

community

The New Apostolic Church around the world

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Motto 2024: Prayer works!

Editorial

The Chief Apostle's New Year message

Divine service

The Father, the children, and the whole family

Doctrine

Election and calling to ministry

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Prayer works!

Dear brothers and sisters,

Regardless of what we go through, there is a source of strength that is often underestimated: our personal prayer! We can be confident that our prayers are heard and will have an effect.

And that is our motto for 2024: Prayer works!

As always, our example in this is Jesus Christ. He had intimate conversations with His Father. He prayed for His own and still intercedes for us today. His prayers are just as effective today. This gives us comfort and confidence also for the coming year.

What are the effects of prayer?

- Prayer makes us grateful.
- Prayer makes us compassionate.
- Prayer makes us strong.
- Prayer sanctifies us.
- Prayer unites us.

In order for our prayer to be effective, we should pray as Jesus teaches us.



New Apostolic Church International

On the one hand, we should pray always and sincerely. On the other hand, we should ask in the name of Jesus, meaning that we should focus on our eternal salvation.

Let us also pray collectively in the congregation, in our families, and as a couple.

I wish everyone a blessed year 2024 and an invigorating prayer life.

Heartfelt greetings

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

Jean-Luc Schneider

The Father, the children, and the whole family



Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider visited the congregation of Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, on 18 June 2023

1 John 3: 1

“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.”

Dear brothers and sisters, it is a great joy to experience this divine service in your midst. I am really glad for the congregation that we can be together here in your church. I am sure that we will experience the power of the Holy Spirit also today. As far as I am concerned, the congregation is certainly a bit smaller than last Sunday. We are a few thousand less than in Zambia. But don't worry. The power of the Holy Spirit is not dependent on the number of listeners and the number of loudspeakers.

The power of the Holy Spirit is the power of God to address each individual and deliver a personal message to them. Whether there are two or twenty thousand people, the power of the Holy Spirit is the same. He will address every single one in his or her situation, tell them what God

expects of them, and give them the strength they need to carry it out. This is the power of the Holy Spirit. I am quite sure that we will experience this power today.

Today we have a Bible text from the first epistle of John. It is a special letter; actually it is a kind of warning to the believers of that time against false teachers. The Bible does not explain exactly what this is about. It seems that there were false teachers who did not believe in the divine nature of Jesus Christ. The Apostles and their co-workers had to fight against these false teachings. We don't know what exactly this was about because these people simply disappeared again after a while, and today we don't even know exactly what their teaching was about. That is actually a good lesson too. Nobody knows what it was really about, but the true gospel endured.

What this means for us today is quite simple to explain. Even today there are many people who want to explain to us what the gospel teaches and how we should understand it. But we are New Apostolic Christians and we believe that God sent His Apostles to preach the gospel in the proper manner. This is what we believe. That is why we follow the preaching of the Apostles—in order to be prepared for the return of Christ. We don't need to discuss that. That makes it easy.

At that time the point was the nature of Jesus Christ. These people did not accept all the messages of Jesus Christ, and one of the most important messages of Jesus Christ was that He revealed God as the Father. Conversely, we can say that God revealed Himself as Father through Jesus Christ. The Jews had a different understanding of God. When Jesus came, He told them, “No, God is your heavenly Father.”

I know that when I say this I get an immediate reaction, “Does that mean God is a man?”

No. God is not male, He is not female. He is far above human nature. The psalmist says that God takes care of us as a father and as a mother.

God is the Father of all of humankind because He created them and He has authority over His creation and those He created. That is the first thought. He is the Father because He is the author of life.

Jesus also referred to God as our Father because all human beings can talk to Him as to a father. Jesus explained to

the people that God knew what they needed and provided for them. God cares for all human beings. All people can address God as their Father. Jesus said that God makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust (Matthew 5: 45). He is the Father of all of humankind. This is something very important and Jesus went on to explain even more.

He described God as the loving Father who is full of compassion for sinful humankind. You know the story. Man was created to live in fellowship with God. Adam and Eve decided to leave God. They distanced themselves from Him. God is the loving Father who is full of compassion. He wants all human beings to return to Him. Paul says that God is waiting for all to return—those who are far away and those who are close to Him—in order to save them. This is the Father.

God is the Father of all human beings. But those who do not believe, who—as it says in our Bible text—do not know Him, who have not accepted Jesus, those who misunderstand the message of Jesus, have a different understanding of God and of human beings.

For some Christians, God is the judge who is waiting for the Last Judgement to punish all these awful sinners. Strangely enough many Christians still believe this. They have forgotten the message of Jesus Christ, who describes God as the loving Father who wants to save all of humankind.

Jesus described God as the loving Father. Many Christians to this day have a distorted image of God and treat Him like an idol. They think one can buy God. They think if you bring enough offerings, if you do the right things then you can buy His grace and His blessing. “If you are kind to God, He will be kind to you. And if you are not kind to God, He will not be kind to you.” They treat him like an idol. They bring their offerings and say, “I am obedient so be good to me.” That is not the idea of God, the loving Father. That is something different.

Others—even among Christians—see God as the great king who has to rule the world and fix the problems in this world and society. Some even think they have been called to help God with this. They want to rule the world in His name and on His behalf, like the king of Israel in the Old Testament.

Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world.’ What God wants is to save you, to deliver you from this world. But it is not God’s job to rule the world. He is not interested in this.”

God is the Father of all of humankind

God is our loving Father. He loves humankind. He wants to save all human beings and His salvation means eternal life.

Those who do not really believe in Jesus Christ or have misunderstood His message also think that God is very selective in His love and that He loves some more than others—that He has His preferences which are based on origin, behaviour, religion, and belief. That is not true! Definitely not. All human beings are children of God and He loves them all with the same love. He wants them all to be with Him in eternity.

That does not mean that all human beings benefit from His love. That is something else because they have to do something to benefit from God's love. God treats everyone the same. He loves everyone, the sinners as well as the just. He loves them with the same love. He is the Father and we are His children.

People sometimes believe that poverty or wealth signifies whether God loves a person. That is also nonsense! God loves all His children with the same love. Even if they do not behave, He will not punish them. If you are poor it does not mean that God has rejected you. And if you are rich it does not mean that you are blessed by God. Sometimes it is quite the contrary, by the way. But that is another story.

We must be aware that all human beings are children of God and that it is not His will to punish them or to condemn sinners. Because sometimes people assume the right that they have been commissioned by God to punish

sinners and condemn those who are not as they should be. They want to act in the name of God to punish and condemn sinners.

This is definitely not according to the will of God! He is the Father of all human beings and He loves them all. He wants to save them, not punish them. Already the image of the Father and His children has great significance. It must, however, be understood in the light of Jesus Christ and then it becomes clear. Those who have not understood the message of Jesus Christ definitely have a wrong understanding of it.

The term "child of God" also has a spiritual dimension: children of God are those who have been reborn out of water and the Spirit. They have become co-heirs with Jesus Christ and will inherit eternal life. This is the other dimension of what children of God are. Children of God are those who have received the sacraments, who believe in the proper proclamation of the gospel, and who align their lives with the return of Christ.

But being a child of God and inheriting eternal life is not just a question of having received the sacraments. Because being a child of God means that one has received all the sacraments, believes in the proper proclamation of the gospel, and aligns one's life with the return of Christ. That is a true child of God. The Bible says that true children of God bear the name of the Father and the Son and keep His name holy by their conduct. They practise justice and Christian love. True children of God trust their Father no

God loves all His children with the same love





matter what happens. Paul said, “Abba, Father,” with which he wanted to say, “God, you are my Father, I trust in you!” That is what it means to be a true child of God.

Such a child of God lives in freedom. What does that mean? The Bible says that those who are led by the Holy Spirit are children of God. They are free. This freedom of God’s children—and I insist on this point—means they are led by the Holy Spirit and not driven by their human nature. Their behaviour is not dictated by their needs. Their behaviour is not dictated by the situation they live in, by their wealth or their poverty. Their behaviour, their opinion, is not dictated by the mainstream and social media. A child of God says: “People can say what they want. They can do whatever they want. The situation may be what it is. But these things will not decide how I should behave.”

Children of God are guided by the Holy Spirit; what they do, think, and what they say is determined by their faith, which becomes active in love. That is the liberty of God’s children. Their behaviour, their feelings are determined by only one thing, their faith, which tells them: “I am a child of God. God is my Father. He loves me. He wants to have eternal fellowship with me in His kingdom. That is where I want to be.” That is the freedom of the children of God.

Again, we need to understand the message of Jesus Christ to understand what it means to be a child of God. Because the evil one will come and say—and he always has the same strategy—“If you are a child of God then ...” He comes to us in the same manner he came to Jesus: “If you are the beloved Son of God, you should not suffer.” He incites us to doubt in our childhood in God by saying, “How can you believe you are a child of God? He is supposed to love you, be your Father, and you have to go through such a difficult situation? Look around you. They all have more money, they are healthy, and you are sick. They are happy and you have a lot of problems,” and so on. You know this spirit.

But those who know Jesus Christ know that He is the Son of God and that God loved Him. In spite of God’s love for Him, He had to suffer and was persecuted. So being a beloved child of God does not mean being spared from suffering. That has nothing to do with it. Being a child of God means having the opportunity to enter the kingdom of God and inheriting eternal life. It has nothing to do with being spared from suffering and being blessed in all earthly matters.

Those who know Jesus Christ know what it means to be a child of God. They look at Jesus and consider what



happened to Him and know: “Okay, that’s normal for it to happen to me too.”

True children of God also know that there is nothing more important in their life than their childhood in God. The evil one, the enemy of Jesus Christ, wants to destroy that. He wants us to think that our earthly life is much more important than our divine childhood. He wants us to think that our opinions and our thoughts are more important and that we are entitled to certain things in life.

But a child of God knows: “No, my childhood in God is more important than my earthly life. This is not about my person, my ideas, my opinions, and my rights. I have the right to enter the kingdom of God as a firstling. I want to be transformed into the image of Jesus Christ and that is the most important thing for me. Being a child of God is more important to me than doing my own thing.” Do you understand what I mean? Our childhood in God is more important than our earthly life. Jesus Christ has given us the example. For Him, being the Son of God, being sent by God, meant much more than being Jesus of Nazareth. The same is true for us.

God wants to gather His children and lead them into His kingdom. He wants His children to be one and to overcome their differences. The place where they can overcome their differences is the church. This is the will of God, the will of Jesus Christ. “Yes, you are all completely different, but

I want you to become one, and the place where you can overcome your differences is the Church.”

And here we have a problem in today’s society because people today tend to insist on their differences. Everyone wants to define themselves by their otherness. “I am different. I belong to this group, to these people. This is just the way I am. I am different and you have to respect my otherness. And because I am different I have this and that right,” and so on. I often wonder, how are you going to build a society on such divisions? Do you not realise that the only aim of this spirit is to divide more and more? No wonder it is almost impossible to create unity in this society. No wonder this society is increasingly divided and people are more and more selfish. Would it not be better for people to focus on what they have in common instead of on their differences?

As Chief Apostle I am—thank God—not responsible for society. But brothers and sisters, let us think about this for a moment. What is the spirit behind all these things? It is the spirit of division. The more groups there are—each one so important and so different—the more divided society will become and the more selfishness there will be in the world.

Back to the church. What’s important for us are not our differences, are not our opinions. God wants us to be one. Paul said that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek. We have no idea what that meant for society at the time. For us



Apostle Jonathan Karl Sturm



District Apostle Rüdiger Krause

these are just two words: Greeks and Jews. For the people then that meant a lot. If one looks at this topic a little deeper you realise that there were really two worlds, extremely different. And Paul said: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3: 28).

This meant a lot in that society. You cannot imagine what all these words meant for the people at that time. For us it is just a figure of speech, but please take a closer look at the historical and social context of what it meant at that time to be Greek or Jewish, to be a free man or a slave.

And Paul says that in the church, in Christ, there are no more differences. “What we have in common is much more important than what divides us,” Chief Apostle Schneider pointed out. Let us put our opinions aside and be transformed into the image of Christ. Our calling is more important than our rights. Our mission is more important than all the advantages we could have, and so on.

My dear brothers and sisters, we are children of God. God wants His family, His children, to be one. The place where we can overcome our differences is the church, and with the help of the Holy Spirit we can do that and truly be one in Jesus Christ—and that is our goal.

The message is clear: God is our loving Father, He cares for us. Don’t worry, He knows exactly what you need and

will take care of you. Please accept that your neighbour is also a child of God and that God loves him or her as much as He loves you; and accept that He makes absolutely no difference. Nobody can rule the world in the name of God. Nobody can fight sinners and condemn them in the name of God. God is the loving Father of all human beings.

We are children of God because we have received all the sacraments. We believe in the proper proclamation of the gospel. Let us focus on the return of Jesus Christ and align our lives with it. Yes, we bear the name of the Father and the Son and do all we can to keep it sacred by practising justice and love. We are children of God and want to be one in Christ. With His help we can overcome all differences.

CORE THOUGHTS

God is the Father of all humankind. He loves all human beings with the same love and wants to save them. All those who are reborn out of water and the Spirit and whose focus in life is the return of Christ will inherit eternal life. Let us make our childhood in God and the unity of the Church a matter of priority.

A question of relationship

Gratitude says something about our relationship with God. This is something that Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider made clear during the Thanksgiving Day service in Switzerland. The believers learned how one can show gratitude to God.



“This is a question of our relationship with God,” explained the Chief Apostle with reference to the Bible text from Colossians 3: 17. “Our gratitude or ingratitude is an indicator of our relationship with God.”

When our relationship with God is not in order

Chief Apostle Schneider mentioned a number of examples from the Bible in which people were ungrateful and dissatisfied. “You can tell that their relationship with God was not in order,” he said. For example, Adam and Eve, who were discontent and wanted more. “They did not recognise the grace that God had granted them.”

He also mentioned the ten lepers, only one of whom felt the need to come back and thank Jesus after He had healed them all. Presumably these people thought that they had a right to a healthy, normal life, and that God had made a mistake. So why be grateful that a perceived injustice had merely been remedied?

An intact relationship with God

“Let us be thankful,” said the Chief Apostle. “Our relationship with God is in order, after all.” The Chief Apostle went on to list some of the many things God gives His children even though they have done nothing to deserve it: “Anything that has to do with the creation comes from God. Our lives, our health, our family, all of this comes from God,” the Chief Apostle listed.

“Through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ we have been given the opportunity to be liberated from the power of sin, from the dominion of evil! This is a powerful act of God!” The Chief Apostle went on to emphasise, “God has proven His love for us through the sacrificial death of His Son.”

“We can also be thankful that God responds to our prayers,” he said. “This is an act of God’s grace. God is never obliged to react to our prayers.” Furthermore, he explained that God grants us His salvation out of pure grace. Eternal fellowship with God is not a given.

Thank you, God

The Chief Apostle then gave the believers a number of helpful tips on how to express their gratitude to God:

- through prayer: “Every time we pray, we give thanks to God.”
- by bringing our offerings: “This is not only to say thank-you, but also to profess our dependency on God.”
- in Holy Communion. “We celebrate Holy Communion together—which is another way of expressing our gratitude.”
- by appreciating the gifts of God: “We must also make appropriate use these gifts,” the Chief Apostle said in reference to the earthly gifts we have been given. He went on to add, “Let us also appreciate grace and forgiveness, in awareness of what Jesus paid so that our sins can be forgiven. We are aware of the value of the divine service, and make appropriate use of it. We are aware of the value of fellowship and make appropriate use of it as well.”
- by speaking and acting in the name of the Lord Jesus. “To speak in the name of Jesus Christ means that we must allow Him to come to expression again and again whenever we speak or even write.”

... do all in the name of the Lord Jesus

The Chief Apostle expanded even further on the last point: “Here Paul goes on to say, ‘Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt.’ With these words, Paul makes reference to Jesus, who advised, ‘Have salt in yourselves.’ The salt here is the gospel,” explained the Chief Apostle. “Jesus is to come to expression whenever we speak,” he clarified. “Our words are to be seasoned with the salt of the gospel.” This does not mean that we must always talk about the gospel, but it should be noticeable in everything we say and do, just like the pinch of salt that a chef adds to every meal to make it taste better. Whenever we talk to people, they should sense our gratitude to God even though we may be talking about something completely normal. We may not say it in so many words, but it can be felt. And they should also be able to feel, “There is a kind of care, a kind of love, a bit of kindness, a kind of grace, a desire for reconciliation, a desire for oneness that comes to expression here.”

“And we are also to act, to do works in the name of the Lord Jesus,” the Chief Apostle went on to point out. “When we act, everyone is to notice: ‘That person belongs to the Lord.’” In Revelation it says that the redeemed bear the name of Jesus on their foreheads (Revelation 22: 4). It is not the appearance that is important here, but rather the

meaning, the determination to adhere to the will of God under all circumstances. “We serve Jesus Christ,” the Chief Apostle said, reminding his listeners of our motto for 2023. “In the name of Jesus Christ we are to reveal His love and make it felt. We are to do good works in His name, and in His name do our part such that His work may be completed and that His plan of redemption can continue.”

“This should be our striving in all situations,” the Chief Apostle said, namely to ask ourselves: “What can I do here and now for the Lord?”



The Chief Apostle ordains Reto Keller (left) as an Apostle and assigns Thomas Deubel (right) as a District Apostle Helper

CORE THOUGHTS

Colossians 3: 17

“And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”

Our gratitude is reflected in our relationship with God. We thank God through our prayers, our offerings and sacrifices, and our conduct. Our heart’s attitude towards God and our neighbour is reflected in our words and our conduct.



For several minutes before the divine service, the Chief Apostle walked around outside to greet and wave to the many brothers and sisters sitting around the church. The church was far too small to accommodate the many thousands who had come



When a multitude becomes a little flock

What biblical image could best be used and explained to a congregation of over 26,000 believers? The Chief Apostle chose the image of the small flock and explained it in a striking way.

Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider visited the congregation in Kananga in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on 23 July 2023.

The little flock

First of all, Chief Apostle Schneider explained the image of the little flock. It is kind of strange to speak of a small flock, seeing that such a large number of people have gathered for this divine service in Kananga, he said at the beginning. However, compared to the world population, you are still a little flock, he said. “There are a lot of people who don’t even know Jesus, so from that point of view we’re still a little flock. But remember, the return of Jesus Christ is not tied to membership statistics in the New Apostolic Church. The preparation of the bride is not measured by numbers, but by the spiritual maturity of God’s children.”

The fact that the flock is little is also a sign that many brothers and sisters live in modest circumstances. Because faithfulness to God does not necessarily lead to material wealth. However, the Chief Apostle said, “God’s love for His children is not measured by wealth and success.”

“We have been sent to proclaim the gospel and prepare the bride, not to perform spectacular miracles,” Chief Apostle Schneider said. This also contributes to the fact that the church is seen as being “little”. For many, the errors committed within the Church are also a clear sign of the imperfection and an indication of the smallness of the flock.

God’s benevolence

However, God wants to give the kingdom, as it says in the Bible text, to this small flock. This means perfect fellow-



ship with God: “This kingdom is eternal life, it is eternal fellowship with God at home in heaven, where everything is perfect, where evil and death no longer exist, where human beings have perfect fellowship with God and with one another, and where we can truly be like Jesus Christ, as though, like Christ, we had never committed a sin.”

Chief Apostle Schneider explained Jesus’ statement, that the kingdom of God is already in our midst, as follows: “The kingdom of God is our experience of God’s presence in our lives here in Kananga.” Often the Lord sends us a sister or a brother to help us, to console us, to do us good. Through this fellowship we can already experience God’s presence.

Staying with the little flock

In order to be able to receive this kingdom, it is important to remain in the little flock, the Chief Apostle emphasised, “Staying with the little flock means staying humble before God.”

This will lead to the following:

- the knowledge that everything comes from God’s grace and cannot be earned. “This makes us humble before God and our fellow human beings. We know that we are no better than our neighbour,” the Chief Apostle said.
- that we accept, trust, and obey God as Jesus reinforced: “Father, Your will be done, do what You want.”
- that we follow Christ beyond mere church attendance: “Those who belong to His flock follow Him, follow His example. They do not come to church to be served, but to serve God and their fellow human beings. Follow-

ing Jesus means wanting to become like Him and to respond as He responded.”

- that we are faithful to the apostolate because we know: “In the New Apostolic Church it is never about the person behind the ministry. It is about the Lord Jesus Christ and the apostolate, the ministry in general; it is about the teaching of the Apostles as stated in our Catechism.”

Fear not!

The Chief Apostle reminded the congregation of Jesus’ promise that He will stay with His Apostles and take care of His church. In addition, he called on the brothers and sisters to remain calm when they are attacked and criticised and not to lose themselves in discussions and quarrels, but to orient themselves to Jesus here too, because: “Don’t be afraid little flock, stay calm. You’ll see, at the end of the story it is Jesus who wins.”

At the end of his sermon, the Chief Apostle once again encouraged the congregation: “Brother, sister, don’t be afraid to commit yourself to the Lord and serve Him. He will always give you far more than you give Him. Eternal glory is far greater than we can imagine.” In summing up, he said: “Stay with the little flock, be humble before God and ask for His grace. Have faith and obey God as a child obeys its father. Trust Him whatever happens. Follow His example, serve the Lord, become like Jesus, and remain faithful to the apostolate. And do not be afraid because God keeps His promises. Jesus is with His Church and with His Apostles. Jesus will come again.”

CORE THOUGHTS

Luke 12: 32

“Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

What people think of us has no influence on our salvation. God offers salvation freely to the humble who faithfully follow Christ and His Apostles. We have nothing to fear. Christ will bring His work to perfection.

Giving things up for God and receiving everything

This is a kind of less is more approach: those who give things up for God will get more in the end than they ever gave up. The Chief Apostle explained the whys and wherefores in a divine service.



Photos: Diana Caesariyanti



“I must say it is a special joy for me to gather together with you in this special circle of the servants of our beloved Lord.” This was how Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider welcomed the ministers to the divine service for ministers in Jakarta, Indonesia, at the beginning of May.

A rich young man who lived a devout life came to Jesus and wanted to know from Him what his chances were of entering the kingdom of heaven. When Jesus asked him to give up his possessions, the young man went away sad. Jesus said, “How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God” (Luke 18: 24). This remark really troubled the disciples. Would they make it? Jesus assured them, “I say to you, there is no one who has left house or parents or brothers or wife or children for the sake of the kingdom of God, who shall not receive many times more in this present time, and in the age to come eternal life.”

What all we must renounce

“Don’t worry,” the Chief Apostle began and referred to the comforting words of Jesus Christ: “Those who have left something for Me and the kingdom of God will receive many times more and have eternal life.” This is still true today, he said. However, anyone who wants to follow Jesus and enter the kingdom of God must renounce a number of things, he continued. He then went on to list and explain these things.

Give up on clinging to material wealth. “You need money, and you can have money,” the Chief Apostle clarified. But wealth should not become more important to you than the love for God and the love for our neighbour, he said. In order to obtain money, people sometimes go so far as to harm their neighbour. “It is better to do without earthly

wealth than to violate the law of Jesus Christ and not to love God and your neighbour.”

Renounce comfort. The house Jesus mentions in the Bible text is an image of convenience and comfort. Jesus Himself loved to come to the home of Mary and Martha. But, the Chief Apostle said, “If you follow Jesus, if you want to have eternal life you cannot be comfortable.”

Quit following the mainstream if it is against God. “The parents and brothers mentioned in our Bible text are an image of the society in which we live,” the Chief Apostle explained. We can be part of this society, but belonging to Jesus Christ is more important to us than the people and traditions we belong to. Because sometimes the actions of society do not correspond to the will of God. “Even if 300 million people do it, I won’t do it because I belong to Christ.”

Renounce other gods. Just because the Bible text says that one should leave one’s wife and children does not mean that followers of Christ may not be married. “And it is not an excuse for the brothers not to care for their wives and children,” the Chief Apostle emphasised. “It was just a reminder of the Law of Moses. For Moses had already told the people of Israel, ‘If your wife or your child, who are like your own soul, tell you to serve another god, do not listen to them.’”

Give up character traits that get in the way. “And to summarise Jesus said that to follow Him you must deny yourself,” the Chief Apostle said. “In other words, overcome all aspects of your personality that do not agree with Jesus Christ. You must be transformed into the image of Jesus Christ and give up everything that does not correspond to that image.”

Ministers especially must learn to do without

From a human point of view, we cannot understand why one person is ordained into a ministry and another is not. Both can enter the kingdom of God, but the ministers may have to give up different things than those who do not have a ministry. Ministers may have to give up things such as

- material wealth: “Certainly, it can happen that a minister may have to do without earthly wealth. He could perhaps become richer if he did not have to serve the Lord. Because then he would have more time and could perhaps work more.”
- comfort: “When someone is ordained, he must definitely leave his house. Things are less comfortable for him

than for others. There is less time to enjoy life, and his life is less enjoyable because he shares in the suffering of others.”

- family time: “This means that we are forced to focus on what really matters. We have less time for our family, but the time we do have with them we need to focus on what is really important.”
- being right: “We have to deny ourselves. We have to give up many thoughts and opinions. And sometimes we have to be weak just for the sake of peace and unity.”

“Is this unfair? No, remember that God gives us much more,” the Chief Apostle said.

What ministers receive from God

“With all the things you experience in the course of your work you realise just how great Jesus is,” the Chief Apostle said. “True, you have to leave your family, but He gives you a much bigger family. There are so many brothers and sisters who pray for us, who support us, and who love us.” And in Christ we have been given the best friend we could ever have, the Chief Apostle said. “His help is much greater than any help a human being could give us. He is always there, day and night. Twenty-four seven.” And finally: “You will receive eternal life. And you will have much more than you can imagine. In fact, we will receive much more than we have given to Jesus Christ.”

CORE THOUGHTS

Luke 18: 29–30

“I say to you, there is no one who has left house or parents or brothers or wife or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who shall not receive many times more in this present time, and in the age to come eternal life.”

Following Christ is essential for salvation. It requires that we give up things. The Lord always gives us more than we give up for Him.

ELISHA HEALS NAAMAN'S LEPROSY

ACCORDING TO 2 KINGS 5

Naaman is an Aramean commander. He was a great man in the sight of his master and highly regarded because it was through him that the Arameans defeated Israel. He was a powerful man, but he had leprosy.

Naaman's wife was served by a young girl who had been taken as a captive from Israel. She said to her mistress: "I wish that my master would meet the prophet who lives in Samaria. He would heal Naaman of his disease." Naaman went to the king and told him what the girl from Israel had said. The king of Aram wrote a letter to the king of Israel, asking him to help Naaman.

So Naaman left and took about 750 pounds of silver. He also took about 150 pounds of gold and ten changes

of clothes with him. He brought the letter to the king of Israel. It read, "I am sending my servant Naaman to you. I'm sending him so you can heal him of his skin disease." The king of Israel read the letter. Then he tore his clothes to show how upset he was. He said, "I'm not God! I can't kill and make alive again! Why does this man send someone with a harmful skin disease for me to heal? You can see that the king of Aram is trying to start trouble with me!"

When the prophet Elisha heard about this, he sent him this message: "Send Naaman to me and he will know that there is a prophet in Israel." So Naaman went with his horses and chariots and stopped at Elisha's house.

Elisha sent a messenger to say to him, "Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed." Naaman went away angry. He said, "I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy. Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus,



better than all the waters of Israel? Couldn't I wash in them and be cleansed?" He left in a rage.

Namaan's servants went to him and said, "If the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he tells you, 'Wash and be cleansed!'"

Naaman listened to his servants. He went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy.

Then Naaman and all his attendants went back to Elisha. He stood before the prophet and said, "Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel. So please accept a gift from your servant."

Elisha did not accept anything from him. All he said was, "Go in peace!" After Naaman had travelled some distance, Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, said to himself, "My master was too easy on Naaman. I will run after him and get something from him." So Gehazi hurried after

Naaman. When Naaman saw him running towards him, he got down from the chariot to meet him. "Is everything all right?" he asked.

The servant said, "Two young men just came to me. They are from the group of the prophets in the mountains of Ephraim. Please give them 75 pounds of silver and two changes of clothes."

Naaman even gave Gehazi 150 pounds of silver in two bags with two changes of clothes. Naaman's servants carried everything home for him. Gehazi went to see Elisha, who asked him, "Where have you been?" Gehazi said, "I didn't go anywhere." But Elisha knew what had happened. "You accepted the money and the clothes and you will buy vineyards, sheep, oxen, male servants, and female servants. Naaman's skin disease will come on you and your children forever." When Gehazi left Elisha, he had the disease. He was as white as snow.



AT KIMBERLEY'S IN PARAMARIBO, SURINAME



Have you ever heard of Suriname? This is where I live. My country is the smallest country in South America. It is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean to the north, French Guiana to the east, Guyana to the west, and Brazil to the south. The population of Suriname is about 590,000. Most people live in and around our capital city of **Paramaribo**. Oh, I forgot to introduce myself. My name is Kimberley and I am ten years old.

A long time ago, **Suriname** used to be a colony of the Netherlands until it became an independent republic on 25 November 1975. So in addition to our mother tongue Sranan Tongo we also speak Dutch. Dutch is the language of instruction at school.

Meet my **friends** Cherencia and Noranja. We are in the same class.

I enjoy learning languages. I speak Dutch, Sranan Tongo, Spanish, and a bit of English. On the right is my **school picture**. I am the second from the left in the first row.



This is me with my **parents**. My father's name is Harvey. He is the district rector of Suriname and the boss of a construction company. He handles all the repairs in our churches and sometimes even builds a new church. Right now he is busy building a medical station next to our church in Dankbaarkondre.

My mother's name is Eveliza. She was born in the Dominican Republic and grew up speaking Spanish, which she is teaching me. She runs the shop of the Church Foundation Corantijn in Welbedacht. It's called Makandra, which means "together" in English. Right next to it is our church, where I go with my **brothers**, Angel and Raul, and my mother.



The district of Suriname is comprised of ten congregations with about 700 members. This is our **congregation**.

My favourite dish is Dominican **nasi**, a rice dish. And sometimes I like a hamburger.

My hobbies are biking and gaming. And I like music. I also love to play with our **cat**.





Election and calling to ministry

The questions of what and who of our concept of ministry have been resolved. What remains is the question, why does ministry come to the believer. This is what Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider explains in the following essay.

The Fifth Article of the New Apostolic Creed states: “I believe that those designated by God for a ministry are ordained only by Apostles, and that authority, blessing, and sanctification for their ministrations come forth out of the Apostle ministry.” In the commentary on this Article of Faith, the Catechism further specifies that

- the ministry is not a human work, nor is it ultimately that of the congregation; it is a gift of God to His church.
- it is God Himself who designates a person to receive a ministry.
- this designation by God is realised on the occasion of an ordination which is performed by the apostolate (CNAC 2.4.5).

Maintaining and strengthening belief

Belief in the divine election of the ministries is part of the wealth of our Church. It is a source of motivation and strength for the ministers. At the same time, it contributes to the acceptance of the spiritual ministry on the part of the congregation.

We are accustomed to saying that it is God who designates a person before the ordination, and that this designation comes to expression in the Apostle’s decision to ordain the person. It must be acknowledged, however, that this explanation falls somewhat short, considering the importance of the subject.

Certain conditions might cause our members to call the divine designation of a minister into question. This can be the case, for example, when it turns out that ministers do not live up to the demands of their ministry or fail in its exercise.

In most cases the selection of the ministers to be ordained transpires as follows:

- the locally responsible ministers provide the Apostle with a list of brothers or sisters proposed for ordination.
- on the basis of these proposals, the Apostle (or District Apostle) chooses the brothers or sisters to be ordained.
- a locally responsible minister contacts the members who have been selected, and explains what will be expected of them.
- if the individuals selected give their consent, the Apostle ordains them into ministry.

It is not necessarily easy to reconcile this administrative procedure with a designation made by God. For this reason, it seems to me that it would be helpful to provide

some explanation of the concepts of divine designation and calling to a ministry.

Divine designation

As with all decisions made by God, the divine designation to a ministry is a mystery which we can only grasp in faith. No Apostle can claim to fully understand why God has chosen a believer in order to entrust him or her with a special duty. Our task merely consists of recognising His will and acting in accordance with it (CNAC 7.7).

In order to determine which believers are called to a ministry by God, we must take the following into consideration.

The needs of the Church: Ministry is not an end unto itself. It is given by God in order to meet the needs of His church. The Apostle and His co-workers must allow themselves to be led by the Holy Spirit in order to recognise the needs and expectations of the congregation.

The spiritual gifts: God gives those whom He has designated for a ministry the spiritual gifts that will be necessary for the exercise of the ministry. Believers who have been called to a ministry can be recognised by

- their faith in Jesus Christ, as well as in His death, resurrection, and return.
- their faithfulness to the gospel.
- their faith in the Church as a mediator of salvation; their faith in the Apostles, in the sacraments, and in the ministry.
- their love for God and the believers.
- their willingness to serve.

Human abilities: The designation that issues from God also shows itself in the abilities He has bestowed upon the believers in question. Some examples of this include the ability to listen, the capacity for dialogue, the ability to express themselves clearly, open-mindedness, common sense, knowledge, or the ability and willingness to learn. The Apostles and their co-workers must make certain that even the human—that is, the characteristic, emotional, and intellectual—abilities of the minister correspond to the needs of the congregation which he or she has been called to serve.

Acceptance on the part of the congregation: Ministry is a gift that God gives to the congregation. He chooses ministers who correspond to the believers they are to serve. The Apostle must make certain that the person to be ordained

will be well accepted by the congregation. In the early church, the Apostles asked the church to seek out seven men who were to be ordained to serve as Deacons (Acts 6: 1–6). In our time, this decision falls to the locally responsible congregational or district rectors, who act on behalf of the congregation. By presenting their proposal to the Apostle, these leading ministers confirm that the believing congregation has recognised (or perhaps, will be able to recognise) the spiritual gifts and abilities of those whose ordination they propose.

The minister's own acceptance of the calling: The divine designation always goes hand in hand with a calling. God calls the individuals whom He has selected and gives them the opportunity to accept their election or not. We are of the conviction that this calling is disclosed to the believer by the Apostle or, if necessary, by his or her representative. However, this is surely not the only way for God to call a believer into His service.

The divine calling also expresses itself in the personal development of the individuals who have been called. Through the conditions of life and personal experiences, God awakens the following in their hearts:

- gratitude for the gifts and favours they have received.
- love for God and the Church.
- the genuine desire—born out of this gratitude and love—to serve God and the Church.

Confirming one's designation and calling

It is the link between the feeling of an inner calling and the call of the apostolate that allows believers to arrive at the certainty that they have been called by God to a ministry. The individuals who have been called must then confirm their designation and calling (2 Peter 1: 10) by declaring, of their own free will, that they

- profess the New Apostolic Creed.
- will discharge their ministry within the mandate issued to them.
- will work together with the apostolate and the other ministries.
- will adhere to the regulations and ordinances of the New Apostolic Church.

It is important for the individuals who have been called to be able to make their decision freely and in full awareness of the significance of the matter. Those who have been called must be clear about the content of their obligation

and what implications arise from this obligation. For this reason, it is important that the spouse also be incorporated into the decision-making process.

After their ordination, the ministers must further consolidate their election by

- sanctifying themselves.
- making the endeavour to recognise the divine will and act in accordance with it.
- deepening their oneness with the apostolate and the other ministries.
- further developing their gifts and abilities.
- committing themselves to training in order to acquire the knowledge and abilities that are necessary for the exercise of their ministry.

The Church leadership in turn must see to it that the ministers are instructed and supported in their ministry. Meanwhile, the members of the congregation must support the ministers in prayer, but also demonstrate their appreciation for them and solidarity with them.

Designation is no guarantee of success

The designation by God, which is realised by ordination, does not rule out the possibility that a minister may fail in the exercise of his or her ministry. "Nevertheless, this does not call into question the original call of God" (CNAC 2.4.5).

Here the Catechism makes a distinction between God, who is perfect and infallible, and the person who, although designated by God, remains imperfect and fallible.

In order to avoid any misunderstanding, let us clarify right from the start what we mean when we talk about failing in the exercise of ministry. The failure of which we speak here does not refer to the results achieved, but rather to the manner in which the minister fulfils the divine will.

There can be various reasons which might prevent a minister from fulfilling his or her ministerial mandate.

Failure attributable to the minister: Ministers cannot be successful in the exercise of their ministry if they

- conduct themselves in a manner that is inconsistent with their ministry.
- are not in oneness with the apostolate.
- lose the trust of the members through their conduct.



- refuse to place their gifts and strength into the service of the Church.

In all of these cases, the ministers deprive themselves of divine blessing, and their actions are therefore doomed to fail. Nevertheless, the acts which they have performed within the scope of their ministerial authority (dispensation of the sacraments, proclamation of the forgiveness of sins, dispensation of blessings) are not called into question as a result of their conduct. They remain valid and can unfold in all their effects.

Failure attributable to the congregation: Human weaknesses can cause members of the congregation to have an intolerant or even hostile attitude toward a minister. From this point onward such a minister will no longer be able to fulfil his or her mandate with them. Such a failure is then attributable to the congregation, and not to the minister.

Also Apostles are imperfect human beings, who are capable of making mistakes. If it turns out that a brother or sister fails to live up to their ministry despite their best efforts, the Apostle must have the honesty to question him- or herself. Perhaps an error was made in assessing the needs of the congregation or the abilities of the minister. It is the obligation of the Apostle to support this minister, if necessary, by adapting the mandate to suit his or her abilities, and to see to it that the minister and his or her family receive the appropriate pastoral care.

Failure attributable to external circumstances: In some cases, events occur after a person's ordination which make it difficult or even impossible for him or her to exercise the ministry. For example, this is the case when

- ministers experience health problems or significant changes in their family or professional life.
- the composition of the congregation has changed so significantly that the requirements are different.
- demographic developments oblige the Church to change the way congregations are organised.

Such changes do not call God's calling into question, but must cause us to ask ourselves the question of

- what God expects of us now.
- what is to be done in order to ensure that the ministers can indeed exercise their ministerial authority in accordance with the will of God.
- whether the ministerial mandate of the minister needs to be adapted.
- whether the time has come to relieve the minister of his or her ministerial mandate.

The exercise of a ministry is no guarantee of salvation, and the fact that a minister may have failed in his or her ministry does not exclude him or her from having access to salvation. Our duty toward him or her remains unchanged, namely to help them attain salvation. It is not the task of the Apostles to judge those who refuse to accept a ministry. Finally, Apostles must not forget that ministers who have difficulties in the exercise of their ministries need special comfort and support.

Taking the future into their own hands

Hairdryers are doing overtime, hammers are banging away, and heads are spinning: the church building in Parkwood in South Africa has been converted into a skills development centre for disadvantaged young people. And they learn far more than technical skills there.



Masakhe Foundation

Smiles all around: these participants have successfully completed their course



“The teacher gives class in a very exciting way,” says Fowiza Taliep. “You feel excited to come to class every week because the teacher explains everything so well and you can ask him the same thing over and over again, and he will have patience with you.” The young woman from Parkwood near Cape Town is taking a computer course in the converted New Apostolic church

From worship space to training centre

The Masakhe Foundation of the District Apostle Area Southern African had plans for a Skills Training Centre already in 2021. Unemployment is especially high in the area around Cape Town, and so is the resulting poverty. The Church provided the church building in Parkwood. And financial support came from the German relief organisation NAK-karitativ.

Work began in October 2022. The pews were dismantled and stored in the Tafelsig church. The church hall was

converted to create classrooms. On 6 February 2023, District Apostle John Leslie Kriel, Chairman of the Masakhe Foundation, formally opened the Masakhe Skills Training Centre.

There are two options when one is unemployed, he said in his address: “Either you wait to be offered a job or you do something to escape the situation.” With the newly created training centre and the Skills Unlimited Programme an opportunity has been created for young adults.

Confronting poverty

Fowiza did not complete her studies after school. “Today I totally regret that,” she says. When selecting individuals, regardless of denomination or religious affiliation, care is taken to ensure that no one is excluded from the programme due to lack of schooling. The programme is aimed at those young people who have fewer opportunities on the labour market.



Courses in basic computer skills, hairdressing, and installing tiles are given

This opened up new opportunities for Charmainne Kodia, for example: “I registered for a hairdressing course at Masakhe to improve my skills because I have been unemployed for more than six months,” she says. She saw a Masakhe poster outside a New Apostolic church offering courses and registered on 30 January.

She has no regrets. Thanks to the certificate she can cut, flat-iron, and blow-dry hair and can now do clients at home. “That was very helpful for me and my family,” says Charmainne, a mother and grandmother, who now once again has an income.

Taking the initiative into the world of work

“With the certificate, the course participants can start their own micro-enterprise or look for a job,” Bishop Gregory February explains, the executive director of the Masakhe Foundation. Thanks to the Skills Unlimited Programme, 120 young people have already learned a practical skill. Many of them earn their living with the qualifications they have acquired.

Some of the teachers at the training centre are former students themselves who participated in earlier courses. They are aware of the challenges in the townships and can provide the best possible support. They know only too well that in the world of work you need more than just technical skills.



The converted church serves as a training area

Sulaimaan Simons, who just finished the computer course, reports: “I have learnt a lot that I did not expect.” He says, “I did not just learn about computers but I also learned life skills, how to sit in an interview, and how to develop more communication skills.”

Looking ahead

“I can only advise unemployed people to come and make use of the training. The training is free. The only thing that is required of you is to come and be here every day,” Charmainne says.

The next courses in basic hairdressing, woodworking, tiling, plumbing, and basic computer skills started at the beginning of September 2023. The courses last six to nine weeks. And soon there will be more: “Hopefully in painting, home decoration, and trades,” Gregory February, the managing director, says.



Robert Kneschke - stock.adobe.com

Voluntary commitment helps protect children

When it comes to the prevention of sexual abuse the New Apostolic Church is undeterred. The most recent example is the introduction of a mandatory code of conduct published by the New Apostolic Church Western Germany.

“Protection from sexual violence is a duty incumbent on society as a whole, and the New Apostolic Church and its ministers are likewise committed to this duty.” This is what it says in the international *Guide for Ministers*. And this is also the wording in the policy being drawn up by the New Apostolic Church Western Germany.

In November 2022, the Apostles’ Assembly had passed a concept against sexual violence. It summarises the guidelines and measures taken over the last fifteen years or so. This is supplemented by a voluntary commitment for ministers and those who work with children and young people, for example.

A binding policy

These directives will now be officially introduced in the districts. To this end, local seminars have been organised.

They are aimed primarily at ministers and those who carry functions in the Church, but parents and grandparents of children and young people—as well as all interested members of the congregation—are invited as well.

The speakers for this were trained via video conferencing in May and June. Bishop Manfred Bruns, head of the pastoral care department and a former criminal investigations officer, and Deacon Gabriele Schmitz, a qualified psychologist and practising psychotherapist, conducted the event.

Practical experience

The church in Western Germany is following a requirement of the District Apostle Meeting: “The District Apostles issue regulations for the prevention and handling of sexual assault in pastoral care, and for co-operation with law enforcement authorities of the state.” This was adopted by

the international governing body of the Church at the end of 2021 together with the new *Guide for Ministers*.

The District Apostle Area Southern Africa has gained practical experience with such policies. A sexual misconduct policy has been in effect in the Regional Church Southern Africa since July 2020. The policy sets a clear road map for dealing with “any form of sexual misconduct” by ministers or functionaries. The document defines responsibilities, describes preventive measures, installs procedures for suspected cases, and outlines pastoral care for those affected. A panel staffed with registered professionals outside of the pastoral realm can be contacted.

This policy was reviewed and ratified last year—this is done every two years—by another independent panel of experts. Meanwhile, the Regional Church has been working on extending the programme to the countries of Botswana and Namibia.

Demand and foster

Prevention, education, and intervention are also the three pillars of the Awareness Concept of the New Apostolic Church Southern Germany. The programme was developed in 2015 and launched in 2016. In addition to guidelines, it also includes raising awareness and training events on how to deal with the issue in a mindful manner. An important element is a code of conduct in ten concise points.

Here too, there is a review and advisory panel consisting of doctors, psychologists, and lawyers—as, for example, in the Regional Church Northern and Eastern Germany. In both of these Regional Churches, as well as in Western Germany, ministers and functionaries are obligated to submit an extended certificate of good conduct, which is examined by a lawyer with regard to relevant offences.

The fight against sexual misconduct does not end at the church door. The Church aid agency in Germany, human aktiv, has been working with the child protection foundation Hänsel + Gretel for years. Nearly 150,000 euros have been donated to various projects since, the latest of which was for the distribution of so-called Strong Kids Boxes (Starke-Kinder-Kisten) for kindergartens and primary schools. After all, “Protection from sexual violence is a duty incumbent on society as a whole, and the New Apostolic Church and its ministers are likewise committed to this duty.”

Serving and reigning with Christ— for children and young people



New Apostolic Church Spain

Over the last weekend in August 2023, the youth from Spain spent three days together in Guardamar del Segura. District Apostle Jürg Zbinden from Switzerland, who is responsible for Spain, welcomed the young people with the words: “United we stand.” In the divine service on Sunday morning and elsewhere during the weekend, he used the opportunity to talk to the young people about the annual motto for 2023 “Serving and reigning with Christ”. One of the things he told the young sisters and brothers was that serving means helping. “To reign means that one has control over one’s time and thoughts. Am I the one who is in control or am I being controlled? This also applies in social media when you give a like or post a comment. All those who open their hearts to the Lord today and let Him do the talking will serve and reign with Christ in peace.”

Children from some of the New Apostolic congregations in Spain gathered near San Ildefonso de la Granja over the last weekend in August 2023. Besides ice-breaker activities, swimming, pottery, and lots of games, the children also talked about their faith. Everyone looked forward to the divine service on Sunday morning, which was based on 1 John 4: 19: “We love Him because He first loved us.” The officiant interpreted the Bible text in a child-friendly way. When you come to divine service, he told the children, you hear the word of God and you are strengthened. “And when we feel good, we can do good for our neighbour,” the officiant said. “This is what Christ wants and this is what it means to serve Christ.”

No distance is too far

Distances, prison walls, social conventions: New Apostolic Christians do not let anything stop them from looking after their brothers and sisters in faith and experiencing fellowship. Here is a look at congregational life worldwide.



New Apostolic Church South East Asia

From island to island

Large open ocean areas lie between the Philippine islands that District Apostle Edy Isnugroho visited in the company of Apostle Samuel Tansahitkno at the end of June and beginning of July. Five divine services and two meetings with the ministers took place in Leyte, Bohol, and Cebu, which are spread over three different islands. The highlight was the service for the departed on 2 July at our central church in Cebu.

Pastoral care behind bars

“I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me.” This passage from Matthew 25: 36 inspired Siyabonga Ndongeni, Xabiso Stwayi, and Khayaletu Vaaltein, three Priests from the Nobuhle district in South Africa, to visit members of their congregations who are in correctional facilities. On 3 June the three ministers visited the members doing time in St Albans Correctional Services.



Werner Feld, Bianca Leyendecker

New Apostolic Church Benin and Togo



New Apostolic Church Nigeria



Music knows no handicap

“Come, now is the time to worship. Give Him your heart, come as you are and worship” was the opening piece of a concert given by the choir Faktor G in Trier, Germany, at the beginning of June. And that was meant literally, because Faktor G is an inclusion project in which young people with and without handicaps make music together. Despite the summer heat, a large audience had come to hear the choir. There was also a YouTube livestream. And to cool down and motivate the singers, the conductor distributed Faktor G flags, which the members of the audience used as fans to keep themselves cool during the concert.

Women's conventions in Africa

New Apostolic women from Togo and Nigeria gathered for women's conventions, lasting three days. The first gathering took place in Togo, where hundreds of women from the five congregations of

District 3 met in Dapapong. There were lectures, panel discussions, devotions, and singing. Apostle Kloutse Kossivi Edoh conducted the closing service for the sisters.

The next convention was in Nigeria, where sisters from 16 districts gathered for a Sisters Fellowship from 7 to 9 July. The focus was on seminars, workshops, and health talks, and medical checks took place. Apostle Oscar Nwanza conducted a special service for the sisters in our Ikeja central church in Lagos.

“Now is the time”

New Apostolic young people from all over Germany overcame denominational barriers at the recent German Protestant Church Congress. The 38th convention took place over a long weekend at the beginning of June in Nuremberg, Germany. The service started at eleven o'clock in the packed St Lawrence Church. The musical accompaniment was provided by a choir of 85 young people from all over Germany under the direction of Gerrit Junge and accompanied by Sigi Händler on organ and electric piano. “Now is the time” was the motto of the Church Convention and the young people also performed the official anthem of the 38th convention, “It is high time”.

Various events also took place under this motto, some of which the New Apostolic Church was involved in. A presentation on our expectation of Christ's return was given by Apostle Matthias Pfützner during a panel discussion on the apocalypse. And Apostle Arne Herrmann, who is responsible for Nuremberg, conducted a divine service for the young people of the project choir and guests and urged them to use the time available in the spirit of Christ and to do good.



Peter Johanning, Frank Schult

The students had special T-shirts printed for the celebrations marking the second anniversary of the campus congregation



Bringing spiritual life to the campus

The University of Ghana, the University of Science and Technology, and the University of Cape Coast are universities in Ghana which have New Apostolic campus congregations. Two years ago another congregation opened on campus at the University of Education, Winneba (UEW). Recently there was a big celebration to mark its second anniversary.

They were all wearing white T-shirts with “NAC UEW” written in blue lettering across the front with a big red number two next to it. On Thursday, 20 July, some students really stood out from the big crowd on campus. Besides the obvious outward signs some of the students felt a deep inner joy and gratitude.

A milestone for Winneba

The students have every reason to be happy: two years ago, they established a congregation on the campus of the University of Education, Winneba in Ghana. They are registered as a denominational association on campus.

There was a bit of red tape on the way there. “There had been attempts to set up a congregation on campus before,” Ernest Kyeremeh Sarpong, a student at UEW and a Priest in the Church, says. “But the university rules and regulations

were not all that flexible.” With the help from some senior lecturers at the university, who are also New Apostolic, the young people finally succeeded in establishing a congregation on campus in 2021. This was not only an important step for the students, but it also helped the already existing congregation in town a lot, because the young people help to fill the pews on Sundays.

Bringing the congregation to the campus

In Ghana it is common for the various denominations to establish congregations on university campuses. The campus congregations see to the spiritual and social needs of their members who enrol to study. “Our church was not really present on campus, other churches were,” Ernest reports. As a result, young people were virtually being lost through education when they transitioned to university.

Most of the youth at the secondary and tertiary level were leaving the Church because they were more involved with other churches on campus or simply because they did not have access to divine services. “We wanted to close this gap,” Ernest explains. “We decided to create the campus congregation to bring the church closer to the students.”

This does not mean that the New Apostolic students stay to themselves and close themselves off from the other Christian congregations on campus. On the contrary. “We are all under one umbrella,” Ernest explains. “We work as one because we believe that the church of Christ is led by Jesus.” Then he mentions the platform provided by the university. In an interdenominational service, all Christians come together, irrespective of their belief and denomination, and worship together. Several times already, such a divine service has already been conducted by New Apostolic ministers.

When students celebrate

During the celebration of the campus congregation’s anniversary, many were intrigued and joined the congregation’s approximately 80 New Apostolic students. The highlight of the festivities was the divine service with Apostle Addo Charles Asare, the district rector Bismark Seky, and his deputy John Adosipa. Priest Ernest was also asked to open his heart. “This experience in the divine service really motivated me to do the work of God,” he says. “I also learned to do the work of God with great joy without expecting a worldly reward for it.”

Otherwise there were lectures, workshops, and many other activities. During a discussion with the students, Apostle Asare spoke about subjects such as pastoral care of young people, our concept of ministry, and the ordin-

ation of women. The ministers of the UEW campus congregation are all students. Priest Ernest reaches out to the young members almost every week to see how they are doing. He receives support with pastoral care from the main congregation in town and from the students’ home congregations.

Sharing their faith and spending time together

Support also comes from the brothers and sisters of the congregation in town. On Sundays, the students join the main congregation in Winneba for divine service. The ministers from the congregation also help out on campus and provide additional pastoral care for the students and support them in their faith. “They also help us out if any of us have a financial issue,” Ernest says. “If one of us needs something, other members from the campus congregation also help out.”

The emphasis is on fellowship. All first-year students are greeted with a so-called Freshers Akwaaba, a welcome programme. Akwaaba means “welcome” in Twi. “We hope that the new students who have been admitted to the university will join us,” explains Priest Ernest. During the Freshers Akwaaba, a week’s worth of events at the university to welcome new first-year students, Priest Ernest and the other brothers and sisters introduce the campus congregations to the newcomers.

There are also weekly activities that take place on a regular basis. “For example, a doctrinal teaching day, where we teach our catechism,” Ernest says. “We also go on trips and funfairs and do activities that will engage the members and will make them feel committed to our campus congregation.”



Apostle Asare in conversation with a professor (left)
The students after the divine service (above)



Coming up

- 7 Jan. 2024 Basle, Switzerland
- 14 Jan. 2024 Hoorn, Netherlands
- 19 Jan. 2024 Gisenyi, Rwanda
- 21 Jan. 2024 Kigali, Rwanda
- 4 Feb. 2024 Lima, Peru
- 11 Feb. 2024 Mulhouse, France
- 25 Feb. 2024 Hildesheim, Germany
- 3 March 2024 Palma de Mallorca, Spain
- 10 March 2024 Minden, Germany
- 14 March 2024 Canaan, Myanmar
- 17 March 2024 Chiang Mai, Thailand
- 29 March 2024 Wil, Switzerland
- 31 March 2024 Nagold, Germany

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