



## The starting beat to a celebration of faith

Rund 45.000 Teilnehmer werden erwartet

Munich/Zurich. Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider officially opened the International Church Convention (ICC) in Munich as a celebration of joyful fellowship with a prayer that all might experience the presence of God. Tens of thousands of visitors in the Olympia Stadium witnessed the starting beat to this large premiere for the New Apostolic Church.

“I am enormously happy to celebrate this feast with you,” said Chief Apostle Schneider. “I wish you all many beautiful encounters with one another.” He noted that the brethren would come to experience their differences as well as their similarities in the process, and thereby learn to have greater understanding for one another. With regard to the throngs of people who cheered him on, the Chief Apostle felt it very important to stress: “Jean-Luc Schneider is merely a human being and is simply a servant of God.”

### A total of 104 flags from around the world

Even before the start of the event, the audience created a lively mood in the stands and stalls by clapping, singing, and doing the wave. The event got off to a colourful start when representatives of the various nations entered the Olympia Stadium: over 100 young flag-bearers divided into two groups running in opposite directions ran a lap of honour through the stadium before a banner of 104 flags was raised above the stage.

The various continental representatives then began to introduce themselves to the crowd by way of video-inserts and live performances. Again and again, the messages of greeting from Church presidents and members from around the world were met with thunderous applause or hearty laughter. The exercise also showcased another element that binds the New Apostolic Church around the globe in addition to its faith, namely a rich and multifaceted love of music.

So it was that the calling cards left by the various continental representatives on the stage in Munich were also very musical in character: the audience rewarded the Cape Town Male Choir's rendition of the folksong "Zulu Mama" with a standing ovation. Listeners responded with similar enthusiasm to the angklung orchestra from the District Church of South East Asia.

Frank Heike then went on to introduce the audience to the sounds of Australia with a didgeridoo performance of his own composition: "All is one"—supported by the rhythmic clapping of the audience. The EYD Big Band—already well known from the European Youth Day 2009—put a different spin on some familiar music with an American boogie rendition of the traditional congregational hymn "Let us sing with joyful voices". A brass quintet from the Young Philharmonic Orchestra of the District Church of Southern Germany represented the European continent with a performance of the "Prince of Denmark March".

### **Official greetings**

Dr. Elisabeth Dieckmann, the managing director of the Association of Christian Churches (ACC) in Germany, conveyed the best wishes of "all churches affiliated with the ACC". She was rewarded with boisterous applause when she addressed the audience as "dear sisters and dear brothers". Dr. Christoph Hillenbrand, the president of Upper Bavaria, lauded the exhaustive programme of the ICC as an outstanding example of volunteerism.

Over the entire weekend, the ICC will offer further exhibitions, concerts, lectures, discussions, and presentations from Germany, Europe, and overseas on topics such as reflection, current issues, congregational life, history, society, music, missionary work, ecumenism, and pastoral care. The highlight will be the divine service with Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider, which will be transmitted around the world via satellite and internet.

The chorus of the ICC song which resounded from tens of thousands of voices at the conclusion of the opening ceremonies exclaims: "God is here, God is here. He's unfathomably near". A celebration of faith has indeed begun.

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