

community

The New Apostolic Church around the world

02/2017/EN

Southern Africa

The birth of a new District Church

Editorial

Recognising God and
His creation

Divine service in Australia

A sure anchor

Church doctrine

Forgiveness of sins and the
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New Apostolic Church
International



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Recognising God and His creation

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This year's motto—"Glory be to God, our Father"—incorporates three tasks that we have resolved to perform in 2017. The very first thing we must do is recognise the glory of God and His activity. It is quite a challenging matter to recognise the glory of God in all its magnitude. However, with the help of the Holy Spirit, it is possible for us to grasp the activity of God. What exactly is it that we must recognise?

God has created the visible world. Everything emanates from Him. His will is the source of all things. Let us recognise God as the Creator and not allow any doubts about His authorship to arise: "But if they were astonished at their power and virtue, let them understand by them, how much mightier He is that made them. For by the greatness and beauty of the creatures, proportionably the Maker of them is seen" (Wisdom of Solomon 13: 4–5).

God has created the invisible world. In addition to the visible, material creation, God has also created the spiritual world. This world also encompasses the living soul of man. God has established the path which leads mankind back into fellowship with Him. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3: 16). That is the way! This is what the Holy Spirit tells us.

God makes the creation available to all human beings. He is and remains the proprietor of His creation. And He sees to it that all things in His creation have continuity. He has



NAC International

given us human beings the charge of dealing responsibly with the visible creation: "... and subdue it" (Genesis 1: 28). Let us treat His creation with care and work with its resources in a responsible manner

Let us recognise and acknowledge God as the Creator. God has made the visible and invisible creation for all human beings. This recognition is the starting point of our praise and thanksgiving, and the foundation for us to talk about God and proclaim His glory.

To this end, I wish us many great insights into dimensions of the divine.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'J' and 'S' followed by a horizontal line.

Jean-Luc Schneider

Nearly a thousand brothers and sisters gathered at Perth Concert Hall for a divine service with Chief Apostle Schneider in October 2016. An additional 1,300 saw a video transmission



■ NAC Australia

| A sure anchor

My dear brothers and sisters here and in all the connected congregations, allow me to be the spokesman for all of us and thank the choir. It was very impressive the way you presented the song “The Lord is the light of my salvation”. I am quite sure that all of us sang along in spirit because it is our wish, no, not just our wish, but our firm will to remain in God’s house forever.

It is a special joy for us to be here in Australia. I must say, this time it was absolutely not difficult to motivate my brothers for the meeting here. All of them were excited to attend this meeting because it was in Perth in Australia,

Hebrews 6: 19–20

“This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”

and, as expected, this meeting of the District Apostles was a blessing for all of us, because it strengthened us in faith and we were able to strengthen each other by sharing our experiences of faith, by praying together, and by being together. It was a real blessing for us to spend these few days together, which strengthened our faith and unity.

I am sure that the preparation for this day was also a blessing for you. You have done a lot of work together, you prayed a lot together, and when you work and pray together it is always associated with blessing. Now let us all together share the blessing of our heavenly Father in His word and grace.

Maybe you were a little bit puzzled when I read the Bible text. Like many passages in Hebrews, it seems a little complicated. But I can assure you, it is not that hard to understand. Even I have understood it, I think. The author compares hope with an anchor of the soul. I think that here in Perth one immediately understands this image. When a ship drops anchor, the anchor falls to the sea bottom and stabilises the boat, preventing it from drifting away with the wind or current.

In our text it says that hope is the “anchor of the soul”. We hope in God, we hope in Jesus Christ, and this hope—this anchor—prevents us from drifting away. It keeps us in the house of the Lord, as you sang.

The text continues and says that this anchor “enters the Presence behind the veil”. That makes it a little bit more

complicated, because a second image comes into play: the veil in the temple, which separated the rest of the temple from the Most Holy Place—the special place considered to be God’s dwelling place, according to the conception of the time. That means that our anchor has been dropped in a very special place, namely there where God dwells. So our hope is anchored in God Himself. I think that is how the image is meant to be understood.

Now the question arises, what do we hope for, what do we talk about? Normally, when we say that we hope for

something we usually mean that we entertain the expectation of something desired and are counting on it to happen. This is the usual definition of hope. As believers, as Christians, our hope is of a higher quality: we expect something and know that God can make it possible. He can do

things that man cannot do. We hope in God and bring Him our wishes so that He can fulfil them if it corresponds to His will. This is the hope founded on Christian faith. This hope is on another level and has a different quality than the hope we generally talk about.

We hope, in other words, we look to the future with confidence because we know that God will fulfil His promises. Such is the hope that is being discussed in this passage, our hope.

Now we have to ask ourselves, what did God promise? God has promised man eternal life, eternal fellowship with Him.

*God, whom we hope in,
is faithful. He will do
what He has promised*

The Chief Apostle was accompanied by the District Apostles and District Apostle Helpers. They came to Perth for the second of two international meetings that take place annually



That is the fundamental promise of God, His first promise to man: I will help you to enter eternal fellowship with Me. We were given another divine promise. Jesus said: "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14: 3). This is the promise of the return of Christ.

God gave mankind a third promise: "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth" (Isaiah 65: 17). There, in eternal fellowship with God, there will be no more room for death, evil, or suffering. These are the promises God has given mankind. And when we talk about hope it is related to these divine promises, in whose fulfilment we believe. This is our hope and it is anchored in God Himself. You know, these are not promises made by a human being, but by God. They are founded in Him. We know that God is truth. The Bible says "it is impossible for God to lie" (Hebrews 6: 18).

Everything He says is truth. God, in whom we hope, is faithful. He will do what He has promised. This is a sure and steadfast anchor. God keeps His word. He is almighty, no one can prevent Him from doing His will. Our hope is anchored in God, and that is a solid foundation.

In our Bible text it says that the forerunner has entered there for us. I like this image. I do not know whether this is still the case today, but in the past when a ship could not drop anchor directly where it was stationed, a small boat was used to carry the anchor to a place where it would have enough hold on the seabed. That is the image here. Jesus was the forerunner, who as the Risen One, as the firstfruits, entered the kingdom of God. This is where He dropped the anchor. A nice image, I love it! He paved the way. He made it all possible and proved: if you believe, if you are obedient, if you follow Me, you will experience the resurrection. You will receive the resurrection body and be able to enter this special place where God is, where you will have eternal fellowship with God. I have made it and I will help you to make it too. This is what the forerunner promises.

What is He doing up there now? He is praying for us. He is our advocate who intercedes for us with God, His Father.



That is why our hope is so sure and steadfast, and is anchored in God Himself—in Him who is truth, who is almighty. This is where Jesus is, the forerunner, who has preceded us. He has paved the way and made everything possible for us, and He prays for us. With this hope, this sure anchor, we will never founder from a spiritual point of view.

Of course, we cannot yet see what we are hoping for. The Bible says that hope that is seen is not hope. And then it continues: "But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance" (Romans 8: 24–25). We cannot see what we are hoping for, but we can see the results, the effect this hope has in our daily lives. This is very concrete, it can be seen.

Sometimes we face storms. The ship is tossed about by the wind and the waves, but the sure and steadfast anchor keeps it firmly in place, and not even a severe storm can tear the boat from its moorings. The anchor keeps it securely in place. Of course it gets tossed about, but it will not lose its secure hold. That is a nice image for us.

The fact that we believe, that we are children of God, that we have hope, does not prevent us from being tossed about



by the waves. We are shaken by tribulations, we are tested, and quite often we have to suffer as other people do who do not believe and who are shaken and tossed about. But we have this sure and steadfast anchor, and we know that the glory which God wants to give us is much greater than our suffering today. Once we have reached this special place, we will no longer think about the suffering we have had to endure during our earthly existence. And that is a very solid hope. Of course, we suffer and are tossed about like a boat by the waves, but we will not be torn away from God, from the fellowship with Him. We are firmly held by our hope.

Let us remain faithful. We know that what is to come is much greater, much more important than what we have to endure today. That is the anchor of our hope—a very firm and secure anchor.

It is not always stormy, of course. Here in Perth we enjoyed a wonderful view of the ocean. It was very calm, very beautiful. But even when the water is calm the boat needs to be held by an anchor to prevent it from drifting

away with the current. So even when everything is quiet we need this anchor of hope. We do not always suffer. Often our lives run their normal course, and we are busy with day-to-day life to the point that many people even forget that God exists. They do not need Him. Everything is going well. I can imagine that here in Australia there are many people who are doing well; they are healthy, wealthy, and

happy and do not need to pray to God every day, “Oh God, help me!” Everything is fine, their life is good.

We, the children of God, have this anchor and long for eternal fellowship with God. Even if everything is okay in our lives,

we are connected with God through this anchor of hope, which keeps us from drifting away from God. We want to see our Lord, we want to have eternal fellowship with Him. We want to be with Him.

And even if Jesus has not yet returned and nothing has happened yet, the length of time will not have an adverse affect on us. We will remain in the same place, in the house of the Lord because we are waiting for something. We look to the

*We look to
the future full of
confidence*



future full of confidence. Even if everything is fine and life runs its usual course and it seems to take forever for the Lord to come back, we will remain in our place. The anchor will keep us there.

Sometimes we become aware of our weaknesses and realise that we really are sinners. We promised to do this or that, but we did not do it. We did something wrong here and hurt someone there, and if we are honest, it can be very discouraging at times. You think: "I will never make it! It is not worth it. I am drifting away. I just cannot do it. This is not for me. I am just too weak, I am a sinner." – No! You have this anchor. Don't forget, there is someone close to God who is praying for you. He is your intercessor.

Let us hope in the grace of Christ! Even if we are weak, if we are miserable sinners, and have done awful things, we can hope for grace, knowing that our forerunner, Jesus Christ, is already up there. He prays for us. The anchor of hope keeps us securely in place and prevents us from drifting away from God. Is that not wonderful?

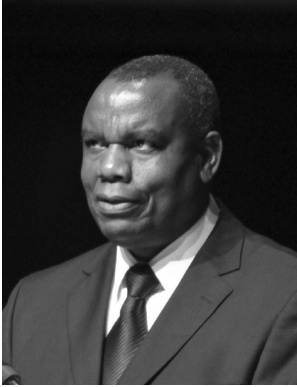
All of you, all of us, serve God in one or the other way. I am thinking especially of the brothers in New Zealand and the neighbouring countries. They have worked hard but have not had the desired results. It can become very difficult sometimes when you work and serve and do all you can and realise there is no success.

I can tell you, we all experience the power of the evil one, who does not want us to promote God's work, who does not want us to spread the gospel, and who does not want us to proclaim the return of Jesus Christ. We all experience how powerful the evil one is. This could maybe even drive us away, but then we remember that we have this anchor of hope which has been dropped in a very secure place, on a solid foundation, on God.

Jesus promised His Apostles that He would be with them until the end. Jesus promised that the evil one would not prevail over His church. We believe His promises and know that the almighty and faithful God will fulfil His promises. That is why we do not give up. As Paul said, we hope in Christ. Let us continue to work for the Lord and serve Him, knowing that our work for the Lord will not be in vain (1 Corinthians 15: 58). Brothers, this is our anchor.

One final point. Paul says, "Rejoicing in hope ..." (Romans 12: 12). This hope, this anchor, allows us to be joyful even when there is no visible reason to be joyful. The anchor, once thrown, is invisible. All you see is the effect: the boat is held in position.

This hope allows us to be joyful. Just thinking about the future and confidently expecting what is going to happen makes us joyful. The idea of being together with Jesus for all eternity, sharing His glory, being delivered from all suf-



District Apostle Helper
Robert Nsamba (Zambia)



District Apostle
Michael Ehrich (Germany)



District Apostle
Leonard Kolb (USA)



District Apostle
Noel Barnes (Cape)

fering, from death, from evil, and to know that soon we will be with Him is a joy we can feel even if there is no visible reason to be joyful. The joy of hope: a wonderful anchor for our soul.

Now, to conclude with the image of the anchor. The hope founded in Christ is a very solid anchor, but you know, it is up to the captain to decide whether to drop or weigh the anchor. If he weighs the anchor, the ship will be carried off by the current and the waves. If a captain weighs the anchor who has little or no experience or is drunk, the ship could drift away in a storm.

It is up to us to remain anchored in Jesus Christ. Please, brothers and sisters, do not weigh the anchor of hope in Jesus Christ. How could this happen? When Jesus no longer takes first place in our hearts, we have weighed the anchor. When something becomes more important to us than Jesus Christ and fellowship with Him, then we have weighed this anchor and our soul is in danger. Or, to make it even easier to understand: if the fulfilment of our wishes becomes more important for us than the fulfilment of God's promises, then we are in danger.

It is normal and quite natural that we want God to respond to our wishes and give us what we ask of Him. That is part of Christian hope. After all, nothing is impossible for God. But if the fulfilment of our wishes becomes more important for us than the fulfilment of His promises—think of the three I mentioned at the beginning—then we are in danger.

This is a piece of advice the Holy Spirit wants to give us. Dear child of God, do not weigh the anchor of hope. Our hope is solid. It is grounded in Jesus Christ. God is faithful,

He is almighty, He will fulfil His promises, give us eternal life, send Jesus Christ, and take us to Him and establish a new creation where there will be no more death or suffering for all those who have believed and followed Jesus Christ. This He promised, and this He will fulfil.

We have received this promise and will therefore be able to remain steadfast in storms, but also in times when everything is calm and it seems to take forever for the Lord Jesus to return. Even when we are weak we hope in the grace of God. Even if there is no success because the power of evil has been at work, we will continue to serve the Lord knowing that God is with His Apostles. He will keep His promise of salvation. Our work will not be in vain. When we work for the Lord in His mind and spirit, He will bless us. This hope fills us with joy.

CORE THOUGHTS

God promised to give us eternal life and to send His Son to take us to Him. We wait with confidence and patience for the fulfilment of His promises. This hope allows us to remain faithful to the Lord no matter what happens.

Love, comfort, and new life



Frank Schudt



An ancient message, one that is still highly topical. A Bible text that has been set to music. And a prayer that was answered a long time ago. In a recent service, the Chief Apostle examined the clean heart and the steadfast spirit mentioned in the Psalms.

About 25,000 believers participated in the divine service in Mönchengladbach in Germany on 18 September 2016 either directly or by transmission. The sermon was based on Psalm 51: 10: “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.”

The Creator

“Why should we still pray this today?” was the question. In fact, God has already answered this prayer. To begin with, Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider gave only a single hint. With the words “create in me, God” the psalm proclaims the salvation engendered by the Creator. Therefore: “Let us take a look at the works of God.”

Not only has Jesus Christ brought the gospel and given His life, the Chief Apostle said, but God also made sure that this message and the baptism to cleanse the soul of original sin

was kept alive over thousands of years despite all the wars, injustices, and human shortcomings.

The heart

“God has given a new heart,” the Chief Apostle said. In the Old Testament it was important that the law was fulfilled. With Jesus Christ the “heart of stone—the law on stone tablets—was replaced by the motivation of love”. He went on to say that God does not punish: “He loves mankind and lets them experience this constantly.”

God has created the possibility that our hearts are cleansed of everyday sins. We have the grace, the chance, to start over again, as though nothing had happened. For this we need the absolution as well as the proclamation of His will: “God made sure that we can hear His word and that we can act upon it,” the Chief Apostle said.



Seven hundred believers gathered at Rheydt City Hall for this divine service. The service was transmitted to congregations in North Rhine-Westphalia (Germany) and to countries cared for by the District Church



The Spirit

“God sent the Holy Spirit on the first Pentecost, and He has been active on earth ever since. He has not left the earth, nor mankind,” he went on to emphasise. The Holy Spirit is always with us. He always has advice and comfort to give and refers us to Jesus Christ.

“Renew a steadfast spirit ...” That is not only a reference to the sending but also to the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is also an act of creation by the Creator, who has given us new life. We received this new life on the day of our sealing. It is a spirit of power, who always gives us the strength to overcome our old nature.

The answer

“See, that is how God works. That is how He answered the prayer of that believing man at the time,” the Chief Apostle said. “Why should we still pray this today?” His answer: “Because we can express so much with it.”

Let us first of all thank God for His saving activity and then bring our longing to expression. And then our prayer should continue as follows: “Lord, grant me Your grace, cleanse me, give me Your word and Your forgiveness, and help me. I want to become a new creation in Christ. Help me. I cannot do it without you.”

CORE THOUGHTS

Psalm 51: 10

**“Create in me a clean heart,
O God, and renew a steadfast spirit
within me.”**

The triune God alone is the Creator of our salvation.

- He has liberated us from original sin, constantly proves that He loves us, and grants us His grace.
- He has sent the Holy Spirit in order to comfort us and to renew us.

We honour and praise Him for the salvation that He offers us. We plead for His grace and implore Him to help and save us.



■ Jessica Krämer and NAC Southern Africa

| Clearing the way for the Almighty

What should hinder God from saving a soul? But even for the Almighty there is an obstacle. And we human beings have the means to clear the way. Here is how in five steps.

“There is only one thing that can hinder God from saving us.” This is what Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider made clear in Silvertown in South Africa. “He will not save us against our own will. That is the key. God wants to save us, but we have to pave the way for Him.”

About a hundred thousand brothers and sisters participated in the service on Sunday, 18 December 2016—most by video transmission.

Step one: fighting against sin

The Chief Apostle listed five ways we can prepare the way for God. Most importantly: “We have to want to renounce

sin and overcome evil.” That is the principle for both Holy Baptism and forgiveness of sins. Decisive is that we do not agree to any kind of compromise when it comes to sin. “Let us renounce sin—all sins, not only the big visible ones, but every sin.”

Step two: sanctifying ourselves for divine service

The Lord wants to meet us in divine service. It is up to us to prepare the way for Him, to clear out our hearts, and set the right priorities: “You know my concerns and needs, my wishes. But You know that the most important thing for me is to enter into Your kingdom.” To sanctify ourselves



Chief Apostle Schneider with the Apostles of the newly formed District Church Southern Africa



Chief Apostle (ret.) Wilhelm Leber and District Apostle (ret.) Noel Barnes

for divine service, the following inner attitude is required: “God, help me to recognise You in the sinner, the imperfect servant You have sent.”

Step three: gathering in the name of Jesus

To be able to experience the presence of Jesus Christ in divine service we have to gather in His name, the Chief Apostle continued. “We have to be aware: I am together with my brother and sister in faith now, the members of my congregation. They are so important to Jesus that He died for them. Therefore I cannot just think of them as sinners and strange people.” That also means that we have to clear up any differences there may be between us. God will not do this for us. He expects us to solve our problems together and reconcile. That is our task.

Step four: taking our bearings from the gospel

God also wants to save our neighbour. Here too the faithful are called to pave the way for God. Let us conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel. Neither New Apostolic Christians are perfect nor is the Church. And it is precisely because of this that we want to do God’s work by forgiving one another, loving one another, and overcoming our differences.

Step five: committing ourselves to the congregation

And, finally, there are very practical ways of clearing the way for the Lord. “Here we are talking about our offerings

and helping along in the congregation,” the Chief Apostle said and referred to concrete requests from Jesus to His disciples, such as preparing a place for their Passover celebration.

In summing it all up, the Chief Apostle said that fighting against sin, sanctifying ourselves for divine service, gathering in the name of Jesus, taking our bearings from the gospel, and committing ourselves to the congregation—this is how we can pave the way for the Saviour.

CORE THOUGHTS

Mark 1: 2–3

“As it is written in the Prophets: Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You. The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord; make His paths straight.’”

We clear the way for the Redeemer by fighting against sin, sanctifying ourselves for divine service, gathering in the name of Jesus, taking our bearings from the gospel, and actively participating in the congregation.

It is not enough to just keep the commandments

For many Christians faith has become a tradition. And yet, Christian faith also entails struggle, suffering, following, and corresponding actions! This article offers some explanations from a divine service with the Chief Apostle.



■ NAC USA

Pasadena is not far away from Los Angeles. The metropolis on the west coast of the USA showed itself in its best light on the last Sunday in November 2016, when Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider conducted a divine service there with the local congregation.

Chief Apostle Schneider began by filling the congregation in on the historical context of the Bible text: “The text makes reference to the act of salvation which God performed upon the people of Israel. In His compassion, He liberated the people by forcing the Pharaoh’s hand and then leading them into the Promised Land.” This liberation was an act of grace! Grace signifies receiving the love of God undeserved. However, the people of Israel also had to subordinate themselves to the will of God in order to reach their goal. Various efforts were necessary to this end, said

the Chief Apostle: “Israel had to cross the desert and do battle against its foes!”

Making an effort to reach the goal

“Today God seeks to liberate mankind from the rule of sin and lead them into His kingdom,” said the Chief Apostle, drawing a comparison between the past and present. “This salvation is also an expression of grace that we cannot earn for ourselves. In order to attain our goal, we must likewise align ourselves with the will of God and make the required efforts.”



These include believing in God’s magnificent act of grace, namely the sending of His Son into the world as the Saviour. “Thanks to His sacrifice we can be delivered—provided we believe in it!” But the Chief Apostle went on to state that—in addition to believing in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and believing in His death and resurrection—believing the message of the gospel also incorporates:

- believing that which He taught!
- performing deeds that are consistent with the gospel.
- remaining steadfast in the gospel!

“One cannot make a business out of the gospel,” said the Chief Apostle to clarify. It is not merely a code for good behaviour or a reference tool for good ethics, nor is it a manual for a successful life! Rather, the necessity of being reborn out of water and the Spirit, celebrating Holy Communion, and preparing oneself for the return of Christ are inseparably connected with the doctrine of Jesus Christ, he explained.

Following Christ is the way

“God wants to lead us into His kingdom, and also shows us how we can get there, namely by following Jesus Christ.” Chief Apostle Schneider then went on to put together the pieces necessary for salvation like a puzzle: rebirth out of water and the Spirit, celebration of Holy Communion. That is how divine life can develop. And in the process it is up to each of us

- whether we want to make the effort. “The path of following Christ is not a comfortable path!” In order to be saved by God, human beings must struggle and battle their way forward.

- whether we want to suffer with Christ. “It is not enough just to keep the commandments!” In order to become like Christ, human beings must overcome the old creation. This is often painful.
- whether we want to be patient. “We are on the way to our heavenly home, but we have not even seen it yet!” It is not always easy for us to wait for it in patience.

“God will grant complete redemption to those who sincerely long for it.”

CORE THOUGHTS

Isaiah 48: 17

“Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: ‘I am the Lord your God, who teaches you to profit, who leads you by the way you should go.’”

Jesus is our Saviour. He has liberated us from sin through His sacrifice. He gives us His doctrine and has made us a new creation. In order to attain salvation we have to follow His teaching and the example He set. Upon His return He will complete the work that He has begun in us.

JESUS BLESSES LITTLE CHILDREN

(MATTHEW 18, 19)

One day the people brought their children to Jesus. They wanted Him to bless them.

The disciples scolded the people and tried to keep the children away from Jesus. They thought that He might feel bothered by them. They were not aware how much Jesus loved children.

When Jesus saw that the disciples wanted to send them away, He said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Then He laid His hands upon them and blessed them.

Another time the disciples asked Jesus who the greatest is in the kingdom of heaven.

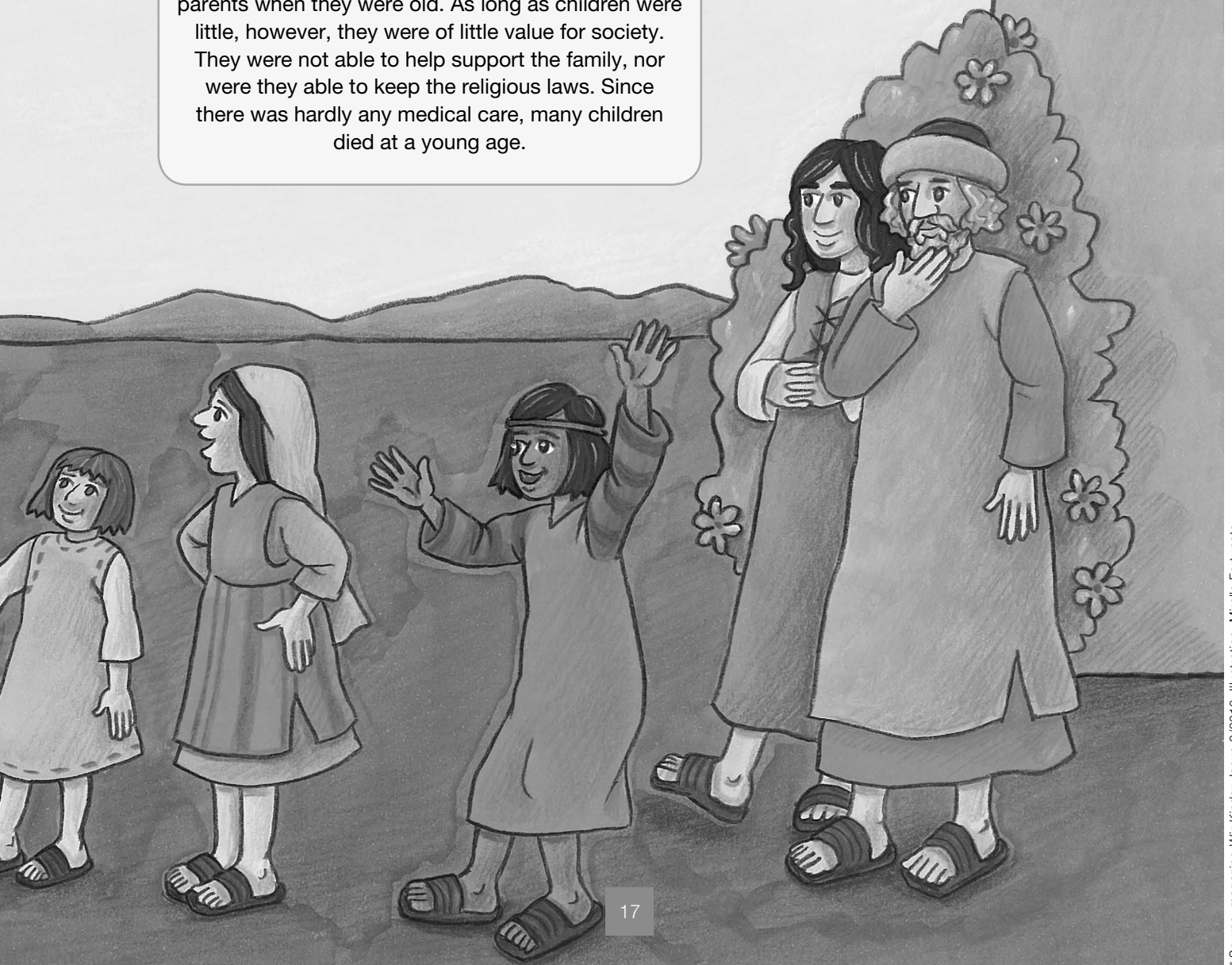
Jesus called a little child to Him, placed it among them, and said, "Unless you become like little children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. The greatest in the kingdom of heaven is



the one who humbles himself and becomes like this child." Then Jesus said, "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes Me. Anyone who prevents a child from believing in Me is better off to drown Himself in the sea. "See that you do not despise the children! Their angels in

heaven always see the face of My Father in heaven. My Father in heaven wants to save every single one of these children."

In biblical times, it was important for people to have children because they had to care for their parents when they were old. As long as children were little, however, they were of little value for society. They were not able to help support the family, nor were they able to keep the religious laws. Since there was hardly any medical care, many children died at a young age.

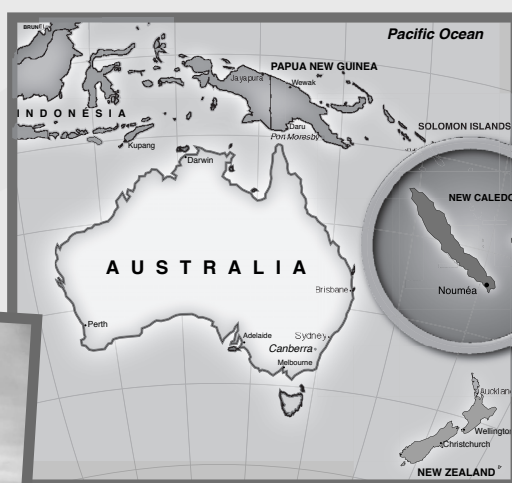


AT GWENDOLYNE'S IN LE MONT-DORE (NEW CALEDONIA)

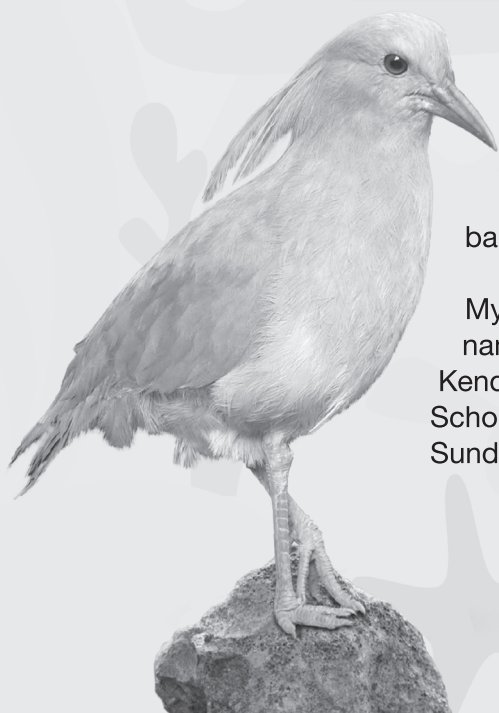


Hello, **my** name is Gwendolyne. I am ten years old and live in New Caledonia.

Many of you have probably never heard of this group of islands. If you look at a world map, you will find **New Caledonia** east of Australia. James Cook, the well-known British explorer, navigator and pioneer, discovered the islands in 1774.



A quarter of the world's supply of nickel is found in New Caledonia. Nickel is an ore that is used in the production of stainless steel. It is used to manufacture kitchen sinks, washing machines, engines, cutlery, and costume jewellery. Nickel prevents steel from rusting. My dad works in a big **nickel mine**.



New Caledonia is home to a very curious bird, a species you can only find here: the **kagu**. It cannot fly, but it barks like a dog. It sounds really funny.

My mom's name is Linda, my father's name Richard, and my **brother's** name Kendivay. He is twelve and goes to Sunday School with me. Standing behind us is our Sunday School teacher.



This is our Sunday School **class**.

Our **house** is in Le Mont-Dore (= gold mountain). The community carries this name because gold was apparently found here in earlier times.

Le Mont-Dore is about 30 kilometres south of Nouméa, our capital. This is where we go to **church** (see arrow) on Sundays. It is a 45-minute trip by car.



We had ministers from France visit us recently, and I picked grapefruits for them. Can you see me through the branches of the **grape fruit tree**?

I love to look after my pets: I have a dog, a cat, and a **goat**.

I may not look like it, but I eat a lot. If there is good food, I am there. This picture was taken at a **dinner** we had at church on Thanksgiving.



In 2015 the **Chief Apostle** visited us. We, the children, sang a song in front of the church to welcome him. We were nervous and our hearts were pounding, but it was great to meet him.



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Forgiveness of sins: the prerequisites and effects

Forgiveness of sins lets us experience the grace of God directly. How do we attain forgiveness of sins? And what are its effects? Thoughts from a doctrinal text by Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider.

Belief in the forgiveness of sins (also known as “absolution”) is a fundamental element of Christian faith: forgiveness of sins is expressly mentioned in the early church creeds—in the Apostolicum and the Creed of Nicaea-Constantinople (Catechism in Questions and Answers, Chapter 2)—as well as in the Third Article of our creed.

Unique and continual

Forgiveness of sins is made possible through the sacrifice of Christ. The fundamental liberation from the rule of sin occurs through Holy Baptism with water, in which original sin is washed away. In every divine service, the Apostle or a minister commissioned by him proclaims the absolution

in the name of Jesus. When received with a believing heart, this ultimately erases individual sin and guilt before God. Nevertheless, neither baptism with water nor the absolution can liberate us from the inclination to sin (concupiscence). No sooner have we been liberated from our latest sins, we sin again—despite all our efforts not to.

Ready for the absolution

To obtain the forgiveness of sins requires intensive preparation. We must

- undertake a thorough self-examination and become aware of our mistakes.
- confess our sins before God. This not only means that

we must recognise our mistakes, but also acknowledge our guilt.

- feel remorse. Let us bring to expression our resolve to do better.
- resolutely pursue the path of reconciliation with our neighbour.

If we follow the above, it will undoubtedly contribute to our sanctification.

Peace with God

The absolution not only washes away our sins, but also assures us of the peace of the Risen One.

- Thereby the Lord confirms that He has not rejected us despite our sins, and that His love for us remains unchanged.
- Jesus Christ reminds us that He has overcome evil. Although Satan may succeed in causing us to fail, He cannot separate us from the love of God.
- We can dare to make a new start.

Nearness among children of God

What is more, forgiveness of sins helps bring children of God closer to one another and reinforces the oneness desired by the Lord.

- In the Lord's Prayer prior to the absolution, the congregation confesses its sins—all of us publicly confess our mistakes and concede that we are no better than our neighbour.
- This collective confession is associated with the plea: "And deliver us from the evil one." This plea underlines the solidarity of the congregation in the battle against sin: "Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed" (James 5: 16).
- The absolution is proclaimed to all—each and every one can hear, and delight in, the forgiveness that has been promised to his neighbour.

Worthy for Holy Communion

Beyond that, the significance of forgiveness of sins derives from its direct relationship to the celebration of Holy Communion. Worthy partaking of Holy Communion is indispensable for a life in Christ. Forgiveness of sins itself is indispensable for receiving Holy Communion worthily, and this is true for several reasons.

- We must be cleansed in order to have sacramental fellowship with Jesus Christ.
- Partaking in Holy Communion is reserved for those who have been baptised, that is to say, for those who endeavour to turn away from evil in order to follow Christ. When we show remorse in order to receive forgiveness of sins, we demonstrate that we—despite all our faults—are firmly resolved to keep the promise we gave at our baptism. (When a child is baptised, this promise to believe in Jesus Christ and live in accordance with the gospel is given by the parents and later reinforced by the young Christians in their confirmation vow).
- In Holy Communion the members of the congregation commune with one another ("communion" is the fellowship with Christ and the members of the congregation among one another). True fellowship is only possible if all have forgiven one another.

Forgiveness of sins is not a sacrament, but it is very important for our preparation to partake of Holy Communion worthily and therefore for the return of the Lord.



■ Marcel Felde

Forgiveness of sins and the Apostle ministry

Forgiveness of sins without the involvement of the Apostle ministry? Is that at all possible? In future, definitely. And today it cannot be ruled out, the Chief Apostle writes. Important is: the ministerial authority gives the faithful certainty.

After His resurrection, Jesus Christ gave His disciples the commission to proclaim forgiveness of sins in His name: “As the Father has sent Me, I also send you. ... If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained” (John 20: 21, 23). The Fourth Article of Faith refers to this passage. The Catechism explains how we understand this biblical reference: “A further task incumbent on the apostolate is to ... bindingly proclaim forgiveness to human beings on the basis of the sacrifice and merit of Jesus Christ” (Catechism 2.4.4).

From the Articles of Faith

Two of the Articles of Faith in our creed mention the belief in the forgiveness of sins and the commission which the Apostles have to proclaim it.

The Third Article of Faith speaks of forgiveness as an act of God: only the triune God can wash away sins, and He

can do so at any time. Jesus, the Son of God, stated that He Himself had the power to forgive sins (cf. Mark 2: 10), and even did so before bringing His sacrifice on the cross.

The Fourth Article of Faith goes into greater detail, and references Jesus’ activity in His church. In the church of Christ, those who believe in Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, can receive the grace of baptism and thus experience the washing away of original sin. Within the church, the Apostles have the commission to bindingly proclaim forgiveness of sins.

Forgiveness is not automatic

The Apostle proclaims forgiveness, however, it is God who forgives. The authority of the Apostles with respect to the forgiveness of sins is not automatic. The proclamation of the forgiveness of sins through an Apostle alone will not suffice in order to wash away sins. Forgiveness only takes

effect when the sinner is repentant and willing to reconcile. The Apostles act as messengers of Christ: through them, Jesus Christ Himself proclaims the absolution to the believers. The forgiveness proclaimed by the Apostle is authoritative, irrespective of the opinions or agreement of other human beings. Sinners can receive forgiveness from God even if other people continue to accuse them.

Is forgiveness possible without the apostolate?

Does the commission to forgive sins entrusted to the Apostles rule out any possibility that forgiveness might also be attained outside of the apostolate?

Let us first remember that the commission of the Apostles is limited in duration, since it primarily consists of proclaiming the return of Christ and of preparing the believers for this event. When the Lord returns, both the living and the dead who were prepared for His coming will resurrect. They will receive a glorified body and will enter into eternal fellowship with God.

Since these are all sinners, they will also need forgiveness of sins in order to be with God. This forgiveness will not be pronounced by the Apostles, but granted directly by God. The same applies to the martyrs who will resurrect after the great tribulation. At the Last Judgement it will be God Himself who will grant grace to those who will be permitted to enter into the new creation.

Our doctrine thus expressly references the possibility of receiving forgiveness of sins even after the end of the Apostles' activity on earth. With regard to the time prior to the renewed occupation of the Apostle ministry, our Catechism explains: "It is conceivable that—even in this time—God showed His grace of forgiveness to those who believed" (Catechism 6.4.2.2).

Ministerial authority provides certainty

How is it in our time? The Catechism also brings a fundamental truth to expression in this respect: "God in His omnipotence has always been able to forgive sins" (Catechism 12.1.8.1). Thus we cannot rule out that forgiveness of sins is possible without the involvement of an Apostle or a minister commissioned by him.

For this reason we should not claim that it is impossible for God to forgive the sins of any believer today, even if he does not believe in the Apostles at work in the New

Apostolic Church. God can also forgive sins quite independently of ministry and church!

However, only those who have received the pronouncement of forgiveness of sins through the apostolate can be certain that their sins have truly been forgiven.

Making its effects visible

In the past, the importance of the Apostle ministry was often associated with the commission to forgive sins. This view was based on the premise that forgiveness of sins without the Apostle ministry would call the ministry into question. At that time, the emphasis was on the forgiveness of sins, and Holy Communion was merely a kind of accessory to the absolution. In a way it was merely considered a kind of confirmation of, or receipt for, forgiveness of sins.

Today we understand Holy Communion as the central event of the divine service, and the forgiveness of sins as the indispensable prerequisite for this celebration. We believe that Holy Communion is an important means of preparation for the return of the Lord, and that the administration of this sacrament is entrusted to the Apostles.

As children of God we have the responsibility to make people aware of the activity of living Apostles. We can only do this if we are an epistle of Christ that can be recognised and read by others (cf. 2 Corinthians 3: 2). The activity of the Apostle ministry is to be clearly recognised in each and every one of us and in our congregations!

Let us also profess that the Apostles have the authority to proclaim forgiveness of sins! Let us show the world that New Apostolic Christians

- have the courage to question themselves and the resolve to change.
- are prepared to forgive and reconcile.
- strive for unity among one another.

Such an attitude will bring us the blessing of God and increase the interest of our fellow human beings in the apostolic cause.

Ministerial authority and leadership function

It was the top subject of discussion for the District Apostles and Apostles over this rapidly closing year: work on the new concept of ministry. What is so important about this, and where will the journey take us? Following is a brief review and a look ahead.

The cornerstones are in place, the foundations have been laid: the autumn conference of the District Apostles in Perth (Australia) formulated some key statements in matters concerning the “Concept of Ministry”. The Work Group Questions of Faith has now been given the mandate to draft a special edition for the *Divine Service Guide*. The *Divine Service Guide* is a publication that communicates information from the Church leadership directly to the ministers of the Church. It is produced in over 70 languages.

Related questions: both theological and societal in nature

But why does a Church with a solid 150 years of tradition even have to give any thought to its ministerial conception? After all, with the publication of the Catechism in the year 2012, the New Apostolic Church presented the world with quite a comprehensive written foundational text. And the whole seventh chapter of this work deals with ministry. “However, other related questions are being raised now,” said retired Chief Apostle Leber already in 2013. What is a ministry and what is a function? What happens during

ordination? These are just some of the basic questions. And very closely associated with these are another two questions: what is a ministerial mandate and what constitutes an organisational task? What is ministerial authority and what is a leadership function?

Once the theological aspects have been thought through, the focus would shift to the related societal questions, said Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider back in 2014 during a panel discussion at the International Church Convention. Who is permitted to bear a ministry? What will the congregation accept? What things will work on an international level and what things will only work in some regions?

Three levels: the ministries and their powers

This much is clear—as a measure of ministerial authority, the New Apostolic faith only acknowledges three levels of ministry:

- the Deacon, who has the authority to proclaim the word of God,



■ Peter Johanning, Oliver Rütten

District Apostles' conference in Perth in Australia (October 2016)



District Apostles' conference in Zurich in Switzerland (March 2016)



- the Priest, who, in addition to the above, also has the mandate and authority to dispense Holy Baptism with water, proclaim the forgiveness of sins, as well as consecrate and dispense Holy Communion, and
- the Apostle, who, moreover, also has the authority to baptise with the gift of the Holy Spirit and ordain ministers.

All further distinctions—particularly with regard to the priestly ministries—derive from the basic idea that the Church was to be restored to its original structure and form. However, a holistic view of all the relevant Bible passages shows us that the early church did not possess a uniform ministerial structure. For example, Elders and Bishops both had the very same function as rectors over the congregations at the time. Even the designation only differed depending on whether they led congregations characterised predominantly by Jewish Christians or Greek Christians.

Establishing doctrine: working together around the world

Concrete work on the conception of ministry has been ongoing since the spring of 2014. The Work Group Questions

of Faith began by assembling all the necessary foundations for theological consideration, which also included the historical background. Since then, the panel has worked to formulate various questions on the subject and prepare possible answers to them. The International District Apostle Meeting has been discussing and debating these matters regularly since March 2015.

At the initiative of the Chief Apostle, all Apostles around the world were drawn into the consultation process as of spring 2016—either in writing or in conferences such as those held in Frankfurt (Germany), Daejeon (South Korea), and Los Angeles (USA). After all, the Catechism describes the apostolate as the ministry responsible for establishing doctrine. Beyond that, the organisational structure of the ministerial concept will also take cultural dimensions into account.

During the District Apostle Meeting in Australia, Chief Apostle Schneider gave voice to his enthusiasm over the progress made to date, expressing how impressive it is to watch these diverse aspects of the subject fill up with spirit and life such that an overall context comes into being as a result.

A country of house churches

They do not need churches for their services, nor do they need big events for an active church life. District Elder Alex Michel Reyes de Martinez talks about how New Apostolic Christians in Cuba live their faith.



Caribbean rhythms, magnificent beaches, expensive cigars. Sandwiched between the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic is Cuba, the largest of more than 4,000 Caribbean islands, and one with a special flair. Among the eleven million inhabitants there are also New Apostolic Christians.

One of them is Alex Michel Reyes de Martinez. He is 33 years old and was born in Santiago de Cuba. He is married and the father of a seven-year-old daughter. At the beginning of 2016, District Apostle Markus Fehlbaum of Switzerland, who is responsible for Cuba, ordained him a District Elder. He is assisted by six District Evangelists and additional ministers.

A first: service in a church

Every year, Alex Michel Reyes travels to Europe for meetings and seminars. He is a journalist and works for a number of magazines. "Cuba is a very beautiful country and

I love to describe the beauty of my country," he says and describes his passion for writing.

When he came to Europe in October 2016, District Apostle Fehlbaum asked him to celebrate a service in Bülach in Switzerland; a first for the young Cuban minister. He normally preaches in small house churches and is not used to the vastness of a large church building.

Joyful congregations in private homes

The New Apostolic Church does not have any church buildings in Cuba, nor does it have rented premises or fixed meeting places like other congregations in other parts of the world. New Apostolic Christians in Cuba gather for their divine services in private homes.

"We have such house churches in every province. From Artemisa in the north-west right down to Santiago de Cuba.



■ Oliver Rütten

Opposite at left: District Apostle Markus Fehlbaum (second from the left) and District Elder Reyes (third from the right) with members in Cuba

Opposite at right: District Elder Reyes celebrates a divine service in a house church

Top: District Elder Reyes during the interview

That is why I drive a lot in order to look after the members,” District Elder Reyes says. “The distance from Artemisa to Santiago is almost a thousand kilometres. Since most of the members don’t own a car, I have to go and visit them at home or meet them in places within walking distance.”

Grateful for God’s nearness

“The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.” Alex Michel Reyes quotes Psalm 23 in Spanish, his personal motto: “With the Lord at our side—and He is there—we have everything. We lack nothing. That is our focus: the Lord is there and helps us. Sure, there is always something missing, but that is not what counts. What is important is that we attain the worthiness that is required. That is our goal. And nothing else really matters.”

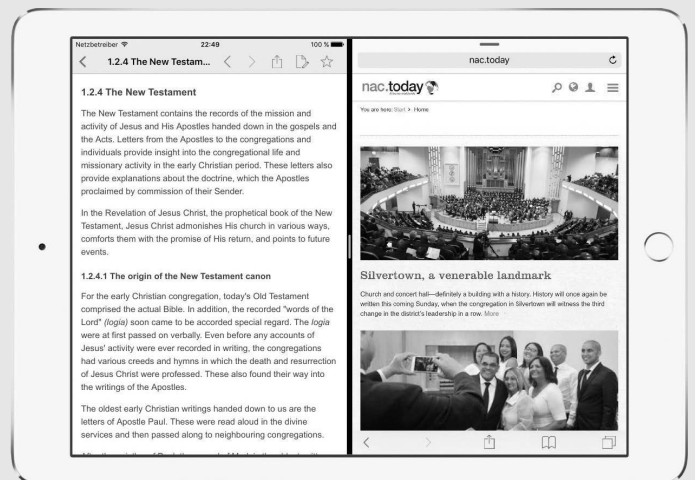
The congregations in Cuba hear the word of God in small groups, celebrate Holy Communion, and talk about their experiences of faith. “This strengthens their faith. It makes them happy,” the District Elder reports. There is an added benefit of conveying Christian values, he goes on to explain: “Our faith is perceived by others, and we are happy that we can contribute positively to the moral development in the country.”

The Catechism for those on the go

A book of faith, a reference work, Church doctrine pure ... The Catechism has not only been given many names but has also been published in a number of formats in the meantime. One of its digital variations has just received a complete makeover.

The app *naccatechism* contains the long version of the Catechism of the New Apostolic Church and features functions such as bookmarks, search functions, the display of Bible passages, and much more. Already before the update, the app offered many functions. It is not only ideal for an occasional read but lends itself well to the intensive study of doctrinal content. The app now has new features.

1. Daily reading. If activated, the app reminds the user to read daily. The app remembers the passage that was read last, and lets you read on from there. This function can be activated and deactivated in the settings. It is also possible to select individual chapters.
2. SplitView, SlideOver, and SplitScreenMode. Tablets running on iOS or Android display the Catechism app in a split view. This is very convenient if you want to refer to a Bible text while reading or make notes.
3. AirPrint and GoogleCloudPrint allow you to print content from the Catechism app conveniently from your iOS and Android mobile devices.



How women move the Church forward

They cultivate fellowship, but not only among themselves: the International Sisters' Fellowship, comprised of New Apostolic women from Zambia, Malawi, and Zimbabwe, is an example of the role women take in church and society in this part of Africa.

There is a lot of singing, dancing, and laughing at Luwanga Secondary School in Mzuzu in Malawi. After two exhausting days with many topics on the agenda, it is time to relax a little. We are not talking about children here who are playing outside their school, but about experienced women—nearly 3,600 from Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Malawi. They have come together for their annual meeting of the International Sisters' Fellowship, taking place from 25 to 28 August 2016. Their motto: "Victory with Christ".

The programme: medicine, legal matters, and economics

One of the presentations was on the Catechism, specifically the sections dealing with thanksgiving, offering, and the tithe. The services of a medical doctor from Mzuzu Hospital could be secured to give a talk on various health issues such as HIV/AIDS prevention, cancer awareness (breast and cervical cancer), blood pressure, diabetes, and sickle-cell anaemia. The organising committee was also able to

secure the services of a magistrate to give a presentation on legal matters, which are often much more than theory: gender-based violence, early marriage, property grabbing, and human trafficking. Also on the agenda was the topic of sharpening women's entrepreneurial skills, including practical advice on the opportunities available to support a family.

Besides enjoying spending time together, the women use these gatherings to follow a long tradition of humanitarian work: they help the sick, orphans, the vulnerable and needy in the community where the conference takes place. This time Mzuzu benefited, a city in northern Malawi with a population of 130,000. The meeting ended on Sunday with an open-air service celebrated by District Apostle Helper Arnold Mhango. He based his sermon on 1 Corinthians 13: 11: "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things."

Some 3,600 New Apostolic women from Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Malawi came to the annual Sisters' Fellowship 2016 in Mzuzu in Malawi



NAC Zambia



District Apostle Helper Arnold Mhango during the divine service that marked the end of the convention



Guidelines: pastoral care, health, income

Such meetings are the culmination of the work undertaken by women in Zambia, Malawi, and Zimbabwe. They play such an important role that guidelines were published in 2011. These are intended to ensure that this noble cause is not misunderstood and that they have the support of the leaders. The paper provides that—from the congregational level to the elder and apostle area level—committees are formed to co-ordinate the work. The committee at the apostle area level will be chaired by a sister with leadership qualities and expertise in education and development of women. At this level, one sister from each elder district and three ministers will also be appointed to the committee.

The guidelines published by District Apostle Charles Ndandula contain an extensive catalogue of activities under the headings “Soul care and spiritual fellowship activities”, “Health and wellness activities”, and “Empowerment and income generation activities”. Included here are, for example, the production of literature on how members can organise their everyday life based on their faith—from marriage to the grave. Other activities include health education, home-based care programmes, nutrition and the promotion of healthy foods, as well as sporting and recreation clubs for sisters.

A key role in the development

The activities in the area of finance have two objectives: first, to strengthen the economic independence of women and, secondly, to support the work of the Church. Fund-raising campaigns are therefore a standard feature. More than 50,000 US dollars were raised at this year’s meeting in Mzuzu alone. The proceeds from such campaigns are invested primarily in charity projects—such as funding a maternity ward or a school. But the money also goes toward the construction of churches. Just how big the sisters’ contribution is can be seen by the following statement from District Apostle Charles Ndandula: “Sisters in the New Apostolic Church play a significant role in building up the Church.”

Creating public awareness during the Sisters’ Fellowship in Mzuzu



Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider with the District Apostles and District Apostle Helpers (October 2016, Perth/Australia)



Peter Johanning

Changes in the circle of the Apostles

Currently, there are 345 active Apostles around the world. Following is an overview of the retirements, ordinations, and appointments that took place in the second half of the year 2016.

There are nine million New Apostolic Christians spread over 60,000 congregations around the globe. They are cared for by 260,000 ministers and receive instruction from thousands of teachers. The Church is divided into 17 District Apostle Areas. There are a total of 345 Apostles, including the Chief Apostle, eight District Apostle Helpers, and 17 District Apostles. The spiritual leader of the Church is Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider.

Ordinations and appointments

In a divine service in our Silvertown church in Cape Town in South Africa on Sunday, 18 December 2016, Chief

Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider ordained John Leslie Kriel (born 1956) a District Apostle and appointed him to lead the newly created District Apostle Area Southern Africa, which is comprised of the former districts Cape and South-East Africa. In the same service, the Chief Apostle appointed Patrick Mandla Mkhwanazi (born 1963) a District Apostle Helper. There are 660,000 New Apostolic Christians in the newly merged church district.

In Blantyre, Malawi's second largest city, the Chief Apostle ordained Jacob Mwansa (born 1957) an Apostle for Zambia on Sunday, 6 November 2016. He and 24 other Apostles assist District Apostle Charles S. Ndandula in a

region in which there are more than a million New Apostolic Christians.

Retirements

District Apostle Noel Edward Barnes (born 1949) went into retirement during a divine service in Silvertown (Cape Town/South Africa) on Sunday, 18 December 2016 after more than 30 years as an Apostle. From December 1996 to his retirement, Noel Edward Barnes led the Cape district assisted by 11 Apostles and 24 Bishops.

Apostle José Mário Cambinda (born 1958) of Angola had to retire early for health reasons on 4 December 2016. Chief Apostle Richard Fehr had ordained him an Apostle in a divine service in Lusaka (Zambia) on 13 March 2005.

Apostle Hans-Peter Schneider (born 1950) went into retirement on Sunday, 14 August 2016 in Heilbronn. Chief Apostle Schneider expressed his thanks to the retiring Apostle from Southern Germany. Hans-Peter Schneider exercised various ministries in the Church over a period of 39 years, the last 18 of which he carried the Apostle ministry.

Apostle Norbert Shamba Lupongo (born 1950) of the District Church Congo South-East went into retirement on Sunday, 17 July 2016. He served the Church in ministry for a total of 36 years, 18 of these as an Apostle. Chief Apostle Schneider carried out the retirement in a divine service in Kananga.

Apostle Walter Reginald Diedericks (born 1951) retired in a divine service on Sunday, 31 July 2016. Walter R. Diedericks was active as a minister in the Cape district for 44 years. District Apostle Noel Barnes carried the retirement out in our Kensington Central church.

In 2016, one District Apostle and 19 Apostles were ordained, and one District Apostle was appointed a District Apostle Helper. There were a total of 16 retirements. One retired District Apostle and six retired Apostles passed away in the past year.

Southern Africa – the birth of a new District Church



Jessica Krämer

On his visit to Cape Town on 18 December 2016, Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider created a new District Apostle Area: Southern Africa. It is comprised of the former districts South-East Africa and Cape. He also appointed a new District Apostle: John Leslie Kriel.

The time for an amalgamation was favourable, the Chief Apostle said. District Apostle Noel E. Barnes from Cape Town was retired during this festive service in mid December. His successor is Apostle John Kriel, who was placed in charge of both districts. District Apostle Patrick Mkhwanazi from Johannesburg will support him as District Apostle Helper.

The new district is called “New Apostolic Church Southern Africa”. The membership of the new district has nearly doubled, but it is still smaller than the District Apostle Area Congo-West or Congo-South East or Zambia, the Chief Apostle writes.

The new working area includes Botswana, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mayotte, Mozambique, Namibia, Réunion, Rodrigues, Seychelles, Saint Helena, South Africa (Free State, Gauteng, Kwazulu-Natal, Mpumalanga, Limpopo, North West, Cape) and Swaziland. The joint administrative offices of these countries are located in Cape Town.

Chief Apostle Schneider expressed his gratitude to the responsible District Apostles for their willingness to help shape these radical changes. They came into effect on 18 December. Chief Apostle Schneider: “I am convinced that this measure will serve as a benefit to all our brothers and sisters in this region.”



District Apostle Michael Ehrich:

Recognizing God's Creation!

Dear brothers and sisters,

Today, I would want us to focus on a topic that is certainly dear to many of us: the responsible dealings with creation.

God has entrusted human beings to be stewards of creation. We are called upon to deal with creation carefully and to preserve them for future generations to have a life-worthy environment. Ponder! The destruction of nature affects us all.

With kind regards,
yours

M. Ehrich
Michael Ehrich

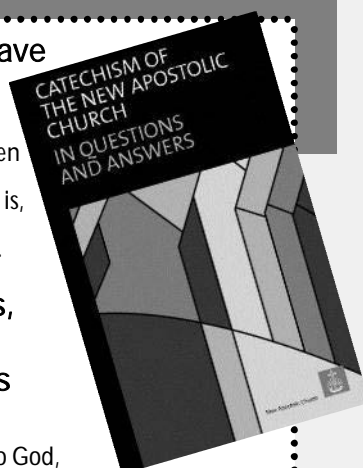
What task does man have in the visible creation?

God has assigned human beings their living environment and given them the commission to have "dominion" over the earth—that is, to shape it—and to protect it (cf. Genesis 1: 26, 28; Psalm 8: 6).

How are human beings, as the image of God, to conduct themselves within the creation??

Human beings are accountable to God, the Creator, for the way they treat the creation. They can deal freely, but not recklessly, with the creation. As the image of God they are to treat all life and their habitat in accordance with the divine nature: with wisdom, goodness, and love.

*Catechism of the New Apostolic Church:
Questions and Answers – Questions 85 and 86*



Benin: We are responsible for our environment!

From 14th to 17th April 2017, more than 2,200 members gathered in the congregation of Atchoukpa for a series of religious and recreational activities for the benefit of children, youth and ministers during the Easter festivities. Taking advantage of this mobilization, Apostle Yedenou drew attention to the theme: "RECOGNIZING GOD'S CREATION".

We are responsible for God's creation and as stewards, we should curb the menace of deterioration of our environment. Every human being must act to perpetuate life on earth. This is what God expects from us: Genesis 2: 15-17... Our responsibility also extends to humanity.

We are all responsible for the positive evolution of human behavior. Our neighbor is, as much as we are, God's creation. Living together must be built on the love for our neighbor, mutual forgiveness, solidarity, union and charity as was observed among the early Christians. This makes the grace of God available to each one of us: Acts 4: 32-33. "We all must fight against thoughts and ideas that destroy the positive perception of others as God's creation despite any imperfections and differences. This is how we prove our responsibility for the God's creation ... "These were the words of the Apostle Yedenou on April 17, in a divine service where 247 young people were confirmed.

YE

Nigeria: Responsible for the creation of God!

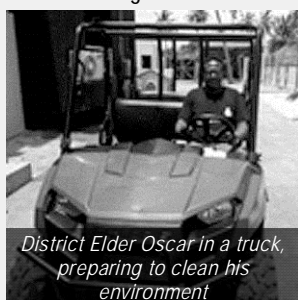
Human beings are accountable to God, the Creator, for the way they treat the creation. They can deal freely, but not recklessly, with the creation. As the image of God they are to treat all life forms and their habitat in accordance with the divine nature: with wisdom, goodness, and love.

As beneficiaries of the divine creation, we should care for the earth, be wise stewards over it,

and preserve it for future generations. The earth and all things should be used responsibly. However, all are stewards - not owners - over this earth and its bounty and will be accountable before God for what they do with His creations.

What can I do? You can, fix up and keep clean the places where you live, work, recreate, and worship.

OS



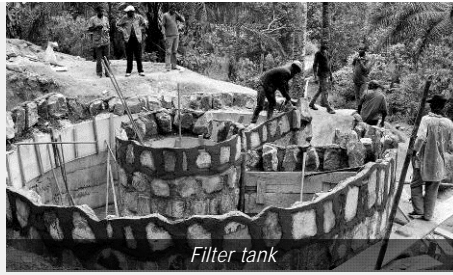
District Elder Oscar in a truck, preparing to clean his environment



District Elder Oscar with children at Lagos conservatory centre



Intake weir



Filter tank



Standpipe

Cameroon: Water supply projects

Far from motorways, in the South-West-Province of Cameroon the members of the Betieku and Ambelle Clans are living in a mountainous rainforest under challenging conditions. Mortality, mostly among young children, is very high due to the bad quality of drinking water. Therefore, the New Apostolic Church of South-Germany is financing the construction of water supply systems for the villages. Water of mountain streams is tapped in high altitudes by a pipeline and purified in a sand bed filter before reaching the lower situated villages, where it is provided to the population by a network of standpipes. The population is engaging in community work to dig the trenches for the pipelines and to transport materials along the jungle paths. Also local materials such as stones, gravel and sand are provided by the villages.

During construction of weirs and filter buildings, young males of the villages were trained as caretakers to independently perform maintenance and repair works after completion of the system. To organize the community work and to guarantee a sustainable maintenance of the water supply system, the villages are establishing a water committee, where women are also active in leading functions. Since the year 2002, one or two further villages are supplied with safe water every year. Meanwhile, 25 water supply systems are in operation and three more are currently under construction. Regular inspection visits reveal that the systems are well maintained. Village elders report that child mortality decreased considerably.

JM



Ghana: Keep the Creation

One indispensable subject that is mostly overlooked is "The responsible interaction with creation". God has entrusted humanity as stewards of creation (cf. Genesis 1:26, 28; Psalm 8:6). We are called upon to ensure sustenance and perpetuity of creation for future generation. Conservation of the ecosystem is a mandate of which God holds man accountable. Thus, it is expedient that every man upholds this mandate as a divine calling. Let us eradicate every negative action that affects the natural environment. Its destruction affects us all. Therefore, as the image of God, man must treat the ecosystem with divine essence: wisdom, goodness and love.



Sierra Leone: Creation Awareness

God made everything in heaven and on earth. The great duty of man is to look after creation in love. We have the commandment to love God and the neighbor. Our neighbors could be those around us and the environment. Shaping the world should be in accordance with the will of God. One should respect and care for creation with great attention. We should develop and activate our vision (live according to the gospel) and mission (church / sacraments). This takes the form of teaching children, caring for youths, empathizing with people and undertaking community development projects.

Liberia: Respect the environment!

The book of Genesis tells us that God took six days to create the heavens and the earth. As humans we are beneficiaries of the divine creation and therefore we should preserve it for future generations and for the plan of God. The earth is part of God's plan of salvation and therefore He will hold us accountable for the care and preservation of the earth.



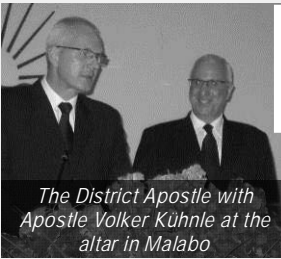
Farming in Lofa-Tubugissizu

The condition of our environment plays a major role in the health and safety of our children and the citizens at large. Air, land and water pollutions should be our concern as Christians. Let us partner with community organizations to mobilize citizens and volunteers to promote environmental stewardship.



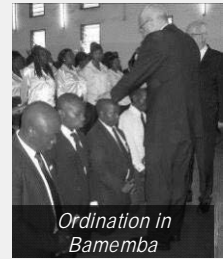
Road Project in Nimba

JEN



Guinea, Cameroon, Gabon: Blessed journey of District Apostle

From March 7 to 15, our District Apostle paid again visit to our brothers and sisters in Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon and Gabon. He was accompanied by the responsible leading Apostle Volker Kühnle.



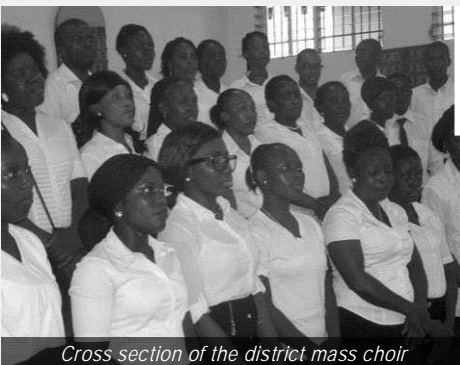
In Equatorial Guinea, the District Apostle conducted the first divine service in Bata. A festive and joyful congregation of more than 660 participants in and outside our church experienced the solemn retirement of two District Elders who have served very faithfully in their ministry for more than 20 years. Two new District Elders and three District Evangelists were ordained in their ministry. The next day, in the capital of the country, Malabo, a congregation with more than 360 participants welcomed the servants of God for the evening divine service in which one Priest was ordained. In both divine services, the local Apostle Gonzalo Esono Aló, also joined the European visitors.

The next destination was Bamenda / Cameroon. The District Apostle conducted a Divine Service in Bamenda-Ntarikon church in the presence of about 240 participants. In this blessed meeting one District Elder and four District Evangelists were ordained for the English speaking part of Cameroon.



Straight after the Divine service, the journey continued to Yaoundé, the capital of Cameroon. The next morning, our main church in Yaoundé-Ekounou hosted the visitors. A very warm and joyful congregation of over 410 participants experienced the blessing from on high as well as ordination of five District Elders and eleven District Evangelists for the French speaking part of Cameroon. Again, the journey continued straight after the Divine service to Douala from where they took a flight to Libreville/Gabon. On Monday Port Gentil, the "oil capital" of the country on a peninsula was visited. About 180 participants witnessed the Holy Sealing of 31 souls as well as the ordination of one District

Evangelist, two Priests and eight Deacons. To crown the intensive visit, the next day District Apostle conducted a festive Divine service in Libreville in a Hall in presence of almost 450 participants. There 22 souls received the gift of the Holy Spirit, and six District Evangelists, three Community Evangelists, two Priests and seven Deacons were ordained.



Cross section of the district mass choir

unforgettable joy in the hearts of many New Apostolic Christians, who gathered at each of the planned activities.

On February 4, 2017 the District Apostle, accompanied by the Host Apostle Alexander Wreh and the other Apostles attended a Divine Service in Karken Town, Margibi County. The text was selected from Daniel 1:12-13 with theme: "Give Priority to Eternal Life." Three priests were elevated as Community Evangelists.

The divine service was followed by a choir concert during the evening hours in the edifice of Monrovia Central Church. In attendance was the Monrovia District Choir including the children choirs from Matadi and Monrovia Central congregations. The concert thrilled everyone in attendance. The children performances were exceptional because they ministered the gospel through the songs they sang.

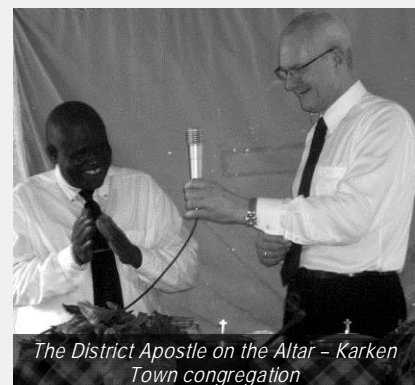
Liberia: Visit of Blessing Bearers

District Apostle Michael Ehrich and Leading Apostle Hans-Jürgen Bauer visited Liberia from February 3 to 5, 2017

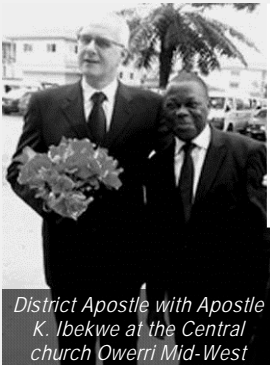
The visit of our District Apostle was a memorable one. It brought

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On Sunday, Feb. 5, 2017, another Divine Service was held in Monrovia Central Church with text from Hebrews 10:23 and theme: Hope! Three Community Evangelists and one District Elder were ordained. There were more than 480 members present.



The District Apostle on the Altar - Karken Town congregation



District Apostle with Apostle K. Ibekwe at the Central church Owerri Mid-West

Nigeria: District Apostle visits Mid-West, South and West Nigeria

From 30th to 2nd of April, District Apostle Michael Ehrich conducted three divine services and held a meeting with all Apostles and Bishops in Nigeria in Owerri (Mid-West Nigeria).

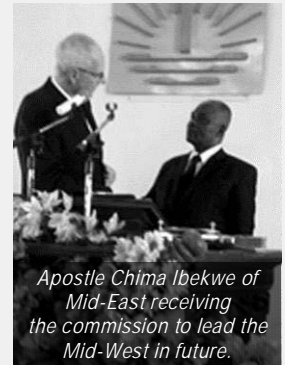
During the festive divine services, Apostle Kenneth Ibekwe of Mid-West, five District Elders and one District Evangelist were retired. Ten District Elders and 14 District Evangelists were ordained.

Apostle Chima Ibekwe of Mid-East received the responsibility to look after the Mid-West in future.

In Owerri (Mid-West), the District Apostle took the text from the letters of Paul to the Romans 4:20-21.

The District Apostle said he was very thankful to be in Owerri as well as very thankful to feel the faith of our brothers and sisters. He went on to say that faith is a gift from God and because of that, we come

to service. God can see our heart and soul, nothing is hidden, he knows the past, present and future. What we need from him is trust, because he loves us.



Apostle Chima Ibekwe of Mid-East receiving the commission to lead the Mid-West in future.



District Apostle giving hands shake to members outside the church in Owerri

Concerning the text word read to the congregation, he said it was all about Abraham: we know Abraham received a promise of a son but he got older and older in that he questioned God because of his age, the lord took him outside and showed him the stars... he was hundred years old at the time. Earthly point of view is different from God. Sarah doubted but Abraham did not waiver of the promise of God.

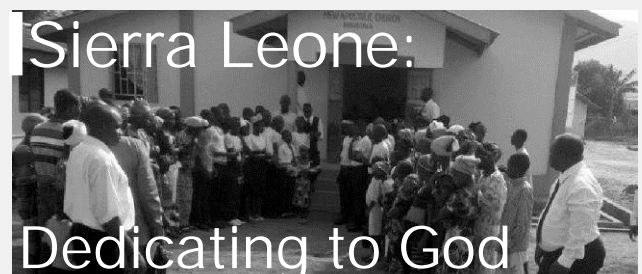


Nigeria: Apostle Namse called home

Retired Apostle Augustine Namse of Ikot Ekpene Area died on the 4th of February 2017.

He worked as an Apostle for 17 years in Uyo Akwa, Ibom state and many other states such as Oyo, Cross river, Abia and River states. He was retired by District Apostle Michael Ehrich on 5th May, 2014 in the new church at Ikot Ekpene due to a stroke he suffered in 2013.

Born on the 28th of August 1948, in Afaha Esang, Uyo Nigeria, Apostle Augustine Paul Namse has been described by the District Apostle as a friend of souls. He had been married since November 1979 and the marriage was blessed with four children. He received the ministries of Priest, Evangelist and District Evangelist. In 1990 he was ordained as District Elder and he was assigned to lead a church district. In 1995, he received the ministry of a Bishop and two years later, Chief Apostle Richard Fehr ordained him as an Apostle of the lord. He was a faithful and committed God servant. District Apostle Michael Ehrich has asked Lead Apostle Nwogu to conduct the funeral service on the 18th of May 2017 in Abak, Akwa Ibom, Nigeria.

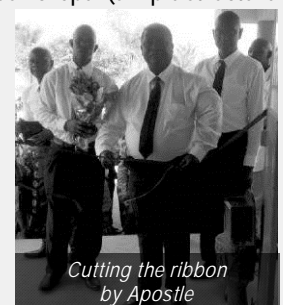


Sierra Leone: Dedicating to God

On Sunday, the 2nd April, 2017, Apostle Sampha Sesay of the Northern Sierra Leone and members dedicated the Bumbuna Church. Bumbuna is found in Kalansogoia Chiefdom, Tonkolili district. This town is important for the Hydro-electric dam electrifying, Bumbuna town, Makeni, Freetown etc.

The church was established on the 17th February, 1994. The congregation had survived from holding divine services in sitting rooms, rented places, and bush chapel (simple structure of mud), until a type three church (capacity of about 200 members) was built.

In his dedicating statement the Apostle rendered the church to God; to be places of worship, where members make their appeal to God to solve their problems, heal the sick and comfort the broken hearted.



Cutting the ribbon by Apostle

South Germany: Divine Service with the Chief Apostle

The Chief Apostle conducted on February 12th a divine service in Kulmbach (Germany), which was transmitted in the European working area of District Apostle Ehrich.

Bible text: "But the Lord said to me: 'Do not say, "I am a youth," for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and whatever I command you, you shall speak.'" (Jeremiah 1: 7)

Core thoughts: The Bible text refers to the calling of the prophet Jeremiah. The prophets mission was to proclaim to the people the divine will, warn them against idols, and encourage them to return to God. We were chosen by God to become His children, be sealed with the Holy Spirit and know the mystery of His will (Eph 1: 3–13). Like all those who have received the gift of the Spirit, we are called to serve God as prophets (Acts 2: 17–18). We must fulfill this service where God sends us, that is to say, in society and situation in which we live.

God sends us to make His law known and to warn those around us of the dangers of worshipping idols. Let us list two which are at the root of many misfortunes: worship of money and worship of the self. Of course, wanting to earn money and taking care of oneself is not blameworthy in itself. But it becomes harmful when mankind begins to break God's commandments to achieve his own ends.

Our task is not to make moral discourses. What we need to do is to firmly resist sin and prove that we can lead a balanced life without breaking the Ten Commandments. Let us proclaim the peace that God gives to those who love Him (2 Cor 13: 11).

Let us be prophets who proclaim salvation:

- n God wants to deliver mankind from evil, not by eliminating evil from this earth, but by offering them eternal life – our behaviour must reflect our priority, fellowship with God;
- n Jesus Christ is salvation. He gave His life out of love for sinners. Let us allow our neighbour to discover the love and grace of Jesus by showing them our love and granting them our forgiveness;
- n currently, the living Apostles impart salvation through word and sacrament (CNC QA 456).

