

Health, growth, completion

Vision



New Apostolic Church USA

District News

www.nac-usa.org

Summer 2016

Dear brothers and sisters,

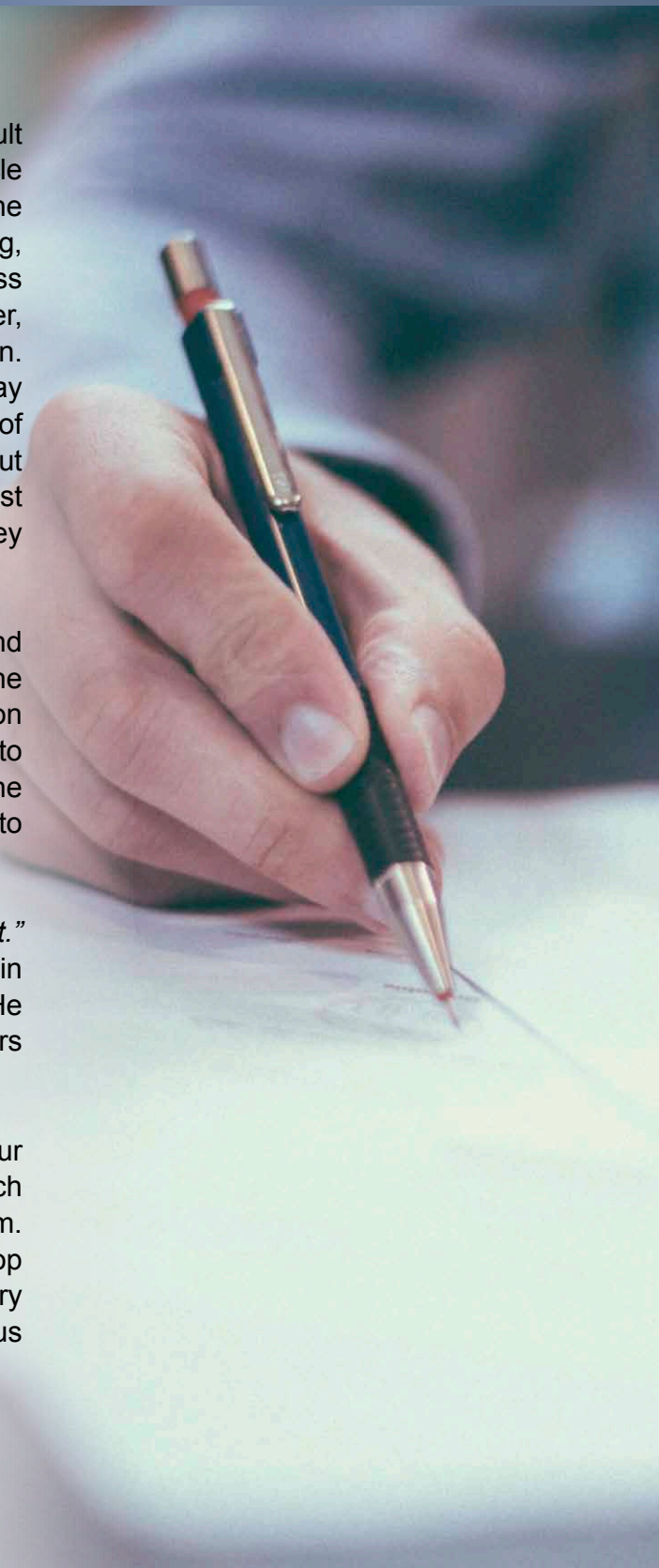
Often times, the apostles, bishops, and I struggle with difficult decisions. As the Chief Apostle described in a Community article last year, we start with prayer asking for the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we propose options using our mind and reasoning, we research for more information if needful, and then we discuss the matters at length. If necessary, there is further prayer, research, and discussion, and thereafter, we make a decision. Depending on the weight of the matter, the Chief Apostle may also be consulted for his thoughts; for instance, in the case of the midweek experience and faith arc, as you will read about in this edition of the Vision. However, he expects that in most matters, the decisions must be made at a district level so they are appropriate for the region.

We realize sometimes these decisions may not be popular and sometimes they may even cause changes or adjustments in the status quo. Please know that in all these cases, the conclusion was wrought with prayer and struggle, always with intent to discover the will of our Heavenly Father. We trust that He alone resolves any issue in the best way possible and according to His blessing, which in turn brings us closer to Him.

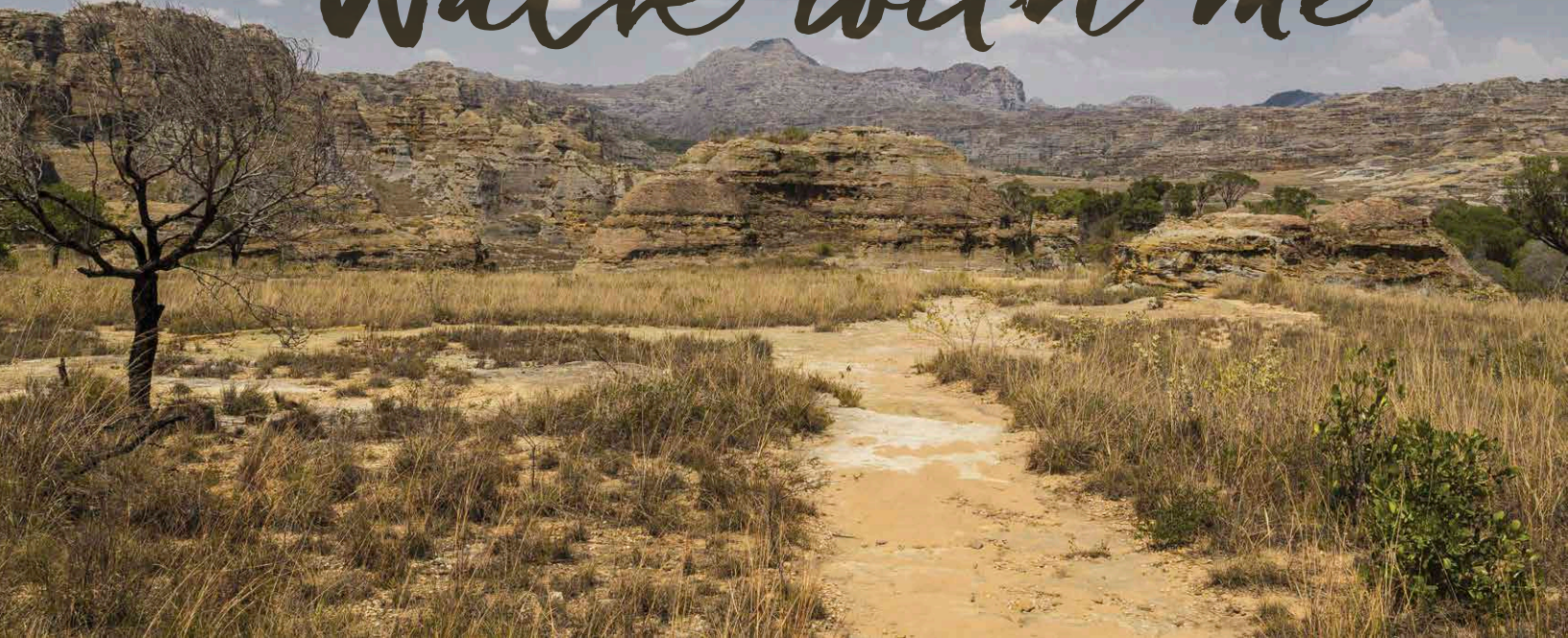
We read in Malachi 3:6 (KJV), "*I am the Lord, I change not.*" As we continue forward to the Day of Promise, we remain anchored to Jesus Christ and continue to walk in the Spirit. He is manifested in the unchangeable Gospel and in the wonders of His sacraments.

On the other hand, the Church, as we understand from our Catechism (6.3, 6.4.2), is composed of sinful humans, which continue to evolve and grow into what Christ expects of them. Hence, this evolution brings adjustment and change to develop to become the bride of Christ. Therefore, let us not grow weary of these course corrections and modifications – they bring us closer to our goal!

With loving greetings,



Walk with me



Going forward, the USA Apostles and I would like pastoral care to be a more intentional focus in each of our congregations. One might ask, what does this entail and whom does it involve? Perhaps the first thing we all think of when addressing pastoral care is the responsibility of the minister.

In its most general sense, pastoral care refers to the ministries/services usually performed by a pastor. Some denominations of the Christian faith use the phrase to refer to more specific aspects of a pastor's ministry, such as counseling and visitation. The core idea of "pastoral care" is that pastors are to care. The word pastor comes from the Latin word for *shepherd*. A pastor is to be a shepherd or caretaker of God's flock.

Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. 1 Peter 5:2-3

"From this we derive that ministers have the task of 'tending' the flock of Christ and of preparing them for the return of the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ. They do this 'willingly' and 'eagerly.'" (Catechism 12.4)

Pastoral care isn't confined to the responsibilities of the ministers, but it is also the task of the entire congregation. This relates to practical help in life. In one of His parables, Jesus says...

For I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me. Matthew 25: 35-36

Pastoral care is a model of emotional and spiritual support that can be found in all cultures and traditions. The goal of pastoral care is to support one another in pain, loss, and anxiety, or in triumphs, joys, and victories.

In Luke 24:13-35, we learn of five simple aspects of pastoral care from the encounter the Lord Jesus had with the disciples on the road to Emmaus. This encounter started with the disciples feeling sad, frustrated, angry, and uncertain about the future. Jesus recognized the situation and drew close to them with empathy towards their situation. He first had to understand what was troubling their hearts. In the time that Jesus spent with the disciples, He endeavored to help change the way they felt by loving them and never judging them, and guiding them in a

way to move forward. We are all able to learn from this encounter of how the Lord Jesus provided care for the disciples. Let us now look into each of the five aspects to help us grow in our understanding of pastoral care.

The first aspect Jesus demonstrated was how to **recognize what is happening**. If we do not recognize that we have a needy neighbor, how can we care for them? This recognition happens when we first love God and come to our divine service experiences, as well as congregational activities, with an *attitude to serve and not be served*. By not focusing on ourselves, we will be more likely to see if those around us need our care. We can be aware of one's need for care in how they greet us or what they talk about in conversation. This is just a simple opportunity of how we can recognize what is happening in someone's life.

PASTORAL CARE ISN'T CONFINED TO THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MINISTERS, BUT IT IS ALSO THE TASK OF THE ENTIRE CONGREGATION

Once we have recognized what is happening, we can look at the second aspect, which is to **spend time together**. Letting someone know that you have time for them demonstrates care and true desire to help. Spending time together can apply to a variety of moments, such as simply talking at church after a divine service or connecting for a few moments at a small group. If there needs to be a more specific time to be set aside, a get together can be scheduled. When you have these moments together, try to be empathetic instead of just acknowledging their situation. When we try to put ourselves in the shoes of others, it will make our care more impactful.

The third aspect Jesus showed was His ability to **listen**. James 1:19 tells us how to do this: "*be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry.*" (NLT) God gave us two ears and one mouth. We should listen twice as much as we speak, but sometimes we rush in too quickly with advice or our experiences with similar situations. What we need to do is try to understand the perspective of other people. When we listen, we radiate a feeling of closeness that can create a rapport. Listening is a sign of putting

the other person first, which means we don't resort to talking about our own experiences or trying to formulate a solution. Positive body language and posture exudes that you are listening attentively, thus showing understanding and focus.

Everyone always likes to get answers. Perhaps when you extend care to someone in need they may seek answers from you. How should we go about this as Christians? This brings us to the fourth aspect, which is **providing answers and counsel**. First we must recognize that we are not professional counselors and should not provide advice and counsel for people on topics and issues that need professional or medical help. In matters of spiritual questions, we take a path pointing to our faith by using Scripture in a timely manner or using the Catechism in understanding our doctrine. In matters of natural life, we can offer help by discussing the pros and cons of a decision or situation; from this we can deduce a direction on a decision that answers the question, "What will bring me closer to God?" Our answers and direction should be based on the Gospel and that which brings a soul closer to God. Christ can be the solution for every need and problem that arises in life. If Christ is our solution, then through His love, we can help others to draw near Him in their own situations in life. When this connection of closeness to God grows, we will not want to leave Christ, but will want to remain as the disciples did.

THE ROAD TO EMMAUS IS A ROAD THAT MUST BE WALKED

Finally, Jesus left the disciples after He recognized their situation, accompanied them, listened, and provided answers and direction. The fifth aspect is to **move on**. Moving on means that by teaching the Gospel, we are creating an opportunity for a soul to practice self-responsibility. The road to Emmaus is a road that must be walked. The walk started out in disbelief and sadness. It ended in joy, excitement, love, and true devotion. The same can happen to each one of us as we bring pastoral care into a congregational focus. As we read in Galatians 6:2, "*Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ;*" we see it is all of our responsibility to help and care for one another on our journeys. - **AD/LRK**



FAITH ARC

When we look at other people, we assign them to a certain season of life almost without realizing it: she is a baby, he is a teenager, she is middle-aged, he is a senior. Once we've recognized this about a person, we narrow it down ever more: she is a student, he is a father, she is a wife, he is a widower. While some of the seasons of life depend on one's age, not all seasons have the same start and end times for every person. Experiences, combined with how one's maturity develops, can determine when one moves into their next season of life.

Because our congregations are filled with people at all different stages in life, we have to be intentional in making sure that each soul is integrated into the Body of Christ. We want to make sure that the "baton" gets passed from season to season and that nothing is segmented. Since 2011, the NAC-USA has been working on an overarching concept called **Faith Arc**. It is a strategy that supports the continual development of a soul as it transitions to different life stages. The way that people learn changes over time and the **Faith Arc** responds to that change. We want to foster a culture of learning that is continuous – each person in their season of life can continue to learn and grow and also help others to do the same. This requires a relationship to exist between congregations and families. God gave us the community of believers, and to steward this gift from Him, we want to use those relationships to grow.

We can look at Deuteronomy 6:4-9 for guidance on how to help ourselves and others grow:

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. 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. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

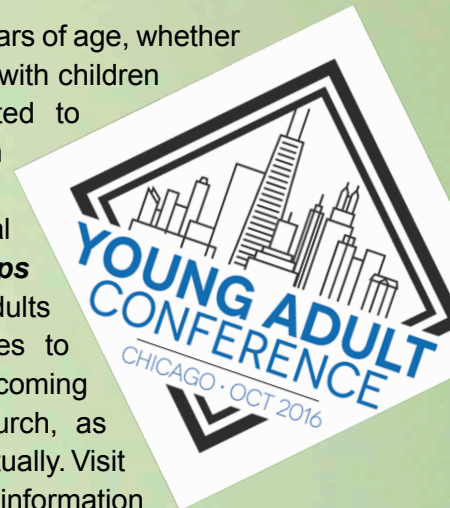
Loving God has to be more than just in our words, it needs to be part of all of our actions, when we're at home or when we're out, when we're resting or when we're active. This is how we can teach others about the love of God, specifically children as they grow and change so quickly and observe the words and actions of those around them.

NEXT STEPS VIDEO: OCTOBER 16, 2016

The **Faith Arc** has many components to it, especially for the younger souls of our congregations. As part of the first phase of the **Faith Arc**, some changes are being made to the existing children and youth programs. On Sunday, October 16th, District Apostle Kolb will outline these initial adjustments in a **Next Steps** video that will be played on demand in the local congregations after the Sunday morning service. This **Next Steps** video will actually be recorded the previous day at a young adult conference in Chicago.

Those who are 18 to 35 years of age, whether married or unmarried and with children or no children, are invited to attend this conference in Chicago, October 14th -16th. Along with a social element and the **Next Steps** introductions, the young adults will be given opportunities to provide feedback on upcoming developments in the Church, as well as learn and grow spiritually. Visit www.nac-usa.org for more information about the young adult conference.

-TL/VB





PICTURE THIS



DEUTERONOMY 6:4-9

MAKING IT WORK

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Recently the church office heard a story of a weekly small group being held. This one small group meets at 3pm on Wednesdays. All of the participants in the small group are retired and prefer to not drive at night.

Meeting in the afternoon also allows for them to have fellowship. Their discussions usually run for 60 to 75 minutes. Afterwards, they always share a meal, whether it is a potluck supper or going out to a local restaurant. During their

dinner, they share their lives with one another and like to talk about some of the topics that came up in that day's small group discussion. By the end of the discussion and fellowship, the small group spends between 3 and 3.5 hours with each other. As a group, each one has drawn closer to each other because they share their faith, victories, and challenges with each other, witnessing the Lord's hand in each of their lives. When one is sick or has had an operation, the small group is their support system; they send cards to each other, pray for each other, and provide strength and pastoral care for one another.

There is one major observation we can make about this small group. They make small group work for them! They start at a time that makes sense for their group. They decide to make fellowship a part of their small group experience each week because they have the time and the desire to do so. They share life with each other through group discussions and fellowship.

It is important to remember that while there are general guidelines for what a small group is and should be, each small group is different. If it works to have your small group at 9am, 3pm, or 8pm, then meet at that time. If your group can more easily meet on a Monday night or a

Thursday afternoon, then meet on those days. If refreshments are important to your small group, bring some snacks to share or even make time to have breakfast, lunch, or dinner together. If your small group members would prefer to meet in a home as opposed to the church, then meet in a member's home. We can see how effective this is from the midweek experience survey. Out of 949 people that participate in small groups, 430 go to a small group in a home and 74% of them describe their overall small group experience as effective.

**EACH ONE HAS DRAWN CLOSER TO EACH OTHER
BECAUSE THEY SHARE THEIR FAITH, VICTORIES,
AND CHALLENGES WITH EACH OTHER**

There are so many options that can lead to a successful, fulfilling small group. Consider some of these ideas and try them out if your group members are looking for a little more flexibility within the small group and would like to change things up a little. **-LRK/VB**



BENEVOLENCE: HELPING OUR NEIGHBORS

We have the special privilege to live in a society where the care of those in need is recognized as an imperative. However, the motivation for Christians to help those in need is more than a social imperative. It is a fundamental aspect of Christ's teaching. He provided perspective on this topic in Matthew 25:31-46. Here we read about feeding the hungry, providing a drink to the thirsty, etc. The Chief Apostle has made it clear that while the main focus of the Church's activity is the preparation of the Bride of Christ, our calling as Christians also includes helping our neighbors with their material needs.

Currently, the benevolence program of the New Apostolic Church USA is a mix of providing help in time of need and giving on a routine basis. We wish to move more towards an approach that mirrors the Biblical example of providing in times of need. In past decades, programs of routine giving to everyone in a certain group were established because those in the group generally faced similar economic challenges. A current evaluation of such programs has shown that such a generalized approach is no longer effective in providing help to those who truly have a need. As a result, it is planned that these programs will be changed and a system for evaluating needs locally is being developed.

As we seek the proper structure for the benevolence program for the future, a number of factors must be taken into account.

- First, it is important to remember the Church's fundamental purpose, which is clearly delineated in our Vision statement – we are a church where *people prepare themselves for Jesus' return and eternal life*. I, along with the Apostles and administration of the Church, am responsible to ensure that the Church's resources are primarily focused on accomplishing its vision.

- Second, the same as any other organization, the Church's resources are limited. For this reason, it is not possible to provide help to everyone who finds themselves in a financial bind. An overview of the sources and uses of funds in 2013 and 2014 was published in the Spring 2016 Vision newsletter, which can help in understanding these limitations.

For these reasons, we will transition to a model where the majority of benevolence is focused on helping those experiencing a short-term need; the intention here is to provide a first step towards a more permanent resolution and/or support from other sources.

The changes discussed here are intended to move the Church towards a benevolence program that more closely fits the Biblical model, as these funds will be made available for the church's new need-based program. For those participants on our current programs, who feel that they are in need of the current support, we will provide for an option to continue receiving this support.

As with all other developments of the past years, the outlined adjustments to the church's current benevolence approach serve our core focus – to serve one another as Christ taught and constantly work to transform ourselves with Him as our example. Thank you for continuing to help and support, so that together, we can continue to advance forward. **-LRK/JWF/KSH/VB**

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free those who are wrongly imprisoned,
lighten the burden of those who work
for you.
Let the oppressed go free,
and remove the chains that bind people.
7 Share your food with the hungry,
and give shelter to the homeless.
Give clothes to those who need them,
and do not hide from relatives who need
your help.
8 "Then your salvation will come like the dawn,
and your wounds will quickly heal."
w/Jacob. See note on 14:1.



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NAC MUSEUM: SUBMISSION INFORMATION

The museum of the New Apostolic Church USA is located in Chicago's North Side congregation. Many historical items and pictures have been donated and collected to contribute to the museum. Even after being open for almost 3 years, the museum still welcomes and receives submissions. If you have plans to donate items or pictures to the museum, please try to include as much information as possible (i.e. if it is a photo – include the date taken, where it was taken, and names of people who might be in the photograph). Providing these details will help with the placement of the item into the museum and provide a more enriching experience for those who stroll through the museum. So come visit sometime and take a look at the history yourself! Email communications@nac-usa.org to schedule an appointment. **-VB**



GUEST BOOKLET: A NEW RESOURCE

In our last edition, we wrote about our new THRIVE Membership Booklet and discussed the meaning behind the acronym. It is our hope that this booklet will be an important tool in explaining the basic fundamental aspects of our faith to those who will be baptized and sealed.

Today, we would like to introduce a complimentary guest booklet. It is branded the same as THRIVE, but is created for the first-time visitor to our congregations. It gives a general overview of our Sunday divine service experience, the midweek experience, and the sacraments. It will include the order of our liturgy and be customizable for local information. With this brochure, we aim to make our guests comfortable with our procedures and familiarize them with our church and congregation. Each congregation should have received a package by the end of June.

-LRK/VB