



NAC-USA
DEVELOPMENT
INSTITUTE

**Our Triune
God and the
Bible**

**Sacraments
and our
Vision and
Mission**

THE BASICS

THRIVE

You're Home

The Basics

Session 1: Our Triune God and the Bible

Welcome! We're happy that you have decided to learn more about what the New Apostolic Church is all about, and we are even happier to walk the path beside you on this journey. In this first session we will start with the foundation of our faith: the one Triune God and His message of the Gospel found in the Bible.

The Trinity

We believe in the one true God who has existed for eternity and that He is revealed as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Another way to refer to God in three persons is the Trinity. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have all been active and present in the history of the world since its creation, and they will continue to be. We can experience the Trinity by participating in divine services, where the Trinity is invoked, and by allowing God's presence to touch our lives every day.

God, the Father—the Creator

When we speak about God, the Father, we are referring to the Creator of all things visible and invisible. From nothing, God created everything that exists through His word. He still sustains it all today and has authority over it. Humankind was created by God in His own image and has experienced His loving care through the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ.

God, the Son—Savior and Redeemer

Jesus is God, the Son, the Messiah and Redeemer that was promised long ago to Adam and Eve and the nation of Israel. In Jesus Christ, true God and true Man existed in the same body.

Through His works, Jesus Christ revealed Himself to humankind as the promised Redeemer sent by God to fulfill what was foretold in the Scriptures from as early as Adam and Eve's fall into sin in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:15). It is only through Jesus Christ and His sacrifice on the cross that we are spared from paying the price of our sins—eternal death. He has saved us.

God, the Holy Spirit—the Comforter

God, the Holy Spirit, is sometimes referred to as the Comforter. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would come to comfort and help His disciples after He returned to His Father in Heaven, reminding them of His teachings and providing further teachings (John 14:16,26). The Holy Spirit opens our hearts to divine wisdom and empowers the preaching, teaching, and understanding of the Gospel (1 Corinthians 2:13-14). The Holy Spirit is the new Creator with the divine power to bring about life. With the birth of Jesus, the new creation begins, which will culminate in the new heaven and earth.

The Bible

Over the course of many centuries, human experiences of God's revelation and His acts in the course of the history of salvation have been recorded in writing. This collection of writings is called the Bible. New Apostolic teachings and the liturgy and content of our divine services are founded on the Bible.

The Bible is comprised of two main parts: the Old Testament and the New Testament. While the writings of the Old Testament refer to the covenant that God made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as well as with Moses, the writings of the New Testament refer to the new covenant that God made with humankind through the sending of His Son. The Old and New Testaments are inextricably connected and testify of God's plan of salvation for humankind.

Although recorded by human writers, the Bible is authored by God, and inspired by His Spirit (2 Peter 1: 20–21). It is the source and authority for Christian belief.

The Gospel

The Gospel is the core belief of all Christians because it tells the story of Jesus Christ and His teachings, which can be found in the New Testament of the Bible. In Greek, the word "gospel" translates to "good news." The good news that Christians embrace and share is that we can be rescued from sin and eternal separation from God through the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. The Gospel is the reason why Christians have hope for the future, and it is what gives us our mission to spread God's work on earth. We can share the Gospel with others by telling how God's plan of salvation has impacted us and by living like Jesus in word and deed.

The Apostles' Creed

The Apostles' Creed is based on the Gospel and has become a unifying element of most Christian churches, protecting it from false teachings. It summarizes the teachings of the early

apostles about Christ, with some of its main points being taken from a sermon preached by Apostle Peter (Acts 10: 34-43). The Apostles' Creed is important for us today because it provides a concise statement of what we believe.

The Apostles' Creed says:

"I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day, He rose again. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy universal [catholic] church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen."

Conclusion

In summary, the Triune God is our source of life. Through Him, we are sustained and redeemed. The Gospel is the message of redemption that we receive as our rescue from sin and promise of eternal life. It is this "good news" that we want to share with others as God seeks to save all people for His glory.

For more information, refer to the *Catechism of the New Apostolic Church in Questions and Answers*, questions 5-6, 12-36, 51-52, 61-69, 93-109, 120, 137, 150-151, 177-178, 186, 197-214, and 274-277.

1. Do you believe God is present in your life? How?

2. Who are the three Persons of the Trinity and what are each one's characteristics?

3. Why is Jesus' death on the cross significant for all?

4. What do you think you could learn from reading the Bible? Why are the Old and New Testaments both important for believers to read? How are they interconnected?

5. Explain the Gospel in your own words.

6. What is taught to us in the Apostles' Creed and why is it important for us today?

Session 2: Sacraments and our Vision and Mission

In this session, we will go deeper in our understanding of the church of Christ, the sacraments, and then more specifically, the vision and mission of the New Apostolic Church. Let's begin with the church of Christ.

The Church of Christ

The church of Christ was established on earth by the Lord Himself (Matthew 16:18). The purpose of the church is to make salvation and eternal fellowship with God known to all and to bring worship and praise to Him.

As believers, we are part of the Body of Christ—that part of Christ that the world can see, and though we will still stumble and sin, we do our best to show the world our Savior. That is why we continually depend on Christ's grace and mercy as we strive to become more like Him.

The Sacraments

Sacraments are holy acts of God that bring us closer to Him through our faith as believers. In the New Apostolic Church, we celebrate three sacraments: Holy Baptism, Holy Sealing, and Holy Communion.

- When we are baptized with water, we begin a new relationship with God — and become a Christian. Through the water there is a washing away, or dying, of our old self and a new life in Christ is initiated. Through our faith and profession of Christ, we join the assembly of Christians to become a part of the church and the Body of Christ. Holy Baptism is an act of God that shows He accepts us when we believe in Christ.
- Through Holy Sealing, God gives the baptized person the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14-17; Acts 19: 1-6). Together, Holy Baptism and Holy Sealing comprise the rebirth out of water and the Spirit. Through this rebirth, we become a child of God.

- Holy Communion is a remembrance and profession of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is through the repetition of this meal that we find strength and renewed life in Christ (Luke 22: 19-20; John 6: 53-58).

Until the return of Christ, the apostles prepare the church through word and sacrament – they preach the Gospel, proclaim forgiveness of sins, and dispense the three sacraments. The apostle ministry received this authority from Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:16-20; John 20:23; Acts 8:14-17). He called the apostle ministry to build the church and proclaim redemption through Christ to people who long for salvation. This group of longing souls includes both the living and the dead (1 Thessalonians 5:9-10). The soul is eternal, and so salvation is still attainable for those who have died. We believe that Jesus is Lord over the living and the dead, and have faith in the availability of the sacraments to those that have died.

Vision and Mission

So far our sessions have focused on the broader, shared elements of the Christian faith. Now I'd like to narrow our scope to the specific vision and mission statements of the New Apostolic Church.

Our vision is to create a church in which people feel at home and, inspired by the Holy Spirit and their love for God, align their lives to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and thus prepare themselves for His return and eternal life.

We want the church to be a safe space to grow and overcome challenges, just as one feels safe doing these things in their home with their family surrounding them. We want to be moved by the Holy Spirit at work inside of us and motivated by our love for God. We want to put aside our selfish needs and desires and make choices in our lives that are in line with Christ's teaching and help us to be more like Him so that we are ready to spend eternity together with Him when He returns.

While the vision statement explains our hope for the future as a church, the mission statement provides a plan for how we are going to get there.

Our mission is to reach out to all people in order to teach them the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to baptize them with water and the Holy Spirit. To provide soul care and cultivate a warm fellowship in which everyone shall experience the love of God and the joy of serving Him and others.

Intentionally working on the elements of the mission keeps us focused on the vision. For example, we can reach out to all people by showing others that we care about them. Listening to and talking with them helps create warm fellowship and an atmosphere where they feel welcome and at home in the church. We can demonstrate God's love through our interactions with others, and that can inspire their own love for God. As followers of Christ, we are given the task to reach out to people and teach them about Jesus. As they learn more about Jesus, they can start to prepare themselves for His return and eternal life with Him by aligning their lives to the Gospel

Conclusion

In summary, as members of the church of Christ, we are united with Jesus in the mission to help all people hear the message of the Gospel and grow in their faith in God. He is the center and all that we do is focused towards Him. With the strength and nearness to Christ that comes through the gift of the sacraments, we can actively live as members of the Body of Christ, doing what He calls us to do.

For more information, refer to the *Catechism of the New Apostolic Church in Questions and Answers*, questions 365-386 and 472-530.

1. How did you first learn about our church? What made you interested to learn more?

2. What is the purpose of the church of Christ? What is each believer's role as part of His church?

3. Discuss the significance of each of the sacraments and the effect each has on the lives of believers.

4. What do you think about the Mission and Vision of our church? Do you identify with any part of it? What role should they play in the congregation?

5. How can you align your life to the Gospel of Jesus?

Session 3: THRIVE

Welcome back! We have spent the last two sessions learning about the “seeds” and “roots” of our faith as New Apostolic Christians. Today we will shift our focus from the church of Christ as a whole to our personal and unique relationships with Christ as individuals. Not only do we want to grow in our faith, but Jesus calls us to thrive in it.

As with a plant, a person who thrives grows strong, flourishes, and produces fruit, or results. As Christians this means that we grow into the image of Christ, with a strong faith and connection to God, healthy relationships with those around us, and a passion to serve. These are *not* requirements or things that must be checked off of a to-do list, but rather the natural *evolution* that comes from being rooted in Christ and His church.

So...what can we do to thrive? Let's use the letters of the word “THRIVE” as a simple guide:

- **T**ransform your nature, using Jesus as the example. Jesus practiced love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). Consider how you can better demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit in your daily life.
- **H**elp spread the Gospel. Share with others how being a disciple of Christ has impacted you. Have you felt loved or motivated? Have you felt God's hand in your life? Tell someone about it!
- **R**espond to the call to serve. As a member of the Body of Christ, you have been purposely designed by God with unique abilities that can be used for serving Him. Each person has a special function that the Body needs. What special function do you bring to the Body of Christ? Your local ministers can help you discover and develop your spiritual gifts and how to use them. A simple way to start is by helping your family, your congregation, or those in need in your community.
- **I**nvest in your spiritual health. This takes a focused, intentional effort. Find some time each day to seek the Lord in prayer. It can be in quiet time at home, on the drive to work, or in any moment in the day when you reach out to Him. The words don't have to be fancy - just sincere! Another way to invest in your spiritual health is by reading and studying the Bible. This, along with seeking Him in the divine service experience at church, is how we learn more about the Triune God we are looking forward to spending eternity with. He is waiting for you to get to know Him better!
- **V**alue the church. Jesus intentionally created the church of Christ so that no believer would have to walk his or her path of faith alone. Come and participate in the community of His children. Lend your support and be supported by fellow Christians who are also in the process of thriving and maturing in Christ. Pray for each other; and bring your offerings of time, talent, and tithing to express to God your thankfulness for what He has provided. And finally...

- **Embrace the promise of Jesus Christ's return.** During Jesus' time on earth, the promise was given on several occasions that He would return (John 14:3; Luke 12:40; Acts 1:11). As Christians, we look forward to this every day and prepare for it by engaging in this process of thriving that we have been talking about today. We do not fear the coming of Jesus - we can't wait to be with him.

Thank you for taking the time to walk through this introduction series to the New Apostolic Church. I encourage you to keep seeking God and the path He has for you, for as He promised through the prophet Jeremiah: "...*you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart*" (Jeremiah 29:13).

1. What do you think of when you hear the word "thrive"?

2. Do you think it is good for Christians to have certain expectations for their lives, such as the ones listed here? Why or why not?

3. All who have the gift of the Holy Spirit have the fruit of the Spirit. What are some ways to develop the fruit of the Spirit within you? Why is demonstrating each characteristic of the fruit of the Spirit important to each believers profession and credibility?

4. How can you help someone who doesn't know Jesus to learn about Him?

5. Each believer is called to be of service in the church. In what ways do you feel gifted to serve the community of believers?

6. Do you have any other questions?
