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The Youth Care Project Group: An understanding minister to talk to...

Zurich. Understanding faith - Faith in practice - Life help: the new youth strategy, more accurately known as "Youth care in the New Apostolic Church", is divided up into these three subject headings. The members of the Youth Care Project Group estimate that the manual will be available for distribution later this year. For now it will contain 10 of a total of 45 youth meeting lessons, along with a conceptual description of youth care, and it will be distributed among the youth ministers in the congregations.



Edmund Stegmaier (59), an apostle from Lower Saxony, is the chairman of the project group. It was established in 1998 by Chief

Apostle Richard Fehr in order to harmonise the essential components of youth work in the New Apostolic Church and to give it a single common denominator in terms of content and organisation. The other members of the project group are Apostle Günter Wiktor (64) from North Rhine-Westphalia, Apostle Michael Ehrich (44) from Southern Germany, Bishop Arvid Beckmann (45) from Northern Germany, Apostle Gerrit Seepers (58) from the Netherlands, District Evangelist Jürg Meier (50) from Switzerland, District Apostle Helper Frank Dzur (45) from Canada and District Evangelist Robert Ehmer (39) from the USA. The members of the group thus come from Europe and North America - which makes it clear that this standard approach to youth work is to be achieved first and foremost in the industrialised world. Attempts to standardise these activities in other regions would miss their mark because of the cultural differences between the various countries.

At the group's inaugural meeting in 1998 the chief apostle expressed that New Apostolic youth work should reinforce the youth's genuine and living faith, love toward God, and joyful hope in Christ's return. The task of the project group is thus comprised of three essential goals: drawing up an overall plan for youth care in the

New Apostolic Church, establishing criteria for selecting the many honorary youth ministers required, and preparing aids to support their work. In addition the group has the task of drawing up instruction manuals to help structure regularly occurring youth meetings.

The project group meets around 6 times per year for 2 to 3 working days each time. Developing written instructions for youth meetings takes up the most time. This is because it is not only necessary to find subjects that are appropriate and interesting to the target group (i.e. the young people), but also because instructions on methodology and didactics need to be supplied as well.

What subjects will the youth ministers introduce to the youth locally? Some topics of emphasis from the section on Understanding faith are: "New Apostolic - why and for what purpose?", "The Ten Commandments - spoon-feeding or help in life?", and "Lasting value". Some examples of subjects from the section on Practising faith are "Participating intently in divine services", "Recognising strange doctrines", and "Active love for our neighbour". In the chapter on Life help there are topics such as "Dealing with media", "Self-actualisation" and "Problem-solving and conflict-resolution". The project group is currently working on 45 topics that will be thoroughly and didactically polished, and gradually placed at the disposal of the youth ministers. In terms of teaching methods, it is of note that the participation of the young people is especially necessary. Thus the youth meetings have more the character of a workshop than a lesson, and place great value on conversation and dialogue.

While the approval procedure for all these articles requires quite some time, it is nonetheless imperative. It looks something like this: the members of the project group either write the various articles themselves or delegate them to others. Next, the entire group discusses the first proposed draft. Then the theological editors at the Friedrich Bischoff publishers read the material, because - especially with lessons relating to faith - they can eventually draw from statements in other publications. Following this, an English translation of the article is prepared, which is sent to the USA and Canada. There the two English-speaking members of the group read the article through conscientiously and make their notes. Finally the Co-ordination Group deals with the implementation of the material, especially in terms of its content. Only once all corrections have been made is the work on a given topic really concluded, at which point the topic enters the catalogue of literature.

What then is the main idea behind this time-consuming, but very thorough path of written instruction? Edmund Stegmaier reports: "The number one objective and the emphasis of pastoral care for young people is to prepare them for the return of Christ. In order to achieve this objective, each brother and sister in faith needs to have access to an understanding minister who will be their personal, understanding discussion partner!"

According to the members of the project group, this guiding principle applies to each of the individual District Churches, despite varying circumstances around the world.

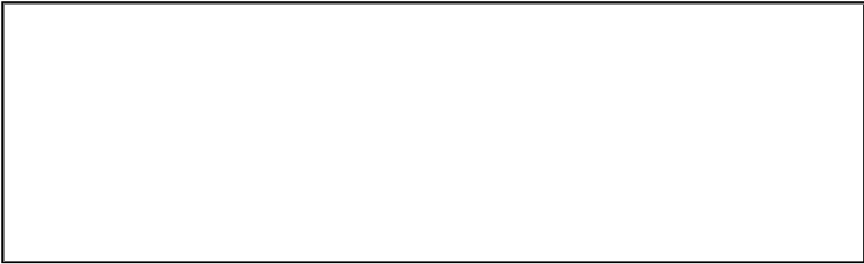
The Youth Care Project Group

The Youth Care Project Group was established on 5 May 1998 by Chief Apostle Richard Fehr. Its task comprises creating a globally - at least for the industrialised world - practicable youth strategy, which will standardise youth care in terms of its content and organisation.

Current members are Apostle Edmund Stegmaier (Chairman), District Apostle Helper Frank Dzur, Apostle Michael Ehrich, Apostle Gerrit Seepers, Apostle Günter Wiktor, Bishop Arvid Beckmann, District Evangelist Robert Ehmer, and District Evangelist Jürg Meier.

Youth care in the New Apostolic Church

The first lessons (of a total of 45) are scheduled for distribution to the youth ministers in the various congregations before the end of this year. The individual topics are divided into three areas: Understanding faith, Faith in practice, and Life help. It also contains comprehensive and detailed statements on the organisation of youth work, however. The main idea behind youth care is to provide the New Apostolic young person with an understanding minister who will be his/her own personal discussion partner. The prime objective is to prepare the youth for the return of Christ. This means enthusing them about the values of our faith and helping them mature into personalities with a strong faith. The role of the youth minister as an example is of extreme importance in this effort. The latter must internalise and practise the principles of the conceptual model known as "Serving and Leading in the New Apostolic Church" (see www.nak.org/le/le-gb-0105.html).



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