

Vision



My dear brothers and sisters,

As we enter the harvest season in our nation, many feelings of thankfulness move over our hearts. Even though we are experiencing a difficult economic time, we still perceive the bounty of our heavenly Father's creation and His continual providing of our daily bread.

In preparation for Thanksgiving, I would like to take a closer look at the story of the widow highlighted in our Spring edition (Mark 12: 41-44 and Luke 21: 1-4). We have seen that a seemingly insignificant gift, measured in human terms, was not only "acceptable" to the Lord Jesus, but also held at a very high value. Let us examine this great example of giving.

- How did a "little" become "more than all"? It is interesting to read that she had no conditions or attachments; she asked for nothing in return. This is a pure giving out of unconditional love.

- Further, we do not read of any tangible results of her offering; there was no visible blessing or reward. Giving out of deep gratitude and pure love to the Lord is a result of our awareness of His limitless goodness and grace to us. This widow did not seem to pursue "something", only offered thanks. Isn't this similar to our relationships with one another as husbands, wives, partners, children, and friends? Does not the expression of our love for each other stand on its own with no expectation of reward? Do we need to be compensated for loving each other? Should we not address our heavenly Father in an even humbler, more worshipful way, not seeking something from Him due to our small gifts? This is true worship and thanks!

- What does it mean to give "out of poverty"? We can understand this to mean sacrificial giving, not only with our financial resources, but also with our time and effort. Our Chief Apostle once related that sometimes when tired or overwhelmed and tempted to give up on a task,

Continued on page 2



Continued from page 1

he has pushed himself a little harder and continued forward. In doing so, he always has found a special surprise which led to his joy and blessing.

We can be sure of our Father's ongoing blessing. We can trust completely in what comes from His hand. It is sometimes seen, but often the true scope of His faithfulness, deliverance and protection remains invisible to our mortal view. Sometimes later in life, glimpses of His wise guidance and ever present care are revealed to us. After seasons of hardship or injustice we may discover the hidden gem that Joseph described to his brothers: *"You meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day"* (Genesis 50:20).

And far greater still, but yet not seen, is the everlasting and eternal blessing found in the Holy Communion where we celebrate an invisible bond to our Savior and in the book of Life where He has written our names with His perfect sacrifice.

So as we celebrate this Thanksgiving season, let us truly celebrate the wonderful relationship Christ has created for us with Him and with one another. This will prompt an acceptable and highly valued expression of thanks before His throne.

With loving greetings,



Leonard R. Kolb

Strategic Planning

I would like to communicate openly with you about the future of our NAC-USA district and your local congregation. As you know, we have begun a district wide strategic planning process that addresses the circumstances in each congregation and creates a road map to greater congregational health. The name for this planning process is Stepping Forward. By its very nature, this type of planning is proactive and far reaching. It will shape the direction of our church for years to come and position our congregations to thrive and grow.

As the process picks up momentum, I would like each member to feel included. This article may seem a bit unusual in its length and detail, but I wanted the entire plan to be summarized in one document and be transparent to all. It also may seem a little business like and corporate sounding. However, we live in demanding times that require us to utilize the most effective and forward thinking techniques available under the direction of our Chief Apostle and the continual prompting of the Holy Spirit. Everyone should understand the process we used in developing Stepping Forward.

At the conclusion of this article I am hopeful that we will all share a common understanding of the following questions:

Why are we doing this?

What are the benefits?

What are the steps in the process and how will it affect me?

How do I participate in the process and offer my suggestions and feedback?

So let us begin our exploration with a few thoughts about strategic planning. Many of you may have engaged in this process within your workplace and understand the steps. For those who have not, let me provide a simple summary:

A strategic plan requires us to intentionally visualize exactly what we want the future to be and then do only those things that will bring our future vision into reality as efficiently as possible. It also requires us to stop doing those things that will not bring our future vision into reality. We can be inspired by the verse from Proverbs in the King James Bible: "Where there is no vision, the people perish."

A good plan has specific steps that must be taken in the right order and another verse from Proverbs will provide a useful perspective: "A man's heart plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps" (Proverbs 16:9).

Continued on page 4

A life in balance

But as for me, I trust in You, O LORD; I say, "You are my God." My times are in Your hand; Deliver me from the hand of my enemies, and from those who persecute me. Make Your face shine upon Your servant; save me for Your mercies' sake. - Psalm 31: 14-16

A life in perfect balance: most would aspire to such a concept. This would be a wonderful and unique experience, where all aspects of life fit and move in a perfect harmony. To appreciate this idea, let us consider the universe; an overwhelming handiwork of our heavenly Father. Scientists have found that the universe comprising uncountable stars (our sun), planets, and moons, rotate and move in a perpetual "homeostasis." God created such an intricate balance that has stood the test of time for millennia.

It may be difficult to imagine such precision or perfection in our own lives. Perhaps this was the inspiration for King David in the verse above. He recognized that when his "times," or all the aspects of his life, were placed into God's hand, good things would happen. But this was not the result of a passive approach to life; it required an active, intentional decision to order his life in a certain way.

Perhaps this is a formula that would also work for you and me in our modern life and times. How do we place our times in God's hand and in the mind of our Savior Jesus Christ?

Firstly, let us examine this concept of time more closely and practically.

Time is such a precious commodity. We often lament over the stress that can be so prevalent in our lives. How much of this stress is the result of too many demands on our limited time? At the beginning of our day we look at a long list of objectives and wonder, "How will I make time for all these things?" The important people in our life; husband, wife, children, parents, brothers, sisters and friends look to us and ask, "When will you make time for me?" In the end, it is these daily decisions about the things, and the people we make time for, that equal a life well lived.

But is it really possible to "make" time? Can we somehow add more hours to our day to fit everything and everyone in? Of course not, and everyone knows that this is really about making decisions. We have only the time that God has given us; no more, no less and we decide how to spend it.

Further, we must acknowledge that every decision contains two parts: A decision to say yes to one

thing always means saying no to something else. They can't occupy the same time. We see the truth and the simple beauty of this in the vow we make on our confirmation day; we both renounce and surrender simultaneously. In effect, we decide to say yes to the Triune God and no to the Evil One and his influences, all within one decision. Both cannot occupy the same time; nor can they receive the same allegiance.

What is the basis or criteria for our decisions? Even with the best of intentions, we often find ourselves reacting to the loudest and most urgent voices, those who demand that we satisfy their needs and purposes often by spending a disproportionate amount of our time. Sometimes this leads to a life that becomes one dimensional and out of balance. It can be done for a while, but we must recognize that in the long run, it is unhealthy and unsustainable. Often this decision comes at a high cost that is only apparent much later in life. What are these costs? They are the opportunities that were missed during a lifetime!

Continued on page 8

Upcoming Events

Chief Apostle Leber's divine service on May 20, 2012, in Philadelphia PA will be open to all members. The service will take place in the Pennsylvania Convention Center located in the heart of this historic city. More information will be coming soon.

As a reminder, our **New Apostolic Thanksgiving Sunday** will be celebrated in all USA congregations on Sunday, November 20th. There will be no services scheduled during the midweek or on the National Thanksgiving holiday.



To stay connected, find us on Facebook!
[facebook.com/NewApostolicChurchUSA](https://www.facebook.com/NewApostolicChurchUSA)

Building faith at home

Since 1991, the United States population has grown by 15 percent and the number of adults who no longer attend church activities has nearly doubled. The health of the American family has been shaken over the past 4 decades giving rise to high divorce rates and an ever-increasing pace of life. The culture and practices in our places of work, at home, within social circles and within our congregations has shifted. And now, further economic difficulties pull families into new life paths.

Our Chief Apostle has a strong interest in the focus that our families place on faith in your home. The church has been rich in Sunday school, youth, and even senior valued-added activities. Various publications have been dedicated for years at serving these demographic areas. While we continue to serve in these areas, new programs and materials are appearing with the design to aid our families in creating the possibility of healthy marriages and healthy family lives.

Prepare & Enrich ©

The PREPARE/ENRICH program is available for those that would like to participate in either evaluating their current relationship in preparation for marriage or for a married couple that would like to assess their marital health. The program is scientifically validated as a foundational program for premarital classes, marriage enrichment, couples

therapy, marriage mentoring and marriage education. We are searching for couples interested in becoming certified facilitators that would guide interested couples through the process. For more information on this program, please contact your local apostle. You may also find additional information about the program at www.prepare-enrich.com.

Parenting

Current day culture has moved our lives into high gear and many of our church programs may become appealing to the parent that wishes to use the church as a venue to bring elements of faith and spiritual life to their child(ren). While the church can be a vital instrument to bring faith into a child's life, it has been far more successful where acts of devotion and faith are practiced at home in unison with an active church life. In short, faith becomes more relevant when children experience a consistent message from parents about faith in the home and in church.

"You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up."

- Deuteronomy 6:7

Soon after the launch of the new USA website, additional information, articles and resources will be made available for parents and families interested in enhancing family life and faith at home. ■

Strategic Planning

Continued from page 2

Here are the steps that we must take together, always seeking the Lord's direction:

STEP 1

Clearly define who we are (or want to become), what we believe and where we want to go. This is often contained in a Mission and Vision Statement. With this knowledge, we can create measureable objectives to achieve.

STEP 2

Determine where we are right now truthfully in relation to our objectives. Often a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis is used for this.

STEP 3

Make a detailed plan to get from where we are now to where we want to be as efficiently as possible.

STEP 4

Implement the plan.

STEP 5

Measure our progress continually.

STEP 6

Make course corrections where needed.

As reported in the Spring edition of this newsletter, this process has been under way for some time and I would like to share our progress to date. Let me use the steps above to give you a progress report and describe what you can expect to experience in the future.

STEP 1: Our New Apostolic Mission and Vision Statements perfectly define the church we want to become. It is for this reason that we display them prominently in all our church buildings.

VISION

A church in which people feel at home and, inspired by the Holy Spirit and their love for God, align their lives to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and thus prepare themselves for His return and eternal life.

MISSION

Reaching out to all people in order to teach them the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to baptize them with water and the Holy Spirit.

Providing soul care and cultivating a warm fellowship in which everyone shall experience the love of God and the joy of serving Him and others.

We can distill these statements down to one overarching objective: Create healthy New Apostolic Christian congregations for our members because thereby we will grow (first in spiritual maturity and then in numbers) and be completed for the return of Jesus Christ. I hope you won't grow tired of seeing the following graphic, but I feel strongly that this is the road map that leads us to readiness for the return of Christ!



Now let's get very specific. A healthy congregation should provide the following benefits to those who make up the body of Christ. These four bullet points describe the very essence of Stepping Forward and should guide our thinking, our actions and our decision making for the foreseeable future.

- Inspirational, worshipful divine services comprised of prayer, music, a powerful message authored by the Holy Spirit, and an enhanced Holy Communion experience with Christ.
- Warm pastoral care that provides the teachings of Christ and support for the daily challenges of

contemporary life for members of all age groups.

- A culture that is based upon the Gospel of Christ; members who learn to live like Christ and ministers who lead like Christ.
- A sustainable structure where a critical mass (sufficient numbers) of dedicated ordained ministers and members engage their spiritual gifts and talents to serve one another and their community in the love of Christ.

STEPS 2 AND 3: Our district leadership teams (apostle, bishop and district leader) have been working diligently to objectively assess the condition of our congregations in relation to the four items above through the use of a SWOT analysis. We know we have room to grow in all areas and our planning will address these deficiencies aggressively. Over the course of time, one or all of the team members will be visiting your congregation to share their findings and present their preliminary plans to enhance congregational health. They will likewise answer your questions and gather your feedback regarding the proposed future direction of your congregation. We will create multiple ways for your voice to be heard directly and comfortably. Finally, they will then work with your suggestions to craft final decisions.

Let me pause for a moment and provide some caution and some clarification. Clearly, we are blazing new trails here and some may be uncomfortable or unfamiliar with the style or the methods we are suggesting. Let us be honest and address directly the areas that may cause us some anxiety.

Firstly, we are not accustomed to integrating the feedback of the membership into congregational decisions. In years past, this was not encouraged and thus, we are not experienced at being collaborative. It is a skill that we must learn in order to Step Forward and while our first steps may be shaky, I am convinced that we will grow together. Please be aware that gaining consensus is much more difficult than being autocratic (a fact that every parent will understand). Ultimately, this will test our culture of living and leading like Christ. Much compromise, peacemaking, tolerance and love will be necessary. At the end of the day, decisions will be made that we believe will benefit the greatest good, knowing of course that not everyone will agree with all things.

Strategic Planning

Continued from page 5

Next, please recognize that some of our deficiencies are rooted in or made worse by our unsustainable structure. In many areas, we are simply spread too thin. The result is not healthy; lives spiral out of balance, and the quality of the divine service experience and our pastoral care is weakened despite often heroic efforts by our ministers and members. On the one hand, each congregation needs a minimum critical mass to be sustainable and to deliver the benefits that will transform us into the Bride of Christ. But on the other hand, we must also be sensitive to the unique circumstances of each locality; we cannot use a cookie cutter approach. Some of the planning will revolve around creating new congregations with improved structure.

STEP 4: The implementation stage will depend on the complexity of the plan and may take some time to fully complete. Plans involving new buildings or capital improvements will be evaluated and prioritized based upon our financial realities across the entire country. Not every plan can be fully implemented at the same time.

In addition, every plan will contain provisions to implement the Work of Ministry initiative, to provide preaching and pastoral training for our ordained ministers, to identify and support our youth in entering ministry and to begin the process of integrating our congregations more completely into our communities. These activities are ongoing with no completion date other than our spiritual completion and Christ's return.

STEPS 5 AND 6: Our progress towards our objectives must be continually measured. As circumstances merit, adjustments will be made to keep us on course.

Please allow me to conclude with this thought. I believe that we are in a transitional moment of great importance to our church in the USA. We have two distinct groups of members that are equally loved by our Savior Jesus Christ, and who can look forward to the day of His return with equal expectation.

Our more traditional members have built our church to its present stature and have demonstrated a single minded commitment to the Lord over many decades. You were born and raised in an era with sharply different norms and customs than we see in our contemporary

world; both inside and outside the church. You are dearly loved and your expectations are respected. To this group, we make a commitment that our planning is 100% within the certainties of our New Apostolic doctrine based upon the Gospel of Christ, and the security of our Chief Apostle's leadership. Further, our plans are designed to make our congregations stronger and more impactful and meaningful to your children and grandchildren. You may feel secure that you are integral and irreplaceable members of the body of Christ. Your zeal and your spiritual gifts are needed more than ever for our completion.

Our more contemporary members should also feel that we fulfill our mission statement: to be "a church in which people feel at home and inspired by the Holy Spirit and their love for God, align their life to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and thus prepare themselves for His return and eternal life." To this group we make a commitment to "pass the mantle" and we encourage you to step forward and take ownership in the future direction of our congregations with the same dedication as your forbearers.

In addition, our plan is to make the future congregational tent as big, as tolerant and as all-encompassing as the grace of Jesus. Perhaps this is what Isaiah meant when he said: *"Enlarge the place of your tent, and let them stretch out the curtains of your dwellings; do not spare; lengthen your cords, and strengthen your stakes. For you shall expand to the right and to the left, and your descendants will inherit the nations, and make the desolate cities inhabited"* (Isaiah 54: 2-3).

To both groups, I would close with the words of Christ: *"that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another"* (John 13: 34-35). -LRK

PERSPECTIVE:

Thoughts on Halloween

As we approach the autumn season, questions here and there arise regarding how we should observe the Halloween tradition. I would like to offer the following suggestions:

Firstly, the tradition of Halloween has no official significance to our church; it is not a holiday that we acknowledge or observe. It is a secular observance that for most Americans revolves around children trick or treating. As such, I believe that it is a matter of personal responsibility between parents and their children.

In addition however, it also can be a teaching moment between parents and children that may revolve around the following key concepts, introduced at the right time in their life.

- The Halloween tradition is observed within the same general timeframe as our Service for the Departed. This may be significant if it interferes with our preparation for this very holy celebration.

- Often the argument is made, "What is the harm in celebrating Halloween?" Perhaps a better question would be: "What is the value?" For this we may investigate the advice of Apostle Paul. *"All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify"* (1 Corinthians 10:23).

- Similarly, as our children mature, it may be wise to teach them the value of acting in accordance with their true convictions even when it means bucking the mainstream. This builds strength of character that will serve them well in all aspects of their life. Our Chief Apostle described this clearly in a divine service in 2009: *"Chief Apostle Urwyler once imparted the concept of self-responsibility. To this I would like to add self-control. Self-responsibility and self-control, this is how we advance on our path of faith."* -LRK



This column will be featured in future Vision newsletters to help spotlight the history of selected areas and congregations by the History Project Group.

Peter Fendt was a true pioneer of God's work and His plan of salvation. As a priest, Peter testified to everyone and anyone that would listen. He worked in a large slaughterhouse in Greenpoint, Brooklyn and in the year 1900 met Hugo Schreiner. Through a growing friendship and a moving desire to become closer to God, Hugo and his family became members of the New Apostolic Church on March 5, 1901. Later that year, Hugo was ordained as a priest.

Both Priest Fendt and Priest Schreiner took the crucial step, entered into a borough of Brooklyn, and began to testify to the German and Dutch immigrants of that area. Speaking in their mother tongue, we can presume there was a true yearning for God's word as the mission of Brooklyn was established. For some time, services were held in various store fronts that would eventually form the Ridgewood congregation.

Hugo was the first priest ordained and active in helping establish the mission in Brooklyn. He was later sent to Rochester, St. Paul, Los Angeles, and Portland to help establish congregations and spread the Gospel in these cities.

These two pioneers served with their whole heart and soul. Their devotion to God's will and plan along with the support of their families helped establish the foundation of the God's work not only in Brooklyn, but also in many of the surrounding areas.



Back row left to right: Priests Ehrenberg, Fendt Sr., Schreiner, Nahm, Steiner, Reinecke, Runge **Front Row:** District Elder Erb, Apostle Mierau, District Elder Freudenberg

A life in balance

Continued from page 3

At a basic human level, they may be opportunities to improve ourselves and enhance our life experiences. But at a much higher and soulful level, they are the opportunities to do good (please remember our Chief Apostle's 2011 New Year's Day advice), to serve Christ, to develop deep and lasting relationships with our loved ones and ultimately the opportunity to secure life eternal with God the Father and the Son.

The experts in time management tell us that we should prioritize our time based upon those activities which create the greatest and highest good. This brings us back to the bible verse from the Psalmist. King David recognized that the hand of God contained the greatest good; blessing, protection, deliverance in dark days and ultimately, the appearance of the promised Savior and Redeemer of Israel. He certainly led a full life. At a minimum he was a shepherd, a warrior, a king, a father, a husband, a writer, a musician and a prophet. When he decided to fit all things and all his times within the hand of God, he experienced the goodness of God. In honesty, like all of us, he also made some poor decisions and experienced consequences that he lived to regret.

Let me conclude by being very practical and specific. Can we make time to...

- Read the Bible and broaden our understanding of the Gospel of Christ?
- Pray more intensively and thereby inquire into the will of God seeking guidance on our journey of faith?
- Experience each divine service in a humble, thankful and worshipful manner?
- Build deeper relationships with our loved ones; our natural families, our brothers and sisters within the household of faith and our communities?
- Serve each other in love as befits true disciples of Christ?

All these decisions will fit nicely within the times of our life and the hand of God. -LRK

Work of Ministry Spiritual Gift Discoveries

The following are stories of members who have discovered their spiritual gifts, shared with us from a west coast district. If you have heard stories of "spiritual gift discoveries" or have one of your own, please send it to us via communications@nac-usa.org.

JP's background in barbershop quartet singing was discovered when he joined the choir with a passion that later developed into an assistant choir director's role.

However, there is another "ministry" that has emerged. JP prays, reads, and studies the Bible verse of each divine service*, and creates a list of songs for worship. Every song, every service! He submits the list of songs to the congregational music leader who prepares handouts and incorporates instrumentals throughout the month. JP has color coded the pages of his hymnal by spiritual theme which may seem strange, but it demonstrates his passion for his spiritual gift. We are experiencing his gift of "administration" in action.

One day, PR began taking notes in divine services after seeing someone doing the same. This soon turned into a source of blessing for many. She began typing up her notes and very kindly forwarded them in an email to a few who could not be in the service. She decided to broaden her audience by sharing notes from divine services with members and friends of hers. She always does this with the intention of sharing words of encouragement, comfort, and strength. One of her friends liked the service summaries so much, she came to a church service one day. PR absolutely loves the Word of God and sharing it which reveals her gift of "teaching".

JS grew up playing the organ and singing in the choir. Now, after 40 years of playing the organ and singing she told her rector she wanted to take a break. With compassion and understanding he supported her request. He was also quick with a reply, "What else is there in the congregation you feel strongly about? Is there something else you would like to help with?" After some conversation, JS landed the role of Sunday school leader. She does not teach a Sunday school class, but supports the teachers. She loves getting things for the Sunday school teachers, coaching and helping them plan and prepare. JS was a great follower for a long time, but now her gift of "leadership" is emerging.

*The bible verse, message and summary of the divine service guide can be found at www.musiccompanion.org.