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District Apostle Meeting:
Deliberations on interesting
topics

language

Die Bezirksapostelversammlung findet dreisprachig
statt

Zurich. Chief Apostle Wilhelm Leber opened the spring conference of District Apostles from around the world with a minute of silence. Shortly before, he acknowledged District Apostle Johann R. Kitching, who had passed away in a fatal accident a few short days before, only five weeks after his retirement. However this moment of silent commemoration was not only dedicated to him, but to all who had recently passed away, along with the bereaved who have remained behind. [Apostle Fally Randriakasy](#) (43) from Madagascar had also passed into the beyond. He had served as a faithful minister of the Church for 20 years.

All nineteen District Apostles and all nine District Apostle Helpers of the world had come together for the International District Apostle Meeting, which lasted all the way until Saturday afternoon. The entire Saturday had been set aside for meetings and final deliberations concerning the Catechism of the New Apostolic Church. The concluding divine service for this meeting was scheduled to take place in the congregation of Lenzburg-Staufen.

Recommended formulations for acts of blessing

Chief Apostle Leber based the spiritual portion at the beginning of the meeting on a Bible passage from John 17: 17: "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth." He went on to explain that sanctification means taking direction and orientation from God. Accordingly, the Church leader concluded: "Turning to God and taking direction from Him—that is truth." An important topic on the first day of meetings was a detailed discussion about special forms of divine service. In addition to the regular divine services, there are also non-sacramental divine services such as seniors'

services, funerals, or congregational ceremonies. As the chairman of the Divine Service Guide project group, Apostle Wolfgang Schug presented a series of instructions and recommendations which will in the near future be passed along to the ministers of the Church, as well as to the congregations. In addition, the District Apostles discussed the recommended sequence and formulations for such liturgical events as retirements, appointments, and adoptions. These too will be passed along to the ministers of the Church after they have passed through the final editing stages. The intent is to provide ministers with a reference work that contains specific wordings for special acts in the divine services.

One hundred fifty-year anniversary in 2013

Another item on the agenda was the anniversary year 2013. It was in the year 1863 that Carl Wilhelm Louis Preuss was called to the Apostle ministry through prophecy. He was the first newly appointed Apostle to exercise this ministry in continuity. The New Apostolic Church has pronounced this event as its founding moment. Both national and regional events, as well as various campaigns such as “district days” or discussion panels, are to take place throughout the course of the year. A celebration brochure, a specially created website, and a Pentecost service in Hamburg which will be internationally transmitted on 19 May 2013 are some further highlights intended to mark the event. The Church day originally planned in Southern Germany will be postponed. District Apostle Michael Ehrich will present a new concept to the May session of the European District Apostle Meeting.

New teaching materials to be created for children

Work is also progressing on the new teaching materials for children. The first step will be to revise the Confirmation Instruction manual to reflect the content of the new Catechism. This will be followed by the creation of new lessons for Sunday School and Pre-Sunday School. New teaching manuals for teachers of all levels of instruction will also be published, but these will likely only begin to appear as of 2015. Later in this same year, the District Apostles are to be introduced to a new website in which each level of instruction will be assigned its own specific area.

The significance of Church law

Another topic of interest to the District Apostles was the drafting of a uniform Church law in the New Apostolic Church. Up until the present there have been a series of different authoritative works such as the “House rules” booklet or the “Guide for ministers”—however there is no systematic, uniformly structured Church law. The retired District Apostle Karlheinz Schumacher was invited to introduce this topic and ask the District Apostles the question of whether the Church needs such a written work of regulations. The Church leaders will take some time to consider this question. If they decide to draft such a canon law for the New Apostolic Church, there will have to be further deliberations on this topic.

Conditions for receiving an engagement blessing

The District Apostle Meeting resolved that an engagement blessing can be dispensed at the wish of an engaged couple. Where it corresponds to the regional traditions and customs, this blessing can be dispensed in the context of a divine

service. The following basic conditions apply: the engagement must constitute a serious promise to marry, and the heterosexual couple cannot already be cohabitating. The blessing can even be dispensed if one of the partners has already been married and has been divorced or widowed, or if he or she has already received an engagement blessing. In so doing, the Church leadership has aligned these conditions with those required for a marriage blessing.

We will release a separate report concerning the final deliberations on the Catechism.

16 March 2012

