

community

The New Apostolic Church around the world

03/2020EN

Just have
courage!

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Let us trust in God

Divine service

The Lord does great things
for us!

Doctrine

Following the precepts
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New Apostolic Church
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Let us trust in God

Dear brothers and sisters,

In distressing situations that leave us with problems that seem almost impossible to resolve we call for a strong God. “Lord, help!” is how prayers are formulated in such uncertain times.

There is a very fitting Bible text that I am thinking of: “The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace,” it says in Exodus 14: 14. At the time, there was talk of the detour which the Israelites were to take through the wilderness: ahead of them were almost insurmountable obstacles, behind them was the Egyptian army deployed by an angry Pharaoh. The people panicked and cried out to God. Moses told them: “Trust in God! Hold your peace. If He is on our side nothing will happen to us.” In the story we learn that God intervened in an unexpected and very effective way to save His people.

Sometimes we too might be confronted with difficult situations. Then the Holy Spirit tells us not to panic or maybe even blame God for our misery. Instead, He reminds us that God will deliver us soon and redeem us in an unprecedented way by sending His Son in order to take us unto Himself. Together with His Apostles Jesus will make sure that His bride is being prepared and is ready for His



NAC International

return. Let us therefore remain calm, trust in God, and prepare for the great moment of our rapture by praying for it.

Often we also experience good times in which everything is fine. Let us then come before God and praise and worship Him, for we know that all the good is an expression of His grace. We enjoy the happiness that God grants us. And while we enjoy the good moments in our life, let us not forget to prepare and pray for the return of Christ and always remember that God wants to give us something that is even far more beautiful: eternal fellowship with Him!

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

Jean-Luc Schneider

The Lord does great things for us!

On his trip to South-East Asia at the end of October 2019, the Chief Apostle celebrated three divine services and presided over several meetings. On 27 October 2019 he joined the members in Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia for a divine service



NAC South-East Asia



Psalm 126: 3–4

“The Lord has done great things for us, and we are glad. Bring back our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the South.”

My dear brothers and sisters, I am very thankful to our heavenly Father that I can be with you today. It helps me recognise how rich I am when I think about all the believing brothers and sisters I have here in Malaysia.

This day gives me the opportunity to express my gratitude and respect to all of you. I have great respect for the way you live your faith even under circumstances that can sometimes be difficult. I have great respect for your service, your offerings, and your love for the Lord. This is not just some polite platitude. I really mean what I say. For me it is always beautiful to meet with my brothers and sisters because I always learn a great deal from them. Thank you for being the way you are!

Now we have heard a passage from the 125th psalm, which is considered one of the more familiar psalms in the Bible, despite the fact that it is translated in various different ways. In the English and French translations it is quite apparent

that the psalmist is talking about the time when the Jews were liberated from captivity in Babylon, while the German text talks more about the future. However, the content is really much the same: these words refer to the period of exile. The Jewish people lived in exile for many years until God again granted them liberty and made it possible for them to return to Jerusalem.

At first only a small number returned to Jerusalem. Naturally, the people were happy and praised God, who had done such great things upon them and had delivered them from their enemies. Even others, the neighbouring nations, recognised this. And even they said: “The Lord has done great things for them” (Psalm 126: 2). That is the story.

But now let us look at ourselves and our time. We too have reason to say, “The Lord has done great things upon us!” He has done great things upon us through Jesus Christ. The Son of God left the glory of heaven and came to the earth. He took it upon Himself to become a human being and to live as a man among men. He conquered death. No one else was able to do this. And in so doing, He has liberated us from the evil one. This is an incomparable victory! No one else could have gained this victory. He was the only one in a position to do so. He attained the victory over the evil one

for us. He did not need to do this for Himself. He did so for us. He sacrificed His life for us—the greatest proof of love anyone could ever envision. Jesus said: “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. You are My friends” (John 15: 13–14).

*In every divine service
He does great things
upon us: He forgives us
our sins*

“The Lord has done great things for us!” He has established His church and sent His Apostles—a great work for all human beings. When we now look at ourselves here in this part of the world, we can say, He has seen to it that the Christian faith was also able to gain a foothold here on this continent. You surely know this better than I do. These are some

of the great things He has done! He has seen to it that this faith has been preserved over the centuries to this very day. To me that is a miracle! God has done great things upon us, so that we can be Christians today in this country. Later on He even sent Apostles to this country, and thus it has become possible for us to receive the childhood in God and become New Apostolic Christians. The Lord has done great things upon us. Just think about all of the things He has already done for us in our lives. How often has He already helped us in our daily lives! How often have we been able to say: “The Lord has done this! He has intervened in my life and has solved my problems!” Indeed, the Lord has done great things upon us.





He has granted us His life in the rebirth out of water and Spirit. What a great miracle!

In every divine service He does great things upon us. He forgives us our sins. No human being is in a position to do this. He erases our guilt. No human being can do this. Only He has the power to do so. Only He can say: “Your guilt is erased. It no longer exists.” He does great things upon us.

He changes us. He shapes us into the image of Jesus Christ. That is a true miracle of divine transformation! We poor sinners, imperfect human beings, are being shaped into the image of Jesus Christ one step at a time. God does great things upon us, and He does so in a magnificent way. He could make use of His might and power to do so, but He does not do this. He works in love and in patience. He is bringing about such a powerful transformation in our souls—and He does this using only His love, His grace, and His patience. And He wants to do great things with us. He wants to hold the marriage in heaven with us. He wants to have eternal fellowship with us. He wants to establish His kingdom of peace on earth with us. After all, He desires to grant salvation to all human beings, both here on this earth and in the beyond. Together with us, the royal priesthood, He wants to redeem humanity.

Just look at all the great things He does for us, upon us, and with us! The reason all of this is so great is because we would not be capable of any of these things on our own. Only God can do such things—great things that lie beyond our imagination, and also beyond all our expectations. We cannot even imagine what He will give us. How we will rejoice then! This is all so great because we have not earned it. None of us can earn any of this for ourselves.

*Think about all the things
He is doing for you right now,
and all the things that He
will yet do upon you! Let us
remain grateful*

No one is capable of describing all the things God does upon us and has already done. And that is a problem for mankind today. We are occupied with so many things today that there is a risk we might not notice all of these great things that God does upon us.

Allow me to express it this way: the devil keeps us so busy that we do not even think about all the great things that God does upon us. We have so many other things to think about, so many matters to take care of, so much to share with others, so much to read ...

I think you understand what I mean. This is a danger! We sometimes forget what God has done for us, and as a consequence, we have no more joy. We even begin to complain, and then we are no longer happy—and soon we become like the people of Israel.

In Egypt, the Israelites were enslaved, and God liberated them from this slavery. He parted the sea and thereby led them to freedom. This sounds unbelievable, but it is the truth.

It only took a few days for them to forget everything God had done for them and begin complaining bitterly: “The



water is bitter! In Egypt we had enough to eat, but here there is nothing!" Only a few days had passed since they had been liberated from slavery and already they were complaining.

Now please don't say: "Oh, the people of Israel ... How impossible they were." After all, we do exactly the same thing! Stop complaining! Just remember all the great things the Lord has done upon you! Think about all the things He is doing for you right now, and all the things that He will yet do upon you! Let us remain grateful, and let us remain joyful!

In the psalm it states that even the other nations will say, "The Lord has done great things for them!" (Psalm 126: 2).

What do our neighbours say about us? Do they say: "The Lord has done great things for them"? I think this is something we tend to hear rather seldom. More often we hear completely different voices: "Where is your God now?" That is a song we have heard again and again over the course of history. Remember Jesus when He was on the cross. That is exactly what He heard too: "He saved others, Himself He cannot save. Let the Christ, the King of Israel, descend from the cross, that we may see and believe" (Mark 15: 31–32). And they mocked Him. But after He had died, one Roman captain standing nearby said, "Truly this Man was the Son of God!" (Mark 15: 39). This man saw how Jesus died. He

saw how Jesus reacted, and heard the words He spoke. This brought him to the conclusion: "This man was the Son of God, after all!"

Brothers and sisters, often enough we hear the reproach, be it openly or implied: "Well, where is your God now?" Do not allow yourselves to be impressed or discouraged by this. Just remember the great things that the Lord has done for you, and still does for you, and remain faithful!

We all have our trials and difficulties. And then people say, "Where is God now? You are suffering and He does not help. You are going through difficult times, so where is your God?" You do not need to respond to that. Remain faithful, trust in God, and keep the peace in your hearts. When people see that we do not give up, and that we trust in God nevertheless, that we have joy in our hearts and do not allow anything to rob us of our faith, that we say, "My Father will provide for me. I will rely on Him!" then they will at some point likewise have to conclude: "God must have done great things for them! Just look at them: despite everything that they have experienced, they have remained true in faith, and even in their sufferings they have kept peace in their souls!"

This is not a theory. This is something we can experience in practice. It is not that seldom for us to hear: "It is actually impossible to be so composed and confident when one is



District Apostle Helper David Devaraj
(India)



District Apostle Peter Schulte
(Australia/Western Pacific)

in such circumstances. God must have done something special for them.” Let us continue to have trust and confidence in trials, for we know that God has done great things for us and will continue to do so.

We serve God to the best of our ability. We even bring sacrifices. And here too we hear the same kind of thing from time to time: “Where is your God now? Is that the reward for all your work, for all your sacrifices? It was all for nothing. And you will get nothing in return. You have wasted your strength!”

Just let them talk, and do not allow yourself to be discouraged. We do not even need to respond to the question: where is your God? All we need to do is remain faithful. We continue to serve God nevertheless. After all, we are not expecting a reward anyway. Nor do we bring our offerings and sacrifices in order to become rich. We serve God out of love. We bring our sacrifices out of gratitude for that which He has given us.

I have no reason to stop serving or offering. I love Him because He first loved me. No matter what happens, I will always have reason to serve God and to faithfully bring Him my offerings.

“The Lord has done great things for them”—because they are still motivated to serve Him and bring offerings to Him.

People also see our congregations and notice—just as we do too, by the way, because we do not close our eyes to this—that things happen there that should actually never happen. We are all imperfect human beings, after all, and

such occurrences are the result of that reality. And once again, you hear these voices that ask: “Where is God? Just look at how those people behave! And they call themselves children of God?! I mean, it is even worse there than in other places—and then they have the nerve to say that Christ is present among them! Ridiculous!”

Let them talk. We remain faithful. We forgive one another, and we remain connected to God. With the power that we receive from Jesus Christ, and with the help of His grace, we can put aside these differences, forgive one another, reconcile with one another, and overcome all difficulties that could arise in a congregation. After a certain time people will then have to remark: “There is something special about this fellowship. If it were anywhere else, this would have led to an explosion. Everything would have fallen apart. But they stick together. They forgive one another. That is very unusual!”

Dear brothers and sisters, we cannot prevent people from saying: “Well, where is your God?” but because we have experienced the great things that God has done for us, we remain faithful and trust Him even in difficult circumstances. We remain steadfast and say: “We serve the Lord because He loves us and we love Him. No matter what happens, we forgive one another and remain one in Christ. That is the sign that the Lord is with us.”

Our Bible text goes on to say, “Bring back our captivity [that is, those still in captivity], O Lord, as the streams in the South.” The Jews who had returned to Jerusalem from Babylon had not forgotten that a number of their own had remained behind, and they wanted God to make it possible



for them to make the same experience of what He had done for them.

We are aware of the fact that God has done great things for us. And it is also our wish that He may do great things for others. We do not have the attitude: “We have been redeemed, we have been blessed because we deserve it!” We want all souls—whether here or in the beyond—to receive the same thing we have been given.

This Sunday we will celebrate the divine service for the departed. We pray for the souls in the beyond: “Lord, do great things for them, just as You have done for us. Let them likewise experience how great You are!”

In other translations of this verse it states: “O Lord, change our fate”—and this translation also applies.

When the Jews arrived in Jerusalem, they were glad to be back in their homeland, but they were also well aware that there was much to do, and that they still had great challenges ahead of them. Hence the twofold plea: “Bring the others back, and change our fate!” That is also our plea.

We are aware of the great deeds that God has done for us, but we also know that we have not yet been completely redeemed. For this reason we pray, “Lord, send us Your Son! Redeem us! Change our fate! Let us be permitted to enter your kingdom.” This is and remains our goal.

Dear brethren, let us not miss out on praying for the return of Jesus Christ! Certainly, we can also turn to our heavenly Father in prayer with all our other concerns and wishes too,

but our greatest wish is to be with the Lord for all eternity! That should be the foremost plea in our daily prayers.

Here in our Bible text it says, “... as the streams in the South.” This is a reference to the climate in Israel. There it is hot and dry, and in the desert regions there is no water whatsoever. But when it rains, it only takes a few hours for streams and rivers to come into being where there were none before. And it is to this phenomenon that the text alludes: where there was only desert before—in other words, where there was absolutely nothing—there are now streams, and life comes into being.

This is a beautiful image for the return of Christ. One might say, “We see nothing beforehand”, but within the shortest possible amount of time, in a single moment, God will change all of this. At present we see nothing but a congregation of human weaknesses, a congregation of sinners. But then the Lord will come, and all of a sudden the bride of Christ will be revealed and we will see the glory of the church of Christ. That is a great miracle that God will accomplish in our midst. But right now this still appears completely impossible.

When I am together with children, I am often asked: “Chief Apostle, how will it be when the Lord Jesus returns?” And I must tell them, “I don’t know. That is not something I can explain to you, but I trust in God. Nothing is impossible for Him. No one can explain this. No one can comprehend it. But He will do it! And He has decided that I am to be part of this—as will you! We are all to be there when this great event occurs.”

God has done great things for us, and He will do great things for all those who remain true to the end—and that is us!

CORE THOUGHTS

We praise God for His great deeds. We testify of these by showing trust in trials, serving God tirelessly, and persisting in brotherly love. We ask God to grant our neighbour the same benefits we have received, and to lead us into His glory.



Frank Schuidt

Get up and speak about faith, love, and hope

A story with three different meanings: a signal to the world, a comfort for many, and an exhortation to the whole church. Following is the Chief Apostle's analysis of the story of the widow of Nain during a service in Meinerzhagen in Germany on 16 February 2020.

The Bible passage that this divine service was based on tells the story of a widow whose son had died. She was destitute and probably even blamed for her own misfortune. Jesus stopped the funeral procession, spoke with the mother, and raised the young man from the dead.

The symbolic act of the Saviour

"The story is a symbol," Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider explained. "Jesus wanted to show: human beings have been condemned to spiritual death because of sin but I come as the Saviour to offer eternal life and resurrection."

Consolation from the compassionate Helper

"Naturally, this also underscores God's love and care," the Chief Apostle said. "Jesus Christ can empathise with us because He went through everything that human beings have to go through."

When He tells the widow, "Do not weep!" it means for all believers: "I know you are hurting. But don't stop there. Think about what I want to give you and will give you: I want to lead you into eternal life."



The choir from the district of Hagen saw to the music in the service in the Meinzerhagen City Hall. Thousands of New Apostolic Christians participated in the divine service live by satellite, over the Internet or telephone



When Jesus tells the young man, “Arise!” He also wants to tell the people of today: “Don’t just lie there. Don’t let yourself be held back by sorrow, by distress, and by suffering. Continue on the path that leads to the goal!”

congregations, in our ranks, let us talk about our faith and comfort and strengthen one another. This is not about preaching with a microphone behind the altar, but about conversations in the congregation. Let faith, hope, and love come to expression.”

The exhortation to the church of Christ

“Now, this story can also be interpreted differently,” the Chief Apostle said. For in the Christian tradition the church, the congregation, the fellowship of the believers is often compared to a mother.

“Here and there one gets the impression that the Christian church here in Europe is in the process of a funeral procession,” he remarked. “And now Jesus Christ comes and tells us: ‘Wait a minute! Have you forgotten that I am here? I am here, I live, and I want you to live also!’”

Comfort and strengthen one another

“Don’t weep, do not think only of what has gone lost,” is the exhortation. “Don’t forget the most important thing that is happening in the church: Jesus is in the process of creating a new man in order to bring him into the new creation.”

And: “Rise! Stay firm in your faith. Don’t allow yourself to be knocked down.” For such difficulties have already been announced in the Bible. “There will be no triumphant church as long as we are on earth. The Bible speaks of a church that suffers and struggles.”

“The son of the widow got up and began to speak,” the Chief Apostle continued. What does that tell us? In our

CORE THOUGHTS

Luke 7: 13–15

“When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, ‘Do not weep.’ Then He came and touched the open coffin, and those who carried him stood still. And He said, ‘Young man, I say to you, arise.’ So he who was dead sat up and began to speak. And He presented him to his mother.”

Jesus Christ appeared among mankind and sacrificed His life in order to save man from spiritual death. He cares and provides for the suffering. Let us exhort one another in trials and temptation by giving expression to our faith, love, and hope.



NAC Haiti

Doing good: from sowing to harvesting

Deep down everybody wants to do good. Unfortunately, we fail more often than not. Let's not give up though! In the end, our efforts will have been worthwhile. Here is a how-to guide from a divine service by the Chief Apostle in Léogâne in Haiti last year in June.

Sowing

Doing good? What exactly does that mean? The Chief Apostle listed five principles.

Keeping the commandments: sometimes we are practically tempted to not keep the commandments, for example, when we see how people lie and cheat and then still have success. "Remember Joseph. He remained faithful to His God. God blessed him in the end. And he was able to be a source of blessing for his brothers."

Acting out of love for God: we must keep the commandments also when no one is watching us, because the point is not to please other people but to please God. "And if we do good it is to prove to God that we love Him."

Working on our salvation: God began His good work in us by giving us the gift of the Holy Spirit. Now it is up to us to nourish this life through prayer and the word of God. Sometimes we might get the impression that the sermons are really always the same. It helps to concentrate on individual aspects and make a conscious effort to act



accordingly. “Every week you will discover a new task for the next week.”

Giving love without expecting anything in return: doing good means loving our neighbour and doing good things for him even if we receive nothing in return. “We love our neighbour not because we want him to love us, but because God’s love has been laid into us, and because it is God’s nature to love.”

Serving God irrespective of whether we are successful or not: God looks at the effort and not at the results that are achieved. “Remember the parable of the talents. The only one who was punished was the one who had done nothing.”

Harvesting

Those who do not tire of doing good will reap in due course, the Chief Apostle made clear.

- Those who love God can be sure that they will receive what they need for the salvation of their soul.
- Those who accept the word and put it into practice will reap one day, and far more than they ever expected. However, the spiritual process takes time, and God keeps time differently than we humans do.
- Already today God offers us His joy and His peace.
- Often we only realise in hindsight that God’s help came at just the right time.
- The return of the Lord will neither be too soon nor too late. “He will come just in time.”

“Don’t become weary of doing good,” the Chief Apostle appealed in conclusion. “Because it is God Himself who promises you: ‘You will never regret it.’”



During his three-day stay on the island of Hispaniola, the Chief Apostle met with the Apostles and Bishops and conducted services in Santo Domingo and Léogâne

CORE THOUGHTS

Galatians 6: 9

“And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.”

Doing good means taking direction from the will of God and the example set by Jesus Christ. God blesses those who do not tire of doing good, and soon He will permit them to enter into His glorious kingdom.

After the service in Walvis Bay the Chief Apostle boarded a flight for East London in South Africa, where he attended a concert and conducted a further divine service on Sunday



NAC Namibia



Earn nothing and receive everything

What do you mean: God is righteous, when things go so well for some and so terribly for others? Where some are elected and others are not? How does it all fit together? The answer was given in a service in Walvis Bay in Namibia on Friday, 13 December 2019: there is grace for all.

“I know many, many people who would not agree with that,” said Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider as he explained a frequent reaction: “Look at the different conditions of life all around the world! How can you say that God is righteous? If God existed, He would not permit this.”

“Yes, we suffer from injustice, but evil was not created by God,” came the answer. “He created man with the freedom of choice, and sadly enough, man made the wrong decision and thus came under the domination of the evil one.”

One way for all

But God is gracious. He promised to send a Saviour, who would free mankind from the reign of evil. “He is righteous

because He sent Jesus Christ to save all mankind. That is the righteousness of God: Christ died for all mankind, for each and every human being.”

This is the great plan of God: He wants to lead all human beings into His kingdom. For this He has established one way—and only this one: we must believe in Jesus Christ and follow Him. “This too is a sign of His righteousness: it is exactly the same way for all human beings.”

Looking into the hearts

Those who follow this path will continue to experience the righteousness of God, explained the Chief Apostle. “No one will be excluded from salvation. God will make sure—on



The service in Walvis Bay took place at the Indoor Sports Complex and was attended by about 1,700 brothers and sisters

of Jesus Himself. He made this very clear.” But even if God expects more, “Don’t forget, whatever happens in your life, God is fair. He will provide you with everything you need to fulfil His will and to answer His call.”

In the end, all will receive the same

In the end, God will give all human beings who believe in Jesus the same reward, namely eternal glory in His kingdom. But isn’t that unfair, considering that some have done more than others? “No!” said Chief Apostle

Schneider clearly. “Don’t forget that we are justified by grace, not by our merits. He gives all of us the same grace. “We have earned nothing, but we receive everything.”

His conclusion: “God wants to liberate all human beings from the evil one. Jesus Christ has died for all human beings, and will grant eternal life to all those who believe in Him. God has elected us in order to serve, and He will also make it possible for us to do so. Redemption far exceeds anything that we could ever earn.”

earth today and in the kingdom of peace in the future—that every human being has the opportunity to recognise Christ and to decide for Him.”

Whether a person truly believes in Christ is something that God not only measures by his or her words and deeds, however. “This is because whatever you are able to do and achieve depends on your nature, on the gifts you have received, but also on the place where you live, on your own story, on your condition of life.” That is why God searches the heart of each and every human being.

“God is a judge—a righteous judge—but a judge nonetheless,” emphasised the Chief Apostle. In the end, God will only accept those who believe in Jesus Christ and follow Him.

Elected to serve

“We are baptised with water and the Spirit, and we believe in our election,” the Chief Apostle said. But how does the idea of being a firstling fit together with the idea of righteousness for all? The answer lies in the reason for our election: it is not because of any personal merits, but rather in order to serve God—already today and in the kingdom of peace.

Being numbered among the firstfruits therefore is more of an obligation than a special preference: “To whom much is given, much will also be expected. These are the words

CORE THOUGHTS

Psalm 145: 17

“The Lord is righteous in all His ways, gracious in all His works.”

God would like to liberate all people from evil. Jesus Christ died for all and will give all who believe in Him eternal life. God has elected us to serve Him and helps us to do so. Salvation is far more than we could ever earn ourselves.

PHILIP AND THE TREASURER FROM ETHIOPIA

ACCORDING TO ACTS 8: 26–40

Philip was one of seven deacons appointed to look after the Greek-speaking widows. But the church in Jerusalem was persecuted and everyone was scattered. Philip went to Samaria. There he told the people the good news about Jesus, the Christ.

One day an angel came to Philip and told him: “Get ready and go south along the road that leads from Jerusalem to Gaza.”

Philip got ready and went.

Before long he saw a carriage approaching in the distance.

The man sitting on the carriage

had come from far away. He

was from Ethiopia, where he

held a high position at the royal

court. He was in charge of the

Ethiopian queen’s money. The

treasurer had been on a pilgrim-

age to Jerusalem and was now

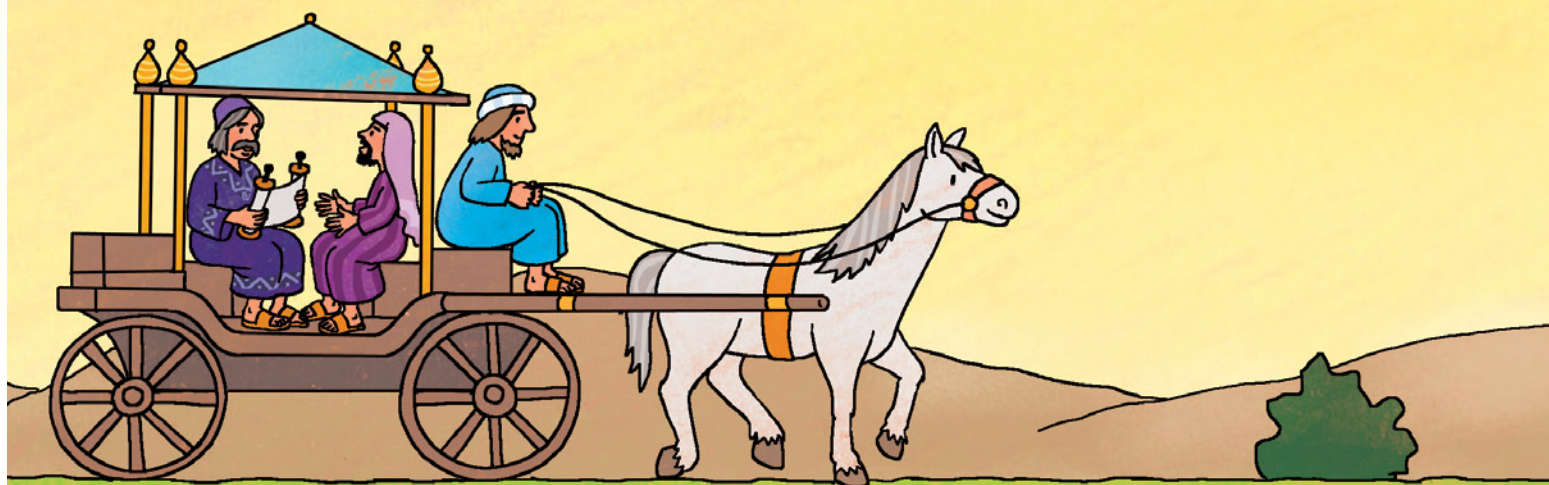
on his way home. He was sitting

in his carriage reading aloud

from a scroll.

The Holy Spirit urged Philip

to approach the carriage.



Philip went and heard that the man was reading from the prophet Isaiah.

Philip asked him: "Do you understand what you are reading?"

The treasurer replied: "How can I without someone to guide me?" He invited Philip to get in and sit beside him.

Then Philip explained to him that Jesus was the man Isaiah was speaking about. He told him about Jesus and all that He had done for the people. The treasurer was intrigued.

As they rode along, they came to some water. The treasurer said: "Look! Here is water. What is stopping me from being baptised?"

He had the carriage stopped and both stepped into the water. Philip baptised the treasurer.

When they came out of the water, Philip disappeared. The Holy Spirit had taken him away. The official continued on his way, full of joy.



AT ANYA'S FROM ST PETERSBURG (RUSSIA)

Hello, my name is Anya! I am 14 years old.

Meet my **family**: my father's name is Alexander, my mama's is Oxana, and then there is my younger brother, Artyom. He is three-and-a-half years old. Also part of the family are my grandmothers Olga and Sofia, and my grandfather. His name is Sergey and he is an Apostle.



We live in the most beautiful city of the world, **St Petersburg**. It was named after the biblical Apostle Peter. Our city is often called the northernmost metropolis in the world. It is criss-crossed by many waterways and canals.

I go to a school for children with special needs. I love **school** and am excited about it every day. We are taught in many subjects: Russian, literature, mathematics, geography, and even computers. We also have a subject called craft education. There we are taught to sew with a sewing machine. I have become quite good at it. Last year I made a nightgown and a cooking apron. Everybody in our class sticks together. After school I go for activities at the rehab centre. I do sports there and I have lessons in which I can train my fine motor skills.



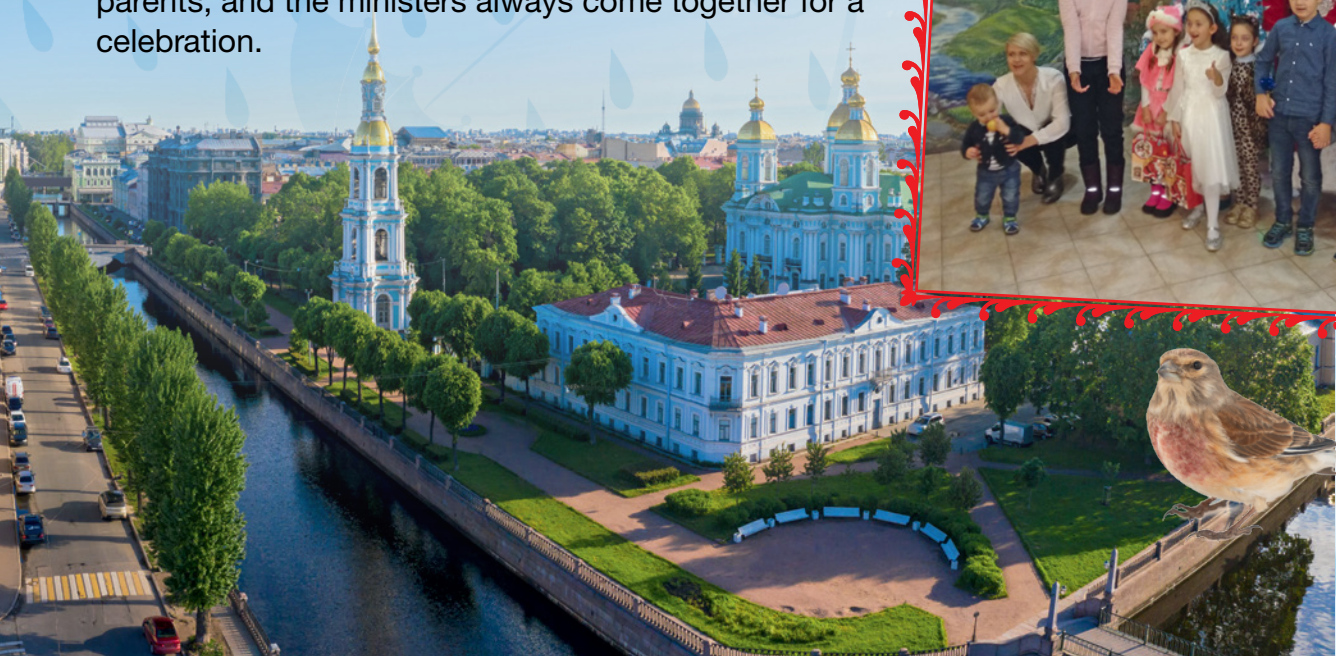
I like animals, but especially **birds**. I love to watch them and to feed them. We also have a pet, our cat Mussya. She is very quiet and has been with us for ten years. We are all fond of her.

In summer my whole family goes **fishing**.

And sometimes we take our **bikes** out for a ride in Pavlovsk Park. We love to cycle around the city and have a picnic along the way.

A while ago I was able to attend a very special divine service: Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider was in our church. He was accompanied by Apostles from Germany and Switzerland. The atmosphere in our church was very special. A **picture** was taken afterwards. You can see Grandma, Grandpa, the Chief Apostle, District Apostle Wolfgang Nadolny, me, and my mama.

I go to **Sunday School** and I really like it there. Shortly before New Year, the Sunday School students, the parents, and the ministers always come together for a celebration.





Oliver Rütten

Following the precepts of Scripture

Preaching, pastoral care, and leadership tasks: all three are based on the testimony of Scripture. This is how the Chief Apostle explains it, using the example of the apostolate. What the Bible says ... and what it does not say.

At the time of their ordination, God imparts to the Apostles the ministerial authority inherent in their ministry so that they can fulfil their apostolic ministry. The authority of their ministry allows Apostles to help with the salvation of mankind by acting in the name of, and in the commission of, Jesus Christ, their Sender. When they ordain other ministers, the Apostles entrust them with a portion of their ministerial authority.

Preaching on the basis of the Bible

The apostolic ministry is also to proclaim the gospel (Romans 1: 1). The early Apostles proclaimed what they had seen and heard about Jesus (1 John 1: 1). Paul testified of his encounter with the Risen One and also taught that which he had seen and heard about Jesus (Acts 22: 14–15).

The preaching of the Apostles of today is based on Scripture, especially the New Testament. In order to emphasise the primacy of the gospel with respect to the Mosaic Law, Paul contrasts the Spirit with the letter (2 Corinthians 3: 6). However, it would be totally inappropriate to conclude from this verse that an Apostle could ever place himself above the Bible on the basis of his ministerial authority. The preaching of the Apostles and all other ministers must always be consistent with the Bible!

In their capacity as stewards of the mysteries of God (1 Corinthians 4: 1), the Apostles of today have the commission and capacity to interpret the Bible with the help of the Holy Spirit. Guided by the Spirit, the apostolate clearly stresses the importance of the Bible for today's believers and, with authority, teaches them how to put the gospel into practice (Matthew 28: 20).

By applying the biblical text to the present in order to make it applicable for our time, the preaching of the Apostles strengthens the faith of the members, reinforces their trust in God, and deepens their knowledge (regarding salvation in the beyond, for example).

Rules regarding interpretation

I believe it is essential to remember some rules which must be respected when we interpret a biblical text.

- Jesus Christ demonstrated that the Old Testament had announced His coming and work (John 5: 39; Luke 24: 27). The Apostles are required to interpret the Old Testament based on Jesus Christ, the Son of God. From the perspective of our faith, the content of the Old Testament writings is only relevant insofar as it conforms to the gospel as it is conveyed to us in the New Testament (CNAC 1.2.5.2).
- Each biblical passage must be read in view of its context. Its interpretation must always be consistent with the overall message of the gospel.
- Miracles and parables of Jesus should not be interpreted beyond the significance that the Lord gave them. In Luke 17, the Lord speaks of two people who are in the same situation, one being accepted, the other not. From this we cannot draw any conclusions on the percentage of those who will be saved. In the parable of the minas (Luke 19), the fact that one of the servants has authority over ten cities and the other over five does not mean that the nature of the salvation that God grants us is dependent on the measure of our work.
- One must never forget that any translation of the Bible results from an interpretation of the original text. Terms such as “ministry”, “service”, or “church” were translated

very differently, depending on the language and the theological conceptions of the translators. Only by taking into account the original text can we come to a relevant interpretation.

- The gospels, the Acts, and the letters of the Apostles were written at different times, and reflect the situation at the time they were written. Thus the various letters are addressed to congregations whose composition and structures were often fundamentally different. In many aspects, the later congregations of the early Christian period differed greatly from the earliest congregations.
- Last but not least, the task of the Apostles is to proclaim and explain those statements of the Bible that are essential for the salvation of mankind. What is important is anything that relates to belief in Jesus Christ, His life, and work. Bible passages that deal with other subjects may be of interest, but in no case are they to be assessed on the same level as the core message of the gospel.

Revealing Jesus and nothing else

The apostolic ministry also incorporates a third aspect: the Apostles must be witnesses of Jesus Christ. The Lord said to Paul, “I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you” (Acts 26: 16).

The Apostles of today too are called to be witnesses of Christ. The apostolate must perceive the will of Jesus Christ through His deeds in the present and derive corresponding conclusions from them for His church.

Following are some examples.

- It is only in exceptional cases that Jesus performs miracles through His Apostles. He expects them to devote themselves primarily to the salvation of mankind.
- The work of God has developed impressively in very different countries. In order to live in accordance with their faith, New Apostolic Christians are not required to deny their culture to conform to the lifestyle of those who brought them testimony.
- Jesus Christ clearly expressed that no human being can ever determine the date of His return. Anyone who has ever tried to do so has been disappointed. It is not the task of the apostolate to provide a date for the return of Christ, but rather to keep alive the hope of Jesus’ return.
- Contrary to all expectations, the number of sealed souls has not increased exponentially in all parts of the world. The Lord’s return is not dependent on the number of members of the New Apostolic Church living in the individual countries.

Leading in the mind and spirit of Christ

The Church of course also needs leadership and administrative functions. The performance of these responsibilities



requires specific capabilities and knowledge, for example, in the area of organisation and management. Even if these functions are entrusted to ordained ministers, they are not associated with their ministerial authority as such. It is obvious that the Chief Apostle and the District Apostles do not act in the name of Jesus Christ and with the authority of Jesus Christ when they make organisational or financial decisions ... However, every leader, on all levels of the Church, must decide and act in the mind and spirit of Christ!

God endows the Church with all the gifts required for the fulfilment of those services He deems essential. In most cases, these are given to individual persons. But at times these gifts can only be developed in the context of teamwork. In today's world, the challenges are so numerous and so complex that no leader of the Church can afford to rule as absolute monarch!

Rules that are not doctrine

Let us come back to Apostle Paul. He fulfilled various duties within the church. As an Apostle he proclaimed the gospel and testified of Christ. But he also led the congregations for which he was responsible, taking into account the environment in which he lived. The epistles contain definitive statements relating to salvation in Christ, based on the ministerial authority of the Apostle.

However, they also contain guidelines concerning the management of the congregations, which do not pertain to actual doctrine. These result directly from the living conditions of the time and are only valid in that context. This includes the instruction for the women of Corinth to remain silent (1 Corinthians 14: 34) and their prohibition from teaching (1 Timothy 2: 12)—although they had the right to prophesy in Caesarea (Acts 21: 9)—as well as the various specifications concerning their hairstyle and attire (1 Timothy 2: 9).

Preparing for a pastoral care visit

To conclude, I would still like to comment briefly on the use of the Bible in the context of a pastoral visit. In many places, it is customary to ask the minister to open the Bible at random, read a passage, and comment on it. This tradition is certainly admirable, but it is not without its risks.

We know that a biblical passage should always be interpreted in light of its context. Yet this is hardly possible in the case of a randomly chosen Bible passage. As a result, the passage might well be interpreted inappropriately. It also happens that members consider the passage that is read out by the minister as a kind of prophecy or divine promise. They draw from it the certainty that God will fulfil their wishes and act in a particular manner. Yet it is not uncommon for such hopes to be disappointed.

Let us be aware that the minister's role is not to reveal the future to the members! His mission is to let himself be inspired by the Spirit in order to strengthen the members in their faith and trust in God.

I feel it would be better for the minister to prepare his visit by asking God to inspire him with a biblical text that could provide orientation in pastoral care. Of course, that does not mean he should use it to deliver a sermon, but to share with the members a few thoughts concerning this Bible passage.



Thousands of people lost their homes when a typhoon made landfall in the Philippines in December 2019. Corrugated iron sheets, lumber, and nails were supplied in particularly hard hit areas



Surviving with some neighbourly help

A roof over one's head, something to eat—in many parts of the world, personal wish lists are very short. Here are some stories about people who help other people survive, and who try to conjure up a smile on their faces in the process.

Corrugated iron and nails

Two are stronger than one! In order to provide aid to those affected by Typhoon Ursula at the end of December last year, two New Apostolic relief agencies decided to work together. NACSEA Relief Fund in South East-Asia announced that it would be working together with human aktiv, the charity of the New Apostolic Church of Southern Germany, on this project.

At the end of December 2019, the tropical storm—which later grew to a category II typhoon—caused tremendous damage in the Philippines and cost lives. This includes 50 deaths, several dozen missing, and damage to property to the tune of just under 70 million US dollars.

NACSEA Relief Fund is helping affected people in the disaster area, which lies some 350 kilometres from the national

capital of Manila. Mabelle Bagtas and Rebekah Silvano, both members of the South-East Asian relief organisation, delivered corrugated iron, marine plywood, lumber, and nails to five different locations. It is in these places that destroyed houses are to be rebuilt. A total of fourteen families—more than 80 people in Bulalacao, Bungabong, Pinamalayan, Barcenaga, and Semirara Island—were thus able to receive the help they needed.

Seedlings and fertiliser

“When farmers sow seed, they hope for a good harvest. But when storms and floods destroy the fields, even the seedlings are affected—and their hopes for a harvest are dashed. This makes the very foundation of their livelihood uncertain. A further challenge is the repair of destroyed houses,” explains the relief organisation of the NAC South-East Asia.

Even before Typhoon Ursula, the significantly stronger Typhoon Tisoy raged through the Philippines at the start of December 2019, destroying people's livelihoods. And these are now being rebuilt in Bicol. The farmers in Basagan, Bantayan in Tabaco/Albay and Tabgon in Goa/Camarines Sur received seedlings and fertiliser from human aktiv and NACSEA Relief Fund in order that the fields could be re-planted. And there were also deliveries of lumber, roofing, and nails for new houses and new roofs.

Reforestation and seed distribution

Huge swarms of locusts invaded East Africa in February. "The rain season strongly favoured their multiplication. Within minutes, the unimaginably large swarms moved across the country, devouring everything in their path and leaving nothing but bare earth. Beyond that, the heat provided them with ideal breeding conditions. This only increased the locust infestation, the worst in 70 years," NAK-karitativ, the charity of the New Apostolic Churches in Germany, reported at the beginning of February.

The charity went on to report that employees had been preparing for aid measures in the heavily affected areas in the north of Kenya, in cooperation with other aid organisations in East Africa. Foodstuffs and seeds were to be distributed in this region before reforestation efforts got underway. Training measures for farmers were also being considered so that these extensive relief projects could be better coordinated.



Huge swarms of locusts devour and destroy crops within minutes

■ NAC SEA Relief Fund, NAK-karitativ

The health facility in São Tomé and Príncipe



■ NAK-karitativ

In many countries across the world, medical care is inadequate. In fact, sometimes it is so bad that sick people have to travel a long way to find a doctor. Until twelve years ago this was also the case in this small African island state. The people living on the island often had to fly as far as Portugal for dental treatment. Fortunately, twelve years ago the situation on São Tomé and Príncipe changed with the construction of a medical centre on the property of the New Apostolic Church in Santana. The building project, which also includes a dental surgery, received funds from NAK-karitativ, the charity of the New Apostolic Churches in Germany, as well as the local New Apostolic Church.

In February 2020 then the dental surgery received X-ray equipment. A team of specialists—including an electrical engineer, two dental technicians and dentists from Germany—travelled to São Tomé and Príncipe and helped with the installation of the new digital X-ray machine. The machine was shipped to the island from Germany.

For the local population (about 200,000 people) and tourists this dental surgery sure offers many benefits. Where before people had to fly to Portugal for dental treatment, examinations and treatment can now be carried out on the island. The machine, which is the only one of its kind on the island, will not only be used in dentistry, but also to diagnose ear, nose, and throat disorders.



Christoph Müller in his workshop. At the beginning of the production process the chalices are a distinct red-orange colour because of the copper that is used



Craftsmanship for the table of the Lord

Retired Shepherd Christoph Müller has a very special perspective on the celebration of Holy Communion. This is because many of the chalices containing the wafers originate from the workshop of the master metalworker.

Anyone who has ever set foot into the workshop in the Saxon town of Wurzen in Germany will quickly get a feel for how complex this job really is: machines, tools, sheets of metal, and moulded parts are everywhere. Only the most imaginative of people would ever guess that communion chalices could be made from these materials. But all it takes are a few expert moves by Shepherd Müller, and things begin to look very different indeed

Taken over from his father

It all started in 1953 when his father, Kurt Müller, started his own enterprise. The first workshop was a former horse stable, which was only replaced by a new building in 1996. In an economy that was being increasingly nationalised in the then German Democratic Republic—and when chronic

shortages of material were the norm—things were especially difficult for independent businesses. But the Müllers held their ground and, during this period, also began crafting communion vessels for the Church. Christoph Müller carried on this tradition when he took over his father's workshop in 1990.

Anyone who has ever attended divine services in different congregations of the New Apostolic Church will have noticed that communion chalices come in many different shapes and are even made of different materials. Christoph Müller has developed his own standard model.

In order to get the communion chalices into the right shape, the steel shaping die and the copper sheet are clamped into a kind of press known as a spinning lathe. The latter rotates



Shepherd Müller conducting a service (left) and in the sacristy (standing, third from the right) with Apostle Jens Korbien (seated centre)



at a speed of 1,400 revolutions per minute. What happens next is reminiscent of the work of a potter. With the help of the machine, Shepherd Müller presses the sheet over the shaping die.

But before he gets down to work, he does the same thing people do when they get into a car: he straps on a safety belt that connects him to the machine. “I need this to help me transfer my strength,” he explains. This is because metal spinning is a strenuous craft. Christoph Müller has to apply all of his weight and strength to counteract the forces in play.

Because Christoph Müller uses copper for his chalices, they are red during the production phase. They only take on their silver colouring through the galvanisation process. This procedure involves a dip into a nickel bath. Now the only thing that is still missing is the cross on the lid.

Liturgical vessels and church spires

The company delivers up to 50 chalices each year to congregations of the New Apostolic Church. Not only does it supply congregations within Germany, but also congregations in other European countries and even as far as Australia.

Christoph Müller’s company also makes communion chalices for other denominations. Depending on the customer’s requirements, these are usually custom-made products with special shapes and metals.

In addition to chalices, Christoph Müller also produces other sacred vessels, for example, baptismal bowls. The

company could not survive from the production of such items alone, however. The majority of the company’s orders call for the production of decorative parts for buildings, such as church spires, roof vents and turrets, weather vanes, and even ornaments for town halls and community centres. The Müller family has even been recognised for their work with a prize that is renowned throughout Europe.

His wife, Johanna, works together with him in the family enterprise. After all, there are many other tasks in addition to the actual production aspect, for example, calculations, accounting, and shipping. Thomas Müller, the oldest son of the family, has also learned the metalworking trade and, beyond that, specialises in the restoration of both secular and sacred objects. He operates a workshop of his own in the Black Forest, where he lives with his family. Nevertheless, father and son still work together on larger orders.

A holy task

As a minister, Christoph Müller held the chalice in his hands on countless occasions as he distributed wafers for Holy Communion. In 1990 he became rector of the congregation of Grimma. Up until his retirement in the year 2017 he also served as rector for his home congregation of Wurzen.

Since his retirement, Shepherd Müller no longer distributes wafers, but the awareness of this special moment has remained. “Once the body and blood of Christ are joined to the elements, they comprise something very special. I simply find it a beautiful task to produce the vessels that are used during Holy Communion.”



Oliver Rütten

I Just have courage!

March 2020: France orders people to stay at home. Even Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider is housebound—and will also be without Holy Communion for weeks. But he has not become discouraged: “I know that God will not abandon His children, especially in difficult situations.”

“I take this crisis very seriously,” said the Chief Apostle in an interview that was published on 21 March on the Church’s official website nak.org. “Unfortunately there will still be many more victims. We share in the suffering of those affected, and we pray for them!”

As a result of the limitations imposed by the authorities, he had to cancel all planned trips for the time being. “At present, no one knows how the situation will unfold after this. I will thus have to adjust to the situation just like everyone else.”

“Stay at home and make the best of the situation,” recommends the Chief Apostle to the members. He expresses his thanks to all those individuals on the front lines who are so committed to helping others. “It is truly beautiful to see how many people are prepared to help others in such situations.”

Recognising what is truly important

“I know that many members will have to do without Holy Communion until the end of this pandemic,” he says. “I

share their suffering.” But there is no other way “to replace, in a fully valid manner, the celebration of Holy Communion in the fellowship of the believers,” he said in an interview with Church spokesperson, Peter Johanning.

Other approaches have indeed been discussed, such as sending previously consecrated wafers to the members or to have ministers take communion on behalf of the congregation, as is the practice in services for the departed. However: “We must eat Christ’s body and drink His blood by worthily receiving the wafer consecrated and dispensed to us by a priestly minister,” he says in reference to the Seventh Article of Faith.

“We don’t know why God has permitted such a situation,” says the Chief Apostle in the interview. “But I am certain that this time of spiritual deprivation will help us recognise more than ever just how important the divine services, the ministers, and Holy Communion are to us!”

Learning from others

“It is during such times in particular that we can learn from our brothers and sisters who have already experienced great suffering in the past,” he said as he recalled the plight of earthquake victims in Indonesia, who cannot protect themselves from this new danger; African refugees, who have been in a state of detention for years; Congolese victims of war, who lost everything overnight; and the Christians of West Africa, who are often killed just for attending a divine service.

However, the Chief Apostle’s intent here was not to downplay the coronavirus crisis. “Quite the contrary!” The idea is to learn from our brothers and sisters in faith. “Why have they been able to remain so strong despite all of these challenges? It is because they are deeply rooted in Christ. Their love for the Lord—that is their secret!” What conclusions does he draw from this? “The most important thing we can do now is protect our relationship with Christ!”

Holding fast to love and trust

“Particularly in these times of distress, let us trust in God,” appealed the Chief Apostle. “Let us put our trust in God. He always knows how to give those who love Him that which is indispensable for their salvation!”

And “let us remain firm in our love for God. The Lord will always find a special way to help those who love Him. The promise of God remains: all things—even the coronavirus crisis—work together for good to those who love God.”

“Just have courage,” Chief Apostle Schneider said. “Things will go on!”

Divine services during the pandemic



Oliver Rütten

If the faithful cannot go to church, the church will come to the faithful. This is how the New Apostolic Church is looking after its members in the current crisis.

The main reason for online services are mostly government bans on large assemblies, but also voluntary precautionary measures. The aim everywhere is to reduce the number of social contacts in order to protect the people—distancing rules. The purpose is to slow the spread of the pandemic and prevent an overburdening of our health care systems.

The four German District Churches have set up their own YouTube channels in order to expand their resources for divine service transmission. South America has its own streaming portal. And Southern Africa can use its own television channel, NACTV, which also airs Wednesday evening services. Ahead of everyone else are the North Americans, who already have quite a bit of experience in live streaming of divine services. Canada and the USA do not only broadcast on occasion, but offer a large number of recordings available for viewing throughout the week.

An entirely different approach is being taken by the District Church Democratic Republic Congo South-East. The district does have its own YouTube channel, but the vast majority of the 1.8 million members either do not have any access or only limited access to the Internet. As far as legal provisions allow, ministers will be going from house to house, conducting a short service, and celebrating Holy Communion. Because the congregations are very large, the ministers will likely be busy throughout the week, District Apostle Tshitshi Tshisekedi said. In order to help the active ministers, he has reactivated all retired ministers.

Together we are strong

By their very self-definition, Christians are not lone warriors. And this is also shown again and again in the course of every subsequent week on all continents and in many thousands of congregations.



Once a year, the administrative staff, the national rectors, and all the Apostles gather for their National Assembly

Keefe Seitobudi, LNA Bažnyčia, NAC Ghana

Church leadership meets in Jakarta

Once each year, all the Apostles, national leaders, and administrative staff of the New Apostolic Church South-East Asia gather to exchange thoughts and experiences. This year they gathered from 17–19 January 2020 in Jakarta, Indonesia. The agenda included specific topics for each country, discussions on spiritual subjects, as well as matters of planning and strategy.

To conclude the weekend, the ministers of the two Indonesian districts of Jakarta and Banten, together with their wives, assembled in Depok for a divine service with District Apostle Edy Isnugroho. On the same day, the Apostles from the vast District Apostle Area then travelled to the congregations of Jakarta and Banten to celebrate further divine services with the members there. District Apostle Isnugroho conducted the divine service in the congregation of Bogor, where the congregation's rector Priest Daryanto and his wife received a blessing on their silver wedding anniversary.



Young people from various congregations in Lithuania at a regional youth service in our church in Vilnius

Hundreds of kilometres covered

Young people from the Lithuanian congregations of Šilutė, Klaipėda, Kaunas, Ignalina, Vievis, and Vilnius gathered for a divine service in Vilnius in the middle of January 2020. The responsible Bishop based his sermon on a passage from 1 Corinthians 10: 23: "All things are lawful for



Teachers have to learn too. Sisters and brothers who teach in a Church context in Ghana come together for regular training

me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify.”

In the local congregations there are often only small groups of young people, which means that such gatherings always unleash great joy among the participants. In the future, these regional youth services are to take place once each month

Teachers go back to school

At the end of January, retired Bishop Ampadu gathered with Sunday School teachers in Osu in Ghana. Together, the teachers—who are volunteer workers in their respective congregations—developed lesson strategies using the teaching materials provided by the Church. There were presentations, skits, and rounds of feedback. The seminar was characterised by working together and learning from one another.

A tribute to Sonja Fehr



NAC International

“She was a brave, loving, and very attentive woman.” It was with these words that Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider began the funeral service for Sonja Fehr. The bereaved family relates that she passed away quietly and peacefully on the afternoon of 23 January 2020, in her 85th year. At the heart of the Chief Apostle’s address to the mourners was the idea of humbling oneself under the mighty hand of God. “From this follows,” he explained, “that God will exalt you in due time, as the Bible passage from 1 Peter 5: 6 suggests. With a reference to her husband, the long-time Chief Apostle Richard Fehr, Chief Apostle Schneider said: “It is our conviction of faith that our brothers and sisters who die in Jesus Christ will be permitted to enter the realm of the redeemed, where they will see one another again.” The couple, Sonja and Richard Fehr, had been married for 53 years.

“Sonja Fehr served as she understood her duty, and God blessed her in it,” the Chief Apostle went on to say. “The example is not the manner in which she served. The example is her motivation: strong in faith, active in love. It is out of love that one serves—and is resolved to serve—even if it hurts a little at times.”



New Apostolic Church
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