

community

The New Apostolic Church around the world

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Motto 2018
**Faithful
to Christ**

Editorial

The Chief Apostle on
our 2018 motto

Divine service in Chicago
Go!

Doctrine

The realm of the departed

New Apostolic Church
International



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Faithful to Christ

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I wish you an abundance of divine blessing and many experiences with God.

It is a nice tradition to exchange best wishes with one another at the beginning of a new year. But we can do much more for each other. We can also pray for one another and ask God: “Bless my brother! Strengthen my sister! Protect and comfort them.”

And this is something we can do every day throughout the year. I am thinking about our brothers and sisters who live in regions where there is war, hardship, and violence. But I am also thinking about those who suffer a lot in body and heart. Dear brothers and sisters, you can be sure that many are praying for you!

The Apostles in particular pray that everyone will be able to reach the goal of our faith: the return of Christ. Let us also prepare for this in the new year. Let us continue to follow our training programme, with its annually changing focal points.

We have already occupied ourselves with the themes of love, joy, victory, and glorifying God. This year we will occupy ourselves with another important characteristic of the bridal congregation: faithfulness to Christ.

In addition to love and joy, faithfulness is another important aspect of a bride’s nature. It will not work any other way. But how can we demonstrate our faithfulness to Christ? Allow me to mention four points here:

- being faithful to Christ means following His example.
- being faithful to Christ means preserving our love even in difficult times.



■ NAC International

- being faithful to Christ means wanting to serve.
- being faithful to Christ means keeping our promises.

These are the most important points. In the divine services we will find out what this means for us personally.

The theme of faithfulness is a very broad one. It incorporates such central notions as sincerity, trustworthiness, steadfastness, and reliability. In the year ahead, we will look at the numerous different facets of faithfulness.

Why? Well, it is really quite clear: our faithfulness to Christ is essential for our faith. So essential in fact that some languages use the same word for both “faith” and “faithfulness” in the New Testament.

In this mind and spirit, I wish you strong faith in the year 2018. Let us remain faithful and true to the Lord!

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized, cursive script that is difficult to read but appears to be the name of the author.

Jean-Luc Schneider

Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider celebrated a nationwide service for ministers in Chicago (USA) on Saturday, 10 June 2017



NAC USA

Matthew 28: 19–20

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

| Go!

My very dear brothers, it is special for me to be in your midst today, knowing that many brothers are connected nationwide for this special service. And that does not happen that often, so I would like to use this opportunity first of all to express our gratitude for your work, for your help, and for your service. I deliberately say “our gratitude” because I just want to be the spokesman of the Apostles. You know, we fully depend on your help and your work. Jesus sent the Apostles, and it is our faith and conviction that the Apostles of the New Apostolic Church have also been sent by Jesus Christ. He gave them a huge mission, one they cannot fulfil on their own. We need your help. We need your prayers.

We need your support. And that is why we are so thankful that you are prepared to work for Jesus Christ together with the Apostles. At your ordination you said yes to receiving a part of the authority and a part of the mission of the Apostles. In other words, we share the burden. The Apostle from whom you received your ministry has delegated a part of his authority to you. You fulfil this commission not as you would carry out a task in your company, but with your whole heart and out of love. It is not just a job that has to be done. It is a work of faith, a work of love that requires many sacrifices and prayers. That is why we are so thankful that you were prepared to accept this task. As ministers you act as a delegate of the Apostle. With the ordination you received a part of the authority of the Apostle. That means that the ministry and the ministerial authority are valid only as long as you are connected to the Apostle ministry and as long as you act in the commission of the Apostle. This is a distinctive feature of the New Apostolic Church. This is not the case in every church. In fact, in some churches ministers can do what they want—as long as the congregation agrees, of course. That is not the case in our Church. The ministerial authority of the ministers—the priestly ministers and the Deacons—is only valid if they act in the commission of the Apostle.

From time to time, brothers come up with funny ideas: “It would be nice if we could do this or that?” Then I have to tell them: “It may be a nice idea, but are you sure that you are acting in the commission of your Apostle? If that is not the case, you have no authority to do this.” Ninety-nine point nine nine per cent of our brothers act accordingly and that is why we are so thankful. Okay, in the US it is one hundred per cent.

Why do I mention this? Because it is important. We have all received a certain mission. As ministers, you act in the commission of your Apostle, who has received His commission from Jesus. And that is why I have chosen this Bible text today, because it is important for all of us—Deacons, priestly ministers, and Apostles—to be aware that this is our mission. It is the mission of the Apostles and they delegate a part of it to other ordained ministers.

From time to time, it is therefore interesting to think about what our mission actually consists of. Jesus makes it very clear: “Go!” That is the first part of our mission. When you

are ordained into a ministry—I am sure I do not need to mention this here—it does not mean that you have been promoted. You do not suddenly become the boss. You receive a mandate to work. You have a mission: “Go!” That means move. It means that we, the Apostles, but also all the other ministers, must penetrate deeper and deeper into the knowledge of Jesus Christ. We must not stagnate and think that we know everything. We must penetrate deeper into the knowledge of Jesus Christ. And for that we need the guidance of the Holy Spirit. And we need to follow His guidance. Let us do so and move and go to the people.

Let us go and tell the people about the glory of Jesus Christ and plant it in their hearts so that they can love Jesus

Teaching the gospel requires personal contact. Jesus did not address this call to an organisation or a company. It is a call that has gone to each and every one of us: the Apostles as well as to their co-workers. “Go!” We cannot say, it is the task of the Church. If that would be the case then we could say, “Okay, let’s do some advertising to make the gospel

and the New Apostolic faith known. Let’s run a public relations campaign.” That is not our commission. We have been commissioned to, “Go!” Jesus wants us to foster personal contact with people. You cannot win disciples with an advertising campaign on TV or wherever. Personal contact is part of the commission we have received. We must be aware of this: “Go!” You have to go to the people. You have to tell them. You have to convince them. You have to motivate them. That is the difference between a Christian church, in particular the work of God, and a company. We cannot act as a company would. We have received the commission to go. We must move and go to the people and speak with them in person.

What must we go and do? Make disciples of all the nations. To make disciples means that we must motivate people to follow Jesus. That is the task. The definition of “disciple” is: one who follows Jesus. So making disciples of all nations means we must motivate them to follow Him. That means that we must first of all believe that the gospel is valid for all people—irrespective of the conditions they live in, their cultural background, their economic situation, or their past. And that applies to the gospel in its entirety. We cannot qualify or limit it and say, “The law is valid for all people. Those who don’t do the will of God will be punished.” That is only one small aspect of the gospel. The gospel in its entirety is valid for all people—for every single person on earth. Brothers, we must believe that. We must go to all



nations. That was the understanding our forefathers had: we must go everywhere, to every country, and bring the gospel to the people and acquaint them with the New Apostolic faith. We are grateful for this and they deserve our respect. The North American ministers and members especially accomplished an enormous task in spreading the good news worldwide. That is an important aspect, but only one aspect.

In Mark it says: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16: 15). That means we are not only to go to the Christians in every country and preach the gospel to them, but to the entire population. We must go to everybody, irrespective of their conditions, their culture, their age, or whether they are poor or rich. And that is my concern when I look into the congregations worldwide. I always ask myself, “Do our congregations reflect a cross-section of the population in the country?” Not yet. But our task is to go to all the nations and to the entire population, without exception. My dear

brothers, we have to think over that: the entire population, “every creature”. What exactly is our task then? We are to make disciples of them, to encourage them to follow Christ. We do not want to promise them anything. It would be easy to go to the poor and promise them that they will become rich if they follow Christ—and even more, if they become New Apostolic. It would be easy to go to the sick and tell them, “If you are faithful, if you follow Christ and the

Apostles, you will be healed.”

It would be easy to go to the oppressed and say, “If you follow Christ, you will be liberated.” But this would not make disciples of them.

Many people followed Jesus because they were hoping for a miracle. They wanted to be healed. But these were not

the kind of disciples Jesus wanted. Others expected Jesus to change their situation, to deliver them from the yoke of the Romans. This did not happen. Jesus wanted disciples who followed Him because they loved Him, because they trusted Him, and were ready to leave everything behind to follow Him. It makes no sense therefore to try and

It is our task to teach the law of Jesus Christ—not our own law, our own rules, or our own traditions



attract people by promising them blessing, wealth, success, and deliverance. That is nonsense. That is not how you win disciples.

There is also no need to threaten people with the great tribulation: if you are not faithful you will suffer with all the others, but we will be delivered. There is no need to threaten anyone.

How can we make all the nations disciples of Jesus? We have to make the glory of Christ visible for them. We have to plant the love for Christ in their hearts. We have to help them discover and recognise how great Jesus is: Jesus is God and God is Jesus. He is the humble one. He is the loving one. He is grace. He is patience. He is the Almighty, yet so humble. He loves everybody with the same love. He loves the rich as much as He loves the poor. I could speak about this for hours, but you know as well as I do: that is what we should do. Let us tell the people about the glory of Jesus Christ and plant this glory in their hearts so that they can love Jesus. And then they will follow Jesus because they have discovered His love for them and that He died for them: He wants to save me; I follow Him because He loves me and I want to be with Him in eternity. I follow Him because He is my example. I want to become like Him.

That is the true motivation to follow Christ. Brothers, it is our task to go to everybody, irrespective of their circumstances, their culture, or their position in society. Go and encourage them to follow Jesus and reveal the glory of Jesus Christ to them. The decision to follow Jesus will then be of their own volition because they know: I need to be with Jesus; I want to become like Him; and I want to be with Him for all eternity. Such are disciples.

And then we have to baptise them. As priestly ministers you have the authority to dispense the baptism with water. And then the souls must be prepared for the baptism with the Spirit through the Apostle. That is a specific task. Dear brothers, we have to make clear that the rebirth out of water and Spirit is not just a condition that needs to be fulfilled, and once that is done everything is fine. We have to explain to the people that when they are baptised with water and Spirit, they receive special strength: “You receive a certain power, and then it is up to you to use this power. This power allows you to do certain things, such as loving Jesus, forgiving others, following Jesus, changing one’s ways, and becoming more like Him.” Sometimes, I worry a little bit. I am not sure that the preparation for Holy Sealing is done with enough emphasis. We must clearly show the candidates what power they will receive with Holy Sealing and what they will be able to do with this.

The best way to explain something is to demonstrate it. Last Sunday I mentioned that we should be an example. This is one way to make the power visible that we received through Holy Sealing. Baptise the people who believe, explain to them what it means to be baptised, and show them that this is not the end of the story but only the beginning. Tell them that they will receive the power they need to be able to grow into the nature of Christ. That is an important part of our mission: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them ...”

And then “teach them to observe all the things that I have commanded you”. Then we have to encourage them to follow Christ. They have discovered the glory, love, grace, and patience of Jesus Christ. They have felt His great love for them and decided to follow Him out of love. Now they want to follow Him and become like Him. And now, and only now, can we tell them how they can follow Christ and what they have to do. There are a few rules that need to be observed: the law of Christ. Explaining this to them at this stage is no longer a problem, because their actions and decisions are no longer driven by the fear of punishment. Now they love Christ and we can tell them, “If you want to please Jesus, then do this but don’t do that.” And they will do it out of love. And what you do out of love is not a problem.

Sadly enough, sometimes we do quite the contrary. The first thing we often tell people is, “Don’t do this. If you do, you will go to hell. But if you do this you will be blessed.” We have to forget that. People first of all have to love Jesus before we can tell them how to follow Him. Once they do it will no longer be a problem for them. But we have to teach them as Jesus commanded us. That does not sound like much, but it is not that easy. It is actually a huge thing to achieve, even though the list of rules is short.

It is our task to teach the law of Jesus Christ—not our own law, our own rules, or our traditions. And we have to make sure that our preaching and teaching focuses on the gospel only—on that which Jesus and the Apostles who are mentioned in the Bible taught. Everything they taught was relevant to salvation. We must concentrate on that which is relevant to salvation and not on any supposed rules or regulations. You know what I mean. None of this has anything to do with our ministerial commission or with salvation. We cannot say that we are acting in the power of the ministerial commission given us. That is nonsense because our ministerial commission is clearly defined: “... teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you,” Jesus said, not what we have decided and think is right. We must teach them the gospel.

Following Christ does not mean uniformity. We have to be aware of that. As I said in the beginning, we have to believe that the gospel is valid for all people, irrespective of

their circumstances, origin, cultural background, or their social situation. You can follow Christ when you are very poor. You can follow Christ when you are very rich. You can follow Christ when you are sick. You can follow Christ when you are healthy. You can follow Christ at a young age and when you are old. No matter what circumstances you live in, you can follow Christ. We need to become more and more aware of this. We cannot expect people to conform to our example because we are of the opinion that this is the only proper way to show that you are a follower of Christ. We have to teach them to follow the gospel of Christ in the conditions and circumstances they live in. They do not have to change. And we do not have to make sure that they become rich in order to be able to follow Christ. That is definitely not our task. Of course we hope that the situation of the poor improves and that those who are sick can be healed. But that has nothing to do with Jesus’ commission: “... teaching them to observe the things that I have commanded you.” That is definitely something completely different.

My dear brothers, our task in the future is to go to all people and encourage them to follow Christ without making any kinds of promises. Let us just show them the glory and the love of Jesus Christ. And that requires that we go and speak to them. And once they love Jesus we can dispense baptism with water. And then we can prepare them to receive the Holy Spirit. We can explain to them what power they



District Apostles Leonard Richard Kolb (USA) and Raúl Eduardo Montes de Oca (Brazil) were called to assist

will receive, and we can show them how they can use this power. Then we have to teach them how to follow Christ and to make clear that they can do so also in their situation. Thankfully, they do not need to become French to be faithful. They do not need to dress as I do. They do not need to eat the things I eat. They do not need to like the music I like. I think you understand. Let us respect people's dignity.

This also applies to the young generation. Let them enjoy their youth in their country and in the world they live in. They do not need to become as we were when we were young or as we are now. Let them be the young people they are. They live in their world and in their time. They can follow the gospel also in their world and their time. This is something we have to think about. It is not comfortable. I know what I am talking about. It is a lot to ask, but it is the will of God. This is part of the mission of the Apostle ministry, which we participate in: "... teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you." That is what we teach in our sermons.

Sometimes, my dear brothers, our teaching also consists of setting an example. And that is why at times we have to go through trials. Remember, God is not punishing us. It is not a sign that He is no longer interested in us. It is not a sign that we did not do a good job and He cannot bless us because of this. We are exposed to trials as all the other children of God and all other people are. But when we have to go through trials, when we have a special cross to bear, God expects a little bit more of us. He wants us to be an example in this situation and to observe the things He has commanded us. Do not be discouraged. Do not be upset if something happens in your life. To teach by way of example is also part of our commission. If the desire lives in us: "Heavenly Father, I want to fulfil the commission you have given me also in this special situation. I want to be an example of what You have commanded us," I tell you, brothers, you will experience the promise of Jesus: "I am with you always, even to the end of the age." You will experience this especially in such moments, and God will bless you in a special manner.



CORE THOUGHTS

We go to all nations and people to show them the glory of Jesus and to encourage them to follow Him. We teach them what is essential to their salvation, without requiring them to conform to our example.



Following the example of Jesus

Faith in the sacrifice of Jesus and in His love is essential. From there it is only a small step to responding to His love by doing good works. Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider mentions seven ways we can combine our faith with works.

On 20 August 2017 the Chief Apostle conducted a divine service in the Estádio das Manguieiras in Saurimo (Angola), which was attended by 3,200 brothers and sisters.

The grace of God was manifested in the life and death of Jesus Christ, Chief Apostle Schneider said. Jesus Christ came to earth and sacrificed His life in order to deliver mankind from evil, to erase original sin, and to forgive sins. Through His example and teaching we learn to live a life that is pleasing to God and to prepare ourselves for the return of Christ.

How can we live a Christian life in the twenty-first century?

1. By renouncing evil. “When we look at the suffering and death of Christ the true nature of evil becomes apparent. Jesus had to suffer through hatred, violence, and injustice. The people were corrupt and were full of lies and hypocrisy.” We do not want to be slaves of such a power, the Chief Apostle continued.

2. By practising the gospel. Jesus died to deliver us from sin. Why did He do that? Because He loves us! Let us model our lives on His word, His gospel. We practise His teaching not out of fear of being punished or because we want to earn something for ourselves. We keep His word because we have recognised the love of Jesus.

3. By following Jesus. Jesus gave His life so that we might be with Him. Our love for Him prompts us to seek His nearness. We always seek His fellowship: this is something we do today in divine service—where we seek His fellowship in Holy Communion—and we yearn to have eternal fellowship with Him in heaven.

4. By showing humility and repentance. The Lord Jesus triumphed over sin and death because He was absolutely sinless. He received the resurrection body and was able to return to the Father. We have the same goal: to enter the kingdom of God, and to be with the Father and the Son. But we notice that despite all efforts we continue to be fallible.



Right: Apostles Manuel Quefasse Mupila and Capote Marcos Misselo receive Holy Communion for the departed

We are completely dependent on grace, which is why we are humble before God, show remorse, and repent.

5. *By forgiving our neighbour.* We need the forgiveness of our sins. The Lord Jesus grants grace to the humble. How can we thank the Lord for the grace He grants us? By forgiving our neighbour as he forgives us. Let us forgive our neighbour out of thankfulness for the grace that God has granted us.

6. *By overcoming trials.* The Son of God was in heaven, but because He wanted to save us He became incarnate and came to earth. He went through everything that human beings have to go through too. Humans suffer from injustice, something Jesus was subjected to as well. Humans feel sorrow; so did Jesus. Humans are betrayed. Jesus was betrayed too. Humans must die. As a human, Jesus died too. Because we love Jesus we are prepared to suffer for Him and with Him. We submit to trials and accept them. We give up many things because we follow Jesus Christ.

7. *By being witnesses.* Jesus Christ brought His sacrifice for all of mankind. It is our desire that as many people as possible can participate in this sacrifice and His salvation. That is why we serve the Lord. Let us tell our neighbour about the gospel. Let us be true witnesses of Jesus Christ in our daily lives.



CORE THOUGHTS

Titus 2: 14

“... who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.”

The sacrifice of Jesus and His teaching induce the believers to renounce the evil one, to live a God-pleasing life, and to prepare for the return of Christ.

| The bitter-sweet taste of the gospel

If you chew long enough on a piece of bread it will begin to taste sweet. This is what science says. And so does the Bible. The gospel can be as sweet as honey bread, but it can also be bitter. A taste-test with the Chief Apostle.

On 24 September 2017 Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider celebrated a divine service in Melbourne in Australia. The District Church received a new Apostle, Peter Schulte, who was also assigned as a District Apostle Helper.

The Bible text used by the Chief Apostle speaks about a little book which John took out of the angel's hand and ate. "This book can be understood as an image for the word of God," the Chief Apostle said in interpreting this image. We have to eat it, he said, in other words, we have to occupy ourselves with it and put it into practice. As a matter of principle, the gospel is the glad tidings and therefore as sweet as honey. But, the Chief Apostle added, there are limitations and constraints, which people can interpret as bitter. The Chief Apostle mentioned a few examples of this bitter-sweet teaching.

God is love. What a sweet message! "God loves us all equally. No matter who we are, where we come from, irrespective of our weaknesses, and despite our failures: He loves us.

That is the sweet message." But when you go into this a little deeper, it becomes clear that God truly loves all human beings, not only certain individuals. "He loves my neighbour just as much as He loves me—even if my neighbour is a great sinner. He loves him as much as me." For some this may sound very bitter, and not all can accept it. They are glad that God loves them, but they cannot accept the fact that God loves their neighbour just as much as them. "Let us accept the love of God. It is wonderful to know that God loves me with all my weaknesses. And for this reason it is not a problem that He loves my neighbour as much as He loves me."

God is grace. More sweet news. Jesus Christ is the Saviour who conquered hell and death. That is why He is able to save believers from death. But that also means that Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation! There is no other way. For some people this is bitter. For them this message is too demanding. They believe that there are other ways that lead to fellowship with God. Of course there are many ways to



Photo: NAC Australia



become a better person. There are many ways one can do good. But the gospel states that only faith in Jesus Christ, the Son, leads to the Father.

God is liberty. What a sweet message! God gave man a free will. “We have the freedom of choice. He will never force us to do anything against our will.” On the other hand, God wants believers to choose Christ freely, and do so in a clear and definite manner—without compromise. This is the bitter side of the decision, the Chief Apostle added. But Jesus clearly said that He will confess those before His Father who confessed Him before others. “Let us not be ashamed to say that we are Christians, that we believe in the gospel. Let us profess our faith in Jesus Christ.” That is not always easy, he said, but the Lord has promised us that He will acknowledge us before His Father.

God is glory. What wonderful news! The faithful can be heirs of His glory. What a wonderful outlook! The bitter side: we have to follow the path He walked. We have to carry our cross, deal with trials, and fight and struggle against the devil. “And for some this is too much. Following Christ to heaven is fine, but giving oneself up—one’s thoughts, opinions, and plans—and bringing oneself into alignment with Jesus is too much for some.” But for the glory of God every struggle is worthwhile. We will not even remember our sufferings. No one can attain this glory by their own merit. “Because we are aware of this grace, we do not want to get upset if God does not spare us every sorrow even though we are faithful. Our reward is fellowship with Christ!”

Chief Apostle Schneider: “Faith in the gospel is a source of salvation for those who accept its limitations and constraints.”



Walking to the Town Hall in Melbourne (Australia): District Apostle Andrew H. Andersen, Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider, and District Apostle Urs Hebeisen (from the left)

CORE THOUGHTS

Revelation 10: 10

“Then I took the little book out of the angel’s hand and ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. But when I had eaten it, my stomach became bitter.”

Faith in the gospel is a source of salvation for those who accept its limitations and constraints.

Remaining in the house of the Lord

Where do you find God? Everywhere, right? After all, He is omnipresent. And where do you experience God? The place where He is at home. Following is a divine service on the three places where God dwells.



Horst-Dieter Kämpfer



“An absolute nightmare for all interpreters.” This was how Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider described the Bible text for the service he conducted on 30 July 2017 in Zepernick, Germany. This is because where the German Bible text says “divine service”, it says “beauty” in English and Spanish, and “glory” in French. “The psalmist knew: if I really want to enjoy the care of God in all its fullness, I must go into the house of the Lord,” said the Church leader before going on to interpret the temple in three different ways.

The service of God upon man

In divine service we can experience God, the Chief Apostle said. “This is not man’s service upon God, but rather the service that God performs upon human beings,” the Chief Apostle continued.

- First of all, we become acquainted with the glorious will of God. So what is the will of God? God desires your salvation, my salvation, and the salvation of my neighbour.

- Even when all human beings reach the very limits of their skill and knowledge, God still knows a way out. God always has a solution. God always has an answer.
- Even if we have done something very terrible—provided that we feel remorse for our actions—God tells us, “All is well. I have forgiven you.”
- We can experience the presence of God in the celebration of Holy Communion, where God encounters us, and the Lord Jesus says, “You—I love you very personally. I died for you. I am here with you. I am very close to you.”

The nearness of God in fellowship

If we want to experience the presence of God, then we cannot experience it as a solitary human being. In order to experience the care of God in full measure, we must be part of the fellowship of the believers—in other words, part of the church of Christ, the Chief Apostle continued.



The congregation in Zepernick moved into a new church building. Chief Apostle Schneider dedicated it on 30 July 2017. On the day before, the congregation attended a concert in their new church

The plea to be permitted to dwell in the house of the Lord thus actually incorporates the following concrete supplications to God:

- help me to overcome all the things that separate me from You.
- no matter what happens, please allow me to recognise that You have brought us together.
- let us serve together; let us work together; let us overcome together.

And how can the glory of God be experienced in fellowship?

- Wherever the congregation assembles in the name of Jesus Christ, and prays together in the mind and Spirit of Jesus Christ, God will answer. He will not necessarily do what we expect of Him, but He will answer!
- When we see how God treats His children, how patient He is at times with one or the other in his weakness, and allows him to realise, “I still love you as much as ever.”
- When He comforts us through our brother, through our sister. And here we must say, “God has just sent you to me.”

The dwelling place of God within man

“Then there is also a third kind of temple: God, the Holy Spirit, has taken up an enduring dwelling within us,” the

Chief Apostle said. “May it also be our plea to experience the presence of God within ourselves again and again!” However, for this to happen we must likewise go into the temple: we are to look into ourselves and think about what God has made of us, and what His intentions for us are.

CORE THOUGHTS

Psalm 27: 4

“One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple.”

We experience God’s care by seeking fellowship with Him in divine service, continuing steadfastly in fraternal fellowship, and allowing the Holy Spirit room in us.

DAVID AND GOLIATH

(1 SAMUEL 17)

The Philistines were preparing for battle. Saul and the men of Israel were also gathering to fight. The two armies were encamped on opposite mountains and between them lay a valley.

A giant stepped out from among the ranks of the Philistines. He was called Goliath and was over three metres tall. On his head he wore a bronze helmet, his heavy coat of mail was also made of bronze as was the armour on his legs. Over his shoulder he carried a bronze javelin. A shield bearer marched ahead of him. Goliath cried out to the armies of Israel and challenged them, "If one of you can defeat me then the Philistines will be your servants. If I win, then you will serve us." For forty days he mocked the Israelites. King Saul and the Israelites were frightened of Goliath. No one wanted to go and fight him. David's three elder brothers were also

in the army of Israel. Their father was too old to go and fight. He sent David, his youngest son, to the camp to take roasted grain and bread to his other sons. For the captain he sent along fresh cheese.

When David arrived at the camp, the army were preparing to fight. David ran to find his brothers. While he was talking to them, Goliath suddenly appeared and once again challenged the army of Israel. David asked, "Who is this Philistine who mocks the army of the living God?" The men explain and David is told that King Saul has promised: "I will make the man who defeats Goliath very rich and will give him my daughter as a wife."

David said, "I will fight Goliath!" David's arrogance, that he believed himself capable of fighting the giant, annoyed his eldest brother. King Saul said to David, "You cannot fight this Philistine. You are too young and he is an experienced soldier."

David replied, "I look after my father's sheep and whenever a lion or bear comes and carries

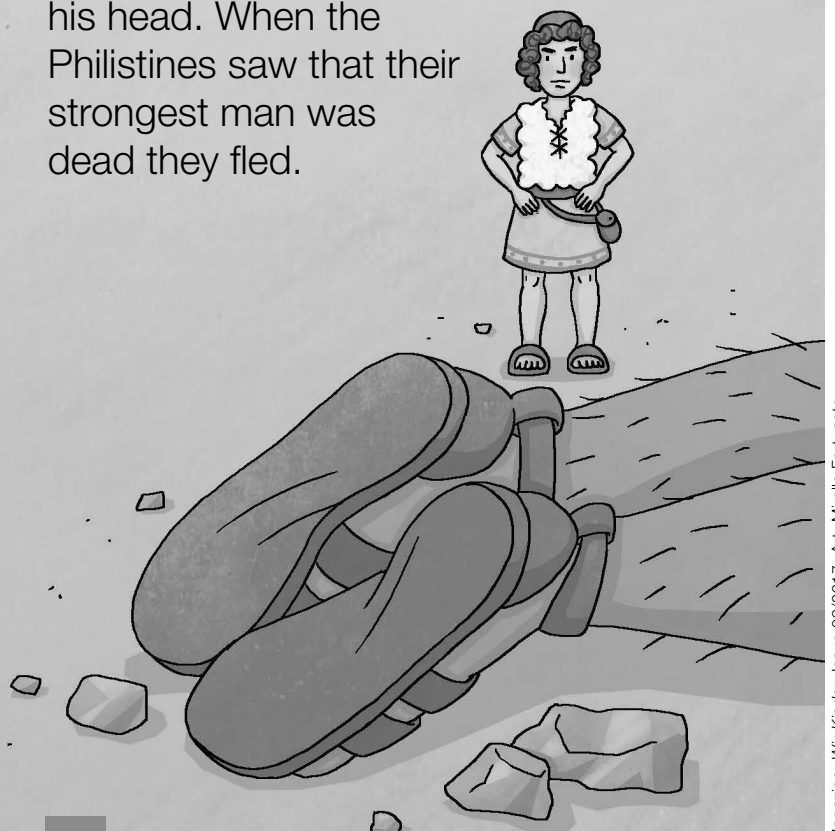
off a sheep I go out after it and attack it and rescue the victim from its jaws. If it turns on me I kill it. God helps me when I fight off the lions and bears. And in the same way He will help me against this Philistine, for Goliath has insulted the army of the living God.”

The king realised that David was the only one brave enough to challenge Goliath. He gave him his own tunic, his bronze helmet, and his coat of mail to wear. David fastened Saul's sword to his armour and then tried, in vain, to walk. He decided then to take it all off again. He took his shepherd's crook and picked up five smooth stones from the stream and put them in his shepherd's bag. He took his sling and then went to meet Goliath.

“Am I a dog that you come to me with a stick?” Goliath asked, and cursed David and also God. “You come to me with sword, spear, and javelin, but I come in the name of God, whom you have insulted. I will defeat you so that all can see that Israel has one God,” David shouted

The Philistines settled on the south-western coast of Palestine around 1,200 years before the birth of Christ. They originally came from the region around Greece via the Mediterranean island of Crete. They settled in Canaan around the same time as the Israelites did. Israel suffered under the Philistines because of their superior arms and military organisation. They were also above average height and were skilled in smithing iron. They made harder protective armour, stronger shields, and better daggers and spears than their opponents. Palestine (which is Latin for *Philistia*) owes its name to the Philistines.

to Goliath. The Philistine drew closer. David put his hand in his bag and took out a stone. He slung it and it hit Goliath on the forehead. The giant fell. Then David took the Philistine's sword and cut off his head. When the Philistines saw that their strongest man was dead they fled.



AT HUI TEA'S IN TAUTIRA (FRENCH POLYNESIA)

Io Rana (that means "hello") to all children! My name is **Huitea**. I am ten years old and live in Tautira, a small village in Tahiti. That is an island in the South Pacific.

Most people have heard about Tahiti before. Many dream about coming here at least once in their lifetime. Tahiti really is very beautiful. We enjoy warm, tropical weather year-round. Life here is very good. The tropical climate makes exotic fruits thrive, such as the **rambutan**, a kind of litchi.



Tahiti is also known for its beautiful flowers. Well-known is the **tiaré**, from which **monoi** is made. It is a fragrant oil that makes your hair nice and shiny and it helps when you get a sunburn. We make floral necklaces with them to welcome visitors.

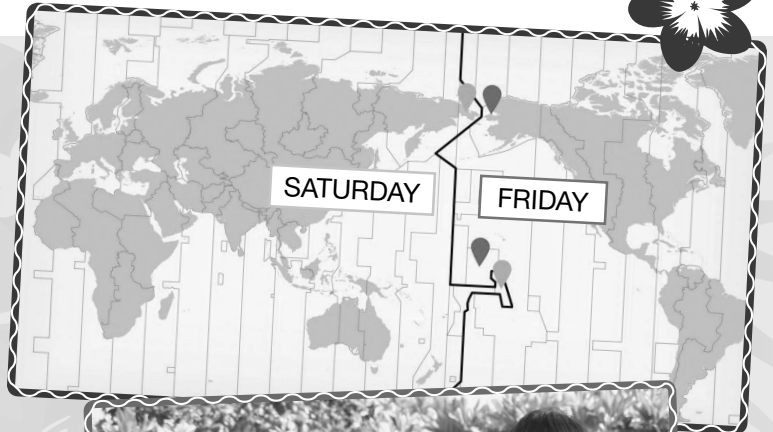


There are flowers everywhere. To decorate the altar in our **congregation** we just go and pick some. We never have to buy flowers.

There are many children in our congregation. I like going to church and often look after the **babies**.



Ministers from France or New Caledonia come to visit us several times a year. France is really far away, but even New Caledonia is 5,000 kilometres east of Tahiti. The brother boards a plane in New Caledonia on Saturday morning and arrives in Tahiti on Friday evening. How that can be? Well, he actually travels back in time, because he crosses the **International Date Line**, which passes through the middle of the Pacific Ocean. In this way you could celebrate your birthday twice!



My family consists of my parents, my two elder brothers Huitua and Huimana (pictured here with Sister Marie Rose, the wife of our District Evangelist) and me.



Mama, me with one of the babies from the congregation, and my aunt.

People who have never been here usually do not know that almost all of our beaches have **black sand**. The island is of volcanic origin. But don't worry, it feels as nice on your feet as white sand.



We Tahitians love to swim, but we also love to **surf**. The Pacific Ocean has big waves.

Canoeing is a national sport here. There are also a lot of **fish** here, even in the sky as a cloud ...





The realm of the departed: key questions

Belief in the idea that the condition of the souls in the beyond is changeable and in God's universal will to save: these are the answers to two key questions concerning the doctrine of the departed taught by the New Apostolic Church.

Our current practice derives from the biblical text (see *community* 04/2017), however, it is also legitimated by the authority of the Apostle ministry, whose task it is to interpret the gospel in an appropriate and timely manner, as well as to expand upon it and preach it.

The sacramental care for the departed must by no means be confused with Spiritism. In Spiritism, the world of the beyond is ultimately understood as a part of this world, which one might explore as though it were a previously uncharted continent.

The New Testament and the New Apostolic faith that is based upon it are both very cautious in the statements they make about the world of the departed. After all, it is not a matter of gaining or imparting new insights into the beyond. It is not about gaining knowledge about the world of the beyond, the condition of the dead, or anything of the like. By no means can the beyond be fused into the here and now, or placed at the disposal of the latter. This is not a matter of satisfying human curiosity, but rather only of expressing the promise of salvation, which applies equally to both the living and the dead.

At this point it is appropriate to ask two questions. First of all, in what condition do the dead find themselves? And secondly, why do they need sacraments?

In what condition do the dead find themselves?

The answer to the first question can only succeed if one recognises the continuity of person, both in life and death. The historicity of human existence may indeed end with death, yet it remains a part of the departed individual. This means that everything a person has ever thought, experienced, or done—his successes as well as his failures—remain part of him. The personhood of the individual therefore remains intact even in death. The departed individual is unique and distinctive, and remains an individual being recognised and addressed by God.

The conditions of the souls in the beyond as an expression of nearness to, or remoteness from, God are quite diverse. In any event, the departed have not experienced any change at all as a result of death. Those departed souls who find themselves in a condition of remote-



ness from God need special care and intercession. According to New Apostolic conviction, the dispensation of the sacraments leads to a change in the condition of the departed. This does not mean of course that we re-baptise souls who were not New Apostolic or that souls who are being sealed are made into New Apostolic Christians.

The conviction of many Christians, that “human beings can no longer change the attitude toward God which they had assumed in life”, or that “no more change is possible, because human beings are firmly settled in death” is contrary to the New Apostolic faith. In consideration of this, the notion of eternal torment in hell or eternal damnation is also without basis. The foundation for any positive change—here as well as there—is the loving care of God, and therefore faith. Consequently, the departed are not absolved of the necessity of believing. The foundation and support for faith—which results in a new relationship with God—are the sacraments, that is to say, Holy Baptism, Holy Sealing, and Holy Communion.

Why are the dead dependent on the sacraments?

According to the New Apostolic faith, the state of being a Christian is rooted in, and reinforced by, the sacraments. Therefore baptism with water is absolutely necessary, as it constitutes God’s yes to the individual. In other words, those who wish to receive salvation,

whose faith is to be strengthened and maintained, are dependent on receiving the sacraments. According to the New Apostolic understanding, this applies to both the living and the dead alike. The New Apostolic Catechism states the following in this respect, at the same time emphasising the significance of the Apostle ministry: “The Apostles fulfil the commission of Jesus—namely to proclaim the gospel, to forgive sins, and to administer the sacraments—upon both the living and the dead. They act in Christ’s stead and in His name. Just as Jesus Christ brought His sacrifice on earth, salvation is also imparted through the Apostles on earth. Since sacraments always have a visible component, they can also only be performed in the visible realm. The effect of the sacraments as essential elements in imparting salvation is the same for both the living and the dead.”

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Intercessions instead of contacting the dead, divine activity instead of human curiosity: the construct of the New Apostolic Church concerning the departed has nothing to do with Spiritism.

At times the New Apostolic Church faces the reproach that its understanding of the departed realm exhibits a certain similarity with Spiritist practices or that it even belongs in the same spectrum as Spiritist ideology. The following makes it clear that our construct of the departed can in no way be associated with Spiritism.

What is Spiritism?

To begin with it is necessary to clearly define what Spiritism actually is. Spiritism assumes the reality of a world in the beyond inhabited by the souls of the dead, among other things. This basic assumption is not only found in Spiritism, but also in many religions of the past and present. The New Apostolic Church also assumes the existence of a

realm of the beyond in which the souls of the dead dwell. However, this basic assumption is expanded by Spiritism, which not only claims the existence of these souls, but also claims the ability to take up contact with them, for example, through a medium.

Biblical examples

Necromancy, a central element of Spiritist practice, is already mentioned in the Old Testament, as Spiritism was part of the religious practice of the pagan environment of Israel. The Old Testament therefore emphatically rejects all forms of necromancy—including astrology, fortune-telling, and so on—as forms of idolatry. For example, in Deuteronomy 18: 9–12 we read: “When you come into the

land which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practises witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the Lord, and because of these abominations the Lord your God drives them out from before you.” Another familiar example is the account of the witch (or medium) of En Dor, who conjured up the spirit of the prophet Samuel at Saul’s request (1 Samuel 28: 7–20). This Old Testament account was often taken as proof that, while the conjuring of the dead is forbidden, it is certainly possible and can be performed by human beings. However, this biblical account is not intended to substantiate the possibility of necromancy, but rather to demonstrate how far Saul had already distanced himself from God. The prophet ultimately only appears in order to express the fact that the king has been rejected by God.

Modern Spiritism

Over the course of time, particularly since the late seventeenth century—the Age of Enlightenment—the idea that one could enter into contact with spirits or with the dead came to be regarded as superstition. It was only in the nineteenth century—once people had tired of following the rationalism of the Enlightenment in every aspect—that there was something of a revival of this practice.

Modern Spiritism came into being in the nineteenth century. While the conjuring of spirits and departed souls was often part of a religious practice in the past, modern Spiritism does not necessarily have a clear religious association. Here the idea is to find a systematic and almost scientific way to take up contact with spirits or the souls of the dead, not only in order to prove that there is life after death, but also to prove the existence of a world beyond, which itself becomes the object of further exploration and inquiry. The dead are questioned, for example, about the condition in which they find themselves and what the world of the beyond is like.

Spiritism is thus interested in proving the existence of an immortal soul, and of the beyond, by inquiring of the dead, among other things. The beyond, as well the souls of the departed, thus become an object of research and inquiry in Spiritism. Often the departed are nothing more than the objects of human curiosity. Therefore the contrast between this world and the beyond—between transcendence and immanence—is no longer taken seriously. Rather, the

world of the beyond comes to represent a kind of invisible here and now, in which the same laws and regularities of the material world apply.

Often Spiritism is also understood as an alternative to Christianity, which—so it is claimed—is mired in dogma and not sufficiently inquisitive of the beyond.

Does our practice have anything to do with Spiritism?

So how are we to assess the reproach that our understanding of the departed realm is a form of Spiritism, or at least that it has a strong relationship to it? While a Spiritist calls upon the souls of the dead in order to learn something of them, our practice as concerns the departed does not endeavour in any way to make contact with them in order to learn more about them or the beyond. In our construct, the departed are not objects of human curiosity or any sort of scientific desire to explore either. Nor is the beyond regarded as any sort of invisible here and now, which could be scientifically explored. Rather, it is simply accepted as a completely different, incalculable, and unsearchable dimension.

Our practice as concerns the departed is only interested in one thing, namely to make the sacraments—which are necessary for salvation—accessible to the departed. Here it is not human beings who act in the beyond on their own impulse or in their own special interests, but rather God Himself who makes use of human beings—namely the Apostles—to ensure that the sacraments can be accessed by the souls of the departed. The question of which souls among the departed receive the sacraments—in other words, of who attains salvation and who does not—remains concealed to us.

Our understanding of the departed does nothing more than clearly express God’s universal will to save, which encompasses both the living and the dead. In our practice, there is no contact with the departed themselves. Rather, we are to bring forth intercessions in which we ask God to show grace and mercy to the unredeemed. Through such prayers of intercession, and through corresponding actions of love toward our fellow human beings, we show God that we are not only interested in our own salvation or the salvation of the living, but genuinely also in the salvation of the departed. This also brings expression to the certainty that the dead and the living comprise a great fellowship of souls in need of salvation, and that the church of Christ itself is a fellowship comprised of both the living and the dead.

Australia receives a District Apostle Helper

Peter Schulte has been the number two man in the New Apostolic Church Australia since the end of September. Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider first ordained him into the Apostle ministry, and then went on to assign him as a District Apostle Helper for the enormous working area.



NAC Australia

In a divine service on 24 September 2017 in Melbourne (Australia) the Chief Apostle ordains District Elder Peter Schulte as an Apostle and assigns him as a District Apostle Helper

First love, then lead

As an Apostle and District Apostle Helper his first task is to become acquainted with his brothers and sisters, and carry them in love. “And you are also to learn to lead the Church and walk before the congregations in this part of the world.” The Chief Apostle went on to add that this will be easy because he has a District Apostle in whom he can confide and whom he can emulate.

“This is an important step that we will now take together,” said the Chief Apostle as he began his address to Peter Schulte, who has been responsible as District Elder for the eastern part of Australia for several years. The Chief Apostle noted that he knew exactly how the District Elder felt in this situation.

Fourteen years ago, he too had been called to the altar as a District Elder, first to receive the ministry of an Apostle, and immediately afterward, also the task of supporting his District Apostle as a Helper. “But I can comfort you with the words: do not be afraid! God is with you!” The Church leader assured him that he would be able to feel the power of God and the prayers of the many members across the vast country.

A man of faith

Peter Schulte (*1963) lives in Sarina, Queensland. As District Apostle Helper he will report directly to the current District Apostle. “I am very grateful to have always experienced the guidance of God in all the experiences I have made in my life,” says the incumbent District Apostle Andersen. “And this is also the case here—this change has been long requested in prayer, and it clearly stands under the blessing of the Lord. Peter Schulte is a man of faith and great strength,” says the District Apostle, as he describes his successor. “He will be leading a large district, and he will do so in his customary calm and sober manner.” The District Apostle’s personal wish is that the transition will be seamless.

nacmaps: congregations are just a tap away

There are 60,000 congregations around the world. People who travel a lot get to know quite a few of them. Nobody can memorise all the addresses, but there is absolutely no need for it either. For smartphone users there is a simple solution: nacmaps.

With the newly developed app, congregations can be located either by specifying the city name or by using the second function “Congregations in the vicinity”.

And if the congregation has its own website with additional information? The website is stored on the congregation page in the app and is only a click away.

Latest addresses

The new app of the New Apostolic Church accesses the latest address listings. Mergers of congregations, newly founded congregations, or a congregation that has just been made wheelchair accessible—everything is correctly displayed in the app already a few hours later. Many countries are already registered in the database, more will follow. The data is also accessible offline, that is, without an Internet connection.

One app of many

nacmaps is the fourth app of the New Apostolic Church and can be downloaded free of charge from the iTunes (iOS) and Google (Android) Stores. In addition to nacmaps the New Apostolic Church also offers apps dedicated to news and information (nacnews: iOS and Android), an app for the Catechism (naccatechism: iOS and Android) and an app for the *Catechism in Questions and Answers* (nacfaq: iOS and Android). All apps are free of charge.

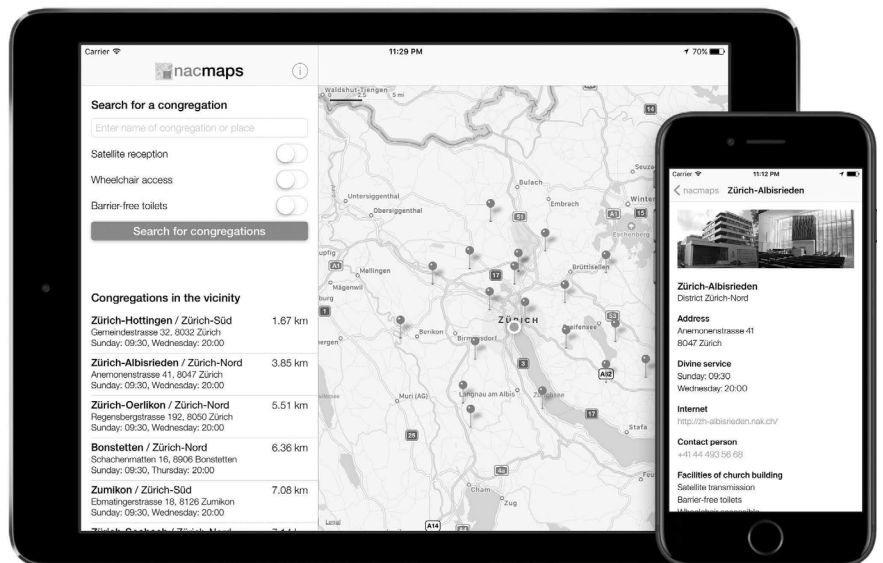
Email or phone contacts

Email addresses and phone numbers of the congregations—if they are in the database—are also displayed in the app. All you need to do is tap on the screen and contact is made to the right person, either by email or phone.

Navigation and congregation website

Once you have found the right congregation all you have to do is tap on “Plan your route” and the app starts via Maps app, Google Maps, or your own navigation app.

Displaying all the congregations in the vicinity or a specific one—for nacmaps it is as easy as one, two, three



Farewell Chrissie!

The daily tragedy



Irmelamela – Fotolia.com



private

Chrissandra is dead. The youth leader was killed in the crossfire of a gang shootout—a tragedy that is part of daily life in some parts of South Africa. What does it mean to live one’s faith while surrounded by poverty and violence? The following provides some insight.

Saturday, 12 August 2017, almost 6 p.m.: Chrissandra Oppermann has just returned home from a youth excursion to Ruyterwacht. The 30-year-old leaves the house for a few moments to borrow a potjie from a friend. Her father hears gunshots. Out on the street he finds his daughter with a hole in her head. She dies in hospital.

The gangs are after abalones. They are sea snails: a delicacy, especially in Asia—the new “white gold” of South Africa, protected, but illegally harvested. A carload of contraband has been secured by the police—worth a good \$600,000 US, seized in a police raid in Bishop Lavis, a suburb of Cape Town. But now the police officers are attacked. At first the only projectiles are stones, but then shots are fired. One of the bullets hits Chrissandra.

“Chrissie was loved by all and had a positive impact on everyone who knew her,” relates her mother. Some 800 people attend the funeral in the New Apostolic congregation of Netreg. “She had a beautiful soul,” says ward councillor Angus McKenzie. Chrissandra’s last post on Facebook is taken from Philippians 4: 19: “And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

The suffering in numbers

Courtney, four years old, murdered on 5 March 2017. Charneal, eight years old, killed in a drive-by shooting on 11 December 2016. Selwyn, stabbed on 31 May 2017. Denzil, Chrissandra, Chadwin: shot, shot, shot. So reads the list of victims of violent crime between May 2016 and

A carload of contraband abalone has been secured by the police—worth a good \$600,000 US



■ Lavis Saps

August 2017—from among the church members of the diocese of Bishop Alwin Witten alone. More than half are younger than 20, hardly any are older than 30.

There is a break-in every three minutes, an attack every five minutes, and a killing approximately every thirty minutes. The crime rate in South Africa is among the highest in the world. There are few other countries in the world where income is so unequally distributed. Poverty prevails in the Townships, residential settlements from the era of racial separation. The unemployment rate here is often in excess of 60 per cent.

God's special possession

Being on your guard 24/7. That is the survival strategy for those who live in the Townships, as described by Apostle Peter Lambert while he was a guest at the 2016 Youth Convention in Frankfurt (Germany): people live in the most cramped of conditions, gang leaders and drug lords rule the area, constantly engaging in power struggles. When children go to school in the morning, parents never know whether they will ever see their little ones again. And even the way to church can be life-threatening if it happens to cross the border between rival gangs.

“Our heavenly Father's special possession” is the title of one of the documentaries that was released in February 2015. Congregations from three dioceses discuss what it is like to live in the midst of such violence. They tell of congregations that stay together after the divine service because shots are still being fired outside. They talk about gangsters who storm into the church to look for hidden rivals. They



People coming to condole with Chrissie's family

speak of members who die violently, whether as innocent victims or as gang members themselves.

“Safety first” is the motto of the leaders here. If conflicts threaten, divine services are shortened or cancelled altogether. If congregations are prevented from assembling for longer periods of time, the ministers resort to house services. And wherever possible, church activities end before five in the afternoon, because that is the time when gangs typically begin shooting.

A safe haven

Drug addiction, rape, murder—an extreme environment for ministers. “I know what you have seen,” says Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider in a church full of rectors at the end of 2016. The men have tears in their eyes. The church Leiden Central is located in Delft, a crime stronghold.

It is a church building that serves as a gymnasium on week-days. It is a safe haven for the 300 children who come here every day and receive food and help with their homework, for example. “A place where children can learn a better way, and receive the tools to deal with their daily trauma,” says Ursula Poggenpoel-Smith of the New Apostolic aid organisation Masakhe.

District Apostle John L. Kriel sees this as an example for all congregations: “It would be desirable if every one of our church buildings could offer such a refuge,” he writes in an article. But the reality of limited resources makes this impossible. Nevertheless, every congregation—without exception—can be a refuge for people in spiritual need.



Maiden visit to the roof of the world

Lily David / David Devaraj

They are numbered among the highest New Apostolic congregations in the world: Ghankula (2,151 metres) and Naugaon (1,435 metres) in the Himalayan foothills. Day-to-day life, getting around, and divine services—this is another world.

There are thirty-five members between these two congregations in northern India, located on the border to Tibet. They are looked after by three Priests. Ghankula in the Uttarkhand District and Naugaon in Gherwal District belong to an Apostle district that stretches over an area of 1,500 kilometres. To Delhi, the country's capital, the aerial distance is 350 kilometres. The congregations in the region are small, scattered, and hard to reach. The people in the region speak Hindi.

Locating congregations by GPS

Google Earth supplies satellite pictures of this region, but the network of roads in this region has not been completely mapped. The congregations are easy to locate by GPS—at least online: Ghankula 30.175297, 78.907718 and Naugaon 30.14666667, 78.94166667. The brothers and sisters who live in the region know their way around, fortunately. The linear distance between the two congregations is only five kilometres. But because of winding mountain roads and two mountain peaks that have to be traversed, the distance is inflated to 40 kilometres, which works out to about a three-hour walk.

The people in these remote regions farm for a living. Most families have livestock. Those who do not work in the

fields collect firewood for a living. Tourism is booming. There are several small guests houses along the route with breathtaking views. Many locals—including some of our members—have their own four-wheel drive vehicles, which can be hired. There are many pilgrims who visit the temples of Badrinath and Kedrinath, and many travelers who want to see the unique beauty of the mountains.

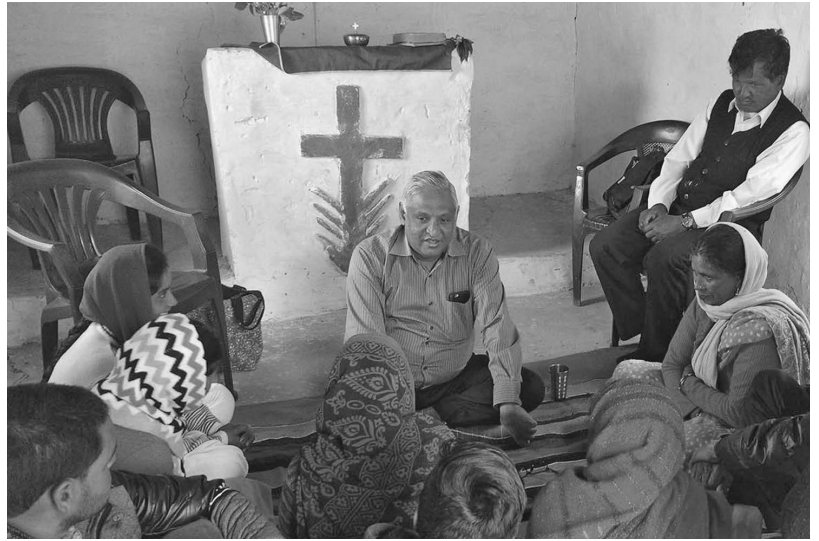
Flying, driving, climbing

District Apostle Helper David Devaraj also had to cover the steep terrain on foot when he was there in March 2017. “The terrain is merciless. Steep climbs by foot are the only access in these Himalayan foothills,” he reported when he came back. He visited four congregations, celebrated two divine services, conducted seminars, and spent the rest of the time visiting the members. But before he could take his final ascent to the villages, he had to cover 2,440 kilometres—meaning two flights and a seven-hour drive on winding mountain roads.

“Being surrounded by the cradle of Hinduism and its revered pilgrimage centres, the congregations have survived through very testing times,” David Devaraj says. He was awed by the faith of his brothers and sisters. The congregations in the Himalayan foothills were established in the



District Apostle Helper David Devaraj on his way to celebrate divine services and make family visits



1980s by Apostle Ram Sahae (1932–1986). The members are scattered, and live in small Christian pockets in a country in which most people profess Hinduism or Islam.

On the roof of the world

District Apostle Helper Devaraj is awed and highly motivated: “Being surrounded by this natural beauty and being embraced by eagerly waiting warm hearts was a feast in itself. Unimaginable. Now I feel the need to help these members even more.” His next step will be to establish the presence of the Church in the area in order to strengthen the brothers and sisters, Apostle Devaraj says.

Divine services, seminars, family visits

The day after the divine service in Ghankula he undertook a journey on treacherous mountain roads to visit the mem-

bers in Naugaon, where the Church was first established in the Gherwal region. He held a teaching seminar, which was followed by a divine service with Holy Baptism and Holy Sealing. The small mountain congregation was delighted and insisted that the Apostle and his team visit their homes. This entailed crossing from one mountain slope to the other, which the members did effortlessly. But it was not so easy for the city-bred visitors.

In the village of Pokhari, Apostle Devaraj visited the three New Apostolic families who live there. His visit there was in the middle of the week on a morning and could not have come at a better time. The local Priest had just been hospitalised, the Apostle reports. He spent time with the members and comforted them ...

Proclaiming the gospel on the street

Glorifying God is not something that is done only on the quiet. Singing, dancing, making music together, and telling others about the gospel are other ways of praising and worshipping God. Our brothers and sisters in Africa are leading the way.



Bright Samuel

More than 400 young people from eighteen different districts met in Asamato/Osisioma in Nigeria for a youth event. Together with Apostle Chima Okpara Ibekwe they celebrated a divine service, talked about their faith, and witnessed the ordination of young men from their ranks. There was a lot to do for the young people: spending time together and making new friends, doing sports, playing games, singing, racking their brains over Bible quizzes, and taking part in various lectures.

Bright Samuel, a young brother, summed up the three-day programme as follows: “I was so happy to meet the many brothers and sisters in Christ from the various districts. The event was simply amazing!”

The youth also used the opportunity to testify of the gospel of Jesus in the surrounding towns and villages. They approached people on the street and talked to them.

When distances pose a challenge

For some the way to church is long and arduous. Not every country has good roads or a public transport system. The terrain is often rough and difficult and people have to make do with what there is.



■ NAC Indonesia

Borneo. Eight divine services in eight days. This was the agenda of Apostle Samuel Hadiwidagdo's trip to Borneo. He travelled by plane, boat, and car on the "island of a thousand rivers", as Borneo is also called. After Greenland and New Guinea, Borneo is the third largest island in the world. It is divided into three states: the sultanate of Brunei in the north-east, Malaysia in the north and west, and Indonesia in the south. The Indonesians call their part of the island Kalimantan. The Apostle began his trip in the congregation of Muara in the sultanate of Brunei. The New Apostolic Church there is still not officially recognised, which is why the congregation meets for worship in rented premises. From there the Apostle continued on to the Malaysian part of the island, where he celebrated several divine services. The final service of his trip was in the congregation Pontianak in Kalimantan.

Argentina. The new church in Concordia will save many members quite a few kilometres. It was dedicated by Apostle Gerardo Zanotti on 6 August 2017. Concordia is in the province of Entre Rios and some 400 kilometres from

Buenos Aires. The congregation is overjoyed that they finally have their own church. The dedication was attended by 130 participants, among them also a man who lives next door to the church. He said that this place had experienced a lot of sadness, but now, with the construction of the new church, the joy had returned.

Azerbaijan and Georgia. The congregations in these countries in the Caucasus are far apart. The members have long distances to cover to attend divine services, and it makes things difficult for them. District Apostle Rainer Storck went on a pastoral care visit to these two countries in August 2017. In Tiflis, the national capital of Georgia, he placed District Elder Peter Ugrimov into retirement. The District Elder has played a key role in the development of the New Apostolic Church in Georgia over the past twenty years. He is already 75 years old. Over the last ten years he was the district rector in Georgia and responsible for the congregations there. Starting in 2012 he was also asked to look after the congregations in Azerbaijan.



District Apostle Michael Ehrich:

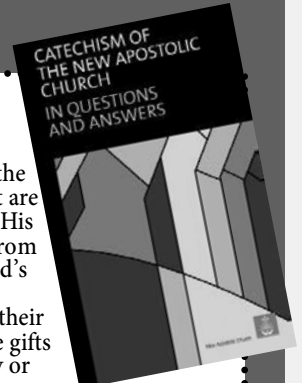
Expression of gratitude and love!

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am sincerely thankful that many Brothers and Sisters make a contribution with their financial offerings so that we can build churches, that the Apostles can visit the congregations, that the gospel can be spread, that teaching material can be provided ... I wish to expressly thank all offerers for their trust in the responsible handling of our financial resources. I also wish to thank all whose willingness to make sacrifices benefits the life in the congregations. We have many thousands of ministers and members in my working area who make a contribution to the life in the congregations. God will certainly know how to answer all your willingness to make sacrifices with His blessings. "Those who give of that which they have received - be it in material or non-material gifts - thereby express their thankfulness and love" (Catechism Questions & Answers 729-738). Let us continue to act in accordance with the mind and spirit of Christ!

With sincere greetings, yours

M. Ehrich
Michael Ehrich



How do we understand our sacrifices?

We understand our "sacrifices" to be the gifts and talents, time, and energy that are put to work in the service of God and His work. Even the endeavour to refrain from doing something for the benefit of God's work is a sacrifice. Believers also feel the need to express their gratitude and love for God in concrete gifts (sacrifices), be it in the form of money or natural goods.

According to Malachi 3: 10, we are to bring the "tithe" of our increase into the house of the Lord. The "tithe" can serve as a guide to the members in their offerings.

How is willingness to sacrifice demonstrated in congregational life?

Willingness to sacrifice is shown directly in congregational life: many members dedicate a considerable portion of their leisure time, energy, and talent to the service of the congregation without remuneration.

Many of them are active in the musical programming and instruction of the Church. With few exceptions, the ministers also work in a voluntary capacity

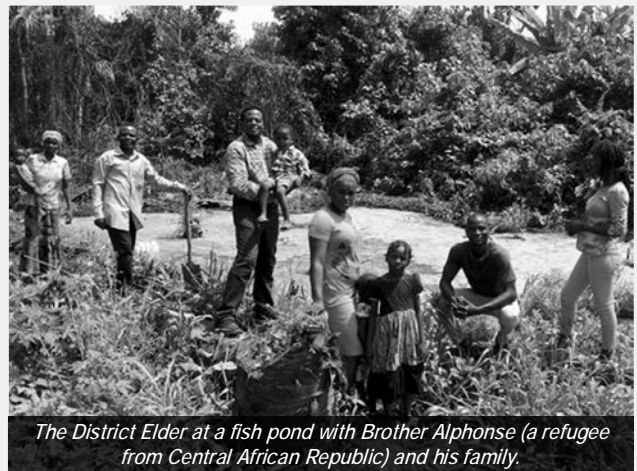
Catechism of the New Apostolic Church: Questions and Answers - Questions 731 and 736

Nigeria: As we offer unto thee

One of the major songs about offering in Nigeria says "we bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the lord and we offer up to you the sacrifices of thanksgiving and joy". These sacrifices are therefore an expression of gratitude for that which we have received.

A sister of Iguemokhua congregation in South South donated a piece of land and resources to build a new chapel for her congregation. Apostle Odili took it upon himself to lay a foundation of that church building.

In the congregation of Surulere, a Priest under very difficult circumstances decided to paint the central church in Lagos for the live broadcast divine service.



The District Elder at a fish pond with Brother Alphonse (a refugee from Central African Republic) and his family.

At the refugee camp in Ibogbo-Ikorodu Lagos, a district elder helped empower several refugee families from Ivory Coast, Central African Republic and DR Congo with livelihood skills especially farming, through seminars and workshops.

Further up in Abuja district, a brother having seen the worsened state of the Kabusa village congregation's building, donated funds to build a new structure for the members. This building was dedicated by Lead Apostle Nwogu.

These offerings and sacrifices of love make our congregational life more radiant.

If made willingly out of thankfulness and love, blessing will surely be associated with it.



Newly build Kabusa village congregation in Abuja North Nigeria



Foundation laying ceremony at Iguemokhua

Sierra-Leone: Gratefully use his talents!



▲ Brothers and sisters have lots of talents to work for the development of God's work: Use of musical talents in divine service.

▼ The brothers and sisters helped build a elementary school in Jeko Town, Grand Bassa. They are very happy that their school is finished with six classrooms. Your children now have a reliable hope.



▲ In the congregation of Foya Kpadonin, the brothers and sisters were very pleased to contribute to the preservation of their church building.



We sometimes sing, "I have a talent for using it for the Lord, but if I do not use it, I would lose it ..." - In this sense, many of the sisters and brothers in Sierra Leone also give their talents out of gratitude and gratitude Love for our Heavenly Father and our neighbor. These numerous sacrifices and offerings bring rich blessings.

▲ We experience our divine services in beautiful and well-kept church buildings: For many years, the brothers and sisters volunteered regularly to clean the church and sweeping the courtyard.

▼ The small community of Singrobo, Abidjan, is pleased with its own place of the services: A sister in faith releases part of her own property for this purpose. Together, the brothers and sisters built the shed for the divine services.



Ghana: Giving wholeheartedly

Ghanaians are known for their hospitality. Many people are providing food, shelter and education to the less fortunate. And they do it to the Glory of God.

It is the custom of Ghanaians that one has to develop any gift received to make the giver understand how one cherishes it; church buildings inclusive. All over the country one can see developments like new altars, painting of church buildings and improving the roofing and ceiling of the church buildings, construction of walls around church buildings. Some ministers, the youth, and some church members regularly clean the church buildings and beautify them in anticipation of mid-week and Sunday divine services. They do it because of their love for God and also to show their appreciation for his many blessings in their lives.



Apostle Oppong sets an example by visiting the sick



Apostle Boakye donates a wheelchair to a retired minister

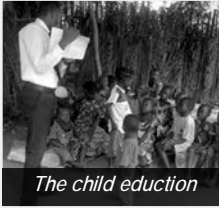


Apostle Otchere donates a prosthetic leg to a brother

The church is donated overhead water tanks and bore holes to communities and villages. Ambulance has been donated to health institutions. Closer to home, a brother who was involved in a motor accident and had his left leg amputated, was sponsored by the church to receive a prosthetic leg which improved his standard of living immensely. A wheelchair was also donated to a retired minister.



District Apostle donates to the Ghana National Ambulance Service



The child education

Benin: Various sacrifices in the care of the soul

Apostle Yedenou motivated over 160 rectors to further the intensive care of the souls in the congregations. This is often associated with large and varied sacrifices. Through role-plays, the rectors showed how important visits are to grieving members, the sick and regular pastoral visits. These are offers that God can bless abundantly.

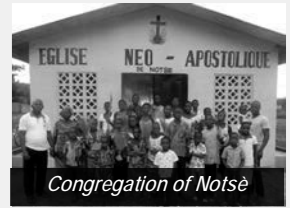
In another seminar with teachers, the Apostle Yedenou illustrated the importance of child education. This task is also associated



Seminar for rectors

with personal sacrifice: "... It is a free will service, an offer that the Lord blesses and never forgets," said the Apostle.

Togo: Give time and energy



Congregation of Notsè

The brothers and sisters of the congregation of Notsè express their gratitude and their love for the Lord through regular offerings. They are happy and thankful for the chapel offered by the church to celebrate divine services. On regular basis, they decided to give their time and energy for the cleaning and maintenance of the church and its surroundings. With great joy, the brothers and sisters take care of their construction to show their love and gratitude.



All brothers and sisters help with the regular cleaning of the church

Gabon: Help the neighbor

The New Apostolic women group of Libreville/Owendo congregations in Gabon celebrating mother's day in their traditional costumes.

They are very ambitious to foster the congregation life, to pay visit to sick and old members, to help those in need and to keep alive a joyful communion within the congregations.



The women's group of Libreville / Owendo in Gabon

Ghana: Joy and hope restored

Places of divine services at Aflao and Kpotame in the Sogakope District of the Volta South Apostle Area have seen a facelift by provision of fence etc.

This benevolence materialized through intrinsic motivation, self-help spirit and oneness among brothers and sisters to contribute their quota out of gratitude and love for God's work.



Front elevation of fence wall at Kpotame



Nigeria: Divine service by broadcast reaches nearly a 100 million people

District Apostle Michael Ehrich celebrated a divine service in Nigeria which was broadcasted live to over 100 million people by the Nigeria Television Authority on Sunday, the 10th of December 2017. The Nigerian national television is the most widely viewed television in Africa due to wide reach.

The service was based on the text word Isaiah 58: 6-7. In his sermon, he explained the difference between natural fasting and spiritual fasting.



Retirement of Bishop Magaji

He defined fasting as renouncing or denying oneself of something. Fasting should include renouncing centering our lives on things that do not work to our salvation, e.g. pursuit of money and successes, domineering behavior, and search for worldly reputation.

Since fasting approved by God includes sharing our goods and setting people free, Christians can do this by alms giving and sharing their spiritual resources like forgiveness, the truth of Christ's doctrine, Love and grace, with others. Bishop Magaji of North was retired in this service.



District Apostle arrive at the Central Church



Choir during the divine service

Ghana: Free water for Akrofonsu Community

The New Apostolic Church has embarked on numerous humanitarian projects in aid of needy communities for many years now.

On 31st December, 2017, the people of the Akrofonsu Community gathered in view of the commissioning of the 2017 Mechanized Water Project, as a humanitarian aid to the people of the community. The Apostle of the Nkawka Apostle Area, Apostle Andrews Boakye felt the need to assist the people of Akrofonsu through humanitarian aid by the New Apostolic Church. Concisely, the purpose of this project was to provide water to elevate the standard of living and also to enable the people of Akrofonsu realize how valuable they are to God and to the New Apostolic Church. The members of the community were happy and felt blessed to have such an aid.



The water project



Delighted woman

Sierra Leone: Workers in the Vineyard

On the 3rd February 2018, the Lead Apostle Hans-Jürgen Bauer conducted a divine service in Conakry, the capital of Guinea. The service was held in the Conakry Central Church.

In attendance were Apostles and Bishops of Sierra Leone, Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire and Liberia. On the day, 59 ministers across the 4 countries, were ordained as follows: 16 District Elders, 32 District Evangelists, three Shepherds and eight Community Evangelists. The Apostle drew our attention to the commission of Apostles. He stressed on sanctification which is derived from the word of God relative to faith, love, truth, peace and the sacraments. He announced that District Elder Braima Saffa of Conakry would be ordained as Apostle on the 28th February 2018 in Yaoundé, Cameroon, and will be assigned to Sierra Leone, particularly Freetown area.



Welcoming Apostle Bauer



Group photos with Choristers

South Germany / West Africa: Divine Service with the District Apostle

On Sunday, February 18, 2018, our District Apostle conducted a divine service in Söllingen (South Germany), which was transmitted to District Apostle Area Europe and per live stream to District Apostle Area West Africa (Benin, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Ivory Coast, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Togo).

Bible text: **“My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it” (Luke 8, excerpt from verse 21)**

Core thoughts: God's will and God's word are holy, completely in agreement, perfect, and eternally valid. At the beginning of the Gospel according to John reference is made to the fact that the triune God, His will, His word, and His nature are fully in accord (John 1: 1-4, 14). Through His word, God explains His will to us, provides us with an insight into His plan of salvation, and helps us understand His workings (Psalm 119: 130). The gospel of Jesus Christ is the focal point of the proclamation of the word in divine services. Those called to proclaim the word must do so uncorrupted and not water it down by personal views or opinions.

God's word is both confirmation and admonishment. These belong together. For example, if we refer to offerings or active cooperation in the congregation and if we are willing to offer and work along, this is a confirmation. We already do much of what we hear in the divine services. Nevertheless we are imperfect and are striving for perfection in Jesus Christ. Therefore we also need the loving admonishment through the Holy Spirit.

“Admonishment” is often understood to be negative. In the two great commandments of love it becomes clear that an admonishment also includes positive aspects. The Lord requests us to also love ourselves (Matthew 22: 37-39).

Isaiah the prophet indicated that God's word should have an effect (Isaiah 55: 11). The danger exists that a divine service can simply become a habit. This should not and must not be the case! Hearing and doing the word of God (see Bible text) establishes true nearness to the Lord!

God's will is expressed in His word. A few examples:

God wants us

- to give thanks in everything (1 Thessalonians 5: 18). This is not always easy, for we also experience days full of sorrow.
- to do good and put to silence the “ignorance of foolish men” (1 Peter 2: 15) – this ultimately means that we provide a positive testimony of our faith and demonstrate our Christian belief in deeds.
- to sanctify ourselves (1 Thessalonians 4: 3). This is carried out by the renewing of our mind (Romans 12: 2). Then we will increasingly strive for that which is Godly. The divine services have an important significance in this regard, for they are a “time-out from earthly matters”.

