

community

The New Apostolic Church around the world

01/2019/EN

Motto 2019:

Rich in Christ

Editorial

The Chief Apostle's new
year message

Divine service

On our way to freedom

Doctrine

The universality of the
church and the gospel

New Apostolic Church
International



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Rich in Christ

Dear brothers and sisters,

Welcome to the new year. It is my wish that we begin with the firm conviction expressed in the 23rd Psalm: “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.”

Despite our worries, struggles, and fears, we can confidently declare that God is immensely rich: rich in kindness, rich in patience, and rich in grace.

And God wants us to benefit from His wealth. We can share in this wealth—namely through Jesus Christ.

Dear brothers and sisters, for 2019 I propose that we focus on the following objective: let us be rich in Christ! Let us therefore caption this year with the motto: *Rich in Christ!*

What does this wealth consist of? How can we acquire it? Over the next few weeks and months we will occupy ourselves with this question. I am very curious to learn what ideas the Holy Spirit will awaken in each one of us and in the congregations.

Beyond that, there is another element which is of special significance for us: we can share our wealth in Christ with



NAC International

others without becoming poorer ourselves as a result. Let us share the wealth in Christ with our fellow human beings.

This is not only a possibility or a need for us. In fact, it is our very purpose.

I wish you all a richly blessed year 2019!

Yours,

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

Jean-Luc Schneider

| On the way to freedom



Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider conducted a divine service in the city of Toronto (Canada) on 15 April 2018 at Convocation Hall on the grounds of the University of Toronto

■ NAC Canada

John 8: 36

*“Therefore if the Son makes you free,
you shall be free indeed.”*

My dear brothers and sisters, first allow me to share a personal joy with you. As Chief Apostle you have no *Divine Service Guide* so you have to find a Bible text yourself, and it is always a concern. Is this a good one? Is this the one I prayed for? ... I came upon this Bible text today and yesterday evening when I saw the opening hymn chosen by your District Apostle. The Bible text is quoted in the first verse of the song. That was a sign for me: “Oh, that was chosen by God,” and I was very happy and glad about that.

I am aware that not all who wanted to be here this morning are here because of bad weather [Editor’s note: an ice storm]. Allow me to say something about that. Maybe some are asking themselves, “Why are we not able to attend this

service?” We can certainly not accuse the devil because the devil is definitely not in charge of the weather. The weather is decided by God, but that makes it even more difficult to understand. I am quite sure all of us prayed for this service. We prepared ourselves for it, practised the songs, and now we see that God has decided to allow special weather conditions, which is why so many were unable to come. So what is going on? Maybe the one or other is thinking that he or she did not pray enough or did something wrong. Brothers and sisters, that is definitely not the case. Just to make this clear: this was the will of God. It was not your fault. No one is to blame for this.

Just remember the situation of Apostle Paul. He had often planned to visit the congregation in Rome, but he was prevented from doing so every time he tried (Romans 1: 13). We know that Paul was a great man of God. He could really pray, and yet he was prevented from doing what he intended to do. He surely must have thought that it would be good for the congregation in Rome if he were to visit them, but he was prevented from doing so. God did not agree with him. Paul did not know why. We must understand that we cannot comprehend God. He said: “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55: 8–9). That means we simply cannot comprehend God nor understand His actions with our intellect.

Sometimes He grants our requests, and other times He does not. One could argue, “But Jesus promised, ‘Whatever you ask in My name, that I will do’” (John 14: 13). That is an important point: asking in the name of Jesus. What did Jesus ask for? He said, “Father, I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one” (John 17: 15). That is what Jesus prayed for. God cannot be forced. Even if we do everything right and think that God will now automatically act and do this and that—He will do what He wants. The only thing we can be sure of is that God will keep His promise. What does His promise consist of? He said, “I love you and I want you to be with Me in eternity so that we can have eternal fellowship.”

Jesus died for our sins so that we could enter into His kingdom. He said, “If you keep My word, if you follow Me, and if you accept the Apostles sent to prepare you to be part of the bride of Christ, you will enter My kingdom. I will

come back and I will take you with Me.” This is the godly promise that is the foundation of our faith. We do not believe that God will give us everything we ask of Him. Nor do we believe that we can force God to do anything. We ask Him, and sometimes He gives us what we request, and sometimes He does not. But we trust His love. One thing of which we can be absolutely certain is that He will keep His promise and send His beloved Son. All those who follow Jesus Christ faithfully and who allow the Apostles to prepare them for the return of Christ will enter His kingdom and will have eternal fellowship with Him. Brothers and sisters, let us focus on this divine promise. He will fulfil this promise. And with regard to everything else we know that we cannot understand Him, but we trust Him. He will always provide what we need in order to be prepared for the return of Christ.

Let us now come to our Bible text. Here Jesus is addressing the Jews who believed in Him. He told them that He could free them. Today, we understand freedom as release from imprisonment. That is the first meaning: not being imprisoned. Freedom is also the state of being able to speak and act without hindrance or restraint. That is our understanding of freedom today.

The truth will make you free

At the time of Jesus it was a little different. Jesus explained His concept of freedom. He compares the state of a slave with that of a child. A slave is not free. He has a master to whom he is subject, and whose will he must fulfil. He has to work for his master and receives no wages. That is the condition of a slave. A child, on the other hand, must likewise obey his father, but in the end the child receives an inheritance. That is the difference with Jesus. That is how He explains freedom.

Then Jesus said, “OK, I can make you free,” which upset the Jews. They said “We are Abraham’s descendants and have never been in bondage to anyone. We are free!” They were upset: “How can You say, you will be made free? We are already free.” It sounds strange for us because it was the time of the Roman occupation, and they suffered under it, although they pretended to be free. And they were right. Despite the fact that the country was occupied and under the rule of the Roman army, they remained Jews. The Romans could never force them to give up their faith. The Jews held on to their faith, their laws, and their traditions. They did not become Romans, and that is what is meant here. “We are free even though the enemy, the Roman army, is here. We will hold on to our faith, our laws, and our traditions.” We



quite often have a negative opinion about the Jews of that time, but I must say, they really are to be admired. There are not many nations on earth who, despite everything they have experienced, have been so successful in preserving their faith, their laws, and their traditions. They knew: this is our identity, this is us, we have to stay with this no matter what happens. I must say I admire them for that.

We can learn from them. Are we Christians as strong as they were? Can we also say no matter what happens—even if we are under the rule of foreign spirits—we are and remain Christians. Even though money rules the world, even though there are so many different opinions, we are and will remain Christians. Part of our identity is that we go to church on Sundays to worship God. We have a need to pray together. That is our faith, our law. We are Christians and we bring our offering, and nobody can force us to give that up. That is our identity. We want to be free as Christians. We are and remain Christians. Even though the world is ruled by other spirits and influences, let us show and prove that we are and remain Christians. This is the first aspect of freedom.

Of course, Jesus was actually talking about something else, and He explained it to them: “Okay, but you’re still prisoners of sin.” That was hard for the Jews to understand. Adam and Eve listened to the serpent who promised them many

things. They obeyed him and were deceived. They gained nothing. Because they made the wrong decision, they became slaves of the evil one. As a result of the fall into sin, all human beings are now prisoners of the evil one. A gulf developed between man and God, making fellowship with God impossible.

No matter what happens, we are and will remain Christians

In the gospel of Luke Jesus says that He has been sent to proclaim liberty to the captives. Jesus says, “I can free you, I can deliver you so that you are no longer prisoners of the evil one. Those who believe in Me because of My sacrifice

can once again have fellowship with God. They will again have the possibility to come to God. They are no longer prisoners.” That is what He meant when He said, “Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed” (John 8: 36). They are no longer bound by sin. “To those who believe in Me I can give strength as well as the help they need in order to say no to the evil one, to renounce sin. You are not forced to do evil. You can do good. It is your decision. And if you decide to do good, I will help you.” That is another aspect of this freedom. So those who believe in Jesus, who are baptised in Jesus Christ, are freed from this bondage. They are no longer prisoners of the evil one, but can come to God. That is the freedom Jesus can give mankind.

This freedom is, however, also an ongoing process. Baptism is only the beginning. In 2 Corinthians 3: 17 it says: “Now



the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” That means that the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, helps us to become free in Jesus Christ—totally free. This is a process we want to allow. We want to be as free as Jesus was. We want to be free in Jesus Christ. And through the activity of the Holy Spirit, the preaching of the gospel, through Holy Communion, and with the gift of the Holy Spirit, which we have received, we can achieve the same freedom that Jesus had. What is this freedom?

Paul wrote to the Romans: “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death” (Romans 8: 2). That is an interesting thought, name-

ly that we are “made free from the law”. The law dictates certain things. So also the Jewish law. The law incorporated certain prescriptions and commandments that had to be kept, and if these were not kept, the offender was punished. That was the law of Moses. Jesus said, “If you have the Spirit of God, if you have My Spirit, if you keep My words, you can be freed from this law.” How does this work? It is quite easy, because at Holy Sealing the love of God was poured out into our hearts, and now we are no longer forced to obey God.

Now everything is completely different. We love God and want to have fellowship with Him. We have understood that the way to fellowship with God is the way of obedience. Therefore we have decided of our own free will to keep the commandments, because we want to have eternal fellowship with Him. Because we love God and want to have eternal fellowship with Him, we follow Jesus Christ on the path He has established. Suddenly it is our decision. We are freed from the law, we are no longer forced to obey it. We have decided to follow this path of our own free will because we want to be with God, and this is the way that leads there. This is the way we want to follow. We have experienced that when we keep the commandments, God abides with us, and that is such a nice feeling. We want to be free in Jesus Christ. This is the way we have decided to take. Nobody is forcing us to take this way, we want to take it. We are free to do that.



ion us in such a way that we love our fellow human beings regardless of their background or faults, or even when society tells us, “No, you can’t love him.” At such times we reply, “No, we are free. You cannot tell us whom to love and whom not to love.” Let us love all people as Jesus did. This is a challenge and is not always so easy, but with the help of Jesus—and the more we allow the Holy Spirit to work on us—the more we can love as Jesus did, namely without prejudice. “If I make you free, you are free indeed.” Brothers and sisters, let us become as free as Jesus.

Out of love Jesus became a slave and served His disciples. Remember, He washed their feet. He, the

There is another aspect. This freedom that comes through Jesus Christ is a gift. He grants this freedom without expecting any kind of compensation on our part. It is a characteristic of God that He provides everything we need for salvation for free. If we are aware of the fact that we have received freedom through Jesus Christ, then we will also be able to give something to God of our own free will, namely our trust, our obedience, and so on. That which the freedom in Christ puts us in a position to do, we now no longer do in order to receive a wage, or to lay claim to anything from Him. We serve Jesus Christ without expecting anything in return. In Ephesians it says that we are bondservants of Christ (Ephesians 6: 6). A bondservant, a slave, does whatever his master tells him. He does all the work, but receives no wages for it. Jesus Christ Himself did infinitely much for others without expecting anything in return. Let us take Him as our example. Freedom is where Jesus is. As His servants or slaves we are free, and we do not expect anything in return—everything we do, we do out of love for Him. We are therefore servants of Christ and no longer prisoners of this world or its demands.

Jesus gave His love freely. Nobody could tell Him whom to love and whom not to love. He was neither interested in a person’s background nor in his behaviour. Not even a person’s sins could prevent Him from loving him. He was absolutely free in His love. He was able to love everybody. This is another wonderful aspect of this freedom, this liberty of Jesus Christ: to love without prejudice. He was able to love everybody, and this Spirit of love has also been poured out into our hearts. Let us allow the Spirit to fash-

Master, did work that was normally performed by slaves. Out of love for mankind He made Himself a slave and took the sins of mankind upon Himself. He was tried and sentenced and died so that we could be saved. Out of love Jesus became a slave in order to serve us.

Paul said that we have been called to liberty, but that we should serve one another through love (Galatians 5: 13). The liberty of the children of God does not mean: “I can do whatever I want. I don’t need anybody. I’m free.” No, liberty in Christ means being a part of the body of Christ, where every member serves all the others. Out of love we become “slaves” of our neighbour, out of love we become servants to our neighbour. We are not alone: it is not just a question of God and me, or of me and God. On the contrary, we are part of the body of Christ. Let us serve one another of our own accord. None of us should want to be more important or loved than our neighbour. We do not consider our concerns more important than those of others. We do not think our ideas are better than everyone else’s ideas. Let us serve one another. Let us be humble and help each other so that all can be saved.

We want all of mankind to be saved. They don’t have to become like us. They don’t need to become Canadians to be saved. They can remain who they are. They don’t even need to become French to be saved. Thank God! See, you didn’t laugh when I said Canadians ... but you understand what I mean. Sometimes we think that people have to be like us in order to be saved. There is still a hint of superiority there—then we think that we are the model. Nothing of the



Apostle
Earl W. Buehner



District Apostle
Enrique Eduardo Minio



District Apostle
Raúl E. Montes de Oca

sort! Jesus Christ is the model! We are merely servants. Let us do our part to help all mankind to be saved and to enter the kingdom of God. We do not, however, expect them to become like we are, to have the same lifestyle as we do, to have the same thoughts and ideas, the same tastes, and so on. We serve each other and help and respect each other even if our neighbour is not as we are. We have been called to liberty in Christ, and to serve one another in love.

If we act in this manner, we become heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. Then Jesus will make us truly free. He will free us from the constraints of human life. We will receive the resurrection body, which is not subject to any temporal or earthly constraints or restrictions. This body will be completely free. It will be able to go wherever it wants. We will have been freed of all our human weaknesses and imperfections. If we follow Christ, and accept this freedom in Jesus Christ, He can deliver us from everything. Then we will receive the resurrection body and enter His kingdom, where there will be no more pain, suffering, or tears. That is eternal bliss. At the end of time, God will deliver all of the creation. Paul already made reference to this: "At the end of time, God will deliver the creation from the bondage of sin and make a new creation, in which there is no room for sin." That is the end of the story, the whole story: absolute freedom in God and Christ.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us just keep these few thoughts: Jesus makes us free. Those who believe in Him and are baptised, will be delivered from the bondage of sin. They have the opportunity to come to God. They are no longer prisoners. They also have the ability to renounce sin: they are no longer forced to sin. Whenever they decide, "I renounce sin, I don't want to commit this sin," Jesus will give them the strength they need to say no to the evil one.

They are no longer prisoners. We all want to attain perfect freedom in Jesus Christ and become like Him. We are not forced to obey. We are free and can walk the path of obedience of our own free will. This is the way that leads to God and the path we want to pursue. It is our decision, one we can make freely.

We are permitted to serve the Lord as slaves. We do not ask Him for wages, but perform this service out of love because He has done so much for us and wants to share His inheritance with us. We serve Him willingly because we love Him. We want to be capable of loving without prejudice. And because we have been called to liberty we want to serve as Jesus served, and help one another. We do not want to rule over our neighbour, but help him and accept him as he is, and remain faithful until the end. We will be absolutely free to receive the resurrection body and wait for the new creation, where even the creation itself will be free from the rule of sin. That is our future, that is our task, that is our way.

CORE THOUGHTS

Jesus came to deliver those who believe in Him from the bondage of sin. Baptism frees us from original sin. The Holy Spirit allows us to access freedom in Christ. This freedom consists of loving and serving Christ's image.



Doing good and doing it right

We know what we are supposed to do: to be kind and do good things. And we are also clear on who is to benefit: our neighbour. But why? Crucial for a good result is our motivation. In a divine service in Kindu (Democratic Republic of the Congo) on 21 July 2018 the Chief Apostle identified five good and five not so good motivations.

A child of God has been called to do good, Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider said in explaining the Bible text. However, the point is not to serve human beings but God.

How not to do it

Our actions are not to be shaped by human considerations, the Chief Apostle said, and cited some negative examples.

- Following the opinion of the majority instead of divine laws. “We don’t say, it is okay, because everybody does it. The only thing we are interested in is what Jesus has to say about it.”
- Following people instead of serving Jesus. “What we do for the Lord we don’t do in order to please the Apostle or our rector. We respect God’s servants, we love them, but they are only tools.”
- Seeking glory for ourselves. “We do not do good in order to shine before mankind and be admired. This is something that Jesus strictly rejected.”
- Acting out of self-interest. Many do good things in the expectation that the same will be done for them should they ever find themselves in need. “Don’t merely act because it might be to your advantage.”
- Showing partiality. “We preach the gospel and are kind



Some 2,700 people participated in the divine service. The sermon was interpreted from French into Swahili



- Reverence. “We have received the gift of the Holy Spirit. We have been given the promise that Jesus will return in order to take us with Him. There are a thousand more reasons to do good things.”
- Humility: “The Lord asks us to be kind to our neighbour ... We would like to choose who should benefit from our kindness. But the Lord tells us: ‘No, no, that’s up to me. The neighbour is the person I have put next to you.’”

“I am aware that there is still a lot of work to be done, for we are all human. And here and there our motivation leaves something to be desired. Let’s correct it,” Chief Apostle Schneider said.

to those around us irrespective of whether people see it or not, whether they love us or not, or whether they deserve it or not.”

Doing it right

If what really matters to us is our relationship with God, then our conduct and actions will have the best possible basis, the Chief Apostle said.

- Gratitude. “Why do we do good things? We do it for the Lord because He has promised us a wonderful legacy: eternal life, the possibility to be with God forever.”
- Constancy. Neither ingratitude nor a lack of interest by our fellow human beings should prevent us from doing good. “Even if no one else pays attention to the good you do, you did it for the Lord. And He is aware of it.”
- A pure heart. “The Lord not only sees what we do, but He also sees why we do it. It is a great concern of mine that we really serve out of love for the Lord, with a pure heart, and without any ulterior motives.”

CORE THOUGHTS

Colossians 3: 23–24

“And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.”

We have been called to do good. We do not do it out of self-interest, but out of love for the Lord. We serve God with constancy, humility, respect, and without any hypocrisy.



■ Jens Lange

| Holding on to our hope

God gave three promises to believers. The reality that presents itself to us, however, looks a little different. Here is a look at what our hope is based on and how not to lose it. Explanations from a divine service by the Chief Apostle in Ulaanbaatar, the national capital of Mongolia, in July 2018.

The author of the epistle to the Hebrews is referring to Abraham here, whose wife, Sarah, conceived and bore him a son when she was quite old. “God’s promise was fulfilled word for word because Abraham kept faith and continued to be patient,” Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider explained.

Promise and reality

“What has God promised us?” the Chief Apostle asked. He promised that

- the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ would break the power of evil.
- He will return in order to take His bride unto Himself.

- He will be with His Apostles until they have completed their mission.

“These are the three great promises we have been given,” he said. However, the reality that presents itself to us seems to tell a different story, he continued: we see the power of evil; Jesus still has not come although centuries have passed; and only a minority accept the Apostles.

Doubt and certainty

This could cause us to become discouraged: “What use is my doing good if evil is going to triumph anyway,” the Chief Apostle asked, outlining some possible thoughts. “Perhaps the coming of the kingdom of God is meant to be under-

About half of the New Apostolic Christians from Mongolia have gathered in a hotel for this divine service

stood symbolically only.” And: “The Apostles aren’t really that successful anyway.” However: “This is how we give up our hope and become indolent.”

“Let us remain firm in hope,” was his appeal. For our hope is established on a solid foundation.

- This promise has been given to you by God. God is the truth; He cannot lie.
- The resurrection of Jesus Christ is not a fable. His resurrection is a fact. Because He resurrected we too will resurrect.
- Thanks to the gift of the Holy Spirit we already today have the power to resist sin.

Diligence and preparation

“Let us always be diligent,” the Chief Apostle said as he put the focus on our preparation for the return of Christ.

- Of course we are still sinners, but let’s not give up but continue to fight against sin. And if we fall fifty times, we get up fifty times. Even if all others do evil, we respond to evil with good.
- We do not only want to be blessed in our natural lives. We do not only want to be good people. We want to develop into the likeness of Jesus Christ. For then we will have eternal fellowship with Him.
- Let us pray that the Apostles can fulfil their mission, that they can proclaim the word of God, and that they can gather the bride. The whole congregation is asked to help along. Let us proclaim the gospel!

The Chief Apostle continued: “The sign that Jesus Christ is with His Apostles is not the number of disciples, but the spiritual development of the congregation. The legible letter of the Apostles today is love, forgiveness, and the unity of the children of God.”

In summing up, the Chief Apostle said: “Jesus Christ promised to deliver us from evil, to return to take us to Himself, and to be with His Apostles until the end. Let us remain steadfast in our hope by persevering in the fight against sin, seeking fellowship with God, and supporting the apostolate.”



CORE THOUGHTS

Hebrews 6: 11–12

“And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”

Jesus Christ promised to deliver us from evil, to return to take us to Himself, and to be with His Apostles until the end. We remain steadfast in our hope by persevering in the fight against sin, seeking fellowship with God, and supporting the apostolate.

From servant to friend of God in five steps

Friends of God ... The Bible mentions quite a few. But is this still possible today? It is a question of proximity to God or remoteness from Him. The ministers and teachers from Lithuania and Latvia gathered for a divine service with Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider in Šiauliai in Lithuania on 18 August 2018.



■ NAC Lithuania

“We see ourselves as servants of God, not as bosses,” Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider said. “It is not humiliating that we are servants of God. In fact, it is an honour for us. Jesus Christ described Himself as a servant.”

“God is the boss, Jesus is the master. He tells us: ‘Go and serve your neighbour and I will decide who your neighbour is.’” The Chief Apostle went on to explain that only God can bring about salvation: “We are only tools.”

Friends come to our aid

In our Bible text, Jesus tells His disciples that they are no longer just servants but also friends. What does that mean? The Chief Apostle found an answer with Abraham, who was called the friend of God. He also referred to Moses, with whom God spoke as a man speaks to his friend, and to John the Baptist, who called himself the friend of the bridegroom.



District Apostle Rainer Storck (right) from Germany is responsible for the region and was called to assist



The friends of the Lord are therefore servants who understand His intentions, fulfil His will, and prepare for His return, the Chief Apostle continued. “He told us about His plans: eternal life so that mankind will be close to God.”

Contributing to His plans

“The service we perform is to contribute to these plans,” Chief Apostle Schneider made clear and mentioned five aspects.

- The goal of our ministering is bringing human beings close to God and having them stay close to Him through good times and bad. Blessing is not to become rich or healthy, but to be near God. Those who are close to God have peace in their hearts. They have a balanced spiritual life, feel and know that they are loved, and have security.
- Let us make sure that our faith in Jesus Christ becomes stronger and stronger. Our ministering is to reveal Jesus Christ to our brothers and sisters so that they get to know and understand Him better and better, and understand that God loves them.
- Our service is to help the Apostles in preparing the bride. The bride must be comprised of souls who love Jesus with all their heart and who share the spirit of Jesus Christ: they love all human beings and want all to be with God forever.
- The Lord will not return and take one from here and another one from there. He wants to take His people with Him: the faithful who believe in Him, who love Him, who serve one another, who love their neighbour, and who are united in Jesus Christ. That is why our service has to ensure that this unity is preserved.

- It is also part of our mission to explain to the brothers and sisters that if there are trials, it does not mean that God has forgotten you. On the contrary, He will make sure that you can continue to come to Him and remain with Him.

“This is the kind of service we want to perform upon our own soul and our neighbour’s soul,” the Chief Apostle concluded. “We are talking about proximity to God or remoteness from Him: being with God or being far from Him.”

CORE THOUGHTS

John 15: 15

“No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.”

The Holy Spirit reveals to us God’s plan of salvation. Knowing God’s will, we work to lead the faithful to God, to strengthen their faith in Jesus Christ, to implant the love for their neighbour in their heart, to strengthen their unity, and to comfort them in trials.

MARY AND MARTHA

ACCORDING TO LUKE 10: 38–42

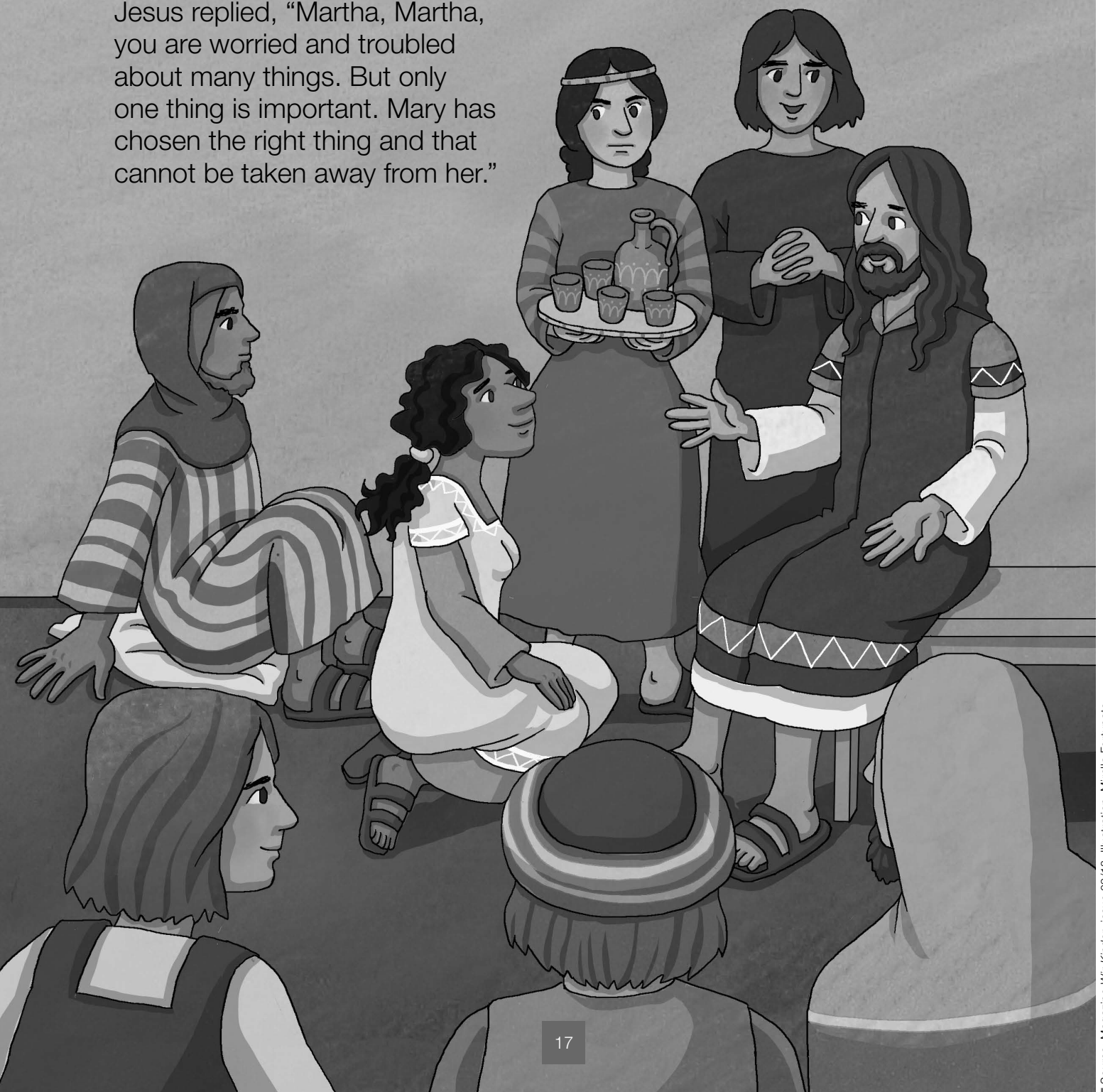
Jesus commissions His disciples to go out and proclaim the kingdom of God to the people. He also travels through the region and talks about the reign of God, which has already begun. On his way, he comes to Bethany.

Jesus and His disciples went to a village where a woman called Martha lived. She welcomed Jesus into her house. Martha also had a sister, Mary. She sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what Jesus had to say. Martha, though, was working



hard looking after Jesus. She went to Jesus and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the work? Tell her to help me!"

Jesus replied, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But only one thing is important. Mary has chosen the right thing and that cannot be taken away from her."



AT ROSALINDA'S IN MALABO (EQUATORIAL GUINEA)

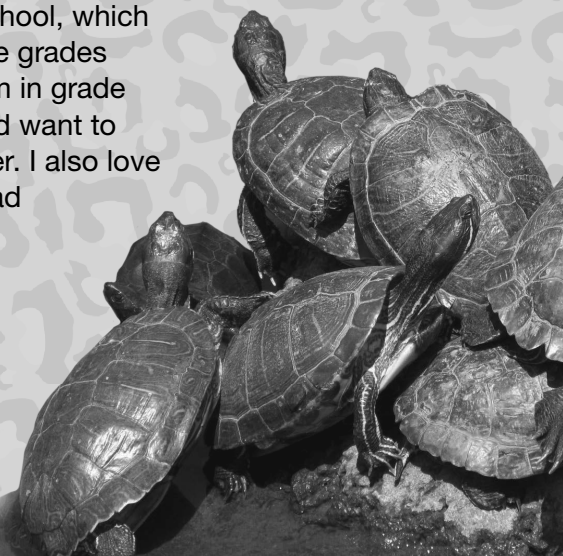
Hola! My name is **Rosalinda**. I was born on 15 November 2006. I have five siblings: Gabriel, Consuelo, Yolanda, Venancio Jr., and Maria Isabel. You are probably wondering why I am greeting you in Spanish? Well, **Equatorial Guinea** is the only country in Africa with Spanish as its official language. Until 1968 it was a colony of Spain.



In addition to mainland Equatorial Guinea, there are also five islands that belong to the country. The largest one, Bioko, is situated off the coast of Cameroon. I was born on the mainland, but in the meantime we have moved to **Malabo**, our national capital, which is located on Bioko.

It is very warm on the islands and there is a lot of rain, which means that the climate is tropical. Our rainforests are a real paradise for all kinds of animals: gorillas, antelopes, leopards, African forest elephants, and many other species. Every year in January and February, thousands of **marine turtles** come ashore to lay their eggs on Bioko Island's southern beaches.

I have already finished elementary school, which consists of five grades here. Now I am in grade six. I love school and want to become a doctor later. I also love to sing, dance, and read stories.



What I don't like are lies and being sick. And sometimes I can't stand it when people tease me. I also don't like to fight or argue. I love to play or watch TV. On weekends I go **inline skating** with my sisters. On the photo you can see me with Consuelo, Yolanda, and my niece Gemima (left to right) .



I belong to the **congregation** in Malabo. At the beginning of March last year, the Chief Apostle visited Equatorial Guinea. Unfortunately, I could not see him because the divine service took place in Bata. I hope he will come to Malabo next time. I like going to church. When I am there I feel happy. I also like the music.

My friends at church are Samira, Grachy, Omarita, Katrina, my cousin Chloe, and my niece Gemima. I am still in Sunday School, but soon I will start with confirmation class. On Christmas 2017 I did the **Bible reading** in our congregation. The service was held by my father, who is our District Elder.





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On the universality of the church and the gospel

The essential aspects of the New Apostolic faith are addressed in the first three articles of our creed. This is also where the “universal church” is mentioned. What this means Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider explains in the following essay.

The essential aspects of our faith are presented in the early church creeds, upon which the first three Articles of Faith of the New Apostolic Creed are based: we believe in the triune God, the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ, in the church of Christ, in the sacraments, in the return of Christ, and in eternal life. I would like to occupy myself with a short, yet extremely important, passage from the Third Article of Faith: “I believe in the one, holy, universal, and apostolic church.” The church that is mentioned here is the church of Christ. It is explained in our Catechism (CNAC 2.4.3, 6.4). The church of Christ is the work of the Holy Spirit, which can only be grasped in faith. From the cited passage I would like to emphasise the following aspect: we believe that the church is “universal” (Greek: *katholikós*)

Belief in the universality of the church

The universality—that is, the catholicity—of the church of Christ derives from

- the all-encompassing nature of the divine will to save. God desires to make it possible for all human beings from all time periods, all nations, and all circumstances to be redeemed from sin and to enter into fellowship with Him. It is in the church that this universal divine will to save finds direct expression.
- the commission which Christ gave His Apostles, namely to preach the gospel without any kind of restriction. The gospel is fully valid and effective for all human beings, without exception.
- the authority that Jesus conferred upon the apostolate. There where Apostles are active all the necessary means are provided in order to attain the fullness of salvation.

The universality of the church can only be grasped in faith. Indeed, the universal character of the church is not always perceptible in its visible form, that is to say, in its historical manifestation:

- The Christian faith was not able to develop in the same way everywhere.
- Both the truth and the current relevance of the gospel are called into question.
- The necessity of the church as an authority for imparting salvation is disputed.
- The Apostles of the present are not recognised by the majority of Christians.

These observations were as true in the past as they are in the present. However, we must by no means allow the

doubt and rejection we encounter to weaken our belief in the universality of the church. We believe in the promise of Jesus: the gates of hell will not prevail against the church of Christ (Matthew 16: 18)! We know, however, that faith in the universality of the church is only of value if it also produces works. These works consist of the universal proclamation of the gospel and the concern that it may be received by all.

The proclamation of the universally valid gospel

The Apostle ministry has received the commission from Jesus to preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16: 15). Led by the Holy Spirit, the Apostles seek to fulfil this task. This applies to the apostolate as a whole, that is, for the Apostles of the early church, those of the Catholic Apostolic Church, and those of the New Apostolic Church.

Our testimony and our preaching are not only based on the gospel and the doctrine, but also on our experience. If we draw from this spiritual potential, we can address the concerns of many of our contemporaries and perhaps provide them with answers.

- We can comfort the poor and unfortunate with the promise that Jesus loves them and cares for them. We can also strengthen them by clearly showing them the bond between Christians and how they support one another.
- We can strengthen those who suffer and those who are afraid of the future by telling them about the return of Jesus and eternal life.
- Those who find themselves on the margins of society will take joy in finding their place in our congregational fellowship.
- Congregational life opens up numerous opportunities for believers to engage themselves and be recognised, irrespective of their level of education or talent.
- The doctrine of the Apostles, that is, the proper proclamation of the gospel, enables believers to change for the better and perhaps even find personal balance.

All of these answers are correct and in conformance with the gospel, however, we must also concede that they are not valid for all. They do not necessarily apply to all human beings and thus do not have a universal character. Not all are poor or without means. Not all are sick and in need of help. Not all are in need of comfort and strength. Thanks to the progress of medicine, people today are not helplessly exposed to sickness and suffering. A longer lifespan allows

people today to think less about death than was the case in the past. The development of the various means of communication and life in urban centres facilitates social contacts. Modern humans no longer need God in order to be successful in their lives or find personal balance. They may not even need God in order to become “better”. They are therefore no longer in need of many of the comforts and promises that are normally part of the sermon and pastoral care!

The result: our testimony no longer has the same influence on the people we speak to. Especially among younger people who are not faced with existential need we find little resonance. Thus we would be well advised to concentrate on the universal message of the gospel that is valid for all human beings. The universality of the gospel is based on that which Jesus Christ teaches us about God, ourselves, our relationship with God and our neighbour, and the salvation that God prepares for us.

- Jesus reveals the perfection of God to us. We know of no other who is good except for Him (Psalm 16: 2, Matthew 5: 48).
- Jesus teaches us that God is love. He loves unconditionally. He expects us to reciprocate His love freely and willingly, that is, without any sort of coercion.
- The gospel reveals God to us as the triune God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They are three distinct persons who are perfectly one. Only fellowship with this God allows human beings to overcome their differences in order to create unity among themselves.
- Through His death and resurrection, Jesus Christ has given us access to the kingdom of God. In order to ultimately be liberated from the evil one at the return of Jesus, we must follow His words and deeds, and take Him as our example.
- God desires to grant us His perfect peace by allowing us to become that which He has created us to be: human beings in His image who will dwell in eternal fellowship with Him.

This message is truly universal. It must be the core of the preaching of the Apostles and of every sermon!

The universal proclamation of the gospel

The glad tidings must be proclaimed to all.

At times we have given preference to the poor and disadvantaged because we thought that their situation might

make them more receptive to the gospel. This strategy was not always worthwhile because it turned out that the faith of certain believers did not have very deep roots. At times we were hesitant to enter into contact with certain groups of people because we thought the conditions were not favourable for us. Here I am thinking about people who have to live in extreme poverty or conditions of violence, or those—and now we have the absolute opposite—who are educated or wealthy. I am convinced that we should also turn more of our attention to non-Christians. Let us show the same courage as the first Christians and let us not set any limits when it comes to proclaiming the gospel. Let us not hesitate to be innovative!

In order to proclaim the universal message of the gospel in a convincing manner, we do not need to demonise earthly life or paint a dark picture of the future. Such an approach would make the truth of the gospel completely inaccessible to a significant proportion of the population. Following Christ is not inconsistent with a pleasant life on this earth. On the contrary, it can contribute to such a life!

The universal proclamation of the gospel rules out all calls for uniformity. The new life in Christ can develop under the most diverse of economic, spiritual, and cultural conditions! In order to follow the doctrine of the Apostles, the younger generation does not have to share the preferences of their forebears! Let us allow ourselves to be guided by the example of Apostle Paul: “And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. Now this I do for the gospel’s sake, that I may be partaker of it with you” (1 Corinthians 9: 20–23). In so doing, the Apostle was walking in the footsteps of his Sender. In order to bring us the glad tidings, the Son of God “made Himself of no reputation, taking on the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men” (Philippians 2: 7).

Having been confronted with this problem for much longer than we have, the Catholic Church developed the notion of “inculturation”. According to Yves Congar, a Catholic theologian who lived from 1904 to 1995, inculturation is based on “introducing the seed of faith to a culture and developing it there accordingly, bringing it to expression using the means and constitution of that culture” (free

translation from the *Dictionnaire critique de théologie*, Jean-Yves Lacoste, Editions PUF). We would do well to take direction from this notion if we want to testify of the gospel to people of another cultural domain or pass along our faith to future generations ...

The church, a universal witness

Not only is it our responsibility to proclaim the gospel comprehensively to all people, but we must also see to it that our testimony can be accepted by all. Once again it is in Jesus Christ that we find our example. "For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth" (John 18: 37). And His testimony had effect because His works bore witness of Him (John 10: 25).

We can only be universal witnesses of the gospel if we are credible, that is, if we show ourselves worthy of the message we proclaim. In accordance with the example of Jesus, we should be

- confident. Our faith gives us firm confidence in that which we hope (Hebrews 11: 1), and this confidence must be perceived by those around us.
- determined to overcome evil. The testimony of a complacent Christian is not credible.
- humble. Jesus did exactly what the Father required of Him. We are in the service of Jesus. Let us content ourselves by doing that which He expects of us. It is not for sinners to discipline other sinners (John 8: 7). On the contrary, Jesus forbids us to judge our neighbour (Matthew 7: 1).
- unbound. The less we are bound by material things or our own honour, the easier it will be for us to forgive others who cause us harm.
- filled with love for God and our neighbour. Because we love Jesus, we are prepared to suffer for Him and with Him. Let us love our neighbour in deed and in truth (1 John 3: 18).

In summary, let us remain firm in faith. We believe in the church of Christ and its universal purpose: its mission is to proclaim the gospel to all universally. Our task is to

- proclaim the universal message of salvation and not hold on to aspects that are of a rather secondary nature.
- heed the inspiration of the Holy Spirit so that the glad tidings can be proclaimed without restrictions.
- take direction from the example of Christ in order to be true witnesses.



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Hong Kong entrusted into new hands

It is as diverse as it is small: the multicultural congregation in Hong Kong. On 26 September 2018, the congregation experienced a historic divine service—and not only because the Chief Apostle was there for a visit.

The Hong Kong members were closer to heaven than most other New Apostolic congregations—until Easter 2018, that is. It was then that they had to move, namely from the Sheung Wang Commercial Building to the Reason Group Tower. The move did not signify a fall from their previous heights, however: they were back to work in their new meeting premises soon afterward, once again on the twentieth storey.

A crucible of cultures

The beginnings of the New Apostolic Church in Hong Kong date back to the early 1970s. Ministers from Canada brought testimony of the re-established Apostle ministry to the region. A pair of brothers with the family name Lim were the first locals to be baptised and sealed—by none other than District Apostle Erwin Wagner. In 1980, a certain Urs Hebeisen—then still a District Evangelist—came to Hong Kong and lived there for two years. Little did he

know that he would return barely three decades later as District Apostle.

The first permanent congregation came into being under the watchful care of Evangelist Ray Strang from New York. The congregation's first gathering place was established in



Top: Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider (fourth from the left) with District Apostles, Apostles, and leading ministers in Hong Kong





The Chief Apostle thanks District Apostle Urs Hebeisen (top) and congratulates District Apostle Peter Schulte (right)



Ninety-eight members attended the divine service the Chief Apostle held in Hong Kong at the end of September 2018

North Point. Over the years, the families Lam, Choi, and Kowk became the backbone of the congregation.

Today the congregation is a true reflection of Hong Kong society: a crucible of cultures and nationalities. It consists of Church members from the Philippines, Indonesia, and Europe, not to mention many travelling business people and visitors from all around the world. In 2013, a total of 148 members from ten different nations came together in the Eaton Hotel in Kowloon to celebrate the congregation's 25-year anniversary service.

Transfer to NAC Western Pacific

One way or the other, the visit of Chief Apostle Schneider represented a milestone in the history of the congregation—all the more so because the pastoral and organisa-

tional care of the New Apostolic congregation in Hong Kong was transferred to Australia. From now on, Apostle Peter Schulte—who was appointed District Apostle in Brisbane just a few days later (on 30 September) for the Western Pacific region—will look after the congregation. In addition to Hong Kong, the new District Church will also look after the members in China, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan.

District Apostle Urs Hebeisen—whose retirement was coming up in November—had said goodbye to the congregation in Hong Kong the Sunday before. He had assumed responsibility for most of the congregations in South-East Asia and the Far East in 2009. With his retirement in November, his working area in classical South-East Asia was transferred to the care of Apostle Edy Isnugroho from Indonesia, who was appointed as District Apostle in the same divine service.

Breathing new life into silent pipe organs

Apostle Jorge Luis Franco from Argentina is an organ and harmonium builder. Viviana Aloy, our correspondent in Argentina, met up with him in the Church's own workshop.



■ INA Argentina

■ *Harmonium builder, is that a common trade in Argentina?*

No, not at all. Throughout Argentina there are very few if any craftsmen who repair and restore harmoniums.

■ *Why did you choose this occupation?*

My father was a harmonium builder. I started to help him with repairs and maintenance of harmoniums in the Church's own workshop when I was 15. I also acquired skills in the repair of pianos and later worked as a tuner and restorer. And then I had the opportunity to work for a very experienced Argentinian organ builder and organist and was able to add to my knowledge and apply it in working with another magnificent instrument: the pipe organ.

Today I have special skills and experience in the building of small pipe organs as well as in the restoration and tuning of harmoniums and pianos.

■ *Did your interest in harmoniums and organs have anything to do with the Church?*

Yes, of course. Because I was involved with the maintenance of our harmoniums—which we use in our divine services—I developed an interest in another specialised field: the building of small pipe organs. Since the Argentine market is small, we make them to order. These organs are used mainly in Catholic and Protestant churches, and I execute the orders in my own workshop. That means, all instruments that are not intended for use in our own Church I build or repair in my private workshop at home.

■ *Are harmoniums still used today?*

The harmonium was invented to be used instead of the pipe organ, with similar timbres and registers, but with the possibility of playing it in smaller rooms. Even today it is an important instrument in our Church, and leads congregational singing in our congregations. It is fundamental for choral singing and learning new songs, as well as accompanying the songs. It is gratifying to see that people in our region are beginning to place more value on music and that it has become more diversified.

■ *Even among the young members?*

Yes, contrary to what one might think, young people are attracted to music that is different from the modern music of today. When young members sing the hymns in our Church—even the old songs from way back when—they find it very gratifying. During the Chief Apostle's latest visit to Buenos Aires, the choir was comprised of 650 young members. Time and again we observe that music is very powerful. Music is a gift of God. For us, it is an added means to transport the message of the gospel into people's heart.

■ *Are all the harmoniums in the congregations in Argentina the same?*

Most harmoniums we use were built in Germany, some were built here, and a few come from France or the USA. They differ from each other in the way the sound is produced. In the German and North American system, air sucked in through the bellows causes metal reeds to vibrate. The French system works the other way around. By pressure that is built up inside the instrument, the air is expelled causing the reeds to vibrate and producing sound.

■ *What is the most frequent kind of work you do on the harmoniums in our churches?*

In the past, harmoniums were tuned a little lower than the standard pitch used today, namely 440 Hertz. Since the harmonium often accompanies our instrumental ensembles and therefore other instruments such as violins, trumpets, and flutes, I have been adapting the pitch of the harmoniums. I am doing it gradually, congregation by congregation.

■ *How long does it take you?*

It takes three to four hours to tune one. A harmonium should be tuned every two to three years. Of course that also depends on how well it has been taken care of.

■ *Does a harmonium ever need a general overhaul?*

Yes, a complete overhaul should be done every twenty or thirty years. For a well-kept instrument this takes about 15 to 20 days.

■ *What do you think when you are working on an instrument?*

I always think about the sisters and brothers and wonder if they are going to like how it has turned out. I always imagine them playing our hymns in divine service. If a harmonium is completely broken and no longer produces any sound, I think about how nice it will sound once it has been repaired. I take it apart piece by piece and then reassemble it step by step. And once it has been reassembled it is ready to be played again. I love that feeling. It is not something you get used to. In fact, you can hardly wait for the moment when you can say, "It was mute and now it is alive again and sounds wonderful."

■ *Which interesting situations have you experienced in your work?*

There have been many interesting situations, especially in the last few

years. We have restored or built a number of organs for various denominations. For example, in 2016 we installed the first pipe organ made entirely in Argentina in the cathedral of Buenos Aires on the occasion of the bicentenary of the country's independence. All the major newspapers in the country reported about the event. This pipe organ is used every day to accompany the liturgy. Last year we restored the pipe organ in the central synagogue of the city of Buenos Aires. This was followed by an important ceremony, which was incidentally also attended by the Chancellor of Germany, Angela Merkel. We also received a letter of thanks from the German Ambassador in Argentina for our work. I could name many other situations, because the work of bringing new life to mute pipes is highly appreciated, and brings me into contact with people of various religions who love music and musical instruments. On account of my work, I have a good relationship with a number of Catholic priests. We often speak about the reality of Christians in the twenty-first century, about the church as a representative institution, and about today's challenges to faith. We have a great deal of respect for one another, and even despite some differences, we always find many common points on which we agree.

■ *What is your biggest wish?*

My biggest wish is remaining faithful and seeing Jesus Christ face to face. This is what I also wish for my loved ones as well as all my brothers and sisters.

Apostle Jorge Luis Franco with members



From frequent flyer to retiree

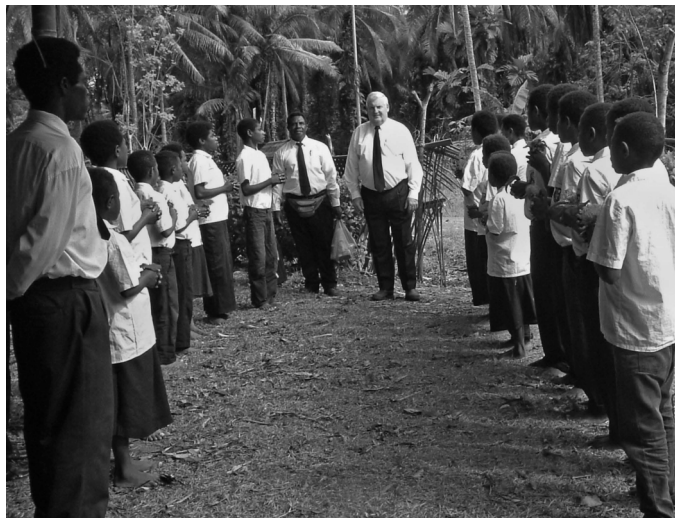
A man the size of a tree—large, generous, and of cheerful disposition. September 30th, 2018 went down in the annals of the New Apostolic Church Australia as the day District Apostle Andrew Andersen retired. It is the end of an era, and the beginning of a new one.

His life reads like an adventure novel: born in Copenhagen 67 years ago, he is a Dane who grew up in Australia. His parents immigrated there and landed in Port Adelaide in December 1956. A new life began for the entire family: a foreign country, a foreign language, and a foreign culture awaited them. For the young children this smelled more like an adventure, but for the parents it represented an enormous adjustment. It was only years later that they really settled down—in the city of Elizabeth, a few kilometres south of Adelaide. Father found a job, the children went to school, and Australia became their new home. Their contact with the Church occurred rather coincidentally, it seems, through one of the father's co-workers. In 1962 the family became New Apostolic.

An Apostle with a pilot's licence

As a young man of 16 years, Andrew Andersen left his parental home and pursued his training in the Australian Air Force—and even managed to secure a pilot's licence

of his own. Later, as a clergyman, the minister Andrew Andersen actually ended up flying so frequently that the airline staff would welcome him by name whenever he boarded the aircraft. In Australia, there is just no way to get around except by airplane. The distances are simply too great. Anyone who travels for 30 years as an Apostle, as he has, will cover thousands of miles in an airplane. But the frequent flyer does not have his head in the clouds. His feet are firmly planted on the ground: he has been married





A towering personality both physically and spiritually,
District Apostle Andrew Andersen

to Margret since 1972, is the father of four children, and a happy grandfather to boot.

Even the year 1988 did very little to disturb the idyllic family scene: it was in that year that Chief Apostle Richard Fehr ordained the District Evangelist Andersen an Apostle. The next nudge came in 2001: again it was Chief Apostle Fehr who laid hands upon his forehead, this time to ordain him a District Apostle. For seventeen years he fulfilled this service in the Church in a thoroughly joyful manner and with enormous strength. Each of his successive Chief Apostles, as well as his fellow District Apostles, describe him as a good friend and a dear brother.

District Apostle Andersen has also given a part of his big heart to the congregations in New Guinea. Years ago he said that the pastoral work in this region was still in the very early childhood stages: making peace among the various tribes, battling with everything from mosquitos to crocodiles, and daring to set off on long foot marches through thick jungle. But what has inspired him even more is the vitality and childlike nature of the faith he has found there.

A friend with a big heart

“His service has been characterised by true love, genuine humbleness, and divine wisdom,” writes Chief Apostle

Jean-Luc Schneider as he describes the retiring District Apostle. He goes on to state that he experienced him as a true friend with a big heart and a subtle sense of humour.

The retirement of District Apostle Andrew Andersen took place in a divine service in Brisbane. He heard words of gratitude and experienced an atmosphere charged with emotion—and will not have been happy that everyone was making such a fuss over him. Some of the District Apostles who were present on the occasion of his ordination as a District Apostle in 2001 have already passed away—including Chief Apostle Fehr. When Chief Apostle Schneider presided over his retirement in September 2018, District Apostles Michael Ehrich (Southern Germany), Urs Hebeisen (South-East Asia), Leonard Kolb (USA), and Mark Woll (Canada) were seated next to the altar. At the end of the divine service, District Apostle Helper Peter Schulte was appointed as the new District Apostle.

District Apostle Andersen has the following to say about his successor: “This change has been long prayed for and stands under the blessing of the Lord. Peter Schulte is a man of faith. He will lead a large district, and will do so in his usual calm and composed manner.” The new District Apostle will also take on the leadership of the New Apostolic congregations in Hong Kong, Japan, Macau, South Korea, and Taiwan from Australia.”

Indeed, an era is coming to a close—and a new one is about to begin.

Remaining faithful

It was only recently that District Apostle Andrew Andersen wrote a kind of farewell message from active ministry by his own hand. In the Spotlight 12/2018 he wrote, among other things: “A well-known saying goes: ‘Practise what you preach.’ I suggest it is even better when, with a good conscience, we can confidently ‘preach what we practise’. As we go forward in life, let us practise faithfulness to Christ ourselves and at the same time be assertive when we are in the company of our family, friends, and neighbours. Our determination that we ourselves have to keep our faith alive must communicate itself to others. My dear brothers and sisters, let us be (and remain) faithful to Christ.”

| By young people for young people

Not quite a year from now, the Church will be celebrating its International Youth Convention 2019. For the young people—who are in the process of graduating, starting their first jobs, or moving in with their first roommate—this is still a long way off. But for the organisers, who are doing their best to plan an event that is to thrill some 30,000 participants, time is short.



■ EYD photography team



Amanda, who lives in Pforzheim (Germany), knows a lot about planning and organising major events. As an event manager, she has already planned and organised a number of youth events for the Church. No wonder that she was recommended when the IYC Planning Committee Contents was looking for additional young members.

Amanda has taken a day off from work to attend a meeting of the planning committee in Bad Camberg. In the evening, the group drives to the church in the nearby town of Taunusstein, where a group of young people are working on a project for the International Youth Convention 2019. After a short round of introductions, they all disappear into the various rooms of the church to continue with their projects.

Making faith concrete

Anna Caroline, Anke, Benjamin, Jasmin, and Vanessa are seated in the mother's room. Bishop Ralph Wittich and Apostle Uli Falk from the IYC Planning Committee join them, keen to learn more about the project they have been working on for the past five months: they want to make the



Pictures we will soon see again. This photo was taken at the European Youth Day 2009

Catechism a little more youth-friendly. "Our idea: a product by the youth for the youth that makes faith tangible and concrete, and shows that it can be fun," Benjamin explains, who is in charge of the project. The five young people have been meeting once a month for about the last year. The concept for their project is in place. What they are doing now is putting their ideas together and implementing them.



Vanessa is 18. Her confirmation is not all that long ago. “Sure, I learned the Articles of Faith by heart. But what do they tell me?” Having experienced themselves that many statements of faith remain rather theoretical and do not seem to have a concrete connection to their everyday lives, the group plans to offer a more practical approach to these topics for young Christians.

A more fun Catechism

In a game box they have created, there is a card game, Hit The Deck, based on our Articles of Faith and a kind of biblical speed-dating game. For the latter, two players sit across from each other, each one personifying a character from the Bible. By responding to yes/no questions, the two players have to guess which biblical character the other one is playing.

The youth group does a test-run of the Articles-of-Faith card game with the Planning Committee. Cards are distributed to the players. One of the players reads an Article of Faith. When a player gives the appropriate generic term, the other players quickly put their hands on top of the deck in the middle. The player who is last has to draw the card. It works. After a few rounds, the players can easily retrieve the Articles of Faith that are buried deep in the nether regions of their memory.

The youth group has designed the games in such a way that they can easily be printed or played using a free app. They have also recorded video instructions. For the design of the game box and the videos the group is hoping to get some professional help, as well as for the theological verification

and translation of the games into other languages.

Women in the Church

In the sacristy, sisters and brothers are sitting around the table. The Project Group Women is brainstorming topics they would like to see treated at the International Youth Convention 2019, and Amanda is writing down notes on the flipchart. They all agree not to address the issue of women in ministry. “This is a subject that the Chief Apostle and the District Apostles will pick up on when the time comes,” says Apostle Opdenplatz. But women occupy an important place in the Church, and there are many fields in which they can become involved, but which perhaps not all dis-

tricts and congregations are utilising yet. The members of both working groups are keen to explain what all female youth members can do in the Church and where they can contribute and help along in shaping things.

The project groups were so absorbed in their brainstorming that they would undoubtedly have lost track of time completely if a commotion from the entrance hall had not interrupted their musings. Young people began to file into the church past large crates with dishes, fruit, and hot food wells. It was time for dinner with the youth from the congregations of Taunusstein and Bad Schwalbach.

The focus is more on short-term goals

Over antipasti, pasta, and apple juice, the youth talk about what they expect from the International Youth Convention 2019, what contents they would like, and how they would like to be kept up to speed about everything. The members of the planning committee find out that young people nowadays want to decide on and choose events spontaneously and last minute. Planning for long-term goals is not really for them.

“I have the feeling that the IYC has not yet sunk in. For many young people, the year 2019 is still far away,” Amanda says. It is high time that this changes, the group in Taunusstein decides. And for this to change it is going to take people like Hannes, who is a youth leader in the Taunusstein congregation. “I was at the European Youth Day in 2009, and it was such an awesome experience that I will do everything in my power that the youth in my congregation can experience the same thrill in 2019.”

DISTRICT APOSTLE MICHAEL EHRLICH:

Rich in Christ!

Dear brothers and sisters,

being able to experience surety belongs to our spiritual wealth. What gives us surety in our natural life? For example: living in peace, being part of a strong community, and being able to trust in the reliable promises of others.

Let us transfer this to a spiritual level:

- Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, extended His peace to His Apostles. If we accept Him in those whom He has sent today we will be able to find true peace. His peace is extended to us following the absolution and in the benediction.
We also feel His peace when we repeatedly make the decision to unconditionally follow Christ and when we look up to the Lord full of trust and place everything into His hand.
- We are part of the strongest possible community – communion with the triune God. This is brought about by the Holy Spirit.
In the benediction, God the Holy Spirit assures us that we are integrated into communion with God the Father from whom love emanates, and with God the Son who grants us grace.
- We can build upon divine promises in an incomparable manner.



Jesus' promise, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28: 20) applies to all of us. It grants us new surety every day – until we experience the realisation of His other great promise which applies to us upon the return of Christ: entering into direct and eternal fellowship with Him (John 14: 3).

If we make these divine promises the focal point of our life, our appreciation of wealth in Christ will become increasingly greater.

With sincere greetings, yours

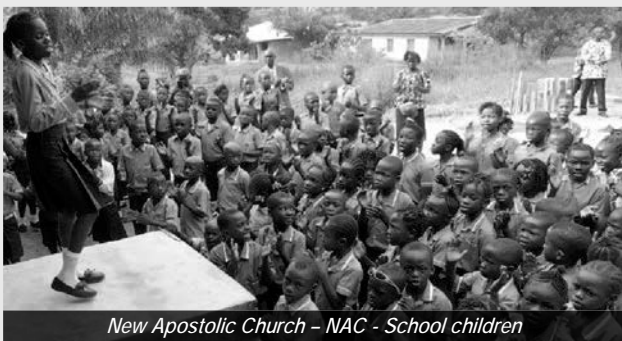
M. Ehrlich
Michael Ehrlich

SIERRA LEONE:

Richness of Children in Christ

There is something very special about the richness of Christ in children. This is why Jesus cautions the disciples not to stop the children from coming to him (Mark 10:14-16). A child's faith is worth inheriting God's kingdom.

We want to be counted amongst the number on the return of Jesus Christ – the richest gain! Children are rich in bringing special joy always to parents and neighbours, which adults can hardly afford to do. So, it is nice to go along with them.



New Apostolic Church – NAC - School children

In Sierra Leone, congregations that have regular Sunday school, confirmation classes, youth activities, choir performances etc, benefit from this inspiring and emotional happiness.

In a school visiting ceremony in Koidu, Eastern Sierra Leone, Rebecca Ndomaina of class three recited the ten articles of faith "word for word" to the amazement of the audience.

To expand their richness in Christ, they need education so as to become future leaders of their communities.



Children in mass choir practices

BENIN:

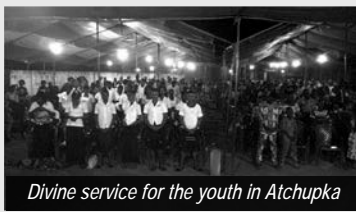


Lead Apostle Bansbach in Konehandri

Fraternal atmosphere makes you rich

The Lead Apostle Herbert Bansbach visited our brothers and sisters in the North of Benin, a distance of about 700 km from Cotonou. During his stay, he conducted three divine services and a seminar for District Ministers.

Apostle Yedenu met the youth of his field of activity on the Atchukpa congregation. Nearly 800 young people rallied around this year's 2019 motto "Rich in Christ". The joy was great and a fraternal atmosphere reigned during the party.



Divine service for the youth in Atchupka

TOGO:



Apostle Kloutse with the young of Dapaong

Youth experiences the richness in Christ

Dapaong, a city located north of Togo experienced the vibration of songs and dances of the youth from New Apostolic Church during this month of February 20.

It is indeed under the theme "Rich in Christ" that the Apostle Kloutse, responsible for the North -Togo brought together the young brothers and sisters of Dapaong. Various activities have been carried out to create a great joy within the youth.



Joy of the young at the end of the divine service

NIGERIA:

Our richness in the congregations

Our riches in Christ is manifest among all groups and bodies in the congregation.

Richness of Our Youth: The Ignited youth.

This enthralling program was organized by the youth of Lagos district. It involved musical renditions, talent display, skill acquisition programs, field trips and lots of other riveting activities.

Children, Our Richness: The word of God on a stage

Drama groups have been created for the children in various

districts and during their monthly Children divine services, they get to showcase their play lets.

The Choir: Our Richness

The NAC choir continues to be a source of joy to both members and ministers through their renditions. A beautiful Christmas concert was organized in Lagos district with the attendance of all the choir masters across the country. It was indeed a splendid event.



Sunday school children at Uyo, before a drama presentation



Youth in Lagos, after an interactive session with the District Apostle

GHANA:

Enriched in everything by Him



Enriched by talents: the orchestra plays with the congregation



Enriched for the congregation: The children of the Sunday school

It was all joy and hearty as the Lead Apostle Samuel Oppong Brenya celebrated the first Sunday of 2019, with our family of the Accra East and West districts in a united divine service.

The Lead Apostle based the service on 1 Corinthians 1:5-7.

“Let all things that have breath give praise, honour and glory to God” said the Lead Apostle in his opening words. He shared the Chief Apostle’s motto for the year 2019, Rich in Christ; and highlighted the special anniversary of the church in Ghana. “Indeed, this year is a blessed year for the New Apostolic Church in Ghana. We are 50 years old; and we celebrate the sacrifices of the 9 souls who started this church in Cape Coast. Today, we have hundreds of

thousands of members, 16 Apostles and over 3,000 ministers in Ghana.”

Reflecting on the text word, the Lead Apostle explained that

being enriched by Christ does not refer to physical and material gains. “What makes God infinitely wealthy are His kindness, patience and grace.” He further elaborated that to obtain these riches in Christ, we:

- Require faith
- Must use our talents
- Cast away sinful deeds

The Lead Apostle concluded by blessing the congregation, “May the Lord enrich every one of us. May the Lord bless us all. And may He be with us through the year, in His full glory and blessings.”



Lead Apostle Oppong Brenya with the welcome girls from Sunday School

GHANA and NIGERIA:

Retirements and ordination of four Apostles

Four Apostles retired on reaching the age limit on January 27, 2019: Apostle Samuel Arthur, Apostle Wilson Dzattah and Apostle Benjamin Kwadzo Pidah - all from Ghana - and Apostle Emmanuel Ityoapine Hagher from Nigeria. With heartfelt thanks, Chief Apostle said goodbye to the four Apostles from active service and wished them a richly blessed retirement from the Lord.



Newly ordained Apostles being blessed by Chief Apostle

The divine service in Cape Coast had a special emphasis especially in the ordination of three Apostles for Ghana and an Apostle for Nigeria, as the successor of the Apostle Hagher.

For Ghana, the former District Elders Richard Senyo Osei, Anthony Kofi Kuada and Samuel Atinga Ayidana received the ministry of Apostle. For Nigeria also a former District Elder, Oscar Kabanga Nwanza, was ordained an Apostle.

RETIRED APOSTLES

Ghana

Apostle (rtd)
Samuel ArthurApostle (rtd)
Wilson DzattahApostle (rtd)
Benjamin K. PidahApostle (rtd)
Emmanuel I. Hagher

NEWLY ORDAINED APOSTLES

Nigeria

Apostle
Oscar K. NwanzaApostle
Richard S. OseiApostle
Anthony K. KuadaApostle
Samuel A. Ayidana

GHANA:

Great joy with our Chief Apostle



The congregation in Cape Coast

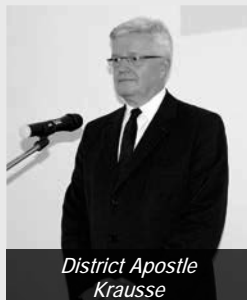


Chief Apostle waving good-bye

Chief Apostle celebrated the occasion of the church's 50th anniversary in Ghana in a festive divine service with 5,120 brothers and sisters. He was accompanied by District Apostles Ehrich and Krausse, District Apostle Helper Soko and 41 Apostles and Bishops from Ghana, Nigeria, Togo, Benin, Equatorial Guinea and Cameroun. The service was hosted in Cape Coast and was broadcasted on the national television network (GBC).

The bible text was taken from the gospel according to Luke 6:45.

The Chief Apostle emphasized that our priority in God's blessings (strength and Godly wisdom) is to be prepared for the return of Christ. However, we also have a mission to fulfill before Jesus' return. We can also be a blessing to people around us; in being witnesses of Jesus Christ,



District Apostle Krausse



District Apostle Helper Soko

and helping them to find and follow Jesus. The Holy Spirit has put in our hearts a good treasure. We are rich and wealthy in Christ. This good treasure consists of:

- The knowledge of Jesus Christ as the Son of God
- The fear of God; a deep respect and knowledge that everything comes from Him
- The promise of our heritage and eternal fellowship with God
- The promise of the Lord Jesus' return
- The love of God poured out in our hearts

District Apostle Krausse and District Apostle Helper Soko were called to serve. Three Apostles from Ghana and a fourth from Nigeria were retired. In replacement, four new Apostles were ordained respectively.

GHANA:

Festive divine service for ministry

Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider celebrated a festive divine service for ministers and their wives in Koforidua on Saturday, January 26, 2019. He was accompanied by District Apostles Ehrich and Krausse, District Apostle Helper Soko as well as Apostles from Ghana, Nigeria, Togo, Benin, Cameroun and Equatorial Guinea.

The word from Timothy 2:15 formed the basis of this divine service. The Chief Apostle exhorted: "You have been called by God and have received a gift from God. And you have to report to God, not to a man." He urged the congregation to look to Jesus as a guide

to the success of their work. "A good servant of God is the one who fulfills the will of God until the end no matter what happens."

The Chief Apostle then urged the congregants to focus their work on salvation. "Brothers let us never forget that the main thing is salvation in Jesus Christ. Do not waste too much of your time and energy with earthly concerns. Let's work for salvation." He encouraged all to believe and persevere in their mission. "Be a man of faith and persevere in your mission. Even if you are not successful and have not been accepted; go on and do the will of God."



The divine service begins at Koforidua



The congregation waving goodbye to the Chief Apostle

South Germany / West Africa: Divine service with the District Apostle

On Sunday, January 13, 2019, our District Apostle conducted a divine service in Backnang (South Germany), which was transmitted to the District Apostle Area Europe and per live streaming to the District Apostle Area West Africa.

Bible text: **"Wisdom and knowledge will be the stability of your times, And the strength of salvation; The fear of the Lord is His treasure.."**
(Isaiah 33: 6)

Core thoughts: In the earthly sense there are prerequisites in order to achieve stability. An important one is peace. Further prerequisites include e.g. having reserves in various spheres of life, a strong society, or reliable promises made by third parties who also have the necessary means and possibilities to implement the promises.

These examples can be transferred to a spiritual level:

- Jesus Christ is the Prince of Peace. Only those who accept Him in His ambassadors and follow Him will be able to find true peace and thus stability (Matthew 10: 12-13).
- Reserves are resources which can be used when necessary or in emergencies. The Lord has "ways and means" to help and assist us whenever there is the need.
- The Holy Spirit brings about communion with God the Son and God the Father. There is no greater communion than with the triune God.
- We can read of the reliable promise for our future in John 14: 3. The means to implement this is to be found in God's omnipotence. No one can prevent Him from fulfilling this promise.

In this surety we look toward salvation in Jesus Christ (Acts 4: 12). Salvation means preservation and redemption. We can experience salvation today in Jesus Christ through communion with Him in word and sacrament. Salvation for the bride of Christ means entering into eternal fellowship with God upon Jesus Christ's return.

Wisdom in the divine sense is understanding the relationships in God's plan of salvation. One is wise if one acts in accordance with this knowledge and understanding (Psalm 111: 10; Psalm 119: 104).

This wealth (treasure) is preserved through the fear of God!

