



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As we approach our season of *thanksgiving* let us consider how this beautiful expression relates to our self-responsibility. We can start in the beginning with Cain and Abel. We read in Genesis 4:3 that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord; Abel brought of the firstborn of his flock. We are well aware of the outcome of these two offerings. In verse 6 the Lord counsels: *"If you do well, will you not be accepted?"* From this we can ask ourselves the question, what does it mean to "do well" with regards to offerings and thanksgiving?

Recently our Chief Apostle referenced a word in Colossians 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."*

Can we see that having a deeper relationship with our Heavenly Father through His Son, Jesus Christ, is really the basis for His acceptance of our offerings and our thankfulness? How could we profess thankfulness to God while at the same time being ambivalent, unmoved or unchanged by the greatest gift He has given the world?

Those who have received Christ develop an intimate connection and live in Him through:

- Praying fervent prayers that are dialogues, not monologues.
- Truly seeking Him in preparation for a divine service experience.
- Becoming aware of the thousands of blessings and acts of goodness received constantly from His hand.
- Appreciating experiences of faith, even through heartache and difficulty, and realizing that He is always present.
- Feeling His touch and influence in our daily lives.


In these ways, we are both *"rooted and built up"* in Christ and become deeply *"established in the faith."* That is our firm belief and trust in Jesus Christ as our way of salvation and as the solution to every matter. This results in *"abounding in it with thanksgiving."* Hence it becomes our responsibility to deepen our bond with Christ through living with Him and being transformed into His nature. In this way we become more conscious of His limitless love and magnanimous grace and thus become consumed with only thankfulness. This, in turn, prompts a thanksgiving offering that "does well."

Praying that this season provides us all with many meditative thoughts on how we can more and more live in Him,

With love,

# VISION AND MISSION

## THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF OUR FUTURE



to provide you with further food for thought and explain more completely how putting these Statements into practice can shape our culture, define our purpose and substantiate the changes we are actively pursuing in every congregation. Let me begin with a phrase that you have heard me say often or have seen in various presentations describing our future plans:

“First health, then growth, leading to completion.”

Let me explain the connection of this phrase to the Vision and Mission Statements.

I feel strongly that the Vision Statement describes healthy congregations and paints a picture of an **ideal internal view** of ourselves and our congregations that we have yet to attain. To grasp how far we sometimes are from this ideal is to also grasp why it is so critical that we continue to create a new **culture of living like Christ**. There are two distinct concepts of health within the Vision Statement that require both diligence to better understand and courage to achieve. The process is ongoing, but our diligence will be rewarded. Each new discovery will inspire new wonder over God’s infinite grace and love. Also, our lives as Christians will become more joyous and fulfilled as we experience the tangible evidence of what Jesus taught us to pray for: Your kingdom come! We can begin to experience already today the priceless benefits of His kingdom while on the path to an everlasting reconciliation and fellowship with God our Heavenly Father.

So let us begin with the first phrase of the Vision Statement: *“A church in which people feel at home...”* When do people feel at home? We generally consider ourselves to be friendly. We love fellowship. But this phrase goes far beyond coffee and cake. People feel at home within a community of believers when they are accepted without judgement and, of


My thoughts have returned often to Chief Apostle Schneider’s Pentecost message. His firm and resolute statement about the future direction of our church continues to inspire me. He held up our New Apostolic Vision Statement and declared in simple and unmistakable terms: “This is our direction.”

With this clear mandate, it is important that we fully explore this Statement as well as our Mission Statement. I am convinced that they were born out of the timely inspiration of the Holy Spirit. To me they form a roadmap that offers continuity and security, and also provide relevancy for our church within an ever changing contemporary world. This is not a fad or a flavor of the month; we can build a strong future for our church in the USA upon this foundation.

I ask every member to make understanding these Statements a high priority within their personal spiritual growth. There is much substance for one to absorb and understand. The discovery of this substance would provide an excellent journey to take with other brothers and sisters within a small group discussion format over the remaining months of 2013.

Please allow me to help you get started in your discovery. The Vision and Mission Statements are the very foundation upon which our strategic plan “Stepping Forward” has been constructed. I would like





course, Jesus Christ is our ultimate exemplar in this regard. Look how He intentionally and courageously broke free of the cultural norms of His time to demonstrate His acceptance of every human being He encountered. To understand the many dimensions of Christ-like acceptance, we can study in detail His interaction with:

The 10 lepers. **Luke 17:11-19**

The adulteress. **John 8:1-12**

Zaccheus the tax collector. **Luke 19:1-9**

The malefactor. **Luke 23:39-43**

The woman who washed His feet at a dinner hosted by a Pharisee. **Luke 7:35-50**

The Samaritan woman at the well. **John 4:1-26**

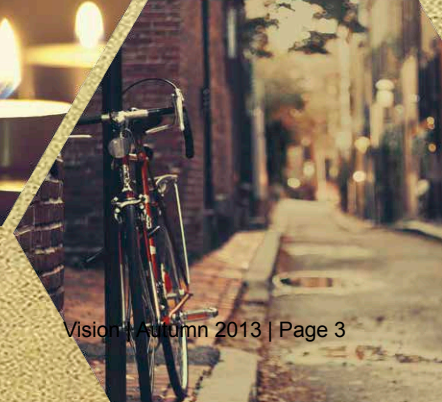
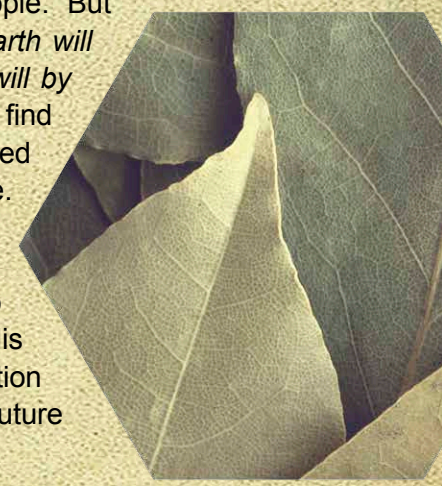
And there are more of course, each with a special nuance and teaching. When we begin to truly understand the nature of Christ and have the courage to follow His example, we will never allow our cultural norms to define the love of God and to create barriers to His grace. We are not a European, Hispanic or Asian church. We are not conservative or liberal, black or white, democrat or republican, traditional or contemporary. These are human labels that may be significant within our temporal world but they have no meaning within the context of eternal salvation! A healthy congregation will form a new **culture**: living and leading like Christ!


Now we move to the next major concept: *“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 ...”* This too is a profound statement with powerful relevance as now the focus shifts to the health of each soul as an individual. What discoveries can we make? Firstly, we see that spiritual health is a matter of **personal responsibility**. We prepare ourselves! There is no automatic free pass to life eternal that comes with church membership. There is no express line that avoids the daily struggle to live a God pleasing life and to be transformed into the nature of Christ.

Also, this phrase professes that salvation is predicated upon experiencing the love of God, being inspired by the Holy Spirit and aligning ourselves to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Hence we see the power and significance of our **Divine Service Experience**; the communal worship, the divine truth of God’s word and the life changing power of Holy Communion. Here we also see the importance of **Pastoral Care** that provides teaching and support to each soul in their unique and sometimes challenging circumstances of life outside the walls of the church building.

Lastly, both the Vision and Mission Statements have an intense focus upon the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This is a source of continuity and security for us. The only constant in our contemporary world is change. Fads come and go as do styles, cultural norms, technological innovations and even people. But Jesus said *“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.”* We find these exact words recorded in Matthew, Mark and Luke. His Gospel, the good news of salvation, is as relevant today as 2000 years ago and will remain so until His return. This is the foundation upon which to build our future plans with confidence.

*Continued on the next page...*





Where the Vision Statement is about health and an internal view, the Mission Statement is about growth with an outward view of our responsibility to profess our belief, to embrace our communities in the love of God and to serve our fellow man with kindness and compassion. It is a collective call to action. It is an invitation to become passionately involved with the greatest cause the world has ever seen. It empowers all of us to discover our spiritual gifts by which to edify the Body of Christ and to live a meaningful life of service to others.

*“Reaching out to all people in order to teach them the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to baptize them with water and the Holy Spirit... Providing soul care and cultivating a warm fellowship in which everyone shall feel the love of God and the joy of serving others.”* This is the very essence of being apostolic. Baptizing with water and the Holy Spirit requires the authority of the apostles and the ordained ministry, but we are all commissioned to reach out and teach the Gospel. Already the Chief Apostle Fehr declared that we are all missionaries. How will we reach out? How will we teach the Gospel?

Reaching out happens outside the walls of the church. It happens where we live, work, learn and play. While some may have the gift to teach by profession, others teach by:

**Living an exemplary life based upon the Gospel.** They radiate peace. They are kind, compassionate and merciful. They love God in a very visible way. They love their neighbour as themselves. They freely forgive, seek reconciliation, and turn the other cheek; they even seek to love their enemies. What a teaching! What a beautiful and rewarding way to live!

**Reaching out in service to others as a tool to share God’s love.** People do incredible good works every day, but their motivations may vary. Let me focus our attention on the highest motivation; the beautiful expressions of kindness that originate out of the pure love of God. People who perform such good works allow their perspective to be redirected outward from the self to the needs of others.

They reach out! They express their unique passions and giftedness in a very practical way that brings the light of Christ’s Gospel into darkened lives when it is needed most. Often these passions are forged within the fire of life-changing circumstances that God has permitted along their personal journey. Thereby they fulfil Christ’s call to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and take in the stranger (Matthew 25:31-46), all in His name and for His sake so that everyone feels the love of God.

Isn’t this a form of soul care? Within Stepping Forward, we call it Pastoral Care but the effect is the same. Within a “Missional church,” there are no passive members. Everyone may find their calling to edify the body of Christ and to share the joy of serving Him and others. “As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1 Peter 4:10).

This understanding of our spiritual gifts, our unique passions that God has engineered within our lives and the place within the body of Christ that He has called us to serve can be found within the journey of the Work of Ministry. This can be a powerful experience, an experience that helps us reach out to all people in a way that brings our life purpose and deep personal fulfilment. The Bible text for a recent midweek service came from Daniel

where we read: “and Daniel was purposed within his heart.” I hope that our Mission Statement can provide us with a renewed sense of purpose and that each member will find their place to express it with the full power and confidence of the Holy Spirit.

**Reaching out as a servant leader.** The Mission Statement concludes with a reference to the joy of serving. This brings us full circle to our cultural objective of not only living like Christ, but leading like Christ. He was the epitome of a servant leader. Despite having ultimate power and the greatest claim to entitlement, Christ dedicated Himself to the humblest path of servant hood for the benefit of all humanity. When teaching His disciples, He advised them that “the greatest among you will be the servant of all.” This is the model for us as we edify the body of Christ. It is a beautiful balance when we can serve with the full power and confidence of the Holy Spirit combined with the humility of a servant leader. Then it is easy for all to feel the love of God reaching into their lives. -LRK

## A CHURCH IN WHICH PEOPLE

FEEL AT HOME...

One more thought regarding this phrase from our Vision Statement: On the one hand, we may not feel at home within our congregation because of the various changes or adjustments that are taking place. *I don't feel at home with more contemporary music, or congregational singing, or the manner in which the Sunday School is being taught, or, or...*

But let us look at this expression a little more closely. The word “I” is problematic. Our VISION says a **church** in which **people** feel at home. Thus it becomes a collaborative effort to feel at home. For example, when two people marry, each formerly felt at home in their own living conditions, styles, habits, etc. Now, however, they must work together to build a new “at home” feeling that fits them as a couple. This evolves again if children come, so that the family feels at home together. A congregation is more complex yet, it is an entire community of believers. An individual cannot remain isolated and insensitive to those around them and expect to feel at home within this community. It is incumbent upon me to work together with the whole family of my congregation to be at home and in peace in the presence of Christ.

After all, we must remember it truly is His home! The more we grow in Him, the more we feel at home with Him and with all those whom He loves. Hence this simple expression gives cause for a fair amount of struggling and adjustment prompted by the love and thankfulness we have for the Lord. -LRK



# SHARING OUR STORIES...

In this edition of the Vision newsletter, we would like to introduce a feature that may run from time to time highlighting interesting success stories from around the NAC-USA District. We hope that these stories will share joy and inspire new thoughts. Please feel free to contribute your own success stories for publication. Send them via email to [communications@nac-usa.org](mailto:communications@nac-usa.org).

***From across the domestic district*** we have some nice news to share regarding the growth of our congregations. To date in 2013, 208 souls have received the gift of the Holy Spirit from our apostles and welcomed into our fellowship. Every sealing represents the beautiful and personal story of one soul's journey to find salvation in Jesus Christ. Please note that by reporting this statistic we do not wish to emphasize numbers nor create a competition for statistical results. Rather, these events represent the evidence of health in our congregations and are reason for joy.

***From Long Island, New York*** we hear of the regular planning meetings held by the Shared Leadership Team in anticipation of the beginning of the new Woodbury flagship congregation. The team, comprised of members and ministers from all three of the congregations that will form the new congregation, is organized around the four objectives of congregational health: culture, divine service experience, pastoral care and structure. They are working diligently to staff the many congregational leadership roles necessary to care for the more than 250 members who will attend.

***From the Pennsylvania District*** we hear of an interesting application of the Work of Ministry. Some confirmation classes integrated the Work of Ministry materials into the class curriculum. In this way, the students discovered their spiritual gifts and discussed how they would integrate them into the congregation upon confirmation. In fact, prior to their confirmation day, they designed special projects whereby they could serve their congregation using their gifts and passions. For example, one young brother used his gift of hospitality by cooking and organizing "theme dinner" fellowships for the congregation, while a young sister combined her gift of creative communication with her passion for crafts and took over the bulletin boards. They then reported on their project in a final presentation to the congregation.

Last year, congregations around the country participated in “Operation Christmas Child” (OCC), a ministry of Samaritan’s Purse. OCC delivers shoeboxes filled with school supplies, hygiene items, and toys to hurting children around the world.

The boxes are distributed at Churches, schools, hospitals, orphanages, refugee centers and sometimes at disaster relief centers throughout the world. Earlier this year, a family from a New Apostolic congregation in New Jersey that participated last year received a wonderful note in the mail. It was a note from the receiving family in Zambia thanking them for the package and also letting this New Jersey family know that they too were New Apostolic! It was reassuring to know there is an additional connection with those that are receiving these packages.

The mission of OCC is to demonstrate God’s love in a tangible way to needy children around the world and together with the local church worldwide, to share the Good News of Jesus Christ. For more information on Operation Christmas Child, or to get involved this year, please contact [ChildrenWG@nac-usa.org](mailto:ChildrenWG@nac-usa.org)



**And, lastly, from Dunkirk New York**

we have the story of Beth. Beth has a passion for “reaching out” and a conviction that God has called her to create a place where she can serve the needs of her community and be an outlet for the love of God. Over the past year she has worked diligently to open the doors to “The Country Cupboard,” an outlet for donated second hand goods. She uses a unique system of exchange to stock her store and trade items needed by members of the community, all the while communicating a warm message of God’s mercy and compassion and His love for all people. Beth has worked closely with the broader Christian community in her area as well as some government agencies to provide goods, information and a location for needed community services. While she freely admits that she is not an experienced business person, she professes of many experiences where God has provided wonderfully and her outreach continues to gain momentum week by week.

# VENEZUELA YOUTH DAY

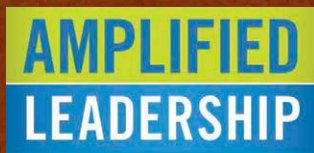
During the first week of August, District Apostle Kolb traveled to Venezuela for a national youth day. The event started on Thursday with a service in Temblador, attended by 900 members. Saturday was filled with seminars for the young people. The first seminar introduced the Work of Ministry initiative. Books were handed out as a tool and the youth were encouraged to discover their spiritual gifts, passions, and serving styles in order to better serve the body of Christ.

Sunday's service was based on 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3 and the District Apostle outlined what it means to strengthen our individual work of faith, work of love, and patience. Over 650 youth participated in this event. Before leaving Venezuela, District Apostle Kolb held another service on Wednesday night in the city of Caracas. This service was based on Ephesians 6:11.



# PILLAR AND FLAGSHIP RECTOR WEEKEND

This year's pillar conference will take place in Detroit from October 18-20. The theme for the conference will be "Amplified Leadership" and will coincide with a conference for flagship rectors that were invited to participate from around the country.



# THEOLOGY MEETING

The international theology group meets yearly to discuss various forms of analysis and argument (philosophical, ethnographic, historical, spiritual and others) to help understand, explain, defend or promote various religious topics. In addition to the New Apostolic Church International's full time theologian(s), the group is made of apostles, bishops, and other representatives from around the world.

These meetings and discussions help ensure that the New Apostolic Church's stances and understandings of spiritual topics are theologically sound and biblically grounded. The group met this summer in Ontario, Canada and among the topics discussed were: the soul, the return of Christ, John the Baptist, and the 1,000 year kingdom of peace.



## 2013 SYNOD

During the last weekend in September, the members of the national synod met in Chicago for their yearly meeting. This group is made up of the district leaders from around the country, as well as the apostles and bishops. They meet yearly to vote on various constitutional items as well as discuss spiritual concepts and upcoming events and initiatives.



## CHIEF APOSTLE IN NIAGARA FALLS

Chief Apostle Schneider's first visit to North America will take place on October 12-13 in Niagara Falls, Canada. All members from Canada and the United States were invited to attend both the concert on Saturday night and the service on Sunday which will be held at the Scotiabank Centre. More information can be found online by visiting the page on our website - [www.nac-usa.org](http://www.nac-usa.org).



## INTERNATIONAL CHURCH DAY

On June 6, 2014, the International Church Convention of the New Apostolic Church (ICC) will be declared open in Munich. For the first time the New Apostolic Church International organizes such a great event to which all Church members and guests are cordially invited.

On the event grounds, the Olympic Park in Munich, more than 50,000 participants from Germany, Europe and overseas are expected from June 6 - 8, 2014. On the three days of the event a varied program with lectures, workshops, music, exhibitions, discussion forums, etc., will be offered.

All members are invited to attend, however all logistics, travel, and expenses are the responsibility of the participants.

For more information, and to register for the event, please visit [www.nac-usa.org](http://www.nac-usa.org) and click on the banner.



# TITHING

## A THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Below please find the continuation of the Offering and Sacrifice article from last quarter, written by our New Apostolic Church International theologian, Dr. Reinhard Kiefer. This portion focuses on tithing. -LRK

### **The Tenth (Tithing)**

Tithing is referenced to in the Old and New Testaments. However, in the New Testament tithing is neither explicitly requested nor extensively commented on (cf. Mt 23:23, Lk 11:42, Luke 18:12, Heb 7:1 to 10). Tithing has also prevailed within the Christian congregations of most denominations, albeit in very different shapes, to this day. Tithing serves to maintain the congregation and its development. This also includes the payment of ministers who can no longer exercise their civil profession because they are employed by the church.

In the Catholic Apostolic Church a clear distinction has been made between tithes and offerings. Whilst the tithings served towards the support of the ministers, voluntary offerings should be given to the church for other tasks. The necessity of tithes in the new covenant/testament has been highlighted, among other things in Hebrews 7:1-10. If already Abram gave the Highpriestly-King Melchizedek a tenth, how much more it is necessary that Christians give Christ these tithes.

Tithing is also used in our church to finance the church buildings and the church organization. When we tithe, we express our desire to participate in a church that can exercise its mission. In this respect, we also understand tithing in connection with Rom 12:1, because it is an expression of man's devotion to God and the gratitude toward God for the establishing of the church and the ministers active therein. - R. Kiefer



# Our History

The Buffalo District began in the city of Buffalo, NY in 1896 when Chief Apostle Krebs sent two priests, Pr. Hockstra and Pr. Ermonis from Hamburg, Germany to Buffalo. Priest Ermonis and Pr. Hockstra walked many, many miles in the course of the day witnessing Jesus Christ and the ministry of apostles.

Due to a tragic fire that destroyed the home of Priest Siegler, where services were taking place, the small group was forced to move to a hall on Fillmore Avenue. As membership increased it became necessary in 1902 to move to a larger hall on Walden Avenue where approximately 25 souls were added to the congregation under the leadership of the then District Elder Freudenberg.

As the work was beginning in Buffalo, Priest Hugo Schreiner was sent to Rochester from New York City to help develop a congregation there.

In 1929, services began to be conducted in the home of Shepherd Paul Kies in the city of Batavia. As Buffalo, Rochester, and Batavia are located in geographical proximity, the Apostle arranged it so that District Elder Runge would care for all three congregations. This was the beginning of the Buffalo District.

In 1931, District Elder Ewald Hiby was transferred to Buffalo and served as District Elder until 1938. During those years, the Ebenezer congregation was established (1935)

and work begun in Syracuse and Cattaraugus, as well as in Erie, PA. In 1938, District Elder Hiby was transferred to Chicago and District Elder Carl Kirschler was sent to Buffalo from New York City. At this time, there were six established congregations in the district.



Between 1938 and 1958, many more congregations were added to the district.

In October of 1955, the contract for the land at 314 Pine Ridge Road was signed, and construction began on the building that is now the Buffalo church. On October 7, 1956 the building was officially dedicated with the main auditorium seating at 256.

By 1958, the district consisted of 19 congregations stretching geographically from Buffalo to Cortland on the east and to Pittsburgh, PA in the south. In 1958 District Elder Kirschler passed away after a long and serious illness.

In the late 1950's, Carl Meisner from Rochester was selected to become District Evangelist and shortly thereafter became the District Elder. During this time the district grew to include congregations as far as Columbus, Ohio.

In 1984, when District Elder Meisner retired, the congregations in the most eastern end of the district were combined with some congregations from the New York District to form the Upstate District. Congregations in the west and south combined to form the Erie District. The Buffalo District had in effect become three separate districts.

The Buffalo congregation is considered to be one of the original New Apostolic congregations started in the United States and continues to be a flagship congregation for the surrounding areas.





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# YEAR END SCHEDULE

<b>Sunday, December 22</b>	Morning divine service
<b>Wednesday, December 25</b>	Christmas Day - morning divine service
<b>Sunday, December 29</b>	Closing of the Year - morning divine service
<b>Wednesday, December 31</b>	No divine service
<b>Thursday, January 1</b>	No divine service
<b>Sunday, January 5</b>	Morning divine service