



Dear brothers and sisters,

We are rich in Christ! This is our theme for 2019.

I would like to focus this letter on one aspect of this wealth – the many ministers in our congregations. Nearly all of our servants are lay-ministers, i.e. unpaid by the church for their ministerial activity. Their driving motivation is the love they have for Christ and for those who Christ loves. Hence, they give many hours of their lives to serve in manifold ways in our congregations, setting aside time from their families, professions, and personal lives. It is a noble calling to serve in ministry, notwithstanding, it also requires a sacrifice, which at times is neither understood, nor appreciated.

From time to time, I have received complaints that “my minister *never* visits me” or “he is not available during the day for my calls.” Brothers and sisters, do you realize that these servants must balance all the elements of their lives in an environment completely different from the one that we lived in during the 60’s, 70’s, and 80’s? The professional demands of their time are far more onerous and the increased pressures, wrought by the advancing technologies, are at times, unbearable. Just a few examples:

- Emails demand replies in minutes in comparison to letters, which took days or even weeks to arrive, let alone be answered and returned.
- Before cell phones were common, we would call home or office phones and if the person was not there, we would simply wait until later that day, or the next day to call them back. Now, with most people owning a cell phone, we expect that our calls are answered immediately and 24 hours a day.

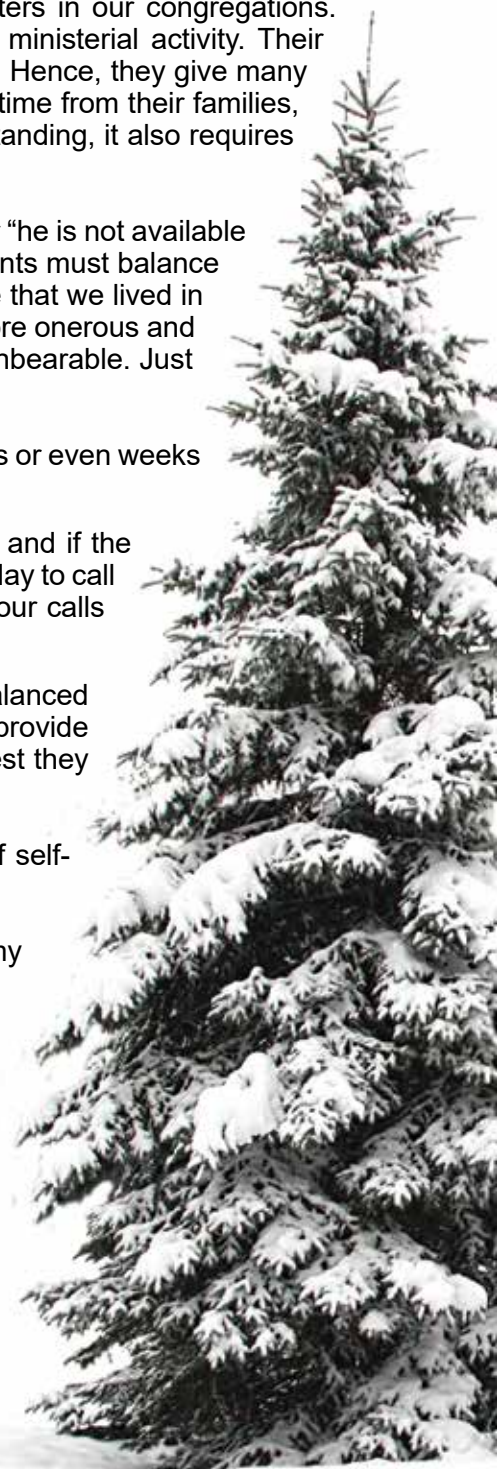
I believe that for our ministers to serve Christ effectively, they must have a balanced life between family, careers, personal life, and ministry. Our ministers want to provide pastoral care for you in the love of Christ, and I believe that they try to do the best they can. But as members, we cannot have unreasonable expectations of them.

Let’s reflect back to an understanding brought to us by Chief Apostle Urwyler of self-responsibility. It is important that every Christian recognizes that:

- I am solely responsible for my soul’s welfare and more importantly, my relationship with Jesus Christ.
- The word of James 5:16 – *The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man [believer] avails much...* means that all sincere prayers are accepted before God. The Chief Apostle Leber said, quite openly, that his prayers were not of higher merit than another’s.
- God has provided me servants to *help along the way*. They are not here as a crutch or to make my decisions for me, but rather to pray that the Holy Spirit may guide my path according to the Lord’s will.

Serving Christ will never be convenient – it always requires a sacrifice. Let’s support and care for our ministers, as they care for us, and express our gratitude to God for these gifts in our congregations!

With love,





LAODICEA

Rich or Poor?

In the last book of the New Testament, Revelation, Jesus reveals to the Apostle John insights that were not just for the believers and churches of that time, but are also for the churches that exist now. The Scripture reads in Revelation 2:7 – *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.* This letter is both apocalyptic (revealing) and prophetic in that it reveals God’s perspective on events in the present and the future. Therefore, what was revealed to the world through it calls the people of Christ to obey Him in the present and to trust Him in the future.

We will focus in on what was said to the church in Laodicea and utilize their instruction and the promises made to them to encourage us as we strive to live a victorious life in Jesus Christ.

REVELATION 3:14-22

In Revelation 3:14-22, John writes: *And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, “These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: ‘I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, “I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing” – and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked – I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcome and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”*

The believers are assured at the start that the One who is saying this to them is the resurrected, glorified Creator of everything, the ruler of God’s creation. He knows them and their works. What is written next may seem odd or make little sense to

us today, but for the believers in Laodicea at that time, the meaning of what was said to them would have been very clear. To help our understanding, we need to know a few things about Laodicea.

WATER SUPPLY

First is its location. Laodicea was located in Asia Minor where two key trade routes intersected. While this brought the city many benefits, one major liability this location had was that the city had no native water supply, so they had to convey in water from an outside source. By the time the water made its way into the city, it was neither hot nor cold; it was lukewarm. Lukewarm water is of little use to anyone. It’s not refreshing to drink and it’s not useful for medicinal purposes. On the other hand, the two cities that neighbored Laodicea, Hierapolis and Colossae, both had useful water supplies. To the north in Hierapolis, they were known for their hot freshwater springs, which were of great help to those seeking healing for their physical ailments. And to the south was Colossae, which was known for its pure cold water, which was cool and refreshing to drink. So the people of Laodicea were well aware of the inferiority of their water and how useless it was when compared to the natural resources their neighbors enjoyed.

FINANCIAL WEALTH

Second, Laodicea was a very wealthy city, one of the wealthiest in the world at that time. It was known for its banking and financial institutions. Currency changing was a common occupation. The city had its own coins. Its people were very wealthy, so much so that when an earthquake devastated the city in AD 61, the people didn’t need financial assistance from the Roman government to rebuild. They were able to recover using their own resources.

WOOL CLOTH

Third, Laodicea was a clothing manufacturer and was known for their black wool tunics named *trimira*. The city was famous for this black clothing that they produced with soft, glossy wool. This clothing was coveted by the wealthy at that time and people traveled from other parts of Asia Minor to purchase it.

HEALING OINTMENTS

And fourth, Laodicea was a distinguished medical center. They were known for their medical innovation because they had developed an eye salve that assisted those with vision impairments, and an ointment for ears that helped treat hearing loss. Again, people travelled to the city just to get these medical elixirs.

As you can imagine, their wealth, clothing, and medical innovations were a source of great pride for the people of Laodicea. With all of this information in mind, we again turn to what was said to them in Revelation.



The first few verses are words of correction. In verses 15 and 16, they are told that they have become lukewarm and their works are neither hot nor cold, both of which are useful, just in different ways. They had become repulsive to the Lord. With this illustration, their attitude of indifference and half-heartedness is being called out. The Lord wishes for them to be useful, not somewhere in the middle where they are useless to all because of their tepid spiritual indifference.

Verse 17 speaks to their wealth and the resulting attitude of not needing the help of others. This caused them to lose their spiritual focus and they failed to recognize that from God's perspective, they had really become *"wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked."* Though they were rich, they were poor in what mattered most. Though they could manufacture the most finest of clothing lines, they were naked when it came to putting on the righteousness of God. Though they could help people with their physical blindness, they had no remedy for their lack of spiritual sight. The Laodiceans had much, but they did not have what was necessary for their spiritual well-being.

Then in verses 18-20, they are given instruction on how to transform their lives so that they could become useful again to the Lord. In verse 18, Jesus simply asks them to turn their attention back to Him, and come to the door of grace to receive the riches of God, white garments to cover their nakedness, and eye salve so that their spiritual sight could be restored. These things – His grace, His knowledge, and our faith in Him – can only come from God. In verse 19, they are told how to receive the grace of God – with a repentant heart. They are reminded of the love God has for them and are directed to change their mind and their direction back to God. From verse 20, we can understand that the Lord had been pushed out of the church at Laodicea. But when the believers turn back in repentance, then the Lord would come to them and knock at the door. And when it is opened, He would re-enter.

The concluding verses tell the people of what they are promised when they follow the instructions that they have been given. The promise to those who faithfully follow and overcome is a place on the throne with Christ.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR US?

How can we as believers today utilize what was given in this letter to Laodicea? We must be watchful that we do not develop that same condition of indifference to God. In order for us to do our part to fulfill the mission of the church, we need to be either hot or cold, we cannot become lukewarm in our spiritual life. Today, the same attitude of "I have need of nothing" or "I don't need anyone's help" is as prevalent as it was in Laodicea. That's why it is critical for believers in Jesus to continually turn to Him with a willingness to grasp hold of the gift of grace, and through repentance, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we can grow into the new creation and do our part to edify the body of Christ and contribute to the community of believers. Take the time to introspectively check the condition of your faith and follow the instructions given by God, so that you can enjoy the promises to come and be a part of the victorious church. - LRK / MB



WE ARE RICH IN *Christ*

This is the transcript of Chief Apostle Schneider's New Year's message for 2019.

Dear brothers and sisters,

Welcome to the new year. It is my wish that we begin with the firm conviction expressed in the Psalm 23: *The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.*

Despite our worries, struggles, and fears, we can confidently declare that God is immensely rich:

rich in kindness, rich in patience, and rich in grace.

And God wants us to benefit from His wealth. We can share in this wealth – namely through Jesus Christ.

Dear brothers and sisters, for 2019, I propose that we focus on the following objective: let us be rich in Christ! Let us therefore caption this year with the motto: Rich in Christ!

What does this wealth consist of? How can we acquire it? Over the next few weeks and months, we will occupy ourselves with these questions. I am very curious to learn what ideas the Holy Spirit will awake in each one of us and in the congregations.

Beyond that, there is another element, which is of special significance for us: we can share our wealth in Christ with others without becoming poorer ourselves as a result. Let us share the wealth in Christ with our fellow human beings. This is not only a possibility or a need for us. In fact, it is our very purpose.

I wish you all a richly blessed year 2019!



NEW BAPTISMAL CHALICE

Holy Baptism only happens once in a believer's life. Baptism with water is the first and fundamental act of grace of the triune God for those who profess their faith in Jesus Christ. Through this sacrament, original sin is washed away and the believer enters into a relationship with God. It is through Holy Baptism that a person becomes a Christian and is brought into the church of Christ (CNAC 8.1). A person's life is transformed when they are baptized.

Because of the importance of this holy event, we are introducing a unique baptismal chalice for the sacrament, starting in 2019. This practice is common in other New Apostolic congregations around the world who also use a baptismal chalice that is distinct from the communion chalice.

Already when it stands on the altar, the baptismal chalice will signal to the congregation that today is a special day; a new believer is joining our community.

GLUTEN-FREE COMMUNION WAFERS

For those that suffer with Celiac disease, gluten-free communion wafers are available for Holy Communion. For those with this disease, it can be a health risk to be exposed to any gluten product, whether directly or indirectly. For this reason, the topic was discussed recently at the National Synod (October 2018) and an approved procedure was specified for dispensing the gluten-free wafers. Ministers who serve gluten-free communion wafers will wear an indicator and stand with the other communion servers.

Because the cost to produce the gluten-free wafers is 16 times more than the standard wafers, we ask that only those with Celiac disease take the gluten-free version.

If you need gluten-free communion wafers in your congregation, and/or to understand the serving procedure during Holy Communion that will take effect in 2019, please speak with your rector.



BUILDING UPDATES

BUFFALO

After many months of hard work, the Buffalo congregation now has a new church building located in Cheektowaga, New York. The building was dedicated in August, and celebrated the merging of the Buffalo, West Seneca, and Tonawanda congregations.



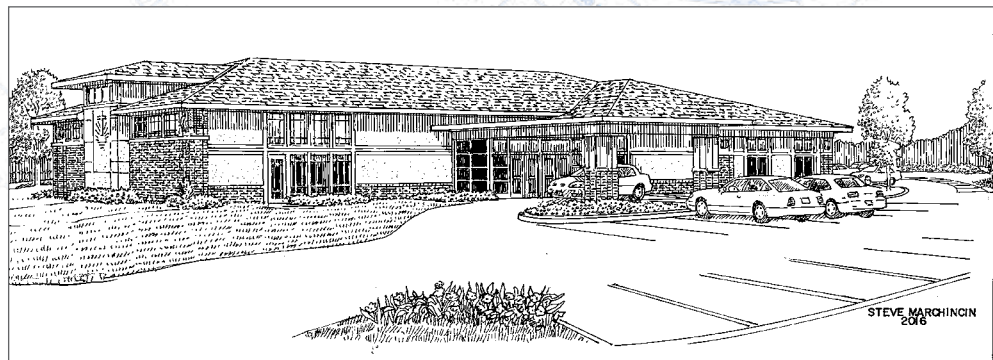
The work of the church was established in the Buffalo region in the late 1880's. The first congregation gathered in the city of Buffalo, where several families met in each other's homes for divine services. Around the beginning of the 1900s, the congregation moved to a hall on Fillmore Avenue. Here, the congregation grew, and began offering Sunday School and became known for their advanced musical program including an orchestra that played in the balcony. After another move to a larger hall, the first actual church building was purchased in 1904 on Hickory Street, where 30 families gathered for services. A new church on Pine Ridge Road was dedicated in 1956.



In 2007, the Buffalo Riverside congregation merged with the Buffalo congregation under the Stepping Forward movement. This allowed new developments to take place within the congregation, such as an enhanced children's ministry, a focus on worship and the divine service experience, and an effort to discover spiritual gifts so that all may contribute to congregational life. In 2010, the Grand Island congregation also merged with the Buffalo congregation.



The design of the new church building is inspired by the prairie style of Frank Lloyd Wright, as seen in the horizontal lines and simplicity of the structure. Steven Marchincin, who has consulted for the building program of the New Apostolic Church USA for the past 20 years, designed it. Sadly, it was the last project that he worked on, as he passed away unexpectedly in 2017.





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The Parables of Jesus

Why are these stories still relevant for our lives?

*Come join us for our small group series in **February!***

If you're not part of a small group, talk to your rector about joining or starting one!

