

community

The New Apostolic Church around the world

04/2017/EN

Pentecost 2017 in Vienna (Austria)

Editorial

Proclaiming His glory

Pentecost service

Effects of the gift
of the Holy Spirit

Doctrine

The realm of the departed

New Apostolic Church
International



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Proclaiming His glory

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This year's motto "Glory be to God, our Father" will accompany us throughout the year. In fact, it will guide us throughout our lives. It is both a mission and a need of the Christian to recognise the greatness of divine creation, to thank God, and to praise Him for it.

Once we have acknowledged everything that *is* as creation, let us proceed from there and thank and praise God, the Creator, for it. A third mission arises from this, namely to proclaim His glory.

And how do we do that? By behaving like children of God.

- We forgive our neighbour—because God forgives us.
- We implore salvation for all of mankind—also for those who have hurt and offended us.
- We are confident—because we know that nothing can prevent God from giving us His kingdom.
- We are in the process of developing—because God has laid life into us that must grow.
- We contribute to unity—because we know that all human beings only have one God and Father.
- We focus on eternal life, the inheritance of God. It is the most important thing in our lives.



NAC International

Let us make public that which we have recognised and for which we are grateful. If all of us become active in this mind and spirit, it will bring blessing—both for us and for our neighbour.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'J' and 'L' followed by a horizontal line and a small flourish.

Jean-Luc Schneider

Effects of the gift of the Holy Spirit



Two thousand were able to attend the Pentecost service in Vienna (Austria) directly, while hundreds of thousands of others around the world participated in the service by audio-visual transmission

Oliver Rütten

Dear brothers and sisters, as is customary we will hear a Bible reading for this celebration of Pentecost. Today it will be an excerpt from the epistle of Paul to the Romans.

Bible reading Romans 8: 9–11, 14–17:

“But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. ... For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did

Acts 2: 4

“And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father'. The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together."

Dear brothers and sisters, today we celebrate a feast that is of special significance for us. The feast of Pentecost is actually the birthday celebration of the church of Christ. We know that on Pentecost, the Apostles of the time—and all the disciples who had gathered with them—were filled with the Holy Spirit. This was the fulfilment of the promise that Jesus had given them.

The Holy Spirit came upon them and then they all began to preach in other languages in order to preach the gospel to the many Jews who had come from every corner of the earth.

The people who later came to believe in Jesus Christ received the gift of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands and prayer of the Apostles. The Bible relates of individual cases in which other gifts were also imparted in addition to the gift of the Holy Spirit. Some received the gift of speaking in tongues, others the gift of healing, and still others the gift of prophecy. Thereby God wanted to show that His Apostles had truly been sent by Him. These signs were to help reinforce the faith of the believers in the mission of the Apostles. In his wisdom, Apostle Paul made it clear right from the start that these gifts were not relevant for salvation. What is relevant for your salvation is the rebirth out of water and Spirit, and the development of the new creation in Jesus Christ. The various other gifts are thus not decisive for salvation.

As New Apostolic Christians we believe that we have received the gift of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands of an Apostle. This is a firm component of our faith and is also recorded correspondingly in the Eighth Article of our Creed.

Through Holy Sealing we have received the gift of the Holy Spirit and thereby childhood in God. Of course, this does not mean that other people cannot be children of God! God is the Father of all human beings because He has created them. Every Christian can also recognise his heavenly Father in his God, who loves him, who cares for him, and who desires to grant him salvation. So far be it from us to

think that only we can be children of God, and that all others cannot! The term "childhood in God" refers to something very special. It is a special relationship with God, as well as a special calling. With the gift of the Holy Spirit we have been given the prerequisite and the possibility of becoming firstlings, and of entering the kingdom of God as firstlings, in order to be heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. That is the significance of childhood in God. We have been called to become firstlings, to be the first to enter into the kingdom of God. Obviously, if there is one group that will be first there will also be others who will come later. God desires to bring all mankind into the new creation and into fellowship with Him. This is something I wanted to clarify once again for a change.

Faith is the prerequisite for the gift of the Holy Spirit to develop to its full effect

We believe firmly in our Holy Sealing. We believe firmly that we have received the gift of the Holy Spirit. Dear brothers and sisters, in my commission it is a great concern of mine to reinforce this faith—such that we may continue to believe very firmly that we have received the gift of the Holy Spirit at our

Holy Sealing, because it is precisely this faith that is the prerequisite for the gift of the Holy Spirit to develop to its full effect. Should it happen that this faith diminishes the gift of the Holy Spirit will not be able to work to its full effect. That is why it is so infinitely important for us to believe so firmly in our own Holy Sealing.

So how does this gift of the Holy Spirit develop to full effect? Paul described this wonderfully when he remarked that where there is faith in the gift of the Holy Spirit we will allow ourselves to be led by the Holy Spirit. This Holy Spirit will have something to say in our hearts! Then the Spirit of God will tell us, "You are a child of God! You have a Father who loves you and who will lead you into the kingdom of God as a firstling." Such individuals will then say, as Paul did, "Abba, Father" (Romans 8: 15–16). This means that they believe that the Father cares for them just as He cared His Son while the latter was still on this earth. The Father saw to it that Jesus Christ was able to make His way to the very end of His commission and then return into fellowship with Him.

And we too say, "Abba, Father". You, the Almighty, are our Father! You will see to it that all goes well and that we will be able to enter into fellowship with You for all eternity! It is for this reason that the Holy Spirit tells our spirit, "Just remain nice and calm! Your Father will always look after you." This



gives us a kind of serene composure that is founded upon our faith.

Paul once said, “Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure” (1 Corinthians 4: 12–13). One of the effects of this gift of the Holy Spirit is this composure, which is so lacking in our time today. The Father is there. He cares for You! That is the first effect of this gift of the Holy Spirit.

Those who possess this gift, who believe in it, and who allow themselves to be influenced by it will be able to recognise God’s glory. Through the Holy Spirit the glory of God will be revealed to them. Those who are able to recognise the glory of God—whether in the past, in the present, or in the future—will simply speak a different language. They will be able to recognise that which God has done upon them in the past. They will no longer focus on all the things that other people have done to them in the past. They will not talk so much about all the things they have accomplished either. In this recognition of the glory of God they know: God has done great things upon us. Let us rejoice and be glad! They are filled with gratitude because they have been able to recognise the activity of God upon them

in the past. Where the gift of the Holy Spirit is permitted to develop, gratitude will come into being.

Then we will also recognise the dangers of the present and will know exactly: the greatest danger is that we might allow the trials we experience to distance us from God. Our priority should always be to ensure that nothing ever separates us from God and that we never take even a single step away from Jesus. That is our task. This must have priority. Then we will assess the future, with all its dangers, very differently. Our greatest concern will therefore be to remain

in fellowship with God, and to engage in this fellowship even more intimately. This will result in watchfulness, an effect of the gift of the Holy Spirit.

*Gratitude for the past,
watchfulness in the present,
and joy in the future*

Those who allow themselves to be led by the

Spirit and who occupy themselves with the glory of God in the future will be filled with joy. They will know exactly what lies in store for them. That is a completely different language than the one we usually hear spoken around us.

Gratitude for the past, watchfulness in the present, and joy in the future. Where else can we find such a thing?



The Chief Apostle called on District Apostle Bernd Koberstein (left) from Germany and District Apostle John L. Kriel from South Africa to assist

Paul also made clear that with the gift of the Holy Spirit the love of God was poured into our hearts. In other words, we have been given the exact same capacity to love as Jesus Christ loved. Naturally it all depends on our will. After all, we are all free human beings. But we can do it if we want to! That is the message: you have received this capacity! By receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit you have been given the ability to love as Jesus Christ loved. The only thing is, it is up to your willingness!

And this love will naturally have corresponding effects. Among other things it will have the effect of making us want to proclaim salvation to our neighbour too. Because we love our neighbour we will also want him to enter into eternal fellowship with God. We will want to share this great treasure, Jesus Christ, with him. That is an effect of this love which has been poured out in our hearts. To this end, let us speak the language of our neighbour just as the disciples did at the first Pentecost. Through the gift they had received, God had given them the ability to proclaim the gospel in other languages, in the language of those who had come to Jerusalem.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us teach the gospel to our neighbour by speaking his language, not our own language. This has nothing to do with English, French, Spanish, Russian, or German. We have a great example—and that is the Son of God. He wanted to proclaim the glad tidings to mankind. He did not simply preach these tidings from heaven. He became Man Himself and shared the lot of mankind. He lived as they lived, He suffered as they suffered, He shared everything with them, and He came very near to them. He was then able to speak their language because He had become like them, namely a true Man.

Naturally, one must first listen in order to learn a language. This is something that people today have completely forgotten. Everyone wants to talk. But we must go even further. Let us also have empathy with our fellow human beings. Let us very genuinely share their fears, their sufferings, and their joys so that they may feel that we are sincerely interested in them. This empathy will open up their hearts and make them receptive to our message, namely the glad tidings: “God loves you and He wants to redeem you! We have found Jesus Christ! Why don’t you

come with us too? He is also there for you!” This phase of empathy is infinitely important. Let us speak the language of our neighbour—because we want to share salvation with him!

There is still another very important point. We also want salvation for the next generation, of course, for our children and the youth. Our children are often sealed when they are still very young. It is our conviction that the child has received the gift of the Holy Spirit through Holy Sealing. However, we all know that the story is far from over at that point. In order for the gift of the Holy Spirit to unfold to its full effect, faith must grow in this child and, later, in this young person. This person must believe that he has received the gift of the Holy Spirit and that this is something unique and wonderful. And that is where the problem lies. A certain proportion of our children, a certain proportion of our youth may well belong to the New Apostolic Church, but their faith in the gift of the Holy Spirit is not always existent. And some of them simply leave our ranks after their confirmation because they were simply unable to recognise the value of this gift.



District Apostle Markus Fehlbaum uncovers the chalices in preparation for the celebration of Holy Communion

How can we explain to them in their own language just how important and powerful this gift of the Holy Spirit really is?

Naturally it is of no use for us to demonise the present or demonise life on this earth and try to explain to them how terrible life on this earth is: “If you stay nice and New Apostolic, you will be able to escape all the things that are going to happen.” It is of absolutely no use to paint the picture of an apocalyptic future and tell them, “If you are not loyal and faithful, something terrible will happen to you.” Nor is it of any use to try and impart a code of conduct to them and say, “You must do this, and you are not allowed to do that.” That is definitively not their language. Actually I am not even sure if this ever was anybody’s language ...

We occupy ourselves with the present. Together with the District Apostles and the Apostles, I give a great deal of thought to the question of how we can proclaim the gospel to our children in their own language. How can we explain to them that this gift of the Holy Spirit is important? We must try to explain to our children and young people that they can have this composure thanks to the activity of the gift of the Holy Spirit, in order to become strong in their inner being. This does not mean they will necessarily have a better life or be preserved from all evil and all bad things. They will—like the rest of us—also have to endure many adversities. Their life will not become better in the human sense, but it will be very different because they will have this

inner composure that results from their faith, and therefore they will simply be strong in their inner being. We must try to explain to them: with the gift of the Holy Spirit you will have the ability to love all people, without reservation or condition; all you have to do is *want* to love them, and then you will be able to do so! I am firmly convinced that this will motivate our youth. Let us endeavour to explain to them: “Through the gift of the Holy Spirit you have the opportunity to work alongside Jesus Christ and can do your part to ensure that all human beings find salvation in Jesus Christ. You are needed and have been called! You can help along to work on the salvation of mankind! You can be a blessing for many!”

Let us bring the gospel—the glad tidings—to our young people and children in this manner. But a whole lot of preaching and talking will never do the trick. That will convince no one. What we must do is practise what we preach! Do our children perceive that we possess this serene composure that derives from our faith? Can our young people recognise that we truly can love all people if we want to do so? Can the youth feel that we have the urge to offer salvation to our neighbour, and that we have the wish and longing for all human beings to find their way to Jesus Christ? That is our task around the world.

Naturally, every human being—whether adult, child, or young person—remains a free individual, who can decide freely for or against Jesus. We cannot and do not want to

force anyone to accept this offer. That would not correspond to the love of God. But let us not make it too easy for ourselves either and simply say, “Oh well, that’s just the way the circumstances are in our time!” The circumstances and the events of our time cannot be an excuse for us and in no way diminish our responsibility.

That is why it is so important for us to first of all reinforce our own belief in our Holy Sealing, and to work on developing this gift within ourselves. Indeed we have been given the gift of the Holy Spirit. With this gift, I can say, “Abba, Father, I have full trust in You. If I am reviled, I will bless. If I am persecuted, I will endure. Yes, I want to love more—and I can indeed do so! Yes, I want to rejoice in the future. Yes, I want to be an instrument in the hand of God! If people are able to see this in us, if we truly practise this, then we will really be able to do our part to reinforce the faith of the children, of the youth, in their Holy Sealing. Then they will also be able to increasingly experience the effect of the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Following the sermons of the District Apostles, the Chief Apostle continued. Let us now transition to the celebration of Holy Communion. Let us prepare ourselves and look into our own souls. My aim here is not to give anyone a guilty conscience. This is an exercise that each one can and should do for himself. I will merely pose the question, “What have you done with the gift of the Holy Spirit? Has this gift been able to develop fully within you?” Dear God, I could have done so much better! Please grant me grace, please grant me the opportunity to make a new start.

I am absolutely convinced that anyone who comes to the Lord in such a manner will experience this grace and receive the opportunity for a new start. Holy Communion is a feast of gratitude. Let us express this gratitude in a very special way today to God, the Holy Spirit. To envision the Holy Spirit is always a little complicated. It is easy for us to envision the Father. The Creator is very concrete, and the fatherly figure is easy to imagine. The Son of God is also very concrete in Jesus Christ. So it is very easy for us to have a clear image of Him. But what do we make of the Holy Spirit? How are we to envisage Him? After all, we always need such images.

Naturally, we recognise God through His activity. And the activity of the Holy Spirit is something we can certainly recognise. Without the activity of God, the Holy Spirit, we would only hear lectures and sermons here—but not the word of God. This already helps us to understand the Holy Spirit more concretely. After all, what would we be if all we ever heard here were lectures and sermons, but not the

word of God? Thus we are very thankful to God for creating this for us. Without the activity of the Holy Spirit we might well be able to celebrate Holy Communion with one another, but there would be no body and blood of Christ! This would merely be a meal of commemoration. But because God, the Holy Spirit, is at work, we can celebrate Holy Communion and have fellowship with Jesus Christ. And because we have this gift of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit can make a new creation out of us. He can make us capable of entering into eternal fellowship with God.

Even though we cannot really envision the activity of God, we are thankful to Him with all our heart.

Let us now come to the Lord together with the wish, “Lord, I would like to do even more to help my neighbour love Jesus Christ too. Lord, help me. I want to do more to help the next generation recognise and experience the activity of the Holy Spirit.” I do not have any grand strategy, and neither do the District Apostles, about all the things we might do for the future to ensure that all the young people who are confirmed also remain faithful. From a human perspective such planning is not even possible anyway. This is something only God can do. Only He can cause human beings to come to faith and remain faithful.

But if all of us—in this large circle today—express the wish, “Dear God, help us! We want to do whatever we can in order that the next generation may keep that which You have given them!” then I am sure that God will not pass us by without heeding our cry! God will help us! Let us simply summon up the will for this!

CORE THOUGHTS

**We believe in our divine childhood.
The presence of the gift of the Holy
Spirit in us is recognisable in**

- our trust in God,
- our spiritual equilibrium,
- our language, and
- our empathy.



Four steps from tribulation to comfort

“My soul is troubled.” We all know the feeling. But there is a way that leads from distress to comfort, and there is even help from a companion along the way. Following is a guideline in four steps based on the example set by Jesus. The Chief Apostle spoke about this in a divine service in Buenos Aires (Argentina) on 2 April 2017.

“It happens quite often that we are troubled,” Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider said, who is not immune to this either. “We experience pain in the most diverse ways.” Some have to deal with illness, death, and the loss of a loved one. Others have to deal with injustice or are worried about the future or are at odds with God. If this is the case, let us follow the example set by Jesus.

Pause and think

Already days before His death, Jesus knew what was about to happen. “Now my soul is troubled.” And He asked Himself the question: “What shall I say?” He did not immediately pray to God. He took time to think. And He allowed the Holy Spirit to work in His heart.

Let us also take time to think before we pray, the Chief Apostle advised. “It is a source of blessing when we go into ourselves and speak with the Holy Spirit. Because your heart already knows the answer. All we have to do is to allow the Holy Spirit to do His work.”

Listen

“Father, save Me from this hour?” As Son of God, Jesus had legions of angels at his beck and call who would have helped and protected Him. Instead he remembers and says, “But for this purpose I came to this hour.”

The Holy Spirit in us tells us: “Remember the plan of salvation. Remember that you have a mission to fulfill. Your



A total of 30,000 members in Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay participated in the divine service that took place in Buenos Aires at the beginning of April

mission is to ensure that the glory of God is revealed today in the world. Your mission lies in showing people that Jesus is present.”

Understand

“And then we realise: the plan of salvation is much more important than my momentary feelings.” After all, once God fulfils His plan then everything is fine. It will lead us into eternal glory. And is that not our greatest wish?

Then our prayers change: “Father, glorify Your name!” This is how Jesus formulates it.

CORE THOUGHTS

John 12: 27–28

“Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name. Then a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘I have both glorified it and will glorify it again.’”

If ever we are troubled, let us give the Holy Spirit room so that it can have an effect in us. God hears the prayers that are inspired by the Holy Spirit and will reveal His glory to us and give us the strength so that we can obey Him.

Experience

Then a voice came from heaven. God will respond. “We have received this promise from God: you will experience my glory,” the Chief Apostle said. This is something we can experience already today. “We can experience this in divine service when we celebrate Holy Communion, when we have intimate fellowship with God. It is a foretaste of eternal glory.”

The Chief Apostle was accompanied by District Apostle John L. Kriel and an additional sixteen Apostles. Among them was also Patrick Liwakala, who was ordained an Apostle for Namibia and Botswana in this service



Greater than anything we can imagine

Even in times of care and suffering there are so many good reasons to praise and glorify God. Really? And how can we show our gratitude and reverence in a practical way? Following are some tips from a divine service with the Chief Apostle.

Practically phrase by phrase, Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider broke down the contents of the long Bible passage on which he based the divine service he celebrated on 26 February 2017 in Durban (South Africa).

God builds up

Jerusalem—that is the place where God desires to save the sinners. From a Christian perspective, this is the church of Christ: if necessary, its origin and development can also be explained as the development of a human organisation, just as one could explain the development of the New Apostolic Church. However, we have gained the knowledge that this is not the work of man. It is indeed God's work.

Through the power of the Holy Spirit, weak human beings prepare other weak human beings for eternal fellowship with the Lord. "That is the glory of God in His work. And

if we see it that way, we too can say, 'Praise the Lord!' For this reason, let us see the church as the work of God," the Chief Apostle said.

God gathers together the outcasts

In order to be saved, people must become part of the church. This is not merely a group of people who share certain values. The church is the body of Christ, the members of which are firmly connected with one another.

"The unity of the church is not merely a non-aggression pact," the Chief Apostle said as he explained how we are to grow together into the nature of Christ: "The closer each one of us comes to Jesus, the stronger our unity will become." And even this is the result of divine activity: "Praise the Lord for the activity of the Holy Spirit, who allows us to attain unity in Christ!"

A little more than two thousand brothers and sisters participated in the divine service at the Greyville Convention Center directly, while another 128,000 attended a video transmission in their congregations



God heals the broken-hearted

"It breaks my heart when I learn of what all some children of God must endure." At times it is already painful enough just to hear about them. "And if we look a little further, outside of our circle and into the world and the world beyond, sometimes it is simply terrible." And nevertheless, "God can comfort all of them. Through the Holy Spirit, all of them can experience His love," said the Chief Apostle. "Praise the Lord! His love is so great that He can comfort all people, no matter what they have experienced."

God binds up their wounds

Sin is like an arrow which hits its mark and wounds us. And then God comes and treats this wound—with His grace. But often there is something that remains, namely a scar. "There is no longer any risk to our health, but if you touch the scar it hurts."

"God has forgiven, but the sinner must deal with the consequences of his actions," explained the Chief Apostle in reference to the scar. Nevertheless, it is not our task to point to the scar or aggravate it by squeezing it in order to cause sinners to suffer. God desires to heal. "He needs us in order that others can feel the love of Jesus Christ—that is our task." This too is a form of praising God, the Chief Apostle added.

God counts us and calls us by name

"God knows each and every soul. And each individual is more valuable to Him than the whole of creation," ex-

plained Chief Apostle Schneider. "He knows everything about every soul and loves each and every one."

"We have so many reasons to praise the glory of God and to praise the love and grace of Jesus Christ," he concluded. "Trust in God. He is greater than anything that you could ever imagine."

CORE THOUGHTS

Psalm 147: 1–4

"Praise the Lord! For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and praise is beautiful. The Lord builds up Jerusalem; He gathers together the outcasts of Israel. He heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds. He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by name."

We praise God for the salvation He offers us. We glorify God by proclaiming His love and grace, forgiving others, and praying for their salvation.

On Saturday, 20 May 2017, two hundred choristers and instrumentalists delighted a rapt audience at a concert in our Depok church



■ NAC Indonesia

Work to rule? Not for us!

Ready to help, support, and to share ... serving our neighbour has many aspects. Chief Apostle Schneider calls upon all of us to put our gifts and talents at the service of our neighbour and not only think about ourselves.

Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider celebrated a divine service in Depok in Indonesia on 21 May 2017. A total of 10,000 brothers and sisters participated: in our church in Depok and in 128 congregations around the country.

Christians are called upon to serve their neighbour ...

The epistle of Peter is addressed to Christians confronted with the hostility of a pagan society. The author urges them

to persevere in faith and support one another. His words are still relevant. We too have tribulations to deal with, the Chief Apostle said. All of us are called upon to serve our neighbour with the gifts that we have received through grace.

The gift of faith. "It is grace that we can believe in God. It is grace that we know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that He is the Saviour sent by God for our salvation." Now we have to apply this faith, he added. And the best way to

In May, Chief Apostle Schneider travelled to South-East Asia to visit his brothers and sisters. He celebrated divine services in Tilling in the Philippines, in Lampung on the island of Sumatra (Indonesia), and in Depok in Indonesia



speak about this faith is to tell our neighbour that Jesus Christ wants to help us overcome sins and that He forgives us.

The gift of God's love. “Our love for God helps us to persevere when we must suffer as Christians.” But this love also enables us to love our brothers and sisters. “Let us use the love of God to strengthen the unity of God's people.”

The gift of grace. The better we know Jesus Christ the more we become aware just how much grace we need to have fellowship with Him. This also affects the relationship to our neighbour, the Chief Apostle said: “Because I am so grateful for the forgiveness of my sins it is not difficult for me to forgive my neighbour. It is not only a condition—you have to forgive to be forgiven—no, it becomes a need, a desire of our soul.”

The skills and talents God has given us. We have received diverse gifts. The Chief Apostle urged the congregation to use these individual talents and skills: “Let us use our skills to the glory of God and for the benefit of the congregation.” One skill we all share: the ability to pray. “We know we should pray for salvation first,” he said. We should first pray for the spiritual before we pray for the earthly.

Material gifts. “Everything we have in life is a gift of God's grace.” It is grace that we have certain resources, that we have money. And with reference to the Bible text the Chief Apostle said: “Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.” That also means not to grumble when our offerings are used outside of our own congregation so that the Church can do its work and the Apostles can fulfil their mission.



CORE THOUGHTS

1 Peter 4: 10

“As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”

We thank God for His gifts of grace by professing our faith, by loving our neighbour, and forgiving those who offend us. Another way to thank God is to use our talents to serve God and to show generosity to others.



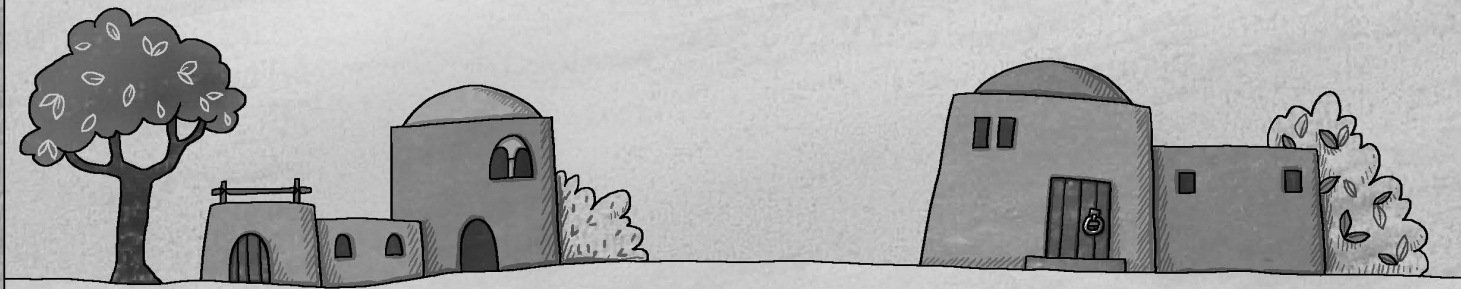
THE LOST COIN

(LUKE 15: 8–10)

The scribes were annoyed with Jesus because he mixed with tax-collectors and other sinners. He even ate with them although according to Jewish law they were unclean. Jesus answered the criticism of the scribes by telling them parables. One of them was the parable of the lost coin.

“A woman has ten silver coins and loses one of them. She is upset. What is she going to do?” The scribes listened carefully. Jesus continued: “Would she not light the lamp, sweep out the house, and look in every corner until she has found it?” They all nodded. They would have done the same.



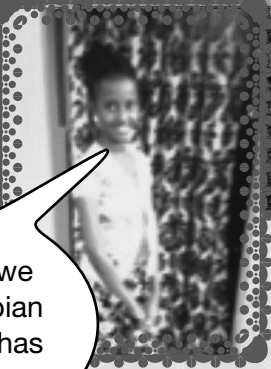


But there was more to the story. "When the woman does find the coin she calls her friends and neighbours and says, 'Rejoice with me! I have found the coin that I lost.'"

Jesus said to the scribes, "In the same way there is joy among the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

Coins only began to be used in Palestine starting in the eighth century before Christ's birth. Their value depended on their weight and the material used. It was not until the sixth century BC that minted coins with a fixed value started to be used. At the time of Jesus, people in Israel could pay with three different currencies. Since Palestine was part of the Roman Empire, they used Roman coinage such as the denarius. This was the emperor's money, who was represented on the coins. However, since Palestine was also part of the province of Syria, Roman provincial coins were used as well, such as the Greek drachma and the Tyrian stater. This was the currency in which the temple tax was paid. The only Jewish coin mentioned in the New Testament is the lepton, (the "mite" of the English Bible). It was the smallest monetary unit.





Did you know that we have our own Ethiopian calendar? Our year has thirteen months.

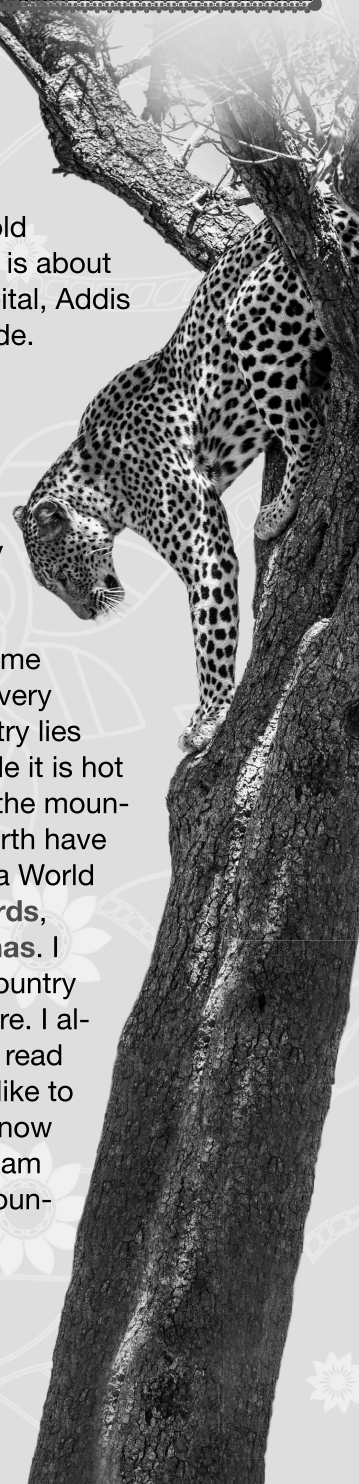
AT SARON'S IN DIRE DAWA (ETHIOPIA)

My name is **Saron**. I am eleven years old and live in the city of Dire Dawa, which is about 500 kilometres east of our national capital, Addis Ababa. That is nearly a ten-hour bus ride.

The two cities are almost on the same latitude. **Dire Dawa** is a little more to the right on the map and is therefore a little closer to the ocean and close to Somalia. I live in a small house with my family, which we have rented.

Together with Lesotho, Ethiopia has some of the highest elevations in Africa. It is very rugged and more than half of the country lies above an altitude of 1,200 metres. While it is hot and dry in the lowlands it can snow in the mountains. The **Simien Mountains** in the north have been classified as a national park and a World Heritage Site. Here you can find **leopards**, **sacred baboons**, and **spotted hyenas**. I

love animals, and I love my country and the people who live here. I always watch the news and read the newspaper because I like to know what is going on. I know the history of Ethiopia and am curious to see how our country will develop.





This picture was taken at **school**. These are not all of my classmates though. When everybody is there, there are nearly 45 students. I am in grade six and learn fast. To get to school I have to walk three kilometres. Many children in Ethiopia have a lot further to walk, especially those living in the highlands. Maybe that

is the reason why my country has produced some of the world's greatest long distance runners. They have won a total of 53 Olympic medals.

But maybe it is also because of their healthy diet. I could eat **spaghetti** with meat sauce all the time, and fruit.



I often go out to **play** with my friends. I love football, but I also like computer games. My best friend's name is Mahader: she is not only very smart but also very nice. She is also very quiet and smiles a lot. We are classmates.

I like music and I learn new songs fast. The songs I like most are our church songs. Here you can see me between my two **friends** from the children's choir. I would love to be able to play a musical instrument, like the organ, for example.

Let me introduce my family. My dad's name is **Girma**. He is 40 years old. He is an Evangelist in our congregation and the rector. My mother's name is Kidist. She works as a street vendor. I am an only child, which means that my family keeps a special eye on me and helps me whenever I need help. I love

my parents. May God bless them and give them healthy and a long life.





■ Oliver Rütten

| True comfort: belief in the love of God instead of signs

Our understanding of the departed comprises part of the richness of the New Apostolic faith. Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider leaves us in absolutely no doubt. But he does call upon us to be cautious and keep things in perspective.

“Recently I was very surprised to learn that more and more Christians claim to believe in Christ, but not in an after-life. Still others believe that the act of receiving the sacraments is contingent on being in the body. According to this opinion, a soul that has been separated from its body has no other option but to wait for the resurrection of the dead. Thus it will only be at the Last Judgement that the resurrected dead will finally be able to enter into the kingdom of God, provided they are accepted by Him.

“We, on the other hand, believe that human beings live on even after physical death: soul and spirit do not die, and thus their personhood remains intact. Even in the beyond, human beings can choose for or against God. It is precisely this freedom of decision that gives them access to the sacraments—even if they no longer have a body.

“God alone knows which souls have the necessary faith to receive these acts of His grace. These souls are then baptised or sealed during a divine service for the departed. We cannot redeem them through our prayers—only Jesus can do this—but we can testify to them of our love. Our prayers are intercessions to God on their behalf, and it is He who invites them.

“When it comes to the departed, let us be careful and matter-of-fact. Brothers and sisters sometimes relate dreams or visions pertaining to the beyond. Such events fall squarely into the domain of the personal experiences of the individual concerned, and cannot be generalised. Therefore they should by no means be elevated to the level of an inviolable truth!

“Here is an example to illustrate this. Recently, two people from different districts told me that they had seen the same departed person, someone well-known. The first person told me that this soul had attested to its joy at being redeemed. A few weeks later, the second person said that this soul had come and asked for urgent help ... So whom are we supposed to believe in this instance?

“I can well understand that one or the other might like to find peace in learning the fate of departed souls to whom they were particularly close, however, I am not of the opinion that signs are the best source of comfort. True comfort comes from belief in the love of God and the trust that results from it. Our task is to share in the sufferings of those who have suffered loss, to pray with them, and to strengthen their faith and trust in God.”

The realm of the departed

The New Apostolic faith and its practice with respect to the departed diverges from that of all other Christians. Why is that? And how do we explain this? Explanations on our conception of the realm of the departed.

Our construct of the realm of the departed pertains to all things relating to those who have passed away. In the narrower sense, this not only addresses our practice of interceding in prayer for the departed, but also of dispensing the sacraments to them—through the Apostles. The primary prerequisite for this is belief in a life after death. The immortality of the soul is among the fundamental certainties of our faith.

Beyond that, our understanding of the departed is predi-

cated on the idea that the condition of the souls in the beyond is fundamentally changeable, in other words, that salvation can even be attained after physical death. This certainty derives from the statements of the gospel that God’s relationship with man is not broken by death.

Concerning this the Catechism states the following: “New Apostolic Christians intercede in prayer for the departed: they ask the Lord to help those who have gone into the beyond in an unredeemed state” (Section 9.6.1).

The death of an unbaptised child

The practice of dispensing the sacraments to the living on behalf of the dead was first applied by Apostle Friedrich Wilhelm Schwartz (1815–1895). The catalyst for this was a specific event that had occurred in the congregation of Amsterdam at the time. In the year 1872, a child died without having been baptised—or was stillborn and could not be baptised—and the parents were very concerned about the salvation of their child. This was followed by a great deal of reflection and contemplation as to whether the sacraments could be dispensed to the dead child, and if so, how. Apostle Schwarz, who was made aware of this situation, had already been reflecting for some time on a passage recorded in 1 Corinthians 15: 29. It was later reported that thanks to this particular case the meaning of this mysterious verse from 1 Corinthians became clear to him.

Ever since, 1 Corinthians 15: 29 has been referenced as one of the biblical justifications for dispensing the sacraments of baptism and sealing to the dead through proxies. The practice of dispensing Holy Communion to the departed in the same manner began in the early 1880s.

The question of which departed souls were to be baptised or sealed was at first made known through visions and prophetic signs. Up until the 1920s all departed souls were baptised and sealed by name. The custom was later discontinued, as no one knew which souls in the beyond had been granted the grace of baptism or sealing by God.

Originally, the divine services for the departed took place on the second day of Christmas. Chief Apostle Bischoff ruled in 1954 that Holy Communion was to be made accessible to the departed every Sunday. In addition, in 1954 it was decided that there would be three divine services each year in which Holy Baptism and Holy Sealing would be dispensed for the departed.

References in Scripture

Since our faith and its practice with respect to the departed diverges from that of all other Christians, there is a need to explain it, at least in its broad strokes.

Let us therefore begin by asking what references there are in the New Testament concerning the dispensation of the sacraments to the dead.

To begin with, in 1 Corinthians Paul makes reference to a practice that was common in Corinth, namely that some

were baptised on behalf of the dead. Paul comes to address this practice in the context of his dispute with those who denied the resurrection. Here he is not concerned with defending the practice of having the departed receive the sacraments. In fact, it seems that this was a totally conventional and therefore completely unproblematic practice. Paul writes as follows: “Otherwise, what will they do who are baptised for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they baptised for the dead?” (1 Corinthians 15: 29).

The first epistle to the Corinthians, which came into being sometime around the year 54, is the earliest attestation of this custom. A second passage was recorded significantly later, and is found in the first epistle of Peter, which was likely composed around the year 90. Although 1 Peter 3: 19–20 does not contain any evidence for the dispensation of sacraments to the dead, it does mention something that is also referenced in the Apostolicum, namely Christ’s descent into the realm of the dead following His crucifixion: “... by whom [the Spirit] also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.” The same context is referenced once again in 1 Peter 4: 6, which states that “the gospel was preached also to those who are dead”.

The passage in 1 Corinthians in particular has generated a great deal of reflection. Some Bible interpreters have assumed that this baptism of the dead referred to a custom that was only practised on the margins of the Christian church. A more recent commentary on 1 Corinthians assesses the matter quite differently, however, and even goes on to state “that the baptism for the dead was standard practice in the Corinthian congregation (and beyond that, perhaps even in other Pauline congregations), and was even practised by those groups who denied the resurrection”.

In the post-apostolic period the church was relatively dismissive of this intercessory dispensation of sacraments upon the living on behalf of the dead. In the year 397, it forbade the practice of baptism of the dead at the Third Council of Carthage.

Revisiting and further expansion

While the Apostles of the Catholic Apostolic Church held to the tradition of the established churches and thus oriented themselves by the Catholic and Orthodox custom of merely interceding for the departed in prayer, the Apostles of the New Apostolic tradition, which came about



■ Daniel Rudolph

“Jesus Christ is Lord over the dead and the living. His gospel is equally valid for all.”

in 1863, took some significant further steps. They began by reaching back to the aforementioned New Testament fundamentals, which—particularly in consideration of the above-mentioned explanations—certainly invited revisiting and further expansion. This development took place over the course of the last 140 years.

A core element of our construct of the departed realm is the belief in God’s universal will to save, which applies equally to both the living and the dead. The New Apostol-

ic Catechism (Section 9.6.3) makes this abundantly clear: “Jesus Christ is Lord over the dead and the living. His gospel is equally valid for all. It is the desire of God that all men be saved (1 Timothy 2: 4–6; John 3: 16). This means that God’s will to save is universal. Salvation is offered through the proclamation of the word, the forgiveness of sins, and the sacraments. All of these are likewise intended for the departed. For them as for the living, belief in Jesus Christ is indispensable for attaining salvation. Redemption occurs solely through Jesus Christ.”

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Genalyn Mosura

Flying to church on three wheels

When Froilan Caderao drives to church he does so on three wheels—not because he is so fast or because his vehicle does not have more wheels. See for yourself. His passengers love it.

Bohol is the tenth largest island in the Philippines, even if only a million of the 100 million Filipinos live there. Some ninety per cent of the people profess the Christian faith. A number of them are members of the New Apostolic Church. They speak Boholano, a variant of the Cebuano language, and many also speak English and Tagalog.

One of the inhabitants of Tagbilaran City, the capital of the island province of Bohol, is Froilan Caderao with his wife and their two children. He is an Evangelist and the rector of the congregation there. Prior to the divine services, and afterwards, Evangelist Caderao (48) can be seen weaving in

and out of traffic like no one else in the city: with a flashy yellow tricycle.

Flying to church on three wheels

Motorised tricycles are the most common means of transportation in the Philippines, especially in rural areas. They belong to the cityscape like cars, buses, or streetcars elsewhere.

Many variations of the tricycle are on the road: either with or without a sidecar, with a roof or with just a rain cover.

Evangelist Froilan Cadero and his family live in the Philippines. He drives to church with a flashy yellow tricycle and loves to give members a lift to church



They are also used as public utility vehicles and can offer room for up to nine passengers. Depending on the design of the vehicle, the passengers either sit or stand during the ride.

It is not a taxi, but carries passengers

This is the kind of tricycle Evangelist Caderao uses to drive to church. Originally, he bought it so he could drive his family to church: his wife, Aurea (45), his daughter, Gwyneth (13), and his son, Gwylhem (8). But before long he was also collecting members along the way to church on a regular basis. He does not use his tricycle as a means of public transportation or to earn money.

Public relations work the fast way

The tricycle is very flashy and easily recognisable from a distance: it is painted in a flashy yellow, and the entire front of the sidecar is used to display the emblem of the

New Apostolic Church. Joy in Christ, the 2015 motto of the Church, is painted in red letters just above the black emblem. And directly above the windshield it says The God Servant in large letters.

Go and teach them ...

The Evangelist designed the artwork for his tricycle himself and commissioned a painter to carry out the work. With some pride he says, "I am the only one who has this kind of painting on his tricycle." Friends and neighbours have of course noticed the unusual lettering on his yellow tricycle and have asked him about it. For the Evangelist this is a great opportunity to speak about his faith and his Church. And he is delighted to be able to do this: with the joy in Christ. Whether he has ever been late for a divine service because of this, we cannot say.

| A very solid, quiet worker



Below: Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider (right) commissions Apostle Edy Isnugroho as a District Apostle Helper. District Apostle Urs Hebeisen in the background



NAC Indonesia

Preserving unity is the greatest challenge, he says. With Apostle Edy Isnugroho the Church in South-East Asia received an energetic District Apostle Helper.

“District Apostle Hebeisen will retire in the year 2018, and he has asked me to give him a District Apostle Helper. Apostle Edy Isnugroho from Indonesia has been selected for this task,” wrote Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider as he informed the District Apostles and District Apostle Helpers of this decision in January. On 21 May 2017 the Chief Apostle performed this appointment in a divine service in the Depok church in Indonesia.

Who is this man whom everybody in Indonesia affectionately calls Apostle Edy? “He is a very solid, quiet worker. In terms of personality he is sort of the opposite of me,” explains District Apostle Urs Hebeisen with a smile. “And when it comes to determining a successor, that is a good thing,” he adds. District Apostle Hebeisen has led the New Apostolic Church of South-East Asia since 2009. In the eighteen countries in his care, he is supported by ten Apostles and 4,300 ministers. His working area is home to some 80,000 members in over 2,200 congregations.

Apostle Edy Isnugroho, who was born on 28 April 1963, comes from a New Apostolic family. His father, Yusak Saptohadiprayitno, served as an Apostle in Indonesia from 1979 until his retirement in 2002. Even Apostle Isnugroho’s grandfather was already a minister of the Church. He led the congregation of Lirap in Central Java. The Apostle is married and has three sons aged 25, 21, and 14.

■ *You are a teacher by profession. Do you work in a school or are you already in the employ of the Church?*

Apostle Edy Isnugroho: I only worked as a teacher in a high school for a few months. But shortly thereafter I gave my notice because District Apostle Tansahtikno asked me to support him in the Church administration.

■ *What do you do in your leisure time? Do you have any hobbies?*

I spend my free time with my wife and children at home. My hobbies are jogging and riding my bicycle.

Apostle Edy and his wife with their three sons



■ *What is your home congregation? And what is special about it?*

I belong to the congregation of Gendeng, Yogyakarta. There are many students who come here to study. Almost every year the number of members changes because the students come and go.

■ *What is your favourite story in the Bible? And what do you associate with this story?*

My favourite story in the Bible deals with David. He was a remarkable man with a humble heart. God chose him. Owing to his heart's attitude, Israel achieved prosperity under his leadership. God blessed him richly.

■ *You have been an Apostle for fifteen years. In what countries have you worked so far?*

So far I have worked in almost every district in Indonesia.

■ *Please tell us about an experience that made you especially happy.*

In ministering to God's children I am often confronted with smaller and larger problems. When dealing with the larger problems, I often experience many a sleepless night, many a feeling of depression. But as long as I trust in God He gives me the necessary strength to cope with it all. Beyond that He allows me to experience that these problems are ultimately always resolved through His intervention. God always helps me at the right time. And that makes me happy.

■ *As an Apostle you are also a missionary. Is there a secret recipe for good missionary work?*

I endeavour to treat all people with love, without making any kind of distinction between them.

■ *You have known District Apostle Urs Hebeisen for many years. Are you fond of working with him, and if yes, why?*

Naturally I want to support my District Apostle. I feel his love for me and I love him back. He is my mentor, and he has great wisdom. Among other things, he teaches me to think globally but act locally. And he also teaches me to look ten, fifteen, and even twenty years ahead, and thus look into the future.

■ *There are many challenges which the Church must face. What concerns you the most?*

God's children in Indonesia come from various tribes, from various levels of social status, and have varying backgrounds and traditions. This applies even more to South-East Asia as a whole. For me, unity is the greatest challenge.

■ *In the District Church of South-East Asia there are great distances to cover—as is the case in most of the world. How will you stay in contact with the ministers and members?*

I will stay in contact with the ministers and members via SMS, WhatsApp, and email.

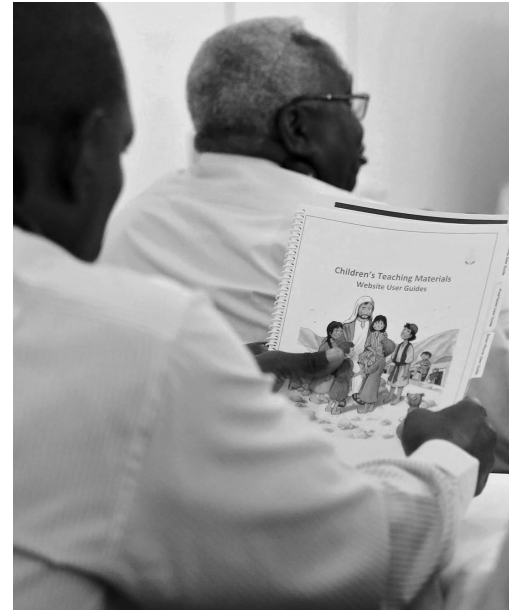
■ *What are you looking forward to most in your new work?*

I look forward to having even more opportunities to meet with our Chief Apostle and the District Apostles. From these encounters I can always draw new strength and joy in order to serve the Lord and the Church.

The District Apostles and District Apostle Helpers have gathered for a two-day conference in Vienna (Austria) with the Chief Apostle



■ Oliver Rütten



District Apostle Helper Robert M. Nsamba takes a look at the new children's teaching material

Our conception of ministry goes into the next round

The District Apostles and their assistants came together for their first international conference this year in Vienna (Austria) over Pentecost. They followed an invitation by Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider. The focus of the conference was the New Apostolic conception of ministry.

Once again the talks centred on defining our conception of ministry. For a church with a hierarchical structure such as the New Apostolic Church, this topic touches on a central aspect of its doctrine. This topic is also very important in the eyes of the president of the Church: the fact that the Apostle ministry is the authoritative ministry is not something that has only been set out in writing in the Catechism.

The Chief Apostle also wants the doctrinal statements required for this to develop in a co-operative fashion in the circle of the District Apostles and Apostles. That is why he

involved the 350 Apostles who are active around the world in the discussion process already last year.

A clearly defined framework

Not all statements concerning the definition of ministry are formulated in the Catechism of the New Apostolic Church. The framework, however, is clearly defined. There are three levels of ministry: diaconal, priestly, and the Apostle ministry, each with distinct spiritual powers. In addition to the ministry there are also positions of a hierarchical nature:

congregational rector or district leader, District Apostle Helper or Chief Apostle Helper.

Answers to further questions

What exactly is a ministry, a commission, a function, and how do they differ? The definition of ordination is clear: it is the assignment to a spiritual ministry and is bestowed in the name of the triune God by an Apostle through the laying on of hands and prayer (Catechism 7.1). Ordination constitutes authorisation, blessing, and sanctification. It takes into account the competencies required for the respective tasks connected to the ministry.

A commission, or an appointment, is intended to structure certain duties and create a hierarchy in order to ensure the smooth running of the organisation. A commission confers certain duties which are connected with the ministry. A commission constitutes a leading function in the congregation, the individual districts, the District Church, or the Church as a whole.

All of this is now to be communicated to the ministers. The District Apostles have approved a presentation for this purpose.

In addition to this, an article has been published on this in the *Special Edition of the Divine Service Guide*, No. 3/2017.

Importance of religious instruction for children

A second important focus of the conference was on the conception and development of children's teaching materials. Unlike other topics, it is very important here to consider the cultural practices in the individual continents. Educational and methodical curricula differ in the various countries. In spite of this, it is the wish of the District Apostles to bring the existing teaching material up to date and to modernise it. Target group surveys have been carried out and are currently being evaluated.

Keyword: District Apostle Meeting International

The District Apostles and their assistants, twenty-seven in total, met for conferences in Vienna already a few days before Pentecost. Also there, and for the first time, were the two new District Apostle Helpers: Apostle Jürg Zbinden of Switzerland and Apostle Edy Isnugroho of Indonesia. Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider had appointed them in divine services on 14 January 2017 in Berne (Switzerland) and on 21 May 2017 in Depok (Sumatra/Indonesia), respectively.

Right to left: District Apostle Helper Frank Dzur (background) and the District Apostles John L. Kriel (right) and Leonard R. Kolb



Sam, the Chief Apostle's interpreter for English

He wowed the audience. "Fantastic interpretation" is what people said in the congregations and on the social networks. And always the same question: who is this guy who worked so hard during the Pentecost service?

Samuel Mueller interpreted for hours on end during the Pentecost festivities in Vienna (Austria). Much of the time he sat in a small interpreting booth in the conference room. There were also many conversations that needed interpreting, and on Sunday during the divine service in the Vienna concert hall, he was at the Chief Apostle's side.

"Is your shirt and suit dry again?" This was a question Sam Mueller was repeatedly asked after the Pentecost service. In fact, his propensity to perspire even inspired his friends in Canada to tease him by asking, "What's the name of that new lake you made in Austria?" Sam Mueller takes things like this in his stride and smiles. The Canadian is not easily flustered.

Husband, father, author, and Bishop

Sam Mueller is 46 years old and married to Christina. They have two wonderful children: their daughter, Kristin, who is ten years old, and their son, Victor, who is seven. The family lives north of Toronto, in the province of Ontario in south-eastern Canada. He is a family man and loves to work in the garden when he has some time on his hands or to take long walks with his family or to write fiction. He actually does not have enough time to write, though. This is something that he wants to change a little later on.

In Canada, the Bishop—who works as a translator—looks after twenty congregations in Greater Toronto (Ontario),



■ Oliver Rütten (left), private (right)

in Quebec, and on Canada's eastern coast. He helps look after the youth across Canada. The Bishop who is currently responsible for the youth will be retiring at the end of the year, and Sam Mueller's responsibilities will grow.

Interpreting the interpreter

The congregation in Halifax in the province of Nova Scotia is the farthest congregation that he looks after. He usually flies there because by car it would take him something like twenty hours to cover the well over one thousand kilometres.

On such pastoral trips it often happens that he conducts a service in English and has a French interpreter standing next to him. "In some of the congregations some of the members speak only English and others only French," he explains.

Every language has its peculiarities

Sam Mueller speaks English, French, German, Spanish, and also a little Cambodian. He does not favour one language over another. And over Pentecost one got a sense that this is really the case: in conversation with brothers and sisters from all over the world he jumped from English to French to German and also to Spanish almost sentence by sentence. And it looks so easy as though it was the most normal thing in the world for him.

Every language has its peculiarities, the language lover says. Spanish is very emotional, the German language is ideal for expressing things in an exact way, and French is very elo-

quent ... He is also fascinated by the relationships between languages and their similarities. His love for languages goes even further: "The next thing I want to do is learn Italian and then Lingala," Bishop Mueller says. He has always had his eye on Lingala, one of the national languages in the Congo.

Translating is luxury, interpreting a challenge

To have time to trawl through a dictionary or do research on the Internet—that is luxury, Sam Mueller says when asked about the difference between interpreting and translating. When you interpret, you are at the mercy of the speaker. Every word has to be spot on. There is no time to think about things or look something up. "I am so relieved when things succeed."

Interpreting can get physical

When District Apostle Bernd Koberstein was called to the altar on Pentecost there was a little bit of a surprise for the experienced pro. The District Apostle from Germany mentioned the concert on Saturday evening and the announcement by the conductor: "The one hundred young people here are on fire!" District Apostle Koberstein was so excited that he raised his fist into the air and called, "Jaaa!" He told the Bishop that he would not have to interpret that, but for Sam Mueller it was clear: "I could not have done anything else but interpret this gesture as well." The *jaaa* became a yes, and the gesture was the same. Both men could not help but break into a grin at the altar, and so did the brothers and sisters.

Left and centre: Sam Mueller at his desk and in his garden.
Right: Christina, his wife, and the couple's children, Kristin and Victor





District Apostle Michael Ehrich:

Dear brothers and sisters,

I would like to express my thanks to all the rectors in our congregations.

In addition to the duties of the priestly ministry, they have a leadership function in which they have to meet a variety of requirements, and a high responsibility: towards our Lord, the apostolate, and to the entrusted. The tasks are only to be done in the power of the Holy Spirit,

and I am thankful that we have these faithful brothers who faithfully serve in the Lord's service.

In this context, I would thank all who are contributing and supporting the congregation most of which happens in silence. Every prayer is of great importance!

Together, we want everyone to remain committed to the cause of the Lord, out of love for him and for his glory! In all issues and tasks in the churches, we keep the focus on the essential; which is about preparing for the return of Jesus Christ.

With best regards, yours

Michael Ehrich

Ghana: God loves a cheerful giver



A new orchestra was launched

Lead Apostle Oppong-Brenya conducted a divine service at Madina. He was accompanied by Apostle Ohene-Saffo and some ministers in the Accra Apostle Area. The text for the service was chosen from 2 Corinthians 9:7 (...for God loves a cheerful giver). He admonished each and everyone to offer with their strength, knowledge, skills and talents.

Again, a six member orchestra was launched. The Apostle lauded them for their efforts and asked the congregation to support them. He also urged others to join in serving the Lord with their talents, time and money.



Apostle Oppong congratulates a newly ordained Shepherd



Sunday school at Madina

Ghana: Divine service for students



The congregation at KNUST

Apostle Samuel Oppong-Brenya visited the student congregation at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), Kumasi, on 15th October, 2017. The text for the divine service was chosen from Proverbs 30:29-31.

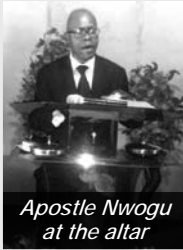
The Apostle urged the congregation to use their strength to spread the gospel and boldly proclaim the good news of salvation to all. The proclamation must be done without fear no matter the obstacle. The students were encouraged to take up and bolster leadership roles in the church such as; Choir-masters, Sunday school and Confirmation class teachers, Youth organizers, Visitation and vineyard workers.



During the divine service



The choir at KNUST



*Apostle Nwogu
at the altar*



One of the congregations visited

Nigeria: A joyful visit

From Thursday 26th to Monday 30th January 2017, Apostle Geoffrey Nwogu accompanied by the responsible Apostle for the area (Chima Ibekwe) held meetings and divine services to the great joy of the members.

In all the divine services, the Apostle was able to link the 2017 motto of the New Apostolic Church "Glory be to God, Our Father" by asking the members to "Recognise the glory of God in His works, thank Him for His gifts, and proclaim His glory".

During this joyful visit, a total attendance of seven hundred and six members was served by the Lead Apostle. 13 souls were sealed, 4 Shepherds, 6 Community Evangelists and 3 Deacons ordained. This brought a great joy to the members and ministers in the entire working area, as these ministers were needed to cover many congregations that have seen a reasonable expansion.



*Ministers and a special choir, ready to
welcome the Apostle*



*Apostle Ekpenyong
at the Altar*

Nigeria: Dedication of a new church

February 5, 2017 was an exciting and memorable Sunday for the members of New Apostolic Church in Uyo South Centre area of Nigeria when the long awaited Ikot Ekong church building in Odo/Ndon Ebom District was dedicated by Apostle Effiong Ekpenyong.

John 12:26 was used as text word. "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my father honour"

250 members attended the service. Apostle Ekpenyong was accompanied by Bishop Ime Udombang. Members expressed their joy and happiness to God for the new building with songs and praises, three souls were sealed by the apostle during the dedication service.



Benin: Visit of the Lead Apostle

It was with a message from 1 John 3: 2 that Apostle Leader Herbert Bansbach celebrated several divine services in Togo and Benin from November 23 to 30, 2017. The Lead Apostle Herbert Bansbach came to Benin on November 26. He held divine services and conducted a seminar for district ministers. "... We are all sinners and none of us is perfect. But such as Jesus was both True man (but without sin) and True God, we, too, by receiving the Holy Spirit, have gained this double nature, - true man and a child of God. If we are faithful in sanctification and in the Apostleship until the return of Christ, we will be like God because we will see him as he is....".



Gabon: Joyful preparation

After 23 years, a Chief Apostle will visit Central Africa again. In Gabon, communities are in jubilation mood as soon as this great blessed news is announced. To express this feverish expectation, a musical concert was organized on August 27, 2017 under the motto: "To our God and Father be the glory for ever and ever, Amen!" Phil 4:20. Sunday school flutists, the Libreville-Owendo, District Choir and the New Apostolic Church Band in Gabon glorified the Lord in the presence of the Apostle Volker Kühnle, District Elder Wolfgang Oehler and all the district ministers of the country. Preparations continue through the mobilization of the living forces of the Church and by a great work of testimony.



Sierra Leone: Donations for flood victims

Heavy rains, floods and landslides killed over 400 people in Sierra Leone in mid-August; more than 3000 people have lost their homes.

The mudslides hit entire settlements in the capital city of Freetown in the early morning hours of 14 August and apparently surprised the residents in their sleep. Among the victims are over 100 children, who were recovered from the floods. Many are still missing.

The Mission, in collaboration with the New Apostolic Church in Sierra Leone, supports local people with food, drinking water, clothing and toiletries. In addition, other local aid organizations are supported in their work, for example the Red Cross.



District Elder Khanda distributing rice



Apostle Garber giving cheque to the Vice President



Largo in Kenema District - flood victims

Sierra Leone: Tasks and Responsibilities



Cheerful tutors - Segbwema

In an effort to equip District Ministers / Seminar tutors with Church responsibilities and tasks, a seminar was organized for them. It comprises those from Kailahun, Kenema and Kono districts in the Eastern province of Sierra Leone.

After presenting the agenda, Priest Abdulai K. Sannoh, the senior tutor briefly taught them about teaching didactics.

Twelve groups were formed, each given a topic to prepare and present. The topics were: pastoral care, sick visits, caring for guests,



Evaluation / test time

contacting inactive members, tasks of deacons / priests – funeral service, prenatal blessing, the sacraments, wedding blessing and anniversaries. The group presentations were interactive coupled with role plays and questioning.

Guinea: Youth gathering in Kondembadou



After the service

On Sunday November 19, 2017, Apostle Bangoura conducted a divine service for Youth at Kondembadou central church with all Guinea Apostles. Also present were Bishop Tolno, District Ministers, Sunday school and confirmation teachers.

He read a text word from the book of Ephesians 5:8 "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light".

After the divine service, Apostle Bangoura thank the youth and also the Ministers and Monitors for their courage and encouraged them to accelerate the growth of the New-Apostolic Church in Guinea.



Apostle Leno is surrounded by joyfully sisters

Ghana: Joyful visit of the District Apostle



Farewell to Bishop Morgan

The District Apostle held three divine services in Ghana, to which a total of around 6000 brothers and sisters were invited. He also performed ordinations and retirements.

Among the ministers he retired are some District Elders and three District Evangelists. Bishop George Morgan Dadzie also retired. The retirement of the Bishop was made by the District Apostle in the divine service on November 12, 2017 at Assin Fosu. Ordained were 19 District Elders and 21 District Evangelists.

The divine service in Assin Fosu was broadcast on state television. In this way, more than 32000 brothers and sisters in the country were able to participate. For this divine service, the District Apostle had invited all 16 Ghanaian Apostles as well as the five Bishops of Ghana.



The choir in Assin Fosu



The District Apostle in the divine service in Tsavanya

Seminar and training week for administration members



Chief Administrator District Evangelist Lothar Heim in a meeting

From October 23rd to 27th in Central Administration Office for the District Churches in West Africa in Accra, Ghana the annual Seminar and Training week took place. Invited were the Regional Supervisors, Country Administrators and Accountants.

Together with Chief Administrator from Southern Germany, District Evangelist Lothar Heim and his Advisors, important contents in church Building issues, Accounting items, IT-handlings were trained. There were a lot of team work and presentations. Participants also exchanged experiences and discussed about best practice. Chief Administrator repeated the main goals which are



Seminar members in discussion

necessary to support the Apostles, Bishops, and voluntary ministers as well as Church Districts and Congregation in their pastoral tasks.

New Seminar Goals and Priorities for 2018



Confirmation education

At the Africa Conference in October 2017, the District Apostle and the leading Apostles set the priorities for the seminar work in 2018. In all, the 15 countries of West Africa agreed to focus on the following seminars - Ministers, Rectors and Youth leaders next year. Also from 2018 onward, they want to have a 2-year confirmand education. District Elder Oehler brought these subjects to the national senior tutors of all 15 countries.

Together with the Apostles and national tutors, they also set the goals for the implementation of Sunday School.

One can see a great improvement in the last years, thanks to the zeal and commitment of our brothers and sisters who are teaching our children.



Role plays visualize the teaching subjects

South Germany: Divine Service with the Chief Apostle

On Sunday, November 19, the Chief Apostle conducted a divine service in Backnang, which was transmitted in South Germany. Apostle Dieter Prause entered into retirement after 42 years of ministerial activity, including 27 years as an Apostle

Bible text: **"Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is"**
(1 John 3: 2)

Core thoughts: The New Testament speaks of "children of God" to refer to the special situation of believers baptised with water and Spirit. The notion of "childhood in God" indicates that God gave them his life, making them a new creature in Christ (2 Cor 5: 17). The effects of the rebirth out of water and Spirit are real, but remain largely invisible the new creature already exists, but it is still in the making – we are still under the grip of sin.

It is only at Jesus's return that the childhood in God will be revealed. Those who will be accepted by the Lord will then be like Him. They will not become equal with God, but will take on the resurrection body. They will see the Lord "as He is", which means that they will be in eternal fellowship with God.

Our childhood in God is not a reward or a guarantee of salvation. If it is not yet fully revealed, it determined already our present:

- we trust God's care – our Father cares for us, but also His word. Our obedience to God's will is the expression of our love for God (Jn 14: 21), essential in order to become like the image of His Son (Rom 8: 29);
- we have not yet reached the goal, but we are determined to lay hold of it because we are held by Jesus Christ (Phil 3: 12). We conform ourselves to Jesus's example, seek fellowship with Him, and renounce that what separates us from Him;.

To inherit eternal life, we must accept to suffer with Christ (Rom 8: 17). Our childhood in God inevitably implies renunciations. What are we willing to give up for Christ?

We became children of God by becoming a new creature in Christ. This creature is in the making, we can only understand it by faith.

