



Structure and organization in

the New Apostolic Church

The New Apostolic Church understands itself to be the church of Christ, identical to the apostolic congregations of the time of the first Apostles. The Holy Scripture, together with the timely word inspired by the Spirit, comprises the basis of its teaching, whose aim is to declare God's plan of redemption and to prepare believing souls for the promised return of Christ.

The New Apostolic Church recognizes that its task is to impress God's word and commandments upon all people, to administer the sacraments of Holy Baptism, Holy Sealing, and Holy Communion, and to conduct acts of blessing. It cares for its members and fosters New Apostolic faith according to its creed. This takes place particularly in the form of regular divine services, conscientious pastoral care, and social work in the spirit of brotherly love.

District Apostle Areas

All of the currently 10.26 million New Apostolic Christians belong to a District Church responsible for their area of residence. The District Churches, while legally independent, together comprise one church with a uniform doctrine and global presence, under the leadership of the Chief Apostle as the church's highest spiritual authority.

The District Churches in Germany are recognized by the authorities as public corporations, in Switzerland (c.f. www.nak.ch) as independent associations, and in other states as legal entities of various forms in accordance with local law. The District Churches are led by the District Apostles who are appointed by the Chief Apostle. A District Apostle may head several District Churches, the sum total of which is called a District Apostle Area. Among these are the missionary regions mainly in Eastern and Southern Europe, Africa, Asia, as well as Central and South America.

The District Churches are divided into legally dependent congregations and districts. A congregation is the unit of members from a specific geographic area. It is led by a rector. Several congregations are grouped together under one district, which is led by a district leader.

The organizational, administrative and legal obligations of the District Churches are regulated by statutes, which are drawn up in accordance with the legal prescriptions of the various states. The German District Churches, for example, are divided into the following organs: the Chief Apostle, the national board of directors – comprised of the District Apostle, the Apostles and Bishops in its jurisdiction – as well as the national assembly to which the national board of directors and the district leaders belong.

The revenue of the District Churches is comprised of voluntary offerings and donations from its members as well as other contributions and returns. The church does not collect any taxes from its members. The funds of the church are used exclusively for performing church tasks. The Chief Apostle receives a copy of the annual statement of accounts signed by the District Apostle, along with the auditing report of an accountant.

NAC International – church with a global presence

The New Apostolic Church International (NAKI) is, in accordance with Swiss law, an independent association whose perpetual seat is located in Zurich. It incorporates the incumbent Chief Apostle and all active District Apostles, District Apostle Helpers and Apostles. The organs of this association are the Chief Apostle, the District Apostle Meeting, and the Apostle Meeting. NAKI, together with all New Apostolic District Churches – while legally independent – forms one church with a uniform doctrine and global presence, under the leadership of the Chief Apostle as the church's highest spiritual authority.

NAKI has set itself the task to nurture, foster, and preserve the spiritual unity of all Apostles on earth with the Chief Apostle and among one another. This is accomplished specifically through: planning, preparing, and conducting District Apostle and Apostle meetings; regularly inviting Apostles to participate in divine services conducted by the Chief Apostle; and planning and preparing journeys by the Chief Apostle to the various District Churches for the purpose of conducting divine services and fostering fellowship.

Beyond this, NAKI promotes the unity of all District Churches as part of a globally active church. For this purpose, it gives impulses for the development of the church both within and without, draws up directives conducive to spiritual, organizational, and international co-operation between the District Churches, and executes the directives of the Chief Apostle. Beyond this, NAKI supports the project and work groups established by the Chief Apostle, preserves the unity of the New Apostolic Church, promotes the interests of the church as a whole and represents them in public. NAKI also devises a strategy for the development of the church and its finances. In order to guarantee the continued economic viability of the various District Churches, support financially weak District Churches – and thus contribute significantly to a uniform development within the various regions – NAKI analyzes the annual statement of accounts of the various District Churches, and supports these in achieving optimum co-ordination of all administrative tasks and utilizing all available synergies. Beyond this, NAKI co-ordinates charitable activities, archives documents relevant to the church, and supervises the church publications of Verlag Friedrich Bischoff GmbH (c.f. www.bischoff-verlag.de).

The District Churches remit revenues – which are set by the Chief Apostle in consultation with the respective District Apostles – to the New Apostolic Church International. These revenues are used to cover its own administrative costs, support financially weak District Churches, pursue charitable and public-spirited activities of international significance, and finance all further activities of NAKI.

These funds are administered in accordance with the directives of the Chief Apostle. He will take steps to assure professional accounting as well as assure a professional statement of accounts by the end of each calendar year, including the auditing of same by a reputable auditing company. The annual statement of accounts, the annual report, and the audit report must be approved by the District Apostle Meeting.

In order to devise and promote NAKI's financial strategy, the District Apostles (without being asked to do so) submit the signed statements of accounts, together with the business reports and the auditor's reports, within six months after the close of each financial year. These pertain to the District Apostle's area (in the form of balance sheets of the District Churches under his care), charitable bodies and foundations, and church-owned economic enterprises.

The Chief Apostle

As the supreme spiritual authority of all New Apostolic District Churches on earth, the Chief Apostle directs the Church as a whole in all matters spiritual. His commission, primarily, is to proclaim Jesus Christ's doctrine continually and conscientiously and to preserve its purity. He appoints and ordains District Apostles, Apostles, and Bishops, places them in retirement or dismisses them. He fixes the boundaries of District Churches, sets up new District Apostle Areas, and assigns areas of responsibility for pastoral and administrative care to the District Churches. He determines NAKI's annual budget, makes decisions regarding expenditures and the managing of its assets, consults with the District Apostles in determining the financial contributions to be made to NAKI, and decrees regulations and ordinances in matters concerning the Church as a whole. The Chief Apostle's ordinances, subject to compliance with legal provisions, are binding for all District Churches and their governing bodies.

The Chief Apostle is appointed by his predecessor. This is also the case if the predecessor falls ill or is injured in an accident but is still able to discharge his duties. In the event that the Chief Apostle is suddenly taken ill or is injured in an accident and is left incapacitated He can deposit documents concerning the appointment of his successor. In the absence of such an appointment his successor will be elected in secret at a District Apostles' Meeting or an Apostles' Meeting from the ranks of the District Apostles, District Apostle Helpers and Apostles. His ministry commences with his ordination, which is performed by the retiring Chief Apostle or by the longest-serving District Apostle. The change will be announced without delay to all New Apostolic congregations around the world.

The Chief Apostle is entitled to retire upon reaching his 65th year of life. He should not continue in office beyond his 70th year of life.

Regarding the appointment of his successor, and to make provision in the event of temporary or definite impediments in discharging his office and functions, the Chief Apostle can deposit relevant documents in NAKI's safe. Should two independent physicians certify a temporary impediment the three longest-serving District Apostles shall open the relevant document; should the Chief Apostle die, or his definite unfitness to discharge his duties be confirmed, NAKI will convene a District

Apostles' Meeting within seven days. It will take note of the Chief Apostle's will and implement its stipulations without delay.

District Apostles and Apostles

The District Apostles and Apostles are ordained by the Chief Apostle or – by commission of the Chief Apostle – a District Apostle may do so in his stead; the District Apostle Helpers are commissioned. If an Apostle is to be ordained, the responsible District Apostle will propose the designated minister to the Chief Apostle. He will in turn inform the other District Apostles to this effect. It is left to the District Apostle's discretion to inform the Apostles in his working area. In case a District Apostle is unable to propose a suitable minister to receive the Apostle ministry, the Chief Apostle will confer with other District Apostles about calling a suitable minister from another District Apostle's area into the Apostle ministry.

Before their ordination the Apostles take the following vow: "Before God, the Father, His Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit I vow to love the Almighty God, the Creator of all things, with all my heart, with all my soul, with all my being, and with all my strength; also to love my neighbour as myself. It is my holy duty to proclaim Jesus Christ's doctrine, especially the redeeming power of His sacrifice, and to proclaim His return, and, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, to fulfil the commission received in Jesus' name honestly, diligently, conscientiously, and uprightly. I want to serve in humbleness, and conduct myself worthily and honourably before God and man. I acknowledge the Chief Apostle as the highest minister and promise him my full support. I declare my support for the unity with the Chief Apostle and the District Apostles and Apostles of the New Apostolic Church that are united with him, whose highest duty is obedience in faith, whose highest honour is being faithful to God's work, whose greatest goal is completion in Christ. In discharging this leading ministry of the New Apostolic Church, I shall unequivocally take responsibility for this profession of faith and live in accordance with the gospel as an Apostle of the New Apostolic Church."

The District Apostles, District Apostle Helpers, and Apostles retire upon reaching their 65th year of life. In the event of weighty reasons obtaining, the Chief Apostle can shorten the period of office (e.g. in case of illness), but he can also extend it. The Statutes also make provision for resignation from office as well as suspension or dismissal. Upon request, every Apostle must provide the Chief Apostle with information regarding his official activities and give an account of them.

Members and ministers

Anyone who professes to the New Apostolic doctrine can become a member of the New Apostolic Church. A legal claim to the acquiring of membership does not exist, however. Membership commences with the receiving of the sacrament of Holy Sealing. It is expected of the members that they conduct their lives in accordance with the teaching of Christ. They are entitled to participate in all religious acts intended for them, as also to spiritual care.

Resignation from the New Apostolic Church is possible at any time. In the event of weighty and persistent infringement against the teaching, purpose, or reputation of the Church, the member may be expelled. In the German District Churches this can be done by the national board of directors. The person concerned must be notified

of the reasons. Within a period of three months the party concerned can bring counter-arguments against such decision on which the board of directors – in a quorum of three members – will decide after the party concerned has been granted a hearing.

Besides Apostles, the Chief Apostle and the District Apostles commission ministers of the New Apostolic Church to conduct services and provide spiritual care for the members. These are Bishops, District Elders, District Evangelists, Shepherds, Community Evangelists, Priests, Deacons, and Subdeacons. The priestly ministries (from Bishop to Priest) are authorized to administer the sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion. A prerequisite for their calling is an especially sound knowledge of the teaching and structure of the New Apostolic Church as well as an irreproachable walk of life aligned to Christ's doctrine. The execution of the ministry is done voluntarily and in an honorary capacity according to the directions of the Chief Apostle, the District Apostles, and the Apostles.

All ministers are clergymen in the sense of general laws. They are sworn to secrecy as regards all facts of which they have knowledge on the grounds of their work as ministers. The pledge of secrecy is also valid once their ministerial activity ends. Dismissal, retirement, resignation from office, resignation, or expulsion from the Church terminate the ministerial activity and result in the loss of all rights connected to the ecclesiastical office.

The District Apostles' Meeting

The District Apostles' Meeting includes the incumbent Chief Apostle as well as all active District Apostles and District Apostle Helpers as members. At the Chief Apostle's invitation, and under his chairmanship, ordinary sessions are held at least twice a year or, upon motion by at least two-thirds of the members, there are also extraordinary sessions. Electoral sessions are held if a new Chief Apostle has to be elected.

The District Apostles' Meeting advises and assists the Chief Apostle in all matters concerning the Church and, together with him, bears the responsibility for the unity of all New Apostolic District Churches. It is part of its responsibilities to advise and decide on matters introduced by the Chief Apostle, the District Apostles, the District Apostle Helpers, or project groups, to decree regulations and ordinances in matters concerning the Church as a whole. It also selects an external auditor for a year at a time for NAKI, approves the annual statement of accounts, the annual report, and the audited statement, and passes resolutions concerning amendments to the Statutes.

When the District Apostles' Meeting convenes a quorum is made when at least three-quarters of its members are present or have legally valid representation. The District Apostles and District Apostle Helpers may authorize another NAKI member to represent them, provided this is set out in writing. Resolutions are passed by a three-quarter majority of those members present and those who have legally valid representation; provided no member requests that a session be convened for discussion purposes, resolutions can also be passed by circular letter. Resolutions

passed, unless they infringe applicable legal provisions, are binding on all District Churches and their governing bodies.

Should a decision be necessary concerning the Chief Apostle being definitely unfit to discharge his duties such session is chaired by the longest-serving District Apostle. In this event decision-making powers are acquired when all the members are present or have legally valid representation. The resolution must be passed unanimously.

An electoral session is required when the Chief Apostle has not designated a successor or when the designated successor is not available. The electoral session is convened within seven days by the longest-serving District Apostle and is chaired by him. Decision-making powers are acquired when at least nine-tenths of the members are present or have legally valid representation. The Chief Apostle is elected by secret ballot by a two-thirds majority. If after seven ballots no successor has been elected the election is delegated to the Apostles' Meeting.

The Apostles' Meeting

The Apostles' Meeting comprises the Chief Apostle, the District Apostles, the District Apostle Helpers, and all Apostles. It convenes at the invitation of the Chief Apostle for ordinary sessions and, upon motion by at least two-thirds of all NAKI members, also for extraordinary sessions. Decision-making powers are acquired when at least three quarters of its members are present or have legally valid representation. Each member can represent no more than five other members subject to their written authorization; the Chief Apostle, however, may represent more than this number of members, also subject to their written authorization. Resolutions are passed by a three-quarter majority. Electoral sessions which are convened and chaired by the longest-serving District Apostle require at least two-thirds of the members being present or having legally valid representation in order to acquire decision-making powers. The secret election of the Chief Apostle is deemed to have been passed when a three-quarter majority is able to agree on a successor.

To comply with legal provisions the Statutes of NAKI also provide for a procedure to vote the Chief Apostle out of office.

25 January 2003