

Health, growth, completion

Vision



New Apostolic Church USA

District News

www.nac-usa.org

Spring 2014

Dear brothers and sisters,

The winter has been cold, long, and difficult. In such an environment, we can become depressed, disillusioned, and despondent as we struggle our way through the snow and ice. For this reason in this spring edition, we will present some good news and reports that I hope will encourage us and lift our spirits.

First off, let us remember our motto for this year – **Labor in love!** May the warm love of Jesus Christ create in our hearts and in our congregations an environment and culture of love, kindness, and understanding. This is possible because, as the Apostle Paul said in Romans 5:5, the love of God is poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

Second, we highlight the visit of our Chief Apostle in February. He conducted a memorial service for Dorothea [Dottie] Freund and comforted the Freund family and the congregation in Alexandria, Virginia. After traveling to Miami, he conducted a Pan American Apostle Conference with all of the apostles of the Americas. The weekend also included a worship evening and the Sunday divine service.

Another year beginning highlight is the dedication of three new flagship congregations in January – Woodbury, NY, Schaumburg, IL, and Ann Arbor, MI. Late last year a church in Crow Agency, MT was dedicated which was primarily built by the local brothers. As this is being published, Houston will also be added to this list.

A considerable effort was made by the apostles, bishops, and district leaders, as well as the administrative team, to launch our new midweek initiative. Already now, a number of congregations have begun this new program.

Spring brings renewal and the celebration of confirmation. As we witness our confirmands making their vows to the Lord, we also want to renew our commitment to Christ to remain in His love, seek His grace, and keep the faith. We remember the words of the Chief Apostle, “We want to be saved together!”

With loving greetings,



2014 HIGHLIGHTS

"...different tools, methods, and workers, are needed for different phases of building God's temple but it still remains according to the plan of God... we are fighting and praying to make sure that the will of our Lord Jesus is done in His work."
-Chief Apostle Schneider, Niagara Falls Canada, 2013

This quote from the sermon of our Chief Apostle is an excellent starting point for our first Vision article of 2014. As our journey towards congregational health and growth continues across the NAC-USA district, we are happy to report progress toward our goals in a number of areas. But before sharing our report, it is good to reflect on the words of our Chief Apostle and remind ourselves of why we are "stepping forward" so decisively.

We are in a different phase of God's plan, but it is still His plan. It is our daily task to fight and pray to understand the will of the Lord Jesus firstly within our individual lives and then collectively within the direction of our church. For this we engage the constant direction of the Holy Spirit. But the direction of the Holy Spirit is incomplete within our lives unless we are sufficiently courageous to take the action and make the changes that transform us. We must be equipped with the tools and methods that are right for this phase of God's plan and likewise, we must emerge as workers and disciples for Christ.

So as we take the next steps of our journey together in 2014, let us be reminded of our goal: We must build healthy, growing congregations where we are prepared for the return of Jesus. Our objectives leading us to this goal remain the same:

- To improve the quality of our divine services.
- To improve the quality of our pastoral care.
- To create a culture of discipleship and continuous learning; how to live and lead like Jesus Christ.

- To create a sustainable structure where all members serve each other and edify the Body of Christ with their spiritual gifts.

We are happy to share progress in two key areas that will impact our ability to reach these milestones. The first area is the creation of flagship congregations and the second area is the new direction of our midweek experience.

NEW CONGREGATIONS

As previously described in past editions of the Vision newsletter, the creation of flagship congregations is an intentional reversal of our past expansion into small decentralized locations. Where possible, we are creating new congregations of strength and scope via the union of existing ones. The new congregations are centralized and bring the maximum number of members together on the Sunday divine service as is possible. The intent is to enhance the experience of preaching, music, worship, and Holy Communion with Jesus Christ for every member and age group. The larger numbers also enhance the possibilities for meaningful pastoral care among our key age groups of children, youth, young families, and seniors. The concept of an enhanced community of believers reflects the teaching of our Chief Apostle in his recent sermon in Miami: "We want to be saved together."

The formation of a flagship congregation is a huge and exciting ongoing process. It requires much planning and preparation to ensure that the new congregation reaches its full potential. Most of the preparation involves the wonderful personal journey of the members to explore their calling and purpose within the Body of Christ and then to come together to form a new congregation that has the power and resources to more effectively transform lives to Jesus. Some of the preparation revolves around a new building as you will see in the accompanying photos.

In January, 2014 a number of new flagship congregations were dedicated.

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WORDS FROM OUR CHIEF APOSTLE

The Chief Apostle's recent sermons in Niagara Falls and Miami contained some new understandings that I would like to highlight. Please create opportunities to discuss these concepts within your congregational settings. - LRK

CHIEF APOSTLE SCHNEIDER IN NIAGARA FALLS

The Apostle Paul compared the Church with the temple saying that God builds the temple, He builds the Church. It's a nice image and we have to think about when you are building a house. You do not use the same workers and the same tools to lay the foundation then when you build the walls or when you paint them or when you fit the lights inside the rooms. It's not the same worker, it's not the same skill needed and you do not use the same tools.

So somebody may be disoriented saying, "Oh everything changed because in the time of District Apostle Kraus it was absolutely different." The methods were different, the doctrine was different and so on. For sure building goes on. We are not in the time of the foundation now, we are in the time of the completion. We do not use the same workers and we do not use the same tools. But what's important? It's still the temple of God. It's still God's work and it's my task as a Chief Apostle, it's a task of the District Apostles, to make sure that everything goes according to the plans of God. Because He established the plan of the Church, He established the plan of the building of the temple.

It's our responsibility to make sure that everything is done according to the plans of God using the methods of the Holy Spirit. That was the reason and the content of the meetings that we had last week. Just to make sure that all is done according to the plan of God and everything is inspired by the Holy Spirit. And I tell you we are fighting and praying for that to make sure that the will of our Lord Jesus is done in His work. Again I tell you that the Lord Jesus will complete His work in North America too. We believe it and we'll experience it shortly.

Holy Communion for the departed:

It's a wonderful feeling to celebrate Holy Communion with our departed; with our brothers and sisters from the yonder world. Together we celebrate the victory of Christ over death. They do not just belong to the past. They belong to our present. They are here. When we look back to the past we are thankful and I'd like to use the opportunity given to me today to express on your

behalf
o u r
gratitude for their
labour, for their victories,
for their prayers, for the great
deeds they did in the past. But
I'd like also to rejoice with them in the
yonder world by telling us don't forget that
those who were faithful are still faithful. They
didn't stop going towards Jesus Christ. They didn't stop
walking on the way leading to eternal life. Sometimes
we see them as they were when they left, when they
passed away and then the thought comes, "oh what
would they say if they would see what happens today",
because in our mind they still remain as they were.
Brothers and Sisters, our fathers and mothers are
faithful, they are in the service, they listen to the word
of God and you know what? They follow the word of
God. And they do what the Holy Spirit tells them to
do. That's my confidence in our fathers and mothers,
in those who go before. They didn't stop at the point
they were when they passed away. They go on. They
follow the preaching and the words of God today. So if
we would ask them what do you think about this? They
would say, I agree with the Holy Spirit as they always
said.

Let's change our mind about our predecessors, about
our mothers and fathers. That will be a special joy
to them if we stop considering them as they were
and consider that they go forward as we go forward.
They belong to the present time of the church, of
the word of salvation and together we prepare for
the future, together we want to go to our Lord Jesus
Christ. Remember Moses and Elijah on the mount of
transfiguration? They didn't talk about the past, they
talked about the future and that's the way our brothers
and sisters do in the yonder world. They talk about
our future, their future. It happens that it's exactly the
same. They pray for us and we pray for them. That's
our joy and that's our trust in the future. That's why we
are confident for the future. We will meet again.

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2014 HIGHLIGHTS

Woodbury, New York: The new Woodbury congregation is located on Long Island, NY. It was formed by the union of the Bayside, Dix Hills, St. James, and Uniondale congregations. Currently, 250 members attend on a Sunday morning. There are some unique attributes of this location.

- **Business Park location:** The church was built within a nontraditional location conveniently located at the intersection of major expressways. Businesses within the office park employ over 10,000 people during the work day hours.
- **Day time utilization/Conference Center:** The attractive new building has multiple uses. In addition to our worship and teaching space, the facility has extensive conference center and office capabilities to allow us to interact in a positive way within the local community as well as provide the opportunity for additional daytime utilization.



Chicago (Schaumburg): This new congregation was created by the union of six existing Chicago congregations. Currently, 300 members attend on a Sunday morning. The congregation gathers in a leased facility also within an office park. The open configuration has been converted to separate worship and gathering space. The offices have been converted to Sunday school classrooms, music rooms, and a dedicated youth space. The entire facility is located on one floor with ample room for gathering and fellowship. All landscaping, washrooms which are in a common space, maintenance and snow removal is cared for by the landlord.





Ann Arbor, Michigan: Likewise, the new Ann Arbor congregation dedicated leased space within an office park on January 5th. It was formed by the union of 3 congregations. The new congregation has also converted open space to an interesting configuration where 120 members gather on a Sunday morning.



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Charitable Ministry OFFICIALLY REGISTERED



After more than a year of preparations, January 1st 2014 saw the official launch of the new charity of the New Apostolic Church USA – re Charitable Ministry. re Charitable Ministry will continue the work of the NAC USA World Relief Fund, which primarily focused on disaster relief, and also expand these efforts, either directly or in cooperation with other charitable and humanitarian organizations around the world.

As indicated in the name, re Charitable Ministry will have a more personal, ‘ministry’-focused approach to charity, reflecting our growing understanding of the Gospel. Jesus Christ commanded us to love our neighbor as ourselves. Often, however, the question of how to put this into action is more challenging. In the 2nd Chapter of James we find a very practical overview of the close and inseparable connection between faith and charitable deeds (verses 14 to 20). Where such a culture of charity already exists, re Charitable Ministry intends to support members in their congregations and communities in continuing to show love towards their neighbors within, and in particular outside, of our church. In other instances, re Charitable Ministry invites those who desire to engage in meaningful charity to join in a journey of discovery and learning. Ultimately, charity should not be something that is done on a ‘project’ basis once or twice a year – but something that is a key part of the fabric of our faith and our striving to live like Christ.

Charity must reach those we intend to help in a meaningful, lasting and transforming way. This is reflected in the underlying core values of re Charitable Ministry:

- **Recognize:** We recognize that every person is created in the image of God. Because of this realization we recognize the need to create a relationship with the people we serve in order to determine their need and work to serve them effectively.
- **Respond:** Jesus came to “proclaim good news...bind up the brokenhearted...proclaim freedom...and comfort all who mourn.” (Isaiah 61:1-3) We respond to His call to serve in the same way.
- **Relieve and Restore:** We strive to relieve people’s physical needs and work to restore and strengthen people spiritually.
- **Renew:** As we work to relieve and restore people, the result is a reciprocal faith, hope and feeling of excitement. This work brings us to new perspectives and a renewed relationship with Christ.

Following the thoughts described in our Winter 2013 Vision Newsletter, re Charitable Ministry will be one of the outward expressions of our faith journey.

Through its Humanitarian Projects Program re Charitable Ministry offers interested participants the opportunity to experience carefully selected charity projects, within as well as outside of the United States. Typically ranging in length from a couple of days to a week, these projects have a clearly defined deliverable for our recipients. Complemented by group discussions and devotional evenings, this program intends to **equip** our participants to become active in local charity once they return home.

True charity starts and takes place at home! re Charitable Ministry aims to have charity **emerge** in our local congregations as a key expression of our faith. Unlike the re Humanitarian Projects Program, our re Grassroots Program does not 'offer' projects, but is entirely built and dependent on the pro-activeness of our local members. Micro Grants are available, where needed, to take the all-important first steps.

Where charity is becoming part of our congregational and personal lives it will invariably **engage** others, not just for a weekend once or twice a year, but continuously. Relationships are being formed, opportunities for faith experiences are being created, and transformation and renewal are taking place on an ongoing basis. Each year, a limited number of Annual Grants are available to support selected projects around the United States where our members take the initiative and commit themselves and their local teams to long-term charity engagements.

In all these activities it is the objective and desire to **edify** God. True charity towards others is not about how we feel in the end or whether it has a direct, measurable impact on our congregational attendance. True charity should be done, without hesitation

or calculation, simply because the Gospel encourages us to!

While affiliated with the New Apostolic Church USA, re Charitable Ministry is intended to support itself independent from church offerings. Voluntary donations made directly to re Charitable Ministry, contributions by our participants as well as grants from third-party donors form the core of its financial support. Annual programs and grants offered by re Charitable Ministry will be based on available funding and full financial transparency will be provided. Over the course of the next year it is planned to register re Charitable Ministry on leading non-profit websites like CharityNavigator®

Later in 2014 the NAC USA World Relief Fund will merge into re Charitable Ministry and cease to exist. However, during disasters and catastrophes we will continue to support the church and community under our Disaster Relief program. As was the case in the past years, the church will continue to donate limited logistical and administrative support to re Charitable Ministry in order to minimize overhead expenses. Implementation of its core activities, in particular the re Humanitarian Projects Program as well as the re Grassroots Program, is accomplished by dedicated teams of volunteers. District Apostle Kolb and Apostle Thomas Schmidt will represent the church on the board of re Charitable Ministry.

re Charitable Ministry will grow organically, in line with its financial and volunteer resources, and will only expand carefully and deliberately over the next years to ensure the impact, sustainability and success of its activities.

For further information about re Charitable Ministry, details about its programs, available projects as well as application forms, please visit re.nac-usa.org or email us at re.charitableministry@nac-usa.org.



NEW MIDWEEK EXPERIENCE

Now it came to pass when Jesus finished commanding His twelve disciples that He departed from there to teach and to preach in their cities. -Matthew 11:1

In addition to the formation of flagship congregations, the district began its first steps in January 2014 toward a new midweek experience for all congregations. Where the Sunday divine service experience is all about the power of preaching within a central location, the new Midweek Experience is all about teaching and bringing the church closer to its members and their communities. It is an intentional effort to equip our brothers and sisters to engage and emerge as disciples of Jesus Christ.

To understand the direction of the new midweek experience, we must compare it to the Sunday Divine Service. Both are necessary for our spiritual transformation, but they accomplish different things. When we experience them together, the Sunday's powerful combination of Word and Sacrament and the Midweek's more intimate moments of teaching and pastoral sharing, we will be better equipped to live and share a life of Christian joy, to edify the body of Christ and ultimately to prepare ourselves for the return of Christ.

Sunday Divine Service: So let's review the template for the Sunday Divine service. The Sunday experience is centralized. We have adopted a policy of bringing the maximum number of members from a geographic region together as we can into one location. The Sunday morning allows for this. For most members, it does not involve the same pressures as the workday week. Traffic is generally reduced making the commute easier.

By combining our members and their strengths, talents and spiritual giftedness,

we maximize the quality of the experience for all. It revolves around organized communal worship coupled with a formalized sermon as prescribed by our New Apostolic Liturgy.

Within the sermon, ordained ministers authorized by an apostle of Jesus Christ and inspired by the Holy Spirit, preach the truth of God's Word that prepares the congregation for absolution and the joyous celebration of Holy Communion. The experience is a celebration of our love for God, His love for us and our love for one another. The celebration should be enhanced by the richness of the full congregation in all its manifestations: Preaching, music, worship, prayer, children, youth, young families, and seniors.

Finally, within the Sunday divine service we perceive the Holiness of God's Word. He is speaking to us and His Word is complete. It is one way communication. It comforts, restores and uplifts. It reveals the truth by which we can be changed and it brings us to repentance and reconciliation. Our Chief Apostle is quite adamant in his conviction; the preaching of the Word of God is required for the worthy celebration of Holy Communion.

The Midweek Experience: The importance of the new midweek experience is to connect or link the Sundays like a spiritual bridge. It will not attempt to duplicate the Sunday but should be the complement. The template for the midweek experience is found within the small intimate experiences of Jesus with His disciples as described within the Gospel. Here, the communication was two way. Jesus interacted with them. He responded to their questions and their need for clarification and support; often in a very personal way. He taught them.

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WORDS FROM OUR CHIEF APOSTLE

CHIEF APOSTLE SCHNEIDER IN MIAMI, FLORIDA

1 Thessalonians 4: 16–17 *For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.*



Dear brothers and sisters, let us be prepared for the return of Christ. We want to fulfill the prerequisites. We want to be in Christ, and we are in Christ with the rebirth of water and Spirit. We want to remain in Christ. Remain faithful in our faith; faith in God, faith in the return of Christ. We believe in the church. We believe in the apostle

ministry. We believe in the sacraments. We want to remain in love so that we can abide with God. And we are aware that we need grace. We have this strong desire. We want to become like Jesus and we suffer because we are not yet like Jesus. We ask for grace and we are humble towards God and towards our neighbor. They can be absolutely sure because God is good and Jesus is faithful. They will find grace.

The very last point, that's nice too, it says, "And they who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air." We are caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. What does it mean? The change Paul speaks about in another letter; we have to be changed. This change of the Bride of Christ will not take place on earth. It will take place in the air... In other terms, we cannot see it. Nobody can see it. The change of the Bride will take place in heaven somewhere. I do not know where, but I know something - I cannot see the Bride today. Sometimes people tell us, "You believe that's the Bride of Christ? Look at them, look what they are, look how they treat each other." But that's normal. I cannot see today the Bride with my eyes. The change will take place in the air, as Paul said. So, brothers and sisters, even if we cannot see the Bride because all of us are sinners and we remain sinners. I cannot see your longing for grace. I cannot see how you suffer because

you are not yet like Jesus, but I believe one thing: when the Lord will come, the Bride will be prepared. That's absolutely certain. My concern, our concern is we want to be part of it. If we remain in faith in Christ and we are longing for this grace, if we remain humble, I tell you, Jesus will return and He will catch us up with Him.

...We want to be saved together. I not only want to be saved myself, I want my brother and my sister to be saved with me. I want you to be with me in the eternal fellowship with God. That's also part of our New Apostolic faith. We do not want to be saved alone. We want our brother and sister to be saved with us. We want to be caught up together. That's the oneness of the people of God. May this strong desire go through the whole people of God in the United States and all of the countries served by your District Apostle. We want to be saved together. You know that will solve a lot of unnecessary problems. If all of us have this strong desire, whatever happens, whatever I have against my brother and my sister, the most important thing is I want him to be with me in heaven.



MEMORIAL SERVICE IN ALEXANDRIA, VA



PAN AMERICAN APOSTLE CONFERENCE IN MIAMI, FL



WORSHIP EVENING IN MIAMI, FL



DIVINE SERVICE IN MIAMI, FL



MEMORIAL SERVICE



PAN AMERICAN APOSTLE CONFERENCE



DIVINE SERVICE IN MIAMI, FL

EVERYONE HAS A STORY.

Since the Winter 2012 VISION newsletter, members have been encouraged to share their stories with each other in the congregations as well as on our website through our “What’s your story?” campaign. Throughout the year, experiences were shared on our website and our office received reports of people sharing their stories. By sharing their stories, people were able to get to know each other on a deeper level all while bringing glory to God and showing how He has orchestrated their journey of faith. To culminate our year of profession and our “What’s your story?” campaign, we would like to feature the story below, submitted by a young New Apostolic sister. This story was submitted as the context for the featured poem and demonstrates God’s merciful power and faithfulness as He guides us on the stepping stones that lead us to a deeper relationship with Christ.

Four years ago, I had just finished my first degree in college. I was busy with youth, pillars, choir, singing, directing, and playing for services. My life was busy and heading full steam ahead. Through a series of unfortunate happenings my ship came to a stalling halt, or so I thought. I found out that I had contracted a serious infection that almost took my life. The infection was responding to the medication but my health was being put through the gauntlet since I was allergic and my body was rejecting it. Going into what all transpired is not what is important. I also experienced blindness and the inability to walk during this time. The Apostle came to me when I became blind and prayed at my bedside, and a week later my eyesight returned. I went through one year of treatments and my ability to walk returned about four months into it. I found out I had one more obstacle to tackle and that was the word most people fear. At that time, God had built me an arsenal of the best doctors I had met during my time, I knew God hadn’t lead me so patiently over the previous two years to not see me through this last trial. By God’s grace I am healthier than ever. During the three years this took place God was allowing me to be made new. When you think of a cure you want it to be quick and fix the problem, but with healing there is a process. So it is with our faith.

This poem I began when I found out at the beginning of these complications with my health. I finished four years later after I walked my journey hand in hand with our Heavenly Father. I had no guarantees I would become healthy again but I held tightly to my faith and the word, “you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good.” Dear friends when we are permitted to walk down stony

and narrow paths in our lives and may think; this can’t be what the Lord had planned for me, we become scared or unsure. In moments of strife you may be tempted to ask the question, why me? The real question is, why not me? Did our Lord not labor over us and continues to labor along with us to see us transformed into the bride? Each stone along our path leads us closer to our goal of faith, these are our stepping stones but in order to reach that great day it is sometimes necessary to go through moments that try us in the fire. The experiences we face in those times may seem unpleasant but when we come out of that fire we are then able to shine brighter and purer. Our stories shape us and allow us to share and uplift one another when we face a situation that may sometimes be unpleasant. However, remember we are not our stories, they are a mere moments in time in which God permitted our spiritual growth and regardless of the outcome we have the promise that God will make all things new. We as His children are unique and precious, He knows what we face and He knows the secret thoughts and desires of our hearts. Always trust our Heavenly Father is right there pulling us along to our completion. I was permitted to see many things through this journey and I can reassure you our angels and loved ones from the beyond are also at our side. What I have personally lived through inspired me to write this poem.

The time of the Lord’s return is imminent and before God’s completion we must have internal transformation and renewing of this continual growth. Let’s keep in mind the Lord holds you and me in His hands and with Him we will see this great day soon.

I heard it! Can it be? A sound so glorious, so alive and free,
Is everyone ready? My heart's beating fast -
We knew this day would come.
But why do I see faces gloomy, scared, numb?
It's not too late - quick! Tell Him how much you cared;
Though you ignored the signs...
And the burdens you carried; all in His time!
Hurry! Yell it out! You're losing time. We're losing ground!

And that sound! What a glorious sound!
What do you mean you don't hear?
Listen with your heart and all of your soul;
That was your greatest power all along you know!
He urged us to keep moving forward, never draw back,
To keep ourselves and release all negative and bad.
Yes I know you're been through a lot, and so have I,
But all will erase with one glance of His eye.
He's held you in His arms close and tight,
While sometimes you wondered, Can I face the day?
He was always there guiding your way.

Yes you're hearing right, don't you see?
That sound has been His voice calling all along to you and me.
He speaks to us as one, yes; but to each it sounds a little differently.
It's up to you to decode your message.
There in your heart is where you two meet.
Take this new joy, He gives it freely. Send it on to the next.
For there is still a little time, and others need a chance.

Our time here has been our learning plight;
Every trial added another feather.
Soon we will homeward fly,
A diamond, a ruby, there is no measure,
He has labored much,
His children, they are His treasure!
But it is up to us to complete our crown,
For soon we will hear that glorious sound.





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NEW MIDWEEK EXPERIENCE

This two way communication or interactive model also provides the opportunity for our members to share the promptings of the Holy Spirit and profess the effect of the Gospel within their lives. On this subject, the Chief Apostle was also very clear. In a recent sermon in Brisbane, Australia he said the following:

“It is my wish that we talk a little bit more about our faith...I wish that the New Apostolic Christians would talk more about God, about the deeds of God, about the grace for God, about our experience with Him, about all the things He does for us. Let us give the Holy Spirit more room in our conversations...”

..When we talk about the deeds of God... we learn what God has done for our brother and our sister. And then we realize how good, how kind, and how powerful God is and we feel a need to praise Him. Then our gratitude will grow...”

So in summary, it is our intent to dedicate the midweek experience to these very special opportunities:

- Teaching
- Prayer
- Pastoral support
- Profession
- Sharing the Gospel with our community
- Worship

You will find a more detailed description of the options available to each congregation on our website. Your rector will discuss these options with you and create a plan to implement them in your congregation. Please take the time to investigate them fully and embrace the experience with an open heart. In all new endeavors, faith, courage and effort are required to make the vision become a reality. Once again, “we are fighting and praying to make sure that the will of our Lord Jesus is done in His work”.
- LRK