

community

The New Apostolic Church around the world

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Don't be afraid.
Just believe!

Editorial

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Divine service

Five steps to the ultimate feast

Doctrine

Where Jesus Christ can still be experienced today

When God Himself says goodbye

New Apostolic Church
International



■ Editorial

- 3 Don't be afraid. Just believe!

■ Divine service

- 4 Five steps to the ultimate feast

■ A visit in Asia

- 10 Harmony: the key to the kingdom of heaven

■ A visit in Europe

- 12 Comfort that strengthens

■ A visit in America

- 14 Far more than just clean feet

■ Children's corner

- 16 Paul is shipwrecked on Malta
18 At Rosa Mia's in Manila in the Philippines

■ Doctrine

- 20 Where Jesus Christ can still be experienced today
22 When God Himself says goodbye

■ Global news

- 24 Thanks and love recycled
25 Symbol of a new beginning
26 A fresh start
28 Taking the future into their own hands
29 Giving with head and heart
30 Building knowledge

■ News from District Apostles Area

- 32 District Apostle Michael Ehrich: "And lo, I am with you always..."
32 Nigeria: Past, Present, and Future
32 Ghana: Remain in Confidence
33 Sierra Leone: On the Road in Faith
33 Benin: Strengthened in Faith
33 Togo: Faith that Endured
34 Ivory Coast: Just Believe!
34 Cameroon: God it with the Afflicted
34 Equatorial Guinea: The Little Flock
34 Gabon: Testifying without Fear
35 Liberia: Visit of the District Apostle
35 Nigeria: A Blessed Farewell
35 Sierra Leone: Blessed Encounters with the Chief Apostle
36 District Apostle Area: The District Apostle in Nigeria

Don't be afraid. Just believe!



NACI International

Dear brothers and sisters,

Our motto for 2026 is: “Don’t be afraid. Just believe!” These are words of Jesus.

We live in a challenging world: quarrels and harsh tones in society, and many voices in which God hardly features.

All too easily, fear could determine our actions. It divides, destabilises, and leads us to ask ourselves: How will this continue?

Jesus invites us to trust in Him: “Just believe!” His word and His love guide our thoughts and actions, not uncertainty or worry. In everything that lies ahead, we can be assured that God is at work—in the midst of our daily lives. He is preparing a future for us in His glory.

A strong faith makes us strong. Let us take the time and take a closer look at our Creed in order to immerse ourselves in its contents. This will help us to overcome our fears and confront dangers with calm composure and serenity.

In this way, we can enter the new year with a confidence that is greater than anything that worries us.

Don't be afraid!



Jean-Luc Schneider

Five steps to the ultimate feast



■ NAC DRC South-East



Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider conducted a divine service in Mbuji-Mayi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, on Sunday, 27 July 2025

Revelation 19: 7

“Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.”

Dear brothers and sisters, this Sunday is a special day for you and me. We have been waiting a long time for this opportunity to come together and see one another again. I am grateful to God that He has allowed me to return to Mbuji-Mayi and see all my brothers and sisters here and throughout the country. It is a delight to be reunited with so many of you. Many have gathered here in Mbuji-Mayi today, but ultimately the reason for our gathering is the same as every Sunday: we are here because we are Christians.

We gather on Sundays to sanctify the day. We pray, sing, listen to the sermon, and receive Holy Communion and the absolution. Above all, however, we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Sunday reminds us that Jesus is

alive. He overcame death and the power of evil. This knowledge gives us strength and hope. As we celebrate His resurrection, we prepare for our own resurrection because Jesus promised to return to take His bride to Himself. That is why we come together: to prepare our souls for His return. And it is precisely this event that is described in our Bible passage: the marriage of the Lamb.

When the Bible speaks of the relationship between God and human beings, it often uses the image of a couple. In the Old Testament, the people of Israel are described as the bride chosen by the Lord. God is described as the spouse who remains faithful to the covenant He has made with His wife, even if she is unfaithful to Him. Jesus often used this image in the New Testament: He is the bridegroom, His church the bride. Those who follow Him and remain faithful to Him are His bride. The bond that unites them is love. And when Jesus is called the “Lamb”, it reminds us that He loved His own so much that He died for them. Jesus Himself said that His own, His bride, are those who love God with all their heart, soul, and mind.

The wedding symbolises the first resurrection. The elect will enter into perfect communion with Christ. They will be with Him forever and be completely one with Him. This

oneness is more than that of two people who marry. Scripture says: “So then, they are no longer two but one flesh” (Matthew 19: 6). So, Jesus and His bride will not only be together eternally, but will be completely one, that is, of the same nature. They will all have the resurrection body. That is why it is so important that we become like Jesus, otherwise we cannot belong to His bride and cannot have eternal fellowship with Him in the kingdom of God.

Today we are still in the preparation phase for this wedding. The bride must be purified and sanctified in order to enter God’s kingdom. The greatest part of this preparation work was done by Jesus Himself: thanks to His sacrifice, the bride can be cleansed. He also cleanses us through His word because God forgives our sins again and again. Thus, the greatest part of the work is being done by God. But Paul also said that Jesus sent His Apostles to prepare the bride: through preaching, forgiveness of sins, and by dispensing the sacraments—namely baptism with water and the Spirit, and Holy Communion. It is the essential task of the Apostles to prepare the bride for the return of Christ.

However, that does not mean that we can just sit there and say, “Apostles, go ahead and prepare me.” That is not how it works. It is not enough to be baptised and sealed, to attend

*Just trust Me. I am
telling you, that is
how it is. Believe it!*





divine services regularly, and receive Holy Communion in order for Jesus to accept us automatically when He returns. The Bible clearly says: “His wife has made herself ready.” That means: she not only allowed herself to be prepared by God and the Apostles, she also did her part, she did real work.

Dear brothers and sisters, that is also our mission, our responsibility. Each one of us must prepare her- or himself. I cannot do it for you; and you cannot do it for me.

First of all, one must learn to believe. The Bible says: “Without faith it is impossible to please God, for he who comes to God must believe that He is” (Hebrews 11: 6). Faith means trusting the word of God, even if we do not see, even if we do not understand. Human beings always want signs. We want proof. We always want to understand everything. But God tells us, “No. I speak to you, and you trust My word. That is all I ask.” Jesus will return soon. Do not try to calculate the date, do not look for signs or proof, do not try to think about how it will happen. Just believe it. Trust Him. It will happen because He tells us that it will.

Jesus sent the Apostles to prepare us for His return. But all we see are imperfect people. We see the church and everything that happens there. We have doubts. We tell ourselves that this is impossible; this cannot be the church of Christ, these cannot be God’s messengers. Why does God not solve the problems? And Jesus replies, “Just trust Me. I am telling you, that is how it is. Believe it!”

God says that He loves us. But how are we supposed to believe that? Maybe we are sick and have nothing but problems. Why does God permit this? How can God tell us that He loves us? But God says, “I love you. Believe My word. Trust Me.”

We are all still learning to believe. We all need to ask God to strengthen our faith because it is still too weak.

Secondly, we must receive the sacraments and give them space to unfold. Part of the preparation is to be baptised. However, it is not enough just to have received the sacrament. We must also keep the promise that we made at our baptism. We promised to renounce evil, that is, everything that is contrary to God’s will. For baptism to be effective, we



To be part of the bride of Christ, one must receive the sacrament of Holy Sealing

must keep our promise and fight against sin to the end. This is an ongoing task because the temptations are numerous.

To be part of the bride of Christ, one must receive the sacrament of Holy Sealing. With the gift of the Holy Spirit, we are given the opportunity to enter the kingdom of God as firstfruits. But this opportunity is of no use to us if we lack the will. For Holy Sealing to be fully effective, our desire to be with Christ eternally must really come first.

Then we must regularly receive Holy Communion. Without it we cannot receive eternal life. However, Holy Communion is not a magic pill that automatically fixes our relationship with God. Its saving effect only unfolds when there is a genuine desire in our hearts to become like Christ. There are people who have been receiving Holy Communion every Sunday for fifty years without it having any effect. They do not really want to become like Jesus.

This is also part of the preparation: becoming like Christ. To be like Christ means loving God as Jesus loved Him. Throughout His life on earth, the relationship with God was

the most important thing for Jesus. Think of the temptation in the desert: He was hungry, and the devil offered Him a solution for obtaining food. But Jesus thought about it and said, "If I do that, I am distancing myself from My Father. I want to stay with My Father." His love for God was more important to Him than His own needs. Dear brothers and sisters, of course we have to organise our lives, but nothing earthly should damage our love for God, our relationship with Him. Jesus' desire to be united with His Father was so great that He gave up His own desires and will in order to do His Father's will. He would have liked to escape the torture and the cross, but when He realised that God had a different plan, He said, "Not My will, but Yours be done." Preparing for the return of the Lord means learning to become one with God and renouncing our own opinions and



Some 15,000 brothers and sisters attended the divine service



ideas in favour of God's. Jesus loved God to the end. Despite all He suffered, He remained faithful. So, to be like Jesus means learning to love God as Jesus loved Him. It means putting our relationship with God first, above all else, and letting go of our own opinions and standing firm in trials.

We must also learn to love our neighbour as Jesus does. How does Jesus love others? I can sum it up in one sentence. He wants human beings to have the same that He Himself received. Jesus' love is shown in the fact that He even wants to give us eternal glory, which only He deserves. Out of love, He put Himself at the service of humankind. He did not say, "It is there for you, but you are on your own." No, the Son of God humbled Himself to help us attain this glory. Not only do we not deserve it, but He even helps us obtain it. Jesus was humble and served His neighbour. He was always ready to forgive when someone had sinned. Loving others as He does, does not mean that He is asking us to love our neighbour as we love our wives or our children, or that we love all people as though they were close friends. The love of Christ means wanting that other people receive the same redemption and glory that Jesus wants to give us. Loving others means helping them to attain this salvation by being kind and doing them good—even when they do us harm. This is what it means to become like Christ: to love God and our neighbour as Jesus did.

Another point is the aspect of grace. We need grace because no one is perfect. That is why we must make an effort to have our sins forgiven. Forgiveness can neither be taken for granted nor is it automatic. That is nothing new. The Apostles have been teaching it for decades. We can read it in the Catechism. To obtain forgiveness of sins, we must acknowledge our sins and sincerely regret them without making

excuses or playing them down. Let us ask for forgiveness and make a serious effort to change and improve.

I admit, it always worries me a little when I hear brothers and sisters say, "God will grant me grace in the end anyway." There are children of God who do things they should not be doing: stealing, fighting, lying. And then they say, "God knows that I need money. He understands and will forgive me." No! Have you acknowledged your guilt? Do you really regret what you have done? Or do you just regret that you got caught? That is not real remorse. Do you sincerely ask for forgiveness? Are you determined not to do it again? Many have been doing the same thing for decades and have no intention of changing as long as no one catches them in the act. There is no remorse, no regret.

This is not intended as a threat. I am just preaching the gospel. And I have made none of this up. But I am concerned about my brothers and sisters. There is often a lack of genuine remorse. When I was young, a Bishop used to say to me, "Don't forget, the Lord is not obliged to take you with Him when He returns just because you are New Apostolic or go to church or serve as a minister."

So let us prepare ourselves for the return of Christ and ensure He can give us His full grace.

The last and final point of our preparation: building unity. God wants us to be one. Jesus said, "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13: 34–35). It is here and now that we must learn to become one in Christ. Let us overcome differences and accept that others are different. We must forgive one another and be reconciled. Jesus wants His church to be one.



District Apostle Thomas Deubel



District Apostle Élie Tatien Mukinda

And we must constantly work towards this unity. This is the fifth point of our preparation.

Our Bible text describes the marriage of the Lamb as already having taken place. That does not imply that we have missed it. Time does not exist for God. For Him, yesterday and tomorrow are all today. When God tells us about the marriage of the Lamb, He is describing a reality: something that already exists but that we just cannot see yet. In other words, nothing can prevent the marriage of the Lamb. Nothing can prevent Jesus from returning and taking those who have prepared themselves unto Himself. And we have every reason to be happy about that.

Let us rejoice, for soon we will be delivered from evil for good. We will be with Jesus in the kingdom of God, where there will be no evil. There will be no suffering, death, or injustice. Instead, perfect and eternal happiness awaits us. We can rejoice because we will be like Jesus. He will make us perfect. Our mistakes and imperfections will be gone. Rejoice because our brothers, our sisters, and our neighbours will also be freed from evil and made perfect. Rejoice because soon we will be united with the living and the dead in Jesus. We can no longer hurt anyone unintentionally. No one will be hurt by a bad word. We will all be like Jesus, perfectly one in Christ. Rejoice because all of this will happen. And rejoice as we prepare ourselves.

To say yes and prepare oneself is not easy because we must believe without understanding everything. We must obey

even if it is difficult. We must forgive even if it hurts. We must serve even if it requires sacrifice. We must give up certain things. Maybe we even think, “There are so many problems in this church. Why even bother?” But let us remember why we are preparing. Those who really want to be with Jesus gladly change because they want to become like Him. They are happy to obey, love, and forgive. They happily serve and work to protect the unity in the congregation because they know why they are doing it.

“My brother, my sister, truly prepare yourself for the return of the Lord. Remember what He will give you and prepare yourself with joy,” the Chief Apostle said in conclusion.

CORE THOUGHTS

We await the return of Christ. Jesus sanctifies us through His sacrifice and His word. The Apostles prepare us. Let us prepare ourselves for it by learning to believe, to love as Christ does, and to take full advantage of grace. The prospect of being part of the bride fills us with joy.



■ Dedy Febriono

Harmony: the key to the kingdom of heaven

A new world for a new, united humanity ... God is in the process of building it! And everyone can be part of it. How exactly, the Chief Apostle revealed.

Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider conducted a divine service in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, on 22 June 2025.

Old world vs. new world

When it comes to God's creation, the first thing that comes to mind is the act of creation of the earth and the world. God's power and glory is tangible here. But with the fall of Adam and Eve, creation was shattered. Sin not only damaged the relationship between God and humankind, the Chief Apostle explained, but also the relationship between humans. The harmony that had existed before fell apart at the seams.

In order to restore this harmony, God began a new work after the fall of the first humans: the work of salvation. He wants to repair what has been shattered by evil. God is working on a new world, the Chief Apostle said: "He wants

to create this Jerusalem that is an image for the people of God, for the church of Christ."

Conditions for the new world

In order to restore harmony between Himself and humankind, and among human beings themselves, God creates things in us and for us, the Chief Apostle said.

Baptism and sealing. Through the sacraments of baptism and sealing, God has created in your soul a new creation that already exists, the Chief Apostle pointed out. This makes a perfect relationship with God possible, as well as access to His kingdom, and eternal life in heaven with God.

Love. Force, punishment, and threats are not methods used by God. Sure, He could use His power, but "He works in a completely different way", the Chief Apostle said. He



Chief Jean-Luc Schneider in the divine service in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, on 22 June last year

motivates us by loving us. “The only power and strength He uses is love.”

Discipleship. God does not spare us the problems and sufferings of our time, but He always provides a way out. God gives us the freedom to choose. Our salvation depends on our own will. If we are determined to follow Christ and become like Him, no one can hinder our own salvation, the Chief Apostle said. “Follow this path and you will be saved,” he emphasised.

A new beginning. As humans, we are imperfect and cannot help but sin. “God always creates an opportunity for us to make a fresh start. He grants us forgiveness of our sins.”

Goal. “God wants me to become like Christ.” Through grace, God will make those human beings perfect who are sincere and steadfast until the end. He has prepared a place for you and for me in His kingdom. This is not a dream or a wish, but a reality.

The path to the new world

God is in the process of building New Jerusalem and wants to create a new people, the Chief Apostle said. “They will live in harmony with God and in harmony with one another.”

Unity. “God calls people from all nations, from all walks of life.” Whether young or old, good, bad, rich, poor, educated, or uneducated, God gathers them all into one people. Nothing is perfect yet, but the unity is already visible, the Chief Apostle said. That which unites is much stronger than that which divides.

Reconciliation. However, since some things are still imperfect there are also problems and conflicts in the congregation and church. God doesn’t spare us conflicts, the Chief Apostle said. But He “always creates a possibility to resolve the conflicts and overcome the differences”. All we must do is be humble and wise enough to follow the way He indicates.

Blessing. God’s mission for His people is: “You must become a blessing for all people.” That means: “Look outside and learn to love all people,” Chief Apostle Schneider called out. And, he added, we must contribute to their redemption.

Solidarity. Together, we can achieve great things, because we complement one another. Just like the image of the body of Christ. The function of each part is different, but each one is needed. We cannot do without one another.

Divine reality. God’s perfect people may not yet be visible today, but in His eyes New Jerusalem already exists. The Chief Apostle explained, “We cannot see it because we are bound by time. We cannot comprehend it with our mind.” For God there is no time and therefore He describes a reality that He can already see.

CORE THOUGHTS

Isaiah 65: 18

“But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem as a rejoicing, and her people a joy.”

God wants all human beings to be saved. He is working on our salvation. He is creating a united and supportive people, who are called to contribute to the salvation of humanity. In the new creation, people will live in communion with God and in perfect harmony with one another.



■ NAC Switzerland

| Comfort that strengthens

When we think of comfort we tend to think of tears. But divine comfort is much more than that, Chief Apostle Schneider explained in Sighisoara, Romania. God gives us His word that He is there for us, that He knows us, that He loves us, and that He is with us—no matter the situation.

Comfort that carries us forward

Divine comfort always goes far beyond what human beings can imagine, the Chief Apostle explained. It is not merely the alleviation of sadness, but rather the enduring promise of God: “I am there for you. I know you and I love you. I am with you and will never leave you!” The Holy Spirit reminds us of this certainty again and again, and shows us that God’s grace and goodness are the true source of all comfort.

In his sermon, the Chief Apostle listed ten such expressions of grace, which allow us to experience His comfort in daily life.

Earthly expressions of grace: seeing what counts

“Human beings are always so focused on the things they do not have—and find it unfair that others have more than they do,” the Chief Apostle said. The Holy Spirit, however, seeks to direct our attention to the undeserved gifts God grants us. “Don’t just dwell on the things you don’t have! Why don’t you think about all the things I have given you that you did not earn for yourself!” There are so many things we take for granted: “You have a husband or wife.

Many others do not. You are healthy. Others are sick, some of them for years! Do you really think you have deserved such gifts, and that the reason others do not have these things is because they haven’t earned them?”

The grace of election: accepted without any effort on our part

A further comfort lies in the fact that God chose human beings before the foundation of the world. Even before they could ever make any kind of contribution of their own, He decided to love them unconditionally. The Chief Apostle emphasised this deep promise of God: “I love you just as you are, no matter what you do, no matter how you behave. I will always love you with the same love.”

The grace of eternal life: hope that endures

In all suffering, God’s promise remains that He will provide humanity with eternal happiness that will cause them to forget all earthly hardship. Chief Apostle Schneider vigorously emphasised that in the new creation, every day will offer new reasons to praise God. People often ask, “Why is life so unfair?” But the grace of God is just as inexplicable:



The congregation in Sighisoara, Romania, on 11 May 2025

“Why does God want to do so much good for me? I can’t possibly earn this!”

Forgiveness: no end to new beginnings

Human beings make mistakes again and again—and again and again, God grants them forgiveness. The Chief Apostle emphasised that this grace does not condemn, but helps us get back up on our feet again. His forgiveness reminds us to never grow tired of fighting against evil and to always forgive others. “Don’t give up, keep fighting!” he urged. God’s grace is not a licence to continue living in the old ways, but an invitation to change and persistently pursue goodness.

Grace in everything we need: He gives what sustains

The grace of God contains everything that a human being needs for perfection—not only word and sacrament, but even the concrete circumstances of each individual’s life. People often have their own ideas about what they need for their salvation. Nevertheless, God does not promise the fulfilment of all their wishes, but rather only what is truly necessary: “You may not have everything you desire, but if you are sincere, you will receive from Me everything you need in order to be redeemed.”

The grace of time: an opportunity for repentance

God grants humanity additional time—a grace period to make changes and do what He expects of them. “It’s not too late—do something!” was the Chief Apostle’s clear appeal. This grace period is both an opportunity and a call to take action instead of merely waiting.

The grace of perfection: He will accomplish it

Human beings can never become perfect like Christ on their own. However, God not only looks at the end result, but at the sincerity of the effort. “God will grant you perfection by grace,” the Chief Apostle assured his listeners.

Grace for all: accessible to the very end

The thought that God never abandons anyone, not even those who have strayed from Him, is another comforting aspect of His grace. “Do not worry unnecessarily: I love them more than you love them!” the Chief Apostle emphasised. God gives all human beings the opportunity to find their way back to Him, even to the very end.

The power of grace: Christ has the last word

At times, evil seems overwhelming. But the Chief Apostle reminded his listeners that the grace of God is always stronger. The work of God will be completed. No power can prevent this from happening. “Do not be afraid, I will complete My work! No one can stop Me from doing so!”

The grace in our gifts: discover and use them

Finally, God calls everyone to recognise the gifts they have received and to use them in service to God and their fellow human beings. “Use these gifts of grace to do good to your neighbour,” the Chief Apostle concluded.

The grace of God is more than a consolation prize. It is a source of strength, a companion on life’s path, and a hope for the future—for all those who keep their eyes open to the activity of the Holy Spirit.

CORE THOUGHTS

Psalm 119: 76

“Let, I pray, Your merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to Your word to Your servant.”

Divine consolation aims to alleviate our suffering, strengthen us, and enable us to reach our goal. The Holy Spirit reveals to us the blessings that God bestows upon us. They are a comfort to us when we truly appreciate their true value.

Far more than just clean feet

It was a sign that not even the disciples understood. And its message still resonates today. Here is the story of Jesus washing His disciples' feet, explained by the Chief Apostle.



Mauricio Bolletta

Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem. “In the gospel of John it says that He knew exactly what was going to happen,” Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider said on 30 March 2025 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Jesus knew that God had laid everything into His hands, the Chief Apostle said. The salvation of humankind therefore depended on Jesus’ actions, but He could count on God’s help.

We also know where we are going. Our goal is eternal fellowship with God. Now it is a matter of personal salvation: “We are aware that everything is up to us. Our salvation depends on our own will, on nothing else,” the Chief Apostle said. “And those who want to be saved, follow the path shown by Jesus Christ,” he said, referring to the Bible text of the service.

One plot, many messages

The Chief Apostle illustrated three messages contained in the Bible text he used for the divine service:

- The Son of God did not come to be served, but to serve.
- The aim of His serving is to give human beings access to fellowship with God, which is often symbolised by a feast.
- The preparation consists of cleansing them from their sins and sanctifying them.

Peter and Judas reacted to this in different ways with different results.

Faith and trust

Peter initially objected, but then swung to the opposite extreme and wanted his head and hands washed as well, which Jesus refused. “What does this mean for us?” the Chief Apostle asked and gave two answers:

- Christ decides what is necessary for salvation. “We must believe in Jesus. We must be born again of water and the Spirit. We must receive Holy Communion and remain faithful to the end.”

- “We must respect that. Whether we understand it or not, whether we agree or not, is irrelevant. It is the only path to follow and the only way to be saved.”

Being there is not everything

Jesus washed Judas’ feet like everyone else’s. But he was not cleansed, because his heart was not with Jesus. This is how the Chief Apostle explained it: “For us that means that it is not enough to attend the divine services and to receive the sacraments in order to be saved. Our salvation depends on our heart, our will, and on our actions.”

“Jesus taught us that all those who will be saved will receive the same eternal life. But Jesus never said that everybody will be saved.”

Selfless love and service

Jesus told Peter, “What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this.” This is a very well-known statement of Jesus Christ, and it applies to all of us. Often, we do not understand what Jesus is doing. But Jesus tells us, “One day you will understand. But in the meantime, just trust Me.”

Jesus set an example for us to follow, the Chief Apostle said:

- “Washing one another’s feet means nothing other than helping the other person to be saved. Not like a master who lectures others, tells them what they are doing wrong, and what they should be doing. No, like a humble servant.”
- Jesus did not reject Judas. Judas left Jesus. “Jesus will not punish sinners. Not God, but they themselves have decided to not enter the kingdom of God.”
- “The washing of feet is definitely related to forgiveness. If I forgive my neighbour, it is not because he or she needs my forgiveness. It is because I want to behave like Jesus. And He forgives, so I forgive too.”

Chief Apostle Schneider said in conclusion: “Jesus cleanses us to give us access to His kingdom. We do not always understand His actions, but we trust Him. Let us follow Christ’s example by doing good to others and forgiving them.”



Priest Alfredo Silveira (left) was ordained as an Apostle, and Apostle Herman Ernst assigned as a District Apostle Helper

CORE THOUGHTS

John 13: 5

“After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.”

Jesus cleanses us to allow us to enter His kingdom. We do not always understand His actions, but we trust Him. We follow Christ’s example by being kind to others and forgiving them.

PAUL IS SHIPWRECKED ON MALTA

BASED ON ACTS 27; 28: 1-10

On his voyage to Rome as a prisoner, Apostle Paul ended up shipwrecked on the island of Malta. He lived there for three months.

The wind turned into a violent storm. The crew tried in vain to secure the ship.

The next day they threw the cargo overboard. The storm did not abate. A day later, tools and all dispensable items followed in the hope of making the ship lighter.

Neither the sun nor the stars were visible in the sky for many days. The travellers gave up all hope that they would be saved. But God told Paul through an angel that all 276 people on board would survive.

Fourteen days and nights passed. In the fourteenth night, the sailors sensed that they were drawing near some land. They took soundings and

found that the water was no longer deep. They were afraid of running aground and being dashed against rocks. Some sailors tried to escape in a skiff. But Paul warned everyone that unless these sailors stayed on the ship, none of the people on board would be saved. Shortly before dawn, Paul advised his fellow travellers to eat something. He took bread, thanked God in the presence of them all, broke and distributed it, and began to eat.

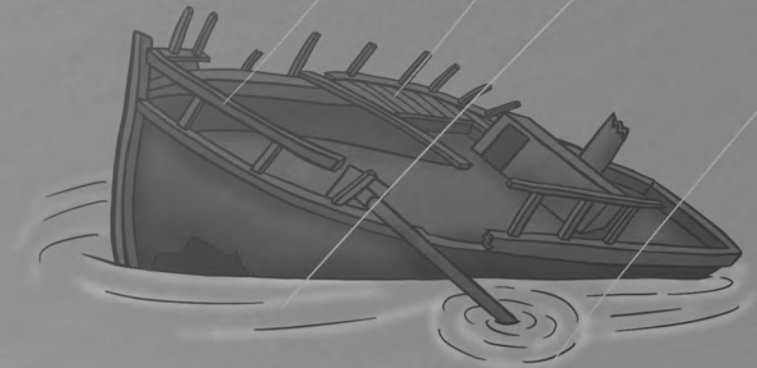
When it became light, the crew tried to run the ship ashore, but the stern broke up on a sandbank. Some swam, others clung to boards and parts of the wrecked ship. All 276 people made it to land safely. They had been saved. They found themselves on an island called Malta. The inhabitants of the island welcomed the castaways. Because it was raining and cold, they kindled a fire for them.

Paul had gone to gather up a bundle of sticks to lay on the fire. As he was about to put the bundle on the fire, a

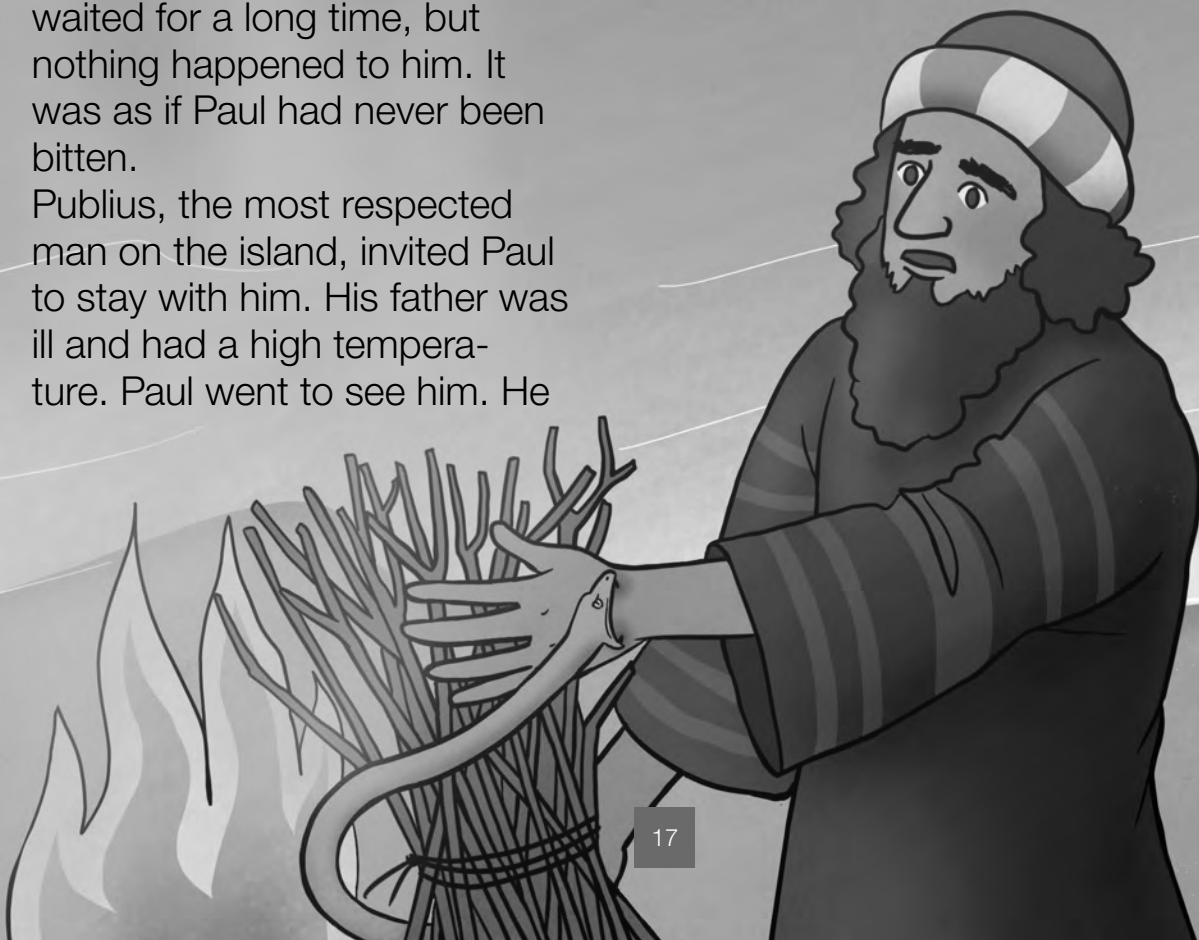
snake—startled by the sudden heat—came out from the bundle and bit him in the hand. The islanders saw it hanging from his hand.

Should the rescue from the storm have been in vain? The islanders said to each other, “This man must be a murderer. Although he escaped from the sea, he is not allowed to live and must die from a snake bite. What is this revenge for?” Paul hurled the snake into the fire. The people expected his hand to swell or for Paul to suddenly drop dead. They waited for a long time, but nothing happened to him. It was as if Paul had never been bitten.

Publius, the most respected man on the island, invited Paul to stay with him. His father was ill and had a high temperature. Paul went to see him. He

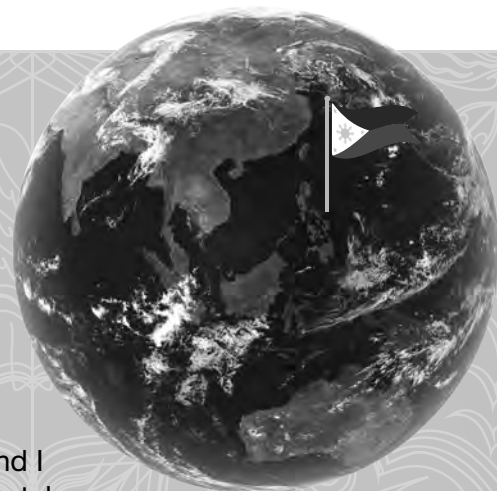


prayed with him, laid his hands on him, and healed him. The rest of the people on the island who were sick also came and were healed by Paul.



AT ROSA MIA'S IN MANILA IN THE PHILIPPINES

Magandang araw po! That is how you say “good day” in my native language, Filipino. The Philippines is made up of over 7,000 islands in the Pacific Ocean. I live on one of them.



My name is Rosa Mia and I am 13 years old. I like watching TV, especially anime, and I also enjoy painting and drawing because it makes me calm. I also like playing online games, especially with my friends, siblings, and cousins.

Here is a picture of me with my **friends** at school. They have helped me to realise the importance of friendship and that I can have confidence in myself and that I am fine just the way I am.



I also have good friends in my **congregation** in Makati. Makati is one of the cities and municipalities that make up Metro Manila.



I live in Metro Manila together with my **mother**, Rosabelle, and my **brothers**, Ranz Jordan and Stephen Klay. Manila is the capital of the Philippines and is located on the island of Luzon. Did you know that the **Philippine islands** are the crests of underwater mountain ranges? When the crest of a mountain rises out of the sea, it





forms an island. Because these islands are only slightly above sea level, the Philippines are severely threatened by climate change and rising sea levels.

The **National Museum of Natural History** showcases the unique flora and fauna as well as the cultural heritage of the Philippines. You can even see dinosaur skeletons there! The museum is housed in a former government building.



My favourite dish is **palabok**. It is a popular noodle dish here, made with thin rice noodles, a rich and flavourful sauce, and a variety of toppings, often including shrimp, pork, and hard-boiled eggs. I like the savoury and tangy flavour.

I learned to play the violin from my mom and my aunt. I play in the **orchestra** in my congregation. How do you contribute to your congregation?





■ zve/stock.adobe

Where Jesus Christ can still be experienced today

The congregation is not a human work, but God's creation. It is a spiritual space where faith grows, love works, and hope is shared.

The church is an institution of Jesus Christ. The church of Christ, which is empirically intangible and invisible, emerges with varying degrees of clarity in the various church communities, and therefore also in every Christian congregation. The term *ekklesia* sheds light on the connection between the entire church and the local congregation, as it refers to the church of Christ as a whole as well as the individual congregation as a visible part of the church of Christ. Both the church and the local congregation have their foundation in Jesus Christ.

The body of Christ

The “body of Christ” is a preeminent image for both the church and the individual Christian congregation (1 Corinthians 12: 12). This is the community of believers who have been baptised in the triune name of God and who profess Him as their Lord. However, the Christian church is more than merely the sum of its parts. It is the fellowship of life of those who believe in Christ, a living organism led by Christ, the head of the church (Catechism 3.4.13). Life in the congregation is shaped by the service of all the believers, who contribute their gifts (1 Peter 4: 10). In the midst of the church, Jesus Christ prepares His bridal congregation through Apostles for His imminent return and the marriage in heaven (Catechism 6.1).

Every Christian congregation should understand its mission in terms of God’s actions. Jesus Christ gave the impetus for the creation of His church. This was evident in the founding of the church upon the rock, Apostle Peter (Matthew 16: 18). Therefore it is also necessary for each individual congregation to reveal Jesus Christ in its self-image and actions today.

Between local congregation and church of Christ

Different levels are evident: the assembly of Christians in the local congregation or house church (Romans 16: 5), the assembly of congregations in an entire region (Acts 9: 31), or even the church of Christ as the community of all Christians in all places and at all times (Ephesians 5: 25; 1 Corinthians 12: 28). From the New Apostolic perspective, it incorporates believers from both here and the beyond, both living and dead. All of them need salvation in Christ, which is imparted through word and sacrament.

As the image of the body already indicates, church is a multifaceted phenomenon. It is a community of divine service in which the reality of God is experienced through sacrament, prayer, and preaching. For New Apostolic congregations, in any case, it is certainly true that the divine service, which is led by ministers ordained by Apostles, is the central point and source of life. Congregations that receive the fulness of the sacraments and the word of God are called upon to make this clear to themselves and to testify of this to others.

The task of the congregation

The congregation is also a spiritual space in which faith is to be developed, experienced, lived and practised, and cultivated under the activity of the Holy Spirit. A vibrant congregation can help the believers recognise the value of the divine services and their fellowship, and also encourage them to make their own personal contributions to congregational life.

The foremost task of every congregation is to honour God and profess Jesus Christ, the incarnate God, through word and deed. An important task—not only for the ministers, but for every member of the congregation as well—is pastoral care, namely mutual support and reinforcement in faith and activity. The Vision and Mission, which are to be understood as the motto of the Catechism, therefore have the character of a guiding principle. From them we can derive the tasks and duties incumbent on a credible New Apostolic congregation.

The congregation is not defined by external things such as its building, the number of its members, the presence or quality of supplementary services (for example, the choir or orchestra) or the great diversity of its events (congregational celebrations, etc.). The strength and credibility of a congregation are not measured by its size or structure either, but rather by the activity of the Spirit that believers can experience there and the brotherly love that characterises the coexistence of its members, irrespective of person. Congregations of all sizes in the care and leadership of a priestly ministry have a right to exist.

When God Himself says goodbye

The closing blessing is not a devout wish, but a divine promise: grace, love, and fellowship accompany believers in their daily lives. Here is a pastoral letter on the subject by the Chief Apostle.

I have the impression that the importance of this element of the liturgy is not always well understood. The benediction is pronounced over the congregation with the words recorded in 2 Corinthians 13:14: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all!” What is the meaning and scope of these words?

More than merely a formula: a blessing

The officiant pronounces these words to mark the end of the divine service. The wording of the Bible verse suggests a wish. One might be tempted to think that the officiant is merely wishing for grace, love, and communion to accompany the believers, just as he might wish them a safe journey home. In reality, it is much more than that.

When pronounced by a minister mandated by God for this purpose, these words constitute a true blessing. They are filled with divine power, and they impart a spiritual benefit to the listener.

In this blessing, God promises the hearers that His grace, love, and fellowship will accompany them in their daily lives. And because God does everything He says He will do, the congregation has the assurance that this will indeed be the case. This promise applies to all who hear it. But, as with every blessing, its effect will depend on the faith and conduct of the one who receives it. Therefore, the benediction is both a promise and an exhortation from God.

A Trinitarian blessing

The passage 2 Corinthians 13:14 makes clear reference to the Trinity. Let us recall here that God is both one and triune. Each of the divine persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is true God. The divine persons are distinct from each other but are only one God. It is in this context that the benediction must be understood. It is God the One, God the Almighty, and God the Perfect One, who is speaking. The actions of God are always the actions of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Grace, love, and communion are therefore not linked to one of the divine persons, but are common to all three. One would also be justified in saying that the Father grants grace, the Son invites to communion, and the Holy Spirit is love.

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ”

With these words, God reminds us of the grace He has given us in Jesus Christ: He has chosen us and made us His children, joint heirs of His glory (Ephesians 1: 3–14). He has forgiven us our sins. Moreover, it is to His grace, rather than our merits, that we owe what we possess. By concluding our encounter with Him with this blessing, God guarantees us the following:

- We will remain His children, no matter what happens. He will never call our election into question.
- We will always be able to count on Christ to defend us against the accusations of the evil one (Romans 8: 34).
- We can hope in His grace. It is this grace that will allow

us to attain the perfection required to enter into His kingdom (1 Peter 1:13).

However, this guarantee only applies to those who adopt a behaviour that is in alignment with the will of God. God encourages us to

- remain humble before God, as we depend entirely on His grace, and to remain humble before others, as we are all sinners
- behave like true children of God who are called to inherit His glory
- use the gifts we have received from Him to serve one another (1 Peter 4:10)

“The love of God”

Before we go home and back to our daily routine, God declares His love for us once again. Everything He does is to enable us to be with Him forever. He will remove from our path any obstacle that could prevent our salvation. He will give us what we need in order to be saved.

In return, He asks us to remain in His love under all circumstances. God wants us to leave the divine service with

- the determination to keep His commandments
- the resolution to serve Him out of love and not out of calculation
- the desire to love our fellow human beings just as God loves them

“The communion of the Holy Spirit”

It is through the Spirit that we can hear God and know His will. God promises that He will continue to speak to us in order to guide, comfort, and strengthen us. And He recommends that we remain attentive to that which He says to us, both in the sermon and in our conscience.

Communion in Christ’s inheritance goes hand in hand with communion in His sufferings (Romans 8:17; Philip- pians 3:10). God warns us that we will still experience af-

fliction and misery. But we have nothing to fear. He is with us. He hears our prayers and will answer them. And if we should ever be too weak to pray, the Holy Spirit will make intercession for us (Romans 8: 26–27).

The communion of the Holy Spirit is also a fellowship of love. The Holy Spirit has poured out the love of Christ in our hearts. As we return to our daily lives, let us remember that God has made us capable of loving others just as they are—provided that this is what we want, that we work on it, and that we implore the Lord for divine help.

The final benediction also attests to the enduring presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church. We have no reason to worry: nothing will prevent the Holy Spirit from leading the bride into perfect fellowship with the bridegroom.

Finally, the communion of the Holy Spirit is inseparable from the communion of the saints. We all have the same Spirit, the same faith, and the same future. We all receive the same word and the same bread. Before we part, God exhorts us not to forget that we are all members of the same body, the body of Christ. We can only truly have communion with God by remaining in communion with one another (1 John 1: 3–7).

We will always be different from one another. But God does not want us to be prisoners of our differences! He asks us to overcome these and to contribute actively to the unity of the Church. And He reminds us that the communion of the believers is not only a spiritual one. It is also expressed in a concrete way, in solidarity with those in need and by sharing the goods of this world (1 John 3: 17–18).

These thoughts on 2 Corinthians 13:14 are far from exhaustive. There are certainly other ways to develop these words of Apostle Paul. I simply wanted to emphasise the importance of the final benediction and to show the effects it can produce in a believing heart.

One last point. This blessing also applies to those who pronounce it.

In February 2025, Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider visited Colombia. The children surprised him with a welcome gift from the *Reciclando en Cristo* project



■ NAC Colombia

Thanks and love recycled

A globe, trees, flowers, and our Church's emblem: all these were drawn by children from Colombia as a logo for a project named Recycling in Christ. Here are the pictures and the story.

The New Apostolic youth in Bogotá, the capital of Colombia in South America, is celebrating its third birthday. The project *Reciclando en Cristo* (meaning "Recycling in Christ"), has been running since 2022. How do faith and environmental protection go together? The project's initiators have a clear answer.

Doing good for the next generation

According to the website of the New Apostolic Church Colombia, the youth want to "encourage respectful treatment of God's creation". It says further: "In this way, we express our gratitude to God for taking care of us and

providing us with everything we need." And they want to "serve the people who will inhabit this world in the future by building a better place for them to live".

From the youngest to the oldest, all brothers and sisters in the region are asked to help by collecting recyclable materials at home and donating them. Once enough material has been collected, the young people and ministers see to it that everything is picked up and taken to a storage centre located in the Tunjuelito church. There everything is carefully sorted before being sold to recycling companies in the neighbourhood. The proceeds benefit youth-related activities.



District Apostle John Schnabel is also delighted by the thoughtful gift from the children



The Sunday School children designed logos for the recycling project

The example sets a precedent

The effects of the campaign are unexpected—pleasantly so. For one thing, friends and neighbours have joined the initiative by collecting and donating recycled materials themselves. And secondly, people in the congregation's neighbourhood have become aware of the activities and work of the New Apostolic Church. And finally, there are attempts to launch similar initiatives in cities such as Cali, Medellín, and Cúcuta.

Sunday School children created their own logos to support the motto: *Reciclando en Cristo*. And they have even developed into something like an advertising medium. During the Chief Apostle's most recent visit to Colombia in February last year, for example, he and his guests were presented with mugs and buttons from the *Reciclando en Cristo* campaign, decorated with the children's pictures.

Symbol of a new beginning

They have been there for 75 years. In fact, thanks to its anniversary, the congregation of Sinzig in Germany has made it into the Church's international news. Why? Here is the story.



The summer of 2021 was particularly dramatic. After heavy rains pounded the area, the Ahr River burst its banks, and a massive flash flood left a huge trail of destruction in the Ahr Valley. The church, located close to the river, was severely damaged, as were homes and businesses in the area. In the days following the disaster, people from the nearby church district of Wiesbaden came to help with the clean-up. Among them were many young people and the responsible Apostle. After extensive renovation work, the congregation was finally able to move back into its church in May 2022.

The anniversary service commemorated this new beginning, the New Apostolic Church of Western Germany reports. A new Bible was placed on the altar: a gift from the district youth. The previous Bible had been destroyed in the flood.



NAC Western Germany

A fresh start

A new job, a new life, and two new congregations in the process ... Here is the story of how New Apostolic Christians from South Africa found a new spiritual home in the Channel Islands.



Dean Hayes

Members from Guernsey on a sightseeing tour with visitors from South Africa

First there was a job offer, then they had a look at the map of Europe: Dean and Tania Hayes from South Africa had never heard of the small island of Guernsey in the English Channel. Guernsey, a crown dependency, is one of four main islands in the English Channel. Approximate-

ly 166,000 people live in the Channel Islands, including roughly 100,000 on Jersey and 60,000 on Guernsey.

Unusual dimensions

A New Apostolic congregation was founded on Jersey back in 2005. Members came and went, and after a few years the congregation ceased to function. It was a big change for Dean and Tania when they arrived on Guernsey in February 2023. In South Africa, congregations have an average of 400 members. On Guernsey, Tania and Dean were initially the only New Apostolic Christians.

Nevertheless, they quickly fell in love with this quaint and beautiful island lying south of England's coast. "Life here is much calmer and more peaceful than in big cities. The lack of commotion, along with the island's natural beauty and stunning views, and the friendly people creates a serene environment," enthuses Tania. Everything could have been perfect if something essential had not been missing: a New Apostolic congregation where they could feel at home.



Confirmation in the congregation



The then Bishop Neil Woodman (left) confirms Dean Hayes as a Priest

The congregation in Jersey with Evangelist Esterhuizen (centre) and Priest Hayes (right)



Ernst Cookson (right) is confirmed as a Priest for Guernsey

Where two or three gather ...

Evangelist Craig Esterhuizen and his wife Gail live in the south of England. In May 2023, they were on a holiday cruise that made an unexpected call in Guernsey due to bad weather—an opportunity to meet with the New Apostolic South African couple. In the town gardens of St Peter Port, Guernsey’s capital, the four celebrated Holy Communion together. Dean and Tania still remember this fondly today.

A New Apostolic family of four—Ernst, Lynn, Danielle, and Joshua Cookson—from South Africa moved to Guernsey in September 2023. Back in South Africa they had been used to youth services with over a thousand participants, but now Danielle was the only confirmand to stand in front of the altar on 26 June 2024.

Grateful for the fellowship

“As young New Apostolic Christians, my brother and I feel quite lonely on the island,” says Danielle. “Youth activities mainly take place in England, and we generally have to travel to attend these activities.” Danielle is optimistic, though, “I know that God has placed our families on this island for a reason, and that is to spread the message and the love of Jesus Christ.”

One step in this direction was the formal start of the Guernsey congregation on the day of Danielle’s confirmation. In the same service, Dean Hayes was confirmed as a Priest for the Channel Islands. The congregation, joined by visiting family members, formed an impromptu choir and gave a small post-service concert, which a passerby heard.

The woman entered the conference room, listened, and was moved to tears by the hymns. “Although our church life is so different from what we are used to in the large congregations we all come from, we are happy and thankful for the community we have here,” says Tania.

On neighbouring Jersey

Around the same time, something very similar happened around 40 kilometres away. Three New Apostolic Christians from South Africa had moved to the island of Jersey. On 11 October 2024, Evangelist Craig Esterhuizen and Priest Dean Hayes came to Jersey to conduct a divine service, the first in a long time. One sister could not be there because she had just given birth to a baby boy. As small as the congregation is, there is a choir and an instrumental ensemble with capable choristers and musicians. On 5 January 2024, Apostle David Heynes travelled to Jersey to conduct a divine service and confirm Ernst Cookson from neighbouring Guernsey as Priest.

The two Priests from Guernsey have since been responsible for both congregations, while Craig Esterhuizen, who regularly comes to Jersey and Guernsey by plane or ferry, is the rector for both congregations. Several ministers from Great Britain support him in his pastoral work.

On Guernsey, services are held every Sunday at 10 a.m., except on the last Sunday of the month, at the Les Cotils Hotel in St Peter Port. On Jersey, services are held on the last Sunday of every month at 10 a.m. at the Town Hall Parish of St Helier.



After the graduates had received their certificates everyone posed for a group shot



NAC Zambia

Taking the future into their own hands

Dreams that become reality? Good prospects in life? Opportunities for further development? All this is possible in Chabota.

The man in the red robe smiles as he hands over a large brown envelope. This envelope contains an important document: one that could change the future to some extent. At least the future of David Chilonde and 72 other young people in Chibombo, a district in Zambia's Central Prov-

ince. With a shy smile, David accepts the envelope from Godfrey Chitambala, the province's deputy permanent secretary for the Ministry of Youth, Sport, and Arts. David is home free, so to speak: he is holding his final diploma for General Agriculture Level 3 in his hands.

Nathaniel Lowa, our nac.today correspondent, reports on the graduation ceremony and the Chabota Vocational Skills Training Centre.

Graduation at the Chabota Vocational Training Centre

On 4 July, 73 young people received their diplomas after completing a one-year course in general agriculture at the Chabota Vocational Skills Training Centre, which is run by the New Apostolic Church Relief Organisation (NACRO). The programme aims to equip vulnerable young people with practical skills for a sustainable livelihood and improved food security.



The press reports on the event



Graduates of the Chabota Vocational Training Centre

Mr Godfrey Chitambala, speaking on behalf of the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Youth, Sports, and Arts, commended NACRO and its partner NAK-karitativ for their efforts in empowering vulnerable people through skills development. He urged the graduates to apply their training to help reduce poverty and inequality in line with the government's development agenda.

NACRO and government hand in hand

Representing District Apostle Kububa Soko, Bishop Martin Mutondo of the Lusaka West-Mumbwa Apostle area emphasised the Church's commitment to improving community welfare through NACRO. He explained that Chabota was founded to empower vulnerable young people. The training centre's programme is now being expanded to offer additional trades such as carpentry, metal fabrication, bricklaying, and food processing. He appealed to the government for support through the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) to provide infrastructure, tools, and teaching resources.

Established in 2018 with support from NAK-karitativ and Zambia's Ministry of Youth, Sport, and Arts, Chabota Skills Training Centre continues to play a vital role in equipping young people with life-changing vocational skills.

Giving with head and heart

A good year for a good cause: thanks to steady donations, human aktiv was once again able to support numerous aid projects in southern Germany and West Africa in 2024.

According to the annual report, the aid agency of the New Apostolic Church Southern Germany recorded income of two million euros last year: 1.1 million euros were received in non-restricted donations and 760,000 euros in donations earmarked for specific projects. On top of this, there was an additional 150,000 euros from interest on short-term financial investments and bequests.

Compared to the previous year, there was a notable decrease of around 200,000 euros in non-restricted donations. Yet, project grants increased by around 30,000 euros.

Since expenditures in 2024—a total of 1.8 million euros—were lower than the income, the charity registered a surplus of 230,000 euros. This profit will be used in the coming years to further its charitable purposes.

Around 1.1 million euros were channelled into humanitarian aid in Germany. Funds totalling 280,000 euros went to associations such as Aktionkinderschutz, Kubus, and Dornahof. An amount of 270,000 euros from the District Apostle's spontaneous aid budget and discretionary funds available to the Apostles was donated to the Olgäle Foundation Stuttgart, ViDia Christian Clinic Karlsruhe, and the Interpalast Germany association, among others. In addition, the annual funding focus for women and children affected by violence received 250,000 euros, and the food bank campaign, Food for the Needy, was supported with 98,000 euros.

The charity actively supported humanitarian aid abroad with 670,000 euros. One area of funding was the construction of schools in West Africa, including the construction of wells, which received 160,000 euros. 140,000 euros were allocated to clean water access. In addition, 110,000 euros were channelled into disaster relief, such as aid for displaced persons in Cameroon or for flood victims in Guinea. People in Ukraine were supported with 95,000 euros. And 60,000 euros were allocated to education, including a school in Ethiopia and teacher training.

An educational initiative by the New Apostolic Church provides training for teachers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo



■ NAC DR Congo South-East

Building knowledge

The DR Congo South-East decided that it would suspend its building programme this year and instead invest the funds in teacher training programmes. The decision by the Church leaders to reallocate the budget is to benefit the children in the congregations in the long term.

There are around ten thousand congregations, thousands of teachers, and tens of thousands of children. The teacher training programme in the New Apostolic Church in the south-eastern part of the DR Congo is a mammoth project—and yet it is only an intermediate step on the way to a future-focused church. The aim of the project is to give Sunday School teachers comprehensive training for their important task.

The current focus is on level three teachers, which involves training teachers at district level. Currently, 1,442 teachers are undergoing this important course. Each participant receives a certificate at the end of the course. “Most of the teachers trained are psychologists and therefore know that this is a continuing education programme at university level,” Serge Mukadi, the communications manager, says.

A structured teaching system

Teacher training takes place across several levels: the Apostle, district, and congregational level. At each level, the teachers receive specific training. In July 2025, a comprehensive training programme for level three teachers took place in all Apostle districts, reaching leaders from 399 church districts. Attendance was high. Of a total of 1,394 expected district leaders and teachers, 1,264 were present. Only teachers from regions where the security situation is tense, making travel impossible, could not attend. They will receive training once the situation eases.

In December of the previous year, level one training had already taken place in Goma. The course had been led by a renowned psychologist and university professor. The course



Sunday School teachers and one of the instructors during a lecture

covers important topics such as general behaviour in dealing with children, pedagogical communication, teaching objectives, general principles of modern education, teaching strategies, and teaching practice.

Efficient use of local resources

Teaching materials were printed locally, totalling 18,000 books, divided into two volumes of 9,000 copies each. Working with a local print shop not only ensures efficient production but also supports the local economy. These books are an essential basis for teacher training and make a significant contribution to ensuring sustainable quality in teaching.

A look into the future

The successful completion of the level three training is by no means the end of the programme: a fourth and final

ensure the sustainable education of the next generations so they can actively shape the future of the Church.

“This is about far more than simply passing on knowledge,” one of the responsible ministers emphasises. “We are investing in the future: in our children and in the people who accompany and shape them. That is our great task and responsibility.” This project being carried out in the Regional Church shows how important the religious education and care of its children is to the Church. This year, the Church made a conscious decision to suspend its building programme and invest the money in teacher training instead.

Another highlight of the year was the visit of Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider at the end of July 2025. He conducted a divine service in Mbuji-Mayi (see pages 4–9). Thanks to a satellite link and the internet, all congregations of the Regional Church were able to follow this special divine service on large screens or overhead projectors.



Certificates are being presented following the successful completion of the teacher training programme

Group photo of the participants



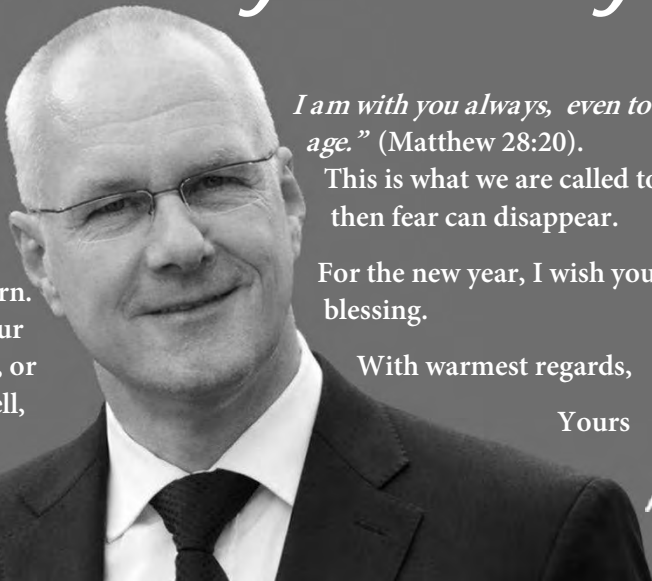
DISTRICT APOSTLE MICHAEL EHRLICH:

“And lo, I am with you always...”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Our motto for the year 2026 is: “Don’t be afraid. Just believe..” When we look soberly at the world around us, there are indeed many reasons to be afraid. Political, economic, and ecological conditions are, in part, cause for concern. There may also be reasons for fear in our personal lives: family problems, illness, or other difficult situations affect us as well, even as children of God.

In contrast to this we have the Lord’s promise: “And lo,



I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:20).

This is what we are called to believe – then fear can disappear.

For the new year, I wish you God’s rich blessing.

With warmest regards,

Yours

Michael Ehrlich

NIGERIA:

Past, Present, and Future

The children at the Child’s Right and Rehabilitation Network (CRARN) bear painful experiences from the past and face many challenges in their present lives. They therefore need encouragement to believe in a hopeful future.

Since last year, our District Apostle, Michael Ehrlich, has supported the Centre to strengthen the children’s confidence and hope. During his visit to Uyo, he met the children on Wednesday, January 14, in Four Towns.

Following this visit, and on the directive of the District Apostle, Lead Apostles Geoffrey Nwogu (ret.) and Oscar Nwanza, accompanied by Apostles Armstrong Inyang and Samuel Usoro, visited the Centre on Wednesday, February 4. They encouraged the children not to be afraid, but to believe, trusting that God knows their past, present, and future, and has prepared a hopeful path for their lives.



Joyful CRARN children during the Apostles visit to the Centre

GHANA:

Remain in Confidence

In January 2024, the Rector of the Tema Congregation (Accra) felt inspired to establish a Brass Ensemble. Questions about sustainability arose, yet God moved willing hearts, and generous support followed. What began as a fragile idea gained strength when a music teacher joined the effort.

Two years later, the Tema Brass Ensemble plays better than ever. Made up of Sunday School, Confirmation Class, and Youth members, they have become a joyful and unifying presence in Accra. From divine services to weddings, youth weekends, and concerts, their music is now widely sought after and warmly received. Where doubt once prevailed, God’s provision now resounds through every note. Fear was transformed into faith – do not be afraid, just believe – and God turned a small beginning into a symphony of praise.



The Tema Brass Ensemble during a divine service



Kailahun youths tracking rough roads to Koidu Youth convention



Kambia youth arrived at the youth convention despite breakdowns on the road

SIERRA LEONE: On the Road in Faith

In the spirit of the annual motto, many youths accepted the challenges of travelling to the youth convention in Koidu with trust and determination. Difficult roads, long journeys by motorbike, and unexpected vehicle breakdowns made the journey demanding and, at times, uncertain.

Nevertheless, the youths continued their journey in confidence and arrived with joy and gratitude, thankful for

God's protection and the opportunity to share in blessed fellowship.

In the same way, Apostles and ministers travel regularly by land, air, and sea to reach souls in remote areas. Trusting in the Lord's guidance and omnipotence, they carry out their mission encouraged by the word: "Don't be afraid. Just believe!"

BENIN: Strengthened in Faith

From 2 to 9 February 2026, Lead Apostle Yedenou Vincent visited congregations in northern Benin, the working area of Apostle Houenou Josias. The visit included several village communities and was marked by warm encounters with the faithful. A central point of the program was the youth weekend held at the ICOM House in Matéri, which brought together young members from across the region.

On Saturday, February 7, an inter-district Bible contest united the eight districts of northern Benin, with participants from the Youth, Women, and Ministers. The visit concluded on Sunday, February 8 with a divine service attended by more than 700 believers. Based on Mark 5:28, the Lead Apostle encouraged the congregation to approach Christ with confidence and trust. The faithful returned strengthened in faith, assured that Christ, but calls us to believe and seek closeness to Him.



Distinction for the best districts in the Bible contest

TOGO: Faith that Endured

Tingbandongue is a remote village in northern Togo, about 30 kilometers from Dapaong. After the leaving of their only priest, the small congregation was left without pastoral care. Yet the members did not lose confidence, continuing to walk five to six kilometers to attend divine services.

When the priest later returned, the congregation gathered in temporary locations, often facing ridicule. Still, the members remained steadfast.

At the beginning of 2025, the Church announced the construction of a permanent shelter. Because access roads were lacking, the members carried cement and other materials by hand and with simple carts.

Strengthened by faith, the congregation persevered, and on 7 February 2026 Apostle Kloutsè inaugurated the new shelter in the presence of local authorities – a joyful testimony to a faith that overcame every obstacle.



The joyful congregation after the inauguration service



The children of Sunday school also joyfully proclaim their faith

IVORY COAST: Just Believe!

On Friday, January 9, brothers and sisters of the Transua congregation gathered to reflect on this year's motto, "Don't be afraid. Just believe!", and the mission of the Church. District Elder Bouo reminded everyone to place full trust in God, cast out fear from daily lives, and courageously share faith, so that also many souls may come to Christ. To support this mission, the congregation will use the Community magazine and the Catechism in question-and-answer format. With these tools, they are now launching the initiative: "I Love My Church - I Invite Someone!", encouraging all members to proclaim their faith joyfully and confidently.



Apostle Bidjang Désiré visits the sick District Elder Mabvouri (rtd.)

CAMEROON: God it with the Afflicted

Living with a disability, having suffered a stroke, and many other ailing people in the Kribi-Town congregation and the district in general, felt strengthened and reinforced in their faith with the assurance that they are neither alone nor abandoned. Through visits from ministers, some of the afflicted experienced firsthand the truth: "God watches over and cares for all who maintain their trust in Him, even in difficult times."



Holy Communion with a sister suffering of a stroke

EQUATORIAL GUINEA: The Little Flock

Especially in rural areas, many small congregations suffer the death of their members, the exodus of villagers, particularly young people, who seek work in the cities, and, sadly, sometimes the migration of some to other religious groups that promise healing and prosperity. In this situation, regular pastoral care, and especially the visits of the Apostle and priestly ministers, strengthen the faithful so that they remain steadfast in their faith and vibrant in their expectation of the coming of the Bridegroom of our soul, Jesus Christ.



Bidoma - a small congregation with members of great confidence in the Almighty God

GABON: Testifying without Fear

On January 25, the children of the Libreville Sunday School were invited to bear witness to their faith without fear. Apostle Leghanza Alain Serge celebrated a special divine service for the children and their teachers. Drawing on the example of Jesus at the age of 12, he encouraged them to make God the center of their lives and to cling to Him in all circumstances, just as Jesus did (Luke 2:49): "Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" In this way, children too can bear witness without fear by speaking about God, praying at school or at home, and doing good around them.



After the divine service together with Apostle Leghanza Alain Serge and District Elder Gbeza Martin



District Apostle at the altar of our church in Monrovia

LIBERIA:

Visit of the District Apostle

From January 31 to February 2, District Apostle Michael Ehrich visited Liberia, together with District Apostle Helper Martin Rheinberger. On January 31, the District Apostle conducted a divine service for the district ministers in Monrovia, followed by a concert at Monrovia Central Church.

The Sunday service, also at Monrovia Central Church, was transmitted to congregations in Liberia, Ivory Coast, Guinea, and Sierra Leone. One shepherd retired, and for Guinea and Liberia the appointment of ten District Rectors and the assignment of twelve Deputy District Rectors was carried out, strengthening the Church's ministerial body.



District Apostle and Apostles after Lagos meeting

NIGERIA:

A Blessed Farewell

From January 12 to 16, District Apostle Michael Ehrich, accompanied by Apostle Martin Rheinberger, visited Nigeria. The journey included a divine service in Lagos, Surulere – the oldest congregation in Nigeria, founded in the 1970s by Priest Peter Gfeller, later Apostle in Nigeria – and Akwa Ibom State. Details of the divine service in Iko Abia Idem, Ikot Ekpene are reported on the back page. A concert featured various choirs, including a children's choir from an institution caring for "witch-children," which has rescued over 8,000 children. Additional support was pledged to the institution. On Thursday, District Apostle Ehrich met with the Apostles of Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Cameroon, and Nigeria in Lagos.

SIERRA LEONE:

Blessed Encounters with the Chief Apostle

Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider paid visit to Sierra Leone from February 27 to March 1, 2026. This last visit before his planned retirement in June 2026 included a festive choir concert on Saturday afternoon, filling the church with joyful music and heartfelt praise. On Sunday, March 1; the Chief Apostle conducted a blessed Divine Service for the departed in Freetown. The service was broadcast via YouTube to congregations in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea, and the Ivory Coast, uniting the faithful across the region. The Chief Apostle

was accompanied by the District Apostles Michael Ehrich from Southern Germany, and Peter Lambert from South Africa, District Apostle Helpers Patrick M. Mkhwanazi (South Africa) and Martin Rheinberger (Southern Germany), as well as all the Apostles and Bishops from the West and Central African countries under the care of District Apostle Michael Ehrich. The divine service was a joyful and moving occasion, bringing the congregation together in prayer, worship, and remembrance, leaving a lasting impression of blessing and fellowship.



Warm welcome for the Chief Apostle and accompanying District Apostles



The Chief Apostle administers the sacraments for the departed

DISTRICT APOSTLE AREA: The District Apostle in Nigeria

On 14th January 2026, District Apostle Michael Ehrich conducted the divine service at Ikot Abia Idem, Ikot Ekpene in South East Area of Nigeria. He was accompanied by District Apostel Helper Martin Rheinberger. Also present were all the Apostles from Nigeria, Gabon, Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea.

Bible text: "Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand." (Isaiah 41:10)

Core thoughts: In his sermon, District Apostle Michael Ehrich encouraged all to always trust and look up to God in the apostolate irrespective of what we are going through. "Do not fear despite political, economic, and ecological problems engulfing the whole world, just believe," he insisted. He referred to that what the Israelites went through in Babylon and how God kept His promise and brought them out of captivity. His message was very timely, encouraging, and assuring. Called to assist was District Apostle Helper Martin Rheinberger. This festive divine service served as a farewell service by the District Apostle and the introduction of the soon coming new District Apostle. During the divine service, the District Apostle retired 13 District Ministers. He then appointed and assigned 47 new District Ministers for the regional Church in Nigeria.

