

Vision



Dear brothers and sisters,

Once again, we approach the closing of yet another year. This should be time of our continuous and constant thankfulness. Apostle Paul writes to the congregation in Colossus (2:6-7) - *As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, **abounding in it with thanksgiving.***

He clearly states that one must “have received” Christ Jesus as Lord. What does this mean in a practical sense? In the first verses of this chapter, he encourages all to be “knit together in love” and to be assured of understanding and knowing the mysteries of God, in whom are hidden all the treasure of wisdom and knowledge. Perhaps we can interpret these verses in this way: United in the love of Christ, we *together* make efforts to discover more deeply the “mystery” of Christ, thus, to “have Christ” is to have a lifestyle in which *we walk in Him*, we are *rooted and built up in Him*, and are *established in faith*. In this lifestyle, one then abounds in thanksgiving.

Let’s sincerely look at ourselves more closely as we approach the New Year. If we honestly want to self-examine, the Lord, through the gift of the Holy Spirit within us, will make it possible for us to see more clearly if we truly “have Him” or not. Possibly a few questions may help:

- Do I make a true effort to *really discover Jesus Christ* by preparing and engaging in the divine service and together with others, in small group discussions?
- Is my faith life evolving, leaving old ways and ideas, embracing the fresh, new teachings of the Holy Spirit today, inspiring me to walk in this newness of life?
- In this lifestyle, do I allow the light of the gospel to help me see everything in a different way, clearly recognizing the temporality of worldly things and the high eternal value of spiritual things?

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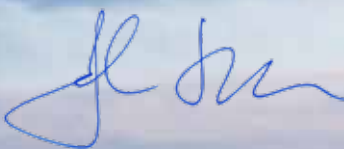



- Am I “knit together” with my brothers and sisters and contributing to my congregation, or am I simply an attendee?
- Does the knowledge of the mystery of Christ firmly root and establish me through the struggles and sufferings of life, not because He alleviates them, but because I know I *have Him*; He is with me always and will lead me to a destiny He has prepared for me.
- Do I abound in thankfulness each day, because He is the “Sun” in my life which shines constantly? *You are all sons of light and sons of the day...* (Thessalonians 5:4-6). This then becomes the proof and clear sign that I have Jesus Christ.

Our thanksgiving is therefore a giving back to Him who gave all. Stripped of everything on the cross, even his last possession, his robe, He gave His life...to change ours. Our true thanksgiving is expressed then, in turn, when we reciprocate and give ourselves to Him, our time, our possessions, our service, our lives, realizing we live under the Sun of His grace.

Dear ones, we have so much to be thankful for – let us try in our humble, human way to reciprocate and respond to the limitless love of God, who, through Christ, opened the way of salvation for us, and by the Holy Spirit, remains our constant Helper and Guide in order to bring us to the supreme purpose for which we were called – eternal fellowship with Him in His kingdom.

With loving greetings,

 and 





Buffalo, New York

CHIEF APOSTLE VISIT

Retirement & Ordination • September 2023





The city of Buffalo, NY is historically important for the development of the New Apostolic Church in North America. Over a century ago it served as one of the entry points, along with Chicago and New York City, for missionizing ministers from Europe. Subsequently, ministers were also able to travel up to Canada from Buffalo to serve souls there and start congregations. In 1983, Chief Apostle Urwyler came to this city and now in September of 2023, after 40 years, Chief Apostle Schneider also visited Buffalo, gathering members from the entire Great Lakes region and Canada.

Guests enjoyed visits to many special landmarks in the city including Frank Lloyd Wright’s *Martin House*, the newly renovated *AKG Art Museum*, the lively *Canalside*, and ultimately gathered in the *Kleinhans Music Hall* for the divine service. This hall was designed by a father and son team – Eliel and Eero Saarinen – the same architects who designed the Gateway Arch in St. Louis, the Dulles airport in Washington, and the TWA terminal building in New York. Kleinhans also has a noteworthy history for the New Apostolic Church as a location for many district services in the late 60’s and 70’s, which were held by Apostle John Fendt, Sr. and District Apostle Kraus.

The Chief Apostle opened the divine service with a verse from the Gospel of John: *For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved* (John 3:17). Originating from this starting point, he went on to enumerate three aspects of salvation: forgiveness, sanctification, and glorification.

How does one obtain salvation? Through belief in Jesus Christ! Here the Chief Apostle elaborated on five specific beliefs: belief in His sending as the Son of God, belief in His teaching, belief in His way and His life, belief in those He has sent, and finally doing His will, because faith is not only saying that we believe something, but also doing it. Doing the will of Christ is to go out into the world, as He sent us, to allow others to experience the love of Christ and to also come to believe in Him. The Chief Apostle encouraged us – “You are sent into this world, into these conditions, to serve the Lord and to contribute to the work of

salvation so that man also in the future has access to forgiveness and sanctification [so] that they can be prepared for glorification.”

District Apostles Minio, Kolb, and Ekhuya served along with DAH Schnabel. Following the sacraments, District Apostle Kolb was placed into retirement after 50 years in ministry. The Chief Apostle shared emotional words after serving together for 20 years: “You are a man deeply rooted in Jesus Christ... You have been a wise leader and a leader full of courage... You had always this need and this will, ‘I have to do more and better’... [and you were] a very supportive, inspiring, and efficient helper[to your Chief Apostles].”

DAH Schnabel answered the call to be appointed as District Apostle after these encouraging and guiding words: “You have to proclaim the true will of God... [which] is very easy to explain – God loves you. His will is that you have fellowship with Him... Proclaim the will of God, do the will of God, do not try to please man. And make sure... that the return of Christ remains priority number one... and finally, love all of them.”

The final verse of the thanksgiving hymn encapsulated the feeling of thanksgiving of the entire gathered congregation: *Worship, honor, glory, blessing, Lord, we offer unto Thee; young and old Thy praise expressing, in glad homage bend the knee...*



Dear brothers and sisters,

I want to express my sincere, heartfelt thanks to each of you for your love, many prayers, and support over these past years, as well as the many cards and expressions of love sent to me most recently. Kathy and I have found the greatest joy and fulfillment in serving Christ and in knowing and serving you...sharing life with you. We are eternally grateful to God for giving us the opportunity to see His mighty hand at work in the lives of so many of our brothers and sisters in a myriad of life circumstances and situations. And in it all, we could witness His boundless love and His unexpected, astonishing wonders.



It is my hope that the children, youth, and young adults in our congregations will be inspired to discover this wonderful mystery – serving Christ brings the greatest fulfillment in life. *And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).* There is no profession, activity, or entertainment that can supplant the joy one has in loving and serving others; truly this is the joy in Christ.

I am also deeply thankful to God for our Chief Apostle, who leads us forward with courage and wisdom. It has been a great blessing and strength for me to serve together with him, as well as with all our apostles and many servants over my tenure as a minister.

It is a great joy that the Lord has chosen our new District Apostle Schnabel to care for His work in the USA district. We have enjoyed many months working and serving together over the past year, and in this time, I could witness the emergence of a newness of spirit that the Lord has stirred in him to lead us forward. Let us meet together in prayer each day in supporting our District Apostle.

Dear ones, we may not see each other as often as in the past, yet we are steadfastly united in the love of Christ, and this relationship we shall always have as we continue in faith to the Lord’s Day (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

With deep gratitude and sincere love,



YOUTH GATHERING IN



VENEZUELA



In August of this year, a wonderful gathering for the youth of the Central-West region took place at the Agroaventura Aquatic Park in Tinaquillo, Cojedes State. The event, organized with the help of Bishop Molina, was attended by 187 brothers and sisters, and it kicked off with a warm welcome from the youth of Valencia.

The gathering started with a divine service for the youth, conducted by Apostle Cesar Barrera. This service marked the beginning of the recreational activities, which started with a play that conveyed a profound message: "Only God can cleanse our sins." The youth also sang a song, "I want to have a million friends," with the beloved apostle, fostering bonding and fellowship among all present.

The wives and servants of Maracay prepared lunch for everyone, allowing the youth, ministers, and brothers and sisters to continue enjoying the activities in the park and enhancing their

fellowship and union. To conclude the event, the youth from all congregations organized a choir and sang hymns of praise to our Father.

Afterwards, another gathering took place in the city of Cumana, Sucre State. This time, Bishop Jonsi Gómez led the gathering where the youth from the districts of Caracas, San Juan de los Morros, Margarita, Valle de la Pascua, Temblador, and other regions was present.

The encounter was held with great joy in the Lord, and it was supported by our servants and youth leaders from each congregation. Meetings were organized in every space to begin the preparations for the gathering named "Next Generation". The aim of this initiative was to encourage, motivate, and continue the work despite the difficulties they face.

Different activities were carried out to strengthen their fellowship as children of God, under the doctrine of the New Apostolic Church. The desire was to continue living experiences in "Serving and Reigning with Christ" and thus strengthening their faith. In addition, various seminars were held that reinforced how they should conduct themselves as children of God.

The youth from each district participated in a wide range of cultural activities that reflected their regions, such as dances, exhibitions, poems, plays, and more.



One notable activity was “The Apostle Responds to the Youth,” where the youth was given the opportunity to ask questions about their concerns regarding the future of the work and how they can face life’s challenges strengthened from a spiritual aspect. This session was received with great enthusiasm, as young people are constantly faced with various overwhelming situations. Apostle Barrera responded with great love to each question, emphasizing how special the love of God is.



Despite financial constraints, the youth experienced the grace of God from the beginning. They prayed to God, and together with their servants, they were able to find the financial means to attend this meeting. Prayer was their best armor, and they trusted in God to live these great experiences.



Committees were also organized to make everything work and ensure that every brother, youth, and servant could feel at home. They took care of every detail, from lodging to transportation, logistics, and recreation, to ensure that everything ran smoothly. Thanks to their efforts, every youth had a wonderful time bonding with one another and Apostle Cesar Barrera, Bishop Jonsi Gómez, and other servants. The activities listed in the program were executed smoothly. It’s worth mentioning that the youth from different districts was able to integrate and interact with each other, sharing their ideas, opinions, and experiences while being united in the same spirit.



To conclude their time together, the Apostle conducted a divine service for the youth. There were 117 brothers and sisters in attendance who were able to experience the guidance of the Holy Spirit as they directed their lives of faith towards a wonderful future.



They said goodbye with great joy and the mutual desire to meet again and continue growing in their faith, so they can be the next generation to carry out the work of the Heavenly Father. - **Ap. Ceasar Barrera**





FORWARD TOGETHER

NATIONAL SYNOD 2023



From October 27 to 29, the apostles, bishop, district rectors and some invited rectors, gathered in St. Louis for the National Synod. District Apostle Schnabel opened the meeting with a focus on our Mission and Vision statements as the purpose of the church – who we are and what we are doing – while our culture points to how we do things. And our culture should be centered on Jesus Christ.

Reflecting back on the Chief Apostle’s message in Buffalo, NY from John 3:16-17, the District Apostle introduced a new word – “sent-ness” – we are sent, and have a quality of sent-ness. God so loved the world that He has sent us into the world so that people might experience His love and glimpses of His kingdom already now. For us, this means that God is with us and working through us, when we’re in His house on a Sunday, or when we are at work or school during the week; as we care for our families; as we work in our communities – we are chosen and sent by Him (1 Peter 2:9). And God equips us! We come to church, to the community of faith, to learn

His will, to be strengthened by Him, only to be sent out to share that message with others. He has given us capabilities, spiritual gifts, life experiences so that we can serve others. “He gives you a message, He gives you a purpose, He gives you a garden to tend. You are sent... [and] you are sent for where you are.”

He explained the theme for weekend in this way: “Forward Together is a combination of how we do things, what we do, and who we are... We are sent with God’s blessing and we are united... We can’t do it alone! We have to do it together!”

The Synod then continued with a new format – panel discussions. Four different panels of members and ministers shared experiences, best practices, and challenges on Small Groups, FaithArc, Inreach/Outreach, and Music and Worship. The ministers were encouraged to ask questions and discuss their ideas and questions with the panel participants throughout the event. The weekend culminated on Sunday with a divine service with the St. Louis district.





Prayer works!

Pray without ceasing.

1 Thessalonians 5:17

“Let us make 2024 the year of prayer. Let us make it our goal to pray in the name of Jesus at all times. And may each one of us make the same experience, namely that prayer works!”

- Chief Apostle Schneider on the theme for 2024

Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the *mysteries* of God.

1 CORINTHIANS 4:1



THE APOSTLES VOW

While we believe the apostle ministry to be a steward of the mysteries of God, there is one mystery that need not remain so. In the divine service, everyone can listen to the words with which the Chief Apostle addresses a new apostle, as well as his prayer, and witness the actual act of ordination. However, before this can happen, something else - a vital component of the ordination - must take place.

Prior to the divine service, usually the day before, the Chief Apostle conducts a meeting with the new apostle or apostles in the presence of their district apostle and the other apostles present at the event. In this meeting, the Chief Apostle outlines the responsibilities and tasks of an apostle, to clearly present the expectations of Christ and the church. This includes what is actually imparted in the ordination: *authority, sanctification, and blessing.*

Authority: through the ordination, a sinful person is entrusted with the authority to proclaim the gospel, administer the sacraments, announce the forgiveness of sins, and ordain others into ministry. These elements of salvation are done in God's authority as though He himself performed them.

Sanctification: God consecrates a servant to His service in order that what they do can be perfect in the view of God. The second part of sanctification is a personal sanctification, a self-preparation in order to be inspired by the Holy Spirit; to be full of His power and wisdom. This is the ongoing task of the minister, in this case the apostle. This includes reading Scripture, studying the Catechism to know our doctrine, seeking unity with the Chief Apostle ministry and apostolate, prayer, and deepening in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. One must also align their personal life and behavior to these understandings.

Blessing: this is God's promise - that He will be with them. This promise also includes God's assurance that what the apostle(s) do in love, in faith, and in trust of God, will be for the salvation of the believers. This blessing is, in a sense, a way for God to say, "If you do your part, I will do My part; that your work will contribute to make My work perfect."

The Chief Apostle also informs the minister of any specific tasks or special concerns that may be inherent in their working areas. Foremost, he highlights that the apostles are ordained to prepare the bride of Christ. Following this instruction, the Chief Apostle requests all to stand, and in solemn moments, asks the local district apostle to read the following vow to the apostles.

Before God, the Father, His Son, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, I vow to love God, the Almighty, the Creator of all things, with all my heart, with all my soul, and with all my mind, and with all my strength, also to love my neighbor as myself.

It is my sacred duty to proclaim the doctrine of Jesus Christ, especially the redeeming power of His sacrifice and His return, and to allow myself to be led by the Holy Spirit alone, in order to fulfill the mission I have received in the name of Jesus, truthfully, diligently, conscientiously, and justly. I resolve to serve in humbleness and conduct myself worthily and honorably before God and man.

I acknowledge the Chief Apostle as the supreme minister, and assure him my full support. I pledge myself to the Chief Apostle and the District Apostles and Apostles of the New Apostolic Church united with them, whose highest duty is obedience in faith, whose greatest honor is faithfulness to the work of God, and whose ultimate goal is perfection in Christ.

In my exercise of this leading ministry of the New Apostolic Church, I shall always stand behind this profession unambiguously, and live in accordance with the Gospel as an Apostle of the New Apostolic Church.

He then asks the future apostle(s):

- *Are you willing to serve the Lord and His church as true apostles of Jesus Christ?*
- *Are you willing to serve with love, with trust in God, and with obedience to God?*
- *Are you willing to work in unity with the Chief Apostle and with the District Apostle and the Apostles as a whole?*
- *Are you willing to work in accordance with the rule and the law of the New Apostolic Church?*

Then please confirm it with your "Yes."

After their yes has been spoken, the Chief Apostle prays that God may grant the strength, the power, the wisdom, the authority, the sanctification, and the blessing that the apostle(s) need to become true apostles of Jesus Christ; that they are filled with His Spirit and with His love; that they are enabled to increase their knowledge of Jesus Christ and to love all His children, without exception, and that they are enabled to fulfill their mission. He asks God to grant them His angel protection and that they will experience that He is with them, as promised by Jesus Christ.

May we join the Chief Apostle in praying that our apostles can grow into and live this vow as they lead us in preparing for Christ's return.

Once the prayer is completed, the Chief Apostle, local District Apostle, and the to-be Apostle(s) sign a booklet of the Statutes of the New Apostolic Church International. The meeting closes with heartfelt best wishes, warm embraces and handshakes for the future apostle(s).

Dear heavenly Father...

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(a group of LGBTQ+ members and allies) at

LGBTQ@nac-usa.org

Further resources will be listed on ndi.nac-usa.org under Pastoral Care / LGBTQ+ Resources.