

community

The New Apostolic Church around the world

01/2022/EN

Annual motto 2022

Together
in Christ

Editorial

Together in Christ

Divine service

How God inquires about us

Doctrine

The Church says yes to life

New Apostolic Church
International



■ Editorial

- 3 Together in Christ

■ Divine service

- 4 How God inquires about us

■ A visit in Europe

- 10 Knowing how instead
of guessing when

■ A visit in Africa

- 12 Believers begin to see

■ A visit in Europe

- 14 Tired? Then come here!

■ Children's corner

- 16 Jacob's cunning wins
him the birthright
- 18 At Vera's in Singapore

■ Doctrine

- 20 The Church says yes to life

■ Global news

- 24 Fellowship is both
the way and the goal
- 26 Fostering friendship on
the other side of the world
- 28 Pastoral care survey:
women for women
- 30 Tears of sorrow, tears of joy

■ News from District Apostles Area

- 32 District Apostle Michael Ehrich:
Staying in the fellowship!
- 32 Ghana: Fellowship
- 32 Nigeria: Together
- 33 Sierra Leone: Get together
- 33 Gabon: Joy of the fellowship
- 33 Benin: Be active together!
- 33 Togo: Solidarity in action
- 34 Guinea: Living fellowship
- 34 Guinea: Experience fellowship
- 34 Cameroon: Support the neighbour
- 34 Nigeria: Music camp
- 35 Ghana: "Whatever you do ..."
- 35 Ghana: Youth Care Seminars
- 35 Ghana and Nigeria:
Mourning two pioneers
- 36 Liberia:
Divine service with the District Apostle

Together in Christ

Dear brothers and sisters,

No matter what the coming months may hold in store for us, let us focus on the day of the Lord in faith!

We firmly believe that the Lord will come in order to take us to Himself. Our motto for this year is: “Together in Christ”.

Let us examine this togetherness a little more closely. I see four levels:

- our fellowship with the triune God
- our fellowship in the divine service
- living together in fellowship
- the fellowship of the living and the dead.

What does it mean to have fellowship with the triune God? Divine life is a life in fellowship. The triune God is a God of fellowship between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And this God calls human beings into fellowship with Himself. Those who carry divine life within them will long for fellowship with God and His people.

This fellowship we experience in divine service. In the divine service, Jesus grants us His word, His grace, His body, and His blood. We have fellowship with those who share the same priorities, the same goal, and the same path with us.

Living together in fellowship prepares us for the return of the Lord, because we grow together here as a bridal congregation. Being together in Christ means: agreeing to give to others and to also receive from them.



There is still the fellowship of the living and the dead. Fellowship in Christ is stronger than death. The living and the dead are prepared together for the return of Christ through word and sacrament. And then the living and the dead will be together with Him forever.

That is our goal, which we work toward collectively! Please be assured: God is with His own. And the Apostles pray for you.

I wish you all a blessed year 2022, which will lead us closer to our goal: together in Christ.

With heartfelt greetings

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized, cursive script that appears to read "Jean-Luc Schneider".

Jean-Luc Schneider

| How God inquires about us



The first divine service which Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider held outside of Europe since the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020 took place on 15 August 2021 in Dodoma in Tanzania

Huyomimi, NAC Tanzania

Genesis 3: 9

“Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, ‘Where are you?’”

My dear brothers and sisters, my heart is full of joy and gratitude. It is the first time since March 2020 that I have been able to travel outside of Europe. It is the first time since then that I can once again experience a divine service in such a large circle and enjoy such a large choir and orchestra. That is a great joy and great grace.

All over the world people have been experiencing a difficult time. And even though the virus may have caused you less problems here in Tanzania than in other countries, I know that you are facing many other problems and hardships. And every time we face such difficult times and

circumstances, the same spirit comes with the same question: “Where is your God? Why doesn’t He help you? Why doesn’t He prevent these terrible things from happening to you?” (Psalm 42: 3). We know the answer: God is here!

God the Father, the Creator, is still active. He looks after His creation, He cares for us, and provides us with what we need for our daily lives. He is the one who gives us the air we breathe and the food we eat. He grants us everything we need for our daily lives.

God the Son is here! He gave His life for us on the cross and ascended to His Father to prepare a place for us. And now He is with His Father as our advocate and intercedes for us (1 John 2: 1).

God the Holy Spirit is at work. He is at work within the Church and gives us comfort and strength and grace. He is at work in our hearts to guide and comfort us. Indeed, God is here and He is at work on our behalf.

But now God comes to us and asks us the following question: “Now you know where I am, but where are you?” You know the story. Adam and Eve committed a grave sin and then realised that they had done something very serious; and they were ashamed. So they hid from God. They did not want to be seen by Him. But God called them and asked them, “Where are you?” With this question, God wanted to make it clear: “I do not reject you. I will continue to take care of you in the future too. You were disobedient and now you must bear the consequences, but I still love you and want to help you.”

Now God comes and asks us the same question: “Where are you?” Of course God knows where we are. He knows everything. He does not need an answer. However, by asking this question He wants to help us assess where we stand. He wants to help us assess the state of our soul so that we can change what needs to be changed.

Perhaps some feel as Adam and Eve did and are ashamed when they realise: “Oh, we are such great sinners.” They think they might not reach the goal, that they are not worthy to be a child of God. But then God comes and says, “Where are you? Don’t be ashamed, don’t be afraid; come, I won’t reject you, I want to give you My grace. Don’t be

afraid, don’t hesitate, come to Me! I love you.” That is the first question.

Another question God asks is: “Hey, where are you? Suddenly you are so far away from Me. Please examine your soul, your heart. Do you realise that you are slowly drifting away from Me?” Maybe we are disappointed because God has not answered our prayers. Maybe He has not fulfilled our wishes, and now we are gradually leaving God. Then He calls out to us: “Hey, where are you? You are drifting away from Me. Don’t forget what I have done for you.” The

Son of God did not come to earth to do miracles. He did not die on the cross to heal the sick. He came to save your soul. He wants to deliver you from evil once and for all; His goal is to lead you into His kingdom, where there will be no more evil. Therefore He

asks us: “What are you doing? Come back, I want to deliver you from evil and lead you into My glory.”

In the Bible we find a number of questions. For example, God spoke through the prophet Elijah to ask His people: “How long will you falter between two opinions?” (1 Kings 18: 21). God asks us the same question: “Why do you hesitate? If you believe in Me, if you believe in Jesus Christ, then trust Me. Jesus said, ‘No one can serve two masters,’” (Matthew 6: 24). You have to make a decision. And yes, it happens that God has to ask us these questions because we are in actual fact a little hesitant.

Brothers and sisters, we decided once that we want to follow Christ and renounce evil, and we should stick to this decision. Let us renounce sin and evil, let us follow the path of God and His commandments. Let us follow the way of obedience even if the way of sin may seem easier and shorter to get what we want. Sometimes we find ourselves in such a situation and God wants to find out which side we are on. Follow the way of obedience. I know, and I am fully aware of this, that the way of sin often seems easier and shorter to get what we want, but we must be clear about one thing: we cannot serve two masters. Our Lord and Master is Jesus Christ and we must definitely walk the path paved by Him.

Another time God asked the prophet Elijah a question (1 Kings 19: 9–18). Elijah had gone into a cave and God came and asked him: “What are you doing here, Elijah?” Elijah

*Now God comes and asks
us the same question:
“Where are you?”*

More than 3,800 brothers and sisters were able to participate live in the divine service in Dodoma



Even if we absolutely do not understand what is going on, let us trust in God and follow Him.

explained: “I have been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life” (1 Kings 19: 9–10). Then God told him that He needed him to work for Him. Go back to work. Fulfil your mission! “Don’t fear, I’m with you; fulfil your mission and you will see I’m with you, I will bless you.”

Dear brothers and sisters, this does not only apply to the ministers but to all of us. We want to serve the Lord, but sometimes it seems that we are not successful, that everything is in vain. We want to serve the Lord, but cannot see the results of our work. Sometimes it even seems that we are the only ones who are doing anything at all, that

everyone else has given up. We are tempted to stop and give up too. Today God comes and asks us: “Hey, what are you doing here? Come out of your cave! I need you, I want you to serve Me.”

Maybe we even withdraw into a cave because we are so disappointed by other people, by our brothers and sisters. We might want to be alone and have nothing more to do with these people. Then God calls out to us, “Come out of your cave! What are you doing there? Get involved in the community of God’s children! I am with you, I am in the midst of the congregation. Come and join the fellowship!”

Jesus also asked some questions. The disciples were out on the lake with the Lord and there was a fierce storm (Luke



A choir and a string ensemble created a beautiful atmosphere



trust Me? Just commit your spirit into My hands and trust Me. I will guide you.”

I know from my own experience that that is not always easy to do. We would like an explanation. We would like God to show us a solution. But all God tells us is: “Just trust Me.” My dear brothers and sisters, that is our faith. We believe in God the Almighty. We believe in the God of love, in the God of mercy. And even if we absolutely do not understand what is going on and have no idea what will happen in the future or how we will cope, let us trust in God and follow Him simply because we have faith in Him.

8: 22–25). You know the story: Jesus fell asleep. The disciples were terrified and thought they were going to die. So they went and woke Jesus. Jesus asked them, “Where is your faith?” (verse 25). Brothers and sisters, that is a question that the Lord, I guess, asks me quite often. We might be in a difficult situation and just see no solution. We think things over and pray over it, but we receive no answer, no explanation, no solution. We just cannot understand what God is doing. There are two avenues we can follow: we can either give up or trust in God. And that is why God asks us: “Where is your faith? You believe that I am the Almighty; you believe that I am the God of mercy; you believe that I am the God of love. That is your faith, so why don’t you

There was another time when Jesus asked His disciples a question. One day His disciples were travelling and they were discussing something. And when they arrived at the village, Capernaum, Jesus asked them: “What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?” (Mark 9: 33). The disciples were embarrassed because they had been arguing about who was the greatest among them. Sure, Jesus would not have needed to ask the question because He knew the answer anyway. However, Jesus wanted them to be aware that this was not good.

This is also a question of Jesus to His bride, to His church: “What are you talking about on the way to Heavenly



District Apostle Helper Robert M. Nsamba was called to assist (left)
The Chief Apostle dispenses Holy Communion to the Apostles (above)

Jerusalem?” This is a question we should consider seriously. Brothers and sisters, what do we talk about? With our spouse, with our family, or in the congregation we can talk about everything, but how do we talk about the Church? How do we talk about the ministers? How do we talk about our brothers and sisters? Do we talk about God? How do we talk about Him? What we talk about and how we talk about it determine the atmosphere in our life as a couple, in our family, in the congregation. So you see how important it is to be aware of what we talk about. You know, our children listen to what we talk about and they understand and take it in. Let us be careful and focus on the right things. Let us occupy ourselves with this question on the road to Heavenly Jerusalem: “What do we talk about?”

Let me refer to one last question of the Lord Jesus. Jesus came to Paul and asked him: “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” (Acts 9: 4). That was a special question. Jesus wanted to make clear: what you are doing to My brothers and sisters, you are doing to Me. Our heavenly Father asks us the same question: “Why are you persecuting Me?” Of course it is not our intention to persecute our brothers and sisters; that is not what God wants to tell us. When He asks us this question, He wants us to realise that the things we do to our neighbour, to our brother, to our sister, to His children, we do to Him.

Let me explain it in another way. When we decide how we are going to approach our neighbour, when we decide how we are going to treat our sister and our brother, how we want to talk to them, we should not only think about what they have done, but we should first of all think about all that Jesus has done for us and how He treats us. Your neighbour has hurt you and you are angry? Remember, Jesus forgave you. Think of all the things you have done and then remember that Jesus came each time and said, “I forgive you.” Think about it for a moment. And then you can decide how you are going to deal with your neighbour. You are disappointed because she promised to help you and did not keep her promise? You are sad because your neighbour said awful things about you? Stop and think before you react. Think about your own behaviour and how many times you have promised the Lord something and did not keep your promise. How many times have we been upset because Jesus did not answer our prayers? How did He respond? Once we are aware of this we can decide how we are going to deal with our neighbour.

You see, dear brothers and sisters, these are just a few questions the Holy Spirit wants to ask us. Let us keep these questions in our hearts. They are important for our salvation. Jesus’ answer is always the same: “Whatever happens, wherever you are, come, I love you. I forgive you.



During the celebration of Holy Communion

Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider ordains two Apostles: Daniel Ooko Ochogo and Cosmas Barasa Wanjala (below)

I want to save you. Follow Me until the end. With My help you can do it.”

After the Chief Apostle called on District Apostle Helper Nsamba and District Apostle Kolb he went on to prepare the congregation for Holy Communion. Where is your God? We can experience the presence of God today in the celebration of Holy Communion. We celebrate Holy Communion in remembrance of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Remember He died on the cross for you and me. Where is Jesus today? He is interceding for you and me at the throne of His Father with His grace and kindness. He forgives you your sins and your guilt.

Where is Jesus? He is here in our midst through Holy Communion. Where is Jesus? He is at your sister and brother's side? As we celebrate Holy Communion each of us can see that Jesus grants the same grace and dispenses the same host to our neighbour, to our brother and sister. He tells us, “I have forgiven you. I love you. I give you My blood, I give you My body.” And to our brothers and sisters He says exactly the same and gives them exactly the same.

Now that we know where Jesus is He asks us: “Where are you?” Do not hesitate, come to Jesus, He wants to forgive you. Maybe we have allowed some distance to develop between Jesus and ourselves in our mind and in our hearts. Come back! Let us serve Him. Let us trust in Him no matter what.

Maybe the words we chose were not the best. Let us be careful what we say and how we say it. Maybe we should behave differently when it comes to our brothers and sisters. Come on, we can do it with the strength we receive through Holy Communion. All of us will receive the strength we need to do so.



CORE THOUGHTS

- The Holy Spirit invites us to come to God, to trust Him, and to serve Him.
- Our conduct towards our neighbour is defined by the love which the Lord shows us.
- Our words reflect all the good that God has done and still does for us.



■ NAC Hungary

Knowing how instead of guessing when

When is Christ going to return? No one knows. And we cannot infer it from the prevailing conditions on this earth either. But we can still prepare for it—and there are two characteristics that are decisive for this.

“Things have never been as bad as they are today! The Lord simply has to come!” People have often said these words over the course of the centuries. Yet these words were never a warning sign of His return—nor could they ever be! After all, Jesus Christ Himself announced that He “is coming at an hour you do not expect”.

But what is more important than knowing when the Lord is returning is to be prepared for the moment when He does return. And Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider explained just how this works in a divine service in Kápolnásnyék, Hungary, on 19 September 2021.

The circumstances are not important

“When the Lord returns, two will be lying on a bed, two will be at the mill, and two will be in the field,” explained the Chief Apostle. “In each case, one of them is taken, and the other is not.” He went on to say that he saw this as an image

of the church: in some places the congregations are in the sowing stage, in others they are in the harvesting process, and in still others congregational life is dormant.

On the one hand, this means: “One cannot even determine whether the Lord is about to return or not based on the level of activity in a congregation, or on the number of its members, or even on the situation of the church. He will come when He decides to come.” And on the other hand: “Whether the congregation is large, whether it is still growing, or whether it is very small and in decline, there are still souls being prepared for the return of the Lord. You can attain salvation in any congregation!”

We are prepared by faith and love

“At the coming of the Lord, there will be a judgement. The Lord Jesus will sort everyone out and make a selection in each congregation, in every situation,” explained the Chief



Above: The divine service in Kápolnásnyék (Hungary) was well attended
 Right: The Chief Apostle was accompanied by District Apostle Jürg Zbinden (seated) and Apostles Dirk Schulz, Thomas Deubel, and Martin Schnauer (from the left)



Apostle. “Naturally, it is important to know the deciding factors in this judgement! We already know the answer to this: it comes down to our heart’s attitude, it boils down to our faith.”

Faith is more than a tradition, a religion, or a culture. It is a matter of agreeing fully with the following essential truths:

- God exists. He is love. He has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ. He reveals Himself today through the Holy Spirit.
- He desires to lead mankind into eternal life: into the glory of the kingdom of God.
- the gospel is the only way to eternal life.
- it is in the church, through His Apostles, that God today prepares human beings for the return of Christ.
- God has personally elected individual human beings to be His children, and accompanies them on their way to eternal life.

The fundamental attitude of love expected by Christ far transcends mere affection or emotions. Those who truly love the Lord

- long for eternal life;
- feel the need to remain in constant contact with God in thought, in prayer, and in divine service;
- renounce anything that could hamper their relationship with God;
- are prepared to serve Him and thereby do their part;
- want to become like Him and love others in accordance with His example.

Neither exclude nor condemn anyone

Those who love God will also want to “build their relationship with their neighbour on a divine foundation. Because

they love God, they love their neighbour,” the Chief Apostle went on to say. “Let us see our neighbour as Jesus sees him.” Above all, this means: “I think of him or her as a person,” as a soul who is to be saved, not merely as a member of one or the other group or extraction.

Beyond that the gospel teaches us that we are not entitled to judge others. People can only see the actions of others, but never the heart’s attitude behind those actions. “It is not our task to correct the sinner to make him or her good! Our task is simply to say, ‘The Lord loves you! Come to Him!’ God will take care of all the rest.”

CORE THOUGHTS

Matthew 24: 40–41

“Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left.”

The return of the Lord is not dependent on the prevailing conditions on earth. Let us prepare ourselves for His return in our congregations. The Lord will judge us according to our faith and our love. It is not for us to judge our neighbour.

Believers begin to see

In the dark, you can't see anything, are disoriented, and bump into objects. How wonderful when there is light to help you find the way. Our faith is such a light.



■ NAC São Tomé and Príncipe



Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider (left) celebrated two divine services while he was in São Tomé and Príncipe District Apostle Wolfgang Nadolny (above at left) with the interpreter for Portuguese

On 12 September 2021 Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider conducted a divine service in Santana on São Tomé and Príncipe.

“The dark place described in our Bible text is obviously not to be understood from a natural point of view, but from a spiritual one,” the Chief Apostle said when explaining the Bible text. “The dark place is the remoteness from God, being far away from Him. Since man’s fall into sin, he has been under the dominion of the evil one.”

Darkness

At a distance from God

- we feel despair: “Without God there is simply no real hope for a definite improvement,” the Chief Apostle said. “We know that evil will always return.”

- we may feel afraid: “We do not understand what is going on,” the Chief Apostle explained. “In this respect many people are in a dark place. They perceive what is going on, but do not understand it. Why does God allow this? Why does He not intervene?”
- we may be disoriented: “I see how lost people are,” Chief Apostle Schneider said. “They no longer know whom they can believe, whom they can trust, and who is telling the truth. They have no orientation.”
- we do not see ourselves as we are: “Without God, people do not recognise themselves,” the Chief Apostle said, describing the darkness without God. “They think: ‘Oh, I am not that bad. There are people who are far worse.’ They don’t see themselves as they are.”
- we do not see our neighbour: “Many people are in a dark place and do not watch out for their neighbour; they hurt him,” the Chief Apostle pointed out. “Through

District Apostle Rainer Storck was called to assist (right). Apostle Massamba Diambu Tuku is placed into retirement after 35 years as a minister in the Church (below right)

words and deeds they destroy many things that are precious without even realising it.”

The light

However, the Chief Apostle had a solution: “God has given us a lamp, a light: the prophetic word.” What exactly is the prophetic word then? On one hand, it reveals salvation and, on the other hand, the will of God: “Through the prophetic word God tells us what we must do to see this promise fulfilled.”

“With this lamp you will be able to see clearly, also in a dark place,” he promised. Everyone has this lamp. All you have to do is light it. Otherwise it won’t work. “How can we light it?” the Chief Apostle asked and provided the answer: “It is possible through faith. God gives the prophetic word. If we believe, the light will come on.”

Those who believe in the promise

- know: “The situation will not remain like this, soon we will experience salvation! Evil will not always be the strongest force. God is the strongest; Jesus Christ has conquered evil. The time will come when there will be no more death, no more pain, no more tears.”
- understand: “I can’t explain every event in my life, but I know what God is doing: He is preparing me for the kingdom of glory. What a wonderful light!”
- see the next step: “It is only a small light, but it helps me to see the next step I need to take. In the light of faith we can recognise: this is the next step I should take. I can’t see the goal just yet, but I know what the next step will be.”
- see themselves: “They see themselves as they are, seek grace and sanctification, and are humble and grateful.”
- see their neighbour: “They know: what I do for my neighbour I do for Jesus Christ.” And they see how valuable fellowship is. They are careful not to destroy the atmosphere in the congregation, not to destroy the Church, the congregation.

In conclusion, the Chief Apostle invited the congregation: “Let us make this lamp shine and walk in its light. We must believe until the Lord comes.”



CORE THOUGHTS

2 Peter 1: 19

“And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.”

The word of God proclaims salvation to us and tells us how we can obtain it. Faith in this word sustains our hope, gives us confidence, fosters knowledge, and develops love for our neighbour within us.

Tired? Then come here!

Come here, this is Jesus' call to the weary and burdened. Who they are and what Jesus has to tell them is something Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider revealed in a divine service that not only lends the weary and burdened strength.



Jennifer Mischko

On 8 August 2021 Chief Apostle Schneider conducted a divine service in our church in Leipzig, Germany, which was broadcast to all congregations of the New Apostolic Church Northern and Eastern Germany.

Heavy laden

The Chief Apostle began by saying that the word applies to all those who feel small and overwhelmed by blows of fate, those who feel rejected because of their otherness, and those who are dissatisfied because they constantly feel at a disadvantage. Jesus calls out to them all: “Come to Me! I will give you rest.” Above all, the word applies to Christians: “He calls to us today: ‘Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.’”

Tired of serving

“This applies to the ministers but also to every brother and every sister who perform a task and serve in the Church.”

Chief Apostle Schneider explained. “At some point you get tired. That is completely normal.” Jesus perceives that and does not talk anyone into continuing. “No,” the Chief Apostle explained, “He keeps telling us: you need some rest. Come to Me! Come to Me in divine service. Come to Me in prayer.” In prayer, in the divine services, and in Holy Communion the faithful can draw strength to be able to continue with their work for Jesus.

Tired of fighting

“I don’t know about you,” the Chief Apostle said, “but I often notice that I tried so hard to do better and then failed again. This makes you weary and leaves you exhausted from the failed effort.” Again, Jesus said: “Come to Me and learn of Me. Come, I will give you grace. I will take care of everything. I will forgive your sins. I don’t expect you to be faultless, but I do expect you to love Me. Everything else I will take care of. Come, I will give you rest.”



Tired of waiting

While we wait for Him, Jesus instills hope in us. “We have been hearing for so long: ‘The Lord is coming soon...’ Now and then you notice that brothers and sisters are getting tired because it is taking so long.” But here too, there is a reaction from the Risen One, the Chief Apostle explained: “Come closer to Me, develop and grow into My nature, and then you will experience and feel that I am already with you. I am here. Experiencing My presence will help you persevere to the end.”

Tired of the sermons

“I have heard that some find the sermons boring,” the Chief Apostle said. “If you look at the sermons, this is indeed a fact: they are an endless repetition. For years we have been hearing the absolute same thing.” But this does not have to be boring, the Chief Apostle explained, because the goal is for us to develop and become more like Jesus: “That is the actual goal, there must be a development, the new creation must develop within us.”

Tired of fellowship

Chief Apostle Schneider said: “Sometimes we feel a little overwhelmed by the fellowship. Once in a while you hear: ‘I wish I wouldn’t have to see that guy any longer. And her, I wish I wouldn’t have to hear her any longer.’ Indeed, we are all very different and none of us are perfect.” Shortly

before the end of his sermon, the Chief Apostle summed up why it is worthwhile to be part of this fellowship: “You are together in the congregation because Jesus wants to give you salvation, because Jesus has called you to serve Him together. When you look at it this way, even fellowship ceases to be tiring.”

CORE THOUGHTS

Matthew 11: 28

“Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

The Lord calls human beings to come to Him in order to deliver them from the evil that afflicts them. With Him we find comfort and forgiveness. By following Christ we can experience His presence and can stand firm despite the effort it takes to wait. Our unity has its source in Christ.

JACOB'S CUNNING WINS HIM THE BIRTHRIGHT

ACCORDING TO GENESIS 25: 29–34; 27



Esau and Jacob were twins. Esau, the elder, had red hair and his skin was rough and hairy. He was a skilful hunter and spent most of his time out in the fields hunting. Jacob had smooth skin. He preferred to remain close to home. Isaac, their father, was especially fond of Esau and enjoyed eating the meat that Esau brought home. Jacob was Rebekah's favourite son.

One day Jacob was cooking stew when his brother, Esau, came home after hunting. He was tired. Esau said to Jacob, "Let me have some of that stew. I am tired and hungry." Jacob said, "Sell me your birthright." Esau replied, "I am dying of hunger. What use is my birthright to me?" It was not important to Esau. He sold it to Jacob for a meal of lentils. So Jacob gave Esau bread and stew. When Isaac, their father, was old and his eyesight was beginning

to fail him, he called for Esau, his eldest son: "I am ill and do not know when I will die. Take your bow and arrow and go kill a deer. Then cook my favourite meal for me and bring it to me. After I have eaten I will give you a blessing."

Rebekah heard Isaac's words. As soon as Esau had gone out hunting to kill a deer, she took Jacob to one side and told him what she had heard. Then she sent him to the herd to bring her two young goats so she could prepare a meal for Isaac, just as he liked it. "You will take it to your father so that he may eat, and you may receive the blessing." Jacob said to his mother, "My brother's skin is rough while mine is smooth. If my father touches me and discovers that I am deceiving him then he will not bless me. Instead he will curse me!" His mother replied, "Do as I tell you." Jacob brought his mother the young goats and she cooked his father's favourite meal. Then

she dressed Jacob in Esau's best clothes and tied the goat skins around his hands and neck. She gave him the meal with some bread.

Jacob took it to his father. Isaac asked him, "Who are you?"

Jacob replied, "I am Esau, your firstborn son. I have done as you asked. Come, sit down and eat the meal I have prepared, and bless me."

Isaac asked his son, "How did you find the deer so quickly?"

He replied, "The Lord, your God, showed me where to find it."

Isaac asked Jacob to come closer so that he could feel him and make sure that he really was Esau.

"The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau," he said. Isaac did not recognise Jacob, because his arms were hairy like Esau's.

Isaac ate and drank. He kissed Jacob. He recognised the smell of Esau's clothes and gave Jacob the blessing: "See, the smell of my son is like the smell of the field, which the Lord has blessed. May God give you of the dew of heaven, of the fat of the earth, and plenty of grain and wine. Let people serve you.

Be master over your brethren and let your mother's sons bow down

before you. Cursed be everyone who curses you. And blessed be those who bless you!"

Isaac finished giving Jacob the blessing. Just after Jacob left the room, Esau returned from hunting. He also cooked a tasty meal and took it to his father.

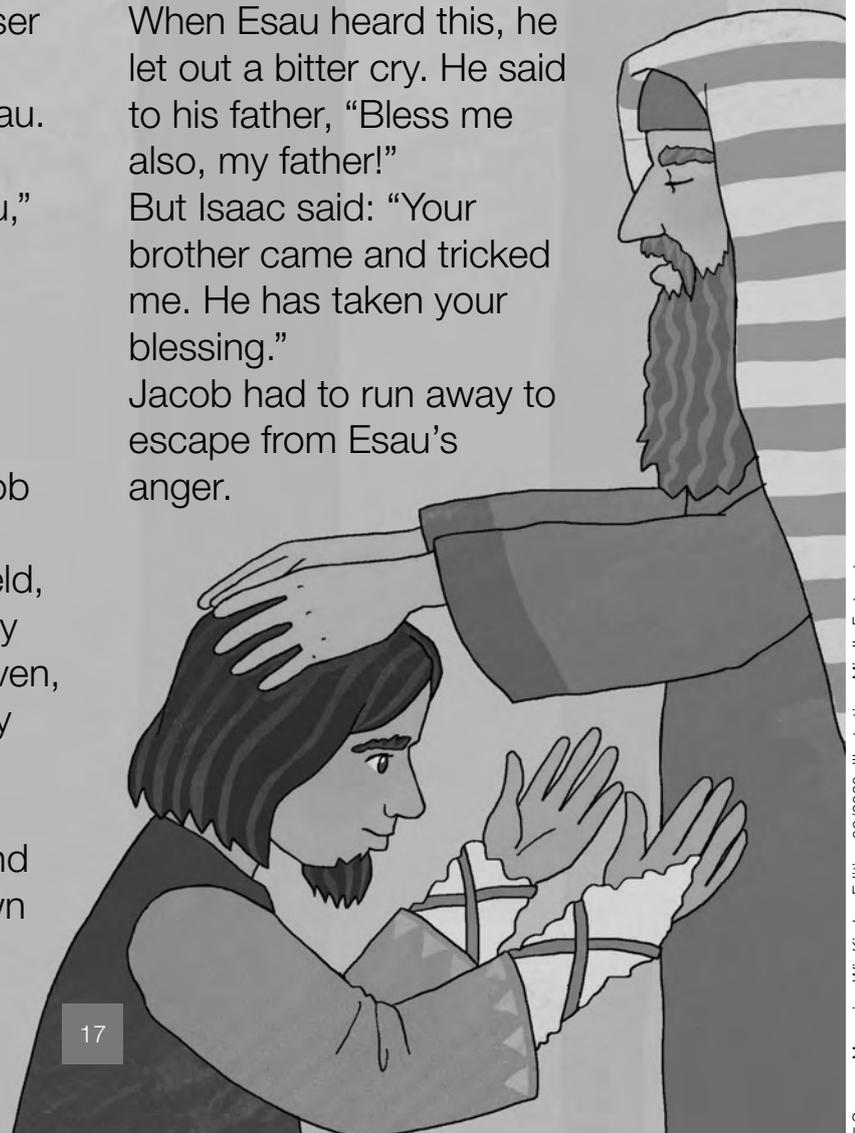
"Who are you?" asked Isaac. He replied, "I am Esau, your firstborn son."

Isaac was shocked and asked him, "Where is the hunter who has just brought me a meal and to whom I gave the blessing? This blessing cannot be undone."

When Esau heard this, he let out a bitter cry. He said to his father, "Bless me also, my father!"

But Isaac said: "Your brother came and tricked me. He has taken your blessing."

Jacob had to run away to escape from Esau's anger.



AT VERA'S IN SINGAPORE

My name is Vera Chloe. My parents and I live in **Singapore**. Singapore is a small country in South-East Asia. It is a financial hub and a popular tourist attraction.

I was born on 1 December 2011. My parents are New Apostolic. My father's name is Gary and my mother's is Nesil. I love them both very much. My father is a Priest. He works for

a bank. My mother helps clients apply for entry permits for European countries.

Shortly before my seventh birthday, my parents gave me a **rabbit**. It is the best present I have ever received. I named it Rainbow, even though it is not colourful, but brown and white.

I attend a girl's school. During the week, my parents and I take the same bus. The bus stops near my school. My father and I get off and we walk the rest of the way to **school**. We have breakfast together at the school gate before my classes start.

At school we talk about different cultures and we are encouraged to wear our respective traditional clothes on festive days instead of the school uniform. For Chinese New Year this year, I will wear my **cheongsam**.



We live in a quiet **neighbourhood**. Our flat has three bedrooms and although I have my own room, I prefer to sleep with my parents. Before we go to bed at night, we pray together, talk a bit, and then say goodnight to each other.

Our church services take place in a hotel. The Church rents a meeting room on the ground floor there every Sunday. I used to be the only child in the congregation. I am happy that five more children have joined our congregation in the last two years; now we have **Sunday School** every Sunday.

One Saturday this year, we went to a nearby shopping centre and my parents bought me a violin. My mother wants to teach me to play the **violin**. I also play the recorder and xylophone and sing in the school choir.



Sometimes my mother and I bake bread together or cook together. I like onion omelette. I get that from time to time when my parents eat something

I don't like, like meat. Or I ask my mother for my favourite dish: she cooks the best **spaghetti** in the world.





The Church says yes to life

Family planning as well as contraception are the sole responsibility of the couple. The Church does, however, offer help in the decision-making process. The criterion to be considered is: the unborn life that has come into being must not be killed.

The basis for this article are the positions of the New Apostolic that were stated in *community* 1/2021 and 2/2021 in the articles “The beginning of human life” and “The end of human life”. The following information primarily refers to the way individual methods work. The safety and side effects are not examined in detail and need to be considered separately.

This information is no substitute for a personal consultation with a specialist physician, especially since contraceptive methods can also carry health risks in certain cases.

Diverse cultural and societal factors, which influence the choice of contraceptive methods, have also not been taken into consideration here. Moreover, we will be specifically reviewing contraceptive methods in conventional medicine. Methods without a scientific basis will not be discussed.

Hormonal methods of contraception usually work in several different ways and influence the natural, biological menstrual cycle at different points (for example, by preventing ovulation and by inhibiting implantation of the fertilised ovum).

All statements can only be made on the basis of currently available medical and biological knowledge and the results of scientific studies.

Ways in which the methods work

Contraception can be done in different ways. By suppressing ovulation or by way of barrier methods fertilisation of the ovum by the sperm can be prevented (A). Other methods (B) prevent the further development of the fertilised ovum. With some methods (C) the principal mode of action depends on the time of use.

The principal mode of action of a contraceptive method can be discussed with a specialist physician. For instance, the question could be asked, whether fertilisation is prevented. Information on the way a contraceptive predominantly functions can also be found in the product information and the patient information leaflet by the manufacturer.

(A) Preventing fertilisation

Suppressing ovulation

By administering specific sex hormones, the body’s own hormone regulation is changed in such a way that ovulation is not triggered.

So-called combined contraceptives, containing oestrogen and progesterone, as well as some which only contain progesterone work in this way.

Besides primarily suppressing ovulation hormonal contraceptive methods also produce additional secondary effects, like the formation of a mucous plug in the cervix, suppressing the motility of the cilia (tiny hairs) in the fallopian tube and changing the endometrial lining, thus making implantation of the fertilised ovum potentially more difficult.

Important note: Hormonal contraceptive products are very reliable in terms of preventing pregnancy as long as they are used correctly and other disruptive factors, which could reduce or impede efficacy, are excluded, such as interaction with other drugs, gastro-intestinal malabsorption, or accelerated breakdown by the liver.

Note on breastfeeding: Breastfeeding also changes the body’s own hormone regulation in such a way as to reduce ovulation. As this effect is very unreliable, however, it can hardly be considered a method of contraception.

Building up barriers

Precautionary measures, which prevent sperm and ovum to come together are called barrier methods. Worthwhile conventional practices are:

- the condom for men or for women, which also provides excellent protection from sexually transmitted diseases
- the cervical cap or diaphragm (silicone cup covering the cervix)
- sterilisation of the woman (ligation of the fallopian tubes) or
- sterilisation of the man (vasectomy)

Inactivating sperm cells

Vaginal creams, suppositories, or douches whose ingredients are intended to kill sperm in the vagina after ejaculation are commonly used forms of contraception. (Note: A very unreliable method which is at best recommended in combination with condoms!)

Time and space

After ovulation the ovum can only be fertilised within the next 12 (to 24) hours. This phase can be calculated using various methods:

- calendar-based method (also called Knaus-Ogino Method, establishing ovulation by way of a menstrual cycle calculator)
- temperature method (establishing ovulation by measuring body temperature)

- Billings Ovulation Method (establishing ovulation by monitoring vaginal discharge)
- symptothermal method (combination of temperature and Billings method)
- interrupted intercourse (coitus interruptus): the penis is withdrawn from the vagina prior to ejaculation (note: very unreliable!)

This type of contraception is often also called natural contraception. Either the couple remains abstinent during the calculated period of fertility or they use condoms, for example, to prevent conception during this period.

(B) Preventing the further development

Preventing the implantation

Fertilisation, that is, the fusion of sperm and ovum, takes place in the fallopian tube. It takes five days for the early embryo to migrate along the fallopian tube to the uterus. In order to be able to develop further, the embryo needs to implant into the lining of the uterus. This is a highly complex process. It is not unusual for this to naturally result in a loss of the embryo. Some contraceptive methods prevent this implantation. As a result the embryo cannot develop further and dies.

These contraceptive methods include copper or gold intrauterine devices (IUDs), as well as all hormonal methods which are not primarily aimed at the suppression of ovulation.

Removing the embryo

Even after successful implantation the further development of the embryo can be prevented by an abortion. The following methods are generally employed:

- abortion with mifepristone (inducing a miscarriage by anti-hormonal effect)
- surgical abortion (removal of the embryo or foetus from the uterus by curettage)

(C) Methods of contraception that depend on time of use

At the beginning we established that hormonal contraceptives work in different ways. The way the methods listed below work depend on the time and duration of use. We cannot safely assume that the suppression of ovulation is their only effect.

- *Three-monthly contraceptive injection and low dose hormonal IUDs*: in the case of long-term contraceptive products without oestrogen, it cannot be ruled out that the initially essential effect of suppressing ovulation is lost over time because of decreased hormone release.
- *Emergency contraception (also known as morning-after pill)*: if taken prior to ovulation it will effectively delay ovulation by several days so that fertilisation cannot take place. Several medical societies regard this as the sole effect of the commonly used agents levonorgestrel and ulipristal acetate. If taken after ovulation has taken place, however, the morning-after pill seems to be ineffective. Therefore the conclusion can be drawn that the implantation or further development of the fertilised ovum is not being influenced. The data volume which medical societies base these findings on is admittedly very small.

Evaluation

In line with the basic principle that no fertilised ovum should be killed, all methods which are primarily aimed at preventing fertilisation of the ovum by the sperm can be used.

Methods which are primarily aimed at preventing the embryo's implantation in the uterus or such methods which are similar to an abortion should be rejected.

Methods which essentially prevent (sometimes delay) both the fertilisation of the ovum as well as the further development of the fertilised ovum, must, at the very least, be examined critically. The emergency contraceptive known as the morning-after pill is evaluated very differently: medical societies state that the only effect is a delay in ovulation, which makes its use unproblematic. Critics consider the available research as insufficient, however, and have reservations.

Position of the New Apostolic Church on contraception

Given the variety of cultures and individual situations, the New Apostolic Church cannot provide detailed recommendations on family planning. The following are the general tenets of the Church:

- In principle, family planning (birth control) is at the sole discretion of the married couple.



©Wayhome Studio - stock.adobe.com

- Sexuality in marriage is ordained by God as an expression of the married couple's love for each other. Human beings have an obligation to manage their sexuality in a responsible and sensible manner. This also includes the decision whether the couple would like children and, if so, how many.
- Birth control can be implemented by using contraceptive drugs and devices.
- The Church does not object to contraceptives which are primarily aimed at preventing fertilisation of the ovum. The Church does, however, reject products and methods, which essentially prevent the further development of an already fertilised ovum or which kill it.
- The principal mode of action of a contraceptive method can be discussed with a specialist physician.

Information on the way a contraceptive method predominantly works can also be found in the product information and the patient information leaflet by the manufacturer.

- The use of condoms as a means of birth control provides additional protection against infectious diseases like AIDS.

Summary

The Church says yes to life. Family planning is at the discretion of the married couple; however, the Church rejects contraceptive methods and products that are essentially aimed at killing fertilised ova. The further development of conceived life must not be inhibited.

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



■ Oliver Rütten

Fellowship is both the way and the goal

Training in the fellowship of the believers for eternal fellowship with God: this is how the Chief Apostle understands salvation in Christ and our preparation for it. What this means he explained in his annual interview 2021.

District Apostle Meeting, Pentecost service, and an interview: this topic is really important to Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider. How does the New Apostolic Church understand salvation? And what are the implications of this for the attendance of divine service?

And no, this is not about a Church leader who is worried about attendance figures. The Chief Apostle not only made this clear in his most recent sermons, but already shortly before he took office in 2013: “As Apostles and ambassadors in Christ’s stead, we are not fighting for the survival of the New Apostolic Church but for the Lord Jesus Christ.” And the main task he sees in this is preparing the bridal congregation for the return of Christ.

Not an escape, but completion

“Forever and in perfect harmony with God” and “continually discovering new aspects of the glory of God”: this is how the Chief Apostle outlined the concept of ultimate salvation of the soul, as it emerges from the statements of Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

This prospect encompasses some very different aspects: liberation, deliverance, preservation, forgiveness, victory, and even redemption are mentioned in the interview. But focusing on individual aspects only harbours certain risks: believers might be tempted to shut themselves off from the outside world. Or missionary efforts might no longer be motivated solely by love for our neighbour, but as a means to an end to escape this world as quickly as possible.

“New Apostolic Christians,” this is how the Chief Apostle formulates our concept of salvation, “do not necessarily see their earthly existence as a vale of tears which they are condemned to walk. What they want is to live with God eternally. Their life on earth is a time of grace that God grants them in order that they may prepare themselves for eternal fellowship with Him in both joy and suffering.”

Fellowship with God

This preparation happens individually to begin with: “We must believe in Jesus Christ, be born again out of water and the Spirit, and receive the body and blood of Christ.” These prerequisites are necessary, but not sufficient. And this is where our participation in the divine services comes in and plays the central role.

“By participating in the divine services, believers first of all strengthen their personal relationship with God.” Besides, the sermon inspired by the Holy Spirit strengthens their faith in the imminent return of Jesus Christ. When praying the Lord’s Prayer, they express their desire to be in fellowship with God. And finally: “The absolution frees them from the burden of their sins. Partaking worthily in Holy Communion strengthens their hope and nourishes the divine life they have received in the rebirth.”

Fellowship with other people

Participating in the divine services also prepares the believers to live in the community of other people in the kingdom of God. Because also in the congregation believers come together with others whom they have not sought out for their encounter with God. “Their desire to praise and worship God, their need to commune with God and be near Him, is so strong that they find themselves coming together with people with whom they would otherwise never have associated.”

The power of the gospel is evident in the congregation in a special way: “God uses the same message in order to strengthen the believers, all of whom find themselves in completely different situations.” In addition to this: “By praying the words aloud together: ‘Forgive us our debts,’ the believers publicly profess that they are all—without exception—in need of grace.” And finally, since no one is perfect, congregational life enables the believers to learn to forgive one another, reconcile with one another, and learn to overcome their differences.

“I see it as my responsibility to solemnly remind all New Apostolic believers that regular participation in divine service is an essential component of our preparation for the return of Jesus,” Chief Apostle Schneider points out. “For these reasons in and of themselves already, I invite all New Apostolic members to hold fast to the practice of attending the divine services in person—as soon as it becomes possible for us to do so again.”

And he does not forget those who have to stay home for reasons of illness or age. “They can rest assured that God will provide for them. We pray for one another!”



Left: The congregation of El Bolsón
Below: Cony (front) with the youth from
Argentina at the IYC



INA El Bolsón, Heiderose Tienes-Liebner, NAC Nordheide

Fostering friendship on the other side of the world

A friend in need is a friend indeed. This is something our brothers and sisters in El Bolsón were able to experience first-hand. And they made more than just one new friend—it was more like 120 friends all at once. Here is a touching story about friendship.

The congregation of El Bolsón in Argentina is located at the proverbial end of the world. The next congregation to the south is 130 kilometres away, and the next congregation to the north is 185 kilometres away. In order to visit the congregation of El Bolsón, the district ministers, Bishop, and Apostle have to travel great distances. For example, Bishop Claudio Videla has to travel 1,500 kilometres as the crow flies from his place of residence to the congregation. “This is not always easy for the members and ministers of our congregation, who often feel alone and forgotten,” relates Heiderose Tienes-Liebner from El Bolsón.

Friends pray for one another

When a letter arrived from the congregation of Nordheide in Germany following the “My congregation in a shoebox”

campaign that was part of the 2014 International Church Convention in Munich—written by none other than retired Chief Apostle Wilhelm Leber—the joy in El Bolsón was incredible. “It was like receiving a caress from God Himself,” said Priest Rudolfo Benítez.

Suddenly the 25 members of the El Bolsón congregation no longer felt so alone. They had found approximately 120 new friends in Germany! They stay in virtual contact with their friends by exchanging photos, videos, and text messages. And their friends pray for them too, for example, when there was a drought in El Bolsón in 2015 and wildfires ravaged the region. Together with Apostle Jörg Steinbrenner, who was there to conduct the service when the German congregation learned of the situation, they all prayed for their friends in South

America. A day later, they received an e-mail from El Bolsón: “It’s raining!”

In addition to praying for the Argentine congregation, the members from Nordheide sent a donation intended to help their friends in El Bolsón. And the donation did just that, albeit in a manner no one would have expected.

Friends help one another

Part of the donation was used to help María Delgado. Our sister was then in her early fifties and had been on dialysis for nine years. Three times each week she would have to make her way to the hospital. There were also many operations. Together with the then Apostle Norberto Pablo Bianchi, the members from El Bolsón decided that the money should be used to make peritoneal dialysis possible for María. This dialysis uses the lining of the abdomen, or belly, to filter the blood inside a person’s body. That meant that María no longer needed to go to the hospital for dialysis.

In order to create the hygienic conditions necessary for this type of dialysis in her modest hut, she needed a kitchen stove, a furnace, and a water heater. In addition, a tiled addition was built to ensure even greater hygiene. The latter was funded by friends and members of the El Bolsón congregation, so there was even some money left over from the original donation. “The donation from the members of the Nordheide congregation means life for me,” said a grateful María. She passed away recently.

A young sister visits her friends

A few years later, the remaining amount was used to help a young sister by the name of Cony, who was then 18 years old. The members of El Bolsón came up with the idea to use the rest of the funds to finance Cony’s trip to the International Youth Convention (IYC) in Düsseldorf in 2019.

Despite the generous donation, the money did not suffice. Cony’s father sold his quad bike to enable his daughter to travel. “He didn’t hesitate for a moment to sell it so I could have the money,” says Cony. “It was a wonderful act of love for me.”

The young woman had only recently moved away from her home village of El Maitén to train as a sports teacher, and had never taken any sort of major trip before in her life. And then there were many problems that worried her: “The only place I could find peace was in the divine service,” she says. “But already on the way home from church everything turned dark again. I wrestled with the Lord again and again: ‘All I ask is one thing: a little caress from heaven so that I can go on.’ But heaven remained silent.” And then, contrary to all expectations, everything worked out after all: “And in the end I received much more than a little divine caress,” says Cony. “For me it was as if I had been embraced by God Himself when the Chief Apostle took me into his arms!” Cony was able to enjoy the IYC in Düsseldorf and even meet some of her friends from the Nordheide congregation in person for the first time.

Children’s friendships are boundless

The children from the congregation of Nordheide showed their friendship in a special way on Christmas 2019: “They went without Christmas gifts, and instead sent a monetary donation to the children of the congregation of El Bolsón,” relates retired Priest Walter Gerke from Nordheide. On Easter, the children of the El Bolsón congregation received gifts that had been carefully selected for them by the members of Nordheide. In order to show their gratitude to their friends in Germany, the children of El Bolsón sent a video with a big thank-you to the other end of the world.



Pastoral care survey: women for women

Is there a need for women in pastoral care? There sure is! This is the conclusion reached by an official work group in the New Apostolic Church Western Germany. And the group has concrete figures to demonstrate the need for a response to this demand in the congregations.

The name of the group engaged by the New Apostolic Church of Western Germany is “schWESTern@work”. The name is a word play combining the terms “West” and “Schwestern” (the German words for “west” and “sisters”, respectively). And the “at work” portion represents their whole agenda: the group is looking to motivate more women and girls to engage their abilities and competencies in the Church.

The first project groups comprised of women from this region were already formed in the then Regional Church of Hesse/Rhineland-Palatinate/Saarland, as well as in Belgium and Luxembourg, following the International Church Convention 2014. When the Regional Church

of North Rhine-Westphalia merged with other districts to form the new Regional Church of Western Germany, District Apostle Rainer Storck advocated that the group be expanded to include the entire area. Today there is thus a representative from each Apostle area in the core team.

Pastoral care—what and how?

This coordinating group is not only the point of contact for all topics relating to women and girls. It also provides information on tasks and services that women perform in the New Apostolic Church. This includes, for example, an extensive survey that was conducted during the International Youth Convention 2019.



The booth of the co-ordinating group “schWESTern@work” at the International Youth Convention 2019

Thomas Brunschede, Oliver Rütten



The sisters at the booth discovered that 93 per cent of the members would like sisters appointed to pastoral care in their congregation

This opinion poll was part of the concept behind a 900-square-metre exhibition and discussion area focused on the matter of pastoral care. The offer was organised by a project group comprised of New Apostolic women from all the Regional Churches of Germany, Switzerland, and France. The team members were appointed by their respective Apostles. The survey was intended to explore what pastoral care means to young people and which communication channels they would prefer for pastoral care discussions.

Not only women are asking for women

The central result of the two-day study was that a whopping 93 per cent of those surveyed responded that they would like an officially appointed sister to provide pastoral care in their congregation. This main question received 1,233 responses on the first day. Some 54 per cent of the yes votes came from women while 46 per cent of them came from men. The small minority of no-votes were 72 per cent comprised of women.

A solid 90 per cent of participants would like to see pastoral care offers tailored specifically to women. This question from the second day received 1,502 responses. Fifty-eight per cent of the yes-votes were female, as were 56 per cent of the no-votes. This information was taken from the documentation of the final survey results, which are available to the editors.

A question of understanding

The reasons for this clear demand are shown by the question inquiring into the issues that might be associated with female pastoral care. By a considerable margin, many respondents—namely 43 per cent—would prefer to speak to a female caregiver about issues specific to women. Some of the specific issues mentioned were:

- problems in marriage, partnership, or family
- loss of a child
- unwanted pregnancies
- abuse and rape
- domestic abuse
- and separation of parents.

In this context the participants made it abundantly clear: women feel better understood by other women than by men.

Other important issues of pastoral care for women that were mentioned included: everyday worries and problems at work—with a share of 29 per cent—and questions of faith and congregational issues—at 11 per cent. The topics of raising children and being married to a minister were ranked at the bottom end of the scale.

Initial work results submitted

Under the theme “Pastoral care—yesterday, today, and tomorrow”, the survey collected insights about the what and how of pastoral care in general. The results in a nutshell: one quarter of those surveyed viewed the formal pastoral care visit familiar from past years as predominantly positive, while the rest viewed it as rather negative. Two thirds of those surveyed were satisfied with the current situation and one third were dissatisfied. And for the future, nearly 60 per cent would prefer more informal, spontaneous, and open pastoral care.

The preferred communication channel is clear: 77 per cent of those surveyed preferred face-to-face conversations and ongoing contact. By contrast, some 20 per cent were able to envision pastoral care via social media, messenger, or video call. The respondents were between 13 and 75 years old, and more than half were under 30. Most of them came from the four German districts and Switzerland.



Left: The flooded church in Sinzig (Germany)
Below: The rebuilt church in San Isidro (Philippines)



Tears of sorrow, tears of joy

Joy and sadness often exist side by side. While some can come together and celebrate again, others are struggling to come to terms with destruction. Let's pray for all.

On Wednesday, 14 July 2021, many congregations still had their normal midweek services. Then the water rose in parts of Germany and catastrophic flash floods devastated parts of the western part of the country. The disaster claimed at least 170 lives. In the town of Sinzig alone, twelve people died in a home for the disabled as the torrents tore through the small town. Church members were also affected: their basements were flooded, their cars were washed away, and one couple was left homeless. The church building in the town of Sinzig fared comparatively well. The water rose up to a meter in the church hall, leaving a thick layer of mud after it drained away.

Clean-up after the floods

On Friday Apostle Gert Opdenplatz and several members met to clear away most of the silt, while a technical support team pumped out the basement. Also on Saturday many came to help and clean the church. "The sanctuary is clean again, the solidarity was amazing," Roland Fuhrmann, who is responsible for the building department, informed District Apostle Storck.

On Sunday Apostle Gert Opdenplatz conducted a divine service in Hanau for the youth and prayed especially for the victims of the flood. He also reported on the situation in other parts of the world. In Gambia, for example, heavy rains had claimed the lives of ten people and resulted in the collapse of three churches. District Apostle Rainer Storck urged the members of his district to help the flood victims with a donation. The New Apostolic Church Western Germany and the aid organisation nak.karitativ want to help those affected: "Let us show solidarity and Christian love to our neighbours in this way," District Apostle Storck wrote. He particularly urged the young people to try and come up with fund drives to collect donations. "We are praying for all those who have lost loved ones," said Peter Johanning, the spokesman for the New Apostolic Church.

Rebuilding after earthquake

The Philippines are regularly hit by earthquakes. At the end of 2019 the Davao region was struck by a powerful 6.8 magnitude earthquake that damaged buildings and left many injured. One of the buildings damaged was the



Top left and right: The confirmands from Vo (Togo) and the confirmands from Lelystad (Netherlands)
Left: Some of the children recited Bible verses during the service in Tarkwa (Ghana)

■ ENA Togo, NAC Netherlands, NAC Ghana

New Apostolic church in San Isidro. NAC SEA Relief Fund, which had helped with relief efforts after the disaster, was also able to finance the rebuilding of the destroyed church.

The aid organisation is also active in other regions with preventative measures to prevent the worst. In Tangana-an, for example, NAC SEA Relief Fund provided a family with building materials so that they could build their new house on solid and secure ground. What was very touching is that members of the congregation immediately offered to help. Together they were able to build a safe home for the family.

Confirmation

June 20th, 2021 was a special day for the confirmands in Vo (Togo) and in Lelystad (Netherlands). In Vo ten confirmands were able to come together to celebrate their confirmation. A year earlier, confirmation had had to be cancelled because of Covid. This year, 2021, both confirmation groups celebrated together. District Elder Amèvi Fangbom based the service on Luke 6: 45: “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.” He made a point of referring to the Bible text issued by the Chief Apostle

specifically for confirmation: “But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one” (2 Thessalonians 3: 3).

In Lelystad (Netherlands) it was a similar scenario. Last year’s and this year’s confirmands were finally able to come together on 20 June 2021 and get to know each other. The planned Confirmation Day had had to be cancelled last year due to Covid-19. The confirmands and their teachers were particularly happy that they could finally be together with Apostle Peter Klene and celebrate under the motto: “I can do it!” Challenging group sports and games brought them together so that they could learn to work together well, and to trust and encourage each other. The afternoon was not about winners or losers but about a good team spirit. The divine service, which was conducted by Apostle Klene, was based on Ephesians 6: 10–18. He called upon the young people to stand firm and to dare to openly and honestly proclaim their faith—with God’s help.

Treasures in heaven

On Saturday, 26 June 2021, Apostle George Sam and Bishop Thomas Ampofo visited the Tarkwa district in Ghana to conduct a service for children. The Apostle read Luke 8: 18 as basis for his sermon and told the children the parable about the lamp under the bushel, which belongs in this context. He made the children understand that they were treasures in heaven and that they should display their talents and shine to the rest of the world: “No one lights a lamp and covers it.”



DISTRICT APOSTLE MICHAEL EHRIK:

Staying In The Fellowship!

Dear brothers and sisters

As the past year has shown, we have found many ways to foster fellowship despite the Corona pandemic. The idea of fellowship has gained in importance. Together in Christ - that is the motto for the year 2022. To pre-

pare together for the return of Jesus means to remain in fellowship with HIM. May we continue to seek fellowship in order to experience the love and closeness of God together within the congregation.

For this new period I wish you, my dear brothers and sisters, God's blessing and HIS protective hand. Let us walk together with Christ through this year with hope!

With warm greetings, yours

Michael Ehrich



Apostle Sam having fellowship with our young brothers and sisters



Children in Benin North after a divine service for children

GHANA: Fellowship

One of the reference points for the Takoradi Apostle Area for this year, 2022, is to create a common goal and belonging and inspire joint participation across the Apostle Area. Consequently, the districts begun the year with a coming together, to support each other, and to also to learn and gain strength through fellowship. This special initiative happened across the 16 districts within the Apostle area where each District Rector organized joint services not only for the adults, but also fellowship with our Sunday school. The purpose is to live this year's motto in God's fellowship, God's work and oneness of brothers and sisters.



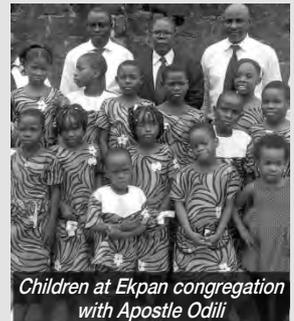
United service at Takoradi district

NIGERIA: Together

As God's children, we should rejoice over hearing infant noises in our midst. This is an indication of His covenant blessings and of His gift of life. God thereby adds to our number and advances His kingdom through the generations. The motto of the year 2022 "Together in Christ" has made most church ministers in Nigeria to teach children how to have fellowship in Christ. The children need to come together and be engaged spiritually, physically and morally with so much fun to make their learning easy.



Lagos East children enjoying the beauty of fellowship



Children at Ekpan congregation with Apostle Odili



Seminar tutors in Freetown

SIERRA LEONE: Get Together

We come together to pray, learn, proclaim the gospel, build school/churches etc., so as to fellowship in Christ. Seminars have been done for senior tutors and it focused on the basic knowledge of NAC, the concept of ministry and confirmation of our children to denounce Satan.

District Rector Joseph Tarawallie and members came together in Binkolo, north of Sierra Leone to make mud bricks for a school building project.

All gathered in Jesus name to prepare souls for eternal fellowship with God

It is in this spirit that various programs with children such as children's day, divine services, talk show, debates and singing have been organized in almost all the apostle's areas to foster the children fellowship in Christ.



Sisters carrying mud for brickmaking

Group photo of brick makers

BENIN: Be Active Together!

In the district of Porto-Novo, the year promises to be busy with activities under the theme "Fellowship in Christ". All sectors of the church are already busy:

- Young people are working on evangelism in the villages
- Special pastoral work is planned for the elderly
- Special seminars are planned for ministers and their wives
- Confirmation and catechism classes are being reactivated in the most remote areas
- Women are participating more in the life of the church.



Young people in an evangelisation campaign in the villages of Ouémé



The brothers and sisters and children talk about the motto of the year

GABON: Joy Of The Fellowship

Following the example of other countries, the communities of Gabon continue their march towards the goal of our faith and for this new year 2022, "Together in Christ".

It is to share this motto together that the communities of Libreville gathered in the festive garden of the Angondjé congregation on 24 December on the occasion of Christmas Eve. District Elder Leghanza explained the motto of the year to the children of God.

He took advantage of these moments of communion and joy to remind them of the major programmes of the year under this theme, including the day of reflection of the ministers of God on 18 April, the National Sunday School Day on 11 June and the National Youth Days from 11 to 14 August 2022.



The brothers and sisters look forward to many activities in the fellowship

TOGO: Solidarity In Action

Together in Christ also means helping each other. This is solidarity in action.

In this spirit, the New Apostolic Church has donated a drinking water well to the population of Tchanguï (northern Togo) in order to alleviate the need of the people. The structure was handed over to the population by Apostle Kloutsè on 19 January 2022.

We would like to show solidarity with the most disadvantaged people and help them by supporting them.



L'Apôtre Kloutsè a remis le point d'eau potable à la population



Handing over of a tricycle to a disabled sister



Apostle Condé and brothers and sisters of Tèmèssadou Toly (Guéckédou)

GUINEA: Living Fellowship

The motto "Together in Christ" is a concept chosen and wanted by our Chief Apostle for all the brothers and sisters of our church and for the year 2022.

In order for each brother and sister to grasp the high meaning of this motto, the Apostles and collaborators must do pedagogical work in all the congregations in their field of action.

In this regard, Apostle Nèma Jacques Conde visited the community of Yombodou and other places in the central region of Guinea to hold divine services.



Reception of Apostle Condé in the congregation of Yombodou



Youth from the South Guinea Region with Apostle Millimouno

GUINEA: Experience Fellowship

Accompanied by Apostle Millimouno, the youth leaders of the Southern Guinea Region shared with the students of the University and neighbouring schools the motto for the year 2022 entitled "Together in Christ". The youths swarmed to show the participants how we can live together as a fellowship in Christ despite our denominational, ethnic, sociological and racial differences.



Interested readers of the magazine Community



The New Apostolic students of the University of Southern Guinea

CAMEROON: Support The Neighbour

The ongoing crisis in Anglophone Cameroon left some families homeless. This is because their houses were burnt. With this, the brothers and sisters of the Bamenda District donated freely to support these brothers and sisters in need. This act is truly a visible sign of fellowship in Christ or being together in Christ.



Great gratitude for the support of the brothers and sisters in need



Donation handover in Bamenda District

NIGERIA: Music Camp

From 2nd through 30th of August 2021, 58 participants aged Seven to 20 years from all the Apostle Areas in Nigeria were camped in Lagos Central Church for the annual music camp sponsored by the JW Foundation in Germany. They were taught how to sight read in tonic sol-fa and staff music, play different types of instruments, vocal singing, composition and recording.



The children during the rehearsal for the studio recording



Sister Benedicta showcasing her talent on a site flute



The brass group presentation during the program



Section of the youth during the clean-up exercise

GHANA:

“Whatever You Do ...

... do heartily for the Lord”

Priest Noah Abrefa, Youth Priest for the Techiman Central Congregation, recently led the Techiman Central Youth to clean-up the church premises. It was a delightful occasion. The youth members turned up in their numbers and worked happily in showing their willingness to contribute to the church’s cleanliness and development.



“Men at work”



The youth leader encourages the youth



Participants of the seminar work out a topic together

GHANA:

Youth Care Seminars

A world without youth is a world without a future, and if the Church does not take care of its youth it is like a house built on sand. So what should be the attitude of the Church towards young people? For years, the Accra West District has been hosting a series of seminars for youth leaders and members in the area of Youth Care. The latest seminar was held on Saturday 27th November 2021 at the Accra Central church.



The Youth Care workbook



Sunday school teachers solve a task

Mourning Two Pioneers

GHANA:

Apostle Benjamin Pidah



On Monday, January 31, 2022, the unexpected passing of retired Apostle Benjamin Pidah, from Ghana, was announced.

Benjamin Pidah was born on March 19, 1956 in Afoega-Agata in the Volta Region, Ghana.

Over the years, our departed Apostle was ordained into the

following ministries: Deacon (1983), Priest (1985), Evangelist (1987), District Evangelist (1987), District Elder (1988). Chief Apostle Richard Fehr ordained him as Apostle on September 18, 1988, in Ghana. Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider placed him into retirement on January 27, 2019, in Cape Coast, Ghana.

Apostle Benjamin Pidah is survived by Sister Faustine, whom he married in June 1986. Their marriage was blessed with three children, all boys.

NIGERIA:

Bishop Antony E. Urom



Bishop Anthony Urom of Uruk Ata (South West Area of Nigeria) passed away peacefully in the early hours of January 8, 2022.

Bishop Anthony Urom was born on August 10, 1957, in Uruk Ata, Abak, Nigeria.

He married his wife Helen Duff Akpan in November 1978.

Their marriage was blessed with ten children, six females and four males.

Over the years, our departed Bishop was ordained into the following ministries: Priest (1987), Evangelist (1988), District Evangelist (1990) and District Elder (1995). Chief Apostle Richard Fehr ordained him as Bishop in Cotonou/Benin on October 08, 1997.

He was active in the working area of Apostle Udoh in Nigeria until his unexpected demise.

Liberia: Divine service with the District Apostle

On Sunday, 16 January 2022, District Apostle Michael Ehrich held a divine service in the church in Monrovia. He was accompanied by Lead Apostle Bauer and the Apostles from Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone. About 560 believers participated in and around the church. The divine service was transmitted to Liberian congregations via Youtube and could be heard on the radio throughout the country.

Bible text: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5)

Core thoughts: In his sermon, the District Apostle pointed out that our inner attitude should be guided by the example of Jesus. To illustrate this, he focused on some of Jesus' parables. Among other things, he referred to the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector from Luke 19: Both went up to the temple to pray. The District Apostle emphasised that we alone are dependent on God and should be aware that God's grace alone sustains us. We should not exalt ourselves above our neighbours, the District Apostle continued, and acting according to the example of Jesus helps us to live more and more according to the year's motto "Together in Christ" and to develop in the spirit of Jesus.

At the end of the divine service, a District Rector, a Deputy District Rector, and two Congregational Rectors were commissioned. Three Priests were also ordained.

