Health, growth, completion

Vision

New Apostolic Church
USA District News

Autumn 2009

Happy autumn!

My very dear Brothers and Sisters,

Amazingly, we are already contemplating year-end events and making plans for 2010. However, let us take the time to experience completely the joy of the Thanksgiving season. With this in mind, our Autumn Vision newsletter contains a special insert containing the following Thanksgiving-related features. Within this issue you will find:

- *Thoughts on Thanksgiving*, which is my Thanksgiving letter for this year.
- A pictorial collage illustrating the events and congregational benefits that are funded from our members' offerings.
- Selected essays and poems submitted by our children and young people on the topic of Thanksgiving.
- A graphic illustration of the NAC-USA District's revenue and expenditures, in the interest of financial transparency.

In addition, please find information on upcoming events as well as a new perspective on the subject of oneness called "The Congregational Palette." Lastly, you will find the final installment of "Keep Yourself," our year-long exploration of thoughts on self-responsibility.

With greetings of love from our dear Chief Apostle and united with all the apostles, I also greet you with love and wish you a meditative and fulfilling season of Thanksgiving.✸

Leonard R. Kolb

Thoughts on Thanksgiving

Across the nations that comprise our district and within our New Apostolic culture, there exists a rich tradition of Thanksgiving. The Thanksgiving holiday revolves around a recognition and festive celebration of God's goodness and bounty. Often we think in terms of the *things for which we are thankful.*

As our children and youth have rightly reminded us of so artistically in this issue of our newsletter, we may "count our many blessings" and tie our thankfulness to treasured possessions, warm relationships and pleasant experiences.

As we approach this special season of Thanksgiving, however, I would like to add another dimension to ponder: a deeper level of Christian faith. In Thessalonians 5:18 we can read: "*in everything* give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

We can see within this verse the same principal of self-responsibility that has guided our inner reflections over the past year. Using our familiar theme for 2009, I would add to the exhortation from the Apostle Paul to the Thessalonians a more modern version: *Keep yourself thankful in everything!*

Clearly, to become and remain thankful is a matter of personal choice. It transcends reacting positively to good things and is a decision *to be thankful in all things.*

Let us look at two contrasting biblical examples of personal

Continued on page 8

Thanksgiving writing contest 2009

Poetry Winners: Age 10-14

Tied for 1st place 10-14 Poetry ~ Lucas Lee & Kristin Moser

I'm Thankful for…
What has happened
What will happen
What is happening.

Lucas W. Lee, Age 13, Westbury, New York

Why I'm Thankful

I have a lot to be thankful for
But, some may say I do not
I don't possess expensive clothes
Or even own a yacht
I have a family who loves me a lot
And friends who are there for me
I've got faith in my Lord and trust Him with everything
Being thankful is the key!

Kristin Moser, Age 13, Westbury, New York

Youth

Thanksgiving and grace go hand in hand,
For if there was no grace,
There would be nothing to be thankful for.
I see God's grace,
In every little thing,
I walk this earth in awe,
Of our living King.
God's grace is all around me,
In trouble and in fear,
God's grace I know surrounds me,
In triumph and in tears.
He loves me,
Unconditionally,
And forgives my sins,
Additionally.
Because He loves me so,
And gives the grace to show,
I know His grace,
Is in the earth as well.
In everything we take for granted,
Grace is there.
In food and family,
Friends and love,
All these come,
From God's grace above.
For this I am thankful.
For this I must say,
"Thank you, God"
In a thousand different ways.

Elissa Pfleuger, Gowanda, New York

Essay Winners: Age 10-14

Dear God,

Thanks for letting me live on earth. I'm glad you gave me a wonderful family and friends. I'm glad I am getting an education, and then when I grow up I can be anything I want to be! I also have the best Sunday School teachers. My mom also got a job that works around our family life. I've been able to sleep nicely because my Dad and Mom protect me. I also love the church you chose for me. The nature that I live by is wonderful. I just love swimming in the ocean. It tells me you are with me. I thank you for all those things.

Love, one of your children,
Bethany Hoffman,Age 10,
Palm Beach Gardens, Florida

Youth

The modern world has its daily struggles and conflicts, such as peer pressure, jobs, keeping grades up at school, and much more. I find peace within the Holy Spirit to comfort me, to always let me know to have trust in the Lord, and to help me make wise decisions through the conflicts of the day. It is a nice feeling to kneel by my bed at night to praise and thank my Heavenly Father that He is always by my side to help me through this modern world of daily difficulties.

Alisse Hanson,
Greer, South Carolina

Please note: *additional contest entries can be found on the NAC USA website - www.nac-usa.org*

Perspectives on self-responsibility: Keep yourself 1 John 5:18

Within the final installment of our year-long theme of self-responsibility and the admonition to "Keep Yourself" as found in 1 John 5:18, we might consider the following applications:

Keep yourself in **Patience**. In James 5:8 we read: "You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand." This verse can be viewed from different perspectives. Universally, we all must exercise patience while waiting for the Lord's return. Without a continual effort to renew and replenish our patience, faithful waiting may turn cynical, especially for those waiting a lifetime.

We may view patience from another, more contemporary perspective. Within many congregations, we are stepping forward in new directions. For some members, change can't happen fast enough, and impatience may lead to frustration. For others, the pace of change is too rapid, causing discomfort or aggravation. For both groups "you also be patient" may be an exhortation to be patient with each other. Empathy and understanding is created, despite our unique personality styles, when we recognize that we share a common future: "the coming of the Lord is at hand."

Keep yourself in **Fellowship**. Congregational life is enriched and enhanced by the contributions of each individual member. Everyone has something exceptional and indispensable to add to the mix. The decision to participate in a meaningful way is truly a matter of individual choice and personal responsibility. How should we make this decision?

> *We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him.*
>
> 1 John 5:18

First, our fellowship should be born out of love for one another. This is the hallmark of New Apostolic Christians.

Second, let us pray for one another! Our intercessions form a critical network that draws us closer together, deepens the bonds of love and strengthens us in times of trouble or temptation.

Last but not least, let our fellowship be inclusive. From Christ's teachings and His exemplary life we can see His love for all. With clear intent He reached past the cultural norms of His time to embrace all members of society. No one was excluded from salvation. Let us likewise care for all equally, including those on the borders of our fellowship and those in difficulty. Then all, especially those most vulnerable and in need of compassion, encouragement and refreshment, will feel sheltered in the love of Christ.

Our thankfulness at work

A sampling of the projects funded by our offerings

Overseas missionary work

East Africa

East Africa

East Africa

East Africa

East Africa

San Salvador, El Salvador

Samoan Islands

Community service

NAC Cares in Pennsylvania

Youth iServe in Florida

Youth iServe in Florida

Youth iServe in Florida

Vacation Bible School

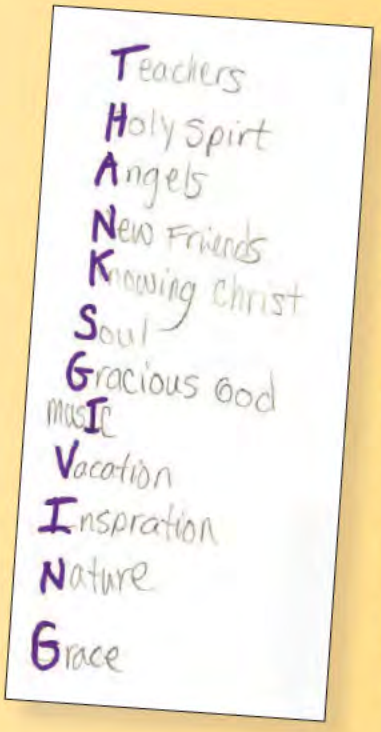
VBS in the Denver area

VBS in Brookfield, IL

VBS in Florida West

VBS in San Francisco, CA

VBS in St. Petersburg, FL



Building projects

Dedication of Parsippany, NJ

Completed church in Parsippany, NJ

Church before renovation - Dix Hills, NY

Church after renovation - Dix Hills, NY

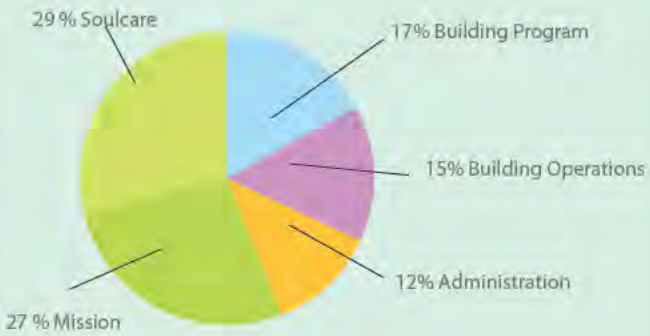
Church renovation in Cinnaminson, NJ

New church building in Wyoming

Church renovation in Cinnaminson, NJ

NAC USA - Source of Funds (2008)

NAC USA - Use of Funds (2008)



Category descriptions

Soulcare: Congregational expenses & activities, printed materials, teaching materials, benevolence, Chief Apostle visits & transmissions, travel, salaries

Building operations: Utilities, repair & maintenance, insurance, taxes

Administration: Legal & professional support services, insurance, office expenses, audit, system maintenance & IT, travel, salaries

Mission: Support for missionary countries, missionary building program, legal & professional support services, audits, travel

Building program: Purchase of land & buildings, new construction, major repairs

Financial stewardship

The New Apostolic Church-USA is guided by a strong operating principal of fiscal responsibility. Within every decision is the understanding that the church is in a fiduciary role and must manage the offerings and contributions of the membership as trusted stewards. In addition, the district church would like to provide financial transparency to inspire the ongoing confidence of its members.

In the past decades, missionary activities have taken up a significant portion of the church's resources. However, future planning calls for a gradual shift of focus to domestic congregational activities and programs without neglecting our members in the missionary areas. Strong and healthy domestic congregations are the cornerstone of the district church's future.

Like all organizations and families, the economic difficulties of the past year have also affected the church. Naturally, it is then necessary and prudent to manage our cost structure accordingly and reduce our expenses where possible. Significant progress has been made to date via cost cutting initiatives, outsourcing and innovative technology applications.

In order to allow for stable and uninterrupted operations even during difficult economic times, the church has historically applied a proactive financial planning strategy. For example, a contingency reserve fund was created during more stable economic times that has provided the required funding during this economic downturn. ✸

Upcoming events

November 1, 2009 ~ Service for the Departed. Let us create congregations of prayer and compassion to support the work of redemption in the eternal realms. The District Apostle, accompanied by all the apostles from the USA district including Latin America, will celebrate this divine service in Erie, PA.

November 14, 2009 ~ Workers Transmission Service from Affton, MO at 6:00pm CST (5:00pm MST, 4:00pm PST, 7:00pm EST). Look for details in your congregational bulletin and at nac-usa.org.

July 9-12, 2010 ~ The NAC-USA district youth will hold their national youth convention at Purdue University in Lafayette, Indiana.

September 5, 2010 ~ This date will find us together with our **Chief Apostle in DETROIT!** For this festive event, we will seek a venue large enough to accommodate all who desire to attend.

New products

A new piano CD, "**Keys to the heart-Christmas**" and the **2010 Devotional** are now available for order. Please watch for a poster in your local congregation or visit the NAC-USA web site www.nac-usa.org for details.

Perspectives: Congregational palette

In a recent meeting, our Chief Apostle carefully illuminated the concept of oneness. I would like to convey his thoughts to you and then ask that each one conduct a very personal introspection. Let us assess our inner convictions regarding this important concept inspired out of the gospel of Christ. Perhaps we are in need of further culture change.

For this meeting, the Chief Apostle researched extensively the many biblical references to Christ's teachings on the subject of oneness. His conclusions can be summarized concisely within the following excerpt: "We can therefore say: A perfect oneness with the Lord yields oneness with one another."

I would like to underline the Chief Apostle's conclusion: Our objective is to attain a perfect oneness with Christ. Why is this significant? In the past, our New Apostolic culture within the U.S. placed great importance on the concept of unity and oneness, but often the focus drifted from Christ and morphed to the idea of achieving a certain standard of perfect sameness and uniformity. The strict application of this standard tends to create intolerance for individualism and diversity. Can we see that perhaps when taken to the extreme, this quest for sameness has created an unnecessary barrier to many souls who love the Lord and are one with Him? Do we not see within the gospel of Christ His specific intent to include all souls in the offer of God's grace and to break down cultural and social barriers to redemption? He made the supreme sacrifice to open wide the door to salvation. Let us also then endeavor to make the congregational tent bigger, not smaller. (See Isaiah 54:2)

With this in mind, let me introduce the analogy of a congregational palette. The artist's palette is the tool whereby very different colors are combined with the intent to create a work of great beauty. Each work of art is a unique combination of these colors and the artist's interpretation, style and inspiration. Likewise, every congregation is unique. Each has its own colors, personalities, characteristics, talents and gifts. A healthy congregation will have enlightened leadership that has the ability to embrace the diversity and uniqueness of each member and weave them all into a masterpiece of Christian love and fellowship. Therefore, let us not be distressed when congregations look different from the outside, but rather seek an inner oneness with Christ that will be clearly evident on His day. ✸

LRK

Continued from page 1

responsibility and decisions regarding thankfulness. One of the earliest Bible verses gives us a glimpse into the inner conflict of Cain. His internal perspective towards his Creator was skewed by his lack of thankfulness. It diminished his perception of God's providence and spawned a jealous comparison to his brother. This personal decision led to events that were tragic and far reaching.

Let us contrast this to the extraordinary example of Job, who decided to bless the name of God in spite of the loss of his possessions, family and health. This personal decision preserved Job during a period of horrible circumstances and formed the basis for his recovery.

"in everything give thanks;
for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you"
THESSALONIANS 5:18

For many, 2009 was a year of difficult circumstances. Many experienced unemployment and financial hardship in addition to sickness, loss of loved ones and the ever-increasing stress of contemporary life on families and relationships. Should our thankfulness then be diminished? The decision to "keep yourself thankful in all things" will preserve us as it did Job and will also form the basis for recovery and renewal "for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

The phrase "in everything" encapsulates the entire human experience; the good and the bad, the joyous and the disappointing. In everything, let us give thanks because:

- We still look forward to the return of Christ and life eternal, the greatest destiny ever offered to anyone.
- We still are under the grace of God and partakers of the merit of Christ. He has not withdrawn from us.
- We still have been able to keep our faith for another year.
- We still can serve Christ by serving others.

Lastly, dear loved ones, let us be cautious of attitudes that can erode thankfulness. One such attitude we might call "entitlement." In Matthew 20, we read the parable of the laborers in the vineyard. Some of the laborers, hired early in the day, complained to the land owner because their compensation was the same as those hired later. In effect, they concluded that they *deserved* the reward of the landowner based upon their deeds. However, Christ rejected such thoughts and instead directed their attention to the overwhelming grace and goodness of God. He will give a reward, but regardless of our deeds, His reward is beyond anything we are entitled to.

From this parable, we also see that a feeling of entitlement leads to comparisons between brothers and sisters. Instead of basking in the joy of their election and calling, some laborers (like Cain) chose to dwell on the perceived unfairness of their circumstances compared to their fellow laborers. Where this attitude becomes pervasive, a congregation becomes unhealthy and is no longer "a church in which people feel at home."

Come, my dear ones, as we approach this blessed season together may we more and more discover that everything that falls from our Father's hand is reason for thanks. Our willingness to bless the name of God, to praise His kindness and mercy and to embrace each other in the love of Christ will inspire a worthy and acceptable thank offering. ✹
LRK