

# Vision



Dear brothers and sisters,

I would like to take this opportunity to wish each one a blessed and peaceful Advent season and a joyous entry into the New Year! In fact, let me describe this as a "joy of hope" for what we will experience in 2012 out of the hand of our heavenly Father. This joy is not an event driven emotion but rather is bound to a Christian awareness of these wonderful facts:

- **Christ was born!** He left His Father's side and took on the burden of human form for the sake of mankind.
- **Christ lived!** And successfully established His church and gave apostles to teach and proclaim His gospel.
- **Christ died!** And provided the eternally valid sacrifice for our redemption.
- **Christ arose!** He overcame death and every human weakness. He was and remains an exemplar to those who follow Him and wish to become His bride.
- **Christ ascended!** And waits with His Father for the day when He can fetch us to our eternal home. He is both our advocate in heaven and present with us through the Holy Spirit, guiding us daily.

These fundamental facts, all of them, should cause us a true joy and an abiding sense of hope regardless of the circumstances we may have to live through.

In addition, 2012 will contain specific events that will heighten our joy here in the USA. In May, our Chief Apostle will visit us and conduct festive services in Erie and Philadelphia. All are invited to attend the divine service in Philadelphia on May 20th. (You will find more information in the Upcoming Events section of this newsletter). Also the divine service will be transmitted to all congregations. He will visit again on August 19th, 2012 conducting a divine service for the combined youth of Canada and the USA at Brock University in St. Catherine's, Ontario Canada.

As we feel the joy of anticipation and hope, may we heed the words of Christ, "Occupy till I come" (Luke 19:13 KJV).

With heartfelt greetings for the blessed season from our Chief Apostle and all our Apostles,

Yours,

## Strengthen the House

We find ourselves in the waning moments of 2011 and with much joy prepare to enter the New Year. Our faithful God has been so good to us and in this issue you will find a pictorial view of some of the many events that were memorable. However, for me 2011 has been characterized by our single minded focus on creating healthier congregations. Much time and work was invested into the planning of the future of our NAC-USA district and as you recall, these plans have four main objectives:

- 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.

*Continued on page 2*

# Strengthen the House

*Continued from page 1*

- 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.

As I mentioned in the Autumn Vision article on this subject, this plan will control our direction for the next decade. There is much to do as we prayerfully and thoughtfully seek to implement these plans in every congregation. So in 2012 we will strive for a seamless and natural continuation of the Stepping Forward process and look to experience a year in which our planning takes tangible form and shape. Our lives should be enriched as these concepts begin to jump off the drawing board and become the new reality within each congregation. We want to see, hear and touch the benefits in a measurable way.

My spirit has been captured by a small phrase found in Zechariah 10:6 where the prophet exhorts God's people to "strengthen the house". I feel this is a worthy exhortation for us as well and is a useful "short hand" phrase (that certainly dates me) for the task that is before us in 2012.

So early in the New Year, what tangible steps can we take to strengthen the house in a way that supports our four healthy congregational objectives above? Let me provide a few suggestions.

**1. Strengthen our Holy Communion experience with Christ.** This is such a fundamental component of the divine service and our very profession as New Apostolic Christians. I am convinced that the quality of each divine service and hence each member's life will be immediately improved when our understanding of this sacrament is enhanced. A Perspective article dedicated to this subject appears later in this newsletter with sample discussion points. I would recommend that this becomes the focus of congregational fellowships and pastoral visits.

**2. Strengthen our understanding of the Gospel of Christ.** In a recent meeting, the question arose: How exactly do we change our culture and learn to live and lead like Christ? Please give us specific details! This is an excellent question and I would suggest the following:

Let us go directly to the source and become students (disciples) of the teachings of Christ. His gospel is the definitive word on how to live and how to lead. He didn't speak in vague generalities but gave us definition and substance that is powerfully relevant today. It has the power to change us.

Every member has access to this learning tool and further, congregations could organize small groups immediately to enhance our knowledge. In addition to His direct teachings (example: Sermon on the Mount), the groups should focus their attention on His parables, encounters (example: the adulteress facing execution by stoning), experiences (example: granting grace at the cross to the malefactor) and miracles. Within these dimensions we begin to better understand Christ. They provide a primer on healthy spiritual living.

Before going further, let me add one word of warning. In our busy world, the temptation is always there to approach this in a task oriented way. We like to check off items on our "to do list". Can we see that being a disciple of the teachings of Christ requires of us a lifelong ongoing striving? But with that said, we need to start somewhere and I would look specifically to gain a deeper understanding of His feelings on these topics:

- Tolerance
- Love
- Compassion
- Judgment
- Anger
- Righteousness
- Revenge
- Servant hood
- Humility
- Forgiveness
- Reconciliation
- Repentance
- Peace
- Service to others
- Charity
- Pride/Arrogance
- Self-Centeredness

*Continued on page 8*



# PERSPECTIVE:

## Holy Communion with Christ

A fundamental component of a healthy congregation is a powerful and inspiring divine service experience for all its members on a consistent basis. And within the divine service, Holy Communion with Christ stands as the high point.

The more we journey toward congregational health, the more I feel that the key to unlocking the full potential of this holy sacrament lies not in one single big step, but rather many small ones. Some lie within the work of our ordained ministers but some revolve around the understanding, the expectations and the preparation of the individual members who comprise the congregation itself. Let us examine this congregational link more closely.

A good way to organize our thinking is to use the teaching on Holy Communion found in a newly released excerpt from our New Apostolic Catechism. The sacrament is explained using an analogy of 5 meals. It is simultaneously a meal of:

- Remembrance
- Thanksgiving
- Fellowship
- The Future
- Profession



All of this in one moment during the divine service! How can this be? Perhaps it would be helpful to further expand the analogy. As we experience the holiday season, we often partake of large festive meals with many courses. Each course is different but complementary. Each course builds upon the previous one and adds to the joy and satisfaction of the total experience. Such a feast can't be rushed. Time and attention must be taken to fully savor each course. Likewise, much preparation is necessary in advance.

So let us now take a journey together of greater understanding. Both in moments of personal introspection and in discussions with one another, let us explore this feast in deeper detail and discover a more satisfying, inspiring and joyous Holy Communion with Christ in every divine service.

**A meal of Remembrance:** Here we acknowledge that Christ has paid the ultimate price for our salvation. His innocent death stands forever as a unique and ever valid event.

*Contemplation:* In every divine service, do we visualize the suffering and death of Christ and stand in awe of this moment of Holy Communion?

**A meal of Thanksgiving:** Within this meal there is much to savor and perhaps much we still need to understand. Here we firstly express our worship and praise for God's limitless grace and Christ's willingness to sacrifice His innocent life for us. But likewise we must grasp that He alone is our Redeemer and His victory over sin and death provides the means for forgiveness and the power to be transformed into a new creature with a restored eternal relationship with God.

Forgiveness is possible for all, but it has conditions. Christ had much to say about these conditions through His teachings. Further knowledge and discussion of His Gospel is essential to our understanding of repentance and forgiveness.

*Contemplation:* At some point before or during the divine service, have we tried to fully express our profound gratitude to the triune God? Do we understand that salvation is truly beyond our capability to do for ourselves? In the light of the word of God, do we clearly see our deficiencies? Our sin often injures others. In addition to asking for forgiveness, have we made things right with them?

*Continued on page 4*

## Holy Communion with Christ, continued

*Continued from page 3*

In all matters of sin, are we sorrowful and repentant? Are we truly committed to changing? Have we abandoned judgment of others? Are we willing to forgive others in greater measure than we seek forgiveness? Sometimes the sins of others have caused us a deep hurt that is not possible to forgive instantaneously. Are we actively working towards reconciliation?

**A meal of Fellowship:** This meal is not merely about Christ; it is with Christ and He is present. It is also experienced together with the family of God, our brothers and sisters.

*Contemplation:* As we prepare in advance of divine service, do we visualize going to church or meeting our Savior? Prior to divine service do we invite Him to be in our midst? During Holy Communion, do we feel His presence, and His love? Likewise, do we feel love for our brothers and sisters that surround us?

**A meal of the Future:** Each celebration of Holy Communion is a foreshadowing of what is to come. There will be an ultimate moment of Communion with God the Father and the Son. We will be transformed into the image of Christ. Our joy will be amplified by our reunion with our loved ones who have preceded us and will no longer be tempered by sin, remorse, sickness or sorrow. God will wipe away all tears.

*Contemplation:* Does our personal faith contain a hope and an expectation of an eternal blessed future with the triune God? Do we strive that each celebration of Holy Communion be transformational on our journey to this day? Do we sense a change within us

from the old nature of Adam to the new creature in Christ?

**A meal of Profession:** To profess is to declare our belief publicly. "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes" (1Corinthians 11:23-26). In this one sentence we profess our firm belief in the death, resurrection and return of Jesus Christ.

*Contemplation:* Are we completely aware of and do we firmly embrace this public commitment of faith when we partake of the bread and the wine? At times do we perform a ritual without fully considering what our actions mean?

There are resources available that can help us to work through these questions and grow in our understanding. I urge you to be a continual learner and recommend the following sources of inspiration and knowledge:

1. The Gospel of Christ contains His teachings, descriptions of historical events and the further illuminations of the first apostles.
2. The 2012 Devotional is a compilation of 52 thoughts from our Chief Apostle all revolving around the theme of Holy Communion. You may purchase this publication in a printed booklet form or access it weekly via the new NAC-USA website.
3. The Peace Making seminar materials. This initiative was introduced to the congregations some years ago (2007). These materials are practical and effective in teaching techniques of reconciliation and forgiveness. They may form the basis for future congregational small group discussions. Please consult with your rector if interested for access to these materials.



**YOUTH DAYS**  
May - August  
Various locations





**NATIONAL SYNOD**

October 28-30  
Phoenix, AZ



**CHIEF APOSTLE VISIT**

July 28-31  
Venezuela



**NATIONAL PILLAR  
CONFERENCE**

September 2-4  
Niagara Falls, NY



**9/11 ANNIVERSARY AND  
BISHOP MILLIGAN RETIREMENT**

September 10-11  
Lodi, NJ



**2011  
IN REVIEW**

**Upcoming Events**

We are thrilled to introduce our **new national NAC USA website**. The website, [www.nacusa.org](http://www.nacusa.org), is now live for you to explore. Just some of the many features on our new website include: a congregational locator, announcements and events, devotionals, as well as information on our various ministries to connect into. Just like our previous website, our new website still features an E-offering option and is located under the "GIVE" section. Come discover our new website and check back often for updated articles and additional features.

**Chief Apostle Leber will be coming to Philadelphia, PA on May 20th, 2012.** The service will be at the PA Convention Center. No tickets will be required for admittance to the service, everyone is welcome. For more service information and hotel options, please visit <http://chiefapostlevisit.nac-philadelphia.org/>  
We look forward to seeing you there!

Save the date! The **2012 Youth Summit** will take place at Brock University, in Ontario, Canada on the weekend of August 19th.

Also our next **National Pillar Conference** will be October 19-21 in Chicago, IL. Please check [www.NACPillars.com](http://www.NACPillars.com) for more information and mark your calendars!

Find us on Facebook!



[facebook.com/NewApostolicChurchUSA](http://facebook.com/NewApostolicChurchUSA)

# Stepping Forward and coming together: Boise, Idaho

One of the Church's responsibilities is to bring Christ to the members and to promote a heart-changing journey with Christ. At times, it means stepping forward from traditions and doing whatever it takes to render effective service.

During the last Youth Convention, someone asked, "Has the Boise congregation ever experienced conflict?" My response was, "Of course! Conflict is part of growth." Look at the congregations of the early church as members struggled to break from Jewish customs. Conflict has been with us from the start. As part of the Church of Christ, how we handle conflict greatly influences our growth and maturity as Christians.



Candidly, one conflict reduced the attendance in our congregation to a mere two members for a Wednesday night service. At that point, we had to step out of the bounds of tradition. Souls need to have a divine service experience, but it made little sense to have one minister at the altar and one member in the bench. With bible in hand, we retreated to the fellowship room and sat down at a table for our first "interactive service." (For those not exposed to this concept, it is a pilot program being tried in certain congregations involving an interactive discussion of key points from the Divine Service Guide, prompted by



the Holy Spirit.) After hearing of our dismal Wednesday night attendance, one brother asked if he could come directly to service in his "work clothes" due to his work schedule. Come as you are, just come! Soon midweek service had five, ten, then fifteen attending and we are still growing.

Now, we struggle to keep the midweek service to 45 minutes because the lively activity of the Spirit keeps everyone engaged. Our Wednesday group often stays and talks another forty-five minutes after the service! This living and active Spirit of Christ has also promoted Sunday morning attendance.

We are the body - Christ is the Head. A measure of this divine relationship occurs when His nature of servanthood reveals itself in us. By God's grace, our congregation has been energized such that when a job needs to be completed, often the first to recognize it attacks it, whether a youth, senior, or those in-between. We see it as our service to Christ. This attitude of service has brought about an active Sunday school where children call for rides to come to church. It has promoted a more active youth group, which makes

up much of our Wednesday night attendance. It has also promoted a more effective music program bringing new life to our worship.



One young family saw that our Sunday school rooms were drab and needed remodeling. We now have sunshine yellow, and lime green Sunday school rooms. The youth renovated an unused room into a 'hang out' area just for them. This spirit of 'service for the Master' promotes strong bonds among the members and within families.



After service on Sunday, we can't seem to stay long enough to enjoy each other's company. There are refreshments or brunch, after every service (frequently until 1 or 2 p.m.!). This time after service allows for great fellowship and sharing. Stepping forward in all these instances has produced growth! We are again beginning to have Holy Sealings and renewed life.

Finally, despite mention of all of these other things, much of our focus is on the divine service experience where God counsels, forgives, and gives us strength and hope for the future. A minister once said, "In the end, members come to be inspired by the sermon, the Word of God." Each service is special and can change our lives, if we allow it to. The full integration of music enhances our services and our ministers spend extra time preparing for a lively delivery of the Word.

We all hope, and are striving for the day of the Lord's return. We believe that through the strong, spiritual, loving, forgiving, and joyful nature of Christ, exhibited by the members of the Body of Christ, we will soon see that day.

Submitted by:  
Megan Flowers



### **A promise come true...**

All congregations in the Lord's Work have humble beginnings. Sarasota congregation was no different. When we consider that this congregation has existed for over a half of a century, we can say that it was the Lord's hand that was the guide.

The Sarasota congregation began with just one faithful sister who came to the United States from Germany. Her name was sister Wassermann. When she returned to her home town of Wheelburg, Germany for a visit she had a chance to speak with Apostle Schall who asked her how everything was going in America. She said "It was nice except it would be wonderful if there was a church in Sarasota that she could at least attend regular services again." He assured her that there would soon be a church in Sarasota, which God would provide. After her return to Sarasota in 1957 two families moved to Sarasota from the Cleveland, Ohio congregation. Elmer Haettich Sr. and his family, along with Fred Haettich and his family. A total of 11 souls now needed to be served.

In 1956 one year earlier, Apostle J.P. Fendt sent the newly ordained Priest Schmidt to St. Petersburg to start a mission. During that same year, Apostle Kraus gave his blessing to Pr. Emil Woll of

Denby congregation to go to St. Petersburg. There were now two priests in St. Petersburg with members in various surrounding cities. Sarasota members faithfully drove two cars to St. Petersburg on Sunday mornings for service.

In 1958 services were started in Sarasota at the Eagles Hall on Lime Avenue. In 1959 a few New Apostolic families from Chicago came to Florida. Pr. Stroh and his wife led the way by moving to Bradenton from Chicago. Sarasota soon became the winter spot for the New Apostolic snowbirds. District Elder Hess and family came to warm up in the winter and brought with them Apostle Hiby. Apostle Hiby conducted the first Apostle Service in the Eagle's hall in Sarasota. In 1960 Pr. Stroh was asked to become the rector. The congregation then moved to the Women's Club in downtown Sarasota.

Our heavenly Father helped our membership to grow for the next 10 years, and in 1971 the church building that exists today was built. Apostle John W. Fendt dedicated the church on February 14, 1971. We were thankful to have a new home. The Sarasota church building had a renovation in 2010 which enhanced the interior of the building, and a new pavilion for picnics and fellowship in the yard.



# Strengthen the House

*Continued from page 2*

You will find additional information to assist you in your research and discussions on the new NAC-USA website in the Going Deeper section.

**3. Strengthen our understanding and implementation of the Work of Ministry.** Each congregation must function in a healthy, sustainable way. Fundamentally, it must provide pastoral care to each member that creates teaching, comfort and support. The early apostolic congregations were communal. They ministered to each other and thereby edified the Body of Christ under the direction of the Holy Spirit and the guidance of the apostles as described in Ephesians 4:11-13.

This is a precedent for us today born directly out of the gospel of Christ. The Work of Ministry is a method for leading and directing a healthy sustainable congregation. Everyone contributes their spiritual gifts for the benefit of all. However, this requires all to possess a knowledge based upon personal discovery: What are my God given gifts? What has God called me to do? What are my passions? What experiences has God engineered in my life that has shaped my ability to serve others? How will I best integrate these factors into my congregation while leading a balanced life? This is a deeper understanding than volunteerism and again requires us to be students of the Gospel. If you have not investigated this yet, please consider this your personal invitation to take an enlightening journey of self-discovery. Your rector will have information to help you get started.

**4. Strengthen our structure:** There are actually two immediate action items that I would like to tell you about.

- The development of “Flagship” congregations as strongholds of health. These congregations will benefit from a size of 100 plus members. We hope to have at least one in each region. This will be an incremental first step in better supporting the smaller congregations surrounding them.

They will have technology and facility enhancements and will be the hubs for training, education and community outreach support from the NAC-USA district church. This structural change is not meant to create two classes of members or be elitist. Rather it is our attempt to bring the best of our teaching,

training, support and ministerial capabilities as close to the most members as possible.

- A stronger support system to “link” all our members more closely. Particularly the small isolated congregations, our youth attending college campuses, our brothers and sisters in the armed forces, our members living at some distance from a congregation and those isolated by sickness, infirmity or travel schedules.

It will come as no surprise that the backbone of this support system is technology. Some of you have been connected to [www.NewApostolicChurchUSA.tv](http://www.NewApostolicChurchUSA.tv), our system for broadcasting divine services to those not able to attend a live service via an internet connection. Currently we are working on broadcasting from at least one site in each time zone. Ultimately, this system will become the basis whereby our Flagship congregations support our smaller isolated congregations and members. It is expected that with time, most Flagship locations will broadcast their services to other sites.

In addition, the groups of isolated members above, starting with our youth on college campuses will be supported by their own dedicated “linked” ministry who will seek to overcome the distances and separation students feel when away from home with an enhanced form of pastoral care, connection and divine services. For our members in the armed services, we hope to “enlist” the help of our ministers who are veterans and have experienced military duty.

In conclusion, another Old Testament personality comes to mind. The story of Nehemiah is fascinating reading at many levels that is both instructional and inspirational. Here we see the power of one every day, humble man who feels a divine calling to serve during difficult times. He rallies the people of God returning from their captivity to restore the walls of Jerusalem. The spark of calling becomes a tangible reality as the vision spreads from household to household and each family adopts a section of the wall or a gate to restore.

Let us likewise come together in 2012 and rally around our cause that will enhance the richness of our congregational life and prepare us for Christ’s return.  
-LRK