



New Apostolic Church
International

Chief Apostle: “The kingdom of heaven is at hand!”

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Stammapostel Wilhelm Leber am Altar der
Gemeinde Frankfurt-West

Zurich/Frankfurt. All European ministers of the New Apostolic Church—both active and retired—were invited to a divine service for ministers on 30 September 2012. This service was conducted by Chief Apostle Wilhelm Leber (65) in the congregation of Frankfurt West. His sermon was transmitted by satellite to many hundreds of congregations throughout Europe. This was the third divine service that Wilhelm Leber has conducted in Frankfurt as Chief Apostle.

The focal point of Chief Apostle Wilhelm Leber’s sermon was the statement of the Son of God: “And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand!’” (Matthew 10: 7). According to the biblical record, Jesus Christ gave this commission to the twelve Apostles as they set out on their way. This message is also to motivate and define the actions of the ministers of our Church, the Chief Apostle said.

Accordingly he called upon the Deacons to bring joy to all members of the congregation with the message that the kingdom of heaven is at hand—and that it can be experienced today by attending the divine services. The priestly ministers, in turn, are to proclaim the message of the nearby kingdom of heaven in the divine services when they pray and preach. Even during pastoral care visits, the kingdom of heaven is always to be a topic of conversation.

Jesus is also present today!

Many people in Jesus’ lifetime had already experienced the kingdom of heaven on earth. As examples, the Chief Apostle mentioned the woman at Jacob’s well as well as the experiences of the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration. “But Christ is also present today,” said Chief Apostle Leber in his sermon. “Mind you, we are not capable of completely understanding the nearby kingdom of heaven in the Son of God using only the faculty of reason. “Many things are still impossible for us to even imagine today, but here it is important to trust in God,” said the Chief Apostle in conclusion.

As he served, District Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider (France)—who was appointed Chief Apostle Helper on Pentecost—talked about the trials that God at times permits. Just like a strainer or sieve that is shaken in order to separate the dust from the grain, we too will at times encounter such trials for our faith, said the District Apostle. The best motivation for all ministers in the church is love for God: “If that is our understanding, then evil can shake and rattle all it wants, but we will remain true.” District Apostles Wolfgang Nadolny (Berlin-Brandenburg) and Markus Fehlbaum (Switzerland) were also called upon to serve along.

Gratitude for all dedication

With warm and heartfelt words at the beginning of the divine service, the Chief Apostle expressed his gratitude to the many thousands of ministers for their dedication: “You do this for God,” he reminded them. He also thanked the wives and partners of the ministers for all their support, collaboration, and prayers. “They too bring many sacrifices for the Lord,” he acknowledged. In his address of thanks he did not forget the many retired ministers: “Your loyalty and support in deed and prayer are very welcome,” he noted. “We make use of the present and work together for the cause of the Lord.”

In addition, he encouraged his listeners not to become unsettled as a result of the various events and changes in our day. In reference to a Bible passage recorded in 1 Peter 4: 12-13, he emphasised that we should not allow the “fiery trials” of our time to disconcert us. The important thing is to look up to Christ and experience the promised joy and delight at His return. “We fight for each soul,” said the Chief Apostle, “but if someone really wants to go their own way, we cannot change that sometimes.”

More than 45,000 participants

Over 570 participants in Frankfurt West enjoyed the divine service with the spiritual leader of all New Apostolic Christians. Across Europe the total attendance amounted to over 45,000.

In addition to the active European District Apostles, the retired Chief Apostle Richard Fehr, along with a number of retired District Apostles, had also been invited to Frankfurt West. It was in this congregation that Chief Apostle Leber had spent his youth, received his first ministerial commission as a Deacon, and married his wife. This was his third visit to Frankfurt as Chief Apostle. Preceding this visit were divine services on 11 January 2009 for the retirement of District Apostle Hagen Wend and the ordination of his successor, Bernd Koberstein, as well as a divine service on Thanksgiving on 3 October 2010.

Thanksgiving 2012

This year, New Apostolic congregations will observe Thanksgiving—which some Christians already celebrated on 30 September 2012—this Sunday, 7 October. Chief Apostle Wilhelm Leber and District Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider are scheduled to visit the congregation of Duisburg for a central divine service that will be transmitted to congregations throughout the District Church of North Rhine-Westphalia.

30 September 2012

