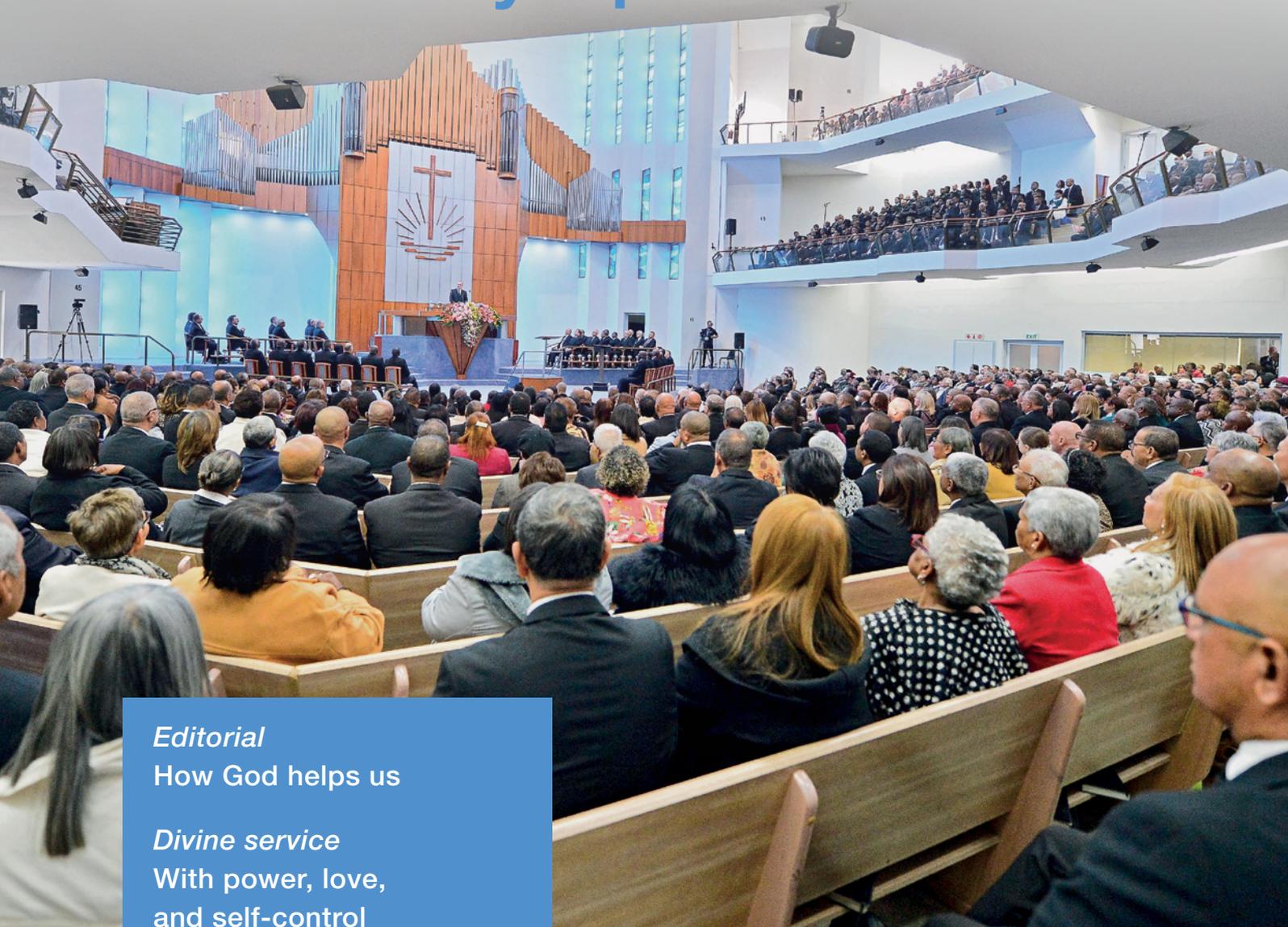


# community

The New Apostolic Church around the world

04/2023/EN

## Trust in the gift of the Holy Spirit



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How God helps us

### *Divine service*

With power, love,  
and self-control

### *Doctrine*

Ordination of women:  
the doctrinal implications

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# How God helps us

Dear brothers and sisters,

We live in complicated times: from all over we hear just how powerful evil is. This really worries us. So it is good to go to divine service because that is where we hear the Holy Spirit tell us how much more powerful God is.

In many places, the situation currently is really bad and dramatic; but let us not forget that there have always been such periods throughout the history of humankind. And believing people have always been able to find comfort and strength in the Bible through the activity of the Holy Spirit. What God did then, He can still do today through the activity of the Holy Spirit.

In these difficult times, let us not forget to worship God. Let us not forget that He is perfect in what He does and what He is. He has chosen us and is pursuing His plan. He can help us if we remain in the fear of God, in obedience, in humility, in trust in God, in reverence, and in love. Sometimes He intervenes Himself and sometimes He helps us



New Apostolic Church International

through other people. In these cases, we have to accept it. Sometimes His help consists of a mission: share with your neighbour and I will give you more than you have given.

Heartfelt greetings

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized 'J' and 'S' that are connected and looped together.

Jean-Luc Schneider

# With power, love, and self-control



Grant Pitcher, Delmaire Viret

The Tafelsig church in Cape Town, South Africa, has a seating capacity of about 4,000

2 Timothy 1: 7

*“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”*

Dear brothers and sisters, it is definitely a great joy to celebrate this Pentecost feast in such a large and wonderful circle. When we think of all those who are connected with us today, we are grateful to our heavenly Father for making this possible. Today we commemorate the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and what we call the birth of the church of Christ.

Thank you! Yes, dear brothers and sisters, in the Bible reading we have just heard about the first Pentecost. It may be useful to remember the significance of this great event and recall the purpose of it all. As always, everything begins with the love of God. This is how everything begins. The

almighty God loves humankind, and in His love He wants to make the fellowship of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit accessible to us. That is the purpose of God's love. He wants man to have access to the fellowship of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And for this purpose He has sent God the Son to earth to open the gate to salvation and grant human beings access to salvation, that is, to fellowship with God. Jesus Christ opened this gate through His sacrifice.

Then Jesus Christ went to heaven and God the Holy Spirit, was sent to earth to continue this work of redemption. Even today, the Holy Spirit is at work on earth to make salvation accessible to humankind. God the Holy Spirit is working to sanctify human beings and prepare them for the return of Jesus Christ. Then Jesus Christ will come to take His own back with Him into His kingdom, where they will have eternal fellowship with God. This is the work that the Holy Spirit is doing today; and it is happening in the church. This is where the Holy Spirit fulfils His mission, mainly through the apostolate.

Through the apostolate, the Holy Spirit sanctifies us in the church and prepares us so that we can enter eternal fellowship with God. The first person to enter into this fellowship with God was Jesus Christ, the Risen One. If we too want to enter eternal fellowship with God, if we want to have eternal fellowship with Christ, then we must become like Jesus Christ. This is the path we must follow. If we want to be with Christ forever, we must become like Him. That means we must think as He thinks, act as He did, and become like Him.

Who was, who is Jesus Christ? He is the one who loves and serves. He was sent to earth to serve God and human beings and to open the gate to salvation. Then Jesus returned to His Father. And what does He do in heaven? He continues to serve. He intercedes for us. He helps us. He serves us.

Thus, to become like Jesus Christ—to think, act, and be like Him—we must love and serve. That is why we are called to serve; not because God needs our help. The almighty God created heaven and earth out of nothing so He does not need me to complete His work. He can do without me. This is not a question of God needing help from human beings. God needs no one. But I need to serve in order become like Jesus Christ because this is the only way for me to have

eternal fellowship with God. I want to become like Christ, so I need to serve.

What does it mean to serve like Jesus Christ? We are to help others find salvation and thereby contribute to God's work of salvation and redemption. We are to make sure that people continue to have access to salvation, and for this we have to proclaim the gospel to them. People must know about Jesus Christ and the possibility of entering the kingdom of God.

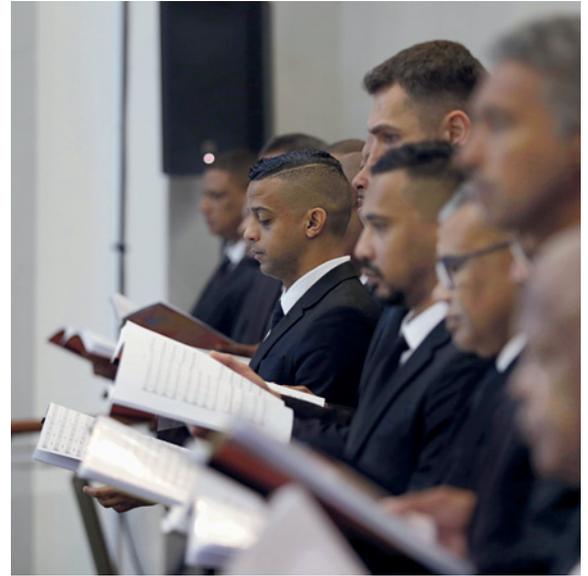
We must make sure that salvation remains accessible in the church. Therefore we must do our part to ensure that the gospel and the forgiveness of sins are proclaimed, that the sacraments can be dispensed, that people can experience the communion of saints in the church. That is the meaning behind this. That is why we must serve. If we want to reign with Christ one day, we must become like Him and serve as He served.

## *Everything begins with the love of God*

I can hear many say, "But in the meantime it has become so difficult. People are no longer interested in God. They are not interested in faith. They don't need God, they get along fine without Him. It is almost impossible to be a witness of Jesus Christ. There is no chance that the Church will survive." Others say, "That's nice, but that's not for me. I cannot do that. I am not able to do that. I am too weak. I am too small." And still others say, "You know, I am so preoccupied with myself. I have so many problems to deal with. I have no strength and no possibility to serve and contribute to the functioning of the Church. I have no way of contributing to the salvation of others."

Then our Bible verse today comes into play. Fear not! God has not given us a spirit of fear. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, all of us have been empowered to serve the Lord and fulfil our mission. The translation of the Bible text differs in the various languages. Here in this version of the English Bible it says that God has not given us a spirit of fear. Other languages speak of a spirit of timidity, some versions even speak of a spirit of cowardice, which is very clear. But it all means the same. The Spirit which God has given us is not a spirit of fear, not a spirit of timidity, not a spirit of cowardice. And that means: "Don't be afraid!"

A coward is one who gives up or loses courage as soon as things become difficult. Don't be a coward! Don't shy away



*Don't be afraid!  
It is a spirit of power who  
dwells within us*

from your mission. We believe in the testimony of the Holy Spirit. Believe in your Holy Sealing. Believe in it! God has enabled you to become like Jesus Christ in the sense that you can serve as Jesus Christ served, and that you can love as Jesus Christ loved. The Holy Spirit enables you to do this.

The Holy Spirit is a spirit of power. The Holy Spirit is also described as the power of God. This is the action, the deeds of God. Through the Holy Spirit, God expresses His power, His strength. Remember, the church is not a work of human beings. The church is the work of the Holy Spirit. If it were a work of human beings, it would no longer exist because we know what people are like and what they are capable of and, above all, what they are not capable of. The church would no longer exist if it were a work of human beings. But it is the work of the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is the power of God. So nothing can hinder the Holy Spirit from fulfilling His mission. And the church will overcome death. Nobody can hinder the Holy Spirit from fulfilling His mission in the church.

We have received the gift of the Holy Spirit, just as the man Jesus Christ received the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was with Him. And it says that the Holy Spir-



A choir and a children's choir touched the hearts of the sisters and brothers with their singing

it enabled Jesus to overcome evil and rise from the dead. And Paul says that if this Spirit dwells in us, lives in our hearts, we can do what is impossible for human beings because it is the same power. If the Spirit who enabled Jesus Christ to overcome evil and rise from the dead lives in us, we can do what Jesus expects of us. Just believe it. It doesn't depend on your abilities. It depends on your willingness. If you believe, you can do it. Don't be afraid! The work done in the Holy Spirit will never be in vain. Allow me to repeat this. The work done in the Holy Spirit will never be in vain. Don't be afraid! It is a spirit of power who dwells within us.



“Spirit-renewed!”, an anthem for choir, children’s choir, and orchestra written by John Rodriques from the music department of the New Apostolic Church Southern Africa, moved audiences worldwide.

And if this is our motivation to serve, our service is not dependent on people’s reaction to it. We do not depend on their gratitude. We do not depend on the success of our work. We do not depend on the glory we get or not. Then our serving will be truly unwavering because gratitude will be our only motivation. And whatever happens, whatever people do: whether they thank us or not, whether they criticise us or not, whether we are successful or not, it no longer matters. We do it for the

Lord out of love and gratitude. And that makes us strong and able to serve, no matter what.

We serve and love as Jesus expects us to. It is our desire to contribute to the salvation of others. We want others to be able to receive the same grace, the same gift, and to enter fellowship with God as we are able to do. To this end, we serve the Lord in the Church and want to make sure that salvation remains accessible to every believer who wants to come to the Lord. It is not our task to force others to come to Jesus. But it is our task to make sure that once somebody has decided to come to Jesus that he or she can experience a divine service, can hear the proclamation of the gospel, can receive forgiveness of sins, can receive the sacraments, can experience the fellowship of God’s children, and experience the presence of God in the midst of His own.

Brothers and sisters, this is our deep motivation to serve in the church of Christ, each in his or her place. We serve the Lord to thank Him, to express our love and gratitude. We serve the Lord because we love our neighbour, and our task consists of making sure that, whatever happens, salvation remains accessible in the Church. A spirit of love.

The third attribute of the Spirit mentioned in the Bible text is a sound mind. Other Bible translations speak of the spirit of wisdom or also—and I like this—of self-control; but the meaning is pretty much the same. Sound mind, self-control, wisdom. “The Holy Spirit is a spirit of a sound mind. He reminds us: “Don’t worry, you are just a tool. The actual work is done by God. You are just a servant.” But it is not

It is also a spirit of love. I know that when we talk about love it is sometimes misunderstood because we think of love between husband and wife, between parents and children. But that’s not quite it. The love of God is much more than just emotion and feelings. The love of God is a powerful promise.

God loves human beings and does everything to save us and lead us into fellowship with Himself. The love of God is a strong commitment, a promise. The love of God is self-sacrificial, a self-sacrificial energy. This is the love of God. It is much more than feelings and emotions.

Paul says that this love was poured into our hearts when we received the sacrament of Holy Sealing. I like this expression: poured out. The love of God was poured out into our hearts. We did not just get a few drops of it. No, the love of God has been poured into our hearts so that it permeates our whole being, our whole heart and soul. God has given us the maximum that a human being can receive.

The love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. And once we are aware of this and believe it then our response is quite clear. Because then we are grateful to God, and we love Him because He is so kind and gracious to us. His love for us is so great that we cannot help but return His love. Therefore everything we do for God we do out of gratitude. That makes us strong. We do not serve because we are forced to. We serve God out of love and gratitude.

The District Apostles as well as many Apostles were in Cape Town for the Pentecost service



that the Lord is dependent on our help. We serve the Lord because we want to become like Jesus. If we listen to the Holy Spirit, we have a sound mind, and we do not think too highly of ourselves.

This applies to all of us: the Chief Apostle, the District Apostle, the brother, the sister, the child, the young boy... A sound mind. It is not about me, but about God. I am just a servant. We have been preaching this for years, but sometimes I wonder: did I really get it? Do I really believe it? A sound mind. God is the one who is at work. We are just tools.



A spirit of self-control. What does that mean? Well, that is very easy to explain. The Holy Spirit tells us, "Don't forget to do to others as you would have them do to you." This is nothing new, but let us think about whether this thought really lives in our hearts. If this is the case, we have enough self-control. And such a spirit of self-control is very helpful.

A spirit of wisdom. The Holy Spirit allows us to discern the spirits, just as He did for Jesus when Jesus was tempted. The devil came and wanted to tempt Jesus. He even quoted the

Scriptures. Imagine that! The devil had his own interpretation of the Scriptures. And it was with this interpretation that he came to Jesus. But with the help of the Holy Spirit, Jesus could recognise that this was not the will of His Father. He could also recognise the motivation of the devil. Even though he quoted Scripture, the devil's motives were certainly not good.

The same is true for us, dear brothers and sisters. We have received the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit dwells in our hearts and teaches us through the preaching in



divine service. Let us use Him to discern the spirits, even if they quote the Scriptures. If something comes from the Holy Spirit, it produces peace, love, joy, kindness, and self-control. That is the definition of Paul. So whenever something happens, something is said, or something is published, please check. If it comes from the Holy Spirit, it produces peace, love, joy, kindness, and self-control. With this tool it is very easy to discern the spirits and recognise the spirit of power, of love, of a sound mind, of wisdom, and of self-control.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us put it in a nutshell. Our goal is to enter eternal fellowship with Jesus Christ. To be able to enter this fellowship, we must become like Jesus Christ. And He is the one who loves and serves. And because we have received the gift of the Holy Spirit, we are able to serve the Lord, to serve God, and to serve in the Church with the spirit of power, of love, and of wisdom. God wants us to become like Jesus, and with His help we can do it. There is just one question, do you really want it too?

*After the contributions by the District Apostle Helpers John Schnabel and Peter Lambert, the Chief Apostle continued.* As I said in the beginning, on Pentecost we reflect on the mission and work of the Holy Spirit and the significance of it all. The Holy Spirit reveals the love of God, the love of Jesus Christ to us. He teaches us how great Jesus is, how great His love is, and this is how He awakens in us the desire to become more and more like Christ.

He also teaches us what pleases God and what is contrary to His will, and we then realise just how far away we are from being like Jesus. And sometimes we lose courage and think that we will never make it. We will never manage to become like Jesus and love and serve like He did. Then comes the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, who tells us: "Don't be afraid. You don't need to become sinless. You cannot become sinless. Jesus Christ was the only one who was without any sin. All you have to do is grow in the love of Christ."

The Holy Spirit is our helper, and He helps us to pray in the right manner and to ask for what makes sense in terms of our salvation. The Holy Spirit tells us, "Don't pray to become perfect. It doesn't work. Rather pray that your love for God and for your neighbour may grow."

I thought about one of our hymns this week, thinking that it is a wonderful prayer inspired by the Holy Spirit, "Lord, more would I love Thee". It exists in almost all languages. Let me just read the first verse: "Lord, more would I love Thee, hear me, I pray! I make this earnest plea to Thee each day. More, Lord, would I love Thee. O Saviour, more love Thee, still more love Thee, still more love Thee." I would propose that we take a moment to let the Holy Spirit inspire us and let this prayer penetrate deeply into our soul, into our heart. Our organist will play this song and we will remain seated.

## CORE THOUGHTS

- We believe in our Holy Sealing.
- God has equipped us with the power of His Spirit.
- We are not afraid because the Holy Spirit makes us strong and capable of love.
- Thanks to the Holy Spirit we have enough self-control.

A children's choir greets the Chief Apostle and his party



New Apostolic Church Indonesia

# Jesus knows every human being

“Jesus knows you.” This is a familiar thought. But what this really means can be quite amazing. Here is a closer look at needs, limits, potential, and motives.

Jesus calls Philip to follow Him. He in turn invites Nathanael to come along. And it is Nathanael who experiences a true revelation. This is how John 1: 48–49 describes it. This passage was the basis of a divine service which the Chief Apostle conducted in Jakarta, Indonesia, on 7 May 2023.

## Yesterday and today

“Jesus Christ is our Lord. He knows us. Jesus Christ knew us before He called us,” Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider began the sermon. Each one has been called in a different way. Some were born into a devout family. Others found their way to the faith by themselves. “But the result is always the same,” the Chief Apostle said. Because Jesus said, “You have not chosen Me, I have chosen you.” And that means that Jesus chose and called you because He knows you and loves you.

“Jesus knows your life and your circumstances,” the Chief Apostle pointed out. He cares about what happens to you seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day. Nothing is too small for Him to not notice or care.

“He knows your needs, your material and your spiritual needs.” That is not always the case in human relations, he continued. Often people offer help and solutions where all that is really needed is a little kindness and someone to lend an ear. Jesus Christ knows exactly what you need. And He will provide what you need. Why pray then? The Chief Apostle’s response was threefold: as a sign of our trust in God, to show Him that we are completely dependent on Him, and as an opportunity to help us set our priorities. “That’s why it is important that we pray.” And if our priorities match Jesus’ priorities, He will give us what we ask for.”



About 4,000 people attended the divine service in Jakarta, which took place in a theatre

## Limitations and potential

The Chief Apostle said that Jesus Christ also knows our limitations. God knows that human beings are sinners. It is our nature. And He does not reproach us for this. What He does reproach us for is if our faith is too weak or our love is not great enough. But He offers us His help to strengthen our faith and increase our love. Sometimes people have to take a detour on their course through life. The Chief Apostle said: “If He leads you this way, it’s just to avoid a problem. He wants to spare you from getting into a situation where you could no longer be saved.”

Jesus also knows your potential. When He asks you to do something, He knows that you are capable of doing it. Sure, not alone. With His help. With the help of your brothers and sisters in faith. But you can do it if you want to. Jesus looks at the heart. “He looks at our faith and our love. And He only blesses what we have done out of faith and love.” Sure, people can be a blessing to others even if their motives were wrong. But it will not serve as a blessing for themselves.

His blessing is a spiritual one. Those who are blessed because of their faith and love have peace and joy in their hearts. And they experience the presence of God. If this is lacking we should perhaps examine ourselves and our motivations, the Chief Apostle suggested.

## Weaknesses and sanctification

“Jesus also knows the weaknesses of His servants. But He sanctifies them,” the Chief Apostle said. So trust Him, He

can give you what you need for salvation even through imperfect human beings, he urged.

The Chief Apostle drew the following conclusion: “God called us personally to lead us into His kingdom. He cares about us and provides for our needs. He knows what we are capable of. He blesses the work of our love. He sanctifies His servants.”

## CORE THOUGHTS

*John 1: 48–49*

**“Nathanael said to Him, ‘How do You know me?’ Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.’ Nathanael answered and said to Him, ‘Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!’”**

God has called us personally to lead us into His kingdom. He turns to us and provides for our needs. He knows what we are capable of. He blesses the work of our love. He sanctifies His servants.

Shortly after the devastating earthquake in Turkey, the Chief Apostle visited the brothers and sisters in Istanbul, Turkey



New Apostolic Church Istanbul, Turkey

## Everything is in God's hands

In a difficult period, the psalmist wrote that he would commit his spirit into God's hand. In a divine service recently, the Chief Apostle showed that this still works today. And it is not just our spirit that can be placed into God's hand.

Two months after the devastating earthquake in Turkey and Syria, Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider visited the congregation in Istanbul in Turkey. "I was deeply moved by what I heard, but especially by the dignity and faith of our brothers and sisters," the Chief Apostle reported in his circular to the Apostles. The divine service on the evening of 3 April in the church in Istanbul was attended by believers from across Turkey, Egypt, and Lebanon.

"Into Your hand I commit my spirit; You have redeemed me, O Lord God of truth." This verse from Psalm 31: 5 served as basis for this divine service. "It is a word from a psalmist who had to deal with hardships and trials," the Chief Apostle explained. "He had enemies who wanted to kill him. Life was very difficult for him. Nevertheless, he

expressed his trust." This devout Jew knew that God had delivered the people of Israel from Egypt, and he had already experienced God's help in his own life. And that is why he was convinced: "God will not abandon me. He will help me."

### Putting our spirit in God's hands

"In the modern sense of the word, the spirit helps us to understand," explained Chief Apostle Schneider. "As humans, we have a problem: our spirit, our mind, does not allow us to understand God."

"We have our knowledge of God, we have our experiences with God, but we are simply not able to grasp the whole



## Tools in God's hand

“In the past, prophets used to say: ‘The hand of God was upon me’ to express the fact that they had been called by God to fulfil a mission,” the Chief Apostle said, pointing out yet another aspect of the Bible verse. “We know that after having been reborn of water and Spirit, we were called, chosen, and sent to fulfil a special mission. We have been sent to be witnesses of Christ in our lives. We have been called and sent to do good to our neighbour.” He urged the believers: “Let us put ourselves in God's hands and be aware that whatever happens—in good or bad times, whether we are young or old, strong or weak—we have been called and sent to fulfil a mission.”

picture of God and will never understand God.” Despite this we can say with confidence: “We don't know much, but we trust God, we believe that He is faithful, that He is love.”

## Putting our life in God's hands

“When the psalmist speaks about his spirit, he also means his own life,” the Chief Apostle explained. We believe that God has told us that He loves us and that He wants to lead us into His kingdom. He wants to deliver us from evil and death and lead us into His kingdom where there is peace and eternal life. So we decided to follow Him. Figuratively, we walk hand in hand with God. Deciding for God means:

- we believe that He is the Almighty. His hand can save us.
- He wants to lead us into His kingdom, and He will complete the work He has begun among us. Nothing can stop Him.
- He will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we can bear.

## Putting our soul in God's hands

To enter the kingdom of God it is necessary to lay one's soul in God's hands. “Or, to use an image from the Old Testament, we say to God: we are the clay and you are the potter; teach us, sanctify us, and mould us into the image of Jesus Christ,” the Chief Apostle said. To do this, God uses His word, and He uses our lives, and our experiences of life. Even the bad things that happen to us can contribute to good.

## Time is in God's hands

The psalm also means that God decides on life. “The time we have in order to prepare ourselves for the return of Christ does not depend on us. Actually, our time is in God's hands. He will decide when Jesus will return,” the Chief Apostle said, admitting: “I have no idea when that will be.” That's why: “He wants us to do right now what He tells us to do. We don't know how much time we will have. So let's do right now what He wants us to do.”

## CORE THOUGHTS

*Psalm 31: 5*

**“Into Your hand I commit my spirit;  
You have redeemed me, O Lord God  
of truth.”**

We trust in God, in His word, and in His love. We put our life in His hands, no matter what happens. We let Him mould us into the image of Christ. We serve Him and do what He asks of us without delay.

A children's choir welcomes Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider, pictured here with District Apostle Storck, and his party



New Apostolic Church Kingston, Jamaica

## When the lame learn to walk

Praising God in the temple—and out loud too. This was the reaction of a certain beggar when Apostles healed him from his paralysis. And what does that have to do with the here and now? Here too, believers must learn to walk. Here is some therapy from a divine service with the Chief Apostle.

A man sits in front of the temple. He has been paralysed since birth and is dependent on the help of others. When Apostles Peter and John walk by, they call upon him to get up and walk—and a miracle occurs.

In a divine service in Kingston, Jamaica on 3 August, Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider interpreted these events as they apply to the present. “This account is an image for the redemption of mankind,” the Chief Apostle explained. The beggar was not able to enter the temple due to his illness. And: “Ever since the fall into sin, human beings have been paralysed in the sense that they cannot come to God.” God

sent the Apostles of today in order to liberate human beings from this dominion of sin so that they can go and meet God and enter into His kingdom, the Chief Apostle said.

### Touched by Apostles

The Apostles spoke to the paralysed man and extended their hands to him. Similarly, the Apostles of today proclaim the gospel and touch human beings as they dispense the sacraments. “And once people are baptised, hear the word of God, and come to believe in it, they are able to enter the kingdom of God and can then also come to God.”

This man in the Bible story was forty years old and had been paralysed since birth. And then someone came along and simply told him to get up and walk. “This is unbelievable,” the Chief Apostle said. But the beggar had to believe these words in order to be healed. We must likewise believe in the preaching of the Apostles. Even if others say it is impossible, unrealistic, or crazy.

## Praising God

After having been healed, the man went into the temple with the Apostles. “We have begun to walk, to move forward, to draw nearer to God. That is our decision,” the Chief Apostle said. “We walk, just as this man did, with the Apostles.” Perhaps there will be some disappointments along the way—such as unfulfilled prayers or similar issues—but there is no reason to give up.

The man went into the temple with the Apostles, and praised God—and everyone was able to see it. Similarly, the believers today approach the glory of God and praise and glorify Him. And the Chief Apostle went on to explain exactly how we can do this. By

- giving thanks: “Even if someone is seriously ill or suffering under very difficult situations, there is always a reason—or perhaps several reasons—to give thanks to God.”
- keeping our promises: “We have vowed to renounce the evil one and do good works.”
- serving: “Praising God also means that we are part of the Church and that we are active members of the Church.”
- accepting our neighbour: “Yet another way to glorify and praise the Lord is to accept one another just as Jesus Christ has accepted us.”
- professing: “I often say that we should talk less about what other people do or what the devil does, and rather talk a little bit more about that which Jesus does, be it in the church or in the world.”

## Moving forward

The people around the beggar heard him praise God and realised that this was none other than the paralysed man who was suddenly able to walk and loudly praised God for the help he had received. This convinced many of them to be baptised. “Our neighbours, the people who live around us, can see us and know very well that we are not perfect,” the Chief Apostle said. “However, they should also be able to notice that we are walking, that we are on our way, that we are moving forward, in order to enter into the kingdom of God—and that we praise the Lord along the way.”



District Apostle Rainer Storck, Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider, District Apostle Leonard Kolb, Apostle Robert Ferguson, and District Elder Shorn Stephenson



## CORE THOUGHTS

*Acts 3: 6*

**“Then Peter said, ‘Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.’”**

We believe in the proclamation of the Apostles and follow them to the goal. We express our gratitude to God, remain faithful to Him, and serve Him. And we accept one another and profess His name.

## THE ASCENSION OF JESUS

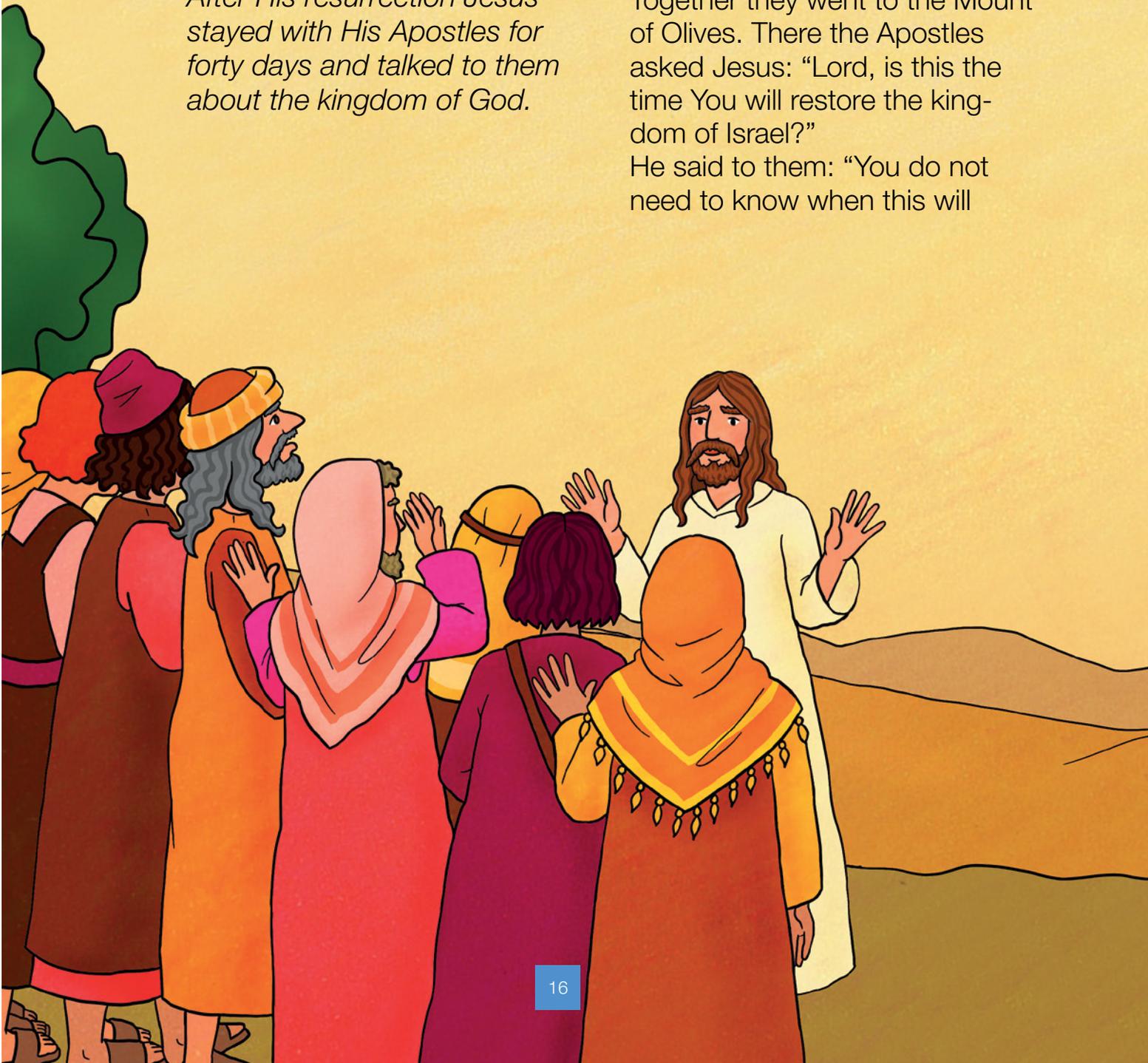
ACCORDING TO ACTS 1: 4-12

*After His resurrection Jesus stayed with His Apostles for forty days and talked to them about the kingdom of God.*

Jesus ordered His Apostles not to leave Jerusalem. They were to wait until the Spirit of God came to them: "John baptised people with water, but in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit."

Together they went to the Mount of Olives. There the Apostles asked Jesus: "Lord, is this the time You will restore the kingdom of Israel?"

He said to them: "You do not need to know when this will



happen. The Father in heaven will determine when this will happen. But the Holy Spirit will come upon you. You will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, in all of Judea, in Samaria, and in every part of the world.”

After Jesus had said this, He was lifted up and a cloud hid Him from their sight. As they stood staring up into the sky, two men wearing white clothes suddenly stood beside them. They said, “Men of Galilee,

why do you stand there looking up into heaven? This Jesus who has been taken from you up to heaven will come in the same way as you have seen Him go.” At that, the Apostles turned around and went back to Jerusalem and waited for the Holy Spirit.



## AT RUTH'S IN FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE

My name is Ruth. I turned twelve in July. Here I am wearing my Leone Stars **jersey**, which I wore to support my country in the last African Nations cup in Cameroun.



At **school** I like Religious and Moral Education, French, and English. Later on, I would like to become a data analyst, even

though I find math a little hard. This is my class. I sit in the front and am the second from the left.



I like to play with my friends. We especially love to go to the beach. Here I am dressed to go to a **birthday party**.



Meet my **family**: my father works as a translator. He comes from the western part of the country. My mother is from Guinea. she is an economist and works as a teacher. My younger brother is called Morie. He is two years old.

Sierra Leone has beautiful beaches. **Freetown** is our capital. It is a major port city and is on the Atlantic Ocean. My father is the rector of our congregation in Lumley, in the western part of Freetown. We also live in Lumley, in the church compound. **Lumley Beach** is close and we often go there.





When we go on outings, I like to eat fufu and okra soup. When we go to a **restaurant** I love to order fried rice with chicken and vegetables or pizza.

There are two distinct seasons here: a wet and a dry season, so we cannot always go to the **beach**. The rainy season is from May to October. In August and September we get the most rain. Sometimes it rains for days on end; I don't like that at all.

This photo of our **church** was taken on the day it was dedicated.

And here we are outside our church with some of the **members** from our congregation. I go to Sunday School and am getting ready to start confirmation classes.

I like music. I play the **shegbureh**, which is a percussion instrument of the Mende people in Sierra Leone. I can also play the drum next to me. I also take piano lessons and sing in the choir.



On 16 June we celebrate the Day of the African Child. Then we always come together in our central church in Freetown for a children's service, where we meet with children from other congregations in our district. This picture shows the **children** from our congregation. I am at the back, second from the right.





# Ordination of women: the doctrinal implications

Gender equivalence and equality before God the Creator, no statements from Jesus Christ, and contradictions in the letters of the Apostles. This is the result of the critical assessment of the Bible. What doctrinal consequences does the New Apostolic Church draw from this? Here is the fourth and final part of the essay on the ordination of women.

The essay entitled “The New Apostolic understanding of the spiritual ministry” explains: “The service incumbent on every Christian, which can also be performed without ordination, has an unmistakably priestly aspect. In 1 Peter 2: 9 the members of the congregation are even addressed as a ‘royal priesthood’. The believers—who have been buried and have resurrected with Jesus in their baptism with water—will follow Him and profess Him as their Lord, and will be part of a universal priesthood of believers. This priesthood is realised by following Christ in word and deed. The priesthood that is based on divine election and imparted through ordination is to be distinguished from this priesthood, which has not been issued any sacramental authority.”

These explanations, together with the theological justification in the last part concerning the ordination of women into ministry from an anthropological and soteriological point of view, lead to the following conclusion: not only are women and men alike called to the universal priesthood of believers, but both can also be called to spiritual ministry. Therefore, women can likewise receive blessing, sanctification, and authority through the mediation of the apostolate

## Designated by God

The Fifth Article of Faith, which among other things deals with the subject of ordination, states: “I believe that those designated by God for a ministry are ordained only by Apostles, and that authority, blessing, and sanctification for their ministration come forth out of the Apostle ministry” (CNAC 2.4.5). The explanations pertaining to this article of faith are of crucial significance for the present considerations: “God is the one who designates an individual for a ministry. Thus the ministry is not a human work, nor is it ultimately that of the congregation. Rather it is God’s gift to His church. The human being, as expressed in the Fifth Article of Faith, bears [this] ministry on the basis of divine will and not human decision” (ibid.). The article thus speaks of human beings in general terms—that is, without reference to gender—with respect to those who have been designated by God for a ministry. It can therefore be said that both women and men can be designated by God for a ministry.

## Blessing and sanctification

The task of recognising the designated individual and ordaining him or her into ministry lies with the Apostle ministry. Both women and men alike can experience that blessing and sanctification are issued for the service for

which they have been designated. Concerning this, the Catechism remarks as follows: “Through the blessing, both the priestly ministries and the Deacons are assured of the divine support and help of the Holy Spirit in the exercise of their ministries. Sanctification points to the fact that it is God Himself, in His holiness and inviolability, who seeks to act through the ministry” (CNAC 2.4.5). Blessing and sanctification are necessary for both women and men to properly exercise the ministry and the service conferred upon them.

## Ministerial authority

The spiritual ministry for which God has designated them receives its character through authority. The Catechism mentions three levels of ministry—Apostle, Priest, and Deacon—each of which is associated with a different degree of authority. Like men, women can be ordained into all of these levels of ministry with all their inherent powers. The remarks contained in “The New Apostolic understanding of the spiritual ministry” explain the powers inherent in each of the levels of ministry. Among other things, the ministerial authority of the Apostle includes the proper proclamation of the gospel, the proper dispensation of all three sacraments, the proclamation of the forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus Christ, the ordination of ministers, as well as the dispensation of all blessings.

Priests and Deacons share in the powers of the apostolate in different ways. They are all sent by, and stand in oneness with, the apostolate.

Among other things, the ministerial authority of the Priest includes the proper proclamation of the gospel, as well as the proper dispensation of Holy Baptism with water and Holy Communion. Priests are authorised to proclaim the forgiveness of sins by commission of the Apostle and in the name of Jesus Christ. They have the authority to conduct divine services and dispense blessings. The ministerial authority of the Deacon includes the proper proclamation of the word and the celebration of word services beginning with the Trinitarian invocation and closing with the dispensation of the Trinitarian blessing.

Both women and men can trust that they have been designated by God for a spiritual ministry. Powers that serve for the salvation of human beings and the benefit of the congregation can be imparted to both from the apostolate. Beyond that, the essay on “The New Apostolic understanding of the spiritual ministry” emphasises the following: “The selection of ministers to be ordained takes into account that the competencies required for the fulfilment of services

associated with the respective ministry are already present in them.” Before being ordained, both women and men must “profess the content of the Ten Articles of Faith of the New Apostolic Church” and properly advocate the teaching of the Apostles as explained in the Catechism of the New Apostolic Church.

## Ministerial mandate

The ministry is not an end unto itself, nor does it serve to reward or elevate anyone. Ordination into a ministry always occurs with the needs of the congregation and the requirements of the Church in mind. When women are ordained to the ministry, the matter of social acceptance must also be taken into account. In addition, due consideration should be given to their personal situations—as is the case with men.

The spiritual ministry stands in the service of Christ. This service is performed in the local congregation, the district, or the Regional Church. Women who receive a spiritual ministry perform their duties in the congregation. Beyond that, they can also be appointed and assigned to leadership functions in the congregation, district, and the Regional Church. The remarks pertaining to the appointment and assignment of ministers in the essay entitled “The New Apostolic understanding of the spiritual ministry”, section 6.2.2 (“Appointment”) and section 6.2.3 (“Assignment”) also apply to them.

**SUMMARY:** The apostolate—that is, the Apostles in oneness with the Chief Apostle—decide that women can be entrusted with ministerial authority on the basis of gender equivalence and equality. In addition, women can be appointed to leadership functions in the congregation, the district, or the Regional Church, or assigned to services associated with a ministry. Nevertheless, the associated ministerial mandate is only to be issued in places where it will find acceptance in the congregation, and where social consensus as well as the law allow for it.

## Notes on the introduction of ordination for women

In June 2022 the International District Apostle Meeting made a binding declaration: “Women can be entrusted with ministerial authority and a ministerial mandate on the basis of gender equivalence and equality before God.” Furthermore, it was decided that it will be possible to ordain women as of 1 January 2023.

## Election to the spiritual ministry

Since it is God Himself who designates a person for ministry, it is equally true for both men and women that they can bear a ministry “on the basis of divine will and not human decision”. Considering that “the spiritual ministry is, on the one hand, a service to God, and on the other hand, a service upon human beings,” any sort of quota regulation is automatically out of the question as a selection criterion for a spiritual ministry. Although the basic prerequisite for ordaining women or men is divine calling, the needs and requirements of the congregation, district, or Regional Church are also always taken into account in the case of a planned ordination.

It is also necessary to consider the competencies “required for the fulfilment of services associated with the respective ministry”. Through the ordination, “available talents are awakened and consecrated for the exercise of the ministry” (CNAC 7.7). This means that “the good abilities and characteristics that this person possesses are placed into the service of ministerial exercise through the act of ordination.” Both women and men alike bring their talents, specific abilities, and positive characteristics to the exercise of their ministries, and engage these for the benefit of the congregation.

## Obligations associated with the spiritual ministry

Those who are called to ministry promise to teach in accordance with the testimony of Holy Scripture as it comes to expression in the Ten Articles of Faith and in the Catechism of the New Apostolic Church. They exercise their ministry in conformance with the *Guide for Ministers*. It is true for both men and women “that the ministry and the person, the exercise of ministry and the person’s abilities, are closely interwoven”. At the same time, the minister, whether male or female, should be aware that it is not he or she, but Jesus Christ, who is Lord of the ministry: “The ministry is not transferred to the possession of the person, nor does it leave an indelible mark on the person, but is and remains a gift of Christ, which Jesus Christ controls, and which He can grant or deny.”

In order to be able to truly serve God and human beings, it is important for ministers, whether male or female, to take their ministries seriously. They bring this to expression, among other things, by striving to acquire the knowledge and abilities that are necessary for the proper exercise of their ministry. They are to avail themselves of the Church’s spiritual and theological training opportunities.



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## Progression in the spiritual ministry

Through their ordination, men and women receive both ministerial authority and a specific ministerial mandate to be active within a congregation, district, or Regional Church. Women can be ordained as Deacons, Priests, or Apostles. Moreover, women—just like men—can be appointed or assigned to perform leadership functions in the congregation, the district, or the Global Church. Since the ministerial mandate applies equally to both men and women, the same respective provisions on the exercise of ministry, retirement, leave of absence, resignation from ministry, and dismissal from ministry also apply equally to both.

Under certain conditions, ministers may be granted a leave of absence from the exercise of their ministries. The *Guide for Ministers* states that ministers may be granted a leave of absence from the exercise of their ministries for personal, professional, or health reasons. The pregnancy of a female minister can also constitute grounds for such a leave of absence. The duration of a leave of absence should not exceed a period of three years.

The District Apostle Meeting also discussed the dress code for ministers, both male and female, and came to the conclusion that all ministers, both male and female, are to wear black and white in the divine service. Attire is to be modest and appropriate to the occasion. The regional conditions are to be taken into account accordingly.

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# Dialogue on strategies and standards

Learning from one another and shaping the future together: this was the focus of the international Pentecost session of the District Apostle Meeting International in Cape Town, South Africa. The topics on the agenda this time were not of a theological but an organisational nature.



Delmaire Viret, New Apostolic Church International

The District Apostle Areas are making the collective endeavour to develop and shape the principles of good governance, decision-making, and communication. Good governance and the principles that are to apply in the Regional Churches were discussed and adopted. These include aspects such as organisational unity and continuity, shared and informed decision-making, accountability, duty of care, and transparency.

A comprehensive questionnaire has been developed from the ten principles and the guidelines derived from them. The leading Regional Churches are called upon to answer these questions, not only for themselves, but also for other

Regional Churches in their organisational care. If this self-assessment reveals a need for action, a corresponding action plan will be drafted and forwarded to the New Apostolic Church International (NACI).

## Learning to do a better job of teaching

The District Apostle Areas are also keen to learn from each other with respect to the initial and ongoing training of their volunteer ministers. The reason for this is that, among other things, some countries in Africa, Asia, and the Americas require certification procedures for state-approved churches. According to an initial survey,

The District Apostles and their assistants had in-depth discussions



most District Apostle Areas have structured training programmes, but not necessarily in each of their Regional Churches.

There are big differences in the training procedures. Some take the form of face-to-face meetings or online courses, which can last a whole day or a few hours, before or after an ordination. Apostles, senior ministers, and specialised teachers act as trainers. As different as the forms may be, the simple fact that training is available at all is important for the volunteers. The District Apostle Meeting was unanimous in this: saying yes to a spiritual ministry also means saying yes to the New Apostolic doctrine and the Catechism.

### Sharing responsibility

The Chief Apostle welcomed District Apostle Helpers Stefan Pöschel and Peter Lambert to their first District Apostles' Meeting. They currently assist District Apostles

Rainer Storck (Western Germany) and John L. Kriel (Southern Africa), and are designated to succeed them in the near future.

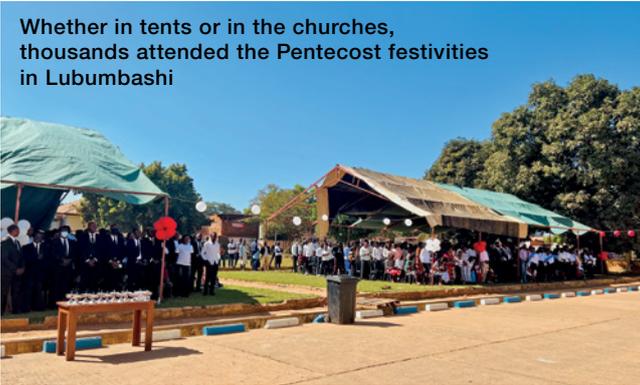
The Delegates' Meeting, which convened in advance, also experienced a first: for the first time, the representatives met together with the Board of Directors, which had emerged from the former Finance Committee last year. While the previous committee only had an advisory function for the Chief Apostle, the responsibility now lies with the Board of Directors as a collective body—and it has been granted discharge for the past financial year.



Pentecost transmission in Lubumbashi



Whether in tents or in the churches, thousands attended the Pentecost festivities in Lubumbashi



# Lubumbashi celebrates Pentecost

How did this year’s Pentecost service get to the various congregations? In very different ways. And some, like the Democratic Republic of Congo, made a celebration of their own out of it.

Behind the scenes there was even a première over Pentecost: the broadcast of the divine service from Cape Town took place entirely via the internet. The years before up to 25 satellites had been needed to transmit the events to all five continents.

## From the sky into the web

The background: Bischoff Publishers, which are owned by the Church, have switched from satellites to the internet because it is more flexible and saves on personnel and fixed costs. This was a decision taken by the European District Apostle Meeting.

A dedicated streaming service has now replaced satellite dish reception in the European congregations. This has been named after the transmission technology used: IPTV. Once registered, members can also log in from home—a concept that Canada and the USA have been using for quite a while.

## From one TV station to another

Entirely via internet? Well, not quite. “The internet is not a good solution for us,” District Apostle Tshitshi Tshisekedi from the south-eastern part of the Democratic Republic Congo reports. “Most of our congregations are in the villages, but even in the main towns the internet connection is poor.”

Pentecost celebration after the divine service



The divine service signal was picked up by the national TV broadcaster in the DRC

“The solution to connect people in our region continues to be the local TV stations,” the District Apostle explains. And this is how it worked on Pentecost Sunday:

- The New Apostolic Church Southern Africa also broadcast the Pentecost service on its television channel NAC TV.
- The New Apostolic Church in the DR Congo secured slots with the national broadcaster NYOTA TV CANALSAT 356, which picked up the live signal via decoder and distributed it nationwide.
- The signal received with the English sound was supplemented by a French interpretation at the station's headquarters.
- The signal received with a French translation was interpreted into the local languages Tshiluba, Swahili, and Otetela at the regional television studios.



### Thousands just kept on celebrating

The Pentecost service reached around half a million members in the congregations of the south-eastern part of the DR Congo alone. And that represents just one of two Regional Churches in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The largest gathering that took place over Pentecost was probably in Lubumbashi, the headquarters of the Regional Church DR Congo South-East. “7,634 young people were together in our central church of Kawama,” District Apostle Tshisekedi reported. “They spent the whole day in the church to celebrate the event.” Right after the service they continued making music themselves.





The bus crash in Zambia left members of the Church and large parts of the population in shock



# Fatal bus crash shakes politicians and the Church

New Apostolic Christians far beyond Zambia's borders reacted with dismay and sadness to a fatal road accident that killed 24 people in mid May, most of them women, who were on their way to a church event.

Sisters' Fellowship is the name of the meetings that New Apostolic women in Zambia, Malawi, and Zimbabwe regularly come together for to bring important issues forward as well as the Church. Besides enjoying time together, there are activities to train women in health education, entrepreneurial skills, matters of faith, and to develop and support charity projects. Fundraising campaigns are a standard feature, the proceeds of which go towards charity. But some of the money also goes toward church construction. In addition to a central annual meeting, there are also regional fellowships.

On 13 May 2023, a bus carrying 35 passengers was on its way to such a meeting in southern Zambia. The group had left Chongwe District and was headed to Siamatika, about 200 kilometres to the south. By the time they reached

Kapiringozi at about 6 a.m. they were more than half way there. Then, according to the police report, the driver lost control of the Mitsubishi bus for unspecified reasons.

## Killed instantly

The bus hit the truck in front of it, swerved off the road, overturned onto its roof, and slid down an embankment. Twenty-five passengers died at the scene of the accident. All but one were female passengers. Some had been ejected from the vehicle.

Eleven other passengers, including the driver, suffered injuries—some of them serious. Among the survivors was a six-month-old boy, Wise Kamanga, and his mother. The injured were taken to two hospitals, one being the

District Apostle Kububa Soko conducted the funeral proceedings



An estimated 8,000 to 10,000 mourners came to pay their last respects



### Thousands attend funeral

It is estimated that about 8,000 to 10,000 people attended the funeral on 16 May 2023. The burial was preceded by a funeral service, which District Apostle Kububa Soko based on Psalm 90: 12: “So teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom.”

Numbering our days, the District Apostle said, is an image of wisdom, namely realising that as human beings we will one day have to leave this earth. It is therefore important that we make wise decisions today. This is especially true when it comes to the goal of our faith and striving for eternal fellowship with Jesus Christ. This includes believing in Him, taking Him as our example, and serving the Lord—just as the late sisters had done.

### Many were touched

It was not only the many people who attended the funeral, but also official statements that showed how much public attention the accident attracted. For example, the Zambian president expressed shock and sadness at the news. He offered his condolences to the bereaved.

Chief Government Spokesperson Chushi Kasanda wrote: “The accident has robbed the nation of citizens who were providing a great service not only to their families, but to the church and the nation at large.”

The news quickly spread to church members all over the world via social media. Brothers and sisters from America, Europe, and Asia shared the information and expressed their dismay, sadness, and compassion.

University Teaching Hospital (UTH) in Lusaka, but all were then transferred to the UTH in Lusaka. This is also where autopsies were performed on the dead and where the bodies were laid out.

### Support for the bereaved

Meanwhile, the Sister’s Fellowship in Siamatika had been interrupted and then cancelled altogether. Those sisters who were still in the process of arriving went straight home again. Mourners gathered in our church building in Chiyabale in Chongwe district.

The Church leadership reacted immediately and promised spiritual and material support to the victims and their families. District Apostle Soko offered his condolences to the bereaved families and wished the injured a speedy recovery. The New Apostolic Church in Zambia, Malawi, and Zimbabwe called on all its members to pray that God would bring comfort and strength to the bereaved families.



# A Pentecost that inspired people around the world

Music, divine service, and fellowship: the 2023 Pentecost festivities electrified New Apostolic Christians around the globe. The conditions for the South African hosts, however, were anything but easy.

Even a few days later, New Apostolic groups on social media were still abuzz: “I’ve never experienced a Pentecost like this before!” “I’m still completely overwhelmed.” “What a pity that Pentecost is over already.” Hundreds of such reactions could be found on social media immediately after the divine service in Cape Town.

The divine service in our Tafelsig church was the highlight and closing event, and was perceived as extremely motivating all around: “Trust in the gift of the Holy Spirit,” Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider had called out to the Church members.

“Our goal is to enter eternal fellowship with God,” he said. “To do this, we must become like Jesus Christ. He is the one who loves and serves. We can also do this because we have received the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is just a question of really wanting it.” Thanks to the live webcast, the divine service had many hundreds of thousands of participants around the world.

## Music sets the tone

Everyone agrees that the music performed by the South African brothers and sisters, both during the divine service



The concert on Saturday evening thrilled thousands across the world

District Apostle Leonard R. Kolb from the United States, for example, visited the congregation of Heideveld. At the end of the service, the choir performed a special arrangement of “God is our strength and refuge”, number 179 from the English hymnal.

### Beyond the glitter and glamour

At the beginning of the final hymn in Heideveld, there was a blackout in the church building. And on the way home, the whole area was plunged into darkness. These blackouts were caused by power cuts. By rationing electricity, the South African government is trying to stop the national grid from collapsing—a measure that European countries such as Switzerland may also resort to if necessary.

The District Apostle Meeting also had to contend with forced blackouts on Thursday and Friday. The leaders of the Church sat in the dark every now and then until the hotel’s diesel generators kicked in. So from the start, the organisers relied on emergency generators to ensure uninterrupted live broadcasts of the concert and the divine service.

Yet power cuts are still a somewhat smaller problem in the lives of South Africans considering an unemployment rate of about 35 per cent and one of the highest crime rates in the world, which make tragedy a part of daily life. With this Pentecost feast, the brothers and sisters have proven what the Chief Apostle formulated in the course of the divine service: “If this Spirit dwells in you, lives in your heart, you can do what is impossible for human beings.”

and the Pentecost concert in the Silvertown Auditorium, contributed to this special Pentecost experience.

On Saturday, the choir, children’s choir, and orchestra had presented a wide range of styles from opera to pop music: from the “Chorus of the Hebrew slaves”, also known as “Va, pensiero”, from the opera *Nabucco* to the “Circle of life” from the Disney classic *The Lion King*. And Sunday still echoes in the hearts of brothers and sisters all over the world, especially with the final piece “Spirit-renewed”.

### Not just in big halls

South Africans have music in their blood, and this was not only evident in the large halls or churches, but also in the smaller congregations in the Western Cape on Wednesday evening. The District Apostles had fanned out to various congregations for the midweek divine service.



# Coming up

- 1 Oct. 2023 Augsburg, Germany
- 8 Oct. 2023 Moscow, Russia
- 13 Oct. 2023 Montecarlo, Argentina
- 15 Oct. 2023 Buenos Aires, Argentina
- 22 Oct. 2023 Metz, France
- 29 Oct. 2023 Paderborn, Germany
- 4 Nov. 2023 Aldela dos Palhelros, Portugal
- 5 Nov. 2023 Portimão, Portugal
- 10 Nov. 2023 Dhaka, Bangladesh
- 12 Nov. 2023 Pune, India
- 14 Nov. 2023 Jagdalpur, India
- 26 Nov. 2023 Zurich-Hottingen, Switzerland
- 7 Dec. 2023 Mocuba, Mozambique
- 10 Dec. 2023 Johannesburg, South Africa
- 17 Dec. 2023 Magdeburg-South, Germany
- 25 Dec. 2023 Strasbourg, France
- 31 Dec. 2023 Tübingen, Germany

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