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Chief Apostle Wilhelm Leber: "I stand before you with a trembling soul!"

Stuttgart. Everything had gone very quiet in the auditorium of the fully occupied New Apostolic Fellbach-Central Church near Stuttgart. Chief Apostle Richard Fehr had just announced to the congregation that he would ordain District Apostle Wilhelm Leber as his successor during the course of the divine service (see [Significance of the chief apostle ministry](#)).

In the first portion of the Pentecost service, the then still active Chief

Apostle Richard Fehr addressed a message of greeting (see a list of messages of greeting below) to all New Apostolic congregations around the world: "Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (Matthew 24: 44). The chief apostle called upon the believers to remain at the word of the Son of God and to endure in watching and praying.

At the end of his sermon he thanked the many brethren in faith around the world for

their love and care. He also addressed heartfelt thanks to all ministers for their tireless work. He also thanked the nearly 360 apostles seated in front of the altar for their oneness in spirit.

Thereupon he asked District Apostle Wilhelm Leber, whom he ordained

into the chief apostle ministry at the end of the service, to conclude the service. Dr. Wilhelm Leber is a German and was previously district apostle over the District Churches of Northern Germany and North Rhine-Westphalia (see [Curriculum vitae of Chief Apostle Wilhelm Leber](#)). The 57-year-old mathematician stood at the altar with a trembling soul. The first thought that he expressed in his address was: "God be gracious to me a sinner".

He referred back to the Pentecost theme from the start of the service, calling to mind the example of Peter, when the Lord asked three times whether he loved Him. Of this he said: "The love for our Sender, Jesus Christ, is the foundation of the chief apostle ministry". He openly confessed that the speculations of the past weeks regarding the succession of the chief apostle had not gone by without leaving their mark upon him. He emphasised however, that he would look toward the future with courage. Then he thanked his predecessor, Chief Apostle Richard Fehr, for his 17 years of excellent leadership, love, and zeal.

Chief Apostle Wilhelm Leber ended his address by expressing: "I extend both of my hands to

you! I promise that I will always love you all"! Thereupon the incumbent Chief Apostle Fehr ordained him as his successor and thereby the new chief apostle of the New Apostolic Church. After his ordination, Chief Apostle Leber retired his predecessor with moving words of thankfulness, which were also directed to his wife Sonja.

Significance of the chief apostle ministry:

The head of the Church is Christ. The chief apostle leads the worldwide New Apostolic Church, and is its highest spiritual representative. Thus he decides on all matters that affect the global Church, especially in matters of doctrine and pastoral care. When making decisions he is able to refer to the District Apostle Meeting, or other advisory bodies established by him, for consultation.

For more explanations on the structure and organisation of the New Apostolic Church, visit:

<http://www.nak.org/news/20030125-gb.html>

List of messages of greeting:

The chief apostle's so-called messages of greeting at Pentecost have become something of a tradition in the New Apostolic Church. New Apostolic Christians are to build upon this Bible passage—announced with special emphasis to all brethren around the globe during the Pentecost service—for the entire year. Usually

Pentecost is a time when larger, even international divine services are transmitted all around the world via satellite. So it is that these special passages from the Holy Scriptures, which everyone hears at the same time and yet experiences individually, take on great significance for the unity of the brethren. At the same time, these messages of greeting all make a clear reference to the goal of faith of all New Apostolic Christians: the coming of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, to take home His bride.

Here are Chief Apostle Richard Fehr's Pentecost messages of greeting from 1988 to 2005:

All passages from the New King James Version

1988

Marana tha! [O Lord, come!]

(1 Corinthians 16, from 22)

1989

He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly." Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus! The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

(Revelation 22: 20-21)

1990

"For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, my soul has no pleasure in him" [Habakkuk 2: 3,4]. But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul

(Hebrews 10: 37-39)

1991

You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand

(James 5:8)

1992

Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.

(Revelation 3:11)

1993

For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were

shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened

(Matthew 24: 21, 22)

1994

Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near

(Revelation 1:3)

1995

Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming

(Matthew 25:13)

1996

And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?

(Luke 18:7, 8)

1997

Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet

(1 Corinthians 15: 51, part of 52)

1998

But hold fast what you have till I come

(Revelation 2: 25)

1999

Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come

(Revelation 1, from 4)

2000

And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work

(Revelation 22:12)

2001

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself

(Philippians 3:20, 21)

2002

Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

(James 5:7, 8)

2003

Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years

(Revelation 20: 6)

2004

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance

(2 Peter 3: 9)

2005

Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect

(Matthew 24:44)

20 May 2005