

community

The New Apostolic Church around the world

03/2018/EN



District Apostle Bernd Koberstein retires

Editorial

Spreading enthusiasm
for Jesus Christ

Divine service

Walking over water
with Jesus

Doctrine

Election – between offer
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New Apostolic Church
International



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Spreading enthusiasm for Jesus Christ

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The gospel is the record of God's salvific deeds revealed in the birth of Jesus, His death on the cross, His resurrection, and His return. Faith in Jesus Christ and the rebirth out of water and Spirit are the path that leads to eternal fellowship with God. This is the gospel, the good news.

Let us share this gospel with our children and our neighbour. Indeed, as Christians we have been called and chosen to spread the fire of the gospel. This is only possible, however, if we are burning for Jesus Christ. This fire must jump from one heart to the other, otherwise it will not work. What can we do concretely?

Let us show more interest in the gospel ourselves. It will make God's love for us, for mankind, more understandable and even greater.

Let us speak with our children and our neighbour about the gospel. This way they will discover God, our experiences with Him, and our great future.

Let us pray with our children and our neighbour. In prayer, we experience the presence of God. God hears and God answers.



NAC International

This sometimes requires a little time, some willpower and self-discipline, and effort. Please, help along in spreading this fire. Take the time to pass this fire on to our children, to our neighbour.

God's love for mankind is so exciting and inspiring! Let us inspire our children and our neighbour with God's love!

I wish you God's blessing in promoting Jesus Christ.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a vertical line that curves to the right and then loops back down to the left, ending in a small hook.

Jean-Luc Schneider

Walking over water with Jesus

For the Young Peoples' Convention from 16 to 18 February 2018 in Cape Town (South Africa), District Apostle John Kriel invited all young people aged 14 to 35



Matthew 14: 29

*“So He said, ‘Come.’
And when Peter had come down
out of the boat, he walked on
the water to go to Jesus.”*

Dear brothers and sisters, it is definitely something special to stand here and experience this service in this great and wonderful circle. I am aware that most of you cannot see me. Even on the screens, if you are far away from them, you will only see a dark speck. We are just too far away from each other.

That is a nice image. It shows how I feel this morning. When I see you, when I think of the presence of God in our midst, I feel so very small and I realise that I am just a small tool in God's hand. And I want to remain that small. But our wish and conviction is that Jesus Christ is great in our midst today, and that everyone can experience: Jesus is not far away from me; He is beside me. And even though we are many thousands today, Jesus will be with you and very close to you.

When Jesus entered Jericho, there was a big crowd waiting for Him. There was also a certain man named Zacchaeus who wanted to see the Lord. He was small of stature. The other people did not like him. He was dishonest. Nobody took notice of him. But when Jesus entered the city, He noticed this man. He knew that the other people despised Zacchaeus. But Jesus went to his house.

At the pool of Bethesda there was one man who had been lying there for 38 years, waiting for the water to be stirred up. But nobody cared about him, everybody ignored him. When Jesus came, He saw precisely this one man, the forgotten one, and healed him.

One day in the temple, Jesus watched the people bringing their offerings, when He saw a poor widow throw in two mites—it was a pittance. For all the people there it was really nothing. But Jesus saw her, and He told the others how important this poor widow's small offering was.

My dear brothers and sisters, maybe some of you this morning have the feeling, "I'm not really part of the community. I feel a little bit rejected, not appreciated." Jesus sees you, and He wants to come to you and bless you. Others may think, "Nobody cares about me. No one even notices me. I asked for help, but it never came." I tell you, you are not forgotten. Jesus will help you.

Maybe you have the feeling, "My contribution in God's work doesn't count. It's not even noticed. Nobody says thank you. What I do is of no importance."

Jesus takes note of all we do, every offering, every sacrifice. He tells us through the Holy Spirit, "Don't worry, I've seen what you've done for Me, and I will bless you for it." Even though we are a big number this morning, we can be sure that Jesus knows each one of us personally. Jesus wants to bless each one personally and in a special manner.

I read a passage from the well-known story when the disciples were out on the lake and a storm came up. Suddenly they saw somebody walking towards them on the water. They were terrified. "It is a ghost!" Jesus immediately called out

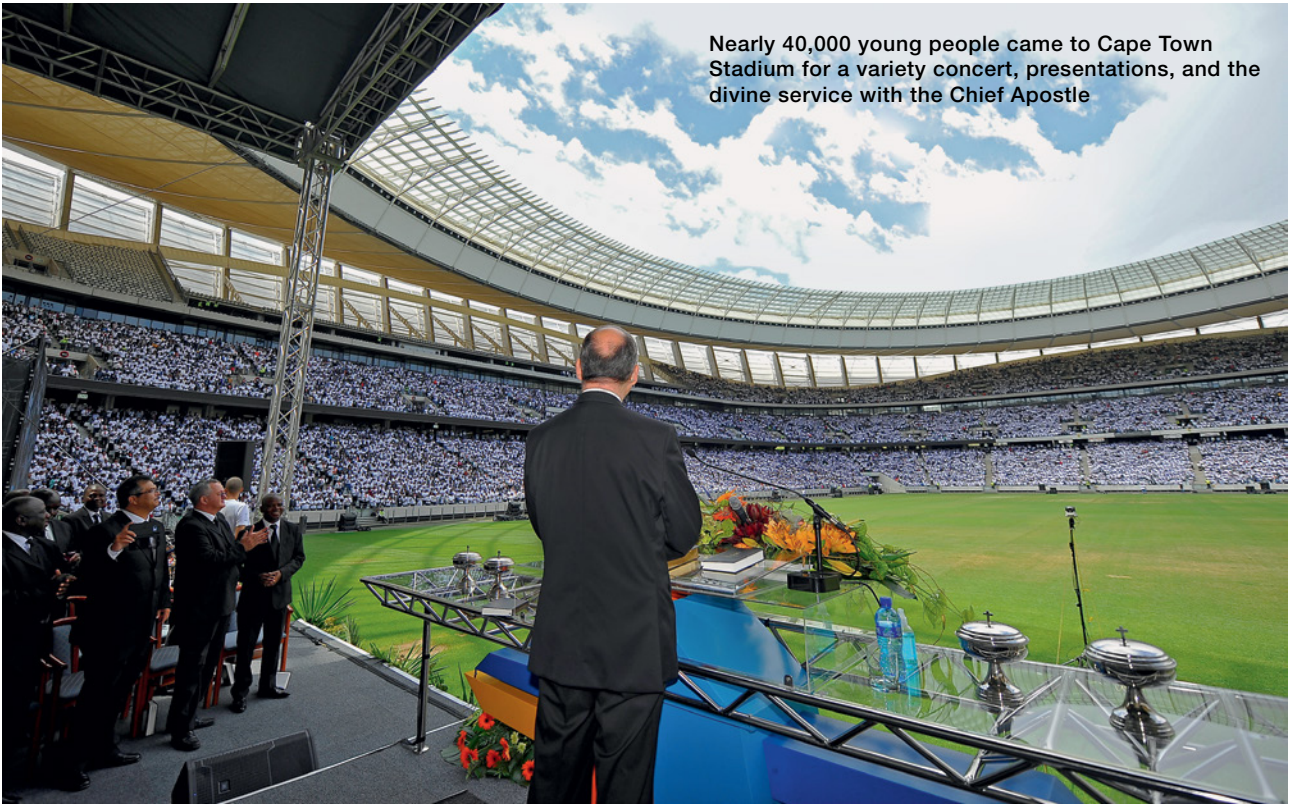
to them, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid." Then Peter said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." And then follows today's Bible text: "So He said, 'Come.' And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus." That is a nice image for our salvation. Since man's fall into sin, Jesus has been calling mankind, "Come back to Me, please. I want to lead you into eternal fellowship with Me." This is not a general call; it is an individual one. God invites every human being personally, "Please come to Me." The same call applies to us. Brother, sister, come to Jesus. He wants to lead you into eternal fellowship with Him.

Jesus calls us today, "Come, I want to have fellowship with you right now." Or to say it with today's motto, "Come, I want to live and move with you." Come, and live and move with Jesus. Let Me be part of your life. Share your thoughts and your life with Me. Come closer to Me.

It is not an organisation that is calling. Nor is it your parents who are calling you. It is Jesus Christ Himself who calls

*If you want to come to Jesus,
you must follow His example
and do what He did*





Nearly 40,000 young people came to Cape Town Stadium for a variety concert, presentations, and the divine service with the Chief Apostle

you: you and you and you. “Come! I want you to enter My kingdom. Come, I want to live and move with you.” And the third call: “Come, I need you! Come and serve Me.” This invitation is addressed to every single one of us.

Peter heard this call and followed it. To come to Jesus, he had to do something special, something unique. He had to walk on the water, as Jesus did. From a human point of view it seems crazy. That is just not possible. How can a man walk on water? But Jesus said to Peter, “Come!” Peter had to follow the example of Jesus.

My dear brothers and sisters, this is very important. If we want to answer Jesus’ call and come to Him, there is only one way. We must follow His example and do as He did. It is not enough to be faithful and come to church. It is not enough to do good deeds. It is not enough to pray and to bring our offerings. If you want to come to Jesus, you have to follow His example. The important thing is to do as He did.

I know, humanly speaking, it is not possible. But Peter knew: if Jesus asks me to do it, I can do it. What does it mean to do as Jesus did and follow His example? Jesus was

focused. During His life on earth, His mission, He had but one goal: He wanted to go back to His Father. Everything else was secondary. He wanted to fulfil His mission and go back to His Father. That is our goal.

If we want to come to Jesus, we must define our priorities. Our priority in life is to enter the kingdom of God. That is the most important thing for us. This is the road we want to take.

Jesus was obedient. Whatever happened, He was determined to do the will of His Father. And nobody could prevent Him from doing so. Following the example of Jesus means: obeying God whatever happens. In every situation, and without exception, we obey God’s commandments. No discussions, no compromises! This is God’s will, and I will do it. Finished!

Jesus was full of love. He loved everybody. Following the way of Jesus means that love is our highest priority. We long to be able to love each and every person.

Jesus was ready to forgive. He even forgave His enemies. And we want to follow His example. That involves a strug-



*Our only motivation
to be obedient to the Lord
is our love for Him*

gle, of course, and it is not at all easy, but we long to be able to forgive everybody, even our enemies.

Once again, it seems impossible, but with God's help we can do it. After all, it is Jesus who is asking us to do it, and He gives us the strength we need. Trust Him! He will never demand the impossible from you. If He asks you to do it, He will help you do it. All it takes is your willingness.

As I said, it was not without risk. And I admire Peter for doing it. He stepped out of the boat and walked on the water. We know that Peter was a good swimmer. Another event proves that: he plunged into the sea and swam to shore to meet Jesus. So he must have been a good swimmer,

but in these conditions—with the wind and the waves—it was dangerous. And he knew that: it was not possible to swim and survive. There was a danger of drowning. But Peter took the risk.

My dear brothers and sisters, it is also a risk to follow Jesus. Many hesitate to follow Jesus, to follow His example, to obey His law, and to love and forgive because it has consequences. The implications for those who are obedient to Jesus and follow Him are that they may have a little less fun in life. They have to settle for a lot less. Those who always obey the law have less money, less pleasure in life, less glory, and less success. If we want to stay with Jesus, and live and move with Him, there is a chance that we will get less than others. However, let us take the chance for Christ's sake.

Somebody might think now, "Yes, but that's risky. You always teach us: we have to forgive, we don't respond to violence with violence, but forgive. But then there is a huge chance that I will be perceived as weak." That is indeed the case. In this crazy world we live in, people who are willing to forgive are considered weak. They are seen as people who have no other options, who cannot fight back and defend themselves, so they forgive. For the world, forgiveness is a sign of weakness. And sometimes we are perceived as weak



District Apostle Michael Deppner (DR Congo)



District Apostle Rüdiger Krause (Germany)



District Apostle Tshitshi Tshisekedi (DR Congo)



District Apostle John L. Kriel (South Africa)

because we are prepared to forgive. However, let us take the chance and follow the example of Jesus.

Some will likely say now, “You know, I’m not that good. I won’t succeed in always being obedient, loving everybody, remaining faithful, and in always being able to forgive. So if I don’t make it in the end, I have lost everything. I will not only *not* enter the kingdom of God, but I will also have been deprived of many things in my life on earth. Either way I lose out.” But that is a chance we have to take.

My dear brothers and sisters, again—and this is my wish for all of us—let us take the chance and follow Jesus. You will not regret it. After all, Jesus is faithful. He will help you. He will bless you. He will lead you into His kingdom, and you will share His glory. You will reign with Him. It is worth remaining faithful to Jesus. Please take the chance. You will not regret it.

Peter stepped out of the boat. He took the chance, and it worked. He did something incredible. He was able to walk on the water as Jesus did. Why? Because he had the right attitude. He did not tell the others in the boat, “Hey, watch me! I am going to show you something amazing.” He did not step out of the boat in order to impress the other disciples. He did not want to demonstrate that he was better than the others. Nothing could have been further from his mind.

His only thought was: I want to be with Jesus. That was his motivation. He did not care what the others thought about him. His intention was certainly not to do anything extraordinary. He had but one desire: I want to go to Jesus, and that is why I will do whatever He tells me.

Brothers and sisters, when we obey the Lord’s commandments, when we are faithful to Christ, it is not because we want to prove to other people that we are better than they are. We do not want to be better Christians than others. We do not want to impress anybody. That is definitely not our motivation. We all know that we will not be able to manage that anyway. We are too weak. It is impossible.

Love for the Lord is our only motivation to show obedience to Him. Because we love Jesus Christ we will do whatever He asks of us. Because we love God and we want to have fellowship with Him, we are obedient and fashion our lives according to the gospel. That is our motivation. And as long as this is our motivation, Jesus will help us do what seems impossible. If our motivation is to become better and to impress others, we will not succeed. But if our motivation is pure, and it is our desire to go to Jesus and have fellowship with Him, God will help us. For man this is impossible, but with Jesus it is possible.

You know how the story of Peter ends. Peter stepped out of the boat, walked on the water, and suddenly—for some reason I cannot explain—he noticed the wind and the waves, became afraid, and began to sink. He was drowning. In panic, he cried out to Jesus, “Lord, save me!” Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” (Matthew 14: 31–31).

This story is interesting from the perspective of Jesus. For Jesus, the wind and the waves were obviously not a big problem. The only problem was doubt, Peter’s lack of faith. The issue here was not the sea or the wind, it was the lack of faith.



Dear brothers and sisters, sure, we have to go through trials and tribulations, we have to bring sacrifices, and sometimes even miss a number of things because of our faithfulness to Jesus Christ. But all these tribulations that we go through do not pose a danger for us. They cannot prevent us from entering the kingdom of God, on the contrary. The danger does not come from outside; the danger comes from inside. If our faith becomes weak, then we are in danger.

If we no longer trust Jesus, and decide that what He asks of us is definitely not possible, then we are in danger. If our faith becomes weak and we no longer believe in the promise of Jesus Christ, and we ask ourselves: is it really worth it, should we really give up this and that, will there really be compensation for this in the kingdom of God, then we have become weak. But we want to remain strong in faith.

Sure enough, from time to time it happens that we stumble and fall, and fail to do what has Jesus asked of us. You can be sure that happens to me too. And then we realise how weak we are. And sometimes we even lose courage and think, I will never make it.

Brothers and sisters, maybe some of you are going through a stage in life where you tell yourself: "I will not be able to make it; I am not good enough. I am just not faithful enough." You can make it. Just speak to Jesus and tell Him, "I want to remain faithful. I long to have fellowship with You. Please help me." And Jesus will help you. He will strengthen your faith. But you have to carry the same de-

sire in your heart as Jesus did, who wanted to go back to His Father.

All those who really want to enter the kingdom of God and follow Christ, will receive the strength and the grace they need to do so. Trust Jesus. Listen to His call. He Himself calls you, "Come!" Respond to this call by doing what Jesus did. Live and move with Him. And even if it seems impossible, you can do it. If your motivation is love for Jesus Christ, Jesus will give you the strength you need to enter His kingdom. Already now you can have fellowship with Him, not only in the kingdom of heaven. Here and now you can experience how wonderful it is to live and move with Jesus Christ.

CORE THOUGHTS

To come to Christ, we must follow His example without hesitation.

Our commitment to follow the Lord is our answer to His call. We are willing to make sacrifices because we love and trust God. In return, God enables us to remain faithful to the end.



Jessica Krämer



Building bridges between inside and outside

Who is inside and who is outside? “Let’s not waste any time over this,” Chief Apostle Schneider said in a divine service in Dieburg (Germany) on 25 February 2018. Other questions are far more important: what is inside, and how does it penetrate outside?

It should be clear that when we are talking about outside and inside, we are not talking about New Apostolics and all the others, Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider said. “What is meant is clearly defined in the Catechism: the church of Christ. We are not talking about the New Apostolic Church. Nor are we talking about the Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church, or the Protestant Church, nor even the sum total of all of these churches.”

“Christendom defines the church of Christ as the fellowship of the baptised who believe in Jesus Christ and profess Him as their Lord.” Only in this light can we begin to examine who is inside and who is outside. “If someone is not baptised, it is quite obvious, but in other cases we must be careful,” the Chief Apostle said, and added, “Only God can assess the sincerity of faith.”

Acting wisely

“We have merely established that there are many around the world who are outside because they no longer believe in Jesus Christ,” he continued. “Now to our Bible text: ‘Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside.’ What is this wisdom? I am going to mention a few aspects.”

- Do not allow yourself to be unsettled. “Whether the majority of people consider the teaching of Jesus Christ true or not does not call into question the truth of the gospel. The fact that many people are of the opinion that they do not need the fellowship of the faithful does not question the importance of the church of Christ for salvation. Jesus said: ‘The word of God stands forever. The gates of Hades shall not prevail over the church of Christ.’”



■ Marcel Felde

Some 1,500 members attended a divine service by the Chief Apostle in Dieburg, which took place in a technical college. Another 35,000 participants were connected by transmission

the salt of the gospel so that people realise: they have special experience, they have special confidence and joy. This acts like a magnet!”

- Do not allow yourself to be influenced. “We have recognised the truth of the gospel and do the will of God. The number of those who are faithful to Him has absolutely no bearing on our faithfulness.”
- Do not regard those outside as the enemy. “Even if many people today are outside of the church of Christ, God does not see them as opponents. Jesus Christ wants to win them for Himself with His love. It is the mission of the church of Christ to give them the opportunity to experience this love and get to know Jesus Christ.”
- Setting an example in the mind and spirit of Christ. “In the church of Christ people serve Jesus Christ. They treat each other with love, strengthen and serve one another with their gifts, and are united. They are one body: the body of Christ. This is the sign by which the effectiveness of the Holy Spirit can be identified.”
- Doing what we expect of others. “We do not treat those who are outside like they treat us. We treat them as Jesus Christ treats them.”

Friendly conversation

“We do not patronise others,” Chief Apostle Schneider said. We know very well that we are here only by grace. We are not better than others. Whether inside or outside, we live by the grace of Jesus Christ.

“Let us have very normal conversations in everyday life,” he said in conclusion. “But let us also season them with

In conclusion the Chief Apostle said: “Let us not waste time thinking about who is outside or inside. Let us strive for this wisdom and speak as we have heard. This will have a positive effect on those who are outside and will help them find the way to Jesus. That is our mission.”

CORE THOUGHTS

Colossians 4: 5–6

“Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.”

We remain steadfast in the imitation of Christ. The love that exists within the church of Christ testifies to Christ’s presence therein. Our words are filled with the joy and serenity that the gospel provides.

Accepting the challenge

While in South America in March, Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider celebrated two divine services. One on Monday evening, 19 March 2018, in a conference centre in Rosario in Argentina, some 300 kilometres north-west of the national capital Buenos Aires.

Chief Apostle Schneider began by describing the historic context of the Bible text. God was leading His people out of Egyptian slavery into the Promised Land. Twelve spies were sent to scout out the country and came back with a favourable report, confirming its wealth. All but two of the scouts, Joshua and Caleb, also reported that it was impossible to take the country because of the strong inhabitants and its fortified cities. Sadly, the people followed them. Caleb, however, trusted in God's help, and God promised him that he would inherit the land he had explored.

But Caleb did not receive it right away. "God did not say: 'You are the only believer, go ahead and go in!' No, Caleb had to follow the rest of the people of Israel and spent the next forty years in the desert with them," the Chief Apostle explained. God was with the people, and provided them with food and clothing. It was only after fighting alongside Joshua for five years to conquer the Promised Land that Caleb finally saw the fulfilment of the promise made to him (Joshua 14: 6–15). God granted him the territory

he had explored forty-five years earlier. To take possession of it, Caleb had to fight one more fight; this one was personal.

Years of battle will bring the victory

Through the sacrifice of Jesus, God delivered mankind from the dominion of sin "in order to lead us into His kingdom", Chief Apostle Schneider said. "To enter this kingdom, we must follow Jesus as well as a certain number of rules," he continued. "We must renounce the devil, fight against sin, and obey the commandments of God." The evil one wants to discourage us and make us believe that God demands impossible things from us. Like Caleb, let us trust God and remain faithful to Him.

God will lead believers until the coming kingdom of God. He will provide them with spiritual nourishment. Chief Apostle Schneider saw another similarity: "God does not look at you and me and then says, 'You are faithful. You can

On Saturday, 17 March, the Chief Apostle had a meeting with the South American Apostles, which was followed by a concert. On Sunday he conducted a divine service in Buenos Aires, which was transmitted throughout the working area of District Apostle Minio





A combined choir of 278 members had practised for many weeks in advance in preparation for the Chief Apostle's visit



enter the kingdom of God right now.” Like Caleb, we have to wait for the day of the return of Jesus Christ.

Personal challenges

To be able to enter the kingdom of God we have some personal battles to wage. “From time to time, God tells us: ‘Now you have one more battle to fight, a very personal one.’”

- God imposes a burden on us. “We become sick. Or maybe one of our loved ones becomes ill or dies. We lose our job or suffer from some injustice,” although we have faithfully served the Lord for years.
- God asks us to give up our own ideas. “We have our own ideas and opinions on what God should do. We may have had a certain idea about what our congregation should be like, how the ministers should be, or how the Church should develop.” However, God obviously does not always agree with us.
- God urges us to keep all His commandments. “We do our best to keep the commandments, the law of God—except in one situation.” However, God asks us to not give up and keep all His commandments, without exception.
- God expects us to forgive and reconcile: “This is a battle no one can fight for us. We have to do it ourselves. God tells us, ‘Keep trying, don’t give up.’”
- God demands a sacrifice: “He says, ‘So far, your motivation was not that clear. You sacrificed because you wanted My help. You did it because you expected My blessing. This time I would like you to do it out of love for Me.’”

Chief Apostle Schneider: “Let us not be offended if God asks us to fight one more battle, but accept the challenge! With God’s help, we will triumph!” God helped Caleb, and He will also help the faithful who trust in Him today.



There was joy and excitement everywhere. It was the first time that the Chief Apostle visited this region of Argentina

CORE THOUGHTS

Numbers 14: 24

“But My servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit in him and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land where he went, and his descendants shall inherit it.”

We have been chosen to become firstfruits of the Lamb. In order to attain this we devote ourselves to God, reject any form of idolatry, serve in accordance with the example of Jesus, and follow the Apostles.

Following Christ: a how-to-guide on gratitude



NAC Papua New Guinea

Giving thanks to God at all times for all things? Isn't that expecting a bit much? "It's unrealistic," Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider says, and goes on to explain what is really meant. Following are core thoughts from a divine service he held on 1 October 2017 in Port Moresby in Papua New Guinea.

"God does not expect us to sing a sincere and joyful hallelujah all the time," the Chief Apostle said. "No, we should give thanks in the name of Jesus Christ."

Let us first give thanks for the salvation of Jesus Christ, which embraces all at all times.

- In the past: "He has given His life for us out of love. When you suffer, remember that Jesus suffered too. So

even in difficult situations we can thank Jesus for His love."

- In the present: "He forgives us our sins. No matter what we have done, we can always come back to Jesus."
- In the future: "He wants us to be with Him where He is and to share the glory the Father has given Him. This glory will be so great that we will not even remember our suffering on earth."



Nearly 1,600 people attended the divine service in Port Moresby. It took place at the Sir John Guise Indoor Complex



To give thanks in the name of Jesus Christ at all times means to follow Him in word and deed.

- In humility and faith: “We are so thankful that our salvation depends only on humility and faith, and not on wisdom and wealth,” the Chief Apostle said. “Not all of us are intellectual or very knowledgeable,” he continued, “but we can all be humble and believe.”
- In prayer: “We are so grateful that the Holy Spirit teaches us how to pray, and that we have the guarantee that if we ask for the same things that Jesus would ask for us we will get them.”
- In forgiveness: “We are thankful for the grace that Jesus grants us and are happy that every sinner receives the same. We are happy when sinners are accepted by God.”
- In trust: “We are thankful that no one, no spirit and no circumstances, can force us to ever doubt Jesus Christ. As long as I want to stay with Jesus, no power can force me to walk away from Him.”
- In perseverance: “Jesus has called us to serve Him. Let us fulfil this mission until the end, because all things work together for good for those who love God and are called according to His purpose.”

In this way, we can show God our gratitude always and for all things, the Chief Apostle continued. “We are grateful because God loves us. We are grateful because we are so blessed, and God responds to our gratitude by granting us still more blessing.”



CORE THOUGHTS

Ephesians 5: 20

“... giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

We give thanks to God for the salvation that He gives us in Jesus Christ. Our offering of thanksgiving consists in faithfully emulating the example that Jesus has given us.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

PSALM 23 *

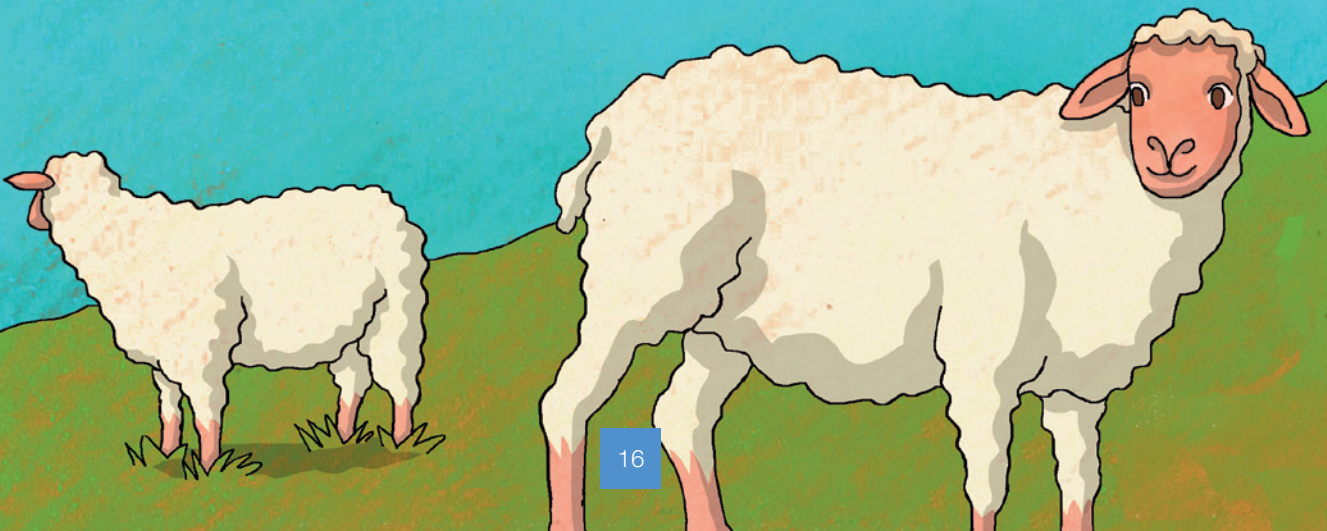
Psalms are poems that were meant to be sung. Some are believed to have been written by King David, such as Psalm 23, in which David expresses His trust in God.

The Lord is my shepherd.
I have everything I need.

He gives me rest in green pastures. He leads me to calm water.

He gives me new strength.

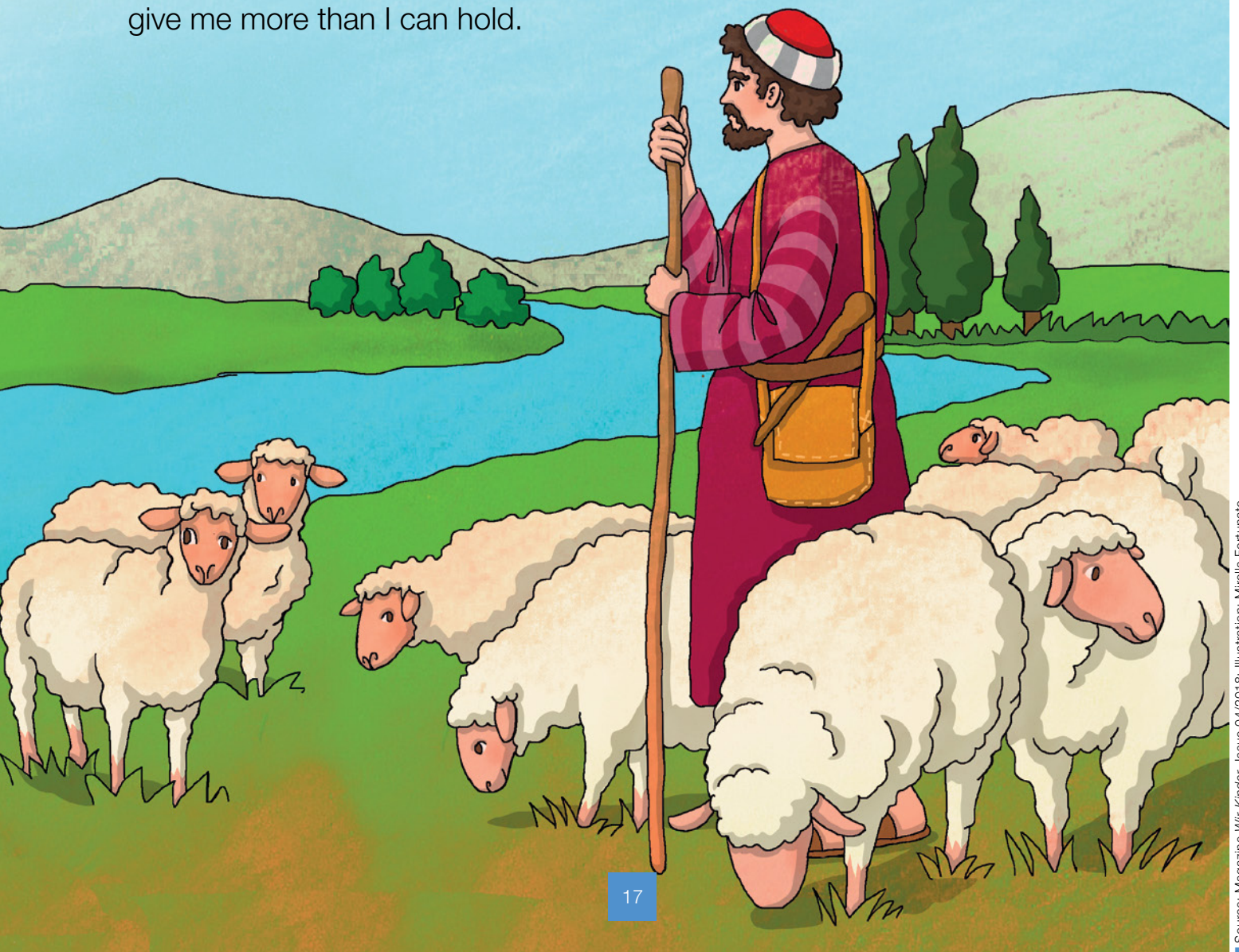
For the good of His name, He leads me on paths that are right.



Even if I walk through a very dark valley, I will not be afraid because You are with me. Your rod and Your shepherd's staff comfort me.

You prepare a meal for me in front of my enemies. You pour oil of blessing on my head. You give me more than I can hold.

Surely Your goodness and love will be with me all my life. And I will live in the house of the Lord forever.



AT JÚLIO'S IN SANTO ANDRÉ (BRAZIL)

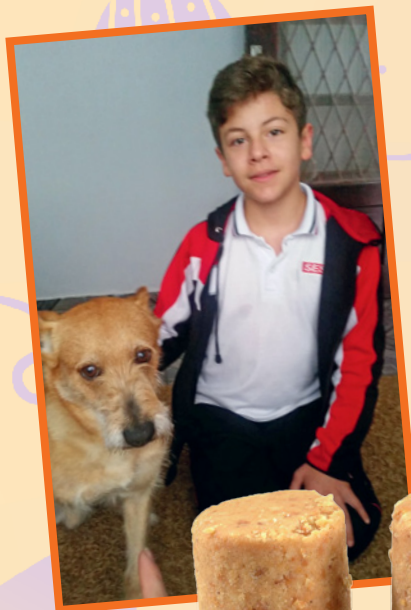
My name is Júlio. I am twelve years old and live in Santo André, a city with a population of nearly 700,000. It is located in the state of São Paulo. I am in grade six. On this picture you can see me with my **classmates** and my younger brother at a book fair.



My favourite subject is math. In fact, I have even participated in **mathematical olympiads**. Twice I came in third and was awarded medals.



Meet Scoobydoo, my **dog**. He only has three paws, because he was hit by a bus when he was two years old. Luckily, he survived!



My hobby is **skateboarding**. I train twice a week and also participate in skateboarding competitions.



At our annual Festa Junina, a Christian festival in June celebrating the birth of John the Baptist, we love to eat **paçoca**, a candy made from ground peanuts and sugar.



I am also learning to play the piano, something I really enjoy. I hope that I will be able to play in my congregation and accompany the members.



I was baptised and sealed in our church in Santo André. The congregation here is important in terms of our family history. My great-grandmother was acquainted with the New Apostolic Church when she was 17 years old. When she was engaged to my great-grandfather, he came to church with her and became New Apostolic. They were married in this congregation. Both have since passed away. They had five children, one of whom is my grandma Edna.



Her husband, José Antonio, became New Apostolic through her. Today he is our Apostle. There is still more to our family history. My father got to know the New Apostolic faith through my mother, and was sealed. By the way, my mother leads the choir in our congregation.

This picture was taken when **Grandma** and **Grandpa** visited us. Normally, there are four in our family: my **father**, Fábio; my **mother**, Laís; me; and Raül, my **brother**. By the way, I was the one who picked his name. His name is the same as that of our District Apostle Raúl Montes de Oca, whom I love very much.



Every Sunday after divine service we have **religious instruction**. Our teacher is really nice. Her



name is Carolina. She suggested that we take **notes** during divine service to help us concentrate better on the word of God.





Election – between offer and mission

Elected by grace. Why? There is no answer to this question. Because the question that needs to be asked is: Elected for what? Following are explanations by Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider on a term central to our New Apostolic self-conception.

“But you, Israel, are My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the descendants of Abraham My friend. ... Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand” (Isaiah 41: 8, 10).

Through the prophet, God addresses the people of Israel in order to remind them of His election and confirm His faithfulness to them. This message also applies to the people of God of the new covenant.

Not only for our own salvation

Our Catechism states the following concerning divine election (Catechism 4.5): “Election is rooted in God’s will to call forth individual human beings or groups for a purpose determined by Him, thereby making them accountable to Him.”

Election is a choice made by God in complete independence. God elects those whom He wants whenever He wants, without ever having to justify Himself (Romans 9: 14–18), both

- for their own salvation, on the one hand,
- and in order to participate in His plan of salvation, on the other hand.

Human beings can neither understand nor deserve their election. Nevertheless, they must make their election sure.

Anything but automatic

Noah was elected by God in order to be saved from the great flood. Through his faith and obedience he made this election sure. The people of Israel were elected in order to receive blessing and salvation. They should have made their election sure by remaining faithful to the Law of Moses. These elections are not based on any human standards. They were God’s free choice (Deuteronomy 7: 6–7).

God also elected the people of Israel in order to serve Him: “And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel” (Exodus 19: 6). Even this election is a sovereign choice by God that continues to elude the grasp of reason.

An offer that must be accepted

In the new covenant, salvation consists of redemption from sin—that is to say, the lifting of the separation between man

and God. Human beings can only attain salvation through Jesus Christ. Salvation results from divine election.

- In order to be saved, the individual must know Jesus Christ, the Son of God and only Mediator of salvation. He is incapable of arriving at this knowledge on his own: it must be revealed to him by God. On the other hand, it is up to the individual to make his election sure through his faith. It was in this manner that God revealed to Simon Peter that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Peter made his election sure by following the Lord (Matthew 16: 16–17).
- The plan of salvation provides for salvation to be offered to all mankind before the end of time, that is to say, before the new creation. However, this will only be possible once Jesus Christ, the King of all kings, has established His kingdom of peace on earth, and once Satan and his followers are bound. In complete freedom, God chooses the moment in which He will make salvation accessible to each and every person, whether before or after death, or before or after the return of Jesus. This election is rooted solely in His will: human beings can neither explain it nor influence it.

Called to serve the neighbour

As the people of God of the new covenant, those who believe in Jesus Christ have been elected not only to be redeemed by Christ, but also to serve Him (Catechism 6.2.3.2). All members of the church of Christ are called to serve, namely by

- bringing praise and adoration to God,
- attesting to God’s favours upon them in both word and deed,
- spreading the gospel,
- doing good works.

This service is particularly incumbent on those who have been reborn out of water and the Spirit, since—by grace and through the activity of the Apostles—they hear the proper preaching of the word, receive all the sacraments, and can receive forgiveness for their sins.

Children of God who have been reborn out of water and the Spirit have been elected in order to become firstlings in the kingdom of God. At His return, Jesus Christ will take unto Himself those who have made their election sure—both from among the living as well as the dead—by allowing themselves to be prepared by the apostolate for this return. They will have access to fellowship with Christ without having to enter the Last Judgement. In the kingdom of peace they will comprise the royal priesthood and, as messengers of



Pavlo Yakhtrushev – Fotolia.com

Christ, will be involved in imparting salvation to all human beings who have ever lived (Revelation 20: 6).

Ministry: a special mission

From time immemorial, God has chosen individuals in order to entrust them with a particular task. Abraham was elected in order to serve as a blessing for all nations. Moses and Joshua were elected to lead the people of Israel into the Promised Land. Jesus Himself is portrayed as the elect of God, whom God has sent to serve mankind (Matthew 12: 18; Luke 9: 35).

The Lord elected His disciples and later Apostles, and also chose Peter in order to entrust him with a special commission (Acts 15: 7). We believe that election to ministry is rooted in the will of God and not the will of man. In the process, the Apostle has the task of recognising the divine will and acting in accordance with it.

God's answer: faithfulness

God is faithful: He will complete the work He has begun (Philippians 1: 6). According to His plan of redemption,

every human being will have the opportunity to be redeemed (1 Timothy 2: 4). Election to salvation is effectively related to the moment when God offers salvation. At the end of the kingdom of peace, all people will know Jesus Christ. The only ones who will be excluded from fellowship with God will be those who did not accept salvation when it was offered to them. None will be excluded for not having been elected.

God protects the church

Ever since the church of Christ was established, God has protected it by according it the necessary sanctification and grace so that the church could always be revealed and experienced throughout history, despite all human imperfections. He has also seen to it that the visible church would always be able to fulfil its mission, namely to spread the gospel and keep faith in Jesus Christ alive.

The members of the church of Christ perform this service out of love for God and their neighbour. And this applies in special measure to us, that is to say, to those who are reborn out of water and the Spirit, since the love of God has been poured out in our hearts at Holy Sealing.



However, this service must also be characterised by the fear of God. We must be aware that salvation can only be received by a human being if he has been elected by God to this end. God alone chooses His elect. This election is a mystery that we cannot explain, a divine choice that we cannot influence through our good works.

Up to the establishment of the kingdom of peace, only those whom God has elected for salvation and service will belong to the church of Christ. Therefore, it will not be necessary for all human beings to be sealed or baptised before the return of the Lord in order for the plan of salvation to be realised.

God expects us to trust Him and serve Him out of love without becoming tired. He will see to it that there are always enough of His elect in the church so that it can fulfil

its mandate. And He will even ensure that this is the case during the great tribulation (Revelation 12: 6). The gospel will be proclaimed on earth until the end determined by God.

God is faithful to His children

God is faithful to those whom He has elected to belong to the royal priesthood. He will see to it that no power can prevent their completion or rapture at the return of Christ (Revelation 12: 5). We know nothing about the actual number of priests of God and of Christ that will be necessary in order to impart salvation to all mankind (the number 144,000 is purely symbolic). No one can say how many firstlings there will be here or in the beyond.

On the other hand, we have the certainty that the Apostles will be active on this earth until the royal priesthood has been established. Through the Apostle ministry, God will ensure that all of His children who desire to make their election sure will receive the necessary powers in order to reach the goal.

God helps His servants

The Lord will also be with the Apostles—whom He has elected—until their mission is complete (Matthew 28: 20). He will watch over the ministry of the rock—in other words, the Petrine office discharged by the Chief Apostle—so that the church will not be overwhelmed by evil (Matthew 16: 18). All ministers commissioned by Apostles—who work in fellowship with them and the Chief Apostle—can be assured of this help from Jesus Christ. With His help they will be able to fulfil their commission.

In summary, I would like to update the words of the prophet of the Old Testament as follows: “Fear not, O church of Christ! Fear not, O children of God! Do not be dismayed, O servants of God! Jesus will remain true to His elect!”



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The horrendous cost of a plate of food

It is a crisis of catastrophic proportions, but it is hardly mentioned in the media. Millions of people in South Sudan are threatened by starvation. Aid organisations of the New Apostolic Church are doing their share to help alleviate some of the suffering.

Mark Lowcock, Under Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, briefed the Security Council on the situation in South Sudan on 7 December 2017. Two million people have fled the country. Seven million people—that is, almost two thirds of the remaining population—need humanitarian aid. Some 1.25 million people are currently in the emergency phase and are experiencing food insecurity. This newest development in the devastating conflict that has been rocking South Sudan is getting little press coverage.

“The poster of the starving child with a tear in its eye and a fly on its forehead has long since disappeared from the me-

dia. In South Sudan, however, this picture is once again a reality,” NAK-karitativ said in a report published at the end of last year. “Millions of children are threatened by hunger. Food shortages and horrendous prices are driving mothers to despair.” The New Apostolic aid organisation set up a plan to begin providing daily meals in schools.

A full belly first

From 2008 to 2012 NAK-karitativ together with the New Apostolic Church Lower Saxony (Germany) and South Sudan built a kindergarten and an elementary school in Juba, the capital. This was followed by a water treatment



Over the last few years, the relief organisation NAK-karitativ has done a lot in South Sudan: from building a kindergarten and a primary school to installing a water treatment system for a school and establishing a medical station. In addition to this, NAK-karitativ has partnered with another charity, human aktiv, in providing food packages and making school meals possible

system for the school and a medical station. A secondary school is currently being built and will be completed in 2018.

In addition, more basic aid was needed and provided. In 2016 and 2017, for example, in a joint effort with the aid organisation of the New Apostolic Church Southern Germany, food parcels were distributed to the families of the approximately 800 pupils. School meals at irregular intervals helped alleviate the greatest hunger.

School meals as emergency aid

“In the current situation, this ad hoc aid is no longer enough,” NAK-karitativ points out. Many families cannot even afford one meal a day. Even a simple bean stew costs more than a simple man earns on average in one day. Recently, David Beasley, Director of the World Food Programme, illustrated this with a striking comparison. “This is as if a New Yorker would have to pay 321 dollars for his simple lunch.”

Daily meals for the 805 pupils and twenty teachers will be introduced at the school for the time being. A new fundraising programme has been launched to raise funds for this. It is called Kindernothilfe (Emergency Aid for Children). Twelve euros, that is about 14 US dollars, are enough to feed a child for a month.

A joint effort to alleviate hunger

Besides NAK-karitativ, other New Apostolic aid organisations are also involved in alleviating hunger in South Sudan. Southern Germany’s aid organisation, human aktiv, not only supported the school project but also Action contre la Faim (Action Against Hunger)—a global humanitarian organisation committed to ending hunger—which is also active in South Sudan.

And NAK-Humanitas from Switzerland did its share by donating to Médecins sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders), which is working in Dadaab in Kenya, the world’s largest refugee camp. It has become home for displaced people from Somalia and South Sudan.



NAC Cuba

New Apostolic Church in Cuba recognised

In Cuba, the road to formal recognition for a church is long. However, the first success on the long road to recognition of the New Apostolic Church has been achieved: it has been officially constituted.

“It was a big step for our Church there. Already now we can officially appear in public and, as an association, conduct any necessary business that a church needs to do. I am very happy,” District Apostle Markus Fehlbaum said, who is responsible for Cuba. For him, the constitution is an important step forward on the road to official recognition of the New Apostolic Church on the Caribbean island. He worked hard for it for many years. Never before have the conditions been better for this: the Church in Cuba received its own Bishop. District Apostle Fehlbaum ordained Alex Michel Reyes from Santiago de Cuba as a Bishop. Now the Cuban church has an official face and its own local Bishop.

The contact to other denominations has been very helpful. For the solemn ceremony marking the constitution, for

example, Bishop Ismael Laborde Figueras, the spiritual leader of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Cuba, offered to act as patron. The constitution took place in the church at his official seat.

Official ceremony

For the Swiss District Apostle Fehlbaum, who has been travelling to Cuba for many years, this was a particular highlight. Ministers and members from all parts of the country came together for the ceremony. The constitution raises the New Apostolic Church to the rank of a legally recognised organisation. It now has the right to freely develop its religion. The forty members who attended the ceremony were thrilled that after more than thirty years



Left: Bishop Alex Michel Reyes de Martinez (in blue shirt); Top and bottom: Members in Cuba



of church work such a step has become possible in Cuba. Seven members were nominated and elected to the church council and introduced to their tasks.

Being New Apostolic will be easier

For many years, the New Apostolic Church led a secluded and quiet life on the Caribbean island. Without official recognition, divine services could only take place in the homes of members. It was not possible to attend a service in a publicly accessible building. This will change in future. In the meantime, applications for recognition of such house congregations have been made to the authorities. “The houses will then become a *casa de culto*, a house of worship,” District Apostle Fehlbaum says. The goal behind this is to make it possible for everyone to attend divine services freely and legally. “Once this has been approved, tourists to Cuba will also be able to attend divine services. For the time being, this is not yet possible.”

In the statutes, the Church declares in writing that, within the New Apostolic Church in Cuba, people come together who—inspired by the Holy Spirit and their love for

God—align their lives to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and who comply with the directives of the New Apostolic Church International. Moreover, the Church expresses an interest in being granted observer status in the Council of Churches in Cuba, an ecumenical organisation, and declares its willingness and commitment to promote the ecumenical development in the country. These statutes must now still be assessed and approved by the government.

In association with other churches

On his last visit to Cuba in February, District Apostle Fehlbaum celebrated divine services, was able to seal members, and ordained a Bishop and two Deacons. He also led a meeting for ministers and their wives, and conducted a divine service for children. “There is great joy and excitement everywhere over the development of the New Apostolic Church in Cuba. We are grateful to our faithful God for the help He has given us so far!” he says, in summing up his travel report.

A midwife without borders

Angela's walkie-talkie squawks: "A woman's haemorrhaging. Can you come quickly?" It is midnight. She has just gone to bed. She jumps up and runs over.

Angela Schwarz has been in South Sudan for several weeks now, a country that declared its independence only in 2011. About 12.5 million people live here, many in extreme poverty. Life here means armed conflicts, epidemics, malaria, and AIDS. For three months, Angela, a 55 year-old midwife from Switzerland, worked in a medical station in Agok run by Doctors without Borders (Médecins Sans Frontières, MSF).

In the middle of a civil war

"People who are bleeding profusely or who have gunshot wounds are received at the gate of the field camp and are then taken to the doctors and their assistants ..." Angela says. Her tone is matter of fact as she talks about the daily drama experienced by hundreds of patients. The field camp—this is how MSF calls the bigger medical stations—is located in an area that has been fenced in twice. There is an inner area, in which the employees live, and a second area around this, in which the medical wards are located. The camp is only ten kilometres as the crow flies from where the fighting is going on. Sometimes you hear gun

shots, the MSF employee says. At night, security guards patrol around the camp.

The midwife is not alone

The maternity ward is located in a stone building with a corrugated iron roof. It is partially open on two sides. Inside there is only one large room. On the left-hand side are two beds on which women give birth. Beds? Well, more like a table with a bit of foam on it. And right beside them are beds for women who are about to give birth, or those who have already given birth. All in all there are 33 beds.

As the head midwife, Angela works eight to fourteen hours a day. Sometimes more, sometimes less, but usually more. On every shift she has four to six midwives who assist her. There are local midwives, trained people who either studied in Juba, the country's capital, or in Nairobi in Kenya. This is a typical male profession in Africa. And then there are the local midwife assistants, who have been trained in a traditional way.



Angela Schwarz/private



Left: Angela Schwarz (second from the right) and her colleagues at the field camp



With a Pinard horn the midwife can listen to the heart rate of a fetus



Urgent help needed

The women who come here are very tall—anywhere from 1.80 m to 2 metres. At six to seven months pregnant they do not weigh more than 60 or 65 kilograms. There is not enough to eat. “Nothing grows here. There is sand everywhere. Everything is parched,” Angela says as she describes the area. Malnutrition is part of life here and seriously affects people’s health: there are many miscarriages.

Some of the women walk two to three days to come here. Their pregnancies are far advanced. “Many do not make it in time because they either leave too late or the child is in the wrong position or there are other complications. Most of the time it is the children who die,” Angela says.

No to herbal remedies

“I am very happy when they make it to hospital, when an expectant mother comes, when we can treat malaria.” Ten to fifteen relatives must give their consent before a sick woman can go to hospital. And the relatives have to be convinced! If a mother-in-law says, “No!” and insists on helping with her herbal remedies, the woman will not be allowed to go to the MSF camp.

The people who work for MSF are aware of the circumstances and create incentives. “Women who are about to give birth receive three meals a day for about three days. This also applies to two or three family members who accompany them. In addition, the women who give birth receive a mosquito net as a gift. And when they come for their follow-up care they receive an extra mosquito net.”

Trained to handle emergencies

“You sit there every day and you pray, you help, you hope, and you resuscitate.” But there is also a great deal of joy. “When you have delivered a healthy child, when you have managed to stop massive blood loss, when you have saved a woman and her child, when they look at you with grateful eyes ...” Angela, herself a mother of two and a grandmother of three, pauses and continues quietly, “... this is it, this is your salary.”

But Angela is also aware of the conflicts between the political parties, the ongoing border conflict, and that people are forced to convert to Islam. She is also aware of kidnapping, rape, and the economic interests in the nearby oil fields ... She has been briefed and trained and knows what to do. She has a small bag packed and ready to go in case the field camp ever has to be evacuated.

Trained to handle emergencies

And in future? Angela wants to go to Bangladesh and help women there; help those who are being hunted down and raped. “I’d like to help people, show them that I’m there for them. I want to show local midwives what they can do when I’m not there.” And Angela would like to establish a home for children in South Sudan and maybe even a shelter for women. She wants to create something lasting. It is a big dream, a strong wish.

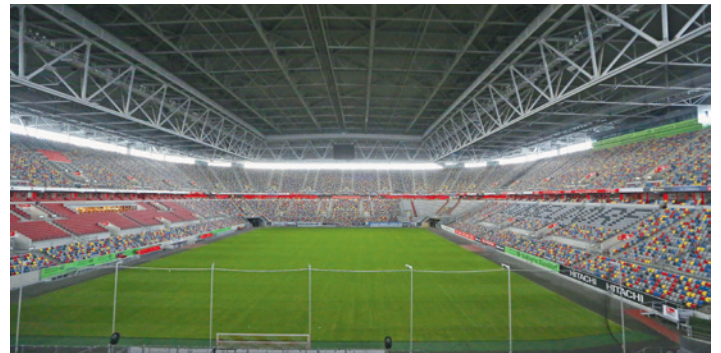
Where are her limits? She thinks for a moment. “I’ve never felt fear. Never! Not once. I can feel God carrying me. And I’m sure that He decides what is best for me.”

IYC 2019: Compiling the programme

“Variety” will be the magic word at the 2019 International Youth Convention of the New Apostolic Church. That much is clear. Otherwise, the topics and schedules are still being developed. And what do the participants want?



Oliver Rütten



From 30 May to 2 June 2019 up to 40,000 participants are expected at the huge exhibition grounds in Düsseldorf (Germany). Thousands of young people from across the world will descend on the city on the Rhine—as was the case already ten years ago at the European Youth Day 2009. Right now, the organisers are busy with the preparations.

They are currently compiling the programme for the three-day event. More than 3,000 young people between the ages of 11 and 34 participated in an online survey, asking them about their preferences. Classified according to age groups—group 1 (11–17 years), group 2 (18–24 years), group 3 (25–34 years)—the organisers were able to evaluate the responses quite accurately.

Divine services are popular

The survey showed that there are big differences between the age groups in terms of what kind of music they like. The approach to topics is also different: the preferences range from serious biblical subjects to parties. Ninety-six per cent of those surveyed look forward to the divine services that will be offered on Ascension and the Sunday after. The respondents also agreed on seminars, panel discussions, and street music. Whereby seminars and panel discussions are more appreciated by the older ones.

Social media, one of the topics, is of special interest to young people aged 11 to 17. Topics such as “Marriage and Family”, “Planning your future” and “Personal crises” seem to be more interesting to those twenty years and older. About eighty per cent of all respondents voiced an interest in “The practising Christian”, “Life after death”, and “The return of Christ”. In fact, faith-related topics are welcome.

The motto: Here I am

The motto of the youth convention is “Here I am”. It is both God who addresses these encouraging words to man and vice versa. And therefore it applies to the participants of the youth convention in a very personal way and stands for: “I will come. I want to participate and help along!” Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider and several District Apostles were given a tour of the exhibition grounds in November 2017. They were very pleased with what they saw.

“Merging and growing together”

The changes in the newly merged District Church Western Germany are finally complete: the new District Apostle presented his goals for the future at a solemn reception to which representatives from other Churches and the world of politics had been invited.

Since January 2018 the former German District Churches of Hessen/Rhineland-Palatinate/Saarland and North Rhine-Westphalia form a single entity. On 25 February 2018 Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider placed District Apostle Bernd Koberstein into retirement and handed his working area over to District Apostle Rainer Storck, a native of North Rhine-Westphalia.

To mark this event, the New Apostolic Church had issued invitations for a reception on 5 March 2018 in the Frankfurt-North church. Approximately fifty visitors responded to the invitation, including representatives of the Protestant and Catholic Churches, as well as representatives from the state and local governments. Bishop Peter Johanning acted as emcee.

Three goals for the future

“Merging and growing together.” District Apostle Storck focused on the motto of the merger preparations in his opening speech. Despite his new responsibilities, he wants to pursue his previously set goals.

- Strengthening local congregations. That means putting an emphasis on individual responsibility, promoting personal initiative, and providing a framework for the congregations in which they can move.
- Prudent financial planning. So far, the financial provisions are still fairly good, he said, but we have to keep future generations in mind. We need to strike a balance between the German regions and those we care for in some forty countries, which are only able to finance themselves at 0.5 to 40 per cent.
- Offering the gospel actively. The teaching of Jesus is also a system of values, the District Apostle said, which makes it possible for people to live together in harmony and get on well. To convey this is not a matter for just one single denomination, but is a task for the entire church of Christ.



■ Jessica Krämer



Coming up

- 1 July 2018 Detmold (Germany)
- 5 July 2018 Ulaanbaatar (Mongolia)
- 8 July 2018 Moscow (Russia)
- 21 July 2018 Kindu (DR Congo)
- 22 July 2018 Kisangani (DR Congo)
- 26 July 2018 Tembo (DR Congo)
- 29 July 2018 Kinshasa (DR Congo)
- 10 Aug. 2018 Mwamba (Tanzania)
- 12 Aug. 2018 Dar es Salaam (Tanzania)
- 18 Aug. 2018 Šiauliai (Lithuania)
- 19 Aug. 2018 Riga (Latvia)
- 16 Sept. 2018 Merlebach (France)
- 26 Sept. 2018 Hong Kong
- 30 Sept. 2018 Brisbane (Australia)

