



The Co-ordination Group: predominantly theological subjects

Fifty-one
agenda items
to cover over
the space of
three days—
around 36
hours per
meeting,

interrupted only by a few short breaks—that is the sequence of a typical session of the Co-ordination Group. The majority of the subjects it deals with are of a theological nature, a trend that has been evident for a few years now. This is particularly due to the kind of projects which the Church has set for itself over the next few years: publication of its own catechism, revision of teaching materials for religious instruction, special questions concerning the book of Revelation.

Dr. Hagen Wend, the district apostle of the District Church Hesse/Rhineland-Palatinate/Saarland, Germany had been chairman of the Co-ordination Group for four years (since 1999) before Chief Apostle Richard Fehr relieved him of this responsibility on 18 December 2003. His successor as chairman is Armin Studer (61), district apostle for Switzerland, who has also been a member of the Co-ordination Group for four years. The third member of the group is Urs Hebeisen (51), a district apostle helper from the Philippines and a well-travelled missionary. The newest member to have joined the Co-ordination Group in December 2003 is Wilfried Klingler (54), the district apostle for the District Church Lower Saxony, Germany. He traded his place in the Project Group Questions of Faith with District Apostle Wend. District Evangelist Jürg Zbinden (46), an employee of the New Apostolic Church International (NACI), is the project manager responsible for all organisational matters before and after the meetings. He records the minutes during the meetings.

What does the Co-ordination Group do? What are its tasks? Why are there so many agenda items? A Co-ordination Group directly responsible to the chief apostle has been established so that the approximately 20 project groups, many of which have already been conducting research for years in the commission of the New Apostolic

Church, may work efficiently and in goal-oriented fashion. It is comprised of three district apostles or district apostle helpers and one project manager, who are appointed for the duration of six years. The Co-ordination Group not only directs the work of the project groups, but also ensures that the final results of the work are continually submitted to the chief apostle. After the latter's assessment, these results are submitted to the District Apostle Meeting for debate and a possible resolution. The final decision rests with the chief apostle.

Here is one example out of many. At present the Church is dealing with the question: "Who are the 144,000?" Some are quick to say: "That's already recorded in the Holy Scripture." This is somewhat rash, because the Bible does leave a certain amount of room for interpretation. "Why should it matter to us?" others will ask. But we cannot be so indifferent when it comes to the future—after all, people want to know what the future holds, and great things are promised to the 144,000.

The Project Group Revelation has been dealing with the content of this question for some time and has submitted a corresponding ten-page file—consisting of excerpts from the Holy Scriptures (Luther's version and the interlinear text), commentaries, related questions, and possible answers—for debate in the Co-ordination Group. The district apostles in the Co-ordination Group go through the paper point for point, sentence for sentence. They do not immediately agree with all the findings cited—some have to be verified, discussed, or assessed differently. After around two hours the ten standard A4 format pages have been discussed in detail. The minutes record that the project group is to re-evaluate the points that have been put in question by the Co-ordination Group, and then submit a revised version of its documents to the chief apostle via the Co-ordination Group. Through his colleagues at NACI, the latter will ensure that this subject appears on the agenda of the next meeting of the district apostles.

The Co-ordination Group

The Co-ordination Group consists of four members: three district apostles or district apostle helpers and a project manager from NACI. They are appointed for the duration of six years. As a rule one of these members will become chairman of the committee over the last two years of his membership.

There are many multi-regional and international project groups and work groups active in the commission of the chief apostle. With such a variety of activities it is indispensable to assure a uniform orientation. Besides this it is important to ensure the direction and co-ordination of the various subordinate committees, as well as to verify the results of the work. This task is carried out by the Co-ordination Group, which is directly accountable to the chief apostle. In order to fulfil these tasks the Co-ordination Group convenes sessions of several days in length

every two months. The session's conclusions are officially recorded in the minutes. Urgent subjects are handled through telephone conferences or by way of circulars, and the results of these are also recorded in the minutes. In order to increase efficiency there is a division of labour within the Co-ordination Group as regards the care of the individual committees. As a rule, specific project groups are assigned to a specific member of the Co-ordination Group, who then becomes a sort of spokesman for them. Thus each of the committees has its own personal contact in the Co-ordination Group.

The members of the Co-ordination Group

Chairman: District Apostle Armin Studer (61), resides in Meilen, Switzerland. He used to manage a company before entering the service of the Church full time in 1990.

District Apostle Wilfried Klingler (54), resides in Hannover, Germany. For many years he worked in a management position of a large company before transferring into the service of the Church in 1987.

District Apostle Helper Urs Hebeisen (51), resides in Manila, Philippines. Originally an independent businessman, he has been working as an apostle in various regions of Asia for 22 years, assisting District Apostle Latorcai in his district apostle area.

District Evangelist Jürg Zbinden (46), who lives in Männedorf, Switzerland, is employed as a project manager with the New Apostolic Church International in Zurich.

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