

community

The New Apostolic Church around the world

01/2017/EN

Motto 2017

Glory be to God,
our Father!

Divine service in Brazil
Love for Jesus

Catechism
Prayer and sacrifice

Catechism
Marriage and family

New Apostolic Church
International



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Glory be to God, our Father!



NAC International

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

“Glory be to God, our Father!”—so says Apostle Paul’s letter to the Philippians. It is a very old idea to glorify the one God who has made and created everything—in other words, to publicly praise His power and proclaim His immeasurable kindness. And yet, human beings have diverged from this practice again and again. In fact, they have even gone so far as to hold God responsible for all their problems in life!

My appeal to you today is: let us glorify God, our Father!

This is not only to be our motto for the year 2017, but is also to define our path ahead in both life and faith. How are we to glorify God, the Father? I would like to mention three examples.

- Let us recognise the greatness of God! He is the Creator from whom everything has emanated, both the visible creation and the whole of salvation history. It is our task to treat His creation with wisdom and kindness. God has provided all the natural resources, but the responsibility for their distribution and preservation rests with us human beings.
- Let us express our gratitude to Him for His gifts by doing His will even if this makes our lives more difficult. Let us bring Him offerings. Let us put greater trust in Him, rather than complain about our cares. He cares for us even though we are sinners. In return, let us respect the dignity of every person. God is the Father of all! We glorify our Father when we pray for those who have hurt us and even ask Him to grant them salvation.

- Let us proclaim His glory by behaving like children of God. In God’s eyes we are like children: we know very little and He knows everything. It is important for us to acknowledge His authority and be prepared to serve Him. We do not see this as a restriction of our own freedom, but rather as a source of blessing!

Let us glorify God, our Father: He is greater than everything. Nothing can prevent Him from giving us His kingdom. His life, which He has laid into us, is meant to develop and grow. In so doing we will contribute to the oneness among His children in the knowledge that there is only one God and Father “who is above all, and through all, and in you all”.

Our agenda for 2017 consists of three tasks:

- to recognise the glory of God, the Father, in His works.
- to thank Him for His gifts.
- to proclaim His glory by behaving like children of God.

To this end, I wish you a great deal of joy and divine blessing in the new year!



The Chief Apostle celebrated a divine service in Gramado in Brazil on 28 September 2016. The city is situated in the southernmost of the 27 states, in Rio Grande do Sul



NAC Brazil

Love for Jesus

Luke 7: 47–48

“Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.”
Then He said to her, ‘Your sins are forgiven.’”

Dear brothers and sisters, I am very happy to be able to experience this service with you. I thought about what God has to tell us today and the first thing that came to mind was that we should not lose heart. I am aware that it is not easy to be New Apostolic in this country, because the membership is small and the congregations are far apart. I can imagine that now and then the thought arises: there are so many denominations in this country who are very successful, yet we in the work of God have such little success. The others have television stations and money, and we are such a small community. What are we supposed to do?

The answer is very simple. Think about the following. Peter had been out all night fishing and had caught nothing. Then Jesus came and told him, “Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.” Peter was a fisherman. He knew that this would be pointless. But he answered, “Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net” (Luke 5: 4–5). They went out on the lake again and brought back a huge catch. The Lord Himself used this event as an image for spreading the gospel.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us make sure that the doctrine of the Apostles can continue to be disseminated. It does not matter how much we have or what methods we use. The point is not to win more members for the New Apostolic Church. That is not our goal. Nor is the idea to find people so that they can offer.

The point is to find disciples who truly follow the Lord. It is important that we find souls who can be counted as the bride of the Lord. That is what is important, not the methods we use. There is only one thing that matters: to act like Peter and simply do the will of Jesus Christ. Brothers and sisters, may this be our resolve in the future too: let us make every effort to put the gospel into practice and to live our lives as the Lord expects of us. Our example will attract people whom God still wants to lead to His work. Let us continue to work on putting the gospel into practice, follow the Lord, and attract others through our behaviour.

Again, it is not a question of winning members for the New Apostolic Church. It is a question, however, of finding true disciples who will follow Jesus and who want to be prepared for the day of the Lord.

Our Bible text may seem a little unusual. Let me briefly explain the context. It is taken from the account of Jesus’ visit to the house of Simon the Pharisee. A woman came in while they were eating. Everyone knew that she was a sinner. She began to cry and her tears began to wet His feet. She dried Jesus’ feet with her hair, kissed them, and anointed His feet with fragrant oil. The people who were there were outraged. How could He allow this woman, this sinner, to touch Him. Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked Simon a question: “There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore,

which of them will love him more?” (Luke 7: 41–42). The answer is quite simple: the debtor who had owed the creditor five hundred denarii loved him more. And then Jesus’ answer followed: “Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much” (Luke 7: 47). Jesus wanted to say: we should love God because He forgives us. That applies to all of us.

Let us always be conscious of the fact that Jesus forgives us our sins. We respond to His grace, His love, with our love.

What does it mean that God forgives us our sins? First of all, that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, suffered and died for us. I do not want to dwell on this now, but how beautiful if we think about all that Jesus took upon Himself for us out of love. Dear brother, dear sister, this is the greatest token of His love that Jesus Christ could ever have given you: He died for you! If we were then to still ask God: “Do you still love me?” it would be insolent by human terms. Christ died

for us! What more could God do for us other than what He has already done, namely sacrifice His Son for us? Jesus Christ died for us out of love and to forgive us our sins.

The first sin He forgave us is original sin. The first instance of grace which was accorded us was the grace of baptism. He absolved us of original sin and made it possible for us to enter into fellowship with God. That may sound very theoretical, but think about it. Through baptism it has become possible for us to have fellowship with God.

And then He still forgives us our personal sins. Every time our actions do not correspond with the will of God, every time we do not live in accordance with the gospel we commit sin, and every sin bars the way to fellowship with God.

Imagine, you have the possibility of entering fellowship with God, but because you have sinned the way is blocked. Well, sure, it is not every day that we go and kill someone, but there are so many small sins that bar us from having fellowship with God. If we contravene the Ten Commandments we sin. Let us go back to the Ten Commandments and read them again for a change and ask ourselves: have I kept everything? It is worth it. Every time we contravene the commandment to love our neighbour we sin. And yet we tend to be so generous when it comes to ourselves.

Jesus has enabled us to enter into fellowship with God



Maybe we have promised God something and have not kept it. We are never lost for an excuse.

Whenever we could or should have done something good and did not do it, we committed a sin. If we think about this we realise just how often we do sin. But the grace of Jesus Christ takes all sins away. I often think about this. God is omniscient; He knows everything. He cannot forget anything, because the past and present are one and the same for Him.

I have noticed that I am getting older and a little more forgetful, but God forgets nothing. When He forgives, He takes everything away. The sin no longer exists. It is as though we never committed it.

It is so hard to forgive seventy times seven times, as Jesus demanded (Matthew 18: 22). Another time He said that we should forgive our brother seven times in a day (Luke 17: 4). Is that not too much to expect? That is absolutely unreasonable! – But have you ever thought about how often you have been forgiven for the same sins?

The Lord forgives us our sins. He died for us. Original sin was washed away so that we could have fellowship with Him and

that the sins could be forgiven that bar our way to fellowship with Him. And because the Lord has done this we love Him. How do we express this love? We remain faithful because we experience His love in His grace. We remain faithful because we love Him even if He does not always

*Because we love Him,
we remain faithful to
Him even if we do not
understand Him*

Some 400 brothers and sisters attended the service in Gramado. Some travelled more than a thousand kilometres to be there



answer our prayers or fulfil our wishes, even if we do not understand Him any more at all, and even if His blessing is not visible. We stay with Him nevertheless. We remain faithful because we want to experience His love.

How else can we express our love for Him? By serving Him. By doing what He asks of us.

Let us do good. Let us serve the Lord—also in our daily lives. We love Him, which is why we want to help Him. We know that it is our task to help along so that all people can find the path to God. We want to help Him because He is so good to us. And because we love Him we are grateful and do what pleases Him. And what is it that pleases Him? He is pleased if we forgive our neighbour. This we do out of love for Him. He has forgiven us so many times already. He has delivered us. Now He comes to me and says, “I have a request: can you please forgive your neighbour?” I cannot possibly tell Him: “I won’t do that. That is too much to ask.” I at least need to reflect on all that the Lord Jesus has already done for me. Alone out of love I do what He expects of me and forgive my neighbour.

Let me sum this up. We must be aware of how much grace God has granted us. The Son of God died for us. He delivered us from original sin so that we could have fellowship with God. And He is always willing to forgive us the small and the big sins—a hundred times if it has to be. He obliterates the debt. It no longer exists. And because He forgives us so much, we want to love Him. Out of love we remain faithful to Him even if we do not understand Him or He does not give us what we have asked for. We serve Him and, out of love for Him, forgive our neighbour.

Jesus says here: “Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much.” These words can also be understood differently: because she loved, He forgave her. This is a causal statement. But Jesus mentioned the reason why He forgave her: “Your faith has saved you. Go in peace” (verse 50). To have one’s sins forgiven requires faith. That is an indispensable prerequisite. You must believe in Jesus Christ. You must believe that He is the Son of God. You must believe that He died for us. You must believe that He resurrected. Without faith in Jesus Christ no one can be saved. More-



over, we believe that the Apostles can proclaim forgiveness of sins to us by divine authority. In order to obtain forgiveness of sins, true faith is required.

How do you recognise true faith and a strong faith? Apostle Paul clearly said that the faith that saves us works through love (Galatians 5: 5–6). That is true faith.

To receive the grace of baptism you must believe in Jesus Christ. Only those can be baptised who profess: I believe in Jesus Christ. What are the effects of grace? It motivates one to follow the Lord out of love. Those who are baptised profess: I renounce the evil one and follow Jesus Christ. I give my life to Jesus Christ. Otherwise, baptism is simply nothing but a tradition, without any effects. So that the grace of baptism can become effective, you must staunchly believe in Jesus Christ. This faith becomes active in love. It urges you to follow Jesus Christ and to live His gospel. He is our example. Jesus delivered us from original sin, and for this reason we love Him and follow Him.

It is the same with the forgiveness of sins: in order to experience forgiveness, we must believe in Jesus Christ. We believe in His Apostles, and this faith becomes active through love.

If we really love Jesus Christ, we will ask ourselves the question: Is He pleased with me? Or is there still something that bothers Him about me? Wanting to please the object of your love and constantly examining yourself is an expression of love. Is there still something that the Lord Jesus finds displeasing in me?

This self-examination is absolutely indispensable if we want to obtain forgiveness of sins. If I love the Lord Jesus then I will suffer because of my sins. Then I do not say: "Everybody is doing it, so it cannot be all that bad." If I realise that my way to Jesus is barred because of a silly thing, a trifle, then I have likewise realised that no sin is too small. Because of this small lie, because of what I have done or not done, I cannot come to the Lord! Then sin turns into



pain, into suffering. We suffer on account of our actions or omissions because we did not do what we should have done. Because we love the Lord we suffer from our sins.

Because we love the Lord we are determined that things must change, change for the better! I want the Lord to be pleased with me because I want to go to Him! That must change. Out of love for the Lord we are prepared to forgive our neighbour. And we ask ourselves what is more important: fellowship with Christ or the fact that I am in the right? That everybody sees the other one is wrong and needs to be punished? Out of love for the Lord we say: we will drop everything; we want to have fellowship with Christ. Because we love the Lord we are ready for reconciliation. We know that He wants us to be one, to live in unity. He does not want discord between people. And out of love for Him we are then willing to reconcile with our neighbour.

Where there is self-reflection, where there is a will to change for the better, where one suffers under one's sins and regrets them, where one is prepared to forgive the neighbour and reconcile with him, there one can experience the forgiveness of sins. It is that simple, dear brothers and sisters. Let us think about this a little more, this grace that the Lord has given us. Let us love Him because His grace is so great. No matter what happens, let us remain faithful to Him. Let us serve Him. Let us forgive our neighbour because we want to please the Lord. Let us have a strong faith, one that acts

out of love. Let us constantly examine ourselves and want to change for the better. Let us become more like Jesus. We suffer because of our sins, and we regret them and want to forgive our neighbour and reconcile with him. We want to follow the Lord and have eternal fellowship with Him. And wherever this faith, which is expressed through love, is active and present, we will receive forgiveness.

Dear brothers and sisters, I had not intended this to become a course in theology. Take these thoughts as coming from the Holy Spirit, and think about them. I can assure you that the more we ponder about these things the more God will bless us.

CORE THOUGHTS

We love Jesus Christ because He grants us His forgiveness. To obtain it we must believe in Jesus Christ. True faith is expressed in our love for Christ.



Struggling with the Holy Spirit against false promises

Appeasing, whitewashing, relativising ... The false prophets that Jeremiah had to deal with told the people only what they wanted to hear. Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider saw an image in this for our time. The congregation that had gathered at the Keio Plaza Hotel in Tama City near Tokyo (Japan) to participate in this service on 29 May 2016 was small.

The Chief Apostle first explained the biblical context. While the people of Israel were being besieged by the powerful Babylonians, Jeremiah had to deal with false prophets who told the people what they wanted to hear. First, they tried to make the people believe that the enemy did not pose a danger for them. Then they told the people that as long as they stayed in the temple nothing would happen to them. And, finally, when Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians, the false prophets told the captives that their captivity would end quickly. Every time, God sent His prophet to tell them the truth.

“The story of the prophet Jeremiah is an eloquent image for us,” the Chief Apostle said. “As children of God, reborn out of water and Spirit, we are citizens of heaven. One could say we are captives in this world and are waiting to be delivered.” But instead of the prophet it is the Holy Spirit who now tells us God’s will.

“But not even the Holy Spirit will tell us everything,” the Chief Apostle said, citing the future of God’s plan of salvation and the world of the beyond as examples. “The task of the Holy Spirit consists in telling us what we need to know



Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider travelled to Japan for the first time in May 2016. A total of one hundred members gathered for the two divine services he celebrated there



to be saved. That is what is important! And that is enough for us.”

Admonisher and guide

“The Holy Spirit also warns us of false prophets,” the Chief Apostle went on. He warns us

- not to downplay the dangers of sin: “Sin is serious. You can never be sure that you will obtain grace. You must obey the will of God, that is your task.”
- not to think we are safe as long as we come to church, give our offering, and pray: “That is not enough. If you don’t change, if you don’t mend your ways, you will not be saved.”
- not to neglect the commission given us by God: “God wants us to be a source of blessing for the people around us so that they can find Christ and discover His love and truth.”

The Holy Spirit also shows us the way to deliverance. “He shows us Jesus Christ and His love, and tells us, ‘Look at Jesus and trust Him.’” The Holy Spirit tells us about the wonderful future God wants to give us: eternal fellowship with Jesus Christ. And finally the Holy Spirit reinforces our confidence and tells us, “Our hope is solid and well-founded, because it is based on the word of Christ.”

“Let us fight against sin,” Chief Apostle Schneider urged the congregation in conclusion. “We don’t just want to stay New Apostolic; we want to change! We are aware that we have a mission on earth. We are part of society and want to be a source of blessing for our neighbour.”



CORE THOUGHTS

Jeremiah 29: 11

“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.”

The Holy Spirit comforts us by revealing the thoughts of God in us and by instructing us in His will.



NAC North Rhine-Westphalia

Serve with love, do not rule!

All active and retired ministers from Albania and the neighbouring republic of Kosovo gathered for a divine service with Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider in our church in Tirana on Saturday, 9 July 2016.

The watchman and the house of Israel are an image for the ministers and the Church, for today's congregation. "The Bible text says: 'I have made you', meaning it is a call from God. We have been called by God to serve Him, not by a human being or an organisation," the Chief Apostle pointed out. And God has called us to serve Him. A minister is therefore a servant of God. Agreeing to accept a ministry does not come with benefits. "We did not become ministers, servants of God, so that we would be better off in life," the Chief Apostle explained. We are there to serve God and the congregation.

Salvation is not automatic

Fulfilling the duties connected with our ministry and serving God does not automatically earn us salvation. These are two completely different things: "One can be a very good minister and do a fantastic job in the work of God and still have to stay behind on the day of the Lord." The ministry and our service to God do not help us in attaining our own salvation. Chief Apostle Schneider was unequivocal: "I cannot come to the Lord Jesus and say, 'Lord, I was your Chief Apostle. You have to take me along!'" He could respond: 'No,

Albania is cared for by District Apostle Storck from North Rhine-Westphalia in Germany. There are two hundred members in six congregations: in Tirana, Elbasan, Fier, Lushnje, Kuçova, and Ura Vaygurore



you were only an instrument, one I no longer need now? If things in my soul do not change for the better, then I will not be there on the day of the Lord.”

The duty of a watchman

A watchman has to be vigilant, recognise danger, and warn others. What the watchman cannot do, however, is fight against the enemy all by himself nor can he prevent the enemy from attacking. It is similar with our faith, the Chief Apostle said: “As servants of God we cannot prevent tribulations from affecting the congregation. We cannot eradicate evil. It is our job to recognise the danger and to warn the brothers and sisters. Neither can we fight on behalf of the members. Every child of God has to fight for its own salvation. This is something the Priest cannot do for the members.”

No dominion over the faithful

Ministers do not have dominion over the congregation. “Our ministry is not some kind of rank that allows us to rule over the congregation so that they would have to serve us,” the Chief Apostle clearly said. As a watchman we have received an elevated position through the sanctification, the divine call to serve God, at our ordination.

Excellent vision

A watchman needs good eyes. If he were short-sighted he would be useless. The Chief Apostle mentioned three

factors that are important when it comes to serving the congregation.

- Consider things from the perspective of eternal life: “It is not only a question of earthly well-being. Think about the goal, think about the coming of the Lord, and think about eternal life.”
- Do not limit yourself to what you see: “We would be a poor judge of the situation if we were unaware that things continue in the beyond.” We have to look beyond our small congregation and consider the work of God as a whole.
- Do not only see yourself: “The Lord Jesus is the example, not me! If the others are different, let them be. Important is that they follow the Lord Jesus and model their lives on the gospel.”

CORE THOUGHTS

Ezekiel 3: 17

“Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me.”

Ministers have been called and sanctified by God to serve Him. Guided by the Holy Spirit, they warn the congregations of any dangers that threaten and act as role models for the members.

Let the light shine!

Nearly 92,000 people participated in the divine service that Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider celebrated in Uganda on 24 July. Well over three thousand were in Kampala and saw and heard the Chief Apostle directly, while thousands of others followed the service on national television. It was also broadcast in Tanzania and Kenya.



Jesus Christ is the light that God sent to earth. Through Him people can distinguish God and see Him as He is. This is a light that cannot be extinguished, because the victory on the cross is final and eternally valid. In order to make use of this light one has to accept it in faith. “Let us not cover it with earthly concerns,” the Chief Apostle asked the congregation. “Let us use this light for the purpose it has been given to us: to lead us into the kingdom of God.”



The light of knowledge

“This light is also an image for the word of God, for the teaching of Jesus.” It illuminates the difference between good and bad and between right and wrong. In order to be able to use it for our own salvation we have to accept this light and believe in it: “The teaching of Jesus also applies to our life and our situation today.” We have to make sure that we do not cover this light up, because that would mean that we hear the word of God but that our actions do not correspond with it. “Let us use the light to illuminate our hearts and to adjust our conduct accordingly.”

The light of the ministry

“Living Apostles have the commission to bring this light into our midst.” In other words, it is their task to proclaim the gospel and prepare people for the return of Christ through word and sacrament. But to be able to partake in this we have to accept Christ’s ambassadors and their teaching, and this in spite all their shortcomings and imperfections. “By not using the Apostle ministry, we are covering it up.”

The light of testimony

“You are the light of the world.” Here Jesus calls on us to be His witnesses, to show that His teaching is the truth, and to prove that one can do what He asks us to do. We accept this

commission no matter the circumstances we face in life, even then when we go through tribulations or experience failure.”

The Chief Apostle summed things up as follows: “Let us radiate the light of Christ for our own salvation and the salvation of our neighbour.”

CORE THOUGHTS

Luke 8: 16

“No one, when he has lit a lamp, covers it with a vessel or puts it under a bed, but sets it on a lampstand that those who enter may see the light.”

We profess Jesus Christ out of love for our fellow man. As servants of God we seek to sanctify ourselves. The Lord has sent us to provide His people with an abundance of care and strength so that they will be able to enter into eternal fellowship with Him.

DAVID AND JONATHAN

(1 SAMUEL 18–20)

After David had defeated the Philistine Goliath in battle, he lived in the house of King Saul, the father of Jonathan. David and Jonathan were friends.

Actually, Jonathan should have become king, because he was the king's son. But God had chosen David. But Jonathan was not jealous. David was his best friend and he loved him. He took off his robe, together with his armour and also his sword, bow, and belt, and gave them to David. But King Saul became jealous and suspicious of David. He was

a good fighter and the people liked him more than the king. Saul became more and more angry. One day he threw a spear at David twice. David was able to dodge the spear both times. But Saul wanted to kill David. Jonathan warned his friend, "Hide until tomorrow! I will talk to my father and find out what he is planning and let you know." Jonathan talked to his father and stood up for David: "He has never done you any wrong. He always fought for you, he killed Goliath. He never did you any wrong. Why do you want to kill an innocent man?" Saul was convinced and promised his son that he would not harm David. Jonathan reported this to David, who returned. But the king forgot his promise and again hurled a spear at David. He dodged it. That night David ran away.



He came back one more time to ask his friend Jonathan, "What have I done to make your father want to kill me?"

Jonathan answered, "He is not planning on killing you. My father would have told me."

"Yes," David said, "but your father knows that we are friends, and maybe that is why he has not told you anything."

Jonathan said that he would go and find out whether David was right. He told him that he would come back afterwards with a servant and shoot three arrows: "If I tell the servant, 'The arrows are behind you,' then everything is all right and you can return to the king's house. But if I tell the servant, 'The arrow is farther on,' your life is in danger and you will have to leave."

Again the two friends promised to stay friends forever. David went to hide in the fields.

Meanwhile, there was a big feast in the palace. Saul asked why David

was not there. Jonathan defended his friend's absence. Saul became so furious with Jonathan for being on David's side that he threw a spear at his own son. Now Jonathan realized that David was right and that his father was determined to kill David.

Jonathan was so upset that he ate nothing that night. The following morning he took a servant with him and went out to the fields to warn David. He shot three arrows and called to the boy, "The arrows are farther on!" Jonathan then gave his weapons to the boy and told him to take them back to town. He wanted to see David one more time. Both cried because they had to part ways.

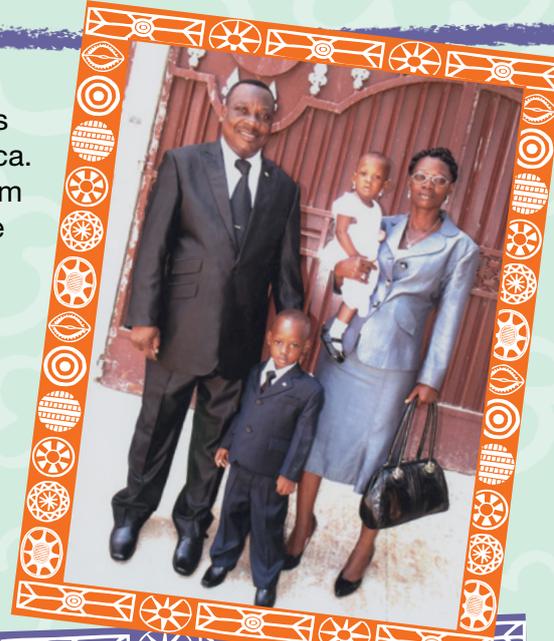
David was anointed king by Samuel. David lived at King Saul's court and played the harp for the king and served as his weapons carrier. He married Saul's daughter, Michal. After Saul's death, David became king over Judah. He was about thirty years old. Seven years later, he became king over all twelve tribes. He conquered Jerusalem and made it his new capital city. He secured and enlarged his dominion by conquering numerous neighbouring nations. David reigned from about 1004 to 965 before Christ. He appointed Solomon to succeed him and died in Jerusalem at the age of about 70.





AT MAXWELL'S IN SOVIÉPÉ (TOGO)

Do you know where Lomé is? No? Well, Lomé is the capital of Togo, a small country in West Africa. There are six million inhabitants in Togo, and I am one of them. My name is Maxwell. Here you see me with my **family**: my father, Dominique, my mother, Edith, and my sister, Jennifer.

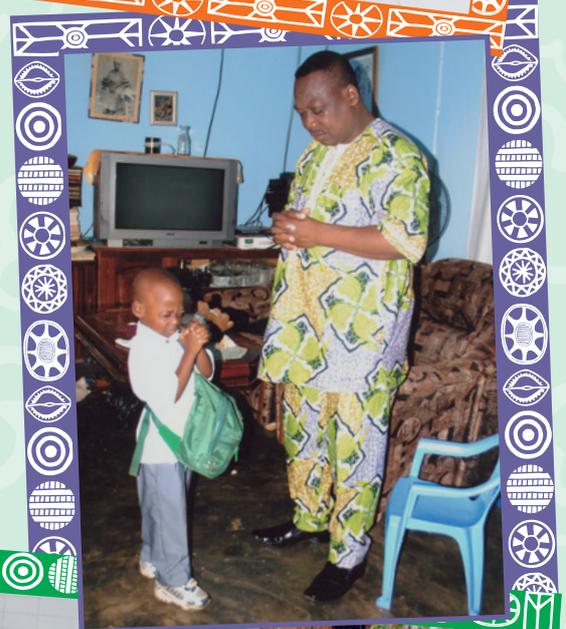


Jennifer and I love to play together. Mama sings in our congregation's choir. When she goes to choir practice she takes us along and we try to sing the songs that the choir is learning.



I have a friend whose name is David. He lives across from us. The two of us love pretend games and we often play divine service. We pretend to **pray** like my father. He is a District Elder.

Our **congregation** in Soviébé, a suburb of Lomé, is one of the largest New Apostolic congregations in Togo. There is always something going on: we have prayer groups, Sunday School, religious instruction, services for children, and a choir. I love to be together with the other children there.



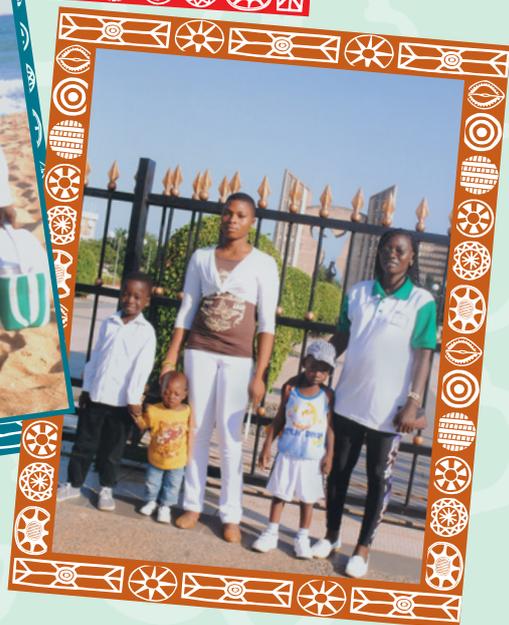
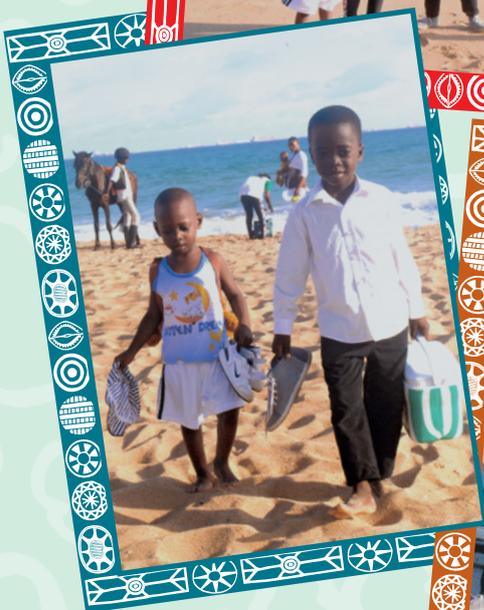
I am only four years old, but I already go to school. Sometimes I invite my **school friends** to church. It makes me really happy when they come along.



When my sister turned one, we went to the **beach** with my mom, my friend, David, and our cousin, Délali. It was the first time I saw the ocean!

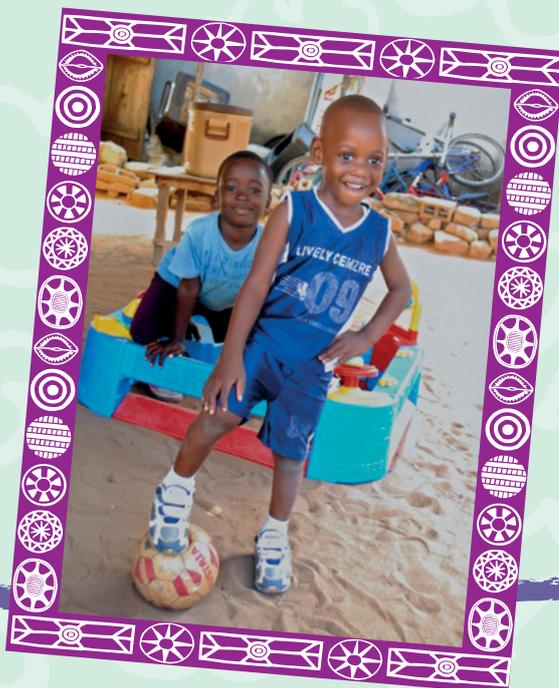
David and I had lots of fun in the **sand** and in the **water**, but I was very careful, because I do not know how to swim.

After our outing to the beach we visited the **Monument of Independence**, which is across from the parliament buildings in Togo. The country gained independence on 27 April 1960, and the monument is a reminder of this.



Outings always make me hungry. And my favourite food, **grilled chicken**, tastes twice as good after. I also love spaghetti.

Athletes need a lot of energy so I have to eat well. David and I play **football** every chance we get. We just love it, and I think we make really good forwards already.



Prayer and sacrifice



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The *Catechism of the New Apostolic Church in Questions and Answers* was published in September 2015. *community* presents excerpts of some of the 750 questions and answers. In this issue we will look at New Apostolic Christians and their life of faith, particularly the aspects of prayer and sacrifice as well as the topic of marriage and family.

What do we mean when we talk about prayer?

Prayer is an opportunity given by God for human beings to enter into contact with Him. In prayer the believer experiences: God is present, God hears, and God answers. Thus the believing human being bows before God's majesty and love in humbleness. The Holy Spirit provides inspiration for proper prayer.

Is praying necessary?

Praying is at times described as the breathing of the soul. This image serves to illustrate the necessity of prayer for the believer. Faith without prayer is not a living faith. A prayer without faith is not a real prayer.

What instructions did Jesus give concerning prayer?

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave important instructions concerning prayer (Matthew 6: 5–8). We are not to make an outward show of prayer nor are we to use a lot of words. We may address God as "Father". Prayers should come from the heart. In view of His return Jesus admonished: "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be

counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man" (Luke 21: 36).

What does the Bible relate about the prayer life of Jesus?

The gospels attest that Jesus often withdrew to pray. The gospel of Luke relates that Jesus made a special point of praying before decisive events, namely:

- before the Holy Spirit descended upon Him (Luke 3: 21–22),
- before He chose the twelve Apostles (Luke 6: 12),
- before the Father transfigured Him in the presence of witnesses from here and the beyond (Luke 9: 28–36),
- before His sufferings began (Luke 22: 41–46),
- before He died on the cross (Luke 23: 46).

It is of note that Jesus already gave thanks before His prayer had been granted (John 11: 41–42).

How are we to pray?

Prayer is not bound to any outward form, nevertheless, the intensity of the prayer can be promoted by closing one's eyes, folding one's hands, or kneeling. The supplicant there-

by withdraws from the busy activity of daily life to pause and bow before God in humbleness.

New Apostolic Christians begin and end their day with a prayer. They also pray before meals. They may also turn to God repeatedly in the course of the day in order to feel His nearness and seek His help.

In the family circle, parents pray with their children and thereby teach them to develop their own prayer life.

What is the content of a prayer?

The content of a prayer is defined by adoration and worship, thanks, petitions, and intercessions.

What is the source of adoration and worship?

The knowledge of the majesty of God prompts human beings to worship and adore Him: "Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker" (Psalm 95: 6).

For what things do we express our thanks when we pray?

When praying, we give thanks for everything that has been given to us by the goodness of God: word, grace, and sacrament, as well the earthly gifts of sustenance, clothing, and accommodation.

What petitions do we bring before God?

We bring all our concerns to God in our petitions. These have to do with preservation in faith, angel protection, or help in daily life. The most significant petition is with regard to the imminent return of Christ and our longing to be accepted in grace at that moment.

Why do we intercede for others?

Intercessions are an expression of love for our neighbour. They are not limited to our own family or congregation, but can rather include all those who need God's help, be it on earth or in the beyond.

What are the effects of prayer?

Prayer strengthens faith and trust in God, and provides the assurance of security in God. After praying, the supplicant is sure that all his concerns now lie in the hand of God: "Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass" (Psalm 37: 5).

What do we mean when we talk about the "willingness to offer and sacrifice"?

In general, the term "willingness to offer and sacrifice" refers to a person's inner desire to use his gifts and talents for the benefit of others and even put his own interests aside for this purpose.

What do people generally mean when they talk about "offerings and sacrifices"?

In common language, "sacrifices" are gifts that are offered to God. They can also be understood as human deeds performed in service to others. Monetary gifts that are donated for religious purposes are likewise sacrifices in the religious sense.

How do we understand our sacrifices?

We understand our sacrifices to be the gifts and talents, time, and energy that are put to work in the service of God and His work. Even the endeavour to refrain from doing something for the benefit of God's work is a sacrifice. Believers also feel the need to express their gratitude and love for God in concrete gifts (sacrifices), be it in the form of money or natural goods. According to Malachi 3: 10, we are to bring the tithe of our increase into the house of the Lord. The tithe can serve as a guide to the members in their offerings.

Everything that the believer does or refrains from doing out of love for God is, finally, a sacrifice.

What is the basis for our willingness to sacrifice?

A sacrifice in the Christian sense should not be considered an enforced obligation. Neither should it be made in expectation of a reward. Rather, the willingness to sacrifice should spring forth from faith, gratitude, and love for God.

How is willingness to sacrifice demonstrated in congregational life?

Willingness to sacrifice is shown directly in congregational life: many members dedicate a considerable portion of their leisure time, energy, and talent to the service of the congregation without remuneration. Many of them are active in the musical programming and instruction of the Church. With few exceptions, the ministers also work in a voluntary capacity.



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Marriage and family

What is marriage?

Marriage is the lifelong union between a man and woman, as desired by God, and upon which His blessing rests. It also forms the foundation for the family. It is based on a public promise of fidelity that is freely given by both partners. Mutual love and fidelity are indispensable factors in the success of a marriage.

Polygamy (marriage with multiple spouses) is not consistent with Christian doctrine and tradition.

What can we derive from the account of creation concerning marriage?

“So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it’” (Genesis 1: 27–28). Both man and woman are thus created in the image of God. Different yet equal before him, they both stand under the blessing of God.

Human beings are created to have companionship. In their spouses, both man and woman have a counterpart whom they can support and help. “And the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him’” (Genesis 2: 18).

By entering into marriage, man and woman are amalgamated into a single entity intended to last for their lifetime: “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Genesis 2: 24).

What is the significance of the wedding blessing?

The wedding blessing can have many different effects: it provides strength for enduring love and fidelity, promotes the willingness to serve, help, and understand one another, and it helps partners to forgive each other and reconcile differences. However, the blessing received can only take effect if the couple conducts themselves accordingly.

What significance does the Christian faith have for the success of the marriage?

It is desirable for spouses to have a common agreement in matters of faith, however, the fact that both partners are Christians is no guarantee for a harmonious matrimony. All questions pertaining to their life together should be discussed and clarified before marriage, particularly in the case where either one of the partners is of a different culture, religion, or confession.

What is the significance of sex in marriage?

If mutual consent and true love stand in the foreground, sex can be an important bond within a marriage and contribute to the well-being of both spouses. Sex in marriage should be defined by mutual respect, sensitivity, and understanding.

What is the New Apostolic Church's position on family planning?

Family planning is at the discretion of both partners. Nevertheless, the Church opposes all contraceptive methods and means that function primarily to terminate an already fertilised egg cell. The Church generally accepts artificial insemination, however, it opposes all measures by which life may be destroyed through human choice.

What is the New Apostolic Church's position on fulfilling one's obligations in one's profession and society?

The Ten Commandments provide direction for fulfilling one's duties in one's profession and in society. It is the obligation of the Christian to contribute to the benefit of society. Each individual shares in this responsibility.

How does the New Apostolic Church perceive its responsibility to society?

Within the scope of its capacity and commission, the New Apostolic Church helps to promote the common good. The New Apostolic Church advocates peace in the world, appeals for reconciliation, and admonishes forgiveness. It opposes all forms of violence.

Do New Apostolic Christians participate in public life?

Yes, New Apostolic Christians are active in public life. The Church does not influence its members concerning their political opinions or activities.

The New Apostolic Church calls upon its members to treat all people—irrespective of social standing, age, language, or any other differences—with respect and tolerance.

What is the position of the New Apostolic Church toward the state?

The New Apostolic Church attaches importance to open and constructive relations with governments and public authorities. It is politically neutral. Its activities conform to the laws of each respective country, in accordance with Romans 13: 1: "Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God." This presupposes that even the power of the state is in harmony with the divine commandments.

The Church fulfils its legal obligations under the laws and regulations of the respective countries in which it works. In turn, it also expects its position to be respected and acknowledged.

How is the relationship of the New Apostolic Church with other churches, denominations, and religions?

The New Apostolic Church and its members respect the religious practices of other people and refrain from making derogatory remarks concerning those of different faiths, different religions, and different denominations. They endeavour to have a good and peaceable relationship on the basis of mutual respect. The Church rejects all forms of religious fanaticism.

In dialogue with other Christian churches—irrespective of differing doctrinal positions—the commonalities of the Christian faith are emphasised.

What is the social commitment of the New Apostolic Church?

The New Apostolic Church is committed to the gospel. Thus it understands its duty to engage in charitable activity that benefits all people irrespective of personal differences. This work is supported by the voluntary commitment of many helpers in the congregations, but also by material assistance.

Within the scope of its abilities, the Church plans, promotes, and supports nonprofit and charitable projects, institutions, and aid campaigns around the world. It also works in collaboration with relief organisations.

Faith can move churches

“You gave a wonderful testimony of your faith.” This is how the Chief Apostle responded to the move of the church in Kananga. But he was far from being the only one to have been amazed.

Not only the new central church in Kananga (Democratic Republic of the Congo) was jam-packed but also the area around the church. Far more people were sitting outside the church under canvas awnings than inside the building. All in all, the service celebrated by Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider in July 2016 attracted more than 19,000 participants.

“Let me tell you how thankful and amazed I am,” he said at the beginning of the sermon. “I congratulate you on what you have achieved with this beautiful church building.” The District Apostle and the responsible Apostle had told him about it. “I was really impressed by what I heard and saw.”

Church building moved

The whole story had begun back in May 2014: the central church in the capital city of the province Kasai-Occidental was dilapidated. Repeated flooding had led to the erosion of soil under the building, causing massive cracks in the walls. A renovation seemed out of the question.



Left: Members carry building material across town to the new site

Below: At the new building site, members help with the construction of the new church





ENR RDC Sud-Est

Inside the new church. A total of 19,000 people have gathered in and around the building

Although the Church owns a piece of property in the city centre, there just was not enough money for a new church building. Together with the members, the Church leaders decided to deconstruct the old building and move the building material to the new site to erect a new church with it there.

The adventure began in December 2014. Brick by brick and beam after beam thousands of members carried their church building to its new location eight kilometres away. Without any trucks; everything was done manually, and carried by hand or balanced on their heads. The move took one month and seven days.

At the end of January 2015 there was a setback: the new piece of land was not level enough. Again the brothers and sisters went to work and started to bring tons of sand to the building site in buckets and bowls—balanced on their heads—from a pit six kilometres away. Members also helped at the construction site under the guidance of professional construction workers. On 1 December 2015 District Apostle Tshitshi Tshisekedi was finally able to dedicate the new church.

People around the world were amazed

“A big thank you to all the brothers and sisters, young and old, adults and children. They showed such commitment and put so much effort into building this new church,” Chief Apostle Schneider said during his visit. “Everyone contributed to the work, whether minister or member, you worked on this together and with joy. And in the process you not only built a church but you gave a wonderful testimony of your faith.”

Following the report on *nac.today*, many from around the world expressed their amazement in the social networks. “This is really moving—literally,” one young woman wrote on Facebook. Others posted “Chapeau”, “I’m impressed!”, “Amazing!”, or “Wow, wow, wow!”

“Yet again it shows that working together as one we can conquer any challenge set. United we stand, divided we fall,” a South African woman posted on *nacworld.net*. And a brother from Cameroon wrote, “Faith is not only able to move mountains but also churches.”

Open to all people and nations

He is at home in two countries, works for the Church on three continents, and speaks six languages: Bishop Aramik Fesdjian has been accustomed to internationality right from the cradle. In this interview he talks about his life between the worlds.



Danièle Idler

- *You were born in Lebanon as the son of Romanian parents. What was it that brought your family there?*

After World War Two my parents fled from Romania as refugees. They wanted to see if they could build a new life for themselves in Lebanon, which was considered the Switzerland of the Orient at the time.

- *You have German citizenship. Do you identify more as German or Lebanese?*

Neither one nor the other. My father—who was a Romanian of Armenian descent—taught me to be open to all people, to all nations. He raised me in such a way that I do not feel bound to any particular place or any particular nation.

- *In which of the countries in your care do you and your wife live?*

Our main residence is in Beirut, but we do have another place in Limassol in Cyprus. When I travel, I prefer to have my wife live in Limassol, because we have had some less than pleasant experiences in Lebanon from time to time.

- *You speak many languages: Arabic, Armenian, German, English, French, and Romanian. Do you also conduct divine services in all of these languages?*

In the past it came more easily to me to learn languages, but now I am no longer finding it as easy. I also tried to learn Greek, but was not able to manage it. I conduct divine services in French (in Lebanon), as well as in English and Arabic.

- *Do you find your pastoral care work difficult?*

I wouldn't say that. I was born in the Middle East. The conditions there are normal for us. Naturally, not everything is easy, especially in Beirut at the moment. But then I ask myself, "Would you rather be in Syria or in Beirut?" And then I am very satisfied and grateful again. I have often experienced God's help and angel protection. Unfortunately we do not really know how often this is the case.

- *Do you recall any particularly dangerous situations?*

Indeed, there were several such incidents. For example, I can recall one occasion in Beirut in 1982, just before the war between Israel and Lebanon. There was total chaos in Beirut at the time. There was practically no government, no police. And some armed men entered the church in Beirut. As we discovered later on, these men had originally planned to steal our cars and then kill us. As it turned out, all they did was steal our cars, but they did nothing to us.



Members spend time together after a divine service in Limassol (Cyprus)

■ *How do you experience the help of God in such situations?*

What I have often experienced—and what I have also heard from our members—is that the help of God often also plays out on the emotional level. For example, there was a war in 2006. It is terrible when airplanes drop bombs. One sister told me, “It was truly horrific, but I nevertheless had a kind of inner peace.” She was certain that this inner peace could be traced back to the many prayers uttered on behalf of our members in this country.

I believe that we experience the greatest divine help on the emotional level. If you are able to stay calm in a very dangerous situation instead of falling into panic, it is already a great help from above. This help does not consist of being safe from all dangers. If that were the case, probably everyone would be New Apostolic, or a Christian in general!

■ *What status does our Church have in the countries in your working area?*

With the exception of Egypt, we have official status of some sort everywhere, not necessarily as a church, however. In Turkey, for example, we are allowed to operate as the New Apostolic Foundation, in other words as an institution of sorts. In Lebanon we are known as the “League of members of the New Apostolic Church in Lebanon”. We have not been granted church status there because if we did have such status, we would have the right to a seat in parliament.

■ *So Christians can practise their faith unhindered in these countries without fear of repression or abuse?*

Yes, this is the case at present. There was a certain amount of time when we had to take extra care in Cairo. For example, we never went outside after the divine service, but rather stayed inside the building and would all go home immediately afterward. But this too has passed. In the other countries I have never noticed any problems. In Lebanon, the constitution even enshrines rights for Christians. One does not feel any kind of discrimination as a Christian there.

■ *Do you have any particular guiding principle or motto in life?*

I think one should always try to see what one has in common with others, and not what the differences are. One should build upon that which binds, and not focus on that which divides. We experience this in a beautiful way in Lebanon. The churches in Lebanon have very good relationships with one another. And we support one another. We see ourselves as part of a larger Christian family.

At Saint Peter's Grotto in Antakya (Turkey); on the right Apostle Jens Lindemann and Bishop Aramik Fesdjian (with cap)



private



NAC Canada

Hungry for God's word

Practising the Christian faith in China is difficult. But in Canada Chinese Christians can live their faith publicly and do so full of enthusiasm. Within the New Apostolic Church in the country they constitute a separate ethnic group.

Canada is home to people from all parts of the world: immigrants, most of whom have been in the country for many years if not generations. One of these ethnic groups, the Chinese community, is growing rapidly. This is something that is also being felt in the Christian congregations in the country, because their hunger for faith is immense. Christianity in China, of course, tends to be of minor importance, but when Chinese immigrants come to Canada they hear and learn a lot about God and the gospel of Jesus Christ. The spiritual growth of the so-called NAC Chinese focus team is tremendous. Thanks to many volunteers and supporters, members of the team spread the

gospel to the Chinese community in the country and provide pastoral care. They even have their own website.

Pioneering work for the last 30 years

One of the pioneers of this work was John Chen, a Shepherd, who has been retired since January 2016. He came to Canada in the 1980s already to study theology at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo. And then there is Evangelist Zhu, who holds a doctorate in radio frequency. He is the rector of the Waterloo Chinese congregation. They receive loving support from some of the veterans of this

work, such as District Elder Herb Pache, who is now over 80 years of age, and many others.

There are three Chinese congregations in the country: Waterloo, Willowdale (Toronto), and Port Credit (Mississauga), all in the province of Ontario. They are not really autonomous congregations as such, but are part of existing congregations and attend the regular divine services. Once a month, however, the Waterloo Chinese congregation has its own monthly Sunday service in Chinese. Otherwise the divine services are conducted in English, sometimes with a simultaneous translation into Chinese or with the call-up of a Chinese-speaking minister, who summarises the most important points of the sermon.

Well integrated

Most Chinese members came to Canada directly from China, some also from Taiwan or Vietnam. Many of them have lived in Canada for a long time. The congregations use the KJV/CUNP Bible, an English-Chinese bilingual Bible, as well as a New Apostolic hymnal in Chinese, which was printed in Canada in 1995.

As for integration into the regular congregations, District Apostle Helper John Sobottka says, “The congregations fully support our Chinese focus work, as do the ministers who serve there.” He says that the efforts among the Chinese community will not only continue but will be expanded. Today there are forty Chinese members in the congregation of Waterloo alone, of whom twenty-five attend the services regularly.

The congregation was busy last year. In April there was a special service in celebration of the Chinese Ching Ming Festival. It is celebrated to honour and commemorate dead ancestors and is a traditional Chinese holiday in mainland China. Evangelist Zhu conducted the divine service and based it on Matthew 6: 11: “Give us this day our daily bread.” This was followed by a question-and-answer session on the Catechism. And in February, for example, there was a workshop for the Chinese congregation on the topic of “Science and the Bible”.

A congregation that also comes together outside of the divine service to study the Bible or talk about their faith or just to spend time together





HelpAge International

Ten goats are enough for a new life

They are sixty, seventy, or even one hundred years old. And in their fight for survival following the drought in Ethiopia they often had to fend for themselves. A project of the New Apostolic Church Southern Germany shows how important it is to help people help themselves.

It was one of the worst famines in recent decades: more than eleven million people in East Africa were dependent on help in the year 2011. At the time, the media was full of images of refugees and relief operations. But as soon as the emergency relief ended, the cameras left too, and the fight for survival began in earnest, because the drought had destroyed people's livelihoods: mainly fields and livestock.

Old, sick, and nothing to get by on

Jillo Wario Guyo is seventy years old and a widow. She is ill and lives in a relative's kitchen. Galgalu Gebaba is about a hundred years old. At least he has a roof over his head, but

no land, no livestock, and no income. For the same reason, Jillo Elema, who is sixty, has joined her husband as a day labourer and works in a mine. Their children and grandchildren can hardly assist them, because they themselves barely manage to make ends meet.

But the lives of these three women in southern Ethiopia have improved, as have the lives of another seven thousand older people and their families in the region of Borana. The humanitarian network HelpAge International has helped them to fend for themselves. The funds for this project to help secure their livelihoods were provided by the New Apostolic Church Southern Germany.



Facing page: Galgalu Gebaba with her grandchildren and her goats

Top: Jillo Elema in the mill

The village communities decide

Not the aid organisations decide who will receive support, but the villages themselves. In some cases all that is needed is a simple cash transfer, but in the great majority of cases the people need aid to help them rebuild their lives and secure a sustainable livelihood.

Jillo Wario Guyo received an amount of money, which she used for medical treatment and to build a house. Galgalu Gebaba received ten goats, which has allowed her to start a small breeding business. Jillo Elema is one of a group of thirty women who, thanks to a donated mill, have started operating their own mill.

Giving people back their dignity

The aid agency Missionswerk has provided 300,000 euros for the three-year project. But already before the project's start in November 2012, the charity was committed in fighting against famine and donated 25,000 euros to Humedica in July 2011 for food and medical supplies; and 75,000 euros to HelpAge for water supply projects as well as pasture management from October 2011 to February 2012.

The big project has now been completed—and with sustainable effects. The aid provided has given the people far more than just being able to provide for themselves. “I am more confident and independent,” Jillo Wario Guyo declares. “I am proud and stronger,” Galgalu Gebaba says. And Jillo Elema is grateful that the start-up grant has “given me back my confidence and dignity”.

Inspiration from social media

For a few months now, the New Apostolic Church has published a daily spiritual impulse. This is a social media project by the New Apostolic Church Northern Germany which started in March 2016. It has its own website and uses social networks. The quotations used at the beginning were from divine services by Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider and two German District Apostles, Rüdiger Krause and Rainer Storck.

Many thousands accessed the site in the first six months so that the project has been expanded to include others. This is what the District Apostles decided at a meeting in April 2016. Since the beginning of September 2016, readers have been finding quotations from all European District Apostles and the Chief Apostle on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest. The quotations are published in English and German and are conspicuous on the blue background.

“Whatever the new year has in store for you, the peace of the Risen One will be with you!” This guiding thought assuring us of God’s promise to be close to us will be featured at the beginning of January. This is the first of many thoughtful phrases to come in the new year. May each one serve as an inspiration and motivation. They are not only there for reading but are best shared in social networks.

<http://newapostolic.org/>



Coming up

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|--------------|-------------------------|
| 1 Jan.2017 | Berne/Switzerland |
| 8 Jan. 2017 | Berlin/Germany |
| 15 Jan. 2017 | Lomé/Togo |
| 20 Jan. 2017 | Sarh/Chad |
| 21 Jan. 2017 | Koumra/Chad |
| 22 Jan. 2017 | N'Djamena/Chad |
| 12 Feb. 2017 | Kulmbach/Germany |
| 17 Feb. 2017 | Guinea-Bissau |
| 18 Feb. 2017 | Guinea-Bissau |
| 19 Feb. 2017 | Sédhiou/Senegal |
| 24 Feb. 2017 | Mpumalanga/South Africa |
| 26 Feb. 2017 | Durban/South Africa |
| 5 Mar. 2017 | Neumünster/Germany |
| 12 Mar. 2017 | Saskatoon/Canada |
| 14 Mar. 2017 | Quebec City/Canada |
| 19 Mar. 2017 | Wuppertal/Germany |
| 26 Mar. 2017 | Evreux/France |

