



Welcome and greeting

Dear brothers and sisters, hearty welcome to this information event.

First of all, I would like to thank you for coming. I know that for many of you, time is in high demand. Your presence attests your great interest that you have in our Church. And I am very grateful for that. Thank you for your dedication to the Lord and His work.

Today I would like to present to you the concept of ministry, which the District Apostle Meeting has developed in consultation with all the Apostles around the world.

Reasoning

Why did we deal with this topic?

During the time of Chief Apostle Fehr, and then that of Chief Apostle Leber, we worked on the production of the Catechism of the New Apostolic Church. In this context, we defined both our understanding of the church and our understanding of the sacraments in a precise way. The only task that remained was to do the same for our understanding of ministry. We postponed this task in order to deliver the Catechism on time. In the meantime, the District Apostle Meeting—in collaboration with all the Apostles around the world—has dedicated itself for this task.

Our first step was to define the most important notions such as: ‘ministry’ and ‘service’, as well as ‘ordination’, ‘ministerial authority’, and ‘ministerial mandate’. These results have already been published. Our second step was to occupy ourselves with the leadership functions. Here our primary concern was to correct one inconsistency. As you know, the rectors of the congregations and of the districts play an extremely important role in our Church, but the manner, in which they were entrusted with their responsibility was not appropriate to the importance of their function: in most cases, all they got was a handshake from the officiant at the moment they were appointed. It appeared necessary to execute this act in a more appropriate fashion in future.

Beyond that, we wanted to adapt our organisation and the way, we are working, to the realities of the present day. Previously, the brothers were ordained and appointed to their functions according to the needs in their congregation or district. But today, things often develop very quickly. Professional life has led to greater geographical mobility. As a result, many brothers have to move to another congregation or district. At their new place, and depending on the individual case, these brothers were: reinstated to their ministry, or reinstated into a lower ministry in the hierarchy, or not reinstated as a minister at all. This practice, as understandable as it may be, is damaging to the sanctity of the ministry.

Not least of all, the demographic developments require us to make regular structural reforms to our districts. Just to give you an example: a priest is ordained as an evangelist, for he becomes the rector of his congregation. After a few years, this congregation is closed. The rector retains his ministry, he remains an evangelist, despite the fact that the reason for his ordination no longer exists. The same applies for a district elder, when his district is amalgamated with another one. If we go on this way, it will become quite impossible to understand our ministerial structure.

Thus, it appeared necessary to adapt our structure to the demands of modern life and to make it more flexible.



The three levels of ministry

Our first step consisted of defining the ministerial authority inherent in each of the individual ministries. Jesus Christ conferred upon the Apostles the authority to preach the gospel, to administer the sacraments, and to proclaim forgiveness of sins. When an Apostle ordains someone, he confers upon him a portion of the authority inherent in the apostolate. As a result, the ordained minister has the authority to speak and act in the name of the triune God. This authority is limited to the preaching of the gospel, the administration of the sacraments, and the dispensation of blessings.

The ordained minister cannot invoke this authority, when he makes organisational decisions, when he gives advice to believers, or when he expresses his own opinion.

For instance, when a district Apostle changes the organization of his district, he does not act in the name of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. And when the priest advises a member, he cannot say that he does it with the authority of Jesus Christ.

Remember: Jesus even made a point of not intervening in an inheritance dispute... (Luke 12: 13-14)

In our Church, we distinguish between three levels of ministry, which correspond to the three levels of ministerial authority:

- the Deacon ministry — the Deacon has the authority to preach the gospel in the proper manner and to dispense the Trinitarian blessing at the end of the service.
- the priestly ministry — in addition to the powers inherent in the Deacon ministry, Priests have the authority to proclaim the forgiveness of sins by commission of the Apostle and in the name of Jesus, as well as administer the sacraments of Holy Baptism with water and Holy Communion. They can also perform acts of blessing (confirmation, marriage, etc.);
- the Apostle ministry — in addition to the aforementioned powers, the Apostle has also the authority to dispense the sacrament of Holy Sealing and perform ordinations. Beyond that, he proclaims forgiveness of sins directly in the name of Jesus Christ.

The five structural entities

For decades, all around the world, the structure of our Church has been based on five main entities:

- the congregation,
- the district,
- the Apostle district,
- the District Apostle district, and
- the global Church.

This division has proven to be consistent. All of these five entities can be clearly seen in the reality of our Church. It is within these entities of the Church that the decisions governing church life are made.



Introduction of a function-oriented view of services and duties

Jesus Christ also entrusted the leadership of the church to the Apostles. As the church evolved, it became necessary to give the church a structure and to appoint local leaders. This is still the case today. For example, a District Apostle is appointed to lead several Apostle districts, a district rector leads a district comprised of several congregations, and the rector of the congregation leads a single congregation. In order to exercise a leadership function, the minister appointed to this task must also possess the required personal competencies, particularly in the area of pastoral care, doctrine, and organisation.

In the course of our deliberations, we came to the conclusion that ministry and leadership function, although linked, are nevertheless two distinct matters. The ministry is based on ministerial authority, while a leadership function is a spiritual service or duty associated with the organisation of the Church. And it was precisely there that we stumbled upon a difficulty. Upon closer inspection, it turns out that our present ministerial structure mixes these two elements together. It is based as much on the ordained ministry as on leadership function. Just think about the evangelists. Both, the District Evangelist and the local Evangelist are Evangelists, but the one is on higher rank in the hierarchy than the other.

Now let us look at the case of the rectors of the congregation: depending on the size of the congregation, they are either ordained to the ministry of a Shepherd, Evangelist, or Priest. Thus, their ministry and their spiritual authority depends on the size of the congregation, in other words on the organisation. If it happens that their congregation is closed, they retain their ministry, even though the main reason, for which they were ordained, no longer exists.

If we continue this practice, it will become more and more difficult to comprehend our ministerial structure.

These and a number of other factors have led us to reconsider our structures and functions.

As mentioned, the structure of our Church is based on five entities. And we have five leadership functions associated with each of these five entities. These functions are known and understood by our members:

- the rector leads a congregation
- the district rector leads the district
- the Apostle leads the Apostle district
- the District Apostle leads the District Apostle district
- the Chief Apostle leads the global Church.

The ministers, who exercise these leadership functions, have the power to make decisions within the scope of their mandate. They are responsible for the entity they lead and they must give account to their leader. In future, these leadership functions will be conferred by way of appointment. In the case of the Apostle, the leadership function is part of the ministry. As is the case with the Chief Apostle, it is conferred through the ordination.

The helper function

Depending on the size of the entity in question, ministers with a leadership function may also have assistants who support them. Subject to the particular requirements, these assistants can stand in for the leader in his absence, represent them for example, in geographically broad regions or be given a specific mission. This helper function will in future be conferred by *assignment*.



We then asked ourselves how we should designate these helper functions. For the Chief Apostle and the District Apostles, the designations can already be found in the Catechism. The Chief Apostle is able to assign an Apostle as a Chief Apostle Helper or District Apostle Helper. In some countries, we are also familiar with the function of a “Lead Apostle”. This is an Apostle who represents his District Apostle in a portion of the latter’s working area.

With the other helper functions, it was a little more complicated. Would it be necessary to introduce new, internationally valid designations? After a great deal of deliberation, we came to the conclusion that such designations are not required. The ministers, who exercise a helper function, will continue to be addressed by their ministerial title, not their function. Here we will address Priest Schmitz or District Evangelist Meier as “Priest” or “District Evangelist”, and not as “District rector delegate”. If he has been assigned officially as a helper, in front of the congregation, this should hardly be problematic.

There is one exception. Out of respect for tradition, the District Apostle Meeting has decided to retain the term “Bishop” as the designation for the priestly minister, who serves as assistant to the Apostle. Thus, we will in future use the designation of “Bishop” for the ordained bishops as well as for the priestly ministers assigned to help the apostles. I am aware that this is not an ideal solution. But I believe that this concession to tradition will not hinder the ordained bishops and the assigned helpers to serve in the right manner.

Think about the situation, we have in the circle of the District Apostles. Until June 2018, the District Apostles used to be ordained. Since June 2018, the new ones are appointed. All of them fulfil exactly the same mission, and work together in the District Apostles Meeting, and it works perfectly! In the future, we’ll also have rectors having been appointed while kneeling, and others, who have been rectors for a long time, who were appointed by way of a handshake.

Interim summary

For now, let us retain the following:

There are three levels of ministry in the Church: the Apostle ministry, the Priest ministry, and the Deacon ministry. Their ministerial authority is conferred through ordination.

The Church has five leadership functions referring to the Church’s five structural entities: the rector of the congregation, the district rector, the Apostle, the District Apostle, and the Chief Apostle. The leadership functions—with the exception of that of the Chief Apostle and the Apostle—are conferred through appointment.

Ministers entrusted with a leadership function can be supported by various ministers assigned to this end. Chief Apostle Helpers, District Apostle Helpers, Lead Apostles, and Bishops—as well as assistants to district rectors and rectors of congregation—are assigned to their functions.

These regulations will take effect on Pentecost 2019.

The ministerial structure

In summary, the ministerial structure of the Church will now appear as follows: **Table**



The priestly ministries

Let us now turn our attention to the various priestly ministries. At present we have Priests, Evangelists, Shepherds, District Evangelists, District Elders, and Bishops. It is very important to note that all brothers, who have been ordained to these ministries, will continue to exercise their ministries as they have until now. Nothing, absolutely nothing, will change for them. We have no reason to question the spiritual foundations upon which we acted with respect to these ordinations. The Apostles and their co-workers have always wrestled for inspiration from the Holy Spirit in order to decide which ordinations were to be performed.

Nevertheless, we asked ourselves if it would still be necessary to ordain these ministries also in the future. To answer this question, we looked back. How did these ministries develop, for what purpose were they required?

Originally the view was that each ministry was associated with a particular personal characteristic. The choice of ministry entrusted to a brother was bound to his character. The Evangelist was to proclaim the gospel with zeal. The Shepherd distinguished himself by way of gentleness with regard to the members in his care. This idea was certainly nice, but difficulties were quick to appear. Not least of all, because a person and his character can change. An Evangelist, who was ordained at the age of 25, is no longer the same man after having exercised his ministry for 20 years.

After a few decades, this interpretation that the ministry should be based on the individual character type of the minister in question was replaced by a much more pragmatic view. The ministries were placed into a hierarchy: the Evangelist was set over the Priest, the Shepherd was set over the Evangelist, and the District Evangelist was set above the Shepherd, etc. The decision to ordain a brother to a higher ministry was no longer solely based on the personality of the person in question, but also upon the organisational requirements of the Church. Depending on the size of the district, the Apostle was supported by one or more Bishops, and the District Elder was supported by one or more District Evangelists. Depending on the size of the congregation, the rector was a Priest, or an Evangelist, or Shepherd. Seen from this perspective of our doctrine, this approach was a little problematic. Through the ordination to a higher ministry, the servant of God received additional ministerial authority. We defined this ministerial authority as the right to preach the gospel in the name of the triune God, to dispense the sacraments, and to forgive sins. In principle therefore, ministerial authority has nothing to do with the leadership function. The ordained minister cannot refer to his ministerial authority when he makes decisions about organisation or leadership.

In fact, when a brother is ordained to a new ministry today in order to lead a congregation or a district, the power that he needs for this does not lie in any additional ministerial authority, but rather in the blessing and sanctification imparted to him by God in the ordination. Therefore, a brother who is called to lead a congregation or district does not necessarily need to be ordained to a “higher” ministry. The important thing is that he receives the blessing and sanctification necessary for this task from God! In future, this will occur by way of an appointment, which will be performed in the name of the triune God.

When we consider the various ministries and the different hierarchical levels, one must recognize that it is not always a good thing to have so many ministries and hierarchical levels. Sometimes, it just makes things more complicated. Let me give you a simple example: what is the hierarchical relationship between Shepherd A, who is the rector of congregation X, and Priest B, who is the rector of congregation Y? Can Shepherd A tell Priest B what he is to do in his congregation, just because he is a Shepherd? In our new structure, the answer is a clear: no! The rector of the congregation is directly accountable to his district rector. As concerns leadership, it is the function, and not the ministry, that is decisive.



Finally we asked ourselves another simple question: how many “leaders” do we need to lead the districts and congregations in an efficient manner? After careful consideration, we decided to work with five levels of hierarchy, corresponding to the five structural entities of the Church.

We decided that, as of Pentecost 2019, no more Evangelists, Shepherds, District Evangelists, District Elders, or Bishops will be ordained. However, these ministries have not been abolished. It is simply that no new brothers will be ordained in these ministries.

Once again: the brothers who have been ordained to any of these ministries will keep their ministry and continue to exercise it. Beyond that, the Apostles are to clearly define the tasks and areas of responsibility that belong to the respective ministry on one hand, and to the leadership or helper function on the other hand. In the future, it may happen that a Shepherd belongs to a congregation, whose rector is a Priest. This Shepherd will continue to conduct services and serve the believers in the power of his ministry. But he will not be in charge of the leadership of the congregation. If the two ministers, the Shepherd and the rector, are driven by the love for God and inspired by the desire to serve, there will be no problems in working together in such a manner!

What is the sequence of ordination, appointment, and assignment?

It still remains for us to explain to you how we will proceed with the aforementioned acts in the future:

Nothing will change with regard to the **ordination** of Deacons, Priests, and Apostles.

Here I have to mention that the District Apostle Meeting has decided that the Chief Apostle, even though he bears the ministry of an Apostle, just like all other Apostles, will nevertheless continue to be ordained in the future. This exception is explained by the special character of the service inherent in the Chief Apostle.

As concerns **appointment**:

- the Chief Apostle appoints the District Apostles.
- the District Apostle, or an Apostle commissioned by him, appoints the district rectors.
- the Apostle appoints the rector of the congregation. In exceptional cases, the Apostle can also commission a priestly minister to act on his behalf.

The brother to be appointed is called to come to the altar. After the content and scope of his mandate have been explained, the officiant asks the brother for his agreement to the appointment, and then goes on to pray. Then the brother kneels down, and the officiant lays his hands upon him in order to dispense upon him the sanctification and blessing required for him to discharge his new task.

The **assignment** is performed as follows:

- the Chief Apostle assigns the Chief Apostle Helpers and the District Apostle Helpers.
- by commission of the Chief Apostle, the District Apostle assigns Lead Apostles and Bishops.
- the Apostle assigns the priestly ministries who have to assist the district rector or the congregational rector. In exceptional cases, the Apostle can commission a priestly minister to perform the assignment on his behalf.



The assignment proceeds in the same way, the Chief Apostle Helper or District Apostle Helper used to be assigned in the past. The brother in question is called to the altar. After the content and scope of his task have been explained, the officiant will ask for his agreement to the assignment, and then goes on to pray. Then he shakes the hand of the brother and officially assigns him to his new function.

Conclusions

Once again: all of these measures will take effect as of Pentecost 2019. I am aware that this represents a significant change to our tradition. It will certainly take some time to become accustomed to it. However, I am absolutely convinced that this reform will have beneficial effects for the Church:

- from a theological perspective, the definition of ministry is now consistent with that of the church and the sacraments.
- the importance of the leadership functions will be emphasised, especially in the case of the district rector and congregational rector.
- the distinction between ministry and leadership function—along with the reduction in hierarchical levels—will facilitate decision-making.
- the system of appointment and assignment gives us greater flexibility, and corresponds to the modern reality of life.

And not to forget: we acknowledge the past in that the brothers will continue to exercise the ministries to which they have been ordained.

The introduction

Over the coming weeks, we will offer information events intended for the active ministers. Other such events intended for the retired ministers and all interested members will be organised thereafter. The subject as a whole will also be the focus of a Special Edition of the Divine Service Guide and various other publications.

One matter that must still be dealt with is the delegation of other spiritual services and duties.

At the next District Apostle Meeting, we will occupy ourselves with the delegation of those services and duties that can be exercised without a spiritual ministry. In particular, we will define which kinds of services and duties require an assignment, and how we will proceed.

The next steps

The other point on the agenda for our next District Apostle Meetings is the question of the ordination of women to a spiritual ministry. In our view, this topic is of special importance, both for our doctrine (this topic has never really been discussed within our Church) and for church life. Just as we have taken the necessary time with our concept of ministry, we will also take our time to sound out the depths of this subject. First and foremost we will make a point of answering the following questions:



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- What does the Bible say about this matter? How are we to evaluate the various biblical statements, some of which are in contradiction to one another?
 - What is our theological position on the subject?
 - What are the sociological and cultural aspects that must also be taken into account in our deliberations?
 - What do our members wish, and above all:
 - What does God expect of us?

Naturally we will also inform you of the progress of our work when the time comes.

I wish you God's blessing and much joy while serving Jesus-Christ, our Lord.

Dessau, 25 March 2019