

community

The New Apostolic Church around the world

03/2022/EN



Fellowship with and in Christ

Editorial

Chosen to serve

Divine service

Fellowship with and in
Christ

Doctrine

Between euthanasia and
palliative care

New Apostolic Church
International



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Chosen to serve

My dear brothers and sisters,

The topic of election is something that has really been on my mind. We are still inclined to think that we have been elected only to be saved at the end of time. God has chosen us, we will be saved and all the others not.

But things are not that simple. Let's take a simple example. We all know brothers and sisters, even family members, who are no longer interested in God, who no longer attend divine services, who no longer have a relationship with God. Do we really want to suggest that they are not chosen, that they will be lost? Anyone with a spark of love in their heart for their neighbour cannot think like that. That just cannot be our understanding of election.

But then what exactly is election? Election means you have been called to serve. You have been chosen to serve the Lord and to help so that His salvation can be proclaimed to all people. This is election. It may perhaps sound a little less easy-going and convenient, but it can be reconciled with love of neighbour.



NAC International

You have not been chosen to be saved while everyone else will be lost. You have been called to serve the Lord and humankind. This is what election means: chosen to serve!

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized 'J' and 'L' followed by a horizontal line and a vertical line crossing it.

Jean-Luc Schneider

Fellowship with and in Christ



Some 230 members attended the divine service in Calgary, Alberta, Canada in person, while another 13,500 across North America were connected via the internet

NAC Canada



1 John 1: 3

That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

My dear brothers and sisters, I think that many of us are very grateful to our heavenly Father that He made it possible to celebrate and experience this divine service here together in Calgary and that so many brothers and sisters in North America can be connected with us. We are thankful to our heavenly Father that He has answered our prayers and we can be together to receive the message of God transmitted by the Holy Spirit.

The first message of the Holy Spirit is that none of us are forgotten by God. I want to address this message especially to those who are going through hardships and afflictions. There are many of them. Right now, everything is about Covid. But at the same time, life goes on. Many brothers and sisters have to live with illnesses, others are mourning, still others have problems in their job or the family or as a

couple. Others have financial issues. Maybe one thinks, OK now that is forgotten because it is all about Covid. No one is forgotten by God. He knows your thoughts, He knows your problem, He shares your pain. Trust Him. He will help.

I would like to address this same message to those on the brighter side of life, those who experience many beautiful things, who are happy, who experience the blessing and presence of God. Maybe they feel ashamed that they have no problems. Do not be ashamed. Jesus shares your joy. Thank Him in an appropriate manner and enjoy the blessing God has granted you. No one is forgotten by our heavenly Father.

Even in this difficult, very special period, nothing has changed for us when it comes to our priority, the most important aspect of our lives. We want to be prepared for the return of Christ. That is why we are here today. That is why we believe in Christ. We want to have eternal fellowship with God. We want to take part in the fellowship of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We want to be together with Christ in His kingdom forever. That is the *raison d'être*, the meaning of the Christian faith. This has nothing to do with being happy on earth, being successful, having no problems, becoming rich, or whatever. A Christian has this strong desire to have eternal fellowship with Christ. Otherwise, Christ would have died for no reason. We want to have fellowship with God in His kingdom. We want to take part in the fellowship of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. That is why we have this motto “Together in Christ”. That is the next step in His plan of salvation.

Here the writer of the epistle of John says, if you want to have fellowship with God you need to have fellowship with the Apostles. There is a reason for that. At the time, this is a few decades into the early Christian church, there were different conceptions of the person and nature of Jesus Christ. Some had this conception and others another one. The leaders of the church realised that this cannot be. That is why the writer says here in this letter: if you want to have fellowship with Christ you must have fellowship with the apostolate; you have to believe in the doctrine of the Apostles; you have to believe in the testimony of those who saw and heard Jesus Christ when He was on earth.

So we are not talking about the doctrine of the New Apostolic Apostles here. We are talking about the teaching of the Apostles at the time of the Bible. We are talking about the testimony of those who saw and heard Jesus Christ while

He was on earth, those who were commissioned and sent to teach others what Jesus had told them. You cannot have communion with Christ if you do not believe in the doctrine, in the testimony of the Apostles as described in the New Testament.

Jesus Christ warned that there would be many who would say, “Look, here is the Christ!” or, “Look, He is there!” He even said that there would be people who would say that they were sent by Christ. They would perform great miracles, would prophesy in the name of Christ, would cast out demons, and would be very successful. Jesus urged caution because not all of them would really be sent by Him (Mark 13: 21–23; Matthew 7: 22–23).

It is not the business of the New Apostolic Church to categorise the different churches and say which one is a good church or a bad church. That is not our business.

None of us are forgotten by God

The mission of the apostolate today is to proclaim the teaching of Jesus Christ as recorded by the Apostles in Holy Scripture. Everyone can do and preach what they want, but our mission is to prepare ourselves so that we can enter into the kingdom

of God and have fellowship with Jesus Christ. For that we have to believe in the doctrine of the Apostles, the testimony of those who were together with Christ on earth. What did they say? What did they report? What did Jesus say about Himself? Let me cite some points.

The first point: Jesus said that the Scriptures—for us today that means the Old Testament—testify of Him (John 5: 39; Luke 24: 44). In the eyes of Jesus, the Old Testament announced His coming. That means it is part of the Apostles’ doctrine that the Old Testament must be understood and interpreted starting from Jesus Christ. What is relevant for our salvation in the Old Testament is what is related to Jesus Christ. We cannot simply take a phrase out of an Old Testament passage and say: “This is for us today.” What in the Old Testament is relevant for us, for our salvation, must be understood in the light of the gospel on the basis of the words and deeds of Jesus Christ. This is very important.

Jesus Christ also said that He had not come, that He had not been sent by His Father, to punish the sinners. Quite to the contrary, He was sent to save the sinners. John the Baptist misunderstood this, as did the disciples. They thought they had to punish. Remember Peter? He struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear when they came and wanted to arrest Jesus. Jesus was opposed to this (Luke 22: 49–51). Another time, the disciples wanted to command

A choir sang to the delight of the congregation



fire to come down from heaven to punish the sinners. Jesus rebuked them (Luke 9: 51–56). He had not come to punish sinners, but to save them. The doctrine of the Apostles tells us that no one has been sent by Jesus Christ to punish sinners in His name. No one can claim that for himself. Jesus Christ is the Saviour. Of course, society has to establish rules and punish criminals. Jesus was not against this. He respected the social rules of His time. But that is society. But no one can punish anyone in the name and on behalf of Jesus Christ. This does not correspond to the doctrine of Jesus Christ. No one can claim to have been sent by Jesus to punish another person.

Jesus also said: “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18: 36). He wanted to say, I did not come on earth to solve all your problems. The Jews were disappointed because they expected that He would deliver them from the Romans, that He would solve all their problems, that the poor would become rich, and the sick would be cured. Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world.” He had not come to solve all their problems. He had not come to rule the country. He did not want to become their king and establish His kingdom. His kingdom was not of this world. He was not there to establish a new catalogue of sins and rules. All He said was, “You shall love the Lord your God...and your neighbour as yourself” (Luke 10: 27).

Jesus defeated evil and wants to share His victory with us

He did not agree with the Pharisees’ long list of rules and laws. Jesus had not come to rule the world. The gospel is not a list of proposals to solve man’s earthly problems. If we have problems, it is because the world is under the dominion of evil. No one can solve this problem. There is only one

Saviour, and that is Jesus Christ. He wants to solve this problem by delivering us from the evil one. He wants to lead us into His kingdom, and later on into the new creation where there will be no more room for evil, where there will be no more suffering and no more death. This is the

solution proposed by Jesus Christ. He tells us what we must do to be saved and enter His kingdom, where evil will no longer exist. This is the teaching of Jesus Christ.

The doctrine of Jesus Christ tells us that the Son of God came on earth, became true man as we are, a human being, and, as a true human being, He defeated evil and death. Thus He received a great merit that no one else can receive because He did what no other human being can do. He defeated evil and death one hundred per cent (Philippians 2: 5–8). And He wants to share His merit with us. He wants to share His victory with us because He knows that we cannot do it alone. He wants us to benefit from His merit, from His victory. All we have to do is believe in Him, trust in Him, and share His love, His feelings, and His trust in God. Paul added that we must share in His suffering (Philippians



3: 10). Jesus did not come to earth to deliver us from all our problems. He wants us to remain steadfast and faithful in trials. Again, He did not come to deliver us from all suffering, but He wants us to participate in His sufferings.

That means when we suffer we are to suffer as He did. Even in trials we are to love God, trust Him, and remain obedient and faithful until the end. This is the fellowship of His sufferings. Again, this is the teaching of Jesus Christ.

The last point I wanted to mention is this: He said what we must do to enter His kingdom. And this is not an invention of the New Apostolic Church. He said one must be reborn out of water and the Holy Spirit, otherwise one cannot enter the kingdom of God (John 3: 3). That makes sense. You have to receive the life of God to be able to have fellowship with God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. He also added that whoever wants to obtain eternal life must eat His flesh and drink His blood (John 6: 54–56). We must celebrate Holy Communion. Whoever wants to obtain eternal life must receive the sacraments. Dear brothers and sisters, that is a short summary of the Apostles' doctrine. The Old Testament is relevant when it relates to the teachings of Jesus Christ and we understand it on the basis of His sayings and actions. Jesus Christ did not come to punish, but to save. He did not come to solve all the problems and to rule today's society. He came to deliver us from evil and to lead us into His kingdom. He defeated evil for us and He wants to share His victory with us. All we have to do is to trust in Him, to share His love, to believe in Him, and

to remain faithful to Him even in suffering; and we must receive the sacraments.

In the first epistle of John it says further that if we want to have fellowship with Jesus Christ and the Father we must have fellowship with one another. You cannot have fellowship with God, you cannot love God, if you do not love each other. That is inextricably linked. If we want to be together with Christ we have to be together in Christ. Jesus explained that very clearly. He showed His solidarity with the believers when He said: "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me" (Matthew 25: 40).

To have fellowship with Jesus Christ we have to share His feelings, His thoughts. Remember, the Son of God—He is God—lived in the glory of God in heaven where everything is perfect, holy, and wonderful. He left this glory to come on earth and to share the conditions of human beings. He shared their joy, their sufferings, and their life. He even accepted death, because human beings must also die. He left His glory to show His solidarity and to be as we are on earth—human beings—in order to save us. If we carry this love of Christ in our hearts, what happens? Then we also have a feeling for the condition of our neighbour and we will be prepared to leave our comfort zone and help when we see that our neighbour is suffering and needs help. This is not that comfortable. It is easier to ignore those who are suffering.

It often seems that suffering is contagious because as soon as someone is unhappy others do their best to avoid him or her. But it is not contagious! Let us leave our comfort zone to stand by our neighbour and share his pain, his suffering, and to comfort him and help him. The great prayer of Jesus for His own was: Father let them be one as You and I are one (John 17: 20–21). Jesus knew that it was not possible to have fellowship with the Father and the Son if you did not have fellowship with one another in the circle of His disciples. Let them be one. He exhorted them to help one another: "Whatever you do for him, you have done for Me." So, again, if we want to be together with Christ, we have to be together in Christ. We have to have fellowship with one another.

To help us do that and make it possible for us to have fellowship with God and with one another, God has sent His Apostles. Through the apostolate we receive everything we need to have fellowship with God and with one another. It is not about the person, but about the ministry! The first thing that helps us to become one is the teaching of the Apostles. And I am not talking about the Apostles who are

alive today. I am so thankful that we have this one doctrine in the New Apostolic Church. We have one faith, one creed, one catechism. How sad it would be if before listening to an Apostle we would have to check which side he is on or which interpretation of Scripture and the gospel he follows. It is so easy in our Church. One creed, one doctrine, one Master, one catechism, one definition, one goal. If we are one with the Apostles' teaching, it is easy to be united. If every preacher and every believer were to have his own interpretation of Scripture, unity would be impossible. I tell you, where the Holy Spirit is at work, He works for unity.

Through the Apostles we also receive forgiveness of sins. When the Apostle or the Priest commissioned by him proclaims, "Your sins are forgiven," we can be sure of Jesus' grace. Without forgiveness we could not have fellowship with God. As sinners we cannot have fellowship with God, we cannot enter His kingdom. We need to be cleansed through the forgiveness of our sins.

Through the Apostles we receive the sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Sealing and thus we receive the life of God. How could we have fellowship with God if we did not carry divine life within us? We need to become a new creation and this new creation in Jesus Christ—and only this one—is able to enter the kingdom of God. We need to become a new creation in order to have eternal fellowship with God and this is dispensed by the Apostles sent by Jesus Christ: "Baptize them!" (Matthew 28: 19). Through the Apostles we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The last point. There where the Holy Spirit is at work through the apostolate, we can celebrate Holy Communion and receive what is needed for salvation, namely the body and the blood of Jesus Christ. Remember, Jesus said, "If you do not eat My flesh and drink My blood you cannot have eternal life." Through the apostolate we receive the body and blood of Jesus Christ. When the congregation celebrates Holy Communion the body and blood of Jesus is present. That means that Jesus is not only present as a spirit or we only remember or think about Him. No, He is truly present in flesh and blood. It is not just an idea, it is not just a concept, or some kind of inspiration. When we celebrate Holy Communion in the circle of the Apostles, we can be sure that Jesus is present at that very moment in flesh and blood. He is really there, He is with us, He is at our side. We can experience that. He is no longer in the realm of the departed, He is the Living One and He is here.

What happens when He is present? What happened when Jesus was with His disciples? He did not allow them to judge others. He said, "Do not do that. That is My task. It

is not your task." He did not allow them to argue with each other. Many problems were solved simply because Jesus was there. When we celebrate Holy Communion, Jesus is there. Through Him, through His flesh and blood, we receive His nature. He nourishes the new creation within us, and we can grow and develop and be ready to enter the kingdom of God.

Holy Communion also helps us to be together in Christ, to have fellowship with one another in Christ. The Bible says that we are one bread and one body because we partake of that one bread (1 Corinthians 10: 17). When we receive Holy Communion, we can see that we all receive the same bread. This bread is, on one side, the word, the teaching of Jesus Christ, and on the other side, the body and blood of Jesus. And we all receive the same. The whole congregation can see that every child of God, every believer, receives the same teaching and the same sacrament—and that it produces a notable effect in everyone, regardless of the person and the situation in which they find themselves. Indeed, the situation of the members in the congregation can be very different, but when we celebrate Holy Communion, we can see that there is one bread. The goal is the same for all. We all have to follow the same path and believe in it.

It strikes me that we live in a time in which more and more people seem to cultivate their differences to show: "No, I am not like you. You have to respect me. I am different." That is fine. We have to accept the otherness of our neighbour. That goes without saying. And we accept the otherness of our neighbour. But it should not be our goal to emphasise and insist on our differences. One bread! We are one body! Let us rather emphasise what we have in common in Christ. Our differences are not important. What is important is that the solution is the same for all of us. The path we must follow is the same for all of us. So please, let us stop cultivating our differences. Yes, we do respect the otherness of our neighbour, but let us please focus on what we have in common.

When Jesus instituted Holy Communion, He first gave His disciples some bread. Then He took a cup of wine and gave it to them and said, "Drink from it, all of you" (Matthew 26: 27). There was one cup so that the first disciples had to pass the cup with the wine to the second one, the second one to the third one, and so on. The cup was passed around the table. Jesus said, "For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26: 28). That is a nice image. This cup with the wine, the blood of Jesus, being passed from one disciple to the next, can be compared to blood circulating in the body. One blood, one body. For practical reasons, we



Chief Apostle Schneider ordained four new Apostles for the USA: Lonnie Klein, Mark Feuerbach, John Schnabel, and Brett Steinbrueck (from the left)

celebrate Holy Communion with wafers, which contain the wine; but the significance is the same. When we celebrate Holy Communion the blood of Jesus flows into the congregation, in which it must circulate. We are aware of the fact that we all need to be cleansed through the blood of Jesus Christ, otherwise we have no redemption, no salvation. The blood needs to circulate within the whole congregation. All of us need to be cleansed. We need forgiveness of sins. We need to be purified by the blood of the Son. We are totally dependent on it. Every part of the body depends on the circulation of the blood. Paul said: “The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I do not need you’; nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you’” (1 Corinthians 12: 21). That is a nice image for the congregation, for the church, for the unity of the church, for the unity of believers. We are all completely dependent on the blood of Jesus Christ. This helps us to be one and this is what we can experience when the Holy Spirit is at work through the apostolate.

Now to the last point about Holy Communion. When we celebrate it, it is a foretaste of the great marriage supper we will have in heaven together with our Lord Jesus Christ. It reminds us that we all have the same future; and that future will be our perfect joy. Whatever our situation is, we have the same goal and when we celebrate Holy Communion we all say together: “Whatever happens, He will come.” This is our conviction. Human beings and the devil can do what they want. No one can stop Jesus from coming back. And then we want to enter into His kingdom with Him.

My dear brothers and sisters, “Together in Christ” is our motto this year. Our goal is to have eternal fellowship with Christ, and for this we have to believe in the doctrine of the Apostles as described in the Bible. We see Jesus as the Apostles have described Him in the Bible. In order to have fellowship with Jesus, we need to have fellowship with one another. And both, fellowship with God and fellowship with one another, are made possible because we receive everything we need through the activity of the Holy Spirit, through the Apostles sent by Him. This is our treasure. This is our faith. We are thankful to our heavenly Father for His grace.

CORE THOUGHTS

Our goal is fellowship with God. To this end, we remain faithful to the teaching of the Apostles and contribute to the unity of believers. The joint celebration of the Lord’s Supper strengthens our fellowship with God and with one another.



NAC Sri Lanka

How you get everything you need

Tired? Tired of fellowship, of promises, of faith? Solutions can be found in a letter whose authorship is unclear as well as the identity of its recipients. Here is a wake-up call from a divine service by the Chief Apostle.

It is unclear who wrote Hebrews and to which churches it was addressed. “The Bible does not tell us this,” Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider said. What is clear, however, is that the author wanted to strengthen the faith of Christians whose faith was faltering because of strong Jewish influences. Their problem: “They had grown tired in faith.”

Why? For one thing, because they had been waiting for the return of Christ in vain. And secondly, because their living conditions changed for the worse, if they changed at all, extending even to persecution. And finally, because they

had difficulties with their teachers and church leaders and left the church.

The biblical letter offers suitable answers and solutions for each of these aspects. Crucial is, the Chief Apostle pointed out, “The message of the epistle to the Hebrews is still valid for us.”

The following appeal applies to all who are disappointed that the Lord has not yet returned: “When God says something it exists, even if you cannot see it. Jesus Christ is the

On his pastoral trip to Sri Lanka in March 2022, Chief Apostle Schneider was accompanied by three District Apostles and 22 Apostles (right). The service took place in Colombo



first man who entered the kingdom of God. He is already there,” the Chief Apostle said. “So, please, remain confident and be patient. Hold fast to your confession. Jesus is coming. He will lead us into His kingdom.”

To all those who miss the effects of faith in daily life, the Chief Apostle made clear:

- the Son of God came to earth, He shared in the fate of mankind. He is with you. He is on your side.
- Jesus knows what it means to suffer. He knows what we need and He gives us what we need. He tells us: God loves you. He prays for and with us, and He gives us food from heaven.
- Jesus also showed us how we can escape evil. If you are obedient until the end you will overcome death and evil. That is not just a lesson taught by some teacher. No, Jesus has proved this. It works.
- because Jesus brought this perfect sacrifice, namely because He never committed a sin, He can forgive your sins. You can receive forgiveness of your sins and you can prepare for eternal life.

Strength in numbers

The Chief Apostle reminded all those who have distanced themselves from the fellowship of the believers:

- “You need to hear God’s word and put it in your heart.”
- “You need forgiveness of sins.”
- “You need to receive godly food: the body and blood of Jesus Christ.”
- “Be aware that you cannot be saved alone. We need one another.”

- “If you have problems with your teachers, your ministers, the recommendation in Hebrews is: pray for the minister because God wants to bless us through the ministry.”

In conclusion, the Chief Apostle said: “Jesus will come and His bride will be prepared. It is entirely up to us whether we can partake in it.”

CORE THOUGHTS

Hebrews 4: 14–15

“Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathise with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.”

We believe in Christ and hope in His return. Jesus Christ shares in our sufferings, knows what we need, and grants it to us in divine service. We hold on to our fraternal fellowship.

Eternity begins today

“Whoever wants to live with Jesus for all eternity has to live together with Him already today.” It sounds simple enough, but what does that really mean? The answer is three-fold: in Christ, for Christ, and like Christ. And this not only affects life on earth.



NAC Kenya

More than 3,000 people participated in the divine service in Nairobi in Kenya

On 27 February 2022 Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider conducted a divine service in Nairobi in Kenya.

God wants to lead all human beings into a new creation which is free of evil. Christ is the Redeemer. And He will return to take His bride to Himself. “This is what Paul proclaimed, and this is the proclamation of the Apostles today,” Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider said.

And then Paul told the believers what they would have to do in order to be ready for the return of Christ. The Chief Apostle summarised it as follows: “Whoever wants to live with Jesus for all eternity has to live together with Him already today.” That means: living in Christ, living for Christ, and living like Christ.

Jesus is the way

“Believing in Christ means: I believe He is the Son of God; I believe in His teaching and follow it. Believing in Jesus Christ also means believing in the testimony, in the teaching of the Apostles. He sent them and told them to ‘teach them to observe all things that I have commanded you.’” He went on to say that “faith is more than merely believing something to be true. To believe in Jesus Christ means to



Apostle Jonathan Mutua (top) was placed into retirement and Bishop Philip Mutia Mbia was ordained as a new Apostle

trust in Him, to stick to His teaching even if the picture presented by reality is totally different.”

There are two aspects to living for Christ, the Chief Apostle explained. Those who truly believe in Jesus Christ and trust in Him, have a strong desire to be with Christ for all eternity. And that becomes the purpose, the meaning of their life. And those who really believe in Jesus Christ love Him and know that they have been called to serve Him: “He has sent Me to help others experience the love of God through my words and deeds.”

And to live like Christ means to be reborn out of water and the Spirit. You have to become a new creation in Christ. And more and more you have to become like Christ: have His thoughts, His feelings, and do His will; and love as He loves.

Here and now instead of there and then

However, this does not only apply to those who are alive. The Chief Apostle said that those who have died are not forgotten. “Jesus Christ loves them as He loves us. He will care for them in the beyond.” For Jesus went into the realms of the dead to announce the good news of salvation to those who could not believe in the time of Noah. The first Christians believed that, and this is also our belief: through His sacrifice, Jesus made salvation possible in the beyond too.

“Sometimes people are odd and say: if salvation is possible in the beyond, why should I go to church now?” The Chief Apostle has several answers: “Nobody knows when the Lord will return. Make sure you are prepared now. Don’t wait. There is no guarantee that you will have the possibility to be saved in the beyond.” What’s more, Jesus has given us the chance to be part of the bride of Christ. “This is a special grace. We cannot count on it. Don’t wait for the Last Judgement.” And: “Living with Christ on earth is a source of joy and strength, of comfort and peace. It enables you to be strong and confident in any situation.”

“Let us live together in Christ today already,” Chief Apostle Schneider said in conclusion. “For soon we will be together with Christ for all eternity.”

CORE THOUGHTS

1 Thessalonians 5: 10

“[Our Lord Jesus Christ], who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.”

Christ has called us into eternal fellowship with Him. To be able to enter into this fellowship, we must believe in Him, live for Him, and become like Himself. We want the departed to be able to obtain salvation just like us.



Chief Apostle Schneider with the District Apostles Zbinden and Nadolny, as well as several Apostles from Germany and Switzerland (left) were welcomed by some children who sang a song



NAC Prague

Staying alive in difficult times!

Evil is powerful, but God is even more powerful. Comforting thoughts in difficult times! What can we do? Fear God, accept His help, and then reach out and share it with others.

He has never been to Prague in the Czech Republic before, Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider revealed at the beginning of the divine service on Saturday, 5 March 2022. However, the most important thing for him was to share in a divine service with the congregation. His sermon consisted of three main points, based on a psalm.

God is watching over all those who fear Him

These are complicated times, the Chief Apostle said in his opening words. “We are being swamped with information

that is anything but good. And it really gets to us.” Psalm 33 is entitled: “The Sovereignty of the Lord in Creation and History”. Then it says to “rejoice in the Lord”. One might think that this is not really compatible with the times. “This is precisely what we need just now. God has comforted and strengthened people with these words for centuries. And He is still doing so today!”

There have always been terrible and dramatic times in human history, the Chief Apostle said. However, believers can find comfort and strength in the Bible. “God sees everyone and looks at the heart, which is the centre of decisions

and conscience. What have you done with the abilities and opportunities I have given you? This is what God looks at.”

His plan is to save mankind. “Think of Jesus Christ. The whole world and hell were against Him. They attacked Him and even killed Him.” God let them do it and fulfilled His plan. “Think of the first Christians. They were persecuted.” God saw to it that they could continue to carry the gospel further and keep faith.

Now God expects those whom He has chosen to fear Him.

- First of all, we must be obedient: “We recognise the sovereignty of God. He is our Lord, we are obedient. We are obliged to do His will and keep His commandments.”
- Secondly, we must be humble: “Those who are filled with the fear of God know that God is great, holy, and perfect. He is far greater and more perfect than anything we can imagine.”
- We also need to be confident. “God is almighty. He is perfect and He does what He says. I know that everything is possible for Him. I trust in His power and that is why I remain faithful to Him.”
- Nor should we forget reverence, the deep respect for God. “I respect God. What He offers me, I accept. I do not despise His gifts of grace. He gives me His word, His grace, His peace. Come, I offer you the bread of heaven.”
- And, finally, we need to love God. “The fear of God has nothing to do with being afraid, but with love. Those who are filled with the fear God have only one major concern: nothing should separate them from God. They love Him and want to be with Him—no matter what.”

He saves them

God saves His chosen ones and keeps them alive—even in famine, it says in the psalm. There is also such a thing as a spiritual famine, the Chief Apostle said. “Humans need God, they need the gospel and Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, this thought has been lost. Sometimes we experience periods of famine in our congregations. In order to function, a congregation needs various things. Many of these things we no longer have; maybe we never had them. Famine means that what is needed is not available.”

The example from 1 Kings 17: 2–6 is very helpful. The prophet Elijah was filled with the fear of God, and God had helped him. “For example, He told him: ‘Go to the brook,

and I will provide for you.’ And then ravens came in the morning and evening and brought him food. It is definitely not the nature of a raven to bring humans food. They rather steal food. God, however, showed Elijah: “I care for you, I can do miracles and make extraordinary and impossible things happen. Even today He can provide for us in mysterious ways. Trust in the omnipotence of God. He can make impossible things possible.”

And He keeps them alive

Sometimes God Himself intervenes in the lives of His children by performing a miracle, as He did in Elijah’s case. “Sometimes, however, He wants to humble us and says, ‘I can help you, but you have to go to a weak person now and accept his help. This might be a minister, or perhaps even a brother or a sister, or a complete stranger. Forget your pride and accept this help. Let that person give you something.’”

And this giving and taking is the third way in which God wants to help God-fearing people. Chief Apostle Schneider said: “Share! And if you reach out, you will receive what you need! Don’t only think of yourself, reach out to your neighbour. You may have worries and problems, but don’t forget your neighbour. Give him or her time, your heart, pray for them.” God will bless the fact that we share and we will receive more than we gave. “The Bible already says: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

CORE THOUGHTS

Psalm 33: 18–19

“Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him, on those who hope in His mercy, to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine.”

The fear of God is manifested in obedience, humility, trust, respect, and love. God helps those who fear Him. Let us accept the help He sends.

CAIN DOES NOT LISTEN TO GOD

ACCORDING TO GENESIS 4: 1-16

Adam and Eve had two sons. The older son was called Cain. The younger was called Abel. Cain was a farmer and Abel was a shepherd.

One day Cain brought an offering of the fruits of the ground to God. Abel also brought an offering to God, the firstborn animal of his flock.

God respected Abel and his offering, but not Cain and his offering. Cain became very angry and looked unhappy. God asked Cain, "Why are you angry? Why do you look so unhappy? If you do good, I will accept you. But be careful. If you do not do good, sin lies at your heart's door. Do not give in to it." Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out into the field." So Cain and Abel went out into the field. There Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.



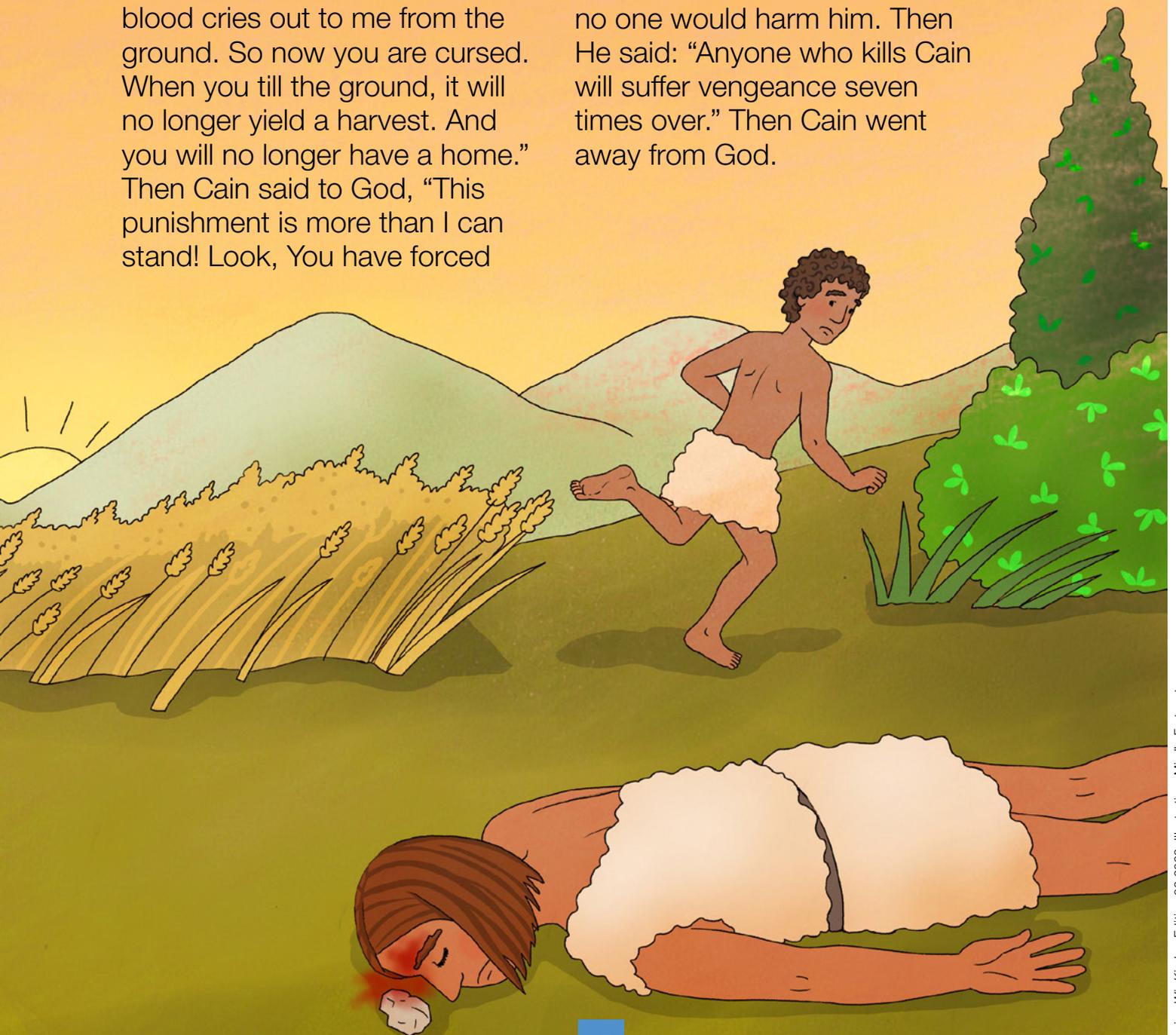
God asked Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?"

Cain said to God, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?"

Then God said to Cain, "What have you done? Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground. So now you are cursed. When you till the ground, it will no longer yield a harvest. And you will no longer have a home." Then Cain said to God, "This punishment is more than I can stand! Look, You have forced

me to stop working the ground. And now I must hide from You. I will wander around on the earth. And anyone who meets me can kill me."

But God was gracious to him. He put a mark on Cain so that no one would harm him. Then He said: "Anyone who kills Cain will suffer vengeance seven times over." Then Cain went away from God.



AT AUBREY'S IN PALATINE (USA)

My name is **Aubrey**. I live in Palatine, a suburb just north-west of Chicago, a big city in the state of Illinois. I am eight years old.



I am the second oldest of five children in my **family**. My older sister, Mackenzie, is 11 years old. My younger brother, Colin, is 5 years old.

And I have two younger twin sisters, Emerson and Mallory, who are both 3 years old. My mother, Britta, is a math teacher and my father, Michael, is a healthcare IT project manager.

That's a picture of me in downtown Chicago in front of the **Cloud Gate** sculpture, which most people affectionately call "The Bean". I am wearing a mint green shirt.

Mint green is my favourite colour.

My extended family also live in the Chicago area, including my grandparents and several aunts and uncles. That's me visiting my **grandfather** at work. He repairs busses for the Chicago Transit Authority.

Even though we live close to a big city like Chicago, our house is near a forest preserve which contains about 2,000 acres of woods, prairies, and wetlands. When



the weather is nice, we often go on **long walks**. Many interesting animals, such as deer, eagles, geese, egrets, and ducks live in the preserve. Sometimes we even see coyotes. One of the cool things about living near the forest preserve is that these animals sometimes show up in our very own backyard.



Mackenzie, Colin, and I all go to the same school. Because of the Covid-19 pandemic we were all learning remotely from home for most of 2020, but now we are back at school. I am glad to be back at school so that I can see all my friends. After school, I like to participate in both **gymnastics** and soccer. I have been doing gymnastics for four years now. My favourite part is bars and vault. I just started soccer one year ago and am still learning to play the sport, but I scored a goal in my final game of last season.



During the summer holidays, we always go to Hilton Head Island in South Carolina. My favourite part of vacation is swimming in the Atlantic Ocean with my brother and sisters. I also enjoy eating the **seafood** there, especially clams and shrimp.



Because of the Covid pandemic our church had to close for a year. During that time, we watched

online services at home on YouTube which our Apostles held. I attended Sunday School classes online using Zoom. While our church was closed, a new **church** was built for our congregation in Addison. It is almost finished now. It is very beautiful and a lot bigger than the old church. I cannot wait for our District Apostle to dedicate the new church so that we can have Sunday School classes there.





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Between euthanasia and palliative care

The idea of death is often associated with fear: pain, abandonment, loss of individuality, dependency. This quickly results in the desire to be able to determine ourselves how our life should end—a balancing act for which the Christian faith offers orientation.

Assisted suicide is often mentioned in conjunction with euthanasia. As opposed to active euthanasia, assisted suicide is the act of deliberately assisting or encouraging another person to kill themselves.

The law with regards to active euthanasia and assisted suicide is country-specific and varies greatly. Legalisation is the topic of public debate. The respective legislation of individual countries can be found on the internet.

Aid for the dying

When death is expected to be imminent, the use of possible medical interventions has to be weighed up. The patient, physicians and relatives will resolve to what extent the (terminal) illness can be left to run its natural course. If the patient is no longer able to make decisions, treatment decisions can be made according to an—as up-to-date as possible—living will. If there is no living will, physicians can also make decisions in agreement with relatives and in accordance with the law.

A cure or an extended life span is no longer the treatment objective. Alleviating symptoms, like for example pain or shortness of breath, and providing support are priorities. It is not the intention to terminate a patient's life, but to let the illness take its natural course and to allow the patient to die. This includes refusing life support measures (such as resuscitation, artificial respiration, or artificial feeding, dialysis), reducing life-extending medication, or discontinuing specific interventions. Using all possible treatment options is not appropriate. Nutrition and hydration should be continued for as long as it helps the dying patient without making him uncomfortable.

It is important in these cases to eliminate or alleviate distressing symptoms such as pain, breathing difficulties, and fear. Nursing care and human kindness are equally important at the end of life. Hospices and hospice care are very valuable in these situations. Support offered by relatives and religious ministers is emphasised by all cultures and religions.

Severe pain and great fear and anxiety despite medical, nursing, and pastoral care and human kindness is rare. In order to control symptoms it could be appropriate—in consultation with the patient or relatives—to administer a

high dose of pain-relieving and sedative medication. Suppression of breathing and in rare cases a shortening of life can be a side effect.

Ethical considerations

Preserving human dignity also in death is a unanimous demand. While those in favour of active euthanasia possibly only see this being achieved by the right to a self-determined death and therefore demand active euthanasia, the main argument for the opponents of active euthanasia is the sanctity or inviolability of human life. No one has the right to actively terminate human life.

The observance or non-observance of the expression of a person's wishes, for example by a living will (advance medical directive/decision), is seen as an example for honouring or threatening human dignity. In some publications self-determination is synonymous with human dignity.

Prevention of suffering is a central argument used by proponents of active euthanasia and assisted suicide; an argument, which seems difficult to dispute.

Alleviating suffering is a central objective in medicine and in modern-day ethics. Suffering is often equated with pain. Suffering is, however, more easily associated with negative experiences. The experience of unbearable suffering depends largely on the attitude of the person.

It could be helpful for the sufferer to see suffering that is perceived as unbearable as an opportunity for developing higher values like life experience or virtues. This allows for a new perspective. In this way life can have meaning and importance, even with a significant impairment or a severe disability. Like this it is possible to view and accept death as one of life's last great challenges.

One concern expressed by opponents of active euthanasia is that the conditions, which have to be met to make active euthanasia legal (for example limitation to incurable diseases in the final stages) as well as the target group, for which it is to be permissible (such as adults only), are bound to be broadened. For example, countries which have legalised active euthanasia subject to specific conditions and initially only for adults, have also later broadened this to include children.

A doctor helps a patient to fight diseases, in line with conventional understanding. Patients trust him to help them get well. If doctors have permission to actively kill (active euthanasia), this important relationship based on trust can be severely compromised. Medical councils and associations emphasise the danger of this loss of trust. Advocates for active euthanasia and assisted suicide, however, perceive the support from physicians as a relief from an unbearable death.

Dying with dignity

The discussion on euthanasia is usually dominated by a single view, mainly concerning the question, whether active euthanasia, that is assisted dying, is ethically justifiable or whether it should be legalised or demanded to be legalised. The far more important aspect from a Christian perspective, namely how care and support in dying in the form of support and alleviation of suffering is possible, is often pushed into the background.

Surely, no one wants to die alone and abandoned and left to feel dispensable and even vulnerable. In order to respect human dignity, thoughtful, attentive, and sensitive care and support is especially necessary at this stage of life. Highly skilled palliative care and pastoral care can contribute to this.

The Christian perspective

From a Christian perspective life is given by God. Human beings deserve dignity, by virtue of the lovingkindness of God (the image of God), independent of their abilities or state of health. Accordingly, active euthanasia as well as assisted suicide transgress the Fifth Commandment: “You shall not murder.”

As a gift from God, life must not be terminated arbitrarily. This does not mean, however, that all conceivable possibilities of extending life have to be used. From the Christian perspective it is not a sin when a sick or dying person rejects therapies or life-extending interventions or when these therapies or interventions are terminated, because the seriously ill person “wants to die in peace”.

Abiding by the commandment to love your neighbour, the family, congregation, and ministers are urged to care for the seriously ill and dying in such a manner that the fear of loneliness and vulnerability and the fear of not being able to cope with the dying process is lessened. The experience of loving and thoughtful support from relatives and

health care professionals in a pleasant environment, either at home, in a hospice, or a palliative care unit is of crucial importance to the seriously ill and dying.

Equally important is the knowledge, that pain and discomfort near the end of life can be made bearable in many cases with palliative medical care. It must be remembered, however, that even optimal circumstances don't make everything easy. Dying, death, and loss remain distressing for those who are dying and for those close to them.

We as Christians can nevertheless experience comfort and strength even in difficult situations, based on our trust in God and our hope in His help and support. The knowledge of our eternal life and our future with God can reduce the fear of parting.

The position of the New Apostolic Church

Every human being has the right to die with dignity. Euthanasia and palliative care concerns the person who is dying and for whom there is no prospect of a cure or an improvement in his suffering. From a Christian perspective this can only take the form of assistance and support for the dying person and never to help someone to die.

Active euthanasia as well as assisted suicide both transgress the Fifth Commandment “You shall not murder”. Allowing a person to die by refusing life-extending treatment is not contrary to the principles of Christian faith. Palliative pain control and sedation with the objective of symptom control can carry a small risk of shortening life. As these measures are exclusively aimed at symptom control, they can be approved of.

Palliative medical care can make pain and discomfort near the end of life bearable in many cases. Nutrition and hydration should be continued as long as it helps the dying person without making them uncomfortable.

In harmony with the Christian view of human life, care should be taken to provide the terminally ill and dying with loving, thoughtful, and tender support from relatives and professionals in pleasant surroundings.

Pastoral care in light of the gospel and consistent and reliable support at this stage of life where so much changes is important for the dying and for those close to them. Pastoral care and support can lessen anxiety and mobilise spiritual strength.



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Decisions with regard to medical treatment near the end of life should be made by the dying person himself. He can seek the advice of physicians and relatives in this regard. When this is no longer possible, the decision should be made by relatives together with the treating physicians, while the wishes of the person concerned are of particular importance. In many cases, it is therefore helpful if a living will has been made, which expresses the wishes of the dying person.

Directives and legislation must be observed, as long as they do not oppose Christian values.

Summary

Every human being has the right to die with dignity.

Euthanasia and palliative care concerns the dying, for whom there is no prospect of a cure or an improvement in their suffering. From a Christian perspective this can

only take the form of assistance and support for the dying person and never to help someone to die.

Active euthanasia as well as assisted suicide are rejected.

Allowing a person to die by refusing life-extending interventions and palliative pain control and sedation for the purpose of symptom control, which carries a small risk of shortening life, are not contrary to Christian principles.

Particularly in the context of the Christian view of human life, palliative medical care is of great importance.

The help and support provided by those close to the dying person and pastoral care in light of the gospel can lessen anxiety and mobilise spiritual strength.

A living will can help to care for the dying person in a way that respects their wishes.

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 Editor: Peter Johanning



Left: Relief supplies pile up in front of the Catholic church in Epfenbach

Below: Elena in the small warehouse they set up at the border



Charity in deed!

Individuals, congregations, and charities... The solidarity with Ukraine is huge also among New Apostolic Christians. Already at the beginning of March, a few days after the war broke out, people were at the border to help.

Since the Russian attack on Ukraine on 24 February 2022, people all over Europe are showing their solidarity. People who are fleeing the war are being welcomed and looked after, and many private initiatives are collecting relief supplies and bringing them to the Ukrainian border.

“We are leaving tonight. Solidarity and charity,” Enrico Schülbe posted on Facebook four days after the war began. The truck driver, who also has a bus driver’s licence, was on the road from 1 to 3 March. Why would anyone postpone an already planned holiday to take a seat behind the wheel of a bus and drive into a war zone? “Charity, and besides I’m a Priest in the congregation of Bad Bevensen and preach the most beautiful things at the altar,” Enrico explains. “I didn’t just want to preach, but actually do something.”

Together with a car dealership in Uelzen (Germany), a bus company from Lüchow had launched an appeal for donations. For Enrico, who is from the area, it was clear: “I have to help.” Two busses and four drivers set off in the direction of Ukraine. In Poland, which shares a border with Ukraine, they unloaded the aid and took fleeing Ukrainians on board and brought them back to Germany. Enrico was moved about what he experienced there and posted on

Facebook: “We should be glad and grateful that we can live in peace at home.”

Hours later, when they reached Dresden in Germany, the four bus drivers were glad to be relieved by other drivers who took the Ukrainian refugees on to Berlin and Hamburg. “I’m beat now, but happy that everything worked out so well,” Enrico posted.

Private aid corridor

Already a day after the Russian attack on Ukraine, Elena Kloppmann from the congregation of Freiburg in the south of Germany, together with a friend, packed her car full with medical supplies and drove to Vyšné Nemecké on the Slovakia-Ukraine border. They set up a warehouse close to the border and connected with local people to help them find like-minded people on the Ukrainian side. The Ukrainians also set up a warehouse on their side of the border, from where the aid is distributed in Ukraine. On the Slovakian side, the two women also approached individuals bringing private donations and provided them with the necessary logistics to get the donations to where they were needed most.

The two women organised this private aid corridor to Ukraine by themselves and were in constant contact with people in Ukraine to find out what was needed most. On the website Elena launched at the time, she constantly updated the needs lists and mobilised volunteers. She was impressed by the wave of solidarity: “It was absolutely amazing to be collaborating with people we had never met before simply on a basis of mutual trust—and to see it worked.”

Bringing sleeping bags to church

For the midweek service on 2 March, the members of the congregation Eschelbronn in Germany not only brought their hymnals, but also sleeping bags, sleeping mats, sterile bandages, gauze dressings, disinfectants, hygiene products, non-perishable food, dried fruit, canned food, baby food, and diapers. The Catholic church in Weibstadt had issued an appeal for emergency aid for Ukraine. Members of the local New Apostolic Church brought the collected relief supplies to a local Catholic church and helped with sorting and loading so that the aid would get to Ukraine as quickly as possible.

The church becomes a haven

Churches, various associations, and private individuals joined forces in another part of Germany, namely in Merseburg, after the outbreak of the war to open and prepare the city for people from Ukraine. The head of the co-ordinating committee is Sebastian Müller-Bähr, an advisor to the mayor of the city of Merseburg and a New Apostolic Priest.

It felt like all of Merseburg was on its feet when the news of the invasion of Ukraine reached us. “We pooled all our

resources,” Sebastian says. When he learned that the city was to take in 102 displaced people from Ukraine, he and his team organised accommodation, drivers, interpreters, and doctors. Since there was no central transit centre, the New Apostolic Church building was converted into one without further ado. In the entrance area, volunteers registered the arrivals, tested them for Covid, and provided food. The sacristy was turned into a doctor’s office, while the adjoining rooms were turned into a diaper-changing room and a play and rest area. The large church hall was turned into a dining hall. Here, sad stories could be heard from the fleeing people, but also gratitude that they had a safe place to stay for now. Sebastian is happy and grateful: “No matter where we come from, no matter what we are, we work together. That really amazes me.”

Aid organisations respond

In addition to the tireless efforts of congregations and private individuals, the New Apostolic aid organisations are also responding to the Ukrainian crisis. “Members of the New Apostolic Church in Moldova and Romania have welcomed refugees into their homes,” the website of the New Apostolic Church Switzerland reports. The local New Apostolic Church, together with the two foundations NAK-Diakonia and NAK-Humanitas, is supporting the local members as well as projects and initiatives that provide direct emergency aid for displaced Ukrainians.

The German aid organisation human aktiv is planning aid measures, as is the relief organisation NAK-karitativ, which is in contact with a partner organisation to ascertain the concrete need of the people in order to be able to provide targeted help.



Left: Ukrainians waiting to board busses in Poland
Top: Our church in Merseburg became a safe haven for people fleeing the war

Sebastian Müller-Bähr

We are doing things at our own pace

The fall session of the District Apostle Meeting took place in November 2021. On the agenda were prominent topics such as our concept of ministry, biblical authorship issues, and a new *Guide for Ministers*.



Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider and the District Apostles during the 2021 fall session of the District Apostle Meeting

Peter Johannig

For many Christian denominations issues of authorship are important. Was the epistle of Paul really written by Paul or by one of his students? Who wrote the gospels? And there were many other questions in this connection. The District Apostle Meeting made it clear that the New Apostolic Church should not be involved in a debate between authority and science: “For us it is important to emphasise that Holy Scripture was inspired by the Holy Spirit. It is not the question of authorship that is decisive but the content of the respective biblical text. What does it say about our salvation, our redemption?” This is how Chief Apostle Jean-

Luc Schneider began his explanations regarding this point on the agenda.

Authority is not a question of authorship

God is the actual author of the biblical books. The authority of the biblical writings is based upon their divine inspiration, and is not dependent on their authors—whether they were Apostles and prophets or not. Therefore, the exegetical conclusion that a particular text derives from a

particular author or not is of no relevance whatsoever for the authority of that text. The teaching authority of the apostolate does not serve to solve individual exegetical problems. Rather, it is given to assure the purity of the Church's doctrine and preaching.

The Catechism is also clear on this point. There it says: "The author of Holy Scripture is God, while its writers were human beings whom the Holy Spirit inspired (2 Peter 1: 20–21). God made use of their abilities to commit to writing that which was to be passed on in accordance with His will. Although the contents of the biblical books have their source in the Holy Spirit, they bear the mark of their respective writers and their perceptions of the world in terms of style and form of expression" (CNAC 1.2).

A new Guide for Ministers

A new *Guide for Ministers* is currently being worked on. It will contain canonical requirements as issued by the Church leadership on how ministry and mandate are to be performed. In addition to explanatory notes, there will be detailed chapters on the order of ministry; the binding nature of liturgical texts, the celebration of the sacraments, and acts of blessing. Notes on pastoral care, ecumenism, and public relations are also included.

The District Apostles unanimously approved all the documents and commissioned the working group *Guide for Ministers* with the editing and proofreading and subsequent finalising of the publication.

Intensive and careful deliberations

After a thorough discussion on the subject of the ordination of women into a spiritual ministry, the District Apostles unanimously agreed to a procedure proposed by the Chief Apostle:

This subject requires intensive and careful deliberations. The District Apostles believe that the Church should not create the impression that it is allowing itself to be put under pressure by societal changes. In earlier years, there was no official theological response to the question of whether there are biblical reasons that speak against the ordination of women. Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider pointed out that the recently published document on man and woman in the image of God has created the basis for further discussion.

This will be followed by a look at the Church, its traditions, and values. "We are giving ourselves time for these consultations and will, as soon as all decisions have been made, publish a paper as was done in 2019 with our revised concept of ministry." The arguments of those whose thinking is conservative in this matter, and who fear that cherished traditions will go lost, he said, must be taken just as seriously as the wish of those who would like to see changes and a faster pace in our deliberations. "We are doing things at our own pace; we decide for the New Apostolic Church as a whole, not for one side or the other," Chief Apostle Schneider said in summing up the discussion.

Definition of church, sacrament, and ministry

He went on to explain that there have always been changes in the New Apostolic Church, and that they were necessary. In the 1990s, Chief Apostle Richard Fehr began with preparations for a New Apostolic catechism. At that time the question was what definition of the church of Jesus Christ the catechism should present.

Up to that point it had always been said that the New Apostolic Church is the church of Christ—a statement that was revised and modified after careful deliberations. This certainly caused some turmoil in many congregations, but it was indispensable in order to take on a catechism in a serious and reliable manner. "It took years," the Chief Apostle summed up.

The continuity of change

Chief Apostle Wilhelm Leber advanced the work of the catechism and devoted his term in ministry to the important topic of defining the sacraments. The information event he presented in our church in Uster in Switzerland on 24 January 2006 remains unforgotten: the baptisms of other Churches were recognised, and the relationship of baptism and sealing redefined.

Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider dedicates a great deal of time and commitment to our concept of ministry and, in connection with it, the question of the ordination of women. The Church leader says: "As we looked into this subject, we realised just how extensive and deep it is. It will not do to give it a simple yes or no. Whatever the outcome of our deliberations will be, the subject is too important to be dealt with hastily and solely on the basis of societal trends."

Below: The typhoon left huge swaths of the Philippines devastated
 Right: NAC SEA Relief distributes corrugated sheets so that houses can be patched up



NAC SEA Relief

Typhoon Odette: charities join forces

“We have realised that there is no end in sight to this calamity.” This is how the charity of the New Apostolic Church in the Philippines describes the situation after Typhoon Odette devastated parts of the country back in December 2021. Among the many NGOs that have responded are also four New Apostolic charities.

16 December 2021: a typhoon makes landfall on the island of Siargao, bringing torrential rains and leaving devastation in its wake. The typhoon moves through the archipelago until the next day, 17 December, making landfall a total of nine times in different parts of the country. The storm sweeps through 11 of the country’s 17 regions, leaving a swath of destruction.

Typhoon Odette (internationally known as Typhoon Rai) received little media attention and the extent of the destruction was initially underestimated. In the meantime, however, it is clear that the damage is even greater than that caused by Super Typhoon Haiyan, which struck in 2013.

A grim picture

“We are looking at a major humanitarian crisis,” reports Ansherina Talavera at the beginning of February 2022,

manager of CARE Philippines. “We are seeing hundreds of thousands of people displaced, and roads and power lines have been washed away.” Schools, hospitals, and other buildings have been destroyed, 1.9 million houses have been damaged, and more than 427,000 houses completely destroyed. “Access to some of the worst affected areas, particularly remote islands, remains a big concern due to destroyed private and public sea vessels.”

Heavy rains caused floods and storm surges in some areas with landslides blocking major roads and highways and destroying hospitals and airports, making these regions inaccessible even by land and air. The storm washed away power lines and took down mobile phone masts. Some regions are still without mobile phone reception, internet, and electricity, and are therefore completely cut off from the outside world.



People affected by the typhoon show their gratitude for the help provided by NAC SEA Relief

People are struggling to access food, as markets are disrupted, food prices are rising, and their agricultural land has been destroyed. Many Filipinos have had their livelihood destroyed. Since the outbreak of the Covid pandemic in early 2020, countless people who had lived off tourism had already fallen below the poverty line.

Volunteers at work

Charities such as CARE Philippines, which works closely with the coordinating organisation OCHA (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs), are supporting the local population. CARE and its international and local partners are cooperating with the Philippine Coast Guard and the Department of Social Welfare. First of all, people in the affected regions have to be provided with everyday essentials: food, safe drinking water, medicine and hygiene items, household items such as solar lamps and equipment for cooking meals, and shelter. Then the houses and infrastructure can be rebuilt.

OCHA faces a number of challenges: the poor food situation is leading to malnourishment and nutritional deficiencies, which in turn causes disease. The country was already struggling, following a hard year battling Covid-19. It was one of the worst-affected countries in the Asia-Pacific region. And now it is being threatened by a new health crisis. And not only that. Odette disrupted schooling for millions of children. This followed two years of intermittent pandemic-related school closures. With many schools damaged, children cannot go to school and are limited in their development. Also the transport and logistics of humanitarian aid is a real challenge without power or telecommunication.

However, OCHA has an emergency and reconstruction plan. It hopes to raise 169 million dollars to help at least 840,000 particularly vulnerable people. This is why it is launching an appeal for donations.

Charities join forces

Shortly after Odette struck, brothers and sisters less affected by it set out to help their fellow human beings. NAC SEA Relief, the charity of the New Apostolic Church South East Asia, distributed emergency food packs and coordinated relief efforts. In February then, the charity was able to supply people with urgently needed building material for rebuilding their homes: plywood, cement, corrugated iron sheets, nails, and steel poles.

Other New Apostolic charities are providing much-needed funds: NAK karitativ (NAC Western Germany), human aktiv (NAC Southern Germany), and NAK Humanitas (NAC Switzerland). Together the four charities have already raised 80,000 euros, which will go towards helping victims of the typhoon. NAC SEA Relief has already distributed more than 1,200 emergency food parcels, containing rice, fish, meat, pasta, coffee, and sugar. However, this is only enough to feed a family for one week. Then they need further assistance.

Reconstruction and rebuilding is also on the agenda. Together the four charities want to help the people in the Philippines rebuild their lives. Once the emergency response is completed, houses will be rebuilt and farmland recovered. "The first priority is to rebuild homes, because the rainy season will start in a few weeks, and families will then need a roof over their heads again," explains retired District Apostle Urs Hebeisen, President of NAC SEA Relief.

Chief Apostle Schneider ordains District Elders Daniel Ooko Ochogo and Cosmas Barasa Wanjala as Apostles



Huyomimi, NAC Tanzania

Changes among the Apostles

Did you know that District Apostles are also authorised to ordain Apostles? This has always been the case, but in the year 2021 many District Apostles actually had to make use of this authority because the Chief Apostle was prevented from travelling as a result of the pandemic.

As of 31 December 2021, there were approximately 247,000 ministers active in diaconal or priestly ministries in the New Apostolic Church. They care for some 58,000 congregations around the world. At present, the Church is led by one Chief Apostle, fifteen District Apostles, eight District Apostle Helpers, and 314 Apostles.

Ordinations

On 18 July 2021 in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, District Apostle Michael Deppner ordained six Apostles by commission of the Chief Apostle all in the same divine service, namely: the former District Elder Kpama Gianni Bangawe (1973), Bishop Kanku Roger Buabua (1964), Shepherd Elie Tatien Mukinba Mudinganyi (1976), District Elder Seni Guy Bariza (1970), District Elder Emmanuel Ngolo Woto (1968) and Bishop Oscar Ponza Etedika (1982).

On his first trip outside Europe after travel restrictions were eased, Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider made a visit to Dodoma, Tanzania. In a service there on 15 August, he ordained District Elders Daniel Ooko Ochogo (1968) and Cosmas Barasa Wanjala (1973) to serve as Apostles for Kenya.

In a service he conducted in the Accra Central church in Ghana on 22 August, District Apostle Michael Ehrich ordained District Evangelist Augustus Adika Lavoe (1965) as an Apostle by commission of the Chief Apostle.

Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider conducted a divine service in Kabwe, Zambia, on 26 September. He ordained District Elder Alex Mvula Thosi Kachikhawu (1971) to serve as an Apostle for Malawi, along with District Elder Lubinda Maliwa Maliwa (1987) and District Evangelist Imunga Malkana (1970) as Apostles for Zambia.

By commission of the Chief Apostle, District Apostle Michael Ehrich ordained District Elder Nema Jacques Conde (1968) and District Evangelist Tamba Sosso Wolle Millimouno (1966) as Apostles for the country of Guinea in a divine service in the Freetown Central church in Sierra Leone on Sunday, 31 October.

In a service on 14 November in our Berlin-Charlottenburg church, Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider expanded the mandate of District Apostle Helper Helge Mutschler (1974) to include the District Apostle Area of Berlin-Brandenburg. The latter's previous Apostle district was transferred to the care of the hitherto Evangelist Ralf Vicariesmann (1971), who was ordained an Apostle for this purpose by Chief Apostle Schneider.

In a service in Dinwiddie, South Africa, on 28 November, Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider ordained Bishops Artur Sobeso Alfazema (1966) and Davide Judas Zaqueio (1967) as Apostles for Mozambique. For South Africa, the Chief Apostle ordained the hitherto District Elder Bradley Ivan Bourne (1972), Bishop Jan Enoch Mabaso (1962), and Bishop Werner Newton von Schaeffer (1967) as Apostles.

Retirements

- Apostle Patricio Jorge (1956) on 4 July in Milange, Mozambique
- Apostles Louis Kabangu (1955), Macaire Mayele (1960), Ferdinand Mbande (1955), Gaston Mukoko (1955), Ndaye Mtumba (1956), and Michel Tati (1956) on 18 July in a divine service in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo
- Apostle Klaus Katens (1955) on 1 August 2021 in a divine service in Berlin-Lichtenberg, Germany
- Apostle Edward Hayford Nzimah (1955) on 22 August in a divine service in Accra Central, Ghana
- Apostle Massamba Diambu Tuku (1955) on 15 September in Santana, São Tomé
- Apostle Julio César Ypez Moratinos (1955) on 20 September in Panama City, Panama
- Apostles Martial Bangoura (1955) and Jules Beavogui (1955) on 31 October in Sierra Leone
- Apostles Harold Brian Swartbooi (1956) and Marc Diedricks (1960) on 28 November in a service in Dinwiddie, South Africa
- Apostle Earl Buehner (1954) on 12 December in Los Angeles, USA

A leave of absence and a resignation

In November, the Chief Apostle granted a six-month leave of absence to Apostle Siegfred Alos Catan (1960) of the

Philippines, as he has been suffering from a very debilitating illness.

Chief Apostle Schneider accepted the resignation of Apostle Baker Chakwana (1975) from Zambia, who had already been on a leave of absence for personal reasons for a year.

Deaths

Apostle Moïse Mabaya (1956) from the Democratic Republic of Congo passed away on 10 October after a brief stay in hospital. Ten days later, Apostle Kennedy S. Kabome (1960) from Tanzania passed away after a brief illness.

District Apostle Areas

The New Apostolic Church is structured into fifteen District Apostle Areas. These are led by the following District Apostles:

- Michael David Deppner (1961) – DR Congo West
- Michael Ehrich (1959) – Southern Germany
- Joseph Opemba Ekhuya (1969) – East Africa
- Edy Isnugroho (1963) – South-East Asia
- Leonard Richard Kolb (1956) – USA
- Rüdiger Krause (1960) – Northern and Eastern Germany
- John Leslie Kriel (1956) – Southern Africa
- Enrique Eduardo Minio (1960) – South America
- Wolfgang Nadolny (1956) – Berlin-Brandenburg
- Peter Schulte (1963) – Western Pacific
- Kububa Soko (1969) – Zambia, Malawi, Zimbabwe
- Rainer Storck (1958) – Western Germany
- Tshitshi Tshisekedi (1972) – DR Congo South-East
- Mark Woll (1959) – Canada
- Jürg Zbinden (1958) – Switzerland

Some of the District Apostles are supported by District Apostle Helpers who as a rule work in specific countries:

- David Devaraj (1959) – India
- Frank Stephan Dzur (1959) – Canada
- John William Fendt (1957) – USA
- Arnold Ndakondwa Mhango (1957) – Malawi
- João Uanuque Misselo (1965) – Angola
- Mandla Patrick Mkhwanazi (1963) – Southern Africa
- Helge Mutschler (1974) – Northern and Eastern Germany
- Robert Nsamba (1962) – Zambia



Coming up

- 3 July 2022 Goma (DR Congo)
- 7 July 2022 Limete Kinshasa (DR Congo)
- 8 July 2022 Mbandaka (DR Congo)
- 10 July 2022 Kinshasa (DR Congo)
- 24 July 2022 Paide (Estonia)
- 27 July 2022 Bonaire (Netherlands Antilles)
- 30 July 2022 Paramaribo (Suriname)
- 2 Aug. 2022 Kingston (Jamaica)
- 4 Aug. 2022 San Salvador (San Salvador)
- 7 Aug. 2022 Mexico (Mexico)
- 14 Aug. 2022 still to be specified (Ukraine)
- 11 Sept. 2022 Fribourg (Switzerland)
- 18 Sept. 2022 Iserlohn (Germany)
- 22 Sept. 2022 still to be specified (Gambia)
- 24 Sept. 2022 still to be specified (Senegal)
- 25 Sept. 2022 still to be specified (Guinea-Bissau)

New Apostolic Church
International

