New Apostolic Church International

The New Apostolic Church and ecumenism

Members of the project group Ecumenism: apostle Rolf Wosnitzka, bishop Paul Imhof, apostle Volker Kuehnle, bishop Hanspeter Nydegger (until 2008) and district elder Peter Johanning (Photo: NAKI)

Zurich. An article published in our May 2001 edition of “Our Family” already dealt with this subject: The New Apostolic Church and ecumenism. We reported on the activities of the Ecumenism Project Group, established by Chief Apostle Richard Fehr in October 2000. In the past decade, numerous contacts have come about. Where do we stand today?

In the meantime, the New Apostolic Church in Germany has acquired seven guest memberships in the Association of Christian Churches (ACC), namely in Aschaffenburg, Göttingen, Halle/Saale, Hamelin, Hannover-Central, Marburg, and Memmingen. In addition, the Church has observer status in the ACC of Wetterau district in the state of Hessen. Although the guest membership of these New Apostolic congregations does not afford them any voting rights, they nevertheless provide input to regular meetings and take part in organising local ecumenical events.

In Switzerland, the New Apostolic congregation in Bern has held a guest membership in the Association of Christian Churches of the canton of Bern for many years, and the congregation of Frutigen has been part of the local ACC since 2008.

Over the past ten years the project group has been invited to many ecumenical discussion panels in order to introduce our Church first-hand. We are happy to note that these discussions have been conducted in a context of great openness and mutual respect. This has promoted the process of becoming better acquainted and significantly dismantling suspicions and reservations.

The following reasons in particular advocate in favour of a rapprochement between the New Apostolic Church and the Christian churches and denominations that have united under the banner of the Association of Christian Churches:

- In terms of numbers, Christianity has begun to weaken in Western Europe. Its influence is sinking in the face of the increasing secularisation of Europe, while the increasingly stronger non-Christian world-religions are on the rise. From the perspective of the Church leadership, it is good for all denominations who profess Christ to band closer together.

- The generally applicable ecumenical principle of “Unity in reconciled diversity” makes participation in our eyes possible and useful. This principle allows individual churches and Christian denominations to preserve their identities while enabling them to participate in ecumenical endeavours. This means that we will not give up our New Apostolic profile.

- Membership in the ACC ensures greater public acceptance.

- In this ecumenical dialogue we, as the New Apostolic Church, introduce our conviction of faith that Christ will return as our bridegroom, a conviction which has largely retreated into the background in general Christendom.

These significant reasons encourage us to pursue our dialogue with other denominations. Of course, there is still a great deal of work to do when it comes to clarifying the issues. Our Church and its doctrine are still far too little known and there is still too much mutual distrust. The distance we have kept to the ecumenical movement over long years makes a rapid move in the direction of greater cooperation almost impossible. This is a process that will stretch over many years.

» Background information on the New Apostolic Church and Ecumenism

An essential basis of discussion within the ecumenical movement is the Charta Oecumenica. This document was signed by the majority of European churches in 2001 and is considered a guideline for the increasing cooperation of the churches in Europe. It does not have any sort of authoritatively dogmatic or canonically legal character, but rather expresses recommendations.

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