

Health, growth, completion

Vision



New Apostolic Church USA

District News

www.nac-usa.org

Spring 2012

Dear brothers and sisters,

Often we may hear the expressions – “we are all creatures of habit” or “I just don’t like change!”

I must admit, though, that I have never heard these words from any children. For them, change is good and sometimes even wonderful. When rooted in a stable home life, they live in a culture of learning, ever grasping for new ideas and exploring new things.

In Matthew 19:14, the Lord Jesus says – “*Let the little children come to Me....for of such is the kingdom of heaven*”. Can we see from this episode in the life of Christ an indication that the “child-like” nature of children is necessary for living in the kingdom of God? Isn’t this attitude epitomized in their feeling that if I want to grow, I must learn and change? As children of the Most High, can we see that it is our duty, even more, our privilege, to adopt this urge in our soul life? We must realize that we are not at a state of worthiness presently and we want to continue learning and growing in Christ’s nature. Being rooted in a stable life of faith is foundational to growing in Christ’s nature. We are on a journey and part of a dynamic process which the Lord Himself has ordained for all of us individually to prepare us to be His bride.

As we in the northern hemisphere begin to experience the changing season of Spring, where the whole earth moves through a renewal process of incredible change, let us be encouraged to follow the instructions that Apostle Paul gave the Romans to *be transformed by the renewing of your mind* (Romans 12:2). Thereby, we adopt a culture of continual learning in our personal soul life and in our congregations to advance closer to the goal of our faith. This will bring change, but this evolution is necessary and we want to embrace it in childlike faith.

With loving greetings,

Two Parables

In our last edition of the Vision newsletter, I introduced the concept of “Strengthen the House”, an exhortation declared by the prophet Zechariah (Zechariah 10:6). Within this continuing theme, please allow me to reference two parables of Christ that will help us strengthen the house in each congregation.

New wine in an old wineskin:

This parable is described in Mark 2:22. *And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine bursts the wineskins, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins.* How does this teaching of Christ help us strengthen our congregations?

Let us begin by exploring the analogy that Christ created with this example. At this time, wine was stored in wineskins, not bottles. New wine poured into skins was still fermenting and this process produced gas which expands. New wine skins were elastic enough to expand with the pressure. But old wine skins often burst because they were hard and inflexible.

And the point to this parable is? Christ’s mission was to bring salvation to all mankind. This was the new wine. However, this mission was much too big to fit into the old wineskin or understanding of His contemporaries. Their understanding was formed out of Old Testament values with a fixation upon the law and judgment and the assumption that God’s goodness was reserved solely for their nation. Christ needed to create a new wineskin or understanding before He could offer salvation. He needed to introduce the concepts of love, grace, mercy, tolerance and forgiveness for all people or else redemption and salvation would have no room. In essence, it would burst the old wineskin and be spilled or wasted.

Today, as we continually strive to create healthier congregations, this parable becomes ever more insightful and relevant. We are implementing changes to improve our divine services and

pastoral care as well as enhance the long term sustainability of each congregation’s structure. This also is “new wine”. However, these changes become meaningless if they are constricted within an old understanding or culture. Please join me in reflecting on the following questions:

- How will a new congregation “reach out to all people”, “teach the Gospel of Christ”, “cultivate a warm fellowship”, “experience the love of God and the joy of serving Him and others” and become a “church in which people feel at home” (new wine) if it does not first learn to live and lead like Christ (new wineskin)? This new wineskin is built on His teachings of unconditional love and acceptance of all people. It requires us to profess and demonstrate these qualities in an open manner within our communities.
- How will a congregational merger (new wine) bring long term sustainability without a new understanding of shared servant leadership and a deep exploration and implementation of the Work of Ministry whereby all members of the body of Christ are empowered to serve one another from their God given gifts, their passions, their unique life experiences and the inspirational qualities that others see in them (new wineskin)?

Wheat and the Tares:

In Matthew 13: 24-30, Christ teaches the following: *The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’ He said to them, ‘An enemy has done this.’ The servants said to him, ‘Do you want us then to go and gather them up?’ But he said, ‘No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn”.*

In the time of Christ, tares were a reference to a specific weed that looked very much like wheat in the early stages and was distinguishable only at the time of harvest. It was poisonous to people so it was important that it was removed from the harvest. What is the relevance of this parable for us and how will it serve to make our congregations stronger?

The tares represent the imperfections that always have been and always will be found within each congregation. Often we are aggravated by these conditions and feel that such weaknesses and deficiencies should not exist. Or we may focus on perceived past mistakes or inconsistencies found in our history. Perhaps this gives some reason to doubt their calling. Perhaps this prompts some to remain passively on the sidelines and uncommitted in their service to Christ waiting for the day when the church is more to their liking.

In response to this attitude, let us look at the reality of Christ's church; even from its first moments. At the high point of Christ's mission, the very moment when He won the victory over sin and death for all mankind, how did He appear to His contemporaries? By human standards, He appeared to be a rejected and defeated man with few remaining followers. Yet from this perceived weakness came the triumphant moment of resurrection and the means of salvation.

Likewise, what was the experience of the early apostolic congregations? They were also characterized by human weakness and far from perfect. Apostle Paul was prompted to give this explanation to the congregation at Corinth. *But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence.* (1Corinthians 1:27-29)

We can see that God consistently chooses to confound the wisdom of mankind. He creates wondrous, eternal outcomes out of our weak and often dysfunctional state. In our new Catechism, we read that the Church of Christ will only reach its perfect, triumphant state at His return.

So as instructed by Christ in this parable, let us be undeterred by the presence of the tares for God allows them until the time of harvest. Instead we may rejoice that He has called us and equipped us with the spiritual gifts needed to serve His Kingdom. We can exchange passivity for passion and increasingly engage ourselves in "strengthening the house". - LRK

The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?' But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn."

Matthew 13:30



PERSPECTIVE:

Small groups

In the winter 2011 edition of the VISION newsletter, I made reference to the organization of “small groups” within the Strengthen the House article. Below are a few of my thoughts that may bring clarity and a new perspective to this concept “small group”.

The Lord Jesus had many disciples. However, He chose out of the many, a small group of 12 disciples to work with intensively. In many areas of the Bible we read of commands for Christians to minister to one another.

Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of His return is drawing near. (Hebrews 10:24-25 NLT)

While we may consider the community of the New Apostolic Church a rather large group across the nation and throughout the world, we have benefited from small and intimate environments in many of our local congregations. Looking into our near and distant futures, as part of the USA District Strategic Plan, some locations will get larger as a result of congregations merging together to create a healthier and more sustainable environment. However, it is equally important that we maintain the personal and intimate settings that we’ve enjoyed so much over the years. Small group will be an opportunity that will allow those in all congregations to enjoy spiritual growth and intimate fellowship. Small group will allow us to counter the feeling that “big” will bring upon us coldness and separation.

Small groups are intentional efforts that allow us to care for each other, grow in our understanding and apply God’s direction

to our lives. You may already recognize the term “small group” as an ever growing term within the Christian community around you. The benefits of small group include the following:

Fellowship

Moves people into fellowship and out of isolation

Application

Helps develop spiritual ripening through practical and relevant application of God’s Word

Accountability

Allows people to share and fulfill their God-given mission in their lives, within the congregation, and throughout the world around them

Guidance

Draws upon the background and experiences of group members and the Holy Spirit to contribute to each other

Encouragement

Helps people to continue moving forward spiritually

I encourage you to explore the Gospel of Christ, His teachings, parables and miracles in a small group and discover where the Holy Spirit leads your understanding and how It can make the teachings of Christ relevant in our lives. Another resource for small group discussion is our new 2012 Devotional that is focused on “grace”. It is a compilation of thoughts from our Chief Apostle that will guide your small group to an enhanced Holy Communion experience with Christ. - LRK



STORIES THAT Strengthen the House

Shared Leadership in South Florida

District Apostle Kolb and Apostle Hecht visited Florida on January 14th and 15th to hold a ministers and wives service on Saturday and a district service on Sunday. This service also introduced the new South Florida district. This new district is a combination of the former Florida East and Florida Spanish districts. As a result, Evangelist Bernardo Gomez was ordained as District Evangelist to share the leadership for the area with District Elder Roger VanKlingeren.

D Ev. Gomez and DE VanKlingeren will be working together with Apostle Hecht to focus on the four objectives of the USA Strategic Plan.

- Enhance the Divine Service Experience
- Improve Pastoral Care
- Improve our Culture
- Create a sustainable Structure

Of the four objectives, DE VanKlingeren will concentrate on improving the Divine Service Experience by holding seminars and presentations that promote continual learning. He will also coach and monitor the effectiveness and growth of Pastoral Care within the new district.

D Ev. Gomez will concentrate on Structure by working closely with the NAC-USA district office in implementing the organizational aspects of the "Stepping Forward" strategic plan within each congregation. In addition to Structure, DEv. Gomez will focus on Culture by helping facilitate the Work of Ministry (discovering your spiritual gifts) implementation plan for the South Florida district as well as youth and youth leader development.

The four Stepping Forward objectives: Divine Service Experience, Pastoral Care, Structure, and Culture all help "strengthen the house" and fit within our central goal of building healthy, growing congregations that are prepared for Christ's return.

Senior Assets in New Jersey

In October 2011 twenty-two retired ministers and wives, within Apostle Hammer's working area, gathered for an open discussion after a service in our Parsippany church that was conducted by District Elder Kurt Orlofski. The purpose of the discussion was to talk about what they could do to assist our current ministers in their work. This group meeting was decided upon after discussions between the retired District Elder Richard Arends and a retired rector, Priest Walter Young. The meeting was prompted by a deep concern in the heart of Priest Young (who recently turned 90) as a result of some thoughts expressed by Chief Apostle Leber in his Pentecost 2011 service in conjunction with his given motto for the year 2011: "Do good works!"

It was obvious that because of the many years of serving across our senior membership, many gifts and talents were available. Hence, the tag "Senior Assets". These retired ministers and members are willing to continue to serve others, albeit in other ways, in order to help build healthy congregations according to our District Apostle's initiative.

Many ideas concerning beneficial ways to serve and support our church in these challenging and changing times were presented. District Elder Orlofski presented three items to the group that concern him:

1. What does it mean to be a New Apostolic Christian?

Continued on page 6

Senior Assets in New Jersey

Continued from page 5

2. How can we help motivate members and ministers alike to want to serve like Jesus did? To LEAD like Christ and LIVE like Christ?

3. How can we as “Senior Assets” help with the important task of soul-care?

A number of suggestions came out of this initial discussion:

1. Have every group member speak with his/her rector, telling him about our group, our interest and willingness to help in our respective congregations by asking him what we can do to assist him or offering suggestions as to what we can do.

2. Foster and host more fellowship in our homes with members and guests.

3. Organize or volunteer to be part of congregational committees to work on projects.

4. Utilize our eyes, ears, and hearts to discern special needs of our brothers and sisters and follow-up as our rectors deem appropriate.

A second meeting of the group took place on November 27, 2011 at which group members reported on their activities including meetings with their rectors, and a clear vision for this group was formulated. This vision is to: “discover and act upon creative ways to actively assist our current ministers and to positively influence our brothers and sisters in serving others.”

Some suggestions received from our current rectors include maintaining communications by phone, e-mail, or personal visits to foster ongoing spiritual fellowship. More and more senior members are not privy to e-mail and that is a concern for them. This group can be of assistance to them to keep them in the congregational loop. Inviting members and guests to our homes was considered to be one of the best ways this group can be of help.

Current plans are for members of the “Senior Assets” group to visit congregations in the district periodically to meet with rectors to plan how they can be of help. A visitation schedule for 2012 will be prepared at the next meeting.

Submitted by DE Richard Arends





Looking back, looking forward...

The Philadelphia congregation grew from the efforts of Priest Christian Nahm and a handful of 'founding families' who immigrated to the City of Brotherly Love. Two such families arrived in the U.S. in 1901 - the Kreske's and the Salevski's. Thereafter, they settled in the North Philadelphia area of Brewerytown. Immigrants from Germany and Prussia could find employment there and live among fellow compatriots.

Asked by his rector, Pr. J. Fendt in Brooklyn, Priest Nahm would visit and care for these families. In 1911, records indicate he confirmed the Kreske's 14-year old son there. Souls were prepared in home gatherings such that Apostle Mierau went to Philadelphia for Holy Sealing each year from 1913-1917 with three times in 1916. Ultimately, Priest Nahm and family settled permanently in Philadelphia by the spring of 1916.

August Herman Salevski (later changed to Sellers) sold insurance and testified relentlessly to his customers. Several of these families, the Binder's and Fossler's, were added as a result. In 1925, the congregation outgrew the Kreske home and a new meeting place was found in a humble room above a dance hall. Steady growth prompted the purchase of land to construct a church at 1712 West Ontario Street.

Overcoming great challenges due to the Depression, Deacon August H. Sellers, Priest Nahm and a few other willing men finished the building when the contractor went bankrupt. Dedicated in 1929, the impressive, brick church held over 200 people in the sanctuary. During World War II, the church was equipped with huge light-blocking curtains and life supporting supplies. Periodic drills were conducted by the local air raid warden. Interestingly, German and English services continued during the war until 1944.

Over the post war years, numerous families had moved to the Northeast part of Philadelphia making it advantageous to move the congregation there. Land was purchased at K and Cayuga Streets. In 1959, the Ontario Street church was sold and construction began at the new location. In the interim, a nearby Methodist Church allowed the congregation to hold services there. The new church was dedicated in the spring of 1960.



From the original congregation of Philadelphia the following churches grew:

Reading, Cheltenham, Willow Grove, Feasterville, Trenton, Browns Mills, and Doylestown. During the 1980's work began with the Southeast Asian community. Several generations later, English-speaking Cambodian members enjoy their faith life among the many different nationalities of our members.

With the visit of the Chief Apostle to Philadelphia in May 2012, the congregation will begin a celebration of its 100th year - looking back at its roots with great thankfulness and to the future with great anticipation!



NATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF THE
NEW APOSTOLIC CHURCH
3753 N. TROY STREET
CHICAGO, IL 60618-4594

NON PROFIT ORG.
US POSTAGE PAID
HICKSVILLE, NY
PERMIT NO. 842

Upcoming Events

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/>

Everyone will also have the opportunity to hear the **Pentecost service** from our Chief Apostle. It will be transmitted from Europe on Sunday, May 27th to all congregations.

In June, District Apostle Kolb will hold a regional **Senior Service in San Francisco**. A DVD of the service will be sent to each congregation, so all seniors can share in this special event.

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 for more information and mark your calendars!

Find us on Facebook! 
facebook.com/NewApostolicChurchUSA

