, October 28, 2024, the retired Bishop Olou Wahounwa André passed away after a very long illness.

Born on 25 April 1937 in Kessahouedji, he was one of the pioneers of the

New Apostolic Church in Benin.

He was ordained into the following ministries:

- Priest: 14 February 1981
- Community Evangelist: 16 November 1984
- Shepherd: 10 November 1988
- District Evangelist: 27 April 1992
- Bishop: 1994 in Ghana

On the 16th November 2008, he was retired by Chief Apostle Wilhelm Leber in Accra.

Southern Germany: Divine service with the District Apostle

On October 6, 2024, District Apostle Michael Ehrich celebrated the 2024 Thanksgiving Service in Karlsruhe-Mitte. He was accompanied by the Apostles from Southern Germany and the four Lead Apostles from West and Central Africa, Apostle Geoffrey Nwogu (Nigeria), Apostle Benjamin Ohene-Saffo (Ghana), Apostle Saa Marc Leno (Guinea) and Apostle Vincent Matokoo Yedenou (Benin).

Bible text:

“When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field when you reap, nor shall you gather any gleaning from your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and for the stranger: I am the LORD your God.”
(Leviticus 23:22)

Core thoughts:

God gives an instruction in this word by saying with divine authority: *‘I am the Lord your God.’* This means until today that this word is not just a recommendation, but an instruction from God. He sets a condition as to how we should deal with the good that he gives us.

In the time of Moses, several harvest phases were common, each with different goals:

- The harvest of the firstfruits, which was given to the priests to offer to God.
- The main harvest, which served as food for the people.
- The gleaning of the harvest - which is mentioned in the Bible word - for all those who have nothing.

Harvest means everything that God gives us for our earthly life. Ultimately, everything is rooted in God. Sowing and harvesting - he gives the gifts and we can do something with them.

Also in our time, the firstfruits belong to God. Sacrifice is not only about financial means, but also about time. The firstfruits offering is also important in terms of time. We should not only commit ourselves to God when there is still time left at the end, but from the very beginning - because God should always be at the centre.



New Apostolic Church
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