

community

The New Apostolic Church around the world

01/2023/EN

A man with glasses, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and patterned tie, is sitting in a black leather office chair at a wooden desk. He is smiling and looking towards the camera. On the desk in front of him is a thick, dark red book. Behind him is a blue office cabinet with several books on shelves. The background is slightly blurred.

Motto 2023:
**Serving and reigning
with Christ**

Editorial

Serving and reigning
with Christ

Divine service

Faith is our guide

Doctrine

Ordination of women:
the basis

New Apostolic Church
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Serving and reigning with Christ

Dear brothers and sisters,

we look back on an eventful year in which we experienced the nearness and guidance of our Lord in one way or another. One thing is certainly true, also in 2022 God continued to pursue His plan of redemption and led us closer to our goal: the participation in the first resurrection to serve Christ as priests and reign with Him in the kingdom of peace. This is what we read in Revelation 20: 6.

Those who have been endowed with the authority of Christ in the kingdom of peace can serve and carry out their mission unhindered. Their service will consist of preaching the gospel to human beings and leading them to God. Reigning has nothing to do with ruling the world, but to be a witness to the supremacy of Christ by embodying the love and mercy of God.

Jesus has already called us today to serve and reign in His spirit. Hence our motto for 2023: *Serving and reigning with Christ*.

We serve Him today already by leaving our daily lives behind and coming to church in order to worship God together. We also serve Jesus by putting His gospel into practice in our daily lives. And it is our service to others to love them as Christ loves us.

We have also been called to rule with Christ in 2023. This does not mean that we exercise power over our neighbour, but that we rule over our own thoughts and actions with the help of Christ:

- His love does not divide, but unites.
- His grace picks us up when we fall.
- His wisdom helps us to learn from our mistakes.



■ New Apostolic Church International

We are not helplessly exposed to temptation either, but can rule over the sin that lies at the door to our hearts.

The best way to remain in control of our own destiny is to let Christ reign in our hearts.

Together with all the Apostles, I wish you a blessed and fulfilling year 2023!

Heartfelt greetings

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'Jean-Luc Schneider'. The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping 'J' and 'S'.

Jean-Luc Schneider



Faith is our guide

Dear brothers and sisters, I must confess that it is really a great joy for me to be able to be with you again here in the Philippines. You know that it has not been possible to travel for a long time. And I am very thankful that so many congregations can be connected today in Indonesia and other countries. Let us celebrate this day as a festive day. We are celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the Church in the Philippines, and that is a reason to express our gratitude. Fifty years ago, faithful servants of God came to this country and proclaimed this great message to the Filipinos: Jesus is coming! And He sent His Apostles in order to prepare us for His return. He will come and lead us into His kingdom. We will be transformed into the image of Jesus Christ. We will have perfect fellowship with Him and with

2 Corinthians 5: 7

*“For we walk by faith,
not by sight.”*



On 16 October last year, Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider conducted a divine service in Tupi in celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the New Apostolic Church in the Philippines
Left: In the sacristy

Fifty years later, the promise has still not been fulfilled

one another in His kingdom. And thank God, many people in the Philippines accepted God's message and believe in it. And step by step, God's work could grow. Today we have many brothers and sisters in many congregations. And it is a great joy to have so many faithful brothers and sisters in this country.

We express our gratitude by thanking those who planted the seed and then those who came later and watered it. First of all, we thank God who has given the increase. Without His help and His blessing none of this would have been possible. Then we thank the servants of God and the brothers and sisters—those who are still alive and those who are already in the beyond—and we praise God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit for His grace and His blessings.

Fifty years ago, they proclaimed: Jesus is coming and wants to lead us into His kingdom; we will be transformed into the image of Christ, and as the church of Christ we will have fellowship with God and with one another. But fifty years later, this promise has still not been fulfilled. And everyone can see that the Lord has still not come. I am still not like Jesus Christ; I am still a poor sinner; and the fellowship in the church is nice, but definitely not perfect. So what about this promise? The answer is: as long as we are on earth, we have to live by faith and not by sight. The promise is still valid, but we must believe and walk accordingly in order to experience the fulfilment of this promise. This has always been the case.

Remember Abraham, God gave him a wonderful promise. He told him that he would have a son and that he would be the father of a great nation. But Abraham was already old and it was humanly impossible. However, God told him,

“I cannot bless you here, you have to get out of your country, to a land that I will show you.” Abraham had no idea where this land was and what it would be like, but He believed and walked. And it took a long time until this promise was fulfilled. Jesus already said that Abraham had actually only waited for Him, Jesus Christ, the Son of God (John 8: 56). Abraham had to wait for centuries until his longing was satisfied and he could see Jesus Christ, the Saviour, on earth. He had to wait for a long time and believe until the end before he could experience

the fulfilment of the promise.

God came to Moses and the people of Israel and told them that He would lead them into a wonderful land, the Promised Land. But they had to leave Egypt for this. And they had to believe and walk through the desert for a long time until their wish was realised and God's promise was finally fulfilled. God was faithful. He fulfilled His promises to Abraham and the people of Israel, but first they had to believe and walk by faith.

I repeat this on purpose: the promise God gave through His Apostles is still valid. But it has not yet been fulfilled, and we still have to walk by faith. What does that mean? It means that we are truly convinced that what God says is true. For Abraham, the word of God was more important than what he could see with his own eyes. To believe means that one is absolutely convinced that the word of God is the truth, not what I see, not what I understand, but what God says. To believe in God also means that one has confidence in Him. To believe in God means that you are confident He will do what He promises and that He can do it.

In the case of Abraham, it seemed impossible that he and his wife would still have children at their age. But he had confidence in God: He can do it, and He will do it. So faith means: I am convinced that what God says is the truth; I have confidence in Him, He can do it, and he will do it. And because I am convinced and I have confidence, I am patient and will wait. That is faith and that is what we have to do: to be convinced that God's word is more important than what we can see and understand. We trust God that He can do and will do what He has promised, and we wait patiently until He will fulfil His promises.



We patiently wait until He fulfils His promises

So that is faith. Now we still have to walk by faith, or live by it. The people of Israel had to believe that God would deliver them, but they had to leave Egypt and that required courage. They could not just say, “Okay, let’s get up and go!” To leave Egypt was a difficult decision to make. But they took the risk and set out. And God delivered them from the Egyptians. You know the story about the Red Sea, I don’t think I need to go into that. God saved the Israelites. But that was not the end of the story, but the beginning. Once they got to the other side of the Red Sea and were finally safe from the Egyptians there was the desert. They had to continue to prove their faith.

We have been given this promise: God wants to deliver us and lead us into His kingdom. However, to enter the kingdom of God we have to leave the kingdom of the evil one. We made a vow and said: I renounce evil. And because of this faith and our willingness, God delivered us through the baptism with water and the Spirit. We could not see it, but through baptism with water and the Spirit we have been delivered from the dominion of the evil one. However, that was not the end of the story, it was only the beginning.

And now we have to walk, as the people of Israel had to walk. What does that mean? Like the people of Israel, we too have to follow the instructions of God. God told them every day what they had to do, and they had to do it. We too have to walk and follow the instructions of God. He teaches

us how to love others. He teaches us how we can increase in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Through the Holy Spirit, He tells us how we can be transformed into the image of Christ. We must follow the instructions. We have to learn to love more. We need to increase our knowledge of Jesus Christ. We have to overcome our old nature and become a new creature in Christ. The people of Israel had to cross the desert, and in doing so they had to fight against their enemies. We too we have to fight against our enemy, the evil one, and overcome temptation. And that is an ongoing process. We have to move forward and overcome. And there was another reason why God wanted the Israelites to cross the desert. He wanted them to become a true people, a nation. The Hebrew people consisted of many tribes, and in Egypt everyone walked and lived for himself. During their journey through the desert, they learned to become a true nation, to become one. They realised they needed each other and that they belonged together.

In short, we have to believe and walk in faith to increase our love and knowledge of Jesus Christ and move forward in our spiritual development. We have to fight our oppressors and we have to learn to become one in Christ, together in Christ. Sure, when the Israelites went into the desert they could not envisage the promise of God. They could, however, experience the presence of God. Sure, they could not see God, but they could hear His voice through Moses. And Moses told them, “God tells you what you must do!”



The Israelites were also able to experience the help of God. Many times they were in an impossible situation for which they simply could not find a solution. And God showed them, “For Me, nothing is impossible, I can help you. Just trust Me.” This is what they experienced during their journey in the desert. They experienced the presence of God in their midst: through His word, through the manna, and through His help. This is also true for us. And God remained faithful even when the people were not faithful. He would have had many reasons to say, “Okay, I am going to abandon you. You are not faithful, you don’t trust Me. Have it your way.” No, God never abandoned them.

Today we cannot see God either, but we can hear His voice through the Holy Spirit and through the Apostles. And we can often experience that God is with us, that He talks to us. The Israelites experienced the presence of God every day because they received their food from Him. They received manna from heaven, which was a great miracle. But sadly, they got used to it and it became normal for them. They totally forgot that it was a miracle.

Dear brothers and sisters, we also receive food from heaven. We receive the body and blood of Jesus Christ when we celebrate Holy Communion. That is the bread from heaven, a great miracle. But maybe we have also grown used to it after receiving it for so many years. Perhaps it has become normal for us to come to divine service and receive Holy Communion. Brothers and sisters, please never forget what this means: God Himself provides this food, this is a great miracle. Never forget the miracle of Holy Communion.

Honestly, from a human point of view, Jesus would have had many reasons to say, “Let them be, I give up. I have told them so many times what to do and what not to do, and they did exactly the opposite.” At least He could say that of me, and I tell you He would have many reasons to say that. But as it says in the Bible, Jesus is not ashamed to be our brother. And He remains with us despite our weaknesses.

We believe, we walk... The promise has not yet been fulfilled, but we can experience the presence of God in our midst. We have no reason to give up. I was very glad when I heard the choir sing “Never give up”. You understood today’s message: never give up, keep on walking by faith. We have no reason to give up and return to Egypt, so to speak. Once we have decided to renounce evil, and God has delivered us from the domination of evil, please don’t give up and return to Egypt. Don’t say, “Jesus did not fulfil

District Apostle Helper John Fendt (left) and District Apostle Enrique Minio (centre) were called to assist



His promise so I will revert to sin and use the way of sin to get what I want.” I am sure you understand what I mean. Don’t go back to “Egypt” only because it is easier and more comfortable there. I know your life would be so much easier if you would just sin a little bit more. Please, don’t give up, keep walking and live your faith, don’t go back to Egypt.

The people of Israel were often tempted to just stay where they were. They said, “The promise will never be fulfilled. Let’s stay here, it is not that bad after all.” Sadly, many Christians have given up hope. They no longer yearn for the kingdom of God in eternity and for perfect fellowship with God. They have given up. They no longer yearn to be transformed into the image of Christ and say instead, “Let’s just stay here.” We believe in God, we are obedient, and we want God to help us in our earthly lives. We want Him to solve our problems, to help us, to give us His blessings, but our focus is on our earthly lives, on earthly matters. Their hope for living in the kingdom of God has disappeared. Please, brothers and sisters, don’t give up hope. The promise is still valid. Don’t just use your faith and Jesus Christ for earthly matters. Don’t give up! We are preparing ourselves for the return of Christ.

The people of Israel were also tempted to say, “We are tired of Moses. We want another leader. We are not happy with

this one, he is not good enough. The things he tells us are not so nice. Let us look for another leader.” Let us follow the Apostles. They have been sent to lead us into the kingdom of God. Let us follow them faithfully. Sometimes what they tell us is nice, sometimes we don’t like what they tell us. However, we know that they have been sent to lead us into the kingdom of God. Let us follow them until the end. We know that the promise has yet to be fulfilled.

Jesus has not yet come, we are not yet perfect. We still do not conform to the image of Christ. The church is not yet perfect either, our fellowship is far from perfect, and promises have not been fulfilled, but we do not give up. We continue to believe and to walk by faith.

Dear brothers and sisters, instead of complaining that the promise has not yet been fulfilled, let us rather realise what that means for us. Sure, we are not perfect yet, we are not like Christ yet in spite of all the years we have been working on it. What does that mean for us? That means that we are fully dependent on the grace of Jesus. We need the grace of Jesus Christ. We will never manage to be perfect on our own. We need His grace. That means we need to be humble and pray, “Jesus, give me Your grace! Without Your grace, I am lost.” And because we realise that we are not perfect yet, let us be humble and ask for Jesus’ grace.

The Chief Apostle ordains Freddie Nuyad (centre) and Medie Sabal (right) as Apostles



Above: The Apostles Alfredo Pascual (left) and Cleofas Bual (right) were retired during the service. Here they are pictured with the Chief Apostle after the divine service

Yes, we ministers are not perfect yet and everybody can see that. That means that we cannot be satisfied with what we are. We have to increase our knowledge and understanding of the gospel. We still have to learn to love more and better. We too depend on the grace of Jesus Christ, but we also have to walk and move forward in our ministry. Even if we have been serving the Lord for forty or fifty years there are still things we need to learn. Servants of God, beloved co-workers, let us be humble, we are still not as God wants us to be. Don't give up, continue to move forward. Keep learning. Yes, the Church is definitely not perfect. Yes, the promise has still not been fulfilled, the fellowship is not perfect. One could complain about this. But wise children of God say, "I have to do more for the unity of the Church. I have to do more for my brother, for my sister. I have to love them more. I can make progress in my love for my neighbour." So instead of complaining let us say, "I can do more and better, help me do it."

Brothers and sisters, that is today's message. The promise that Jesus gave is still valid, but as long as we are on earth we must walk and let our faith guide us in order to make progress. Let us not give up. What God says is the truth. We are confident that He will do what He promised, and we are waiting patiently. However, we have to move on and love our neighbour more and increase our knowledge. Let

us not give up, but fight our oppressors and work for the unity of the work of God. We experience the presence of God in our midst through His word, the apostolate, Holy Communion, and through His help in our daily lives. We do not want to go back to "Egypt", we do not want to stay here on earth, we want to enter the kingdom of God, and we want to enter it together. Let us follow Christ, and let us follow the Apostles until the end, and we will experience: God is faithful, He keeps His promises.

CORE THOUGHTS

We are certain that God loves us and we trust Him. We continue with our spiritual development and experience the presence of God on our side. We will experience the fulfilment of His promise.

On 22 September Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider (right) paid a visit to the congregation in Banjul in Gambia. He was hosted by District Apostle Rainer Storck (second from right)



■ New Apostolic Church Gambia

| God's word in plain language

Faith, doctrine, preaching: everything is based on the Bible. That is why it is so important both for the ministers and members to know their Bible. It cannot be read just like any other book, however. Here is a manual from a service by the Chief Apostle.

Comfort, strength, and blessing: some people expect miracles. But this is not how God works. "God wants to talk to human beings, and He wants them to listen to Him. And that is why the preaching in our Church is so important," Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider said on 22 September in Banjul, Gambia. "Not every word spoken at the altar is God's word." The sermon is not perfect because it is delivered by imperfect human beings, the Chief Apostle said. But the Holy Spirit can provide us with the strength we need in spite of these imperfections.

"You need a good knowledge of the Bible." For the Bible is the foundation of our faith, the Chief Apostle said. "So the ministers should know the Bible. The believers should also know the Bible. Otherwise, it is difficult to understand the meaning of the preaching." Above all: "Reading the Bible gives comfort and wisdom from God."

Not a book like any other

"You cannot read the Bible as you read any other book," the Chief Apostle said. Because what has been written by inspiration of the Holy Spirit must also be read under the

inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he continued. "Otherwise, it cannot be understood in the right manner."

"This is exactly where the problem lies," the Chief Apostle pointed out with reference to the Bible text that the divine service was based on: "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me" (John 5: 39).

The scribes saw Holy Scripture as a collection of rules and laws. However: "Jesus said: that is not the true understanding of the Scriptures." But: "If you are inspired by the Holy Spirit you know that all of Scripture testifies of Jesus Christ."

Between heaven and earth

"That was at the time of Jesus," the Chief Apostle said. "What about us today?" he asked, warning against misunderstanding the Scriptures.

■ "The Bible cannot replace science," he said. The Bible texts reflect the knowledge of the time they were written in. The authors, for example, thought that the sun



District Apostle Kububa Soko from Zambia (right) was called to contribute to the sermon during the divine service in Gambia

revolved around the earth (Joshua 10: 12) and that the earth was flat (Revelation 7: 1).

- “The Bible cannot make decisions for you.” God does not want to make decisions for us. The Holy Spirit tells us what we have to consider to make our decisions. But we have to decide ourselves, the Chief Apostle said.

In this context, he referred to an old adage: “The Bible does not tell us about heaven and earth, it tells us how to live on earth to enter into heaven.”

Understanding contradictions properly

Let us avoid making our decisions or justifying them based on an isolated passage in the Bible. On many points, the Bible’s texts say everything and its opposite, and everyone can find what suits them. The Chief Apostle illustrated some of the contradictions in the Bible.

- Sometimes God wanted the people of Israel to fight, other times not. Sometimes Jesus wanted the disciples to go only to the Jews, other times He wanted them to also go to the Gentiles. “Imagine you open the Bible and find only one of these sentences.”
- In 1 Corinthians 7: 26–33, Paul recommends not marrying to please the Lord. But we read in 1 Timothy 4: 1–3 that those who advise believers not to marry are false teachers! So was Paul a false teacher?
- In 1 Timothy 2 it says that God desires all people to be saved. A few verses later it says that women who were childless could not be saved. That would mean: God wants the salvation of all, except women whom He does not allow to have children.

“So far our human understanding: this poses a huge problem,” the Chief Apostle said. “But God says: use the Holy

Spirit in order to understand things. And to help you, I have sent the Apostles.” They have the mission and authority to interpret the Bible.

Examining messages properly

“When we read the Old Testament in the light of the Holy Spirit, what can we learn?” the Chief Apostle asked, answering: God’s love for us is unconditional. He is faithful and keeps all His promises. He expects us to believe in Him and trust Him. He expects us to love God and our neighbour. Our election is based on grace, not on our merits. It is a calling to serve Him.

And the messages from the New Testament: Jesus Christ is the Son of God, who came to earth. Salvation means eternal life and eternal fellowship with Christ and His own. All of humankind can be saved if they believe in Jesus Christ. Those who want to prepare for the return of Christ must be reborn out of water and Spirit, receive Holy Communion, and follow the teaching of the apostolate.

In summing up, the Chief Apostle said: “The Bible is truly a wonderful source of strength, comfort, and wisdom. We need to know the Bible. We need to read it. But we must also allow ourselves to be inspired by the Holy Spirit. The apostolate has been sent by Jesus to help us understand the Bible properly. And if we do, we will find everything in the Bible we need to obtain salvation.”

CORE THOUGHTS

John 5: 39

“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.”

Our faith is based on the Bible. Read in the light of the Spirit, the Bible is a source of comfort and wisdom. Jesus entrusted the Apostles with the authority and mission to interpret it through the Holy Spirit.

Preserving what's old, accepting what's new

Nothing is as constant as change. In a divine service in Mexico on 7 August the Chief Apostle put the focus on old things that must be preserved and new things that are good—impulses that are particularly important at this time.



■ New Apostolic Church USA



“To understand the meaning of the Bible text we have to look at the context,” Chief Apostle Schneider said in his opening remarks. Jesus Christ came and proclaimed the kingdom of God to the people and told them, “I did not come to destroy the law of Moses, but to fulfil it.” This surprised the people, of course. The Son of God did not always keep the Mosaic Law. “Jesus had to explain to them how to understand the Mosaic Law correctly: it is the law of God.”

The law of God

Jesus formulated the law of God as follows: above all, you must love God with all your heart and your neighbour as yourself. “God gave the Ten Commandments to the people

of Israel to explain to them how to express their love for God and their neighbour in concrete terms,” the Chief Apostle explained. Then there was a whole series of other rules that helped the people of Israel to live their faith on a daily basis. But these laws were always adapted to the circumstances, even in those days. For example, God was not worshipped in the same way in the desert as in the temple or later in exile.

In Jesus’ time, the circumstances had changed again and were entirely different, which is why He made it clear to the people that “the will of God, the highest level, is always more important than the rules of everyday life”. The most important thing is to love God and your neighbour. And that is why Jesus could say, “I fulfil the law of God.” As

for the Pharisees: “Their love for their neighbour was not exactly their strong point.”

The new law explained by Jesus

Jesus once more made it clear to the people what the most important rules were: rebirth out of water and the Spirit, eating His flesh and drinking His blood, denying oneself, and being transformed into the image of Jesus Christ.

The Apostles and the rules

Jesus charged the Apostles with the mission to proclaim the will of God and the new law and to lead the congregations. That also required laws that were then adapted to the time. For example, the members of the first church shared all their possessions with one another. In later congregations this was no longer necessary.

“What the first Apostles did, today’s Apostles also do,” Chief Apostle Schneider continued. They explain how we can put our faith into practice today. “They have to interpret this law and adapt it to today’s situation.” As a result, some believers are confused while others are even upset. At worst, some reject the whole message.

“Brothers and sisters,” the Chief Apostle said urgently, “let us be aware that the essence has not changed. The essence of the message is the same. Jesus Christ is God. And to be saved you must believe in Him, accept Him as your Lord, and keep His law. You have to love God and your neighbour. You have to keep the Ten Commandments. You have to be reborn out of water and the Spirit, receive Holy Communion, and be transformed into the image of Jesus Christ.” There is no reason to reject the message. On the contrary: “Those who accept what is preached are blessed by God.”

Changes today

Keeping the old things and adapting them to today’s situation applies to every child of God. “We are open for new things, but we don’t give up the old things which continue to be essential,” the Chief Apostle reminded the congregation. Changes can give rise to new things, which is good.

- Changing circumstances: people no longer have as much time to volunteer and become involved in the Church and serve the Lord as they used to. But other things open up in return. “Couldn’t you do something new for the Lord and your neighbour?” the Chief Apostle asked. For example, talking to people you have

never talked to before or doing something good for people you have never cared about...

- Changing society: the diversity in society has also changed the composition of our congregations. “We have to accept this new composition, this variety, these differences, and accept one another as Jesus accepts us.”

But the old rules still apply: “If you want to be a disciple of Jesus, deny yourself and follow His example. This is what it means to be transformed into the image of Christ.”



The Chief Apostle assigns Apostle John Schnabel (left) as a District Apostle Helper

CORE THOUGHTS

Matthew 13: 52

“Then He said to them, ‘Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old.’”

The law of Christ is inviolable. We must believe in Christ, love God and our neighbour, receive the word of God and the sacraments, and become like Christ. The Spirit reminds us of the old things that we are to keep and helps us discover new things.

Below: A view of the congregation at the Day of the Youth in Fribourg
Right: Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider and District Apostle Jürg Zbinden at the altar



■ Jonas Spengler and Marc Genoux

Together in Christ: living and experiencing it

This was the theme of a three-day youth event for which the young people from Italy, Austria, Switzerland, and parts of France gathered at the beginning of September. Different activities took place in four camps, culminating in a joint youth service in Fribourg in Switzerland.

At the beginning of the service, Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider made a point of encouraging those young people who were unwell or experiencing other problems and assured them: “We can rest assured that the Redeemer will not pass anyone by.” Paul, he said, did not have an easy life either. “In his difficult days—and even in good days—he realised: the Lord always gives me what I need to achieve my goal.” The Apostle’s statement “I can do all things” was, however, not a sign that nothing was impossible for him, Chief Apostle Schneider said. The meaning, he said, is different: “I can always have what is most important for me and that makes me happy.”

Nowadays, young people face many challenges. The insecurity brought on by the Covid crisis, the energy crisis,

or global warming is noticeable. “With the help of Jesus Christ we can deal with anything. He wants to help us to be content in all circumstances. Don’t worry, with Jesus you can do it!”

Current needs of young people

Young people have many questions and are looking for answers to help them understand the world, said the Chief Apostle. This poses problems for them today, he said. “In today’s world, we are flooded with information. When people have a question and search for answers, they find not one but a thousand answers that range from one extreme to the other.” So it is difficult to know the right answer.



The highlight of the three-day youth event was a joint divine service with Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider. District Apostles John Kriel and Rüdiger Krause were also there and were called to assist, as was Apostle Andreas Sargant

“Jesus Christ can help you. He can say of Himself, ‘I am the truth, My words will never pass away.’” The Chief Apostle advised the young people: “If you are looking for answers, look for them in Jesus! He has the best answer, the one that is right for you, the one that fits your situation. His solution is always the best!”

“Today’s generation also feels a need to belong. They want to be part of a group and be accepted. This is perfectly understandable, but can sometimes also be dangerous.” You quickly become dependent on the opinions and views of those you are trying to impress. And so you showcase yourself on Tiktok, Instagram, and other social media platforms. As a result, the Chief Apostle says, there is a danger that the same young person takes on a completely different personality depending on the group she or he wants to impress. Also in this regard Chief Apostle Schneider advised the young people to come closer to Jesus’ heart: “You are always welcome with Him, at any time and just as you are. He allows you to be yourself.”

“Young people don’t want to be pressured and resist force. They want to have fun,” the Chief Apostle explained. That is why young people find it difficult to accept authority. “But even there Jesus helps us to be happy and content because He does not come as a ruler who forces us. He does not give orders. He loves us and works exclusively with love.” Young people want to be free and are reluctant to commit themselves. The fear of being tied down and therefore missing out on something better is a sign of insecurity, the Chief Apostle said. This applies to both professional life and

partnerships. He made clear: “The Church has no say in how you organise your personal life, but I can guarantee one thing: if you make a commitment to Jesus Christ, you take absolutely no risks. There’s nothing better!”

The danger today is distraction, the Chief Apostle said. He went on to say that people do many things at the same time, but do not derive any real satisfaction from them. Jesus would have some good advice here for us too: “Focus on what’s important. If you want to get something out of life, focus on love. Those who love are guaranteed a fulfilled life.”

As a last point, the Chief Apostle addressed people’s need for personal fulfilment. People want their life to have meaning. This is particularly pronounced in the young generation, he noted. It is not just a matter of earning money in one’s professional life, but of

experiencing a sense of purpose. This then also raises the question “What do I want to become, what should my true personality be?” In their search for a sense of purpose in life, young people should be aware of one thing: “Do you realise that you are part of a wonderful programme? As a Christian, you are called to be part of it. It’s not just about you being saved. The plan goes much further, God’s plan of redemption involves creation and all human beings. God wants to deliver all human beings from evil.”

In conclusion, the Chief Apostle said that anyone who is oriented towards this will of Jesus Christ can experience: “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”

CORE THOUGHTS

Philippians 4: 13

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

Thanks to Christ we can face whatever happens to us and remain masters of our destiny. Christ meets our desires and provides for our needs.

JESUS WASHES HIS DISCIPLES' FEET

ACCORDING TO JOHN 13: 1-20

It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for Him to leave this world and go to His Father. Together with His disciples He celebrated the Last Supper.

During the meal, Jesus stood up and took off His outer garment. He took a towel and wrapped it around His waist. Then He poured water into a bowl and began to wash His disciples' feet. He dried them with the towel that was wrapped around Him.

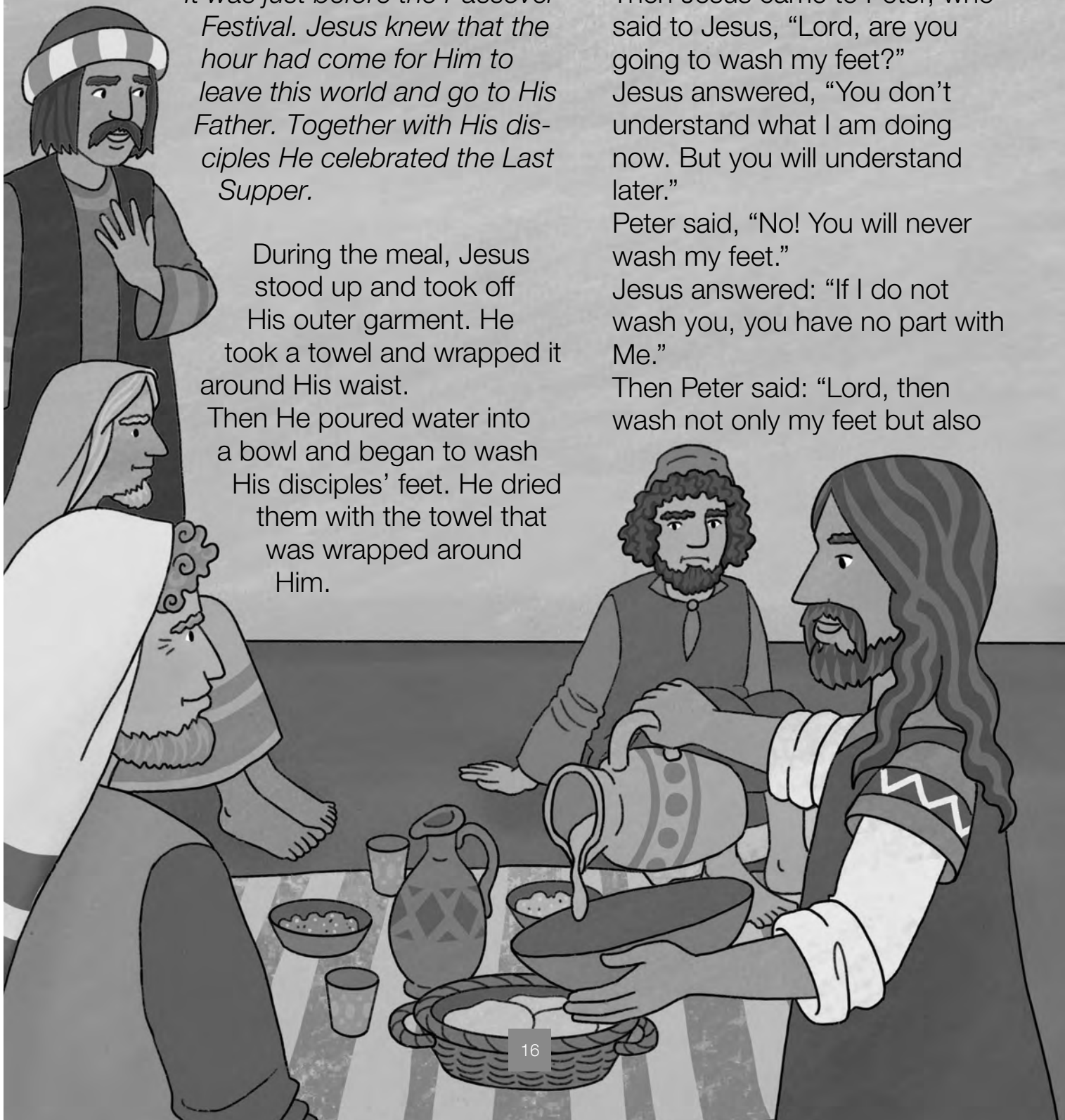
Then Jesus came to Peter, who said to Jesus, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

Jesus answered, "You don't understand what I am doing now. But you will understand later."

Peter said, "No! You will never wash my feet."

Jesus answered: "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me."

Then Peter said: "Lord, then wash not only my feet but also



my hands and my head!"

Jesus said: "He who is washed only needs to wash his feet so that he is completely clean." He added, "All of you except for one are clean."

Jesus knew that one of His disciples would betray Him.

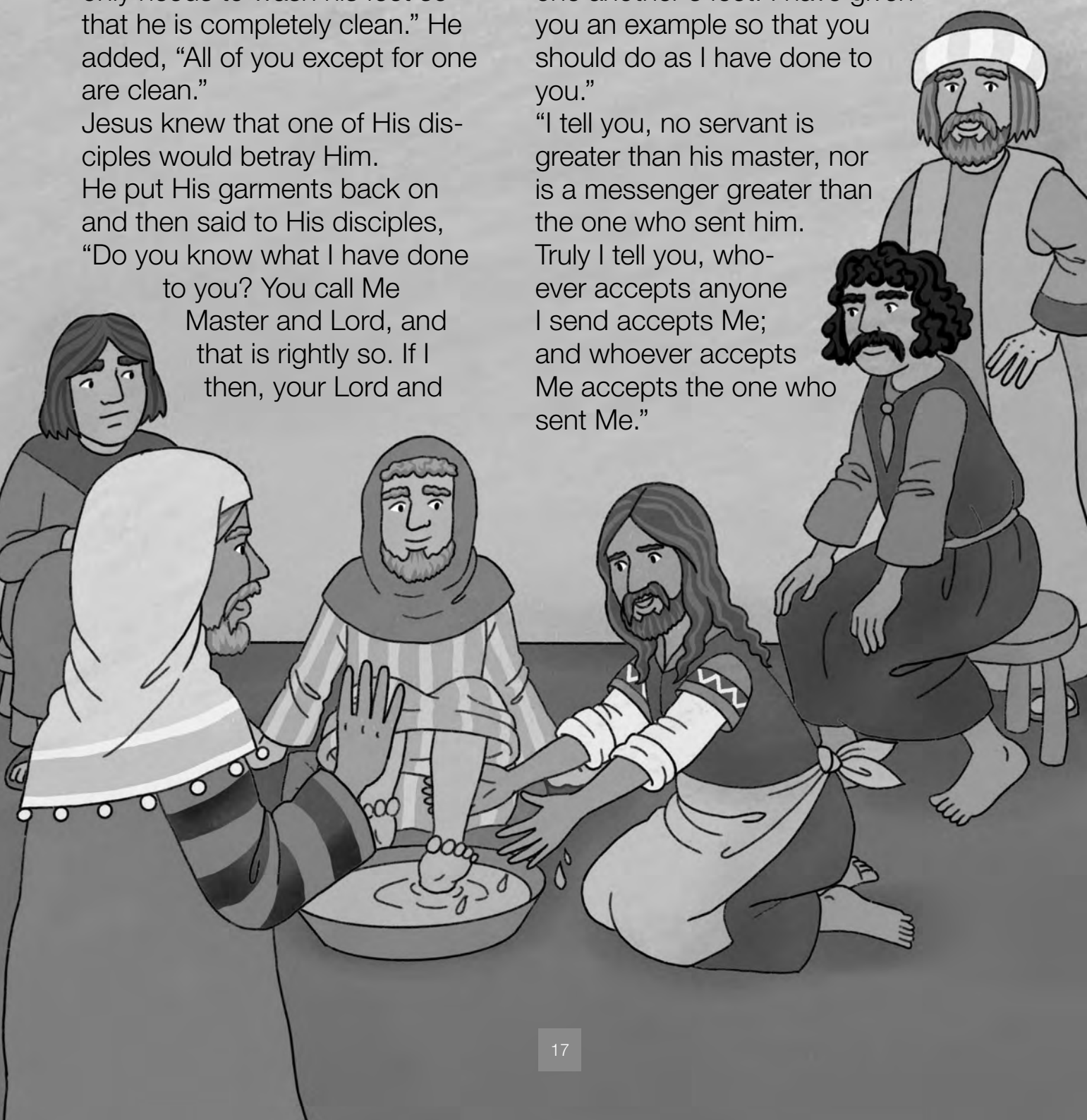
He put His garments back on and then said to His disciples, "Do you know what I have done

to you? You call Me Master and Lord, and that is rightly so. If I then, your Lord and

Teacher, have washed your feet then you also should wash one another's feet. I have given you an example so that you should do as I have done to you."

"I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.

Truly I tell you, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts Me; and whoever accepts Me accepts the one who sent Me."



AT DAVID'S IN NDOLA, ZAMBIA

Mulishani. That means “how are you?” in Ichibemba, one of the 72 languages spoken in Zambia. This is the language that is the most widely used in the Copperbelt, where I live. This is a region in which copper is mined. I live in **Ndola**, the capital of Copperbelt Province.



My name is David. I was born on 10 June 2011. I am eleven years old. Meet my **family**: my father, my mother, my five-year-old sister Lubuto, and me. My father, Trevor, is a Priest in our congregation. He works in marketing for a telecommunication provider in Zambia. My mother, Mweshi, is a physiotherapist and works in one of the biggest hospitals in the country.

I am in grade six. My sister goes to the same **school**, and is in kindergarten. My favourite subjects are math, music, and English.

This is our **church** in Ndola. It is the biggest church in Zambia and offers seating for about 5,000 people. The Chief Apostle has been here twice. The church was dedicated in July 2014. I had just turned four then.



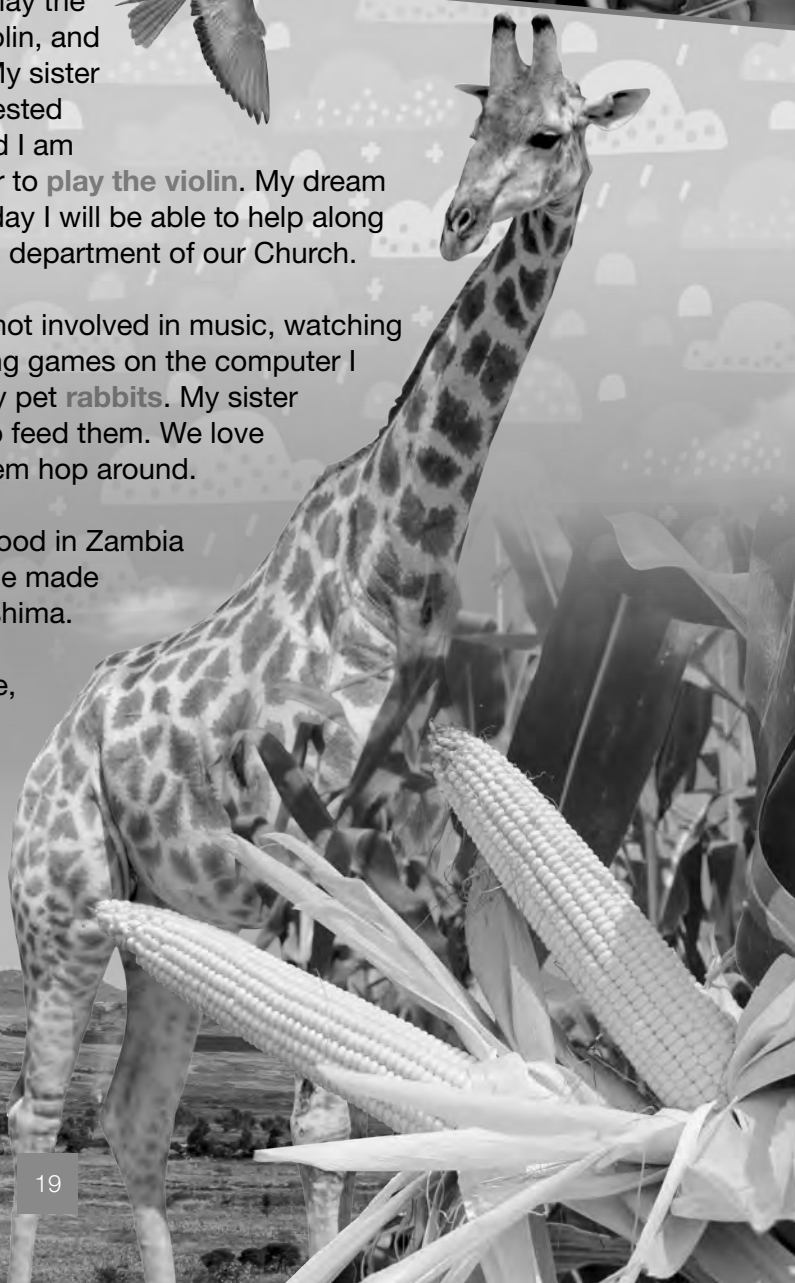
Sunday School lessons take place after service every Sunday, while music classes and choir practices are on Saturdays. I am the youngest orchestra member in our district. I play the **violin**. The senior members of the orchestra are very helpful and often they let me conduct interludes during the services or in concerts. Sometimes I conduct the children's choir. I love my congregation, my Sunday School friends and teachers, and our conductors. I just love my church!



I practise quite a bit at home. I play the recorder, violin, and the piano. My sister is also interested in music and I am teaching her to **play the violin**. My dream is that one day I will be able to help along in the music department of our Church.

When I am not involved in music, watching TV, or playing games on the computer I play with my pet **rabbits**. My sister and I love to feed them. We love to watch them hop around.

The staple food in Zambia is **nshima**, which is basically a thick porridge made from maize. No meal is complete without nshima. I also love pizza. When it is time for meals, I help my mum to cook. So far I can cook rice, fry eggs, and prepare a simple breakfast.





Ordination of women: the basis

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The Apostles are “stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Corinthians 4: 1). Especially when it comes to issues for which there is no clear biblical answer, it is up to the apostolate to arrive at sound decisions with the help of the Holy Spirit and reason. The question of whether men and women are equally worthy to receive ministerial authority and a ministerial mandate is one of those questions that the apostolate must answer.

During his term of office, Chief Apostle Fehr made a variety of suggestions for clarifying and sharpening the doctrine of the New Apostolic Church. He initiated the composition of a book in which the teaching of the New Apostolic Church could be presented in an authoritative manner. The result of these efforts was the Catechism, which was published in 2012—that is, during Chief Apostle Leber’s term of office.

It was in the Catechism of the New Apostolic Church that the New Apostolic understanding of church was developed. Here the distinction between the visible and imperfect churches and the one invisible and perfect church of Jesus Christ plays a decisive role. The development of an understanding of church and a doctrine of the sacraments was unprecedented in the history of the New Apostolic Church. However, it was not yet possible to present an actual doctrine of ministry in the Catechism. Nevertheless, the Catechism did describe some essential aspects of a future doctrine of ministry and open up some possible ways of thinking about it.

As an example, the following explanations of the Fifth Article of Faith make a distinction between ministry and service, and mention essential elements of ordination: “The human being, as expressed in the Fifth Article of Faith, bears his ministry on the basis of divine will and not human decision. This is executed or implemented by the Apostle ministry. The ministry and the apostolate are inseparably linked to one another. Consequently, where the Apostle ministry is active there is also a spiritual ministry (see 7). In the church of Christ there are also various other functions which aid in proclaiming the gospel and serve to the benefit of the believers, which can also be performed without ordination. ... The ordination to a spiritual ministry incorporates three aspects: authority, blessing, and sanctification. Especially for priestly ministries, the element of authority is of decisive importance, because they are authorised to proclaim the forgiveness of sins by commission of the Apostle and to consecrate Holy Communion. The priestly ministries share in the proper dispensation of the sacraments through the Apostles. The proper proclamation of God’s universal will

to save also occurs through the authority bestowed through the apostolate. Through the blessing, both the priestly ministries and the Deacons are assured of the divine support and help of the Holy Spirit in the exercise of their ministries. Sanctification points to the fact that it is God Himself, in His holiness and inviolability, who seeks to act through the ministry” (CNAC 2.4.5).

It was in 2014 that work began on the formulation of a New Apostolic concept of ministry. In the year 2019, an essay entitled “The New Apostolic understanding of the spiritual ministry” appeared, which was published in a special edition (2/2022) of the *Divine Service Guide*. Among these statements pertaining to ministry, the terms ministerial authority and ministerial mandate are of essential significance. These will be briefly explored in the following.

SUMMARY: The apostolate—which is comprised of the Apostles in oneness with the Chief Apostle—has the task of ensuring the timely order within the congregations under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The question of whether men and women are equally worthy to receive ministerial authority and a ministerial mandate is one of those questions that the apostolate must answer and decide for the future.

Ministerial authority and ministerial mandate

The Catechism already emphasises that “the element of authority is of decisive importance” (CNAC 2.4.5). The Catechism likewise describes the commission or mandate: “Ministers discharge their ministries within the framework of the authority issued to them. To this end they receive a commission from their Apostle, who assigns them a working area” (CNAC 7.8). On the basis of a resolution passed by the District Apostle Meeting, the aforementioned essay on the understanding of ministry incorporates the following binding statements:

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

- Definition of **ministerial authority**: Ministerial authority constitutes the right to act and speak in the name of the triune God, which is founded upon Jesus Christ and issued through the Apostle by way of ordination in the power of the Holy Spirit. Ministerial authority is issued

through ordination. It ends when the Apostle accepts the resignation of the minister, the minister is dismissed from his ministry, or at the time of the minister’s death.

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

Among other things, ministerial authority relates to the dispensation of the sacraments, the right to ordain, and to proclaim the word of God. The ministerial mandate regulates the context in which this ministerial authority is to be exercised, be it in the congregation, the district, or the Regional Church. Therefore it is appropriate to understand the ministerial mandate as a canonical—and thus pragmatic—dimension.

Neither the Catechism nor the later explanations pertaining to the concept of ministry explicitly state that ministerial authority and a ministerial mandate can only be conferred upon men.

SUMMARY: None of the literature on our Church’s understanding of ministry contains any theological justification for restricting ordination to men alone. The question therefore arises as to whether this practice of limiting the spiritual ministry exclusively to men—which is rooted in a general Christian tradition that dates back to the second century—is still tenable, given the biblical testimony. The problem in question cannot be properly resolved merely on the basis of the equal rights enjoyed by both men and women in society—a principle enshrined in the constitutions of many states—but only on the basis of an appropriate theological evaluation of the biblical testimony. In this context, the biblical reference that man is created in the image of God—as found in the accounts of the creation—is of crucial importance.

Humankind in the image of God

The two accounts of creation found in Genesis 1: 1–2: 3 and Genesis 2: 4–25 constitute the most important theological foundations for any discussion of man as part of the cre-

ation. While the first account of the creation appears rather abstract, the second account has a pronounced and vivid narrative character.

The first account of creation

The formulation that human beings are created in the image of God is found in Genesis 1: 26–27. We also read of human beings in the image of God in Genesis 5: 1–2 and Genesis 9: 6. The first account of creation portrays God as the one who orders or constitutes all of reality in six days—that is, in six time periods—through His word alone. In the concluding phase of the creation event—on the sixth day—the animals living on the ground are the first to be created (Genesis 1: 24–25). And once the various animals have come into being, God turns His attention to the creation of mankind: “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth’” (Genesis 1: 26–28).

The creation of man is distinct from that of all other things and creatures. This is already evident from the fact that God does not utter the rather neutral statement: “Let there be...”, as was the case with the other works of creation, but rather seems to be talking to Himself, as it were: “Let Us make man...”. This appeal to Himself to make man is expanded—and even intensified, so to speak—by the fact that God relates Himself directly to man—after all, man is to be created “in Our image”. God thereby places Himself into an enduring relationship with man. By the same token, man is thereby incorporated into just as enduring a relationship with God.

Following this, God fulfils what He has set out to do in Genesis 1: 27: He creates man “in His own image”—and He makes man “as a plural entity consisting of man and woman”. At first, the word “man” is used as a generic term, and is only given a concrete meaning later on through the biological specification “man and woman”. From the start, human beings created in the image of God thus incorporate both genders in terms of substance. “Man and woman together reflect the glory of God, and together propagate God’s creation... The only one superior to him

[the human being] is God. Thus he stands between God and the world.”

Man or woman—that is, man in general—are both equally created in the image of God. Both stand in an identical—namely a direct and unconditional—relationship of dependency to God. As a result, man and woman have received the same task in the creation, namely to have dominion over it and to represent God in the creation. Beyond that, this plural entity also indicates that human beings cannot truly exercise their humanity—that is, the fact that they are created in the image of God—in a state of egocentricity or chosen isolation. The plural entity only “becomes concrete once both make the transition to the reciprocal use of the address ‘you’”.

Man and woman, woman and man, therefore belong together because mankind has been created for fellowship from the outset. Man—in the form of man and woman—is blessed by God, addressed by Him, and assigned a mandate: “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it.” Man is commanded to reproduce. In so doing he is to fulfil God’s mandate to represent Him in the creation and subdue the earth throughout the course of history.

The second account of creation

While the first account of creation focuses on the world as a whole and divides its development into six distinct stages, the second account of the creation takes the form of a story with characters who act and react to one another. Schüle stresses that although the description of the first account of creation is a closed narrative it seems made “to be continued”. The second account of creation now constitutes this “continuation”, even though it was composed at an earlier point in time and stems from a different line of tradition. The two accounts of creation do not exist in isolation from one another, but are combined to form a new entity. The “Eden narrative regards itself as a commentary on, and even a correction of, the narrative concerning the creation of living creatures in general, and mankind in particular”.

Genesis 2: 7 relates that man is formed by God from the dust of the earth. Like a potter, God creates a figure out of the dust. The designation “Adam” here refers to mankind in general, without making any differentiation of gender. The word “Adam” refers to *adamah*, the earth, the ground, from which man was created.

It is of note, that the idea of being created in the image of God—which is of such fundamental importance for

the creation of man in Genesis 1: 27–28—is missing here. However, there is a corresponding action of God, namely the fact that God breathes into man in order to give him the breath of life. The figure that God has formed of the dust of the earth receives its breath of life directly from Him. God turns to man in a binding—indeed intimate—manner, an action He does not take with any other creature. The breath of life that the moulded clay receives not only results in its physical vitality, as it is inherent in the animals, but also creates the necessary conditions for its personhood. The breath of life is, at the same time, the breath of God—and thus the reason for the uniqueness of man within the creation. So it is that “the Eden narrative likewise associates the creation of man with the notion of being created in the image of God”.

The special status of man, his function as the image of God within the creation, is thus also brought to expression in the second account of creation. Man becomes a “living being”, someone who can and should shape his environment: “Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it” (Genesis 2: 15). Tending and keeping are both constructive actions which are assigned to man. Here we find a clear parallel to the dominion assigned to man in Genesis 1: 26 et seq.

Genesis 2: 18 brings a fundamental principle to expression, namely that human life is always to unfold in the context of fellowship or community: “It is not good that man should be alone.” The helper that is to be created for the man is to correspond to him. In literal translation, the second part of verse 18 speaks of “a helper as a counterpart to him”. This counterpart qualifies the help, so to speak: “Man is to have a counterpart who is not only with him and near him, but who also meets him at eye-level, and in whose presence Adam recognises himself.”

Verses 22 and 23 discuss the entity that corresponds to the man, the entity that is his counterpart. This counterpart is not created from the dust of the earth, but rather from the flesh of the man. The rib from which the woman is created symbolises that the body of the man and that of his counterpart are of the same kind and of the same substance. The physical unity between the man and his counterpart is

emphasised: “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”

Adam, the man—who had until that point existed without any gender specification, and in whom the potential for sexuality had been inherent, so to speak—is now able to describe and recognise himself as “Man” and the other as “Woman” in the counterpart who is like him. There is a physical unity between them. They are made of the same material. Man and woman are equally formed and shaped by God. In both cases, they are formed from an already existing material and owe their existence to the direct actions of God

Any notion of hierarchy between man and woman is only suggested in Genesis 3: 16, following the account of the fall into sin (Genesis 3: 1–24). The rulership of the man referenced after the fall into sin—which can therefore also be regarded as a consequence of sin—finds its first direct expression in that Adam gives the woman a name: “And Adam called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living” (Genesis 3: 20). This assignment of names is to be understood in parallel to Genesis 2: 20: “And Adam gave names to... every beast of the field.” The woman is now subordinate to the man.

SUMMARY: The close relationship between God and man is expressed in both of the Old Testament accounts of the creation. Adam—that is, humankind in the form of both man and woman—receives the mandate to have dominion (Genesis 1: 26 et seq.) and to tend and keep the creation. There is a physical unity between them. They are made of the same material. Any notion of hierarchy between man and woman is only suggested in Genesis 3: 16, following the account of the fall into sin (Genesis 3: 1–24).

What are the theological implications that the New Apostolic Church draws from this biblical assessment? This is the subject of the next part of this doctrinal letter and will be featured in community 02/23.

Chief Apostle Schneider in our church in the city of Dessau in Germany, where his video broadcast was recorded



■ Andreas Rother

The Church says yes to women in ministry

For the first time in its 160-year history, the New Apostolic Church has, from a doctrinal perspective, provided a response to the question of whether women can be ordained to ministry—and the answer was yes. Following are some of the reasons and background information for what amounts to a “significant shift in our tradition”.

The decision was made in the afternoon of 2 June 2022: “Women can be entrusted with ministerial authority and a ministerial mandate on the basis of gender equivalence and equality before God.” Such was the resolution of the District Apostle Meeting in Buenos Aires. And a lot has happened since then.

Chief Apostle announces resolution

The decision and the foundations for it were discussed with some 330 Apostles. Teaching material and training documents were still to be drafted. And a video address was to be produced in order to introduce and explain the decision to all our brothers and sisters around the world.

So it was that Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider made the following announcement in his broadcast: “The apostolate—that is, the Apostles in oneness with the Chief

Apostle—decides that women can be entrusted with ministerial authority on the basis of gender equivalence and equality.” This applies to all levels of ministry and all leadership functions. The corresponding ministerial mandate will be issued wherever it is accepted in society and the congregation.

A point that had remained open

This decision has nothing to do with gender debates, which result in different outcomes around the globe anyway. On the contrary, in the process of updating its doctrine, the Church had simply reached the point where it had to answer the question of who can bear a ministry?

Chief Apostle Richard Fehr had already begun to formulate and clarify the doctrine in his time. His successor, Wilhelm Leber, continued in this endeavour to the point of publish-

ing the Catechism. And finally the baton was handed to Chief Apostle Schneider, whose task was to respond to a matter which had remained open up to that point, namely the Church's understanding of ministry.

Beginning in 2014, the District Apostles studied the fundamental questions: "What is a ministry?", "What happens during the ordination?", and "How does our Church configure its leadership functions?" From this developed the reforms to the ministerial structure that took effect in 2019. And now that the questions of what and how had been answered, it was time to answer the question of who.

Testing against the standard of the Bible

Traditionally speaking, the New Apostolic Church has only ever ordained men. However, the Church's literature had never provided any proper doctrinal justification for this. The matter needed to be put to the test—and on the basis of the Bible, no less. After all, neither gender politics nor state constitutions can provide answers to theological questions.

The first question to ask of the Bible was: What does God want? And here the account of the creation provides a clear answer. Women and men were both equally created in the image of God. They have the same responsibility before God. "On the basis of this finding, both genders can be entrusted with ministry and service in the Church and in the local congregation," states the Chief Apostle in the video.

The second question was: What does Jesus say? Unfortunately nothing concrete. While He does treat women better than most men of His time, He nevertheless only calls men to be Apostles. Otherwise, it would likely not have been possible for the gospel to be preached in the synagogues. However, "neither the words nor the deeds of Jesus provide a clear reason as to why we should act contrary to the clear will of God as expressed in the creation with regard to the equality of men and women", says the Chief Apostle in his address.

The third question was: What do the Apostles teach? This is somewhat contradictory. At times women are encouraged to speak prophetically in divine service, and at other times they are told to be silent in the congregation. The conclusion here states that "individual negative statements found in some New Testament letters concerning the active participation of women in divine service and the congregation do not constitute sufficient grounds for excluding women from ministry".

Advertising with music

From 25 to 28 August, Port Gentil in Gabon was the scene of a youth summit attended by 185 young people who had come from all over the country to be together under the motto "Here I am: together in Christ". Since Apostle Geoffrey Nwogu had not been able to visit the small country for a long time owing to the COVID pandemic, the district ministers' meeting was held at the same time. So while the ministers worked on spiritual subjects and negotiated ways to achieve financial independence, the youth enjoyed beach games and lots of music. However, they also introduced the New Apostolic Church in the various city quarters of Port Gentil and prepared for a large concert, which took place on Saturday afternoon at the Place de la Concorde. On Sunday, the youth summit came to a close with a divine service, which was attended by over 300 members. But that was not yet the end for the choir leaders and tutors. They still benefitted from some seminars together. Their task will now be to pass along the knowledge they have acquired to their home congregations in accordance with the train-the-trainer model.



Wolfgang Oehler



Left: The early years. Urs Hebeisen (first row, left) and Herbert Pache (far right) with Philippine ministers.
Below: One of the first church buildings in the Philippines



Missionary work on foot, by boat, or motorcycle



How a pioneer drew attention to his cause

It is 1972: a tall man in a black suit sits in a park and waits. At some point someone comes up to talk to him. Their conversation marks the beginning of the New Apostolic Church in the Philippines. This year our members there look back on a fifty-year history and just celebrated this jubilee.

The man in the black suit was a Canadian by the name of Herbert Pache, who was living in Japan at the time. District Apostle Michael Kraus had called upon him to help spread the New Apostolic faith around the world. And Herbert Pache thought to himself that it would surely be helpful if he were to do so in an unusual manner.

So there he sat in Rizal Park in Manila, the capital of the Philippines, wearing a black suit in the tropical heat. This attracted the attention of a number of individuals, among them Carlos Gayon. He and his family were the first people

in the Philippines to receive the sacrament of Holy Sealing. After another family was adopted a year later, it was possible to establish the first congregation in Sampaloc.

Lots to do on the inaugural visit

When Apostle Erwin Wagner visited the island state in December 1979, he dispensed the sacrament of Holy Sealing to one hundred believers and ordained numerous Deacons and Priests. In addition, the many new congregations were given the necessary structure.

The social, economic, and political situation at the time had a profound effect on the people of the Philippines. Many of them were in search of security and meaning in life. And they found these in the churches. Since the state also granted religious freedom, the membership in the various denominations began to grow. The New Apostolic Church likewise experienced tremendous growth during this period.

Small and large churches

The new congregations needed to be both presentable and flexible. They had to fit into the various neighbourhoods and adapt to the risk that a given community might grow rapidly, shrink, or disappear altogether. Just as the urban economy was growing, the churches in the big cities grew and the churches in the rural areas declined.

Over the years that followed, larger central churches were built in some of the larger cities where Apostles and Bishops also lived. One of these representative churches was dedicated in Makati in 1994.

The 18th of January 2009 was a historical date for the New Apostolic Church in the Philippines. It was on this day that Chief Apostle Wilhelm Leber established the District Apostle Area of South East Asia and appointed Urs Hebeisen to lead it as District Apostle. As of 18 November 2018, this function has been performed by District Apostle Edy Isnugroho. He is supported by Apostle Samuel Tansahtikno, who was charged with looking after the congregations in the Philippines.

Below: Chief Apostle Wilhelm Leber and the District Apostles Alfons Tansahtikno (left) and Urs Hebeisen (right) in 2009
Right: Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider appoints Edy Isnugroho as District Apostle in November 2018



Funded by love

In 2004, a tsunami raged across the Indian Ocean, killing many people and unleashing a wave of solidarity around the world. The Church in the Philippines suddenly had a great deal of financial resources at its disposal. A well organised apparatus was needed to ensure that the aid would actually reach those who needed it the most. That is how the relief organisation NAC SEA Relief came into being, which is registered as an independent organisation but makes use of financial resources and the pastoral network of the New Apostolic Church.

Great excitement

There was great excitement among the brothers and sisters in the Philippines, who now number more than 40,000, when it was announced that the Chief Apostle would visit them and celebrate the Church's fiftieth anniversary with them. While he was there the Chief Apostle conducted three divine services. The anniversary service on 16 October was transmitted throughout the entire country. Apostle Samuel Tansahtikno explained: "Since many of the nearly 1,500 congregations are located in mountainous areas, some of them were merged, and our brothers and sisters gathered in places where there is an internet signal." There were extensive preparations for the Chief Apostle's visit to Tupi. The choir members, particularly, were delighted to be able to participate in choir practices.

During the divine service in Tupi, the Chief Apostle also performed some ordinations and retirements: Apostles Cleofas Bual and Alfredo Pascual were retired, while the two District Elders Medie Sabal and Freddie Nuyad were ordained as Apostles.





Left: At the Porta Nigra in Trier, Germany
Below: Two cyclists on the Camino de Santiago



■ Klaus Müller

Collecting donations on two wheels

Riding together over a distance of more than 8,000 kilometres: Werner, Karsten, Paul, and Caspar Kühnle committed to this struggle for a good cause. The grandfather, father, and two teenagers recently travelled the Camino de Santiago on their racing bikes.

The idea for a charity tour came to Karsten Kühnle (49), a Priest in Bad Homburg, Germany, back in 2019 when his son Paul (18) rode the Camino de Santiago with his grandfather Werner (73) on racing bikes. The team for the charity tour was made complete with Paul's younger brother Caspar, and a good friend of the family, Klaus Müller (71), who joined in as tour manager.

While the four Kühnles cycled, Klaus saw to everything else from the escort vehicle—and their supporters donated. From 25 July to 17 August the team made its way through Germany, France, and Spain. The aim was to collect donations for emergency aid in Ukraine and for well construction and for schools and education in West Africa.

Despite setbacks...

The tour began in Trier, Germany, but not quite at zero: over 13,000 euros had already accumulated before the start. This motivated everyone to accept the challenge. They set off early in the morning. Parked in front of their accommodations, the team noticed a Ukrainian bus. "Evidently, this was intended to remind us why we should make this trip at temperatures well over 30 degrees Celsius," said the four. It was an emotional moment.

And it was very hot indeed. And then there were also the mosquito bites to contend with. Already on the second day, Caspar's rear tire burst. Each of the cyclists had to change a

wheel over the course of the tour. But tour captain Werner was able to draw on his rich experience, and was quick to solve these problems. And whenever he got stuck, Klaus was quick to lend a hand with his van full of spare parts and a good air pump.

Speaking of Klaus: the team would have been pretty lost without him. He would get up early every morning and get the bikes ready to go. While the cyclists pedalled along the road, he would prepare the food and fill their drinking bottles. In between, he would wash their jerseys, all the while taking photos. And he was always there to motivate his friends to keep going.

There were times when it was not that easy. Steep inclines, summer heat, and impassable roads turned the tour into an ordeal again and again. Once there was such a violent storm—and a sudden drop in temperature—that Grandpa Werner decided it was time to break off early for the day.

...the four of them made it to their goal

But despite all the setbacks, Klaus, the many donors, and the beautiful landscape along the Camino de Santiago always managed to motivate the cyclists. They visited memorials and enjoyed the sights along the route, met up with other pilgrims, and enjoyed dinner at the guesthouses on the way in the evenings. Filled with pride, the five reached Santiago de Compostela, Spain on 11 August. They were now able to look back gratefully and proudly on the route they had mastered.

Then, on the penultimate stage of the trip, it happened: Caspar fell off his bike. But after the initial shock had

passed, it turned out that he had not been seriously injured. Only his bike was worse for the experience: the gear shift was no longer working properly. For him, the last few kilometres would prove to be a big challenge. But in the end the four cyclists made it: a wave of satisfaction and accomplishment flowed through each one of them when they arrived at their final destination on the Camino de Santiago in Finisterre.

By that day, the donations had already surpassed 37,000 euros. And by the time the charity team returned home, there were another 10,000 euros waiting for them.

For a good cause

Klaus and Werner, who is a retired Apostle, have been to West Africa more than a few times in the context of their pastoral work for the New Apostolic Church. They are thus well aware of what it means to have access to clean water and the opportunity to go to school there. When war broke out in the Ukraine in 2022, the suffering there touched them so closely that Karsten decided to donate to affected individuals there as well.

Half of the donations for the charity tour will go to human aktiv, the aid organisation of the New Apostolic Church Southern Germany, and the Jörg Wolff Foundation, which was founded in 2004 by a New Apostolic minister. The charity human aktiv used its share for emergency aid in Ukraine. The Jörg Wolff Foundation funds the construction of wells and schools in West Africa and supports midwives and school teachers there. In the meantime, video messages have come back to the team from people in West Africa who are now able to draw water from a brand new well.



Left: Kilometre zero of the Camino de Santiago at Finisterre, Spain
Top: Tired but happy the fivesome gets ready to fly home

Below: The children of the congregation Madina in Ghana present their skit
 Right: District Apostle Enrique Eduardo Minio in Guayubira, Uruguay



■ New Apostolic Churches Ghana and South America

| Biblical plays and more

Children in Ghana and Guinea put on biblical skits after a service, a District Apostle celebrated six divine services in a single week in Argentina, and the members in the Philippines were delighted when their District Apostle was finally able to visit them again. Let's take a trip around the New Apostolic world and look at some of the activities in the past year.

The children of the congregation of Madina, Ghana put on a play following a divine service on 17 July. The subject of their play was the "Parable of the talents" from the Bible, which they presented to the congregation as a role play. Each of the children either assumed a role or accompanied the piece with a musical instrument, solo performance, or as part of the children's choir. The objective was to show their listeners that, as Christians, we are all called, and that we all have a special responsibility: we are to use our gifts in order to bring glory and honour to God.

A service for children in Guinea

The children in Guinea likewise put on a play. More than 500 children had gathered for a children's service in the congregation of N'zérékoré and listened spellbound to the words of their Apostle Tamba Sosso Wolle Millimouno. The latter used a Bible text from Luke 18: 16 as the basis of his sermon: "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them, for of such is the kingdom of God." The intent was to demonstrate the significance of children for their families and for the Church. At the close of the ser-

vice, the children performed biblical role plays bringing joy to their parents, who had likewise been invited for this special occasion.

Talking about mental health in South Africa

"It's okay not to be okay." These words echoed at the annual Women's Day event that took place on 9 August 2022 at Tafelsig Congregation. Una Rhooide had sent out invitations to an event focusing on mental illness and the problems faced by women in particular. She had also arranged to have a number of speakers attend: two psychologists were on hand to explain mental illness, a social worker gave a presentation on the importance of mental health for children, and two of our sisters related their very own personal experiences. The COVID-19 pandemic had placed a particular burden on many women because they had had to take on full responsibility for the care of their children or had even been exposed to violence at home. Sister Claudette Ruiters emphasised that, while one can certainly ask God for strength and help in such difficult situations,



Above: District Apostle Edy Isnugroho dispenses Holy Sealing
Right: "Night of open churches" in Vöcklabruck, Austria



one should still seek the help of professionals. A children's choir and two musicians paid special homage to the women by providing musical accompaniment to the programme.

A service a day in South America

District Apostle Enrique Eduardo Minio celebrated a total of six divine services in a single week. During his stay in Uruguay he covered long distances in order to visit the brothers and sisters. For example, the congregation of Guayubirá in the Artigas district is some 500 kilometres away from the congregation of De Luque in the capital of Montevideo. District Apostle Minio visited the two congregations on Sunday, 17 July and on Wednesday, 20 July, respectively. The Saturday before that, namely 16 July, he went to visit the members in Achar in the Tacuarembó district. From De Luque, the District Apostle drove together with Apostle Herman Ernst, who accompanied him for two services, the first of which took place on Thursday, 21 July in Santa Catalina. That trip was not as long, since the congregation is also located in the capital city of Montevideo. On Saturday, 23 July, the District Apostle then held a divine service in the congregation of La Palmita in the Canelones district, before concluding his trip to Uruguay with a service on Sunday, 24 July in Porvenir, which is also in Montevideo.

Acts of blessing in Asia

Members in the Philippines likewise rejoiced over the visit of their District Apostle. For two and a half years already, District Apostle Edy Isnugroho had not been able to visit the island of Luzon as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The District Apostle began his seven-day trip in the north, accompanied by Apostle Samuel Tansahitkno and

Bishop Armando Cao. There he visited the congregations of Basagan, Carolina, Siembre, Vergana, and Lucena. In the south of the island, the District Apostle and his companions visited the congregations of Isabela, Magrafil, and Makati. In addition, the members were delighted by some acts of blessing. For example, the District Apostle ordained two new Deacons in Magrafil, and appointed a new rector for the congregation of Basagan. Beyond that, a total of 36 believers were able to receive the sacrament of Holy Sealing.

Open churches in Europe

Visiting a church at night—that was precisely what believers of various denominations in Germany and Austria organised under the motto "Night of open churches". On 24 June, many churches in the city of Kassel, Germany opened up their doors. The event was organised by the Association of Christian Churches in Kassel, in which the New Apostolic Church has also been active with guest status since 2021. A total of 38 churches, among them two New Apostolic congregations, offered musical programmes and other activities, as well as snacks and many opportunities for discussion.

In Vöcklabruck, Austria, groups of Catholic, Protestant, and New Apostolic Christians strolled together through the churches of the city. The New Apostolic Church likewise opened up its doors to the city's pilgrims that evening, and delighted them with a brief sermon and some music performed by the congregation's regular choir and the children's choir. The churches of the other denominations likewise organised spiritual presentations and music. To close the evening, the participants joined together in some Taizé hymns in the village church.

DISTRICT APOSTLE MICHAEL EHRRICH:

Sharing with Thankfulness

Dear brothers and sisters

Perhaps some of us have taken for granted the good things that God gives us, so that it does not necessarily occur to us to give thanks for them. However, it is worth-while to reflect on all that we receive from God - be it in the earthly or in the spiritual sphere.

We can also express our gratitude to God, which must always come first, by acting in the spirit of Jesus Christ. Here I am thinking of the double commandment of love, in which Jesus Christ calls us to love our neighbour as ourselves. If we are doing well in the earthly, let us not forget those who are in need in the earthly. It is not enough just to pray. It is also necessary to have an open helping hand, to give of our goods and to stand by our neighbour in need.

It is the same in the spiritual: from what we may "harvest", for example peace from God, joy in the Spirit, hope from the Gospel of Jesus Christ, let us give to those who are in need. This is done by turning to them in the love of Jesus Christ.

With kind regards, yours

M. Ehrich
Michael Ehrich



GHANA:

"Chance For Children" - Help For Street Children

For the third time, the relief organization of the New Apostolic Church of Southern Germany, Human Aktiv, has supported the organization Chance for Children, which cares for street children in Ghana, with 30,000 Euros.

The two Lead Apostles Benjamin Ohene-Saffo (responsible for the District Churches of Benin and Togo as well as the south of the District Church of Ghana) and Samuel Oppong-Brenya (responsible for the northern part of the District Church of Ghana) handed over the donation to the leadership of the organisation. Apostle Oppong-Brenya emphasised that

Christianity is based on love. He said that Jesus' commandment to "love your neighbour as yourself" prompted the charity to support "Chance for children" so that even more children can be taken off the streets. Consequently, two more locations with support services for street children have been planned.

Chance for Children, a non-profit organization for street-connected children, currently cares for over 3000 children all over Ghana. They have a drop-in-center at Agbogbloshie, and a home situated at "Hebron", a border town between the Greater Accra and Eastern Regions, housing in excess of 70 children.





CAMEROON: “... And Ye Came Unto Me” (Matthew 25:36)

With the permission of the prison administration, three priests and two sisters visited prisoners in the central prison in Bamenda, Cameroon-Anglophone. In the circle of about 60 inmates and 2 prison officers, they first celebrated a service in the prison chapel. The word service, based on 1 John 5:11.12 touched deeply the hearts of the participants. Afterwards, the Church donated rice, yams, corn, gari, soap, Maggi, peanuts and an amount of cash. They also donated a very generous amount of money to an older widow from their ranks, who herself lives in poor conditions.

Thanks to the commitment of Father Emmanuel, the resident clergy, an agreement was reached with the prison administration that in future church services can take place in the prison on the first and third Wednesday of every month.

A beautiful example of Jesus' words from Matthew 25 living in the hearts of believers!



Food items in the premises of the South South area office



The heavy rains have triggered massive flooding

NIGERIA: Support For The Flood Victims

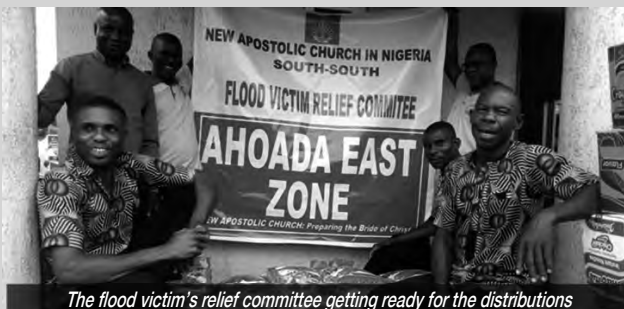
In Nigeria, especially the Delta region of the country, flooding has become a perennial problem plaguing the people as it keeps reoccurring every year. In the year 2022, the flood situation took a different dimension, as it ravaged almost the entire region. The New Apostolic Church in this region was not spared from this disaster.

Homes, churches, farmlands, communal infrastructures, public facilities and human beings were affected by the flood. The Church in the region cried to the church humanitarian aid organization and speedily, the help came. The New

Apostolic Church South Germany with it Aid organization (“human aktiv”) swung into action and brought succour to the people.

In the relief, food items like rice, beans, noodles, tomatoes, food seasoning, onions, salt and groundnut oil were distributed to the six affected zones of Abua, Ogbia, Ahoada East, Ahoada West, Engenni Ijaw and Erema.

The people were so joyful and expressed their gratitude to God and the church.



The flood victim's relief committee getting ready for the distributions



Many victims await their share



The youth donate sewing machines

TOGO: Humanitarian Action

In the execution of its humanitarian actions, a group of young people from the Gulf District gave some sisters from the Vo District sewing machines to enable them to take care of themselves. The donation of a tricycle to a sister from the Kolbigou congregation by Apostle Kloutsè was a great help to improve her everyday life.



Donation of a tricycle



The sewing machine helps with self-sufficiency



Brothers and sisters want to save lives with their blood

BENIN: Saving Lives With Blood

The blood donation programme in Apostle Yedenou's working area continues to bring together brothers and sisters. In February, nearly one hundred volunteers were mobilised to donate blood and save lives. For this purpose, the Red Cross team had to travel to the Atchoukpa community to meet the volunteers (including believers and ministers).



The ministers also donate blood



Saving lives with a donation



Commissioning of the water well with the new school in the background

SIERRA LEONE: Help To Education

The New Apostolic Church Pre-Primary school, Koakoyima Township, Koidu City, Kono District, are joyful to have not only a school building but an improved water well.

In the December 2022, the water well and school were inaugurated. The school administration and children expressed their appreciation for the new facilities with suitable school songs.

The construction of schools and wells will complement efforts to provide free, quality education.



Pupils at the dedication ceremony



A girl receives a school award



The combined well with an eco-toilet

BENIN: Great Support

The members of the New Apostolic Church and the people of the village of Gbagla-Yovo were very happy during the dedication of the combined Well and Ecological WC by Apostle Yedenou. This project was fully funded by Human-Aktiv and JWF (Jörg Wolf Foundation). The need for clean drinking water is very great in this village. This gift to the whole village is a great support to the poor people. Various songs and dances were performed to appreciate the kindness of our generous donors.



Apostle Yedenou at the dedication



People are thankful for the drinking water



The gratitude of the Kankan bouriens

GUINEA: Sharing With Gratitude

With a scholarship, the brothers and sisters were given the opportunity to train as teachers. For this training at the ENI (Ecole Normale d'Instituteur), the graduates would like to thank the New Apostolic Church for the sacrifices, financial and spiritual resources.

This training is a great opportunity for young people to commit themselves to a good future.



Gratitude, together with Apostle Millimouno



Apostle Sam made some donation to the 'Angel of Hope Orphanage Home'

GHANA: Help For Orphanage

Apostle George Sam made a generous donation to the Angel of Hope orphanage during a visit to the Tarkwa district. This included clothing and hygiene items. He also provided emergency medical aid for sick ministers.



Apostle Sam with Bishop Ampofo visited the sick minister Communtiy Evangelist



Apostle Timothy Akubia cuts the ribbon to commission the water facility

GHANA: Great Relief

Apostle Timothy Akubia (Volta North Apostle Area) commissioned a water project for the people of Guaman, a community in the Jasikan District of the Volta Region, Ghana. The project is sponsored by "Human Aktiv", the relief organization of the New Apostolic Church, South Germany. The completion of the project came as great relief to the inhabitants who have had no access to clean potable water for decades. The project, according to the Chief of the town, could not have come at a better time.



The mechanized water facility



Thank you "Human Aktiv"

GHANA and NIGERIA: Passed Away



**Apostle
Wilson Dzattah**
Birth: 12/02/1954
Ordinations:
1984 Evangelist
1986 Shepherd
1986 District Evangelist
31/10/1987 Apostle
Retirement: 27/01/2019
Passed away: 10/11/2022



**Apostle
Charles Johannes Ohemeng**
Birth: 21/09/1946
Ordinations:
1975 Deacon / 1977 Priest
1978 Evangelist
1981 Shepherd
1984 District Evangelist
1987 District Elder
1992 Bishop
11/07/2004 Apostle
Retirement: 19/02/2013
Passed away: 14/11/2022

District Apostle Area: Divine service with the District Apostle

On Sunday, 26 February 2023, District Apostle Michael Ehrich conducted a divine service for all the congregations in his working area. This was transmitted from the church in Ravensburg via IPTV and live internet stream to numerous congregations in South Germany, and also to Bosnia-Herzegovina, Israel, Croatia, northern Macedonia, Serbia, Ukraine, the Persian Gulf region as well as East and West Africa.

The District Apostle was accompanied by the six Southern Germany Apostles.

Bible text: "... And He went in to stay with them."
(Luke 24:29)

Core

thoughts: At the beginning of his service, the District Apostle explained that the text speaks of Jesus' return. The Holy Scriptures report that Jesus often stayed in Bethany with Lazarus, Martha and Mary and experienced many beautiful and joyful moments with them. But Jesus also stayed with them in distressed and sad situations. Even today, the various external and personal situations are very different - but the Lord wants to come to everyone.

The Emmaus disciples had been disappointed; they had hoped that the Lord would bring salvation to the people of Israel. But they saw him executed on the cross. There was great disappointment because the Lord had probably done nothing. But then the Lord came to them. Despite their disappointment, Jesus touched the disciples let themselves. So it is also important today to let ourselves be touched by Jesus in all situations of life, because Jesus said: "I am with you always, even to the end of the world. The decisive thing, however, is that we also stay with him and use the Gospel as orientation for our lives.

Apostle Martin Schnauffer (Apostle District Freiburg/Tübingen), Apostle Manfred Schöneborn (Apostle District Heilbronn/Nürnberg) and Martin Rheinberger (Karlsruhe) were called upon to preach.



New Apostolic Church
International

