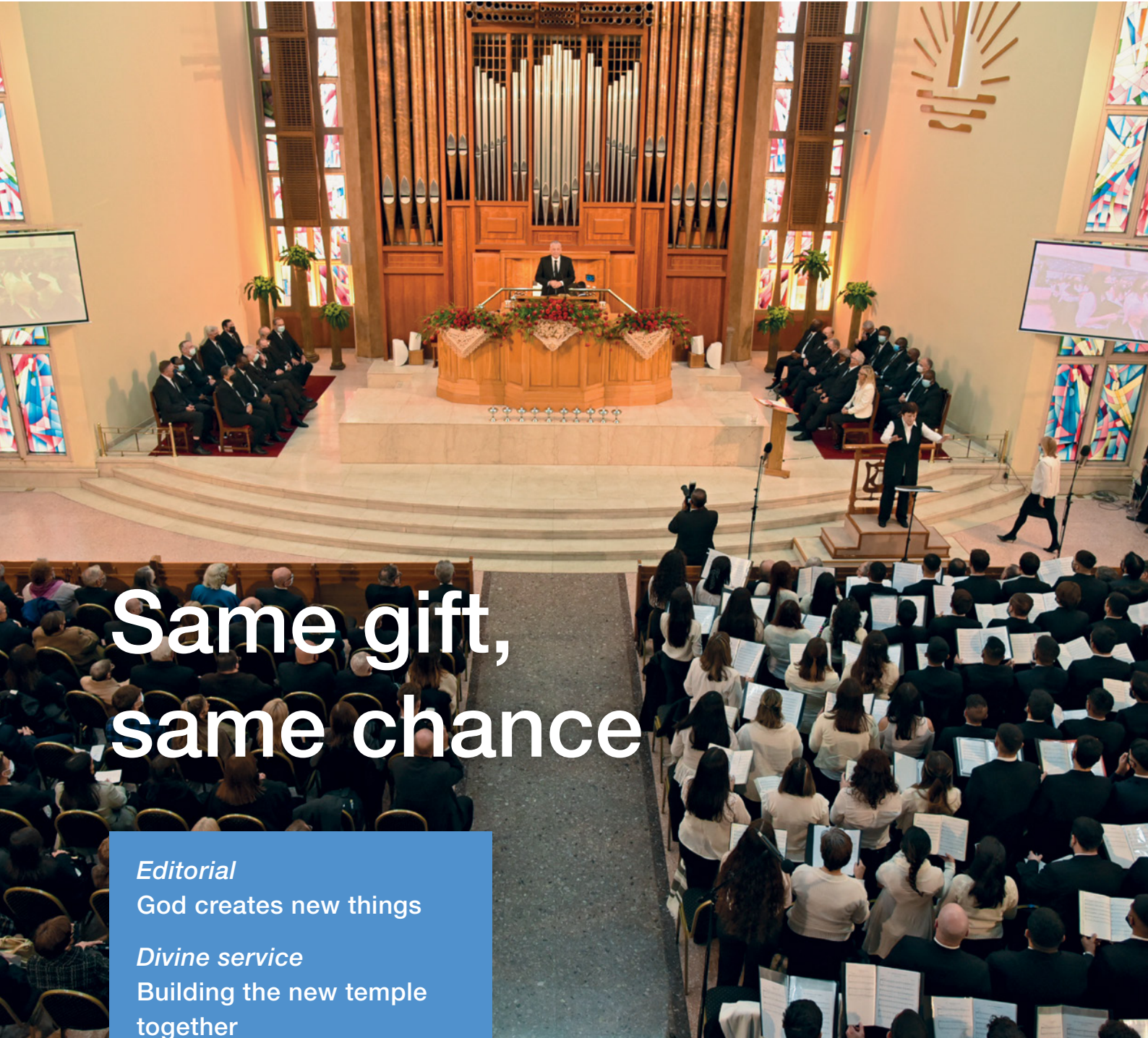


community

The New Apostolic Church around the world

04/2022/EN



Same gift, same chance

Editorial

God creates new things

Divine service

Building the new temple
together

Doctrine

A look at our concept
of ministry

New Apostolic Church
International



■ Editorial

- 3 God creates new things

■ Divine service

- 4 Building the new temple together

■ A visit in Europe

- 10 Faith that lives up to its name

■ A visit in Australia

- 12 The merit of Jesus is our reward

■ A visit in Africa

- 14 Seven ways of looking at the cross

■ Children's corner

- 16 Jesus and the children
- 18 At Amber and Elena's in Mackay (Australia)

■ Doctrine

- 20 A look at our concept of ministry

■ Global news

- 24 Church for and with children
- 26 If you don't look the other way...
- 28 Walking the path together
- 30 What the District Apostles talk about

God creates new things

The Lord creates new things. He also creates new knowledge through the Holy Spirit, and He leads us into the perfect knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Yes, I know that one or the other has trouble with these new insights. For years you believed certain things, it was preached for years, and now everything is different and new.

What is more important now? What you believed, said, preached, or heard for years? Or what comes from the Holy Spirit and brings us closer to Jesus Christ?

Dear brothers and sisters, let us not categorically cling to things only because we heard and believed them for years. The question here is not whether it was right or wrong.

The only question we need to ask ourselves is: does this new thought bring me closer to Jesus Christ? Does it correspond even better to the mind of Jesus Christ?

If it brings me closer to the Lord, then I will walk this path and accept this new knowledge. If it does not correspond to the will of God, then I do not want this new thought.



NAC International

However, if this new knowledge comes from the Holy Spirit it will lead me closer to salvation and blessing, and will bring me even closer to the mind of Jesus Christ. Let us accept it. Brother, sister, allow yourself to be guided.

Heartfelt greetings

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

Jean-Luc Schneider

Building the new temple together

The Pentecost service took place in our central church in Buenos Aires in Argentina



1 Corinthians 3: 16

“Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”

Dear brothers and sisters, we are really grateful and thank our heavenly Father that He answered our prayers and has made it possible that we can celebrate the feast of Pentecost here in your midst. We have been longing for it, and it is just wonderful to actually be able to experience it now. We are also very grateful that all the District Apostles and District Apostle Helpers could join us here. Their presence means something special for me, and maybe for you too. They represent all the children of God, all the New Apostolic Christians worldwide.

Together they are in charge of the Global Church, and through them we can connect in spirit with all the brothers and sisters worldwide.

When I think about the worldwide people of God, it strikes me how different they can be. What is striking is the huge diversity that exists among the people of God. First, they live in different countries. In some countries there is peace and security, but in a number of countries there is high criminality and war. Some countries are very developed, others are much less developed. Some countries are very wealthy, others are very poor. And this impacts the living conditions of our brothers and sisters, which really are very different.

There is also a huge diversity in our Church. In some countries we have millions of members, while in others there are maybe only a dozen. There are children of God who belong to a huge congregation, and there are others who are alone and isolated. And when you look at their personal situation the diversity becomes even bigger. Some are healthy, others have always been sick. There are poor and rich people. Some live very long, while the lifespan of others is very short. Some have plenty of gifts, skills, and potential; while others have much less. There is a huge diversity.

As human beings we cannot explain this. It is useless to even think about it, because one would not find an answer. All we know is that God wants to eliminate this injustice. He wants to lead all human beings into the new creation, where there is no injustice, where all human beings are free from evil, death, and sickness. That is all we know.

On Pentecost we celebrate the outpouring of the Holy Spirit—and that is something great. All children of God who have been reborn out of water and the Spirit have received the same gift: the gift of the Holy Spirit. With it they have received the possibility to be transformed into the image of Christ. They have been given the possibility to enter the kingdom of God as firstlings. And each one who has been reborn out of water and the Spirit has received exactly the same gift of the Holy Spirit. All have exactly the same opportunity, the same chance to enter the kingdom of God as firstlings. The conditions or circumstances one lives in do not matter. Whether one is healthy or not, rich or not, whether one is gifted or not is irrelevant. What does matter is one's willingness to be transformed into the image of Christ. If we are determined to enter the kingdom of God as firstlings, God will provide all we need. Whatever

conditions we may live in, the great comfort of Pentecost is that we have all received the same gift, the same chance. Which congregation you belong to, how old you are, and so on is irrelevant. Let us be determined to enter the kingdom of God and to be transformed into the image of Christ. I tell you, you can do it!

On Pentecost we also celebrate the birthday of the church of Christ. The church of Christ became visible on earth on Pentecost through the assembled believers who were sealed with the Holy Spirit. In our Bible text, Apostle Paul compares the church of Christ with the temple. The church is the temple of the new covenant. Each believer is a stone that has been incorporated into this building by God.

In the Old Testament, the temple was the dwelling place of God on earth. The people of Israel came to the temple to meet God there. They gathered in the temple to encounter God, to praise Him, and to bring their thanks to Him. When they were attacked by their enemies they came together in the temple and pleaded with God for help. They also came to ask God to forgive them. And in order to be forgiven they brought sacrifices. That was the Old Testament.

In the New Testament the church is the temple of God. The church is the assembly of believers who have been baptised and who follow Christ. We come together in the divine service, in the fellowship of the children of God, in order to meet God. And because we know that we meet God in the divine service, we praise His name together and express our gratitude. We do this in our prayers, through music, by bringing our offerings, and by showing kindness to our neighbour. This too is a way to express our gratitude to God: serving one another, being kind to one another. Jesus said: "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me" (Matthew 25: 40). So this is a great way to express our gratitude when we come together in the fellowship of God's children and do something good for one another.

We also gather to ask for God's help. Above all, we ask Him to deliver us from evil. We know that when we come here and ask God for help He will help us! We can come to our heavenly Father and tell Him all our concerns regarding our earthly lives. We trust Him, He is our Father, He knows

*We are called to
contribute with our gifts
and strength and make
sure that the gospel
can be proclaimed also
in the future*



what we need—and He will grant us what we need. And when we pray for each other, He will listen to us.

However, our most important prayer surely is: “Deliver us from the evil one. Lead us into Your kingdom, into freedom.” God will answer this prayer. He is already working on delivering us from the evil one.

We also ask God to forgive our sins. When we join in the Lord’s Prayer, we actually confess our sins and pray together that He will forgive our sins: “Forgive my sins, and forgive my brother and my sister their sins.” God also answers this prayer. And what is so nice about it is that we don’t even have to make any sacrifices to obtain forgiveness. We have Jesus Christ, who brought the sacrifice. He brought it once, and that is enough. His sacrifice is eternally valid for all human beings. So when we come together, we don’t have to bring any sacrifices to obtain forgiveness. When we come together we celebrate the sacrifice of Jesus Christ; and we praise and thank the Lord for His sacrifice. This is what we do when we celebrate Holy Communion. We express our gratitude. The sacrifice has been brought by Jesus Christ. It is still valid. It will always be valid.

This is the meaning behind the statement that the church is the temple of the new covenant. We gather to express our gratitude and to praise God, to pray and to ask Him to help us and our neighbour, and to ask Him to forgive our sins. And we celebrate the sacrifice of Jesus Christ when we come together.

Every believer is a stone that belongs to the temple

The temple had a further significance in the Old Testament. By building a temple Solomon wanted to send out a message. He wanted to make sure that all the Gentiles could see that the Almighty God lived on earth in the midst of His people. The temple was therefore the sign of God’s presence in Israel and thus on earth. The

church of Christ is the temple of the new covenant. The church is therefore also the sign that God is still present on earth and active.

When it says that every believer is a stone belonging to this temple it also signifies that every member of the church is a sign of the presence of God on earth. Or, to be more precise, since it is the church of Jesus Christ, every believer, every Christian, should demonstrate that Jesus Christ is not just a figure in history, but that He is the Living One, that



Holy Communion for the departed was received by the Apostles Gerardo Zanotti and Guillermo Canessa, who were both retired in this divine service

It is nice to hear, “Yes, we are preparing for the return of Christ, we attend the services, we bring our offerings and sacrifices.” However, the question that arises then is always the same: “Have we changed?” Everybody can answer this for themselves. Please, don’t look at your neighbour, look at yourself. I am absolutely honest: I am not happy with my own answer. We have to work on it. There are so many things we should and could change in our thinking, in our way of living. We should trust God a little bit more in certain situations. We could, we should, behave differently towards our neighbour. There is still a lot of work to do.

Let us demonstrate that God is active in His church and in our hearts. Remember, we are determined to be transformed into the image of Christ. God does His part, but we have to do ours.

He is present on earth, and that He is at work. You and I, brothers and sisters, have been called to be a visible sign of the presence and activity of God. We can bear witness that God lives in our hearts. He is not far away in heaven, and we even talk to Him from time to time. He is the Living One and He lives in our hearts! He is always with us.

And because this is the case, because God is with us and lives in our hearts, we want to please God and not human beings. This seems obvious, but it isn’t. When one sees how much energy people put into pleasing others... They do everything just to be like others, to conform to the prevailing opinion, to say exactly what others say just to get a few Likes on social media. They want to be accepted by others. Or, to use the language of the Bible, they want to please human beings. But what about God?

Let us show that God lives in our hearts. If this is the case, it will always be more important for us to please God than to please human beings. We should also demonstrate that God not only lives in our hearts, but that He also works both in the church and in our hearts. This becomes visible through our spiritual development. I know this is nothing new. This has been preached for decades and centuries. But I am wondering, and seriously wondering, how things are in terms of our spiritual development.

Another sign of the presence of God is the unity of God’s people. Jesus Christ prayed for the unity of His people. For Him the unity of the disciples reflected the unity of the Trinity. He wanted His people to be one, as He and His Father are one, and thereby show that the triune God is at work here. The church is the visible sign of the presence of God, which is why we are working on the unity of the people of God. This is one of the greatest signs of God’s presence. Where God is truly present, as the entity of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, there is unity.

We have all been called to contribute to the building of the church, the temple. In a way, we are responsible for the future of this edifice. We are all called to contribute with our gifts and strength and make sure that the gospel can be proclaimed also in the future; that the return of Christ can be announced to the next generations; that the bride of Christ can be prepared in the future; and that the believers can have fellowship with one another and with God in the future. Each baptised person is called to contribute with his or her specific gifts and abilities; we even have different responsibilities. But everyone is needed, and everyone can contribute. Let us serve the Lord together. And let us complement one another with our gifts. This is what is needed until the return of Christ.

Sure, we cannot build this church, this temple, in a human way. If that were the case, everyone would say, “It must be comfortable for me. I want the church to be built in a way that is comfortable for me. I do not want to have to change my opinion. I want to be accepted as I am. I do not want to change my habits.” Imagine a church built this way... It would be a mess. Rather, God says, “You are responsible for building the temple, but according to My plan.” His plan is very precise.

The plan of God is the gospel of Jesus Christ, the doctrine of the Apostles, as written in the Bible. Many people refer to the Bible to reinforce their own opinion. Sometimes I am really astonished that the Bible is used for just about everything. You can always find a word in the Bible that confirms your own opinion. Honestly, if you want to kill somebody, you can find a good reason to do so by reading the Bible. I am exaggerating a little bit, but I think you understand what I mean.

Let us not use the Bible in this manner. Let us rather read it in the light of the Holy Spirit. The apostolate is in charge of interpreting the Bible in the light of the Holy Spirit. And we have all received the gift of the Holy Spirit. Please use this gift, and not your own opinions, when you read and interpret the Bible. When you read the Bible in the light of the Holy Spirit you will be inspired to love God and your neighbour. In this way, reading the Bible becomes very useful because its message is to love God and your neighbour. And remember, it is more important to please God than to please human beings.

Let us contribute to the construction of the temple in this way. Let us put our gifts, our skills, our strength, and our energy together so that the gospel can be proclaimed also in the future, that the return of Christ can be announced, that the bride can be prepared, and the children of God can have fellowship with one another. This temple is not yet finished, of course. It is still under construction. When you look at a building under construction, you can tell that it is unfinished. The visible part of our church, the assembly of the living, is still unfinished, imperfect. Don't get upset about it. This is normal. It is still under construction. It is not the number of imperfections that matter, but how we deal with



The new Apostles Néstor Manzelli, Claudio Videla, and Pablo Basso

them. The church cannot be perfect as long as it is on earth. But with God's help and His guidance through the Holy Spirit we are perfectly capable of dealing with these human imperfections. Again, let us be inspired by the Holy Spirit, for He teaches us how to deal with these imperfections.

On the day of Christ's return, He will take unto Himself that part of the church that is ready for His return. They will not be perfect, but He will make them perfect through His grace and merit. This is the only way we can enter the kingdom of God.

The temple will finally be established in the new creation. Then all people who believed in Jesus Christ and followed Him—all those who were accepted by God—will live in perfect and eternal fellowship with God in the new creation. What grace! We do not need to wait that long. We are waiting for the return of Christ already now. Amen.

Following the contributions of District Apostle Helper Helge Mutschler and District Apostle John Kriel, the Chief Apostle continued as follows:

The power of the Holy Spirit does not depend on age. It works in those who are young as well as in those who have become older. This morning we have another opportunity to experience this power of the Holy Spirit.



of forgiving our neighbour. With the power of the Holy Spirit, we can take this step.

Then we experience the power of the Holy Spirit in the celebration of Holy Communion. Through the power and activity of the Holy Spirit, you can receive not only bread and wine, but the body and blood of Jesus Christ. This is only possible because of the activity and power of the Holy Spirit.

By partaking of Holy Communion, by receiving the body and blood of Christ, our fellowship with Jesus Christ is strengthened. Jesus tells us, “Take and eat, this is My body. See, I love you and I died for you. See, I am here. I am with you. See, I want to lead you into My kingdom and want you to be with Me in eternity. Take it, it is Me.” This strengthens the fellowship with Jesus Christ.

When we prepare ourselves for the forgiveness of sins and the celebration of Holy Communion, we pray together: “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” Since this is a communal prayer, we are not only praying for the forgiveness of our own sins, but we are also asking God to forgive the sins of our neighbour. Thereby we commit ourselves to forgive our neighbour. These are two different things. On the one hand, we ask God for forgiveness, and on the other hand, we also want to forgive our neighbour. I know that in some cases it is extremely difficult to forgive someone who has done something really horrible. This makes people anxious and they wonder, “Will God forgive me if I am not able to forgive?”

Chief Apostle Leber often said: “What is important is that you are at least willing to forgive.” Don’t worry if it takes time until you manage to do so. God will see your efforts to forgive your neighbour.

Then, however, comes the other aspect: we pray and ask God to forgive our neighbour. That is something else. Brother and sister, if you are not yet able to forgive your neighbour, at least take the first step and ask God to do so. Give up on the idea that God should punish him, that God should condemn him. That is a first step. Let us pray: “Please God, I cannot forgive, but you can forgive him.” I am convinced that this is a decisive first step in the process

When we receive the body and blood of Jesus, and thereby His divine nature, we also receive the power to overcome. Let us remember to change. Let us take a step forward in our spiritual development. We receive the power to do so in the celebration of Holy Communion. When we celebrate Holy Communion, we are gathered around Christ and this strengthens our fellowship and unity. We may be very different, but we are together in Christ.

CORE THOUGHTS

The church of Christ is the assembly of believers who have been baptised and who follow Christ. Let us be a visible sign that God is present and working on earth and in our hearts. We are called to contribute to the building of the church. We do this in accordance with God’s plan, in accordance with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Faith that lives up to its name

Sunday, 22 May 2022. Important moments in Berlin: Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider released District Apostle Wolfgang Nadolny into retirement, appointed a new District Apostle, ordained a new Apostle, and amalgamated the Regional Church of Berlin-Brandenburg with the Regional Church of Northern and Eastern Germany.



Jens Lange

District Apostle Nadolny had led the large district for seventeen years: “At such times, emotions arise, perhaps even questions, perhaps even some fears,” said the Chief Apostle in his introductory remarks. “After all,” he went on to say, “we are not simply members of an organisation! Our work is also always a matter of the heart.” But he also had a message of comfort ready to share with the congregation at this point: “The story is not over! God has always been present, and He will continue to be with us in the future. He has always been in our midst, and He will always remain in our midst.”

With reference to the Bible text, Chief Apostle Schneider explained that water is an image for life. Living water also represents salvation, eternal life, and fellowship with God. And the thirst of the soul describes the state of deficiency that the soul experiences when it is at a distance from God. “But here Jesus Christ is using the image of water for some-

thing else—here He is talking about the Holy Spirit.” Belief in Jesus Christ is a prerequisite for receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Faith produces works

However, belief in Jesus Christ is not only a prerequisite for receiving the Holy Spirit, but also for allowing the salvific effect of the sacraments to fully develop. This applies to every sacrament. “Where belief in Jesus Christ is no longer strong enough, the activity and effect of the Holy Spirit can no longer be felt as intensively when He comforts, purifies, strengthens, and encourages.”

But what exactly constitutes this faith? First of all, Holy Scripture states that faith in Jesus Christ consists of not doubting things which cannot be seen. The Chief Apostle: “People have always had problems with this—including



District Elder Thomas Krack is ordained as an Apostle

The effect of this bond with Jesus Christ is that living water—in other words, salvation—will stream forth from us: then there will be no deficiency. “Whether there is Covid or not, whether there is war or not, whether we are rich or poor, whether we are part of a larger or smaller congregation, the effect and activity of the Holy Spirit can be experienced here and there and everywhere!”

The Holy Spirit causes us to testify!

This not only applies to the believer himself, noted the Chief Apostle. After all, the Holy Spirit is a Spirit of testimony: He bears witness of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is the source of this testimony, and wherever He becomes active, there is also testimony of Jesus Christ. In this way, believers can also become a blessing to their surroundings. There are still a great many people who thirst and who feel a lack of love. “There are a great many people who have no peace, no confidence. They are afraid of the future. This is a thirst of the soul. And that is where we can help with our faith.”

those who live in our time. But we must believe and not doubt that which we cannot see.” Modern man is no longer capable of dealing with the discrepancy between the sermon and reality: “They have doubts about the things they do not see and the things they do not understand. People are no longer capable of believing because that which they see and perceive does not conform to that which is told to them by God.”

Faith has real implications

The Catechism defines faith in yet another way, he said: faith is an unconditional bond with Jesus Christ, an inner drive to live one’s life in accordance with the commandments of Christ. It is thus not simply a matter of not doubting that which one cannot see, but rather a matter of this unconditional bond with Jesus Christ. “The Holy Spirit is still there. The gift of the Holy Spirit is still present within us. But it can no longer properly develop because our faith has become weak.” For this reason, said the Chief Apostle, the question is: “What can we do about this?”

“We must concentrate on those things that promote faith!” As an example, he mentioned the words of Paul from the epistle to the Romans: “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10: 17). It is also by partaking in Holy Communion that our bond with Jesus Christ is repeatedly reinforced. “If we deliberately and enduringly fail to attend the services and refrain from partaking in Holy Communion, there is a risk that our faith will decrease and that we will no longer experience the full effect of the Holy Spirit,” said the Chief Apostle.

CORE THOUGHTS

John 7: 38–39

“He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’ But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”

Faith in Jesus Christ is essential to be saved. Faith means to be convinced of the truth of His teaching, to commit oneself to Him, and to be determined to listen to Him. Faith is nourished through preaching and the Lord’s Supper. Through the Spirit we can help others.



NAC Sydney

The merit of Jesus is our reward

The Bible talks about reward, but none of us can do anything to earn this reward. So how does this fit together? It's actually very simple: the merit is Jesus' alone. And He shares out the reward to those who follow Him. Here are thoughts from a divine service by the Chief Apostle.

Finally, after eight years, Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider was able to be in Australia again. On 1 May 2022 he conducted a divine service in Sydney.

A complicated Bible text...

Taken literally, the Bible text could lead one to believe that the faithful will be rewarded for their good behaviour and that they will receive what they deserve. "And we are all convinced that we deserve the best," the Chief Apostle said. But the reward, he said, is eternal life and perfect fellowship with God. And who of us could say that they deserve eternal life? "The only one who deserves eternal life and fellowship with God is Jesus Christ, because He was the only one without sin. No one else deserves

eternal life. No one deserves salvation. So you see, it's quite a complicated word."

...explained in a simple way

In attempting to explain the biblical statement, the Chief Apostle said: "Let me propose a solution: it is not our reward, but His reward." Through grace believers can share in this reward. Jesus wants to share the reward. He committed no sin. "He wants to share this merit, and we can share in His merit by obtaining grace." He put on the resurrection body: "We will get the same body, and we will be transformed into His image." God gave Jesus all authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28: 18). "With this authority He will complete His work of redemption and lead us into



The retired District Apostle Andersen and his wife, Margaret, receive a blessing on their golden wedding



The Chief Apostle called on District Apostles Edy Isnugroho from Indonesia (left) and John Kriel from South Africa (right) to assist

“Now we can understand this Bible text a little bit better,” the Chief Apostle said after his explanations. He went on to summarise his thoughts as follows: “He will come with His merit, and if we are faithful, if we love Him, He is ready to forgive us everything and we can have grace.” This “if” is not intended as a threat, he said. “It is fantastic,” the Chief Apostle said, “a fantastic promise of our Lord Jesus. Don’t worry, I will come and you will share in My reward, My wages. Not what you deserve, but what I deserved. I will share this with you. But do the work of God, remain faithful, love one another, be one, and be steadfast until the end. Behold, I am coming quickly.”

the new creation.” God also gave Him authority to execute judgement (John 5: 27). “Every human being will be judged according to His word and according to Jesus Christ.”

Not a threat, but a promise

“To receive the reward and to benefit from it, we have to do God’s work. The work is not just a number of deeds, of good deeds, we have done; the work is the work of our lifetime.” In order to be able to share in Jesus’ reward, we have to

- believe in Jesus Christ,
- love God and the neighbour,
- become more like Jesus,
- act like a member of the body of Christ, and
- be steadfast and watchful until Jesus returns.

CORE THOUGHTS

Revelation 22: 12

“And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.”

Christ will come to share with us the merit He earned. To participate in this, we must prove our faith and love, model ourselves on His example, be a true member on the body of Christ, and persevere until His return.



Seven ways of looking at the cross

NAC Accra

Recognising that you need help and knowing who can help is a good start to solving a problem—and even more so the basis for eternal redemption. Yet there are even more useful ways of looking up to the cross.

The context: Jesus was speaking about His death on the cross and referred to an incident during the Israelites' journey through the wilderness. The people had rebelled against God, who had sent poisonous snakes among the people. When the Israelites saw that those who had been bitten died, they realised the gravity of their fault. To save themselves they had to look up to the brazen serpent that Moses had erected.

Profound: the bite of the snake

“God wanted them to trust Him,” explained Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider. “This is the example Jesus used to explain: you have to believe in Me to be saved.”

The venomous snakes are an image for sin. Man's fall into sin caused his separation from God. And each individual sin keeps us from perfect fellowship with God. To be freed from original sin and to obtain the forgiveness of sin we need to look up to Jesus Christ, the crucified Lord.

Redemptive: looking up

The Chief Apostle cited seven different ways believers can look up to Christ on the cross.

Understanding that we need help: “First, we need to become aware that we need salvation. We have to feel the need and have the will to be saved. Not everybody agrees with that. They do not really feel the need to be saved. But our wish is to enter the kingdom of God, not just to be wealthy on earth and have a few nice years here.”

Knowing who the Saviour is: “Who can save us? There is only one: Jesus Christ. We believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God who came on earth. We believe that He was the only man who committed no sin whatsoever. We believe that Jesus Christ died for us and that He rose from the dead. We believe that He was the first man to enter the kingdom of God clothed with the resurrection body. We believe that He will come back to take us with Him into His kingdom.”

Accepting His authority: “You know what it means to look up to someone: you have to acknowledge and accept their authority. We know that no one else can do what He did. Our Lord is Jesus Christ. We do not worship other gods in any form. His word is always the truth. He decides which way we should go. He has authority over our whole life in all its aspects: the public and the private spheres, the visible part and the invisible.”



Chief Apostle
Jean-Luc Schneider



District Apostle Helper
Patrick Mkhwanazi



District Apostle
Tshitshi Tshisekedi

Building up a personal relationship: “Everyone had to look up to this brazen serpent themselves. Our salvation depends on our personal relationship with Jesus Christ. No one can believe for us; we have to believe. No one can trust for us; we have to trust in Him. No one can obey for us; we must be obedient. Our relationship to God should not depend on the thoughts, opinions, or behaviour of somebody else. We should not allow ourselves to be influenced by the way they behave, speak, or act. It is a personal relationship.”

Following our model: “Looking up to Jesus on the cross also means following His example, emulating Him. Jesus believed in His Father and trusted in Him until the end. People really treated Him horribly. But He remained Himself and forgave them. He loved them until the end. Even while He Himself was suffering He helped the man on the cross beside Him. He made sure that His mother was taken care of. He trusted in God until the end and He loved mankind and God until the end.”

Accepting the helper: “In Christian tradition, Mary is the image of the church. On the cross, Christ entrusted His church to Apostle John. He entrusted His church to the care of the apostolate. He wants to save us through the activity of the apostolate. Through the apostolate we can be reborn out of water and the Spirit. Through the apostolate we can receive Holy Communion, the food we need to grow into eternal life. Through the apostolate we can be prepared for the return of Christ.”

Keeping our future in mind: “Remember that the victory only became visible after the resurrection. Look up to Jesus

and remember: the salvation of the believers is not yet visible today. In the worst case, it looks like a defeat. However, if you trust in Jesus until the end, you will experience the first resurrection and your victory, the victory of Christ, will then definitely be visible.”

“So trust in Jesus and be patient,” the Chief Apostle said in conclusion. “Jesus Christ is our Saviour. He will save us.”

CORE THOUGHTS

John 3: 14–15

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”

We know that we need a Saviour and that only Christ can save us. We submit to His authority and follow His example without allowing ourselves to be influenced by others. The Apostles prepare us for the return of Christ, which will reveal to us the greatness of His salvation.

JESUS AND THE CHILDREN

ACCORDING TO MATTHEW 18: 1-5

One day people brought little children to Jesus so He could bless them.

The disciples tried to keep the children away from Jesus. They thought that He might feel bothered by them. They had no idea how much Jesus loved children.

Jesus saw that the disciples wanted to send the children away. He told them, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

Then He placed His hands on them and blessed them.

Another time the disciples came to Jesus and wanted to know who the greatest is in the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus called a little child to Him, and placed it among



them. He said, "Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

Then Jesus said: "Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me. But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me

to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven. My Father in heaven does not want any of these little ones to perish."



AT AMBER AND ELENA'S IN MACKAY (AUSTRALIA)

G'day, how are you? This is how we say hello in Australia. Our names are Elena and Amber. We are both six years old, are cousins, and were born here in Australia. Our mothers are sisters. They migrated from Germany to

Australia with their families 15 years ago.

This is a picture of us with our **siblings**: the two of us are at the back; in front of us are Christina, who is four, Nathan, who is three, and two-year old Jack.



Australia is famous for its great wildlife. This is a picture of us with a **kangaroo** and with koalas. Many people think that **koalas** are bears, but they are marsupials. And they don't smell as cute as they look.



We live by the **ocean** and love that we can build **sand castles** and fly kites even in winter. It is nice and warm even in winter. Besides, there is so much to discover here: crabs, small fish, shells, corals. A few weeks ago we even saw a ray! In winter you can watch humpback whales from the shore; that's amazing.



Our congregation in Mackay consists of about 60 members. This is a photo of us Sunday School children with **District Apostle** Peter Schulte, who comes from our congregation.



The **weather** is usually very beautiful here, which is why we can always do a lot outside on our **Sunday School outings**.

We like to eat Australian sausages or **meat pies**. We also love German cuisine. The Swabian spaetzle and pretzels that our grandparents make are really delicious.

This is a photo with all of our cousins and our **grandparents**.





Björn Henz

A look at our concept of ministry

“The New Apostolic understanding of the spiritual ministry”: this is the title of a 32-page doctrinal text that the ministers recently received. Here are excerpts of the most important points for all those who are interested.

Ministry and service are part of the life of the church. Without them the church cannot fulfil its mission, namely to bear witness to Christ in a credible manner. “A spiritual ministry constitutes authorisation, blessing, and sanctification issued through ordination for service in the church of Christ. It is exercised in the power of the Holy Spirit” (Catechism of the New Apostolic Church, CNAC 7.1). “In the church of Christ, ministry is to be distinguished from the various duties which serve for the proclamation of the gospel and the benefit of the believers, and which can also be performed without ordination” (CNAC 7.1). So there is no need to be ordained in order to take on a task or function in the congregation or the church. “It is also important to distinguish ministry from the call that has gone out to all believers, namely to serve the Lord by following Him” (CNAC 7.1). This universal priesthood of believers is manifested through following Christ in word and deed.

The two natures

As Christians of all denominations believe and profess, Jesus Christ has two natures, and is thus true man and true God (CNAC 3.4). If Jesus’ person and deed are to constitute the standard for the church and all that is associated with it, then it is only logical that the doctrines of the church and of the sacraments must be closely related to the doctrine of the dual nature of Christ.

Concerning the church, we read: “In its nature, the church of Christ reflects the dual nature of Jesus Christ. His divine nature is concealed or invisible, whereas His human nature is visible or manifest.” This means: “Likewise, the church of Christ has a concealed—or invisible—and a visible—or manifest—side. Like the divine nature of Jesus Christ, the concealed side of the church is ultimately indescribable. Its

presence, however, can be perceived in the salvific effects of the sacraments and in the word of God. ... The revealed side of the church of Christ, like the man Jesus, shares in the general history of mankind. In contrast to Him, however, the human beings at work within the church are subject to sin. Hence the errors, aberrations, and lapses inherent in mankind are also to be found in the church” (CNAC 6.3).

The doctrine of the dual nature of Jesus Christ is also of decisive importance for our understanding of ministry. This will be illustrated on the basis of the definitions regarding ministry and person.

Ministry and person

In the New Testament, Paul is an outstanding example of the fact that person and ministry—private life and public activity—comprise a single entity. The Apostle can speak about the unity between person and ministry because he is filled with faith in Christ, follows Christ—not least of all in the sense of sharing in the latter’s suffering—and is loyal to the gospel.

The Fifth Article of Faith states that God is the one who designates an individual for a ministry. “Thus the ministry is not a human work, nor is it ultimately that of the congregation. Rather it is God’s gift to His church. The human being, as expressed in the Fifth Article of Faith, bears his ministry on the basis of divine will and not human decision” (CNAC 2.4.5). The yes of the elected individual to his election occurs when the person accepts this divine election and endeavours to live up to its demands with all his being. The good abilities and characteristics that this person possesses are placed into the service of ministerial exercise through the act of ordination. At the same time, it becomes evident that ordination is not associated with the imparting of new talents.

When it speaks of the Apostles as “fellow workers for your joy” (2 Corinthians 1: 24) or as “examples to the church”, section 7.6.3 in the CNAC refers to the ministry’s frame of reference, namely the church. Affinity—in other words, love—for the congregation can only succeed when both the ministry and the person, the exercise of ministry and lifestyle, are consistent, in that both are oriented to Jesus Christ.

A dissoluble unity

The ministry and the person—like man and God in Jesus Christ, or the visible and invisible church, or the bread and wine with the body and blood of Christ—comprise a single

entity. However, this entity is not perfect, but is rather vulnerable and fragile owing to the sinfulness of the person. Although the ministry is received by the person, and although it is the person who is responsible for its proper exercise, the ministry is nevertheless always oriented to the congregation and has its place there.

The act of ordination is likewise a reference to the doctrine of the dual nature of Christ: the divine nature of the eternal Word entered into a bond with the human nature through His conception by the Holy Spirit. In the ordination, the ministry—which is holy, and is imparted by the power of the Holy Spirit—enters into a bond with a sinful human being.

The ministry is not transferred to the possession of the person, nor does it leave an indelible mark on the person, but is and remains a gift of Christ, which Jesus Christ controls, and which He can grant or deny. The possibility of separating or detaching the ministry from the person is a logical consequence of the non-sacramental understanding of ordination in our Church.

Aspects of ministry

The ministry is received through ordination—that is, through the imparting of authority, blessing, and sanctification. For the minister, the ministry has its [source in Jesus Christ](#), and is imparted to him through the ordination performed by an Apostle, which is—just to stress once again—not a sacrament. Through the Holy Spirit, the person receives something that is fundamentally external to his own potential and abilities.

Like the church as a whole, the minister is dependent on the presence of the [Holy Spirit](#), and must pray for the activity of the latter in his exercise of ministry. The Holy Spirit not only enables the minister to rise to the demands of his mission, but is also active in his exercise of ministry, no matter whether it relates to the sacraments, preaching, or pastoral care.

The spiritual ministry is, on the one hand, a [service to God](#), and on the other hand, a [service upon human beings](#). In this respect, the exercise of ministry is oriented to the dual commandment of love. Service to God and service to one’s neighbour belong together. Service to God is comprised of bringing praise and glory to God, and of proclaiming God’s great deeds. On the one hand, service to one’s neighbour consists of pastoral care and support for the members of the congregation, but on the other hand, also of the endeavour to show this same care and support to all people.

Ministry and authority

The Greek word for authority—*exousia*—has various meanings in the New Testament. It denotes the authority with which Jesus teaches, forgives sins, and performs miracles, but also refers to the authority imparted to the disciples to exorcise demons, the authority to impart the gift of the Holy Spirit through laying on of hands, as well as apostolic authority in general.

The authority of the disciples—so the New Testament texts allow us to conclude—is directly dependent on Jesus, just as His authority is directly dependent on the Father. The ministries that Jesus holds—namely Priest, King, and Prophet—are expressions of the authority that has its foundation in God and is brought to expression in the categories of the ministry. Jesus is the emissary who has been equipped by God with the corresponding powers.

The apostolate thus participates in the authority awarded by Jesus Christ. The powers of the other ministries are derived from the authority of the apostolate.

How the ministries emerged

The starting point of ministry and church were the disciples who followed Jesus wherever He went and who occasionally testified of His sending by God in both word and deed. It was from among these disciples that Jesus chose the twelve Apostles. It was only through the activity of the Holy Spirit starting on Pentecost that they emerged with apostolic power and authority.

The New Testament does not develop any doctrine of ministry. The early Christian congregations did not have any generally binding or structured ministerial order. At first, only the Apostles were active in the congregation of Jerusalem, but soon they began choosing helpers to take care of the poor and see to the diaconal service in the congregation. The Pauline texts provide references to a further development of the ministry. More important and more decisive for the New Testament congregation were the presbyters (Elders) and bishops (Bishops), both of which were designations for congregational leaders.

The development of the ministerial order over time

A closer look at the development over the last hundred years makes it clear that the Church repeatedly abandoned certain ministries or instituted new ones over time. The essential element of the apostolic movement throughout the ages was the ministry of the Apostle.

Up until the early decades of the twentieth century the notion persisted to some degree even in the New Apostolic Church that a fourfold ministry—consisting of Apostles, prophets, Evangelists, and pastors—was a necessary part of the church. The letter to the Ephesians does not establish any general or ever-valid ministerial order. On the basis of these findings, the doctrine of the fourfold ministry was recognised as untenable.

The ministerial order outlined in the Catechism of the New Apostolic Church (2012) derives from the progressively diminishing ministerial order that began to develop in the time of Chief Apostle Bischoff. Over the course of time, ministries such as Prophet and Community Elder were either discontinued or no longer occupied. This was also the case with the ministry of Sub-deacon.

The ministries of Evangelist, Shepherd, District Evangelist, and District Elder are no longer occupied. Those who have been ordained to these ministries will continue to serve in these ministries and can also be addressed with the corresponding ministerial designation. The District Apostle and Bishop ministries are no longer occupied either. However, the designation of District Apostle continues to be used, namely in reference to an Apostle who has the mandate of leading a Regional Church. The designation Bishop also remains in use, and serves to describe that priestly minister who functions as an assistant to the Apostle.

Ministerial authority and ministerial mandate

A ministry comprises both ministerial authority and a ministerial mandate. The ministerial authority is of a theological nature, while the ministerial mandate is of a canonical nature.

Ministerial authority constitutes the right to act and speak in the name of the triune God, which is founded upon Jesus Christ and issued through the Apostle by way of ordination in the power of the Holy Spirit. Ministerial authority is issued through ordination. It ends when the Apostle accepts the resignation of the minister, the minister is relieved of his ministry, or at the time of the minister's death.

In the **ministerial mandate** the minister is assigned the right and responsibility to fulfil his tasks in the ministerial authority he has received, within a framework that is limited in terms of both duration and location. The ministerial mandate ends when the minister moves outside the area for which his mandate applies, when he retires, after the Apostle accepts his resignation, when the minister is relieved of his ministry, or dies.

Ordination, appointment, and assignment

In the ministerial order now in effect, the three levels of ministry emerge more clearly than ever before. Spiritual authority, which is part of a ministry, is now more clearly distinguished from the tasks that need to be fulfilled in a church organisation.

Ordination is the investiture of a spiritual ministry. It is performed in the name of the triune God by the Apostle through laying on of hands and prayer. In the ordination, the minister receives authority, sanctification, and blessing.

Upon ordination, the **Deacon** receives the authority to properly proclaim the word of God and to dispense the Trinitarian blessing. Above and beyond the powers already received, ordination to the **Priest** ministry confers the authority to proclaim forgiveness of sins, to dispense the sacraments of Holy Baptism with water and Holy Communion, and to perform acts of blessing. Above and beyond the powers already received, ordination to the **Apostle** ministry confers the authority to dispense the sacrament of Holy Sealing and to ordain ministers.

The selection of ministers to be ordained takes into account that the competencies required for the fulfilment of services associated with the respective ministry are already present in them.

The fact that the Chief Apostle is ordained represents a special case, because even the Chief Apostle is a bearer of the Apostle ministry. This is the case because, in his exercise of the office of Peter and the administration of the authority of the keys associated with it, the Chief Apostle takes on the leadership of the church as a whole.

An **appointment** is the allocation of a service associated with a spiritual ministry, which involves a leadership function within the Regional Church, district, or the congregation. In the appointment, the minister receives sanctification and blessing. The appointment is not bound to the duration of one's ministerial activity, but ends along with it.

An **assignment** is the allocation of a spiritual service to ministers or non-ministers. The blessing of God is requested for the fulfilment of these services. Ministers can be assigned in order to support other ministers who exercise a leadership function.



Photo: Marcel Felde

Publisher: Jean-Luc Schneider, Überlandstrasse 243,
8051 Zürich/Switzerland
Verlag Friedrich Bischoff GmbH, Frankfurter Str. 233,
63263 Neu-Isenburg/Germany
Editor: Simon Heiniger

After the children's service in Algrange in France in May everyone posed for this picture



NAC France

Children in Barcelona in Spain planted ornamental and edible plants in the church garden in April this year



NAC Barcelona

Church for and with children

The greatest wealth of a congregation is its children. This is a treasure that should be cherished and fostered—whether in special services for children or singing together or planting a garden. Here are some inspiring ideas to imitate.

A divine service for children and their teachers took place in the district of Algrange in France on 27 May. The topic of the service was “The good Shepherd”, and the officiant based the service on John 10: 14–15: “I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.” It was an interactive service and he developed the focal points together with the children. For example, he asked, how we can follow Jesus. “By speaking with Him and keeping His commandments,” was the answer from the children.

Even in times of virtual divine services, the New Apostolic Church Canada made sure that its Sunday School and Pre-Sunday School children were well taken care of. Before a divine service, they could go to the Church’s website and click through until they found the activity page for that specific service, which they could fill out or colour in during the service. This made it easier for the children to ask their parents, Priests, or Sunday School teachers after the service what they may not have understood and to talk to them about what particularly touched them.

Music overcomes borders

There were 9,400 kilometres between them, but even so they were very close when they sang together. Two children’s choirs, one from Wiesbaden in Germany and one from Cape Town in South Africa, met on Zoom at the beginning of April. The children talked to each other in a mix of English and German and sang songs together. One child from Germany said, “It was great to be able to sing with children from South Africa.” The South African children not only learned a little bit of German, but also the Cup Song, in which the cup game is used as the song’s percussion. The South Africans in turn taught the German children the traditional Cape Town song, which turned out to be a real earworm. “It was cool to be online in Africa,” one of the German children said at the end of the joint rehearsal.

To finally be able to make music again together following the pandemic, the Committee Pastoral Care for Children of the New Apostolic Church Western Germany developed a plan to promote singing and music-making with children.



NAC Cape Town



Children of the Woodlands congregation in Cape Town launch their planting project “My little garden”

The name of the initiative is “Music with Children. How to go about it after Covid?” Choir directors, as well as anyone who enjoys making music with children, can register on the online training portal of the New Apostolic Church Western Germany. During the training, participants will be made familiar with the teacher’s folder for the German children’s songbook *Stimmt mit ein*, will learn voice training stories, and how to make instruments themselves and then incorporate them. Music is an important aspect of religious education, supports personality development, and promotes fellowship.

Children bring spring to the church garden

Marigolds, daisies, spices, cherry tomatoes, strawberries, and even a tangerine tree... The church garden of the congregation in Barcelona, Spain, is bright and beautiful. In April, the Sunday School children and their teachers met to spruce up the garden and welcome spring. The children went to work with great excitement and paid attention to their teachers’ instructions. To make sure that the garden will continue to bloom so beautifully for a long time, the children were divided into teams to take turns in caring for and watering the plants.

The children of the Woodlands congregation in Durban, South Africa, have already got an ahead start for this year’s Thanksgiving Day. They thought it would be a good idea to launch their planting project “My little garden” early. On a sunny day in April, the Sunday School teachers set up raised garden beds in front of the church, and the children planted the seeds. After the service, the adults marvelled at the beds of onions, broccoli, cauliflower, and many other vegetables to be. There was not much to see yet, of course,

but the children had created little flags and labelled them, indicating what they could eventually harvest.

Entering adulthood

Thirty-eight young brothers and sisters took their confirmation vow on 1 May 2022 at Kumasi Central Congregation and received a blessing from Lead Apostle Samuel Oppong-Brenya. The divine service was based on Hebrews 13: 15–16: “Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.” The Apostle said that the best sacrifice, one that is pleasing to the Lord, is doing good to our neighbour. “Let your good deeds be evident so that others can see you as their saviour.”



NAC Ghana

The confirmands in Kumasi Central in Ghana

If you don't look the other way...

...you see so many situations in which people need help. No matter if many or only a few look more closely, the help is gratefully accepted: in Ukraine, in Sierra Leone, and in the Philippines.



NAC Sierra Leone

Apostle Sanpha Sesay confirms that the water in Bumbuna is good

In Sierra Leone, a tropical and humid country, there is also a dry season in winter, in which rains are scarce and in which the country struggles to provide clean and safe water for the people. It is a blessing to have a well that stores water from the rainy season. That is why the people in Bumbuna were so happy when Apostle Sanpha Sesay came for a visit and commissioned a newly constructed well which had been funded by donations. This was reported by the New Apostolic Church Sierra Leone on its website.

Help for Ukraine

Since the outbreak of the war in Ukraine there have been numerous relief efforts. Also the New Apostolic Church is doing its share. At the beginning, for example, many private individuals quickly organised much needed relief supplies and brought them there and brought people back with them to safety. Congregations too were quick to respond.

The Dutch relief organisation of the New Apostolic Church, Stichting Corantijn, reached out too. When an employee

of the Swiss river cruise company Skylla AG approached them to ask whether they could provide toiletries, among other things, for Ukrainian refugees who were being accommodated on board one of its cruise ships docked in Düsseldorf (Germany), the charity did not hesitate. The company made one its ships available on 14 March to house refugees. Up to 100 people can be accommodated on the ship. The company then appealed to private individuals and other companies, including Stichting Corantijn, for hygiene items, toiletries, diapers, and medical supplies.

The New Apostolic Church in Langen in Germany was unrecognisable. For three days, the members from several congregations and a municipal church organisation collected donations in kind for the refugee camps that had sprung up on the Polish-Ukrainian border. They sorted the items, packed them into boxes, labelled them in several languages, and then stored them in the church. Before long, not only the ad-

Our church in the German town of Langen is packed with relief supplies



Marcel Felde, Reinhold Rust



A van full of donations for Ukraine

Helpers in Plauen sort through the donations and repack them



NAC Plauen

joining rooms were full, but also the church hall was overflowing with boxes of donations. In the end, it took several trucks to bring clothing, hygiene products, baby food, other food, children's toys, and much more to the border.

When, after an ecumenical prayer for peace, the leader of a Christian organisation in Plauen (Germany) asked the participants for help and donate to a Christian refugee home in Balti in Moldova—which is situated close to the Ukrainian border—the members of the New Apostolic congregation in the town also started to collect aid. Within a few days they had gathered clothing, toiletries, essentials for babies, toys, and food, put everything in boxes, labelled them, and then brought them to the collection point. So many donations had been received that the vans had to make two trips to Moldova, 1,800 kilometres each. The rector of the New Apostolic Church in Plauen was also on board both times. The relief organisation of the New Apostolic Church of Southern Germany, human aktiv e.V. supported the transport financially. The best thanks for all the efforts was to see

the happy faces of the children, who immediately started playing with the footballs.

Helping fisherfolk restart

The people affected by natural disasters such as Typhoon Odette in the Philippines must not be forgotten. Last month, the New Apostolic charity NAC SEA Relief stepped up its efforts to help fishing communities that had been left with little to no livelihoods or food sources after Odette had crashed through the islands in December 2021. The help that the survivors usually receive is short-lived: food, water, clothing, and shelter materials, but nothing to rebuild their livelihoods. That is why NAC SEA Relief has donated marine engines and cash assistance to repair fishing boats and help fishermen in rebuilding their lives so they can go back to the only source of income they know: fishing.

Filipino fishermen are all smiles over the new engines for their fishing boats. They can finally start rebuilding their livelihood



NAC SEA Relief

Jessica Krämer



Walking the path together

It began with positive steps towards one another that developed into a common path forward. Much has happened since the ecumenical work of the New Apostolic Church started 22 years ago. One of the initiators who has done a lot of work in this area has now stepped down.

It was a sunny Thursday afternoon on which the members of the Working Group Contacts with Denominations and Religions (WG CDR) and delegates of the Council of Christian Churches in Germany met to bid the outgoing chairman of the WG CDR a heartfelt farewell. He welcomed the guests with a beaming smile, either with an elbow bump or a heartfelt embrace. Apostle (ret.) Volker Kühnle was in his element.

Ecumenism is not a magic wand

After a musical introduction by a small string ensemble and a Bible reading by the chairman of the Council of Christian Churches, Dr Verena Hammes, Bishop Peter Johanning greeted the guests. He spoke about the change that is visible everywhere—also in the Churches. Change is not always positive, he said. “Ecumenism is not a magic wand,” Bishop



Verena Hammes, Bishop Peter Johanning, Apostle Volker Kühnle, Pastor Albrecht Haizmann, Pastor Reinhard Hempelmann



Representatives of the Council of Christian Churches in Germany

another. Even the renowned religious scholar, Professor Dr Helmut Obst, a recognised expert of the apostolic scene in Europe, agreed: “The New Apostolic Church has become theologically fit for ecumenical circles.”

Apostle (ret.) Volker Kühnle summarised the subsequent developments with the words: “The positive steps towards one another developed into a truly common path forward!” The outgoing chairman ended his talk by expressing his thanks once again.

Johanning admits, “but at least it is an encounter across denominational borders. And we need this connection with one another.” In closing, he said, “If there were a prize for ecumenism within the New Apostolic Church, Volker Kühnle would have won it long ago.”

Time to say goodbye

This was the title of his presentation. In the programme it was introduced with the following words: “22 years WG CDR in 22 minutes”. Apostle Volker Kühnle began his talk with words of thanks and then tried to summarise his time in the Working Group Contacts with Denominations and Religions in 22 minutes. It all began in the year 1999, also on a Thursday. The project group Ecumenism was founded by then Chief Apostle Richard Fehr. Its mandate was to find out to what extent the essential doctrinal statements of the New Apostolic Church are compatible with those of the ecumenical movement. The challenge was to determine the essential doctrinal statements in the first place, and this at a time when there was irritation within the Church and external prejudice. But he remembered the good things: “We consider it a special gift of God that we encountered critical but predominantly benevolent dialogue partners.”

With the publication of the Catechism in 2012, certain prejudices had become obsolete. In many places in Germany, and also in other parts of the world, Apostle Kühnle’s active work made the membership in the Council of Christian Churches a reality—it was a series of genuine positive steps towards one

Fellowship instead of separation

Then District Apostle Rüdiger Krause stepped onto the small stage and, after a short speech, handed over the chairmanship of the Working Group Contacts with Denominations and Religions to Bishop Jürgen Kramer.

After the string quartet’s performance of the “Palladio”, two further speeches followed by the pastors Dr Albrecht Haizmann (head of the Baden-Württemberg branch of the Council of Christian Churches in Germany) and Dr Reinhard Hempelman (who chaired the EKD Institute for Research on Religious and Ideological Issues in Berlin for 20 years). Grateful, the latter said: “Bridge-building is usually not a short-term project, but a long-term project. For 22 years you have been building bridges to other Churches.” And Dr Haizmann expressed His gratitude to God and said: “That fellowship was able to develop from what was previously separation and aloofness is absolutely great!” Afterwards, the participants enjoyed this fellowship over some refreshments.



The Working Group Contacts with Denominations and Religions with their new chairman, Bishop Jürgen Kramer (centre)

The District Apostles met in Buenos Aires two years later than planned



NAC South America, Peter Johanning

What the District Apostles talk about

The last International District Apostle Meeting in Buenos Aires ended two years later than planned. The agenda included a wide variety of topics. Here is an overview.

In fact, the conference had been planned in the Argentinian capital already for Pentecost 2020. However, as we all had to learn, the Covid pandemic made such trips and meetings impossible right into the first half of the following year. The District Apostles could only meet again for the first time in November 2021 in Zurich.

The Church leaders followed up on the subjects that were tabled at that meeting and continued their deliberations on the subject of the ordination of women. They followed the

roadmap outlined by Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider in his annual interview in 2021. What does God say? What does the Bible say? What does our Church say? What is the situation in the individual countries? "As we looked into this subject, we realised just how broad and deep it is. It will not do to give it a simple yes or no," the Chief Apostle had emphasised before already. "We are giving ourselves time for these consultations and will—as soon as all decisions have been made—publish a paper as was done in 2019 with our revised concept of ministry."

One Bible, but many versions

The question of a trusted Bible translation with a more modern vocabulary had been raised in the circle of the English-speaking Regional Churches. The New King James Version (NKJV) is used in English-speaking countries, having replaced the classic King James Version (KJV) in 2001. However, also this revision is characterised by traditional language.

The result of professional analysis of various translations is that there is no one-size-fits-all solution. The NKJV will continue to be the authority for the doctrine and liturgy in the New Apostolic Church. Outside of the official framework, the study and use of other translations is welcomed.

Basically, the same applies for all countries. In addition to the official Bible translation for doctrine and liturgy, comparisons with more modern Bible translations are possible; the District Apostles will make recommendations in this regard.

Religious Instruction classes

During their meeting, the District Apostles were also informed about the progress being made on the teaching materials for children: now that an extensive range of materials for Sunday School children—including printed materials, a web portal, and apps for mobile devices—is available, a short version is in the pipeline. This is aimed

at countries, especially in Africa, where infrastructure does not allow for the full version to be supplied to every child. In the meantime, work has started on material for Religious Instruction, intended for older children.

The subject of religious instruction in general is a priority for Chief Apostle Schneider. “Instruct the ministers, and establish Sunday School for children in all congregations,” the Chief Apostle had said when issuing this agenda at the meeting of all African Apostles on Pentecost 2015 in Zambia. “I am aware that this is demanding, but I also believe that with God nothing is impossible!”

Sharing responsibility

And then there was that special historic moment: Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider asked the District Apostles to vote by secret ballot on a Board of Directors. This board will be responsible for advising and assisting the Chief Apostle by mandate in the financial matters of the Global Church. The District Apostles gave their votes to District Apostles Mark Woll (Canada), Michael Ehrich (Southern Germany), Joseph Opemba Ekhuya (East Africa), and Apostle Robert Worship (Southern Africa).

“I am very grateful for this step,” he confessed after the vote. He said that it had been a concern of his for some time to share his leadership of the Church particularly in financial matters, which are linked to his ordination as Chief Apostle, with an elected board of directors.



The District Apostles met in Buenos Aires over Pentecost for their semi-annual conference



Coming up

- 2 Oct. 2022 Evreux (France)
- 13 Oct. 2022 Taguihon (Philippines)
- 15 Oct. 2022 General Santos (Philippines)
- 16 Oct. 2022 Tupi (Philippines)
- 23 Oct. 2022 Limburg (Netherlands)
- 30 Oct. 2022 Kiel (Germany)
- 6 Nov. 2022 Indiana (USA)
- 13 Nov. 2022 Nuremberg (Germany)
- 20 Nov. 2022 Winterthur (Switzerland)
- 27 Nov. 2022 Moldova (Moldova)
- 1 Dec. 2022 Bloemfontein (South Africa)
- 4 Dec. 2022 Cape Town (South Africa)
- 11 Dec. 2022 Wiesbaden (Germany)
- 28 Dec. 2022 Amnéville (France)
- 25 Dec. 2022 to be determined (France)

New Apostolic Church
International

