

Health, growth, completion

# Vision



New Apostolic Church USA

District News

[www.nac-usa.org](http://www.nac-usa.org)

Autumn/Winter 2014

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

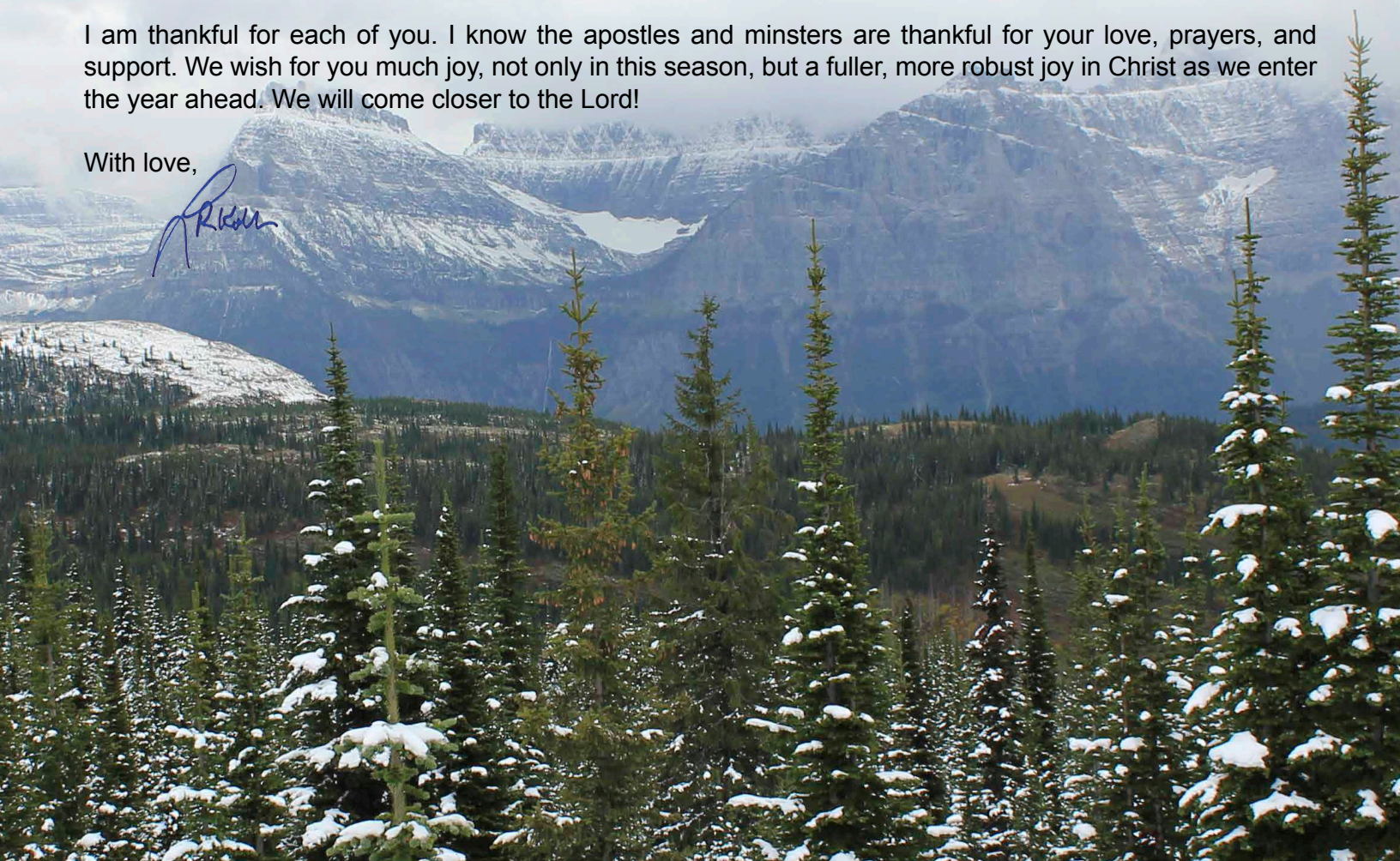
Our Heavenly Father loves us with a love that can never be measured. This love is unlike anything we know or can understand. It is limitless and yet still righteous. Jesus Christ is the manifestation of this love. He is patient with us and supports us as we try to grow more and more into His mind and spirit.

God wants to bring us together with Him for all eternity – that is His prime objective. Everything He has done and does is directed to this goal. This is the highest goal obtainable for any human being and we are called to it. Of this, we must be convinced. It is interesting to note that Christ used the image of a bride when describing those who will be ready for His coming. The image of a bride brings us to the understanding of one who is deeply in love with the bridegroom. This is the leading characteristic of those souls who wait for Christ. Because of this love, they do not seek rewards nor entitlement; they realize they deserve nothing. Nor are they interested to be with the Lord simply to escape the destruction. They understand all is grace and they are overwhelmed in joy because they feel the love of Christ. This is their sole motivation and they strive to serve and love one another as the outward sign of their love for Jesus.

As we celebrate Christ's entry into the world, let us kindle more and more love in our hearts for Him and for one another. Let us leave old things in the past and emerge to embrace the new understandings that He wants to teach us.


I am thankful for each of you. I know the apostles and ministers are thankful for your love, prayers, and support. We wish for you much joy, not only in this season, but a fuller, more robust joy in Christ as we enter the year ahead. We will come closer to the Lord!

With love,



# connecte

Chief Apostle Schneider visited Venezuela on August 17th, which was a great experience of joy for all involved. During the weekend there was an Apostles and Bishops meeting, a worship evening, and a divine service that was attended by 4,513 members and guests. The United States has a special connection with Venezuela, along with various other countries in the Caribbean and Central and South America. These countries are part of our district and we have been working together for many years to spread Christ's message to all people. When we first started working with our brothers and sisters from these areas, we referred to their countries as "mission lands" because we had a mission to bring the teaching of the Gospel to them. Now, after much time has passed, the congregations in these countries are developing as we are and the Church has been established in all of these areas for many decades, some for 50 years already. The "mission" description might leave some feeling that they are less in some way and that they have less responsibility. Neither is true. The depth of faith in the congregations is no less than that in the USA, and from the perspective of material support, more and more they are developing the resources to be self-sufficient. They have been following the same Stepping Forward strategic plan and are being taught the same principles we are learning here. Because of this, we will no longer refer to them as "mission lands." Instead, they will be referred to as "linked international districts" because we are all truly connected to each other in one faith.

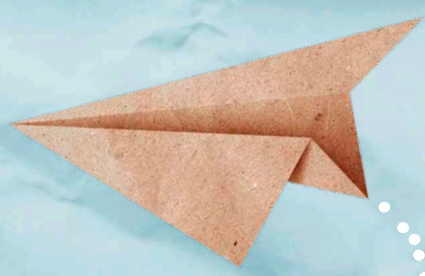


A part of the teaching that goes on in the Central and South American countries is done through emerging leader seminars. The 2014 meetings were held in El Salvador, Peru and Jamaica for current and future leaders of the church. Many of the teachings that we receive in the United States are also shared in these countries, uniting all of us together with the same goal of having healthy congregations. They are developing flagship or model congregations with their own characteristics, along with catechism training and iServe-type activities that allow them to reach out to the surrounding communities. Most importantly, the United States and these countries learn the same basic thing: to live and lead like Christ. These teachings, which relate to the spiritual and material aspects of the Church, were well-received by these emerging leaders.

# ed in faith



In **Jamaica**, the Caribbean leaders and emerging leaders from the Bahamas, Jamaica, Guyana, Trinidad, Dominica, Saint Vincent, Saint Lucia, and Haiti attended the weekend of meetings and services. The Jamaica weekend started off with the Ascension Day service in Jeffrey Town, one of the first congregations that has been in existence for 50 years now. The ministers took part in meetings on spiritual and financial matters. The District Apostle held the spiritual session and it had the same theme as the Youth Retreats this year in the USA and Mexico: Rise. Leaders in our connected districts are asked to rise, and use what they have been equipped with by God in order to emerge, engage, and edify. Along with this, Apostle Orlofski held a seminar for the priestly ministries on effective preaching. In all of the meetings and fellowship, the comradery that the Caribbean brothers shared was especially noticed. Not only were they given the chance to know each other better, but they also learned that they experience many of the same problems and triumphs in their local congregations and various solutions could be discussed. The seminar weekend ended with a service in Kingston, the capital of Jamaica.



Each country had participants who were able to learn in these meetings and then take that knowledge back to their local congregations. For example, emerging leaders from different regions in Mexico were also invited to attend the emerging leader seminar in **El Salvador**. The El Salvador meetings included leaders from Venezuela, Panama, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Dominican Republic, and Mexico. These deacons brought enthusiasm and unique perspectives to the discussions that were held and they returned to their congregations with a new appreciation for the calling of an ordained minister, realizing the necessity for workers of ministry to help along. By working together with the priestly ministries, along with the direct support of the country's administration team, they were given strong incentives to take responsibility for specific projects in the Stepping Forward strategies in Mexico, knowing that they will be an important part of the future of the Lord's work in their country.

Similar to the meetings in Jamaica, the seminar in **Peru** involved leaders from Colombia, Peru, and Ecuador. This weekend concluded with a service in Lima with over 1800 attendees. On one of the evenings during the weekend, the ministers enjoyed a hillside dinner and also were part of a town hall meeting.



# THOUGHTS FROM THE CHIEF APOSTLE

Chief Apostle Schneider held an Apostles' Conference in Miami on February 8 of this year. In these meetings, he shared some very valuable insight on the work of the Lord and us as children of God. The Chief Apostle referenced a few stories, and through those, brought forward teachings that we can take away.

The first story came out of the Bible verse for the meeting: *Remember these, O Jacob, and Israel, for you are My servant; I have formed you, you are My servant; O Israel, you will not be forgotten by Me (Isaiah 44:21).*

*When God introduces Himself to the exiled, imprisoned Israelites, He says through an unknown servant, "Now hear, listen to Me. I am the King of Israel and his Redeemer. I am the first and the last. The only God. My counsel shall stand and I will do all my pleasure." In this presentation of Himself, the people become aware of who God is, which is a wonderful way to worship Him. We have to look up at God. He never changes. He is the first and the last. He's the Almighty God. In the past generations, the church saw much growth and there were many sealings. Today it seems a little bit different. We could say, "Is that the same church? Is that the same God? What changed? What happened?" We still have the promise that Jesus will prepare His bride for the Holy Spirit. But where is that bride? What happens? Nothing happens. Sometimes God has to remind us, "Now listen to Me. Did you forget who I am? I am*

*the Almighty God. I am the first one and the last one, and what I began I will complete. You have some reason to hope because it's Me, the Almighty God." We should never doubt that God will follow through with His plan and His reminder to the Israelites also serves as a reminder to us.*

*In this story, God refers to His chosen people as Jacob and Israel because Israel was the children of Jacob and he was the one who had the promise: You will be the father of a great people. He had this promise and many others, but when he got these promises he had nothing. He had just a stone to lay down his head. He had to flee because his brother wanted to kill him. He had nothing but a promise and he trusted in it. It was a long time before Jacob saw the promise fulfilled through his 12 sons. Through the whole story of Jacob, we can see he remained faithful. This serves to remind us that we should always be faithful even when we cannot tell how the story will end or if God's promise will come to fruition.*

*We also are children of Jacob and we have this promise. Jesus will come and catch up His bride, and His bride will be prepared. Today sometimes, we have the impression that it's not possible. That cannot be. Jesus calls us, "Here too, you are children of Jacob. You have this promise. Even if today you have just a stone and you have just nothing, be faithful. I will fulfill my promise." Sometimes we are tired or we lose our courage. That's normal because we are just human. But,*

*in the depths of our hearts we must keep this promise. Jesus will come and His bride will be prepared. Jesus wants his apostles to fight for this promise to remain alive in the hearts of His people. Jesus will come and we are the ones who have to keep this promise alive.*

*Jacob's second name was Israel because he struggled and won the battle against God and man, so God gave him a new name. He wanted the blessing. In his battle against the angel, he was injured, but he didn't give up. He went on and continued. Why? He wanted the blessing. Even if he was hurt, he went on because he wanted the blessing and he got it. So, for sure we also have to struggle and fight because God named his people as Israel and we are their descendants. We have to fight against the devil and the spirit of this time. We have to fight against the world and its difficulties. But we want the blessing. What is that blessing we are fighting for? What do we want? We want Jesus Christ. That's the blessing we are fighting for. We want to enter into fellowship with Jesus. That's why we are fighting and for sure it is not easy. Sometimes we are tired or even injured. All of us have suffered and that will continue. But, we do not give up because we want the blessing. We want Jesus Christ.*

The other story that Chief Apostle Schneider brought forward was the 10 workers in the vineyard, which he feels for New Apostolics.

*We have been working hard and we suffer, while others might not. The Lord says, "What's your problem? I give you everything, what more do you want? Are you good to the other one?" The idea behind that is that in some way we think we deserve salvation and the reward of eternal life because we are New Apostolic, we are faithful and we serve God. The whole image of the story that Christ told is that you cannot deserve it. It's just grace. What was important is not what you did during these hours of working and suffering, but rather I called you and you came and did what I asked. That's why you are saved. The last one I called 1 hour before. He heard my call, he answered, and he worked. He did what I asked him to do. That is why he's saved, because of his obedience. But who is called when, that is the decision of God. We cannot interfere. That's why what is important is the love we show our brothers and sisters.*

*The Bride of Christ will love Christ and love their neighbor. If you love Christ and you love your neighbor, our reward or "salary" is Christ. And if I have Christ, I have everything. He comes to me and says, "Okay, because you were faithful and you answered my call, I will share everything with you." If he decides for any reason that one person or another will come with Him, will I be angry? I have everything, why do I want more? He shares with everybody and even if the other one has the same thing as me, I never have*

*more or less. That is God. We cannot understand that. We think in terms of heritage. "Oh, there's 1 million. If I am alone I have 1 million. If there are 10, I have only 100,000." But God is God and He can give everyone all. That's why worship is important. Just remember who He is. We cannot understand Him. We can just love Him.*

### **Chief Apostle Visit to the United States 2015**

Chief Apostle Schneider will be in the Woodbury congregation in New York on June 14, 2015. This service will be open to the New York district and will be available as a webcast for all other regions and congregations. There will be more information coming out about the webcasts soon.



# PERSPECTIVE

## Liturgy of a Divine Service

With the recent changes in the Liturgy, some members may be uncomfortable or confused as to when to close their eyes and when to look to the minister. Before examining each component of the Liturgy individually, we should start with the idea that no one should feel uncomfortable during these very important ministrations. If someone would like to continue closing their eyes during the Absolution, Consecration of the Elements and Benediction as was our old tradition, they are welcome to do so. However, if we look carefully at the purpose of each of these Holy Acts, we may find a new comfort zone that enhances our experience during the divine service.

**Absolution:** This is actually not a prayer, but a proclamation of the grace of God directed to you and me as believers in Jesus Christ. This message is very personal. God offers us forgiveness for every sin great and small, and His peace to replace our guilt and remorse. The minister is authorized to declare this to us in the name of Jesus Christ by our apostle. It is God speaking to us through His servant and we can be comfortable looking into his eyes just as we do during the sermon.

**Eucharistic Prayer:** The Absolution is followed by the Eucharistic prayer. As in all prayers, it is customary for us to bow our heads, fold our hands and close our eyes. This is a very important prayer. The minister speaks to God on our behalf and captures our feelings to God as we approach the sacrament of Holy Communion. He brings our collective thanks to God for the gift of grace made possible through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. During this prayer we are reminded of His suffering for us. The minister expresses our joy that in Holy Communion we will be in the presence of His Son and share in the power that made Him victorious over sin and death. He speaks of our desire and commitment to struggle against our sins in the future and to experience eternal communion with Him one day. It is so important that we are “present” during this moment.

**Consecration of the Elements for Holy Communion:** Like the Absolution, this is not a prayer. First the minister, in the name of the Triune God, consecrates the natural elements and lays into them the power of Christ’s eternally valid sacrifice. He then speaks to us the words of our Savior. We are now in the presence of Jesus Christ and He reminds us that He gave His body and blood freely for our eternal life and asks us to take His life into our lives. And finally, He reminds us that when we partake of this meal, we are proclaiming our belief in Him and His return. These are the most intimate and loving words that can be spoken to us and again, we can be comfortable looking into the eyes of the minister who says them on behalf of the Lord.

**Celebration of Holy Communion:** When we partake in Holy Communion, made possible through faith and the forgiveness of sins, we are commemorating Jesus’ sacrifice for us and thus, are able to have fellowship with Him through Holy Communion. Because Holy Communion is an act of fellowship, we keep our eyes open when we look at the minister who dispenses it to us.

**Benediction:** This is not a prayer but rather a declaration of blessing to us by God as we prepare to leave His house. He promises to accompany us in the future with the continuing elements of the Trinity, the grace of Jesus, the love of God and the continuing, ever present comfort of the Holy Spirit. This is quite a promise and we can once again be comfortable looking into the eyes of the minister who proclaims this closing message to us from God.

The minister is talking to and making pronouncements of the Lord to us in these important parts of the service, so it is appropriate to keep our eyes open for them. We want to receive these messages, so if we feel comfortable doing so, we can look at the one who is delivering them. - LRK

# PERSPECTIVE

## Funeral and Memorial Services

Over the years, our once traditional funeral service has evolved into two different forms with names and distinctions that may seem vague or confusing. I would like to clarify our understandings and practices based upon the direction of the Catechism while allowing for flexibility as needed for unique circumstances.

In general, we have come to distinguish a “funeral” service from a “memorial” service based upon the presence of the deceased’s earthly remains. In a “funeral” service the earthly remains were present and an interment followed the service. In a “memorial” service, the earthly remains were already cared for by burial or cremation.

However, the Catechism states that a funeral service is a word service which provides comfort and strength for the bereaved. This service also commends the immortal soul of the deceased to the grace of God. The Catechism further states that the presence of the earthly remains or the method of interment (burial or cremation) has no bearing on the purpose of the service or upon the soul’s future resurrection.

Therefore, let us conclude that every New Apostolic member is entitled uniformly to a funeral service.

In addition (but not as a matter of course), a memorial service may also be an appropriate option in the time that follows the funeral service under certain circumstances:

- The family desires a private funeral service with the immediate family and then wishes for a memorial service in a larger venue for the greater congregation of friends and loved ones or for those needing to make travel arrangements from long distances.
- The funeral service is held where the deceased lived and a memorial service is conducted in another part of the country where the deceased lived previously.

Written by: Apostle Thomas Schmidt

## CHANGES TO THE OUR FAMILY

Starting in January 2015 there will be a number of changes with how the New Apostolic Church International communicates with members around the world. In the German-speaking areas, the Chief Apostle will continue to communicate via the bi-monthly *Unsere Familie* (the German edition of the *Our Family*). Publication of the foreign editions of the *Unsere Familie* (*Our Family*, *Notre Famille*, *Nuestra Familia*, etc.) will cease with the December 2014 issue. *Community*, a free member magazine, will replace the *Our Family*. It will be published once per quarter in English, French, and Spanish. *Community* will be the new publication through which the Chief Apostle communicates with members worldwide. To receive the 24 issues of the *Unsere Familie*, subscriptions can be made directly through the Bischoff-Verlag office. These can be paid for by check or credit card. To request and order, contact the Bischoff-Verlag at [vertrieb@bischoff-verlag.de](mailto:vertrieb@bischoff-verlag.de) and provide them with your name and address.

In addition to *Community*, [nac.today](http://nac.today), a new online portal, will be launched in English, French, Spanish, and German, and will carry abridged reports of divine services from around the world. It will also contain announcements and information from the Chief Apostle and report on happenings in the District Churches that have international relevance. Please see the article in the October issue of the *Our Family* for more information about what will be replacing the magazine and why.





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# RISE!

## YOUTH RETREATS 2014

What shapes your identity? Have you wondered “why did God create me?” What does it mean to “Labor in Love?” These questions and more were answered during this summer’s regional youth days.

Throughout the summer, 7 regional youth retreats occurred around the country in Los Angeles, Billings, Chicago, Erie, the Carolinas, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. Of the 7 locations, 4 were host to both American and Canadian youth. Some youth even traveled up to 20 hours to be together. All of the youth weekends had the same theme, “Rise.” This theme was evident in the seminars as well as the divine service on Sunday.

The divine service centered on the story of David and how he rose to the call to slay Goliath. David was equipped with the experiences and training God had allowed in his life, and he emerged from the struggle with his brothers and those around him with confidence to fight for what he knew God had led him to. David engaged in the opportunity by utilizing his gifts, and he ultimately edified God and His people, which is parallel with our edification of God.

### SEMINARS

- **Gospel Identity:** Rise to a consistent identity that is deeply rooted in the Gospel of Jesus Christ
- **Gospel Driven Life:** Rise to your call and live a life that aligns with Scripture
- **Gospel of Love:** Rise from judgment to love and genuinely create an environment to Labor in Love

