

Health, growth, completion

Vision



New Apostolic Church USA

District News

www.nac-usa.org

Autumn 2017

Dear brothers and sisters,

In our efforts to learn behaviors that glorify God, we discussed in the last two newsletters a study done by our work group on the topic of giving. The resulting reference paper was introduced at our National Synod, and will be disseminated to all our members using several themes to highlight various aspects of this topic. The first in the series is *Giving is Love*.

When we think about both giving and love, we must turn to the almighty God. He is the giver of all perfect and good gifts [ref: James 1:17], and He, alone, is the genesis and essence of love. Anything to do with love must find its source in Him.

In His love, He gave life to Adam and Eve. He gave them, and us, the creation to care for [ref: Genesis 1:29]. In the creation, we find a sustaining power also born out of His love that continually renews life until this day. There is also an evolving power that permits the creation to adapt to time and the changing environment, even under the burden of a polluting, sinful humankind.

However, the greatest gift God gave was His incarnation in Jesus Christ, who in turn also gave. Foremost, He suffered and gave His life for our salvation. He gave us the gospel to learn the ways of His kingdom, the church as the assembly of believers, and the apostolate to testify of Him. These gifts also have sustaining and evolving characteristics. Further, He gave His words, which are the bread of life for us, and the water of baptism, which brings us into a special closeness with God.

In pondering the love and giving nature of our God, let us allow His love, which has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, to overtake us so we also may, in turn, be givers in love.

With loving greetings,





GIVING IS

LOVE

Giving is...

Giving allows us to give expression to our passions, interests, and feelings by offering ourselves and our resources to help advance them. As Christians, giving is an integral part of our faith and a vital part of our profession to the world that we are followers of Jesus.

We would like to discover together some deeper aspects of giving in all its forms. In this article, we'll focus on giving is love. Upcoming Vision Newsletters will introduce faith, joy, worship, mission, sacrifice, and secret – all aspects of giving.

We pray that these articles will serve to inspire a new understanding of Christian giving and a new desire to demonstrate God's love to the world through a renewed willingness to share what we've been blessed with.

Giving is love...

Our desire to give begins and ends with God. John wrote in 1 John 4:16, *God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.* It is love that has brought us from the brink of despair into fellowship with God. It is the love God has shown us that fuels our passion to share with others what we have been given. When we recognize that we are unworthy to receive all that God has given us, we must respond in love towards our God and our neighbors. This love prompts us to give freely from what we've been blessed with.

Following God's example

We're often told to hold on to the things that are most precious to us, and for good reason. Whatever we consider most precious is very valuable to us – it is instinctual for us to safeguard these things. Because of this, we may be reluctant to share what is precious to us out of fear that we will not get them back or have our generosity reciprocated. But let us understand that giving

is love. And our guiding example for how to love is God, Himself, who is love. We must learn to love as He loves – unconditionally and without concern for reciprocation. So how do we learn to give unconditionally from those things that are most precious to us, our very best? Follow God's example.

In John 3:16, the Bible says, *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.* God's creation is sin-filled and broken. And yet, this has not deterred His love from us. Instead, He further proved His love by giving the very best He had to all people: His son, Jesus Christ. The sacrifice of His Son was not given for just the people of that time, but rather for all people in all times. And so, we can feel that God continues to look upon us with love.



In Romans 5:8, Paul wrote, *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* This verse speaks to the unconditional nature of God's love for humankind. The sacrifice that Christ brought on the cross for sinners showed that there was no activity, no good work, which anyone could do to receive God's grace and reprieve from their sins. It was only by the gift of Jesus Christ that redemption could be received. *While we were still sinners,* Jesus gave His life for us. God's love is unconditionally given to His creation and we are called, as disciples of Jesus, to share this unconditional love we have been given.

Giving reflects three commandments

We know that meeting the needs of others is important to Jesus because it serves both God and His children. This importance is laid out in three commandments that Jesus gave:

- *Jesus said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This is the first and great commandment. (Matthew 22:37-38)*
- *And the second is like it: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matthew 22:39)*
- *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. (John 13:34)*

Throughout Jesus’ life, we see the compassion that He had for the needs of those around Him. He gave beyond what the law required at that time because of the compassion and love He had for people, and because of His desire to do His Father’s will. Out of this same desire, we see that a Christian gives beyond the tithe to honor God and to provide others with what they need because we feel compassion for the needs of others. Jesus gave beyond the law. He gave everything, including His life, because He loved God, and thereby became the embodiment of God’s love towards us. It was what God wanted and what we needed. Christian giving is a function of our love towards God and each other, and is our response to meet the needs of others.



Jesus teaches further, through the parables, specific attitudes and actions that connect giving with serving others. In Luke 10:30-35, you can read the parable of the Good Samaritan. The Good Samaritan saw the need of another and responded with the compassion and love of God. But he didn’t just do the minimum and take the injured person to a place to receive help. Instead, he bandaged him, set him on his own animal, took him to an inn, and then he established a plan with the innkeeper so that the man would be fully cared for even after the Good Samaritan had moved on. When we give out of the love of God, we will go beyond the minimum of what is expected and we will try our best to fully

care for a person’s needs. You may be saying to yourself that it’s not possible for you to do that. And this is true; this kind of compassion and love is impossible when you rely on only yourself. But, when you are fully surrendered to God and moved by the Holy Spirit, **you can love unconditionally** and go beyond what is expected.

Believers give with the confidence that their reward is assured by their belief in Jesus Christ, and it awaits them in the kingdom of God. But this is not why we give. When our giving is a response prompted by the love we have received, no thought is spared for what we have given or what we will gain as a reward. This perspective, based on the parable of the sheep and goats found in Matthew 25, is expounded upon further in the third session of the October small group discussions.

What do I have to give?

Those who *have* give to those who *have not*. This is what God wants for us. In a sense, it is why we have been given what we have, in order that we may give it away. We receive God’s merciful love through Jesus Christ and His sacrifice, both freely and undeservedly. We can express God’s merciful love to others when we give to them. 2 Corinthians 8:9 reads, *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you by His poverty might become rich.* We are only rich through Christ because of His love for us, and we can share that wealth with others. In some way or another, most of us have experienced a period of poverty – whether that meant having little money or receiving little love. These experiences help us to be compassionate to those we see in a similar state. If you can relate to someone in need and be empathetic of their circumstances, then let your love for them be genuine. Work hard to meet their needs because



you already have all that you need to do so. And if all you have to give to a person is the love of Jesus, that is the greatest gift that can ever be shared!



Who are the needy that we are called to give to? Engage the Holy Spirit to lead you towards those who are in need of help. They are all around you, in your neighborhoods, workplaces, families, congregations... Believe that you have been placed and equipped by God, and are in position to serve a purpose for His kingdom each day. Strive to live with your eyes and heart open, and be Spirit-guided as you seek to share the love and compassion of the Lord. You don't have to do this work alone. As Paul taught the early church, the community of believers together can identify the needs of others and utilize their shared gifts and resources to aid groups of people who are in dire circumstances.

Conclusion

Giving is love. God is love. Our desire and willingness to give is rooted in the love that has been showered upon us by our God. Giving what we have is a reflection of this love back to Him and to all around us. Our Heavenly Father has led the way in showing us how love drives giving when He sent His Son to redeem humankind with His sacrifice. Through Jesus Christ, we have been made rich, and God has supplied us with the things we need in order to be able to care for the needs of others. Let's be captured by the love of God and unconditionally share our love for Him and for those in need by sharing and caring for others.

We demonstrate our love, for God and others, when we give. - VA / MB

Believe that you have been placed and equipped by God, and are in position to serve a purpose for His kingdom each day.

Who is God?

How we feel about God is determined by our experiences with Him. It only makes sense then that because each of us has experienced God differently, we may think about God differently than the person next to us. However, this isn't something that should divide us. Instead, we can focus on and be thankful for the characteristics of God that will always be the same for all people, something that is universal.

The message of the gospel, whether people believe in it or not, applies to all people. This message is based on that which Jesus teaches us about God, ourselves, our relationship with God and our neighbor, and the salvation that God prepares for us. Let's look at the five universal aspects of the gospel of Christ:

God is perfect

It's hard to understand perfection because we have never been and never will be perfect. And yet, God is perfect. When we recognize this about Him, it is a wonderful revelation. It means that we know and believe that God doesn't make mistakes and He never has to fix things. This is clearly seen in His creation – it is always adapting and evolving. Further, we can perceive in His perfection that all good for us emanates from Him (Psalm 16:2).

God is love

God is not just loving, He is love. He is the genesis and essence of this gift of His kingdom. Love only exists on earth because He is love. And God's love is unconditional. When Adam and Eve fell into sin and were cast out of the Garden, God had a plan in place to send His Son as a sacrifice and restore the relationship He had with man. God loves us and He wants us to love Him back, freely and willingly.

God is Triune

God is composed of the Trinity, three Persons who are one – God, the Father; God, the Son; God, the Holy Spirit. This is a unique relationship that no one will ever be able to fully comprehend; it is a divine mystery. However, when we enter into a relationship with the Triune God, only then will we be able to have peace and oneness in our relationships with others, only then will we experience harmony and unity. God loves our diversity, but He wants us to overcome our differences and be unified through a relationship with Him.

God is Jesus Christ

Through Jesus Christ, God revealed Himself in flesh to us. He is the only way of salvation. As both true Man and true God, Jesus Christ is our model, our example to follow. To be fully liberated from evil and sin, we must learn from and follow His words and deeds.

God is peace

God wants us to have His peace by allowing us *to become the being that He intended us to be*. Adam was created in the image of God – he was created to be the best he could be. But, Adam failed. So, then the new Adam came in Jesus Christ. Because of Christ's sacrifice, we can enter into a relationship with God again and strive for a fulfilled life in becoming the best person that we can be.

This gospel message is for everyone. To allow everyone to connect to the gospel, we want to be credible witnesses of this message and truly live out these five aspects.

We can also let these five universal gospel truths be reasons we give thanks and worship to God. We want Him to see our expression of how we feel about Him and all that He has done in our lives.

* Based on excerpts from the International District Apostle Meeting in Vienna, 2017.



YOU'RE HOME


Our mission statement calls each one of us to serve and reach out to all people. We work at doing this so that every person may come to know and have a relationship with Jesus Christ. Whether we were born into the Church or not, there was a point in all of our lives where someone reached out to either ourselves or an older relative, inviting them to experience God within the New Apostolic Church. This invitation was maybe the spark that was needed to begin a relationship with God, a relationship that can never be severed and lasts for eternity.

If reaching out and offering a simple invitation opens people to the possibility of having a relationship with God, then how do we work on inviting people to church? Usually the first hurdle to inviting someone to church is ourselves. God gives us many opportunities to invite people to church, but we don't always see them or take them. Maybe we're just too comfortable with the people we know and are scared to reach out to someone new. Maybe we're afraid or embarrassed of the possibility that our invitation could be turned down. We may know from experience that not all invitations go well, and not all are accepted. In these cases, we want to be brave as the first Christians. It may be time to get a little uncomfortable and reach out to people, even if that means starting with inviting someone to a small group or youth activity, instead of a divine service.

Once we can move beyond some of these things that hold us back from opportunities of invitation, what can we do to show that our invitation is truly out of the desire to help connect people to Christ and a church with fellow believers?

While there are many approaches to invite one to church or a church activity, there are a few things we can focus on:


- **Be genuine.** When we approach people, our first intention should be to build a relationship with them. We cannot just go to someone, introduce ourselves, and then immediately try to get them to come to our church. Instead, we can focus on them as a person, getting to know them and understand them, learning to love them as a person made in the image of God. With this genuineness, people can see that we truly care for them. Remember, our purpose is not just to bring someone to church, but to aid in their relationship with Christ.
- **Be personal.** For many of us, it may be unnatural to be personal with someone we have only known for a short time. Because of this, we may feel the urge to resort to talking about facts about God or the Bible, without



making it personal, when inviting people to our church. And yet, your personal story and experiences of God are what you know best and can be most passionate about. God is present in the stories of our lives. A true disciple of Christ is a witness of Him with their life. We are called to share these stories so that people may see God's love and grace in our lives, and then want to experience it for themselves.

- **Be open.** Every single person is different and God loves the diversity of His children. This is something we can keep in mind when thinking about inviting a person to church. Other people may have experienced God and church differently than we have, and some of these experiences will not always have been pleasant. We want to be open to hearing about other people's experiences. Our understanding will go a long way in building relationships with others.

These are just three qualities among many that we can have when inviting people to experience God in our church. We want to create a culture of invitation within the church, so that it becomes a normal part of our lives. Looking at the qualities we want to grow in when inviting someone to church helps start the conversation, but it doesn't end there. If someone does accept our invitation, and they find themselves walking into our congregation, what is the next step?



GOD IS PRESENT IN THE STORIES OF OUR LIVES.
WE ARE CALLED TO SHARE THESE STORIES
SO THAT PEOPLE MAY SEE GOD'S LOVE AND
GRACE IN OUR LIVES, AND THEN WANT TO
EXPERIENCE IT FOR THEMSELVES.

To help answer this question, the NAC-USA Church office has created resources that will help a congregation greet and welcome new guests. These materials are called the *You're home* resources and are intended to support the congregation in making all people feel at home when they enter our congregations. *You're home* helps guide a person's journey from being a first-time guest, to their further interest in our faith, and to their desire to become a member. The first two steps are supported with resources, such as:

- defining the roles of greeters and ushers, creating a congregational welcome strategy,
- providing small group videos and discussion guides to further engage guests with our faith.

Coming soon will be the next level of *You're home* resources, which will help guide the discussion about sacraments on a person's journey in becoming a member. If your congregation has a greeting team in place or is looking to start one, the *You're home* resources are currently located on Minister Companion, which the ordained ministers in your congregation can access. – VA

IN YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY

Recognize the needs in your own community and partner with a local organization to make a difference.

SERVING OPPORTUNITIES

re.charitableministry@nac-usa.org
[Facebook.com/re.Charitable.Ministry](https://www.facebook.com/re.Charitable.Ministry)

IN BELIZE

January 13-20, 2018
June 16-23 and 23-30, 2018

Continuing our partnership with King's Children's Home in Belmopan.

PROJECT TYPE: construction
PARTICIPATION FEE: \$550 + travel
AVAILABLE SPOTS: 6-8 spots per week

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HAITI

beginning a new partnership with an organization that builds and supports local community health centers.

Contact us if you are interested, especially if you have a medical background.

ZAMBIA

Quarter 2019 / 2 week trip

Continuing our partnership with iChange in working on the Mackenzie Community School



PROJECT TYPE: construction
PARTICIPATION FEE: \$650 + travel
AVAILABLE SPOTS: 4

A Charitable Ministry of the
New Apostolic Church USA



A person is shown from the side, holding a Bible. The background is a sunset or sunrise over a body of water, with a warm orange glow. The person is wearing a dark, textured sweater. The text "Go to the people" is written in a white, cursive font and underlined.

Go to the people

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

Matthew 28:19-20

Chief Apostle Schneider used the Great Commission as the foundation of the 2017 minister service in Chicago. This is the ministers' mission in the church, and we, as members, can also share in and support this mission.

What does the mission consist of?

Jesus makes this very clear: *Go*. We have a mission to fulfill and part of that means we must go deeper into the knowledge of Jesus Christ. We cannot remain where we are and think we know everything. To **go further into the knowledge of Christ**, we need to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit. **We have to go to the people**. The transmission of the gospel needs a **personal contact**. It's not a mission given by Jesus to an organization or to a company. It's a mission given by Jesus to each of us. We cannot say that's the task of the church. We ARE the church. And so it is our responsibility to go because Jesus wants us to have a personal relationship with the people. That's the difference between a Christian church or the work of God and a company. We cannot act as a company. We have to move, go, talk, and make personal contact.

Why do we go?

To make disciples of all the nations. To make disciples means our task consists of motivating people to follow Jesus. That's the **definition of a disciple: the one who follows Jesus**. To do this, we first have to believe that the gospel is valid for all men. Whatever the conditions they live in are, whatever their cultural background is, whatever their economic situation is, whatever their past is. The whole gospel, the laws and the salvation, is **valid for everyone on earth**. In the Gospel of Mark, it says, *Preach the gospel to every creature*. We have to preach the gospel and make disciples in the whole population, irrespective of their conditions, of their culture, of their age, of their wealth. When you look at your congregation, does it reflect the population of your town or state?

*This is our task for the future... showing them
the glory and the love of Jesus Christ.*

And what's our task? **To motivate all to follow Christ**. We do not want to promise them something. It would be easy to go to the poor one and to promise them they will become rich if they follow Christ. But that wouldn't make disciples out of them. Plenty of people followed Jesus because they were waiting for a miracle of healing. Others expected Jesus to deliver them from the oppression of the Romans. But this is not why Jesus came to earth. He wanted to have disciples who follow Him because they love Him, they trust Him, and they were ready to leave everything behind to follow Him. And it's not necessary to threaten people either, that if they are not faithful, then they will suffer in the great tribulation. We just have to reveal to them the glory of Jesus Christ. We have to plant in their hearts the love for Jesus Christ, and help them to discover how great He is. That Jesus is God and God is Jesus. He's humble. He's powerful. He's almighty. He's love. He's patience. He's grace. When people know this, then they will follow Jesus because they have discovered His love and desire to save. That's the true motivation to follow Christ.

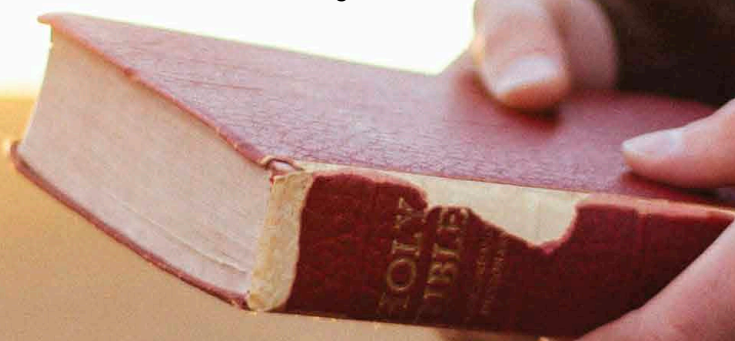
To baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. We have to make clear that being baptized and reborn out of water and Spirit is not just a condition to be fulfilled. When you are baptized with water and with Spirit, you get a special strength and it's up to you to use it. With this power,

you can love like Jesus, you can forgive, you can follow, and you have the power to change and to become like Christ. The best way to explain this power is to demonstrate it. Be an example to make obvious the power that we received through baptism with water and with Spirit.

To teach them to observe all the things that Jesus has commanded. When people have decided to follow Christ and they have discovered His glory, love, grace, and patience, then they can understand what it takes to follow Christ. There are a certain number of rules, the law of Christ, to be respected. But when people come to know Christ, these rules won't seem so restrictive. Now, they love Christ. Now, they will have a desire to live by these rules – out of love for Him. Our task is to teach the law of Jesus Christ, not our own law, our own rules, our own traditions. Our rules have nothing to do with salvation. We have to teach them the gospel and how to live it in their life. This also applies for the younger generations. They don't need to become like we were and like we are. They can follow the gospel in their society and in their time. Knowing this, we can become more aware and accepting of people's differences. We cannot ask people to become like us because that's the way we know how to follow Christ. Instead, we have to teach them to follow Christ and to live according to the gospel in their conditions.

This is our task for the future: going to all people and motivating them to follow Christ, showing them the glory and the love of Jesus Christ. This needs personal contact. And once they love Jesus, then they can be baptized with water and be prepared to be baptized with the Spirit. Then they can be shown how to use this power from their baptism. And then, they can follow Christ in the way that He commanded.

**Taken from the Chief Apostle's Ministers service in Chicago, 2017*



Six years ago, re Charitable Ministry started to engage with Kings Children Home in Belmopan, Belize for the first time. As Stanley, the local project coordinator admitted many years later, “You guys were such a small group, we weren’t sure you would be coming back.” This statement was as much based on our – admittedly – small size, as it was based on experiences Stanley had made before. While all help is welcome and appreciated, he had noticed that various other groups faded away after one or two project visits, leading him to assume that maybe this was just the way things go.

HOWEVER, FROM THE DAY RE CHARITABLE MINISTRY STARTED ITS WORK, WE WERE COMMITTED TO ONE THING - TRANSFORMING RELATIONSHIPS FOR BOTH, OUR PARTNERS AND OUR PARTICIPANTS.

Fast forward six years and our last project discussion with Stanley sounded quite different. Not only did he commend our participants for their deep commitment and hard work, but one statement in particular touched us: “Today I don’t have to wonder anymore whether you are coming back, but can focus on discussing with you where our home, and our children, are going strategically.”

Moving into their new facility in 2013, the last years were dominated by many construction-focused projects; and while this will continue for some time, the team at KCH also shared some of their concerns and thoughts for the future with us. With the main building construction coming to a completion, some of the past donors are starting to pull back, their commitment fulfilled. However, running the new facility and the number of children assigned to KCH on an ongoing basis, requires resources as well. Government-stipends for each child only cover half or less of the average operating cost for each child; core donors make up most of the rest, with a growing number of self-sustainability projects (their freshly baked cinnamon rolls are delicious!)

plugging gaps in the operating budget on an increasing basis. One key project in this context was the rainwater retention system installed by our teams in 2017.

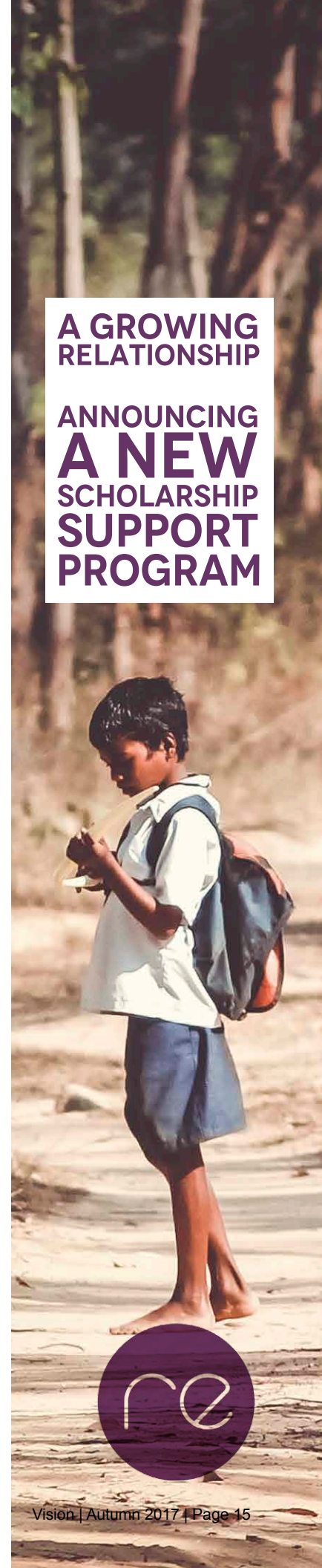
In our most recent discussions with Miss Leonie, the founder of KCH, we asked her where she sees the greatest need in the coming years. Much to our surprise her answer had nothing to do with any infrastructure or operating needs anymore: “high school scholarships” was her simple reply. While each child is provided free education until the end of primary school (grade 9 in Belize), this does not extend to high school anymore. And while continuing to high school is not necessarily the best choice for each child, there is a deep desire by Miss Leonie to somehow enable those students who qualify and are interested in completing high school, to do so. But with an average cost of 800 Belizean dollars (USD400) per student for a year of high-school coursework, this often exceeds the funding currently available.

For the past years, our relationship with KCH has been growing and changing as a result. Today, we feel that we are a small part of the lives of these children and the home. We realize that only a limited number of our members have the opportunity to spend time with these children in person. For those of you who either want to continue your relationship with the kids at KCH or participate in their lives even though you cannot participate in a visit, we are excited to announce our new **KCH Scholarship Support Program!**

As part of this program we will offer a limited number of one-year donation opportunities, either as a one-time contribution of \$400, or a monthly donation of \$33.50, specifically geared towards supporting an eligible student at KCH for one-year of high school. For further details, and to participate in this program, please visit <https://recharitableministries.weshareonline.org/> or email us at re.charitableministry@nac-usa.org

**A GROWING
RELATIONSHIP**

**ANNOUNCING
A NEW
SCHOLARSHIP
SUPPORT
PROGRAM**





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