

community

The New Apostolic Church around the world

02/2019/EN

A visit in Indonesia

Editorial

Don't give up on
the promise

Divine service

Rich in Christ

Church doctrine

The church of Christ

New Apostolic Church
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Don't give up on the promise!

Dear brothers and sisters,

God has given us a promise: He wants to bless us. Let us make every effort to recognise this blessing and share it with others. Don't give up on this promise.

God gives us what we need in order to obtain eternal salvation. He offers human beings the possibility to be with Him forever. This is His blessing: His wealth and, ultimately, eternal fellowship with Him.

God gives so that we can share with our neighbour. Let us share our spiritual riches with our neighbour already today, in the course of our lives, and then also later in the kingdom of God. It is our wish that human beings can come to God.

It is up to us to keep this promise and pass it on to our children and to our neighbour: "Trust in God, He will bless you!"

Dear brothers and sisters, it is also up to us that we recognise this blessing and share it. Please do not tire of trying to recognise this blessing and speaking about it with your neighbour!



NAC International

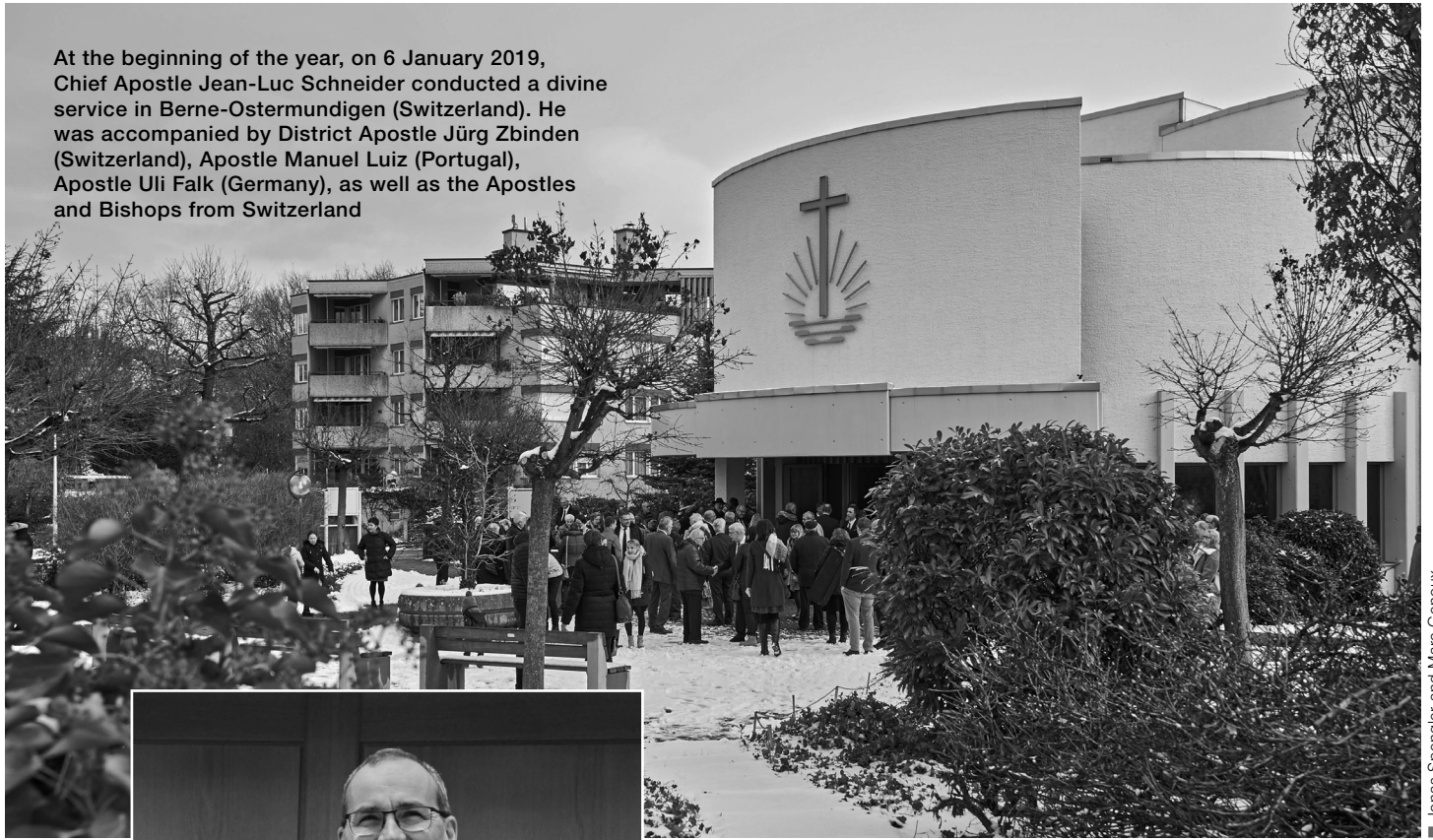
If we remain faithful to Jesus Christ, He will bless us and make us a source of blessing for others. It is my heartfelt wish that we pass His promise on to future generations.

Yours sincerely,

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

Jean-Luc Schneider

At the beginning of the year, on 6 January 2019, Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider conducted a divine service in Berne-Ostermundigen (Switzerland). He was accompanied by District Apostle Jürg Zbinden (Switzerland), Apostle Manuel Luiz (Portugal), Apostle Uli Falk (Germany), as well as the Apostles and Bishops from Switzerland



Jonas Spengler and Marc Genoux

Rich in Christ

1 Corinthians 1: 5–7

“... that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Dear brothers and sisters, it is a beautiful start when we can gather together right on the first Sunday of the year in order to praise and glorify the Lord, as the children have so nicely sung. In so doing we profess our faith in the almighty God. It does us good to begin the year in the knowledge and confidence that God is still the Almighty! Nothing will happen this year that could stand in the way of His plan of redemption in any way. He will see to it that the plan of salvation will continue to unfold and that nothing will hinder it. He is the God of love, and it is His plan to lead you and me—and many other people who so desire—into fellowship with Him. God is immeasurably rich in love and kindness. He desires to help all human beings. He desires to lead all human beings into fellowship with Himself. His glory far surpasses anything we could ever imagine. And because

God is so rich in His glory, so rich in love and kindness, He wants all of us to share in His wealth. That is His objective. He has created mankind in order to live in perfect fellowship with Him. And He will see to it that every human being will have the opportunity to share in His wealth. Only it is up to each individual human being to decide whether he or she wants this or not.

Our motto for the year is “Rich in Christ”. We want the wealth of God. Let us become rich in God. In order to become rich in God, in order to receive His wealth, He has established a way for us. There are not two hundred ways. There is only one way. This way is called Jesus Christ. The Son of God came to this earth and became a man. He made Himself equal to mankind in order to reveal who God actually is, how He is, what He intends, and how close He is. Through His sacrificial death and resurrection, He prepared the way for mankind to be able to enter into the kingdom of God: if you follow Me, you can become rich in God and attain this wealth. The wealth of God is comprised of divine kindness and divine wealth. However, it is up to us to decide: do we want to become rich?

Let us occupy ourselves with this year’s motto and how we can become rich in God? Of what does this wealth in Christ consist? How can we share this wealth?

It is my wish that this theme will flow into the sermons again and again—even if it is not explicitly written in the *Divine Service Guide*. It is to make its way into the sermon such that the congregations and the members may occupy themselves with it. The Holy Spirit will awaken many thoughts among the members, among the young people, among the children. And these thoughts will help reinforce the thought: “Yes indeed, I want to become rich in Christ!”

How can we become rich in Christ? The first condition is that we must believe in Christ! Without that it will not work. There is only one way to come to God. This one way is Jesus Christ, and we must believe in Him. Here Paul states that the testimony of Christ is to be confirmed within us—in other words, it is to become strong within us. We believe in Jesus Christ, in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, in His sacrificial death, and in His resurrection. We also believe in His promise: “I will come again and receive you to Myself” (John 14: 3). We believe in His teaching and in His gospel. This is the truth and the way to blessing! This is the way to come to God and to please God—we believe this! This faith is not merely something we “hold to be true”. The

Son of God has become Man, has died, and has resurrected. I am a Christian, which means I believe this! And I believe that the Son of God will come again at some point. I believe in the gospel and in the word of God. Simply holding something to be true will not make me rich. Even attending the divine services and doing so merely out of a kind of tradition—as a Christian one goes to church, and a New Apostolic Christian attends the New Apostolic Church—is not enough to make us rich. This testimony of Jesus Christ must be powerful. This means that our faith in Jesus Christ must become a true force within us. It must live within us. This faith should be the driving force that inspires us to think: “Yes indeed, we do want to go to Jesus Christ! We do indeed want to live in accordance with His will. We do indeed want to become as He is. Let us live in Jesus Christ. Let us be inspired by the fact that the Son of God became

Man for us, that He overcame death and the devil, that He is the first human being to enter into heaven in the resurrected body. Let us be inspired by His promise: “I will come again, and then you can be with Me

again!” Let us be inspired by the doctrine and the gospel. This testimony of Christ must be powerful in us, otherwise we cannot become rich in God. Let us see to it again and again that Jesus Christ becomes a power in our heart. Despite all that we experience, despite all that the world offers us, let us not forget: God has become Man. He has died for us. He is the first to have entered heaven. He will come again. That cannot help but inspire enthusiasm within us! It must burn within us!

Paul states that God became poor so that we could become rich. He became a poor human being just so that we could become rich! He has made Himself poor in order that we could become rich! What do we have to do in order to become rich in God? Jesus mentioned this right at the start of the Sermon on the Mount: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5: 3). That was the first element of His sermon at the time. To be poor in spirit does not mean that we need to be stupid! How then can we become poor in spirit? Those who are humble enough to be obedient are poor in spirit. They will not act in accordance with their own will, but rather in accordance with the will of God. For them, the commandments of God are the best thing there is. They will shape their lives by these commandments and remain obedient to God. For many people this is too much to ask. They allow themselves the luxury of deciding when the commandments apply or not, or when they might be helpful. On a spiritual level, however, such people are indeed poor. They cannot be bless-

*Let us serve God—each
of us in our place*



ed or become rich in God. The humble—the poor in spirit—will say: “God knows better—I will keep to the commandments, no matter what happens. This is the best way for me.” These are the poor in spirit. Let us therefore become poor in spirit, and let us humble ourselves in order to become rich.

Another aspect is: Jesus did not come so that we might serve Him. He came in order to serve us! He humbled Himself and served us. And in order to become rich, we must serve God. We must work. Jesus spoke a great deal about work: if we wish to become rich in God, we must serve, we must work, we must make an effort. There are many parables with messages to this effect: the parables of the talents, the labourers in the vineyard, and so on. Jesus often raised this subject. You cannot earn your salvation, but you must work, you must make an effort—otherwise you will not become rich. If we want to become rich this year, then we must work, we must accomplish something. Let us serve God—each one of us in our place.

The parable of the talents is very interesting. The master gave one of his servants five talents, the other two, and the other one. Why did he decide it that way? The one who had been given the five talents worked with them and came back with another five talents. The one who had been given two talents also worked with them, and came back with another two talents. The servant who had been given only one

talent simply buried it. He was lazy and did nothing with it. And in the end he received nothing! Those who came back with the ten talents and four talents received exactly the same reward. Thereby Jesus wanted to show us that it is not the result, but rather the effort that counts.

There are some congregations that are very large and very lively. They have a wonderful teaching structure, are thoroughly informed about everything, and are well educated in faith. They have a large choir. There is nice music there. The members have already been New Apostolic for three generations and have received a great deal. And the other brother was just sealed the day before yesterday, and belongs to a small congregation with four members. They have one Priest, who is not theologically trained and does not know his way around the Bible so well, but he gives his best. God is not expecting the same results here! From those whom He has given much, He also expects much.



From those whom He has given less—for whatever reason—He also expects less. However, He expects all of them to work intensively. Let us work intensively. Let us work on our salvation intensively. Let us serve the Lord intensively. This is our priority: our soul's salvation. Our service to the Lord is the priority of our lives. Those who are poor in this respect—and who serve in this manner—can indeed become rich in Jesus Christ.

How else can we become rich? There are many other possibilities. For example, no one can bless himself. That will not work. That is what it says in our Catechism and it is a Christian profession. In order to receive blessing, one needs the servants whom God has sent and called in order to impart blessing to us. These are the ordained ministers who conduct the divine services and dispense blessings. An example: there was a widow with two sons, and she had some heavy debts. Her husband had died and she was in a very difficult position. The prophet Elisha came to her and said, "I can help you. What do you have at home?" She told him that all she had was a jar of oil.

Service to the Lord: that is the highest priority of our lives

He answered, "Go to all your neighbours, and borrow all the vessels you can, and then go home and fill these vessels with your jar of oil." So she went to all her neighbours and borrowed all the vessels she could. And then she filled them up one after the other until they were all filled with oil and

there were no vessels left. Then she went and sold the oil and she and her son were able to live on what was left (2 Kings 4: 1–7). Had she been worried about whether her neighbour's vessels were clean, or had she decided that one or the other vessel didn't look so nice, she would

have had much less oil in the end. She even used vessels that did not belong to her house!

Dear brothers and sisters, we cannot always expect God to send us ministers who correspond exactly to our expectations. Let us accept all of those whom God gives us. The more we accept them, the more blessing we can receive. And in this manner we can become rich. Let us have a deep faith and let us be obedient. That is the way to become rich. Let us accept the ministers whom God sends us.



Let us also demonstrate our gratitude and trust in God by way of our offerings. This is also a topic that comes up again and again in the Bible. Those who are faithful in offering are rich. And the important thing here has nothing to do with the finances of the global Church! The important thing is that we bring our offerings as a sign of our gratitude and trust in God. Those who are poor in spirit know: “I have earned nothing! Everything I possess, I have received by grace. That is the grace of God! And for this I am thankful, and my offerings are an expression of my gratitude.” Those who are poor in spirit will say, “Dear Lord, I will give You Your portion and I know that you will take care of me. You will give me what I absolutely need.” Let us bring our offerings. This has nothing to do with money and finances. Our offerings are an expression of our gratitude toward God and our trust in God.

God has promised: those who offer will be blessed—because it is this attitude of heart that He blesses, not the money! What counts is the attitude of heart. Those who are poor in spirit will say, “Everything comes from You, and I am thankful for it. You are the one who provides for me, and I trust in You!”

Let us become rich in Christ. To this end, we must naturally also sanctify ourselves and let go of all things that do

not please God. The Lord Jesus said, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself” (Luke 9: 23). At times we have thoughts—which are not necessarily evil or wrong—but they are not consistent with Jesus Christ. This may have to do with certain attitudes of heart, traditions, or whatever else, but they simply are not consistent with the gospel. Let us not debate forever about what is right and wrong. Let us simply do without these things because they are not consistent with Jesus Christ. We cannot become rich by hanging on to them.

What does it mean to be rich in Christ anyway? One could list a number of things, but there is one thing that is very important, and Paul talks about it here: it is knowledge. We know what God has in mind. In this world people absolutely want to know what will happen in the future. What is in store for us? What is behind it? People spend all sorts of money to be informed. They spend money for newspapers, reports, and so on. We know what is happening: God continues to work on His plan. The end is eternal fellowship with God in the new creation. God will see to it that all human beings who desire to enter there will indeed enter. The near future is the return of the Lord. I know exactly what God has in mind with me. I do not know every street and every corner, but I do know the way and I do know where the journey will lead me. Those who truly believe in this are

rich. Naturally, we do not always rejoice over the fact that we must die, nor do we rejoice when someone dies. But we know where the path leads and what God plans to do. This is a great wealth which we often underestimate. We know that God has all things in His hand. Those who have such a strong faith, those who are poor in spirit, will indeed possess this wealth and this knowledge.

Another kind of wealth that is of inestimable value: we know that we are loved. Each one of us is unconditionally loved and is able to say, “I know that there is One who loves me, and that is my God—even if I at times do something wrong. He loves me all the same. He does not love me because He needs me. He does not love me out of any particular interest. He does not love me because I have done anything good or beautiful. He simply loves me as I am. He Himself is love. He cannot do otherwise. This is a kind of wealth which we at times underestimate. It could be a little more prominent in our hearts, this joy of knowing: I am loved, no matter what happens. And we have the best Advocate there is: Jesus Christ. He intercedes on our behalf again and again, and grants us His grace. He is the best Defender we have! Those who believe in Jesus Christ can always depend on this Defender. He will come and forgive us our debts.

We can rejoice that we belong to a congregation. We are not alone. Naturally, not everything in the congregation is perfect. The one congregation is big and the other is small. Some members are pleasant and others are not so pleasant. Some are like we are, and others are completely different. Let us be poor in spirit in the way we look at this: our congregation constitutes great wealth! We can pray for one another. Dear brothers and sisters, let us see the congregation with spiritually sanctified eyes. It is a community where all pray for one another, a community that manages to be one in Jesus Christ despite all its other differences. Often we do not realise how great this wealth really is. When you look around this wide world, whether here in Switzerland or in other countries, we see that people generally want to belong to some sort of group and enjoy some form of fellowship. We have been born into a congregation. That is a kind of wealth which we undervalue at times. We want to inherit the great wealth of fellowship with God, but already today, let us become richer and richer in Jesus Christ. We can do so by becoming poorer and poorer in spirit, by remaining humble, by being devoted to God, by serving Jesus, by remaining obedient, and by sanctifying ourselves.

Let us also share this wealth with our neighbour. We will not become any poorer in the process. We also possess the wealth of grace. Jesus Christ defends us. He forgives us.

What enormous wealth! And we can share it by forgiving our neighbour. People think that they will lose out if they do not get even, if they do not insist on their rights. But we know that we do not become any poorer by forgiving, on the contrary: we become even richer. Let us share the wealth of this grace with our fellow human beings. Let us share the gospel with our fellow human beings, and let us tell them, “You are also loved! We know where the path leads, and you are also part of this plan!” Let us also speak of the gospel and continue to spread its message: “God is love. He desires to save you! Everything that we possess we have received from God!”

We are thankful and give God our offerings. Every now and then God tells us that our neighbour is in distress. In other countries there are also people who are suffering from poverty. Let us reach into our pockets and give them something. Let us also share this kind of wealth! To be rich in Christ means that we are not dependent on money. A true Christian—a humble Christian—possesses inner peace. This peace is not dependent on possessions. The assurance that God will grant me everything that I need in order to enter into His kingdom is the most important thing of all to me. That also puts the importance of money and possessions into perspective. Then we are no longer plagued by greed and covetousness, as so many people are today. Those who are rich in Christ are liberated and no longer suffer from greed or envy. They are simply satisfied and content. Their inner happiness, their sense of equilibrium, is no longer dependent on their possessions, and for this reason they can also go around to others and help wherever it is needed. All of us could still stand to improve in this respect.

Dear brothers and sisters, those are some thoughts. “Rich in Christ”—that is to be our motto for this year. It is to occupy our hearts—and the Holy Spirit will also awaken many other beautiful thoughts on the subject.

CORE THOUGHTS

- God makes those who demonstrate faith and humbleness rich.
- We aspire to be rich in knowledge, love, grace, and peace.
- We share our wealth with our neighbour.



■ NAC Brazil

| God is not deaf

Curitiba is the capital and largest city in the Brazilian state of Paraná with a population of two million. Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider conducted a divine service there on 13 October 2018.

As soon as you hear the Bible text it becomes clear that nothing can prevent God from saving the faithful. He hears and answers prayers that are in accordance with His will, the Chief Apostle said. "It can happen that our prayers are not answered. It can happen that we ask God to change a situation, but He does not do it. Then it becomes a little bit more difficult for us to thank the Lord and we ask God why He did not help us." The Chief Apostle said, "Don't worry, God hears our prayers!"

The Chief Apostle penetrated deeply into the biblical text. Chapters 58 and 59 of Isaiah talk about rebellious Jews who accused God of abandoning them despite their devoutness and their prayers. In reality, however, they saw only their

own interests and abused their neighbour. God answered them that He does not approve of such an attitude.

God's thoughts are higher than our thoughts

God always has an ear for those who believe, the Chief Apostle explained. "There is no situation where God could not help." The Holy Spirit comforts us by reminding us of the love and omnipotence of God. God wants to save us and nothing can prevent Him from doing so. No situation is ever too complicated or the enemy too strong or the servants too weak and our sins too big that God could not help us!"



Some 250 sisters and brothers gathered together at the Radisson Convention Center to hear the Chief Apostle. He was accompanied by District Apostles Leonard Kolb, Enrique Minio, and Raúl Montes de Oca



However, God's help does not consist of putting an end to our suffering, the Chief Apostle continued. God's thoughts are higher than our thoughts. Instead, He wants to deliver us from evil for good and lead us into His kingdom. He sent His Son—that was the first help we received from God. The sacrifice of Jesus is valid for all human beings. God gave His commandments. They do not restrict our freedom, but protect us from evil, the Chief Apostle went on to say. God gave us His Apostles. Through their activity we can inherit the kingdom of God. "They have received the mission to prepare the bride of Christ. The bride is comprised of those souls who will be able to enter the kingdom of God much earlier." Sometimes, he continued, we forget how wonderfully God helps us.

And finally, God has also given us a congregation that helps us, the Chief Apostle said. "We are never alone. We have brothers and sisters who help and support us." That is help from God.

Why God does not answer all of our prayers

Even so, some of our prayers are not answered! Why not? Simply because they do not correspond with the will of God, the Chief Apostle said. After all, there are enough examples of prayers in the Bible which were not answered by God. God refuses to

- give us tangible proof of His existence, His activity, and His love: "Faith is indispensable if we want to be saved."

- punish those who reject Him: "Jesus wants to save them."
- do our work for us: "It is up to us to resolve our conflicts and reconcile ourselves with others."
- allow us to remain as we are: "To attain salvation we must let our old nature die."
- give us the exact point in time of Jesus' return.

"Let us bring our prayers into line with the will of God so that He can answer them."

CORE THOUGHTS

Isaiah 59: 1

"Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear."

God answers those prayers that correspond to His will.

Nothing can prevent God from saving the faithful.

| Not of this world, but in it

The large tent on the grounds of our church in Malaika (Tanzania) held over 2,500 worshippers on 10 August 2018. In the divine service he conducted there that day, Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider spoke about the evil in the world and the power to resist it.



■ NAC Tanzania



The verses comprising what is known as Jesus' intercessory prayer are recorded in the gospel of John. In this prayer, Jesus turns to His Father in heaven to pray for His followers and for the congregations that will yet come into being.

Avoiding evil

He began by asking, "What sort of evil confronts us today?" His answers to this question are surprising.

- Although we must look after our own needs, we must not do so with the help of the evil one: "Let us not resort to sin in order to acquire the things we need."
- Although we are exposed to suffering and death, they are not to affect our relationship with God. Let us not distance ourselves from God in disappointment.
- Although we are indeed free to pursue material success, our material well-being must never entice us to forget God.
- Although we love our family, it should never become more important to us than Jesus: "Family ties must never call into question our vow of faithfulness to Christ!"
- Although we are persecuted, let us nevertheless remain with the Lord.



The good news about this: “Those who cultivate their relationship with God in this manner will have the Lord on their side,” assured the Chief Apostle. After all, God hears the prayers of believers. He strengthens and protects them from the evil one—this is a firm commitment of faith.

Requesting the aid of God

How does this work? Following are some answers from the Chief Apostle.

- God Himself defines the limits of our trials, and makes sure that they never become too difficult.
- God teaches us the truth, and thus at the same time equips us with the ability to expose the lies of the evil one.
- God loves us and has poured out His love into us. We seek fellowship with Jesus, and serve Him. We deny the devil.
- Through the Holy Spirit, God reminds us of our calling: our mission is to profess Christ in this world and to proclaim His message.
- God does not abandon us. He sends us His servants to continually edify us and integrate us into the fellowship of the believers.

Jesus’ prayer is also to be our prayer!

“We suffer from sickness, death, and injustice, but we remain faithful. We have families and friends, but they are not to be more important to us than Jesus. We have success in our lives, but we do not forget our heavenly Father in the process. We are persecuted and led into temptation by the devil, but we ask God for help such that these temptations never become too difficult for us. He grants us truth, which we can use in order to expose the lies of the evil one. He imparts His love to us, with which we follow Him: not out of obedience, but out of love. He has given us a task and sends us His servants to support us.” It was with these few sentences that the Chief Apostle summarised his sermon. And he gave the congregation one more piece of advice: “Let us pray like Jesus, ‘Father, we do not ask that You should take us out of this world, but that You should keep us from the evil one.’ This plea will be granted!”



The Chief Apostle called on District Apostle John Kriel, District Apostle Helper Robert Nsamba (top, at left), and District Apostle Tshitshi Tshisekedi (above, at left) to assist

CORE THOUGHTS

John 17: 15

“I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.”

God expects us to live in the world without succumbing to the devil. He hears the prayers of the believers by strengthening them and protecting them from evil.

On the road to our eternal inheritance

Inheritance seeks heir: it is of immeasurable value and is incorruptible. Here is what applicants have to bring along and how they can benefit from it already now ... Thoughts from a divine service by the Chief Apostle in Brisbane (Australia) on 30 September 2018.



■ NAC Australia



Chief Apostle Schneider thanks District Apostle Andrew Andersen for his 30 years of service and dedication in the Apostle ministry

“We were reborn out of water and Spirit and have been given the wonderful promise that God will give us eternal life: a wonderful inheritance in heaven.”

Our inheritance is waiting for us

“I am definitely not a dreamer,” Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider said, “but from time to time it is worth thinking about what it means to be delivered from evil, to have a resurrection body, to be perfect, to conform to God’s will, to be in total harmony with God and with one another, and to have received this special mission to help everyone obtain salvation in Jesus Christ. I tell you, the more I think about it the more enthusiastic I am about it. That’s our future!”

“This inheritance already exists,” he said. Jesus Christ was the first human being to be clothed with the resurrection body, to receive the inheritance from His Father, and to enter into eternal glory. “God has prepared a big inheritance for you. It is there just waiting for you.” Until then, the Lord will watch over it and protect it.

An incorruptible inheritance

The inheritance is incorruptible. “This inheritance is as great as on the day Jesus accepted it. It has not changed since. Time has no effect on it. It is everlasting like the bliss we will experience on entering the kingdom of God.”

The inheritance is also indestructible, the Chief Apostle said. Evil will not be able to destroy this new fellowship



Chief Apostle Schneider appoints District Apostle Helper Peter Schulte as District Apostle for the Western Pacific district

between God and mankind, because Christ was victorious on the cross. “The inheritance cannot be defiled by the imperfections of the servants or the members of the church of Christ. It cannot be defiled by our own sins and weaknesses.” Its value does not depend on our own merit, but is determined by God’s grace.

Finally, the inheritance will not fade away and never diminish in value. It will always be more precious than anything life on earth can offer us. It will always be greater than all the sufferings we have to go through. And sharing it with others will by no means diminish its value for us.

And the heirs?

“This inheritance is reserved for those who believe in Jesus Christ and follow Him,” the Chief Apostle said. But God does not only preserve His inheritance, He also watches over His heirs. “God will use His power to save those who believe.”

Those who believe are guided by the living hope in eternal life. That makes it possible to persevere in misfortune and adversity. It also comforts when we are shaken by the suffering of others. And it encourages us to proclaim salvation to others and help them to obtain it.

Conclusion: “All we have to do is be willing to believe and fight and tell God: ‘I want to believe. Strengthen my faith.’”

CORE THOUGHTS

1 Peter 1: 3–5

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

The Holy Spirit reveals God’s nature to us, His plan of salvation, and God’s saving activity. He is preparing us for our future through word and sacrament.

JESUS HEALS A MAN AT THE POOL OF BETHESDA

JOHN 5: 1–18

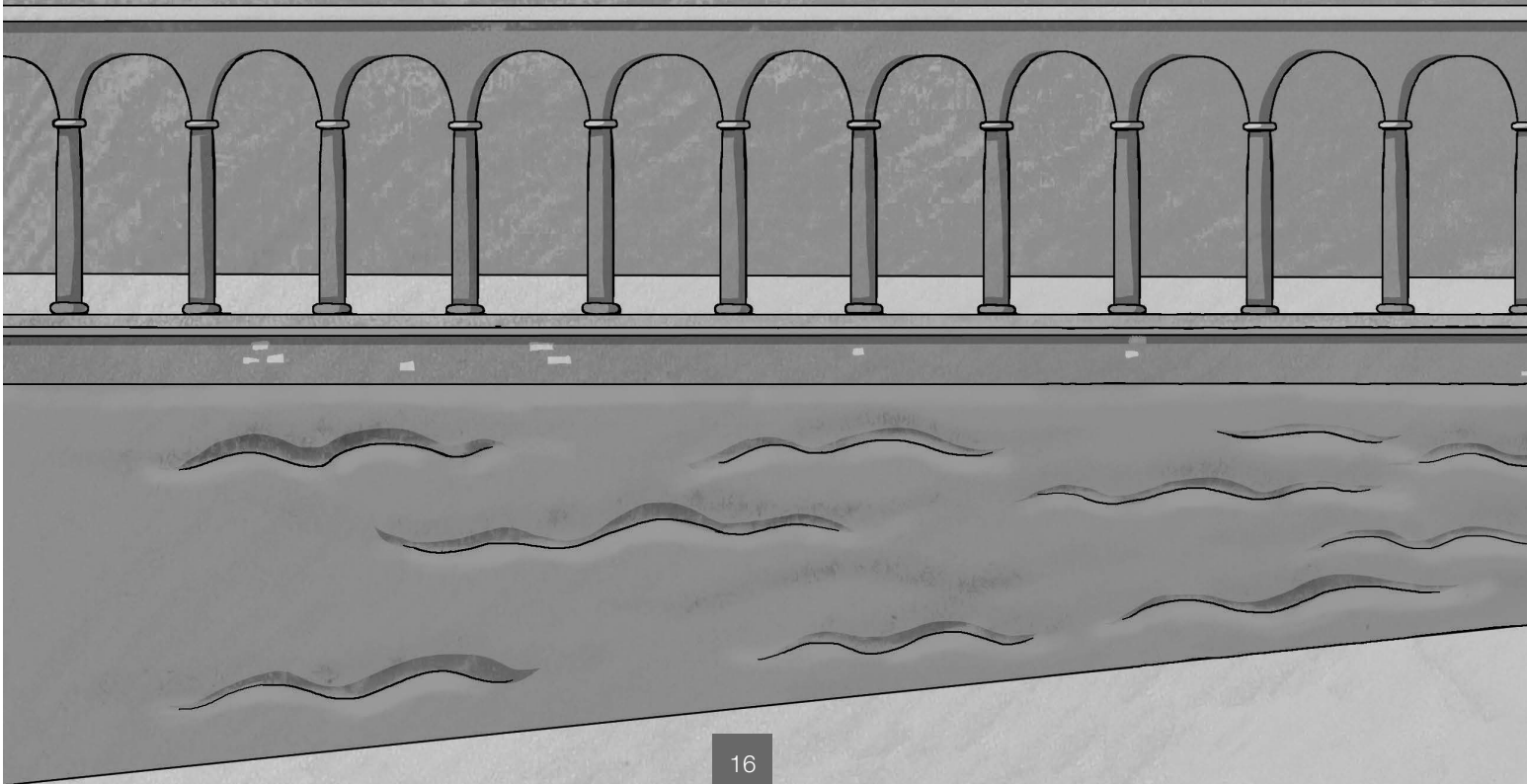
The Pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem was surrounded by five porches. And in these lay a large number of people with various physical ailments. They were either blind or lame or sick in some other way. They were all waiting for the water to be moved. Whoever stepped in first was healed.

Among the many people waiting there was a man who had been sick for 38 years. When Jesus saw the man lying there, He asked him, “Do you want to be made well?”

The man answered, “Sir, there is no one to help me get into the pool when the water starts moving. I try to be the first one, but someone else always goes in before I can.”

Jesus told him, “Rise, take up your bed and walk.”

The man got up. He was healed! He took his bed and walked.

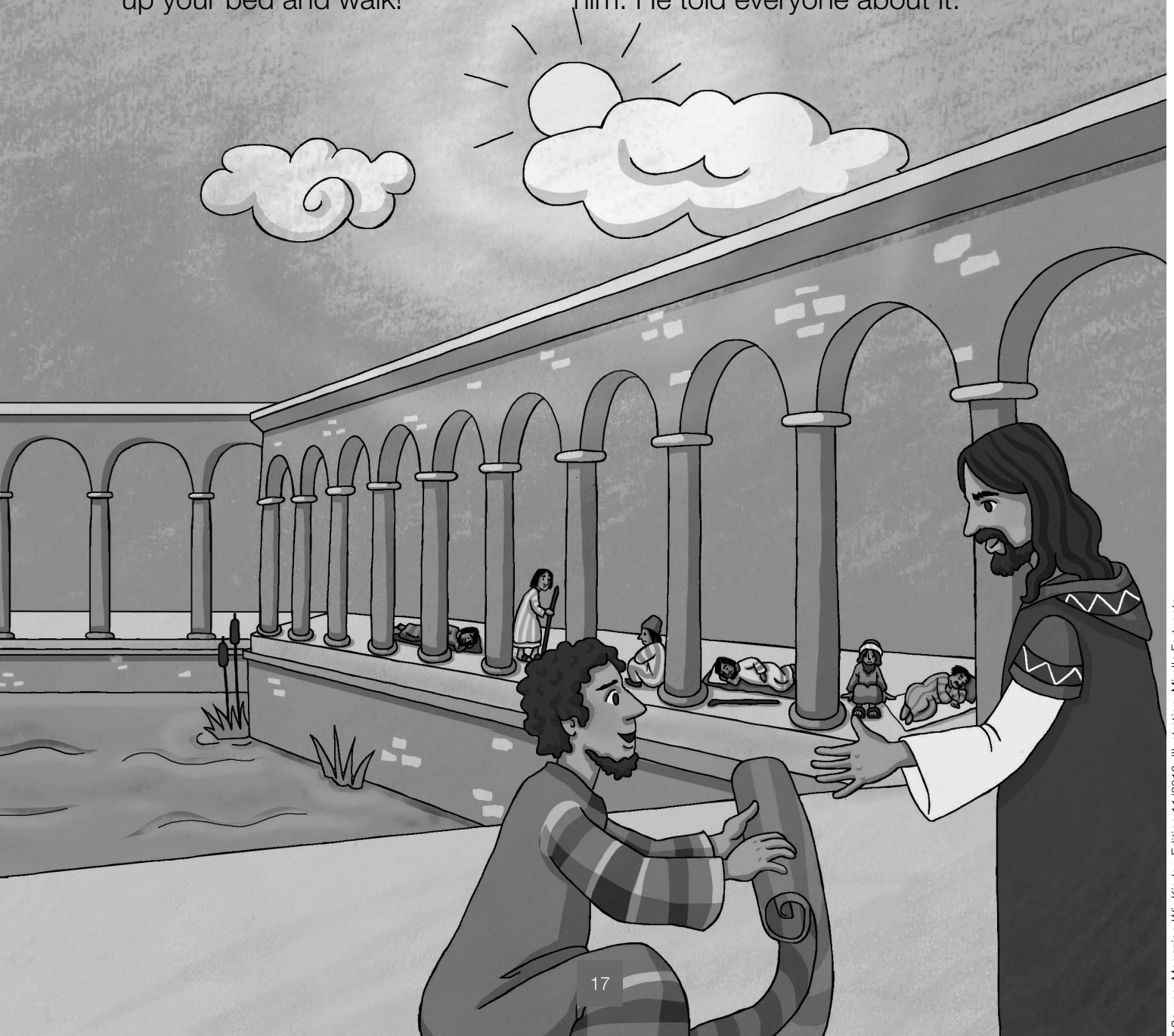


This all happened on the Sabbath. While he was walking away some of the people said to the man, "Hey you, today is the Sabbath. You should not be carrying your bed on the Sabbath."

The man replied, "The man who made me well said to me, 'Take up your bed and walk!'"

The people asked him who this man was, but he had no idea who it was.

Afterwards Jesus found the man in the temple. He said to him, "See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you." Then the man knew that it was Jesus who had healed him. He told everyone about it.

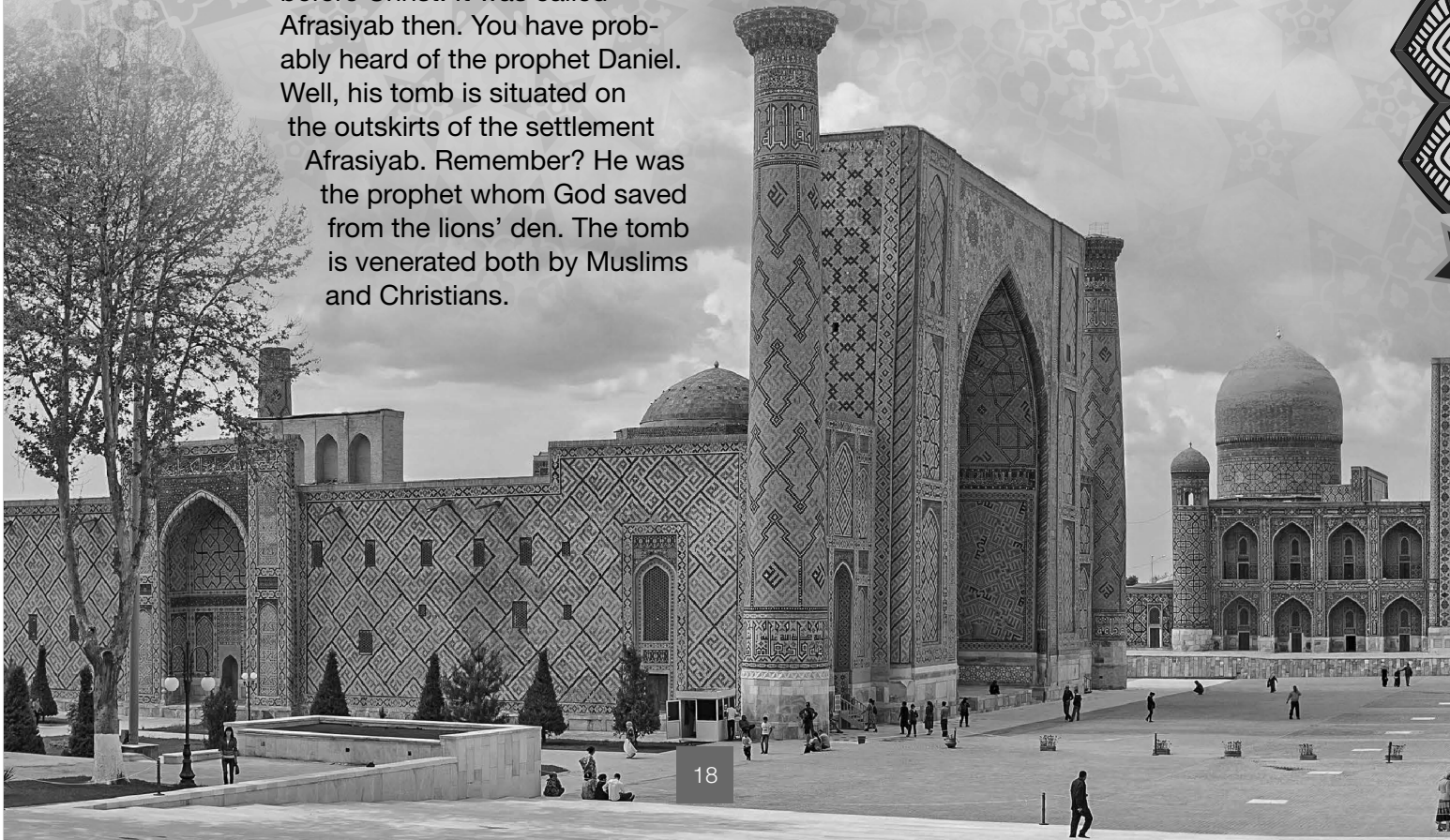


AT MATVEY'S IN TASHKENT (UZBEKISTAN)

Tashkent is the capital of Uzbekistan. It has a population of three million. This is where I live with my **family**. My name is Matvey. Uzbekistan is a country in Asia. For a long time, the country was part of the Soviet Union, but it has been independent since 1991.

We live in the church building. My father, Alexander, is a Priest in our congregation. My mother, Tatyana, and I sing in the choir. We like to sing. When we come home from school, Mama is there and looks after us. My sister, Sofia, is in grade seven. I am eight years old and have just finished grade two. And my little brother, Arseni, just finished grade one.

We live in Tashkent, but I was born in **Samarkand**. This city has a fascinating history, and I would like to tell you a little bit about it. Samarkand is one of the oldest cities in the world. It is thought to have been founded between the sixth and seventh centuries before Christ. It was called Afrasiyab then. You have probably heard of the prophet Daniel. Well, his tomb is situated on the outskirts of the settlement Afrasiyab. Remember? He was the prophet whom God saved from the lions' den. The tomb is venerated both by Muslims and Christians.



The national dish in Uzbekistan is called **plov**. It is a delicious stew with meat, rice, garlic, onions, and carrots. Each city has its own recipe for plov. On 8 September 2017, 50 chefs in Tashkent prepared the world's largest plov, which weighed 7,360 kilos and made it into *Guinness World Records* book. It took the chefs six hours to prepare the dish. They had to cook 1,500 kilos of beef, 400 kilos of mutton, 1,900 kilos of rice, and 2,700 kilos of carrots. At our last congregational festivity we had plov too. It was delicious!



Last Christmas each one of us children received a **rabbit** as a present. We often play with them. I also like making things with modelling clay, and I like to play with my friends.





Björn Henz

Ministries, gifts, and services in the church of Christ

The church of Christ, what exactly is that? Answers are given in the following treatise by the Chief Apostle.

Paul makes use of the image of the body in order to describe the church. The believers are members of the body of Christ. Each one of them has a different function. His use of this image is not intended to give a definition of the church, but simply to describe some of its aspects.

- Christ is the head of the body, namely of the church (Colossians 1: 18): the church stands in the service of Christ just as the body puts into action the decisions made in the head.
- The members of the body are all different: they may not all have the same function to perform (Romans 12: 4), however, they work together and serve one another.
- For the edification of the body, God has given individual gifts and services (Ephesians 4: 11–13; Romans 12: 6–8; 1 Corinthians 12: 4–11).

- The growth of the church as the body of Christ results from the will and actions of God (Colossians 2: 19).

The church of Christ is comprised of all those believers who belong to Christ through baptism, belief, and profession. This is something we can only grasp by faith.

At the time of Paul, the Christians were gathered around the Apostles. In those days there were not yet multiple church communities or denominations, nevertheless, Paul could not have known which Christians were really part of the church of Christ. Only God can see the sincerity of faith in each individual.

Today we are confronted with a great diversity of Christian churches. And here the church of Christ must not

be confused with these institutions or church communities. Among others, it consists of Catholic, New Apostolic, Protestant, and Orthodox Christians, yet it cannot be equated with the Catholic Church, New Apostolic Church, Protestant Church, or Orthodox Church, nor even with the sum total of all of these churches.

Ministries, gifts, and services in the early church

Jesus Christ equipped His church with the Apostle ministry. He chose the Apostles, authorised, blessed, and sanctified them, and entrusted them with the administration of the sacraments. It is through the Apostle ministry that believers have access to the fullness of salvation.

In addition to the Apostle ministry, God has also equipped the church with other gifts and spiritual services. The New Testament cites the following.

- Romans 12 mentions prophecy, teaching, exhortation, leading (the congregation), and mercy.
- In 1 Corinthians 12: 8–10 the gifts of wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, working miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, speaking in different kinds of tongues, and interpretation of tongues are mentioned. Thereafter (verse 28) the letter mentions Apostles, prophets, teachers, miracles, gifts of healings, helps, (congregational) administrations, and varieties of tongues.
- Ephesians 4 mentions apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers.

By grace, God dispenses all of these gifts, or charisms, upon those whom He has elected for a service in the church. Paul makes use of the image of the body in order to explain that not all have received the same gifts, but that each one is to put his particular gifts into the service of all. As members of the same body, the believers are called upon to demonstrate humbleness (Romans 12: 3), unity (Ephesians 4: 3), and solidarity (1 Corinthians 12: 26).

Having been commissioned by Jesus to edify the church, the Apostles of the early church ordained Deacons, who supported them in their work. Later they gave structure to the church by appointing local leaders (called elders or bishops) and prescribing how the various gifts were to be applied in the church (1 Corinthians 14; 1 Peter 4: 10).

Here it is of note that the letters of the Apostles clearly emphasise the imperfect nature of the church of Christ in its historical reality—because it was comprised of imperfect men and women.

Gifts and services in the church of Christ after the death of the Apostles

For centuries after the death of the Apostles of the early church, the apostolate was no longer personally occupied. For this reason it was no longer possible to

- ordain servants into a spiritual ministry, that is to say, sanctify, bless, and authorise them in the name of the triune God.
- dispense the gift of the Holy Spirit.
- obtain the fullness of the gifts and blessings during the celebration of Holy Communion—a fullness linked to receiving a wafer consecrated by an Apostle or a minister appointed by him.

Nevertheless, God continued to provide for the church of Christ. It was still possible for those who believed in Jesus Christ to be baptised with water and incorporated into the body of Christ. The Holy Spirit continued His activity of salvation by equipping the members of the church of Christ with the gifts required for the proclamation of the gospel, the deepening of knowledge, and the development of the church.

Faithful Christians used their gifts to serve Christ and His church: they proclaimed the gospel, taught and exhorted the believers, searched the Scriptures and thereby advanced knowledge, led and organised church communities, and helped those in need. During all this time, the church of Christ was able to continue in its historical manifestation because believers who had been baptised with water engaged the gifts they had received from God in service to the body of Christ.

On the other hand, the imperfections of the church members were also the root and cause of certain deficiencies, which is how the numerous divisions that so adversely affected Christendom are to be understood, for example.

Various members, various services

Not one member of the body of Christ is more important than the other. The only difference is that their tasks and functions vary. The Chief Apostle elaborates on the church of Christ and how it is revealed in the New Apostolic Church.

Since the renewed occupation of the Apostle ministry, those who have been baptised with water can once again receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. By partaking in the body and blood of Jesus, they have full access to the fellowship of life with the Son of God. Ministers can once again be authorised, blessed, and sanctified for service in the church.

Belief in the living Apostles of today and the gift of the Holy Spirit are gifts of grace that God grants those whom He has chosen for this purpose. His decision is beyond the

comprehension of our human intellect: “But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased” (1 Corinthians 12: 18).

Professing Christ in word and deed

The church of Christ consists both of those baptised with water and those who have been reborn out of water and the Spirit. All members of this body are called upon to profess their belief in Jesus Christ and proclaim the praises of God for that which He has done upon them (1 Peter 2: 9) in both word and deed. All are to bear with one another in love, and do their part to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4: 2–3).

The members of the body of Christ who have received the gift of the Holy Spirit are not “better” than the others. In staying with the image of the body, the eye is not “better” than the foot. They have been chosen to fulfil a special service: they are to announce the imminent return of the Lord, to testify of the activity of living Apostles, to give room to the Holy Spirit within themselves, to acquire divine virtues, and in this way prepare themselves for the return of Christ. Since God has poured out His love into their hearts through the gift of the Holy Spirit (Romans 5: 5), He expects them to exhibit His love to others in special measure.

Those who have been reborn out of water and the Spirit, and whom God has chosen to exercise a spiritual ministry—namely the Apostles and the ministers ordained by them—are



■ Marcel Feide

authorised by Jesus to proclaim the gospel, to prepare the believers for His return, to dispense the sacraments, and to proclaim forgiveness of sins.

Developing gifts and using them

God endows the church of Christ with the gifts it needs. He elects some members of the church from among those reborn of water and the Spirit, just as He elects some from among those baptised with water, in order to entrust them with special gifts, such as the gift of proclaiming the gospel, the gift of teaching, of knowledge, of wisdom, or of helping their neighbour. All members of the body of Christ are called upon to develop and use the gifts they have received—each one in accordance with the measure of faith God has given them (Romans 12: 3), in humbleness and gentleness.

The believers who belong to the church of Christ today are likewise imperfect, no matter what gifts have been entrusted to them, and no matter what function they exercise in the church. Their errors and mistakes are the reason for the deficiencies in the visible church of Christ.

Preparing for the return of Christ

Our understanding of the church of Christ also has implications for our relationship with other Christian churches.

The doctrine of the New Apostolic Church is based on interpretation of Holy Scripture in the light of the Holy Spirit. It is described in the Catechism of the New Apostolic Church. With regard to the church of Christ, we believe the following.

- God calls those whom He has chosen in order that they might receive the baptism of water and thereby be incorporated into the church (Ephesians 4: 1).
- All those baptised with water, who believe in Jesus Christ and profess Him, are part of the church of Christ.
- God entrusts spiritual gifts to the members of the church of Christ, and requires them to use them in service to God and His church.
- Throughout the entire history of Christendom, to this very day, Christians filled with faith and love for God have put the gifts they have received into the service of Christ, and thereby contributed to the development of the church of Christ and the progression of the plan of redemption in accordance with the divine will.
- The Apostles and the ministers ordained by them have been called and authorised by God in order to prepare the believers for the return of Jesus and to ensure that they may receive the fullness of salvation.
- Belief in the Apostles and the gift of the Holy Spirit are special gifts which God grants those members of the church of Christ whom He has chosen for this purpose.
- Believers who have received this gift are called upon by God to fulfil a special duty in the church of Christ.
- Although they have all been equipped with different gifts, all members of the body of Christ are nevertheless called upon to stand in solidarity with one another and overcome their differences in order to edify one another in the love of Christ.

Unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace

Let us develop our relationships with other Christians and other Christian churches upon this foundation.

We are filled with deep gratitude toward all Christians, in both the past and present, who have placed the gifts they have received from God into the service of Christ and His church. Here we are thinking especially of the gifts of proclaiming the gospel, of teaching, of knowledge, and of mercy.

As members of the body of Christ, it is the concern of all New Apostolic Christians to fulfil the mission they have in common with all other Christians, namely to profess belief in Jesus Christ and proclaim the praises of God in both word and deed (1 Peter 2: 9). They believe in their rebirth out of water and the Spirit. That is why it is their sacred duty to allow others to experience the love of Christ through them. Out of love for their neighbour they also proclaim the imminent return of the Lord and testify of the activity of living Apostles. In doing so, they show the due respect to those Christians who do not share their belief.

In conclusion I would like to give the following advice: let us craft our relationship with other Christians in accordance with the words of Apostle Paul: “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4: 1–3).

The numbers behind charity

Nearly four million euros went to one hundred projects in 24 countries: this what the 2017 annual report of NAK-karitativ states. The report was published recently and describes some of the fates behind the figures.



■ NAK-karitativ



“We are touched by the need that is found in many parts of the world,” is how the retired Chief Apostle Wilhelm Leber, the charity’s patron, describes the motivation for the ongoing commitment. “There are many ways to practise charity. This is where the Church’s relief organisations see their task.”

Where the funds went

The relief organisation of the New Apostolic Church in Germany cites six fields of activity in its annual report 2017.

The main focus with more than 1.7 million euros in expenditures was on food; that is, securing and developing people’s livelihood. A prime example is the production of tomato ketchup in Zambia, which not only provides work for six employees, but also supports 1,900 farmers and their families.

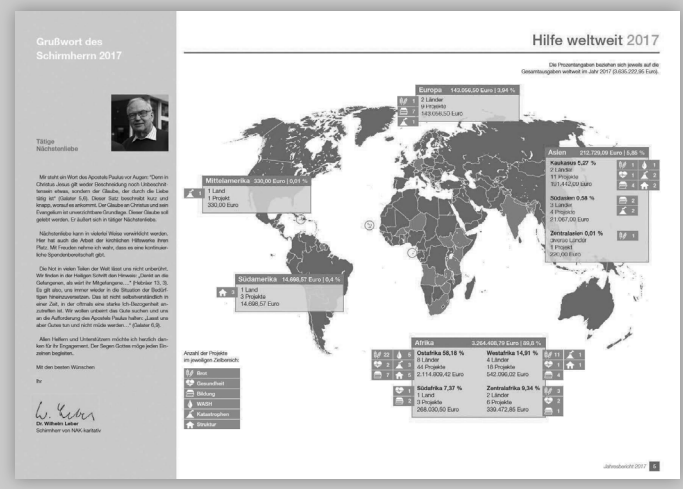
Well over 780,000 euros went towards education. The funds were mainly used for the building and expansion of schools, but also for vocational training for young people and continuing adult education.



The field called “structure” received nearly 490,000 euros. The model project here is the establishment of a waste disposal and recycling system in Banjul in Gambia.

Nak-karitativ also spent approximately 290,000 euros in emergency relief. This money was used to fight famine in East Africa and for emergency assistance and integration of refugees in Germany, Greece, Jordan, and Serbia.

More than 250,000 euros were allocated to health projects. Funds went to Coming Clean, a project in South Africa to fight drug addiction, for example. It is a joint project with



The annual report keeps donors and interested parties informed about the manifold activities of the relief organisation



Masakhe NPC, the aid organisation of the New Apostolic Church Southern Africa. This is not the only aid organisation that NAK-karitativ works with, however. It also works on joint projects with the aid organisations in Zambia (NACRO) and Kenya (KUMEA).

Nearly 90,000 euros went towards WASH, the field dedicated to improving water and sanitation management. The money went towards a bio centre project in Mukuru Slum in Kenya. Central toilet and shower facilities channel their wastewater into a biogas plant. The methane produced provides electricity for lighting and separate cooking areas.

Support on the credit side

The main focus for NAK-karitativ is Africa. Nearly 90 per cent of its expenditures go there. Well over 2.1 million euros went to East Africa, nearly 1.1 million were shared by West, Central, and Southern Africa. This is followed by Asia with a share of 5.8 per cent ahead of Europe with 3.9 per cent and the Americas with 0.4 per cent.



Over a ten-year average, 98 per cent of the projects are financed by donations. The largest amount is covered by individual donations, followed by sponsorships, long-term campaigns, as well as inheritances and estates. Subsidies are also reflected on the credit side.

“We at NAK-karitativ are proud and pleased about our many sponsors, supporters, and critics,” says managing director Jörg Leske in his foreword. They have managed to retain a differentiated perspective despite the current heated political discussion on the big issues of flight and migration.”



Left: The Chief Apostle retires District Apostle Andrew Andersen in Brisbane
Below: Retirement of District Apostle Urs Hebeisen in Manila



Changes in the circle of the Apostles

Nine Apostles were ordained by Chief Apostle Schneider in the second half of last year. He also appointed two new District Apostles. One Apostle passed away, seven Apostles and two District Apostles retired, and one Apostle was dismissed.

On 31 December 2018 there were 355 active Apostles. They are assisted by an additional 253,000 priestly and diaconal ministers in 59,000 congregations across the globe. Including the Chief Apostle, there are a total of 355 Apostles, of whom nine are District Apostle Helpers and sixteen District Apostles.

Ordinations and appointments

On Sunday, 22 July 2018 District Evangelist Kalenga Roger Kabengele (1965) was ordained an Apostle in Kindu (Democratic Republic of the Congo) by the Chief Apostle. More than 4,000 brothers and sisters attended the divine service.

Chief Apostle Schneider ordained four Apostles in a service in our Kinshasa-Limete church (Democratic Republic of the Congo) on 29 July 2018: these are André Mutanga

Sukadi (1964), Merlin Wamba Basolo (1960), and Kayembe Muteba (1966) for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Aldin Makoundi Bifiga (1978) for Congo-Brazzaville. The divine service was attended by 9,000 people, while many more in the country were able to watch a broadcast on national TV.

Bishop Oscar Sibota Kalumiana (1964) received the Apostle ministry for Zambia on Sunday, 12 August 2018. The Chief Apostle carried the ordination out in a divine service in Dar es Salaam (Tanzania).

On Sunday, 30 September 2018, Chief Apostle Schneider celebrated a divine service in Brisbane (Australia). He appointed District Apostle Helper Peter Schulte (1963) as District Apostle for the newly established District Apostle Area Western Pacific. Besides Australia, New Zealand,



The Chief Apostle retires the Apostles
Kum-Bading Handjamba and Sadisa
Kumala in Kinshasa

Papua New Guinea, and many islands in the Pacific, the congregations in China, South Korea, Hong Kong, Japan, and Taiwan now also belong to this district.

Bishop Samuel Handojo Tansahtikno (1971) was ordained into the Apostle ministry for the Philippines and District Evangelist Prem Mohan Ray (1970) for India. The Chief Apostle carried these ordinations out on 18 November 2018 in Manila in the Philippines. In the same service he appointed District Apostle Helper Edy Isnugroho (1963) District Apostle for South-East Asia.

Bishop Ralph Wittich (1960) received the Apostle ministry on Sunday, 23 December 2018. The Chief Apostle carried the ordination out in a divine service in Weimar (Germany)

Retirements and dismissal

After 21 years in the Apostle ministry, Benjamin Tshiamala (1953) was retired in a divine service on 21 July 2018 by Chief Apostle Schneider in Kindu (Democratic Republic of the Congo).

In a service on 29 July 2018 in Kinshasa-Limete (Democratic Republic of the Congo), the Chief Apostle placed the Apostles Kum-Bading Handjamba (1953) and Sadisa Kumala (1953) into retirement. For many years the two men had been responsible for numerous congregations, 240 and 350 respectively.

By commission of the Chief Apostle, District Apostle Charles S. Ndandula retired Apostle Stanley Munsaka (1953) in a divine service on 5 August 2018. He had been an Apostle for 26 years.

On Sunday, 12 August 2018, the Chief Apostle conducted a divine service in Dar es Salaam (Tanzania). In this service, which was broadcast on national television, Apostle Francis Charo Kazungu Kingura (1953) from Kenya went into retirement after 21 years as an Apostle.

Apostle Matthew Arendse (1958) had to retire early for health reasons. The Chief Apostle had commissioned District Apostle John L. Kriel to carry out the retirement, which took place in Strand Gustrouw (South Africa) on Sunday, 23 September 2018.

In the second half of 2018 two District Apostles retired. The first retirement was carried out by the Chief Apostle on 30 September 2018 in Brisbane (Australia). District Apostle Andrew H. Andersen (1951) retired after 30 years in the Apostle ministry, seventeen of which he served as a District Apostle.

On Sunday, 18 November 2018 the Chief Apostle conducted a divine service in Manila (Philippines) and placed District Apostle Urs Hebeisen (1952) into retirement after 36 years in the Apostle ministry, ten of which he served as a District Apostle.

On Monday, 19 November 2018 Chief Apostle Schneider dismissed Apostle Songseang Phat (1973). He had worked in Cambodia since 2015.

In a service on 23 December 2018 in Weimar (Germany), the Chief Apostle placed Apostle Rolf Wosnitzka (1953) into retirement.

Obituary

Apostle Zuhuke Hungito (1959) from Papua New Guinea passed away unexpectedly on 19 October 2018 at the age of 59. He was on his way to visit members in Madang province. The funeral was held by District Apostle Peter Schulte on 31 October 2018 in Lae (Papua New Guinea). Apostle Hungito served almost 30 years as a minister in the Church: twelve of these as a Bishop and seven as an Apostle. He is survived by his wife, Mary, and their six children. In a letter informing the Apostles of their fellow Apostle's death, Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider expressed his sincere sympathy to the Apostle's family and all those mourning his death. "May our heavenly Father grant them much comfort, strength, and confidence during this difficult time."

I Nearer my God to Thee

I AM is the name of the pop oratorio that will be staged in English for the first time at the International Youth Convention 2019. Originally a German composition, the lyrics were translated into English by Jeremy Dawson. Life has taught him: “God gives first and asks later.”

“I’m so happy to be part of something as big as the pop oratorio. The excitement of the young people is so inspiring,” the Priest from London (England) says. He did the translation within six weeks. “How that was possible in such a short time I can only explain with one word: Jesus. He was there.”

Jeremy was born into a New Apostolic family. When his mother took over the management of a retirement home in Ipswich in the east of England, the family of four moved into a flat in the complex. “My father was a Priest and conducted services in our living room. For me it was church. We were a congregation of four members.”

When a New Apostolic family from the USA moved to Ipswich, the services started to take place in a larger room

of the retirement home. The residents of the home became curious and some wanted to be baptised and sealed. “This special congregation contributed to my faith being strengthened.”

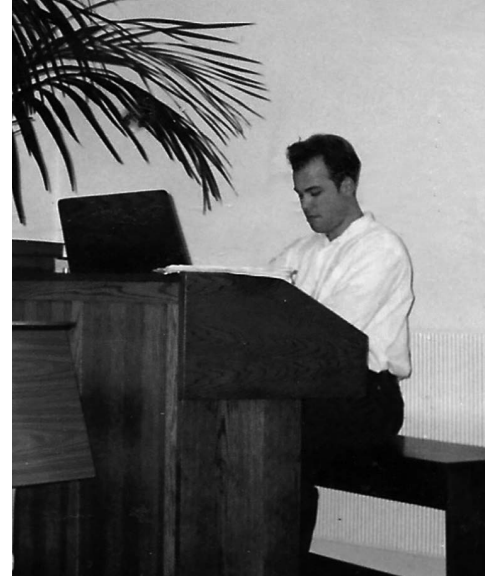
Trusting in God’s help

“There was an old piano in the home which nobody wanted any more. I needed two fingers to press the keys,” Jeremy says and smiles as he remembers. He was only six years old. “One day my father saw me at the piano and showed me which keys produce which sounds.”

Colin Dawson was a professional musician: he played the saxophone in the Band of the Grenadier Guards. In order to have more time with his family, he gave up his job and

Bottom: Jeremy Dawson at the keyboard during the performance of the German version of the pop oratorio in Leipzig (Germany) in June 2018
Right: Jeremy with his wife, Ruth, daughter, Alicia, and son, Tom





Colin Dawson, Jeremy's father, in uniform with his saxophone (top left). Jeremy with Chief Apostle Richard Fehr in London in 1990 (centre). Jeremy at the organ in Ilford in 1994 (right)

worked as a taxi driver. "I didn't know until much later that he had sold his saxophone so that we would have heating in the winter."

"When I was 14 years old, our District Evangelist asked me whether I could compose a song for the retirement of our District Elder," he says about his beginnings as a composer. "'Me?' I asked in astonishment. But I was convinced that God would help so I sat down at the piano that same day and wrote music to the District Elder's favourite psalm."

Two years later, Jeremy was again asked to compose something. This time it was to be two pieces for a divine service which the Chief Apostle was to conduct at the end of the year. "When Chief Apostle Richard Fehr heard that a young brother had composed the songs he did not know, he wanted to get to know me and called me to the altar," Jeremy says.

Put to the test

Jeremy began to study music in London when he was 18. "It felt good to be among so many young people. Student life in the capital was fun. There was lots going on," Jeremy remembers.

At the time, he was a member in the main congregation in London and served as a Deacon there. "There was a period when I wondered whether I should take a leave of absence in order to concentrate more on my studies. I prayed a lot and read the Bible and arrived at the conclusion that the ministry of Deacon brings joy and strong faith, so I wanted to hold on to it."

This did not change even when he was asked to help out in the very small congregation of Ilford: meaning an almost two-hour drive there and back twice a week. But Deacon Dawson did this gladly. He was firmly convinced: "God called me." He found a second home in the new congregation.

Inspired by faith and fellowship

Jeremy met his wife, Ruth—a native of Germany—about twenty years ago in London Central. When their children were born, she spoke German with them. And Jeremy used the opportunity to learn German together with his children. The course was set for the pop oratorio down the road.

Priest Dawson performs many tasks in the Church. As a religious instruction teacher and as the person responsible for the children in the district, he loves to make music with them. He plays the organ and piano, is a member on the music committee, and composes songs. "My faith, the services, and the fellowship with the brothers and sisters are my source of inspiration. Important for me is to bring people closer to God through music."

When looking back on some of the things he has experienced, Jeremy is firmly convinced: "When God needs somebody for a particular task, He always gives the means, tools, and the time so that one can master the given task. God gives first and asks later. He only demands from us what we can manage and what is good for us."

A globetrotter full of love and creativity

Urs Hebeisen was always on the go—across geographical, technical, and sometimes even mental barriers. As District Apostle he has left his mark on many people, congregations, and the international Church. The Chief Apostle retired him on 18 November 2018. The following is a tribute to a man with a heart of gold.



■ Keefe Setiabudi, Oliver Rütten

“I had invited Urs Hebeisen and his wife to dinner in a restaurant. Unfortunately, as the waiter was bringing our drinks he stumbled, spilling our drinks all over the District Apostle’s suit. I told the waiter off and asked him for the address of the restaurant so that I could send him the bill for the dry cleaning. The District Apostle told me that something like this could happen to anyone and that I should stop. The waiter should not lose face. The fact that his carelessness had brought on the whole situation was already punishment enough,” a long-time friend recalls as he describes the evening.

A cosmopolitan and a perfectionist emotionally

Pastor, family man, global player, humorist, perfectionist, patron, visionary, father figure ... and District Apostle. It

takes more than a few words to describe Urs Hebeisen. You have to get to know him and experience him. On Sunday, 18 November 2018 this cheerful and open-minded District Apostle from the Philippines went into retirement, bringing an era to an end.

Urs was born in 1952 in Eggwil/Basle in Switzerland. He was baptised and sealed by District Apostle Ernst Eschmann. In 1977 he married Lucienne. The couple have two sons. This is the family man, whose family is spread across three countries and lives in different cultures.

These circumstances have widened his perspective, his understanding already from a young age. In 1976 he emigrated to Japan, later he lived in Hong Kong. The Philippines have been his home for many years now. Urs Hebeisen lives in many cultures and moves easily between them.



“He has an incredible range of life experience. He is known for his Swiss precision, Canadian open-mindedness, and Asian friendliness,” a friend says. Another one adds, “Urs is Urs and true to himself; but not only to himself, also to God and the Chief Apostle. Urs always keeps a cool head, even in times of distress.”

Inspiring and impulsive

In 1975 Urs Hebeisen was ordained a Sub-Deacon in Switzerland, in 1978 he became Priest in Japan, and in 1982 he was ordained an Apostle. In 2009 he was ordained a District Apostle to lead the District Apostle Area South-East Asia, which was established at the time: 18 countries and more than 80,000 members in two thousand congregations.

District Apostle Hebeisen has attended 45 sessions of the International District Apostle Meeting. For many years, he was also a member of the Co-ordination Group—a body that advises the Chief Apostle—bringing his wisdom and expertise to bear, providing impulses, and taking others along. Discussions about apparent trifles could occasionally make him fly off the handle. One of his long-time companions smiles and gratefully remembers: “Urs could and can be very persistent, even when it comes to seemingly unimportant aspects.”

Communicative and kind

He spent much of his time travelling and serving the members in many countries. For the longest time, he spent two thirds of the year in hotels, always on the road, always close

to people. Whether in big churches or under a tree, for District Apostle Hebeisen it was the people who mattered.

He sometimes sought this closeness also across continents. Urs Hebeisen is a very communicative person, spontaneous, precise, on all channels. That was the case already in the past. In 1998 he sent a telefax to a German youth hostel. He had somehow heard about the gathering. It was a long letter in which the Apostle sent greetings from the Philippines to the youth group who had come together at the hostel for an activity, and wished them much blessing. He did not know any of them. Being in touch with people was and is important to him. “He is a good listener and an adviser with a sense of humour,” one of his companions confirms.

Demanding and encouraging

However, just talking isn’t his thing. He is a man of action. He is not a lone fighter who pushes things through, but a team player. And sometimes even a little more than that. “For me, District Apostle Hebeisen is like a father,” one of his staff says. “He always gives us the chance to develop. He never judges, but always supports.” However, there is no such thing as taking it easy around him. “Working with the District Apostle always means keeping an eye on the clock.” He pushes you to your limits with the aim of bringing out the best in you.

And when it is not about the individual then it is about the Church. In Chennai in India, for example, communion cups have been manufactured since 2013 in a small workshop and supplied to congregations in various parts of the world. This is called global sourcing, when there is cross-border co-operation between the various District Churches. On behalf of the New Apostolic Church International, the district of South-East Asia is in charge of the logistics. For Urs Hebeisen, who studied international freight logistics, this comes naturally to him.

Leave-taking and permanence

In November 2018, Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider and the District Apostles were together for their fall conference in Zurich (Switzerland). At the end of the meeting, the Chief Apostle said goodbye to District Apostle Urs Hebeisen on behalf of the District Apostles and wished him all the best. “May I ...,” the District Apostle asked and switched on his microphone. In a short personal address, he took a nostalgic look back on the many years of their work together and thanked the Chief Apostle and his fellow Apostles. After a short pause he bent over his microphone again and, looking into the ranks of the assembled District Apostles, said in a firm voice, “God bless you!”



THAT SAYS THE CATECHISM

What is the commandment to love one's neighbour?

"You shall love your neighbour as yourself" (Mark 12: 31; cf. Leviticus 19: 18).

Questions and Answers – Question 285

What does the commandment to love one's neighbour demand?

The commandment requires human beings to treat all other human beings with love. It sets clear limits to egoism.

In the parable of the Good Samaritan (cf. Luke 10: 25-37), Jesus illustrated that loving one's neighbour involves being merciful and acting accordingly.

Just how seriously Jesus meant these words can be inferred from His exhortation to even love one's enemies.).

Questions and Answers – Question 286



Bekwai Congregation pays a visit to Bekwai Government hospital after Easter Sunday service



Members of Obuasi choir at Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital (KATH)

DISTRICT APOSTLE MICHAEL EHRLICH:

Active charity!

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Included in the standards and requirements of the gospel is help provided in a selfless manner which we can refer to as "Active charity". We are all called to participate, beyond that covered by institutional assistance. In accordance with the parable of the Good Samaritan, anyone can be counted as our neighbour who is in need and whom we can support.

I wish to specifically express my thanks at this point that this also frequently takes place in our congregations, whereby members experience relief, support and practical help. In this manner we take account of the twofold law of love and fulfil that expressed in Matthew 25: 35-36.

With sincere greetings, yours

M. Ehrlich
Michael Ehrlich

GHANA:



Apostle Osei-Du presenting gifts to the authorities at the Kumasi Children's home.

On the 20th of April, 2019, many districts in Kumasi, Konongo and Sunyani Apostle areas made donations to children and hospitals on various visitations.

The Kumasi Central district visited the Kumasi Children's home and presented food items, toiletries and others to the authorities in charge of the home. It was led by Apostle Amos Osei-Du. Prior to that, Bekwai congregation which is also in the Kumasi Apostle Area visited Bekwai Government hospital and donated some items to the wards.

The Obuasi Choir in the Konongo Apostle Area also paid a visit to Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital (KATH) to visit a neighbour's child who had been admitted on the 21st April, 2019. Priest Ebenezer Akyirem met this distressed neighbour and very sick child by chance in public transport, who was en route to Komfo Anokye

Teaching Hospital, having been referred from another hospital in Obuasi. Their interaction over the 61 km journey endeared the Priest to visit later with the Obuasi choir to provide spiritual and brotherly support to the financially-stretched parent.

NIGERIA: Unconditional love

A newly sealed young brother, in the Central Church Lagos, received a call from the district elder, who asked him to visit a Priest in the Hospital. The young brother was pleased to offer assistance but he was a little scared because he had never visited an orthopedic Hospital. Besides, he had never met the Priest and the only thing they probably had in common was their faith.

Despite the proximity, the brother reported that this was his first time of paying a visit to the orthopedic hospital. The hospital was filled with overwhelming emotions some patients looked sad and in despair and although some were in critical conditions, the major cause for the sadness was because



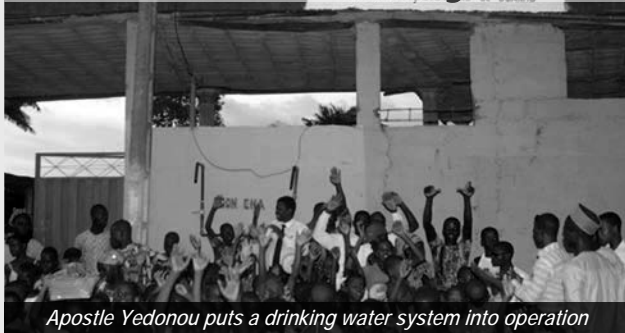
The recovering Priest was delighted to meet the brother

they had no one to show love or care for them. The recovering Priest and many other patients were delighted to meet the brother and even though they had never met before, they conversed like old friends. On his own, the brother decided to make further visitations to the Hospital because he saw that the priest had no one to take care of him. He was all alone in the Hospital.

The most important lesson the brother had learnt was the true meaning of charity. It isn't just about making donations. It is about showing heartfelt compassion, having fellowship with brothers and sisters, praying for one another and above all, showing unconditional love.

Benin:

Water for everyone



Apostle Yedonou puts a drinking water system into operation

In recent years, brothers and sisters in Southern Germany have supported the drinking water project in several villages in Benin. It is a charitable action whose beneficiary populations understand the value. Large areas, however, remain without water.



Thanks to the well drilling, people in Hounli get enough water.

Benin:

Children's joy



The children of Ouanho are happy about the gifted school equipment

The passage in Matthew 18: 1-6 is quite edifying about the value of children to our Lord. Jesus loves little children. We demonstrate this love in various ways. The children of the village of Ouanho were able to experience this love on the eve of the new school year.



Apostle Yedonou distributes the teaching materials to the children

SIERRA LEONE: Portable Drinking Water for Tissor

One of the first New Apostolic Schools established in Sierra Leone is the Karl Kuhnle Memorial High school. The enrolment is about 300 Junior and Senior secondary school pupils offering Science and Commerce.

The school and the Tissor community in Kenema presented the newly-constructed potable drinking water well to the visitors - Apostle Albert Garber, Apostle Thaimu Kargbo of Sierra Leone, Apostle Saa Marc Leno of Guinea, District Wolfgang



Presentation of Water well

Oehler of Germany and retired Apostle Robinson Musa Saidu. Parents, teachers, students and other invitees were present to grace the occasion. The pupils sang songs, performed plays dramatizing appreciation and challenges (especially accommodation), of the school, nice statements of gratefulness to God. It was a jubilant atmosphere as the children gathered round the water-well, pumping and drinking from it; that they will no longer suffer to fetch water from far places.

SIERRA LEONE: Milton Margai Hosts Youths

Saturday, 1st December 2018 was the long awaited date for youth of Western Area (rural and urban) of Freetown. The youths were determined to attend the youth service conducted by Leading Apostle Hans-Jürgen Bauer.

Just after the national cleaning exercise, 1st Saturday of every month from 6 a.m. to 12 p.m., the youths converged to the college Amphitheatre for the divine service.

The service started at 3 p.m. and the Lead Apostle, accompanied



The Goderich youth choir and orchestra with Lead Apostle

by Apostles, Bishops of West Africa 1 – Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire – read a text word out of John 15:14 – “You are My friends if you do whatever I command you”

Apostle Bauer and his entourage had a memorable service – interacting and taking many photos with the members after the service.

There were about 700 in attendance. The youths were amused with the brilliant musical

performance of the Goderich church choir.

NIGERIA: Come to the Throne of Grace

In the West of Nigeria, Apostle O. K. Nwanza travelled to Ibadan city, the Oyo state capital with Bishop Isaak Adelabu. On Saturday 2nd March, they attended a well-planned concert in memory of the departed. On Sunday the Apostle conducted

the divine service for the departed at Odo Ono congregation in Ibadan with an attendance of 226 members. For the divine service, he read a text word from



Apostle Nwanza with Sunday School children

the letters to the Hebrews 4:16, ‘Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need’. The Apostle implored the brethren to come to the throne of Grace with confidence by believing in



Choir during the concert

Jesus Christ as the redeemer of our souls. “Come to the throne of Grace with trust as our Lord Jesus Christ does not condemn us but understands us,” he concluded.

GHANA: 50th Anniversary Celebration



► The brothers and sisters of Bolgatanga also redecorated their church building.

◀ The brothers and sisters from the congregation of Sunyani have repainted their church for the 50th anniversary



► The Konongo Apostle Area members in an evangelical route march around the Adako-Jachie Township



▲ The Youth Choir of Konongo and the Youth Choir of Accra had an outstanding concert in Kononog for the 50th anniversary.

GHANA: The Golden Jubilee Walk

In the rich fellowship of joy and love, up on the mountainous township of Aburi (Eastern Region), more than 600 brothers and sisters from the Accra Apostle Area



Participants warming-up at the starting point

continued the golden jubilee celebrations of the church in Ghana with a 6.0 kilometre health and evangelical walk. Members and ministers from the Accra East and West Districts as well as the Aburi District took part in this event.



Members enjoying the jubilee walk

As part of the activities, District Elder Adjei (Accra East) led prayers of thanksgiving, adoration and supplication to God on the topics of:

- The 50th anniversary and its celebrations
- The growth and sustenance of the church
- The strengthening and uplifting of the faith of members
- The provision of the physical needs of members

GHANA: Positive Effects of Team Work

A cross-section of 120 members of the Sunday School, Youth and Women's Groups "retired" to renovate the Kpotame congregational chapel and refresh its surroundings on November 26, 2018. The "Painter's Day" was one of the events that preceded the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the New



The Rector on a ladder with the Sunday School children joyfully involved

Apostolic Church in Ghana on January 27, 2019. The beautification exercise included painting, planting flowers and trees, and demarcating the property to mark the parking lot and location of future projects.



First coat of paint being applied to the interior walls of Kpotame congregation chapel

Members achieved this through teamwork and guidance from experts.

Nigeria: Divine service with the District Apostle

On Sunday the 24th of March 2019, District Apostle Michael Ehrich accompanied by Lead Apostles Volker Kuhnle and Nwogu, together with all Nigerian Apostles and Bishops celebrated a festive divine service at the Abuja Central Church.

Bible text: **"However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come"**
(John 16: 13)

Core thoughts: This text comes from the final moments of Jesus with the disciples (John 13-17). The disciples were saddened because they now realized that the Lord would leave them in the near future. The Lord comforted them with that word and opened their eyes to a common future. In that time, the disciples will not be on their own, but God's Spirit will be with them and guide them "in all truth". After the ascension of Christ, the miracle of Pentecost happened (Acts 2) and the power of the Holy Spirit unfolded in many ways. Let us look at some of the effects of the Holy Spirit and ask ourselves if we perceive the workings of the Spirit in us as well: the Holy Spirit:

- Reveals the thoughts of God to us: Does the Holy Spirit reveal God's thought to me, can I leave my thoughts behind and go with thoughts of God revealed in the Divine Service?
- Leads us in the right way: "Do I accept His leading or not. For as many as are led by the Holy Spirit of God, these are sons of God.
- Gives talents: Let us serve God with the talents He has given us, then He will lead us well.
- Initiates the union between the Spirit and the Bride: The Spirit always invites us. Do we also say to the Holy Spirit "come into my life?" This is a sign of the bride of Christ.

Two district ministers were retired while one district elder was assigned to lead the district. The service ended on the high note of a Silver Jubilee marriage blessing of the Lead Apostle Geoffrey Nwogu and Sister Augustina Nwogu.

