New Apostolic Church International

e anniversary year of the New Apostolic Church comes to an end

150

Fotos: NAKI

Zurich. The past year 2013 was an anniversary year for the New Apostolic Church. It was celebrated with numerous national and international events. Having emerged in 1863 from a small Catholic Apostolic congregation in Hamburg, Germany, the New Apostolic Church today numbers over ten million members around the world. New Apostolic Christians gather to worship in over 60,000 congregations. Following are some excerpts from a year in motion.

The highpoint of the anniversary year was surely the feast of Pentecost in May 2013. On this occasion, Chief Apostle Wilhelm Leber retired from ministry after serving for eight years as the spiritual leader of the Church. The divine service took place in Hamburg, the same place where everything had begun 150 years before. On the occasion of the anniversary year, the retiring Chief Apostle expressed his gratitude for everything that had been built up over the past years. However, he went on to say that “we should also make use of the anniversary of our Church in order to draw new strength for the future.”

A new Chief Apostle on Pentecost

Several million people around the world witnessed the divine service live via satellite and internet transmission: Jean-Luc Schneider (54) from France was ordained as the new Chief Apostle. Chief Apostle Wilhelm Leber had already taken a step in this direction at the Pentecost service in Cologne in 2012. At the time, he introduced District Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider as his successor and appointed him a Chief Apostle Helper. The latter now had a year in order to prepare himself for the tasks ahead of him. As the year progressed he also relinquished his previous responsibilities as leader of the District Churches of France and the Congo.

At the end of the Pentecost service on 19 May 2013, after the celebration of Holy Communion, Chief Apostle Wilhelm Leber asked his successor to come to the altar. “You are the rock for New Apostolic Christians,” he said, recalling the words of the Lord Jesus to His disciple Peter (according to Matthew 16: 18): "On this rock I will build My church.”

2013 – The year of professing

What else happened over the past year? Right on the very first day of the year, District Apostle Urs Hebeisen hoisted an anniversary flag in the front yard of the Makati Central church in the Philippines. On the other end of the world, Chief Apostle Leber began the New Year’s divine service with a firm motto: “The year 2013 is to become a year of profession!” His wish, he said, was to very deliberately call upon all to make this a year of profession. “For this it is necessary to take a clear position in decisive moments, and not retreat,” he pointed out. “It is also important to stand up clearly and unambiguously for a particular cause and not look for a way

out. This too lies in the nature of professing, just as it does to be courageous and unafraid of suffering any sort of disadvantage," explained the Church leader in the divine service he conducted in Herford, Germany.

A new Catechism just in time for the anniversary

A new confessional text that appeared over the course of the anniversary year was the Catechism of the New Apostolic Church. It was presented in January 2013. Two events, one in Zurich and one in Frankfurt, marked the public introduction of the book that outlines the beliefs of New Apostolic Christians. On the other hand, the anniversary brochure presented in July provides insights into the historical perspective, looking back to the beginnings and the development of the Church. It appeared in English, French, German, Russian, and Spanish. In his foreword, the Chief Apostle wrote: "Naturally the development was not always as straightforward as it might appear in hindsight." There had also been disappointments and setbacks. Here he recalled the two World Wars which had left a clear mark in the area of church. He went on to point out that there were also new questions and new challenges in the present. "And so we continue on our journey. Around the world we are united by the imminent expectation of the return of Jesus Christ. This is and remains our goal of faith."

Chief Apostle Fehr passes away

A great man passed into the beyond in June, namely the retired Chief Apostle Richard Fehr, who had been at the helm of the New Apostolic Church for seventeen years. After a long illness, he passed away at the age of only 73. The current Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider bid farewell to the departed man of God in a divine service which was transmitted to many New Apostolic congregations around the world. He described his predecessor in ministry as a "wise and far-sighted man". Chief Apostle Fehr had loved all human beings, especially Christians. "It was very important to him that New Apostolic Christians take the beliefs of their fellow human beings seriously and esteem their faith," it says in his obituary.

ICC 2014 as a celebration of faith

Ticket sales for the International Church Convention (ICC) of the New Apostolic Church, which will take place in June 2014, began almost a year before the event. Tens of thousands of New Apostolic Christians and interested guests are anticipated at the Munich Olympic Grounds over the Pentecost weekend from 6-8 June. The ICC is to be a celebration of faith for both young and old! The organisers conceived of a two-phase process for ticket sales: the first phase unfolded between 2 September and 30 November 2013 and allowed interested parties to order their tickets through their congregations. Subsequent orders will still be possible up until 31 January 2014, also through the congregations. Ticket orders can also be changed or cancelled up until that date. As of 1 February 2014, it will be possible to order tickets online or by telephone. And naturally there will also be a box office on location.

Numerous concerts, divine services, and public events have taken place all around the world over the anniversary year. Our anniversary journal provides a little overview of these celebrations. We thank all congregations who have taken part. Reactions

and responses from outside the Church were also very welcome. In the year 2014 the motto will be to “Labour in love”—a beautiful continuation of last year’s motto and a worthy slogan for the 151st year of our Church’s existence.

31 December 2013

