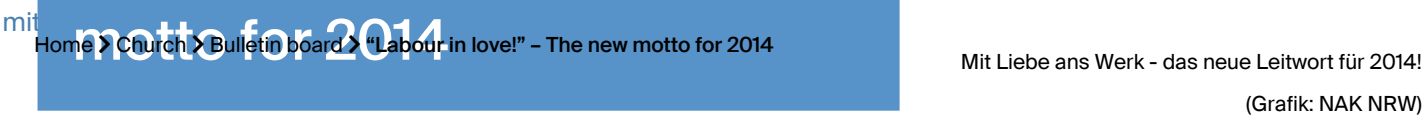
New Apostolic Church International

“Labour in love!” – The new motto for 2014



Mit Liebe ans Werk - das neue Leitwort für 2014!

(Grafik: NAK NRW)

Zurich. The new year 2014 has a new motto: “Labour in love!” In his divine service on New Year’s Day in Stuttgart, Germany, Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider, the spiritual leader of the New Apostolic Church, used the words of the Lord Jesus as an appeal to all Christians to make a special profession of faith: “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

There is already a certain tradition for the presiding Chief Apostle to issue a watchword for the year ahead in the New Year’s Day divine service. This time the task fell to Jean-Luc Schneider who has borne the Chief Apostle ministry since Pentecost 2013. His wish for all Christians and for all congregational activities in the New Apostolic Church is that all may “Labour in love”. Faith in Jesus Christ is exhibited through works produced by love, said the Church leader. Concrete actions for the benefit of our neighbour are a firm component of our preparation for the return of Christ. To love our neighbours also means to share their burdens, in other words, to help alleviate the things that bring them suffering.

Solidarity with our neighbour

In his sermon, the Chief Apostle mentioned that there are many brethren in the congregations who are confronted with sickness and loneliness. Others are exposed to financial hardships, family problems, or professional difficulties. In addition to the visible suffering caused by all of these things, such burdens can also have effects on one’s faith and trust in God. “Although it is not possible for us to completely take the burdens away from others, we can certainly help alleviate these burdens,” he concluded in his appeal. “First of all, let us pray for those who are experiencing trials of suffering. Then let us take the time to listen to them and express our sympathy to them. And if necessary, let us offer them our help.” At times we must battle or do without when we apply the gospel in daily life, but to bear one another’s burdens means to encourage one another to follow the Lord. “It also means that we must avoid anything that could hurt our neighbour.”

Seeing our neighbour in society

“This brotherly love is not supposed to stop at the door of our congregation, however,” the Church leader stressed emphatically. The early Apostles already encouraged solidarity within the church. Chief Apostle Schneider: “Our neighbours are also those who do not share our faith.” Thus our involvement in humanitarian aid efforts is also a nice way in which to express our sympathy and compassion.

“And finally, we will again be confronted with the weaknesses of our neighbour even in the new year. Every now and then we will even suffer on account of these, but the love with which Jesus carries us enables us to forgive others and love them despite

their mistakes. Our love for our neighbour is demonstrated by how often we forgive him."

Having time for others

The Church leader was in Fellbach near Stuttgart (Southern Germany) for New Year's Day. The festive divine service was simultaneously translated into Croatian, English, Italian, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese, and transmitted by satellite to approximately 400 congregations throughout Southern Germany, as well as to Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Israel, Macedonia, Serbia, and the Ukraine.

Chief Apostle Schneider based his divine service on the same Bible text from Galatians 6: 2 that he had already released to all District Apostles around the world weeks before, on which he had also written a detailed article in the Divine Service Guide for the priestly ministers of the New Apostolic Church: "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

His thoughts in the New Year's Day service ran along the same lines. "It may not be possible to take away all the pain, all the suffering, or all the problems of our neighbour, but we can make it easier for our brother and our sister when we help them bear their burdens." This, the Church leader said, "requires an open ear—and an open heart in order to perceive their suffering." He appealed to the believers very urgently: "Let us repeatedly make the time to listen to our neighbour. We live in such a connected society of communication and yet we all have so little time! Please lend an ear to your neighbour! He needs this! And even if you have heard his story five times already, please listen to it a sixth time! He needs this! It is a sign of your compassion when you listen!"

Helping along in concrete ways too!

However, the motto "Labour in love" also implies lending a hand in terms of concrete help, the Chief Apostle underlined. Apostle James very fittingly stated in his epistle: "If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?" (James 2: 15-16).

It is also important to share the burden of faith. "In the scope of the congregation let us cheer each other up and encourage one another again and again," said the Church leader. He then went on to give an example: "What do we talk about in the circle of the brethren? What is the content of our conversations?" Our conversations with one another are to make our burdens lighter, not heavier!"

And finally he also described the burden of our neighbours' weaknesses: "We all remain imperfect human beings and are all poor sinners. In the future as in the past we will always have to reckon with the weaknesses and imperfections of our brother and our sister. Let us continue to forgive and to forgive and to forgive one another again and again in the future as well."

And whatever applies to the individual or to the congregation also applies to the church as a whole, he concluded. You can read more about the New Year's Day divine service with Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider on the website of the New Apostolic Church Southern Germany.

“Labour in love” – this is our wish for all Christians in the new year 2014.

2 January 2014

