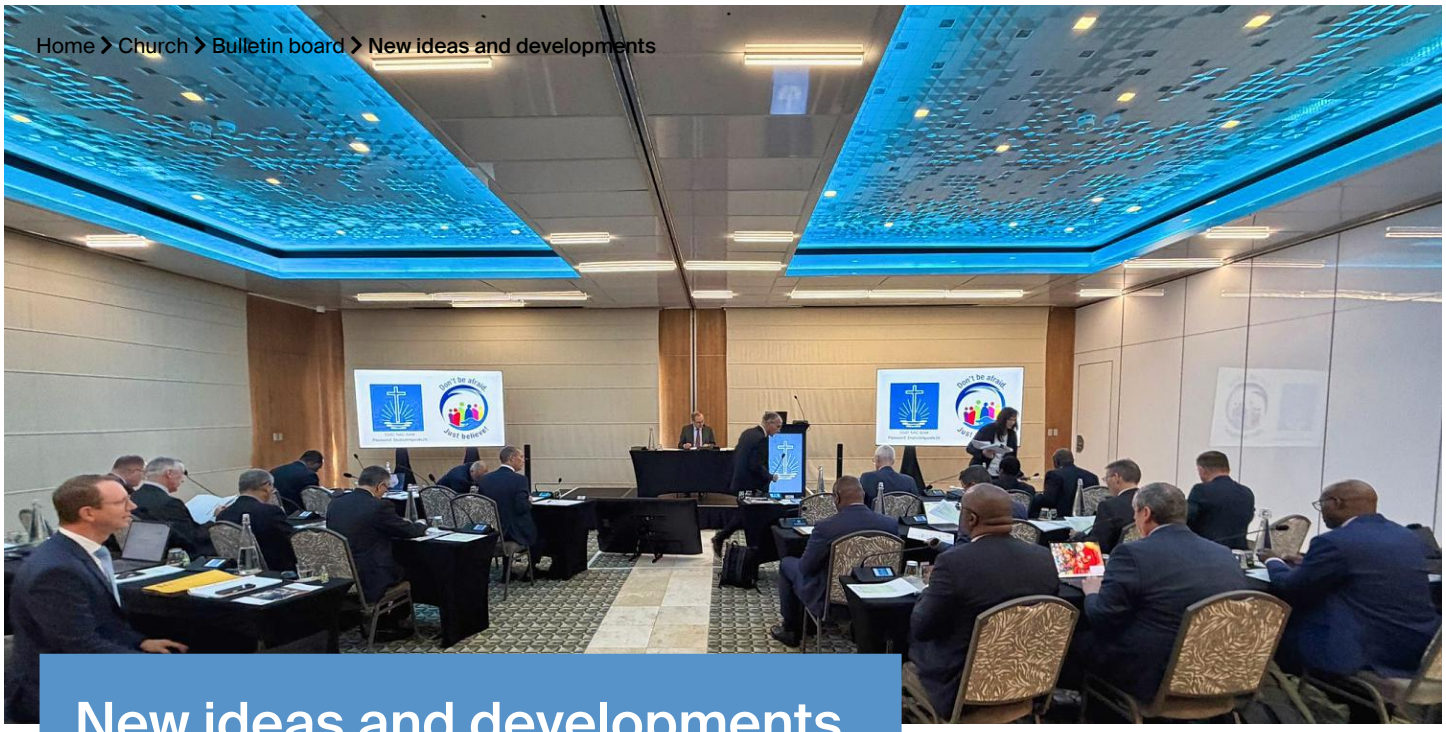


# New ideas and developments

Pastoral care, doctrine, and leadership principles: these were the topics that occupied the District Apostle Meeting at its most recent session in Cape Town.

Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider began the meeting by addressing a spiritual message to the District Apostles and their assistants one last time: the task of the apostolate is to proclaim the gospel truthfully, which also requires it to warn against false prophets. These include all those who seek to exercise power in the name of Jesus, who religiously justify violence and war, who prioritise wealth over salvation, who condemn and exclude people, and who profit from faith.

The Chief Apostle specifically addressed the Tenth Article of Faith, which accepts the authority of the state as long as it does not contradict any divine commandments. “In recent years, I have repeatedly observed forces at work that sought to impose opinions on our Church that contradict the gospel,” he said. He went on to call upon the District Apostles to “resolutely resist such attempts”—“even if this position should be detrimental to the functioning of the Church as an institution”.

**Pastoral care as a space for support**

Later in the meeting, Chief Apostle Helper Helge Mutschler explained the current status of the in-depth discussions surrounding the Church’s understanding of pastoral care. Following his remarks, the workshop that had been begun at last year’s session was continued. The focus was not only on where a great deal of good and valuable work is already taking place, but also on how pastoral care can be

further supported, reinforced, and expanded—as an indispensable space for fellowship, relationships, and spiritual support and guidance.

The exchange will continue: the results are to be evaluated, further perspectives are to be incorporated, and open questions are to be further discussed. The objective is to explore the topic in greater depth together and develop feasible next steps.

**Ongoing work on the Catechism**

Also on the agenda was an interim report concerning ongoing updates to the Catechism. A number of major changes occurred after the publication of the Catechism, especially with regard to the concept of ministry. Beyond that a number of other doctrinal statements have since been more precisely explained, and other clarifications published.

The relevant updates are now to be incorporated into the Catechism. Preparatory work for this was carried out by a sixteen-member project group. The project is being spearheaded by a body known as the Coordination Group, which prepares the decision-making process for the District Apostle Meeting on spiritual matters.

**A focus on serving**

A number of documents relating to the guiding principle of “Serving and Leading” have been retracted from the list of valid Church documents. As previously reported, the New Apostolic Church has updated this guiding principle. New content and additional chapters address important developments from recent years and reinforce the concept of service.

Chief Apostle Schneider, who will retire this Sunday, was not the only one to bid farewell to the assembly. District Apostle Michael Ehrich was also in attendance for the last time. He will hand over his duties to his successor, Martin Rheinberger, in June.

**22 May 2026**