Health, growth, completion

Vision

New Apostolic Church
USA District News
www.nac-usa.org
Summer 2010

Witnessing Christ!

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

May the wonderful feast of Pentecost continue to resonate in all of our hearts. Truly the experience has touched our souls. The Pentecost message from our Chief Apostle can be applied to every circumstance in life. The Apostles and I want to share with you our impressions as "witnesses" to the divine service in Cape Town:

"At the end of our meeting on Friday, the Chief Apostle created a short service just for the apostles and celebrated Holy Communion with us. It was truly a moving moment to be in the circle of the ambassadors of Christ and to be able to commune with our Sender, the Lord Jesus."

"I was wonderfully impressed by the joy and enthusiasm of our South African brethren."

"To me, Cape Town embodies the text 'for the joy of the Lord is your strength' (Nehemiah 8:10). The brothers and sisters there live in this joy from month to month. They add song as the roof to accompany the four walls spoken of in Acts 2:42."

"Pentecost 2010 in Cape Town was a glimpse into heaven."

"They have set a gold standard for the expression of the joy and zeal of a New Apostolic Christian."

It is really wonderful to be a "witness" to the great experiences that the Lord gives us. Let us take up the equation which our Chief Apostle gave us: pray more intensely for power, so that we may have experiences which our Heavenly Father has prepared for us. Then we shall become "witnesses" of the work of Christ! Wishing you a safe and joyful summer.

With love,

Leonard R. Kolb

Shared Leadership

In previous Vision Newsletters published this year, the main article has focused upon our 2010 initiative called a Work of Ministry. Within this initiative, each member is encouraged to discover their unique God given calling and gifts of ministry by which they can edify the body of Christ. I have enjoyed traveling to various locations around the USA during the past 6 months and interacting with our brothers and sisters in Town Hall Meetings where we explored the beginnings of this new and exciting component of creating healthier congregations.

Have you asked our Heavenly Father to reveal the gifts of ministry He has given to you? Have you listened for His calling to serve Christ by serving others? I would encourage each one to begin this journey now in sincere prayer and inner reflection.

It is my firm belief that this initiative will help us create healthier congregations. The congregation of the future will need your unique calling to provide our brothers and sisters with a rich spiritual experience leading to our completion. However, our congregations must first prepare themselves for a change in perspective. One such change is the way we perceive our congregational rectors.

Currently, our culture contains a commonly held and deeply engrained expectation of congregational leadership. Over time we have evolved an unrealistic job description for our rectors. In our minds he must be the ultimate authority in every congregational decision; a person who is responsible for everything and everybody. Let us explore the effects of this further.

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Chief Apostle Visit

On September 5th, 2010, the Chief Apostle Leber will visit the United States to conduct a Divine service in Detroit, Michigan. All NAC-USA members are invited to attend this special Labor Day weekend event—no tickets or registration needed! Along with the apostles and bishops from the USA District, the apostles from Canada and Cape Town South Africa will be our guests for this event. The Bishop Freund, will also celebrate his retirement.

In conjunction with the Chief Apostle service, a National Rector's Conference will take place at the Detroit Marriott Renaissance from September 2-4. All rectors and district leaders are invited to attend. The event will feature an address by the Chief Apostle as well as the introduction of changes to our liturgy. There will be training workshops on a wide range of topics designed to assist our rectors in building healthy, growing congregations.

Furthermore, the conference will convene a synod to vote on changes to the NAC-USA district constitution. The new document will reflect the international NAC constitutional template and encourage enhanced transparency.

The Divine service, conducted by our Chief Apostle will be held at The Rock Financial Showplace in Novi, Michigan. We hope that you will take advantage of this unique and blessed opportunity to join together with the Chief Apostle and members from across the country for an extraordinary weekend.

Rooms at a discounted rate have been blocked off at the following nearby hotels: Baronette Renaissance, Courtyard by Marriott, Crowne Plaza Hotel, DoubleTree Hotel, Hilton Garden Inn, and TownePlace Suites by Marriott. For more information on hotels and attractions, please visit www.cadetroit2010.org. ✳

Updates on the World Relief Fund

While attending to the spiritual needs of members in the United States as well as in over 30 countries in East Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, Central America and the Pacific, NAC USA has encountered many humanitarian emergencies and catastrophes, both natural and man-made. In order to better respond to these events, District Apostle Freund created the NAC USA World Relief Fund, LLC (WRF) in 2006, to focus its humanitarian efforts and the resources needed for them.

As a separate entity from NAC USA, the WRF has a distinct, independent profile for the purpose of raising and attracting the funding needed for its projects, though its work is a living expression of the Church's Christian values. As a result, NAC USA allows that its own employees, administrative structure and volunteers are used to manage projects for the WRF, reducing the need to use donated funds to cover administrative overhead.

The WRF makes it a goal to ensure that the highest percentage possible of its funding is put to direct use in its projects. Besides relying on the administrative structure of NAC USA, it relies on volunteer participation by Church members and other non-members when implementing emergency and disaster relief projects within the geographic range of NAC USA domestic and international missionary work. For specifically chosen projects outside of this range, the WRF depends on partnerships with other organizations, for example the Church's NAK karitativ organization based in Europe.

Recent major projects of the WRF include: Peru Earthquake Relief—2007, Dominican Republic Hurricane Relief—2007, China Earthquake—2008, Kenya Drought Relief—2008, American/Western Samoa Tsunami Relief—2009, Kenya Civil Unrest Relief—2009, and Haiti Earthquake Relief—2010. ✳

Anyone wishing to make donations to the WRF may do so by sending a check payable to NAC USA World Relief Fund to:

New Apostolic Church USA
Attn: World Relief Fund
3753 North Troy Street
Chicago, IL 60618

Stepping Forward: The Phoenix Experience

The following article has been prepared by the Phoenix congregation communication team describing the evolution of a new congregation in the Phoenix area. As the article indicates, the congregation is enjoying a positive outcome and demonstrating the potential possible when we step forward towards congregational health. It must also be said that this process involved growing pains. The faith and commitment of the membership overcame many early obstacles. However, we can now see the tangible results of "serving Christ by serving others". We include this report in the hopes that it will be instructional and inspirational to all. Likewise, we welcome reports from your congregation in the spirit of sharing successes and challenges.

The Phoenix Experience

When our District Apostle Kolb asked us to "Step Forward" to build a modern congregation, we began assessing the tools and processes necessary to achieve this ideal. What does a modern congregation look like and how do you go about building one? What an exciting time to be a New Apostolic Christian. Although change seemed daunting at first, stepping forward and putting into motion activities and programs using God-given talents is clearly the appropriate direction for a Child of God and a congregation who recognizes and values the unique gifts they have been given. Here in a newly merged Phoenix-Metro Congregation we have initiated some new programs to aid in shaping our community into an environment where everyone willing has a role. The vision behind the modern congregation movement is becoming a reality in our spiritual home.

Here are some changes that have become staples of our new environment. Firstly, we have merged two congregations, creating a critical mass that has produced a climate of idea sharing and growing participation. The youth and children are enjoying the benefits of being together each Sunday. A unique spiritual energy is noticeable and exciting. Recently, a member new to our area positively stated, "This is not the New Apostolic Church I remember…." A music team has been formed to further develop a congregational music program. Some changes include Wednesday night congregational all-sing evenings, Sunday morning singing with additional musical performances that include soloists and instrumentalists alternating with the choir.

Four sisters stepped forward and created a committee called iFUN (Fellowship & Unity Now) with a mission statement of "Creating unity by building relationships with each other and drawing others through fun and interactive events." iFUN has been the catalyst for our area newsletter – The Desert Voice, which is a vehicle to promote and report on these activities. Additional activities prompted by iFUN include NAC Attack, a men's softball team, International themed fellowship events (held in member's homes) for St. Patrick's Day, Cinco De Mayo, and Oktoberfest, a Sunday School Teacher and Minister's Appreciation Week, outreach into the local community including working with a local women's crisis shelter, a homeless shelter, preparing and sending treats to our military troops and continual work with our food bank. Additional efforts include a young brother mentor program, where no visit or trip is made by a minister without a young brother in attendance; and co-ed and women's bible study sessions. For two years, Town Hall Sessions (after Sunday morning services) have been utilized to inform the members of changes and help in the adoption process of a merged congregation and "stepping forward" activities.

A famous philosopher once said, "If we are to achieve results never before accomplished, we must expect to employ methods never before attempted." The power of the Holy Spirit, as we recently heard on Pentecost, has been the force behind the inventiveness, energy and excitement within the Phoenix-Metro Congregation. *

A new district is formed...

The history of the work in New York among Chinese-speaking people began on Sunday, February 11, 1968. On that date, the first ever Chinese translated service was held in the Uniondale church -- held by the late Evangelist Ray Strang, and translated sentence by sentence by his barber at the time, Brother Jackie Chan. Through the hard work of many brothers and sisters, and through the receptive hearts of many God-fearing Chinese people, 58 souls could be sealed on August 17th, 1969. By that time, services were being held in Chinese in both Uniondale on Long Island and in Chinatown, in the heart of Manhattan.

In November 1970, the first Chinese-born minister -- Deacon Ng -- was ordained into that ministry. Sadly, the Lord called him home only two months later, in January 1971. Eight years after Deacon Ng's ordination, the first Chinese-born priest was ordained, our present-day Evangelist Leung.

Since those early beginnings, two more congregations have been established, and the newly-created New York Chinese District consists of four congregations, located in Chinatown, Flushing (Queens), Westbury (Nassau County) and Amityville (Suffolk County). Each of the congregations has its own unique characteristics, but in all congregations there is life and growth; there are over 350 registered members in these four congregations, and there are routinely 30 or more guests attending services on a Sunday morning district-wide.

What makes the New York Chinese District unique? Each service is translated, sentence-by-sentence, into Chinese, either Mandarin or Cantonese, depending on the members present. And the Lord's Prayer is spoken twice in each service – once in English, and once in Chinese. Adopting this approach to the Lord's Prayer has allowed all of our members to better appreciate the value of the Absolution and Holy Communion, and draws us together in a wonderful way. Our Chinese-speaking priests receive a translated copy of the Divine Service Guide. In our New York Chinese District we also focus on two special events during the course of the year that are not celebrated elsewhere: we always have a big fellowship for Chinese New Year, and a big guest service for the Harvest or "Moon" Festival that occurs in the fall of the year. Our orchestra is growing and thriving, and our overall music program recently received a great boost with the addition of a new Chinese-based hymnal.

The New York Chinese District also strives to support Chinese-speaking congregations in New England, New Jersey and Chicago. ✳

Thanksgiving 2010 Update

The District Apostle Freund, at the beginning of his tenure, made changes in the NAC-USA district celebration of Thanksgiving Day. After a discussion at our District Leaders conference, we desire to continue this trend with some further modifications based upon the following rationale:

1. The national Thanksgiving holiday is a traditional time for families to travel to be together and share moments of joy and fellowship. It forms a much needed break in our busy lives prior to the season of Advent. Our ministers must often sacrifice or curtail this tradition to conduct services in the local congregations. We are concerned that we thereby place an additional burden upon our ministers and their families who so freely and voluntarily dedicate their time to serve us. As we all struggle to live lives in balance, more moments of family closeness are critical to enhance our relationships and renew our faith.

2. The national Thanksgiving holiday of course falls on a weekday. This, combined with the emphasis on travel and hospitality, may detract from the extreme significance of our New Apostolic Thanksgiving Day. Our ability to express profound thanksgiving and adoration to our good and merciful Heavenly Father is essential to our relationship with Him and His Son, Jesus Christ. Truly, this experience will be enhanced if celebrated on a Sunday morning, the day of God.

With these factors in mind, we would like to implement the following 2010 Thanksgiving holiday schedule for the NAC-USA district. We will celebrate our New Apostolic Thanksgiving Day on Sunday, November 21st. There will be no midweek service on either Wednesday, November 24th or Thursday, November 25th (Thanksgiving Day). Normal local Divine services will be held on Sunday, November 28th. Happily, our Chief Apostle concurs with our program. ✳

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The rector holds the majority of the Divine services. The members look to him for spiritual guidance and pastoral care; often requesting his opinion on situations of life and death as well as everyday matters. In dark times he comforts and intercedes. He is a teacher, a coach and a motivator for the other ministers.

To the youth, the children, the single parents, the newlyweds, the seniors, the grieving, the lonely and the suffering, he is a trusted advisor and confidant. Administratively, he cares for the local church finances and building upkeep. All while working a full time job and caring for the critical needs of his family.

While we thank God daily that we have ministers with such willingness to serve, we must accept the fact that this expectation, in the extreme, is unsustainable and unfair to both the minister and the congregation.

Clearly, the answer is **not** to minimize or diminish the expectations of our members; far from it! We seek an enhanced spiritual experience from a healthy congregation in terms of worship, altar serving, music and pastoral care. Rather, the solution I propose is a new model of congregational leadership.

The apostles presently are creating a new job description for the emerging rector and a new blueprint for congregational leadership. While this is a work in progress, we feel strongly that our new model should and will deliver the following:

- A collaborative, inclusive congregational culture that integrates all the gifts and talents of the body of Christ into the congregational mix. The "emerging rector" will be sensitive to diversity and skilled in helping our membership discover their God given calling and develop their talents (A Work of Ministry). More than asking them **"to do"**, he will be helping them **"to become".**

- The introduction of shared responsibilities within the ordained congregational ministry based upon gifts, talents, education and training. It should not be considered unusual to see one minister specialize in altar serving (perhaps not the rector) and another in pastoral care. A third could care for administrative matters. Specialization allows each minister to pursue their calling to a deeper level and enhance the spiritual experience of the congregation while achieving a healthier balance in their personal lives.

- A rector with a life in balance; ministry, family and occupation revolving around the central and core foundation of serving Christ. ✳

Property Management Update

Reducing energy costs is a key objective of the Property Management Department of the New Apostolic Church, USA. Utilities are one of our largest expense categories given the relatively large portfolio of buildings we have across the United States. Following extensive research, we have entered into a five year contract with LPB Energy Management (LPB). LPB is responsible for assisting us with the management of electricity, natural gas, water and sewer bills in order to assure billing accuracy, identify opportunities to lower utility prices in deregulated markets and enhance conservation. Approximately 60% of our USA congregations are included in the scope of this project.

The Property Management Department, partnering with GSYEnergy, will also be initiating a pilot program to determine the viability of creating passive revenues from the installation of vertical axis wind turbines (VAWT). VAWT's do not suffer from many of the negative perceptions attributed to traditional wind mills found in wind farms, and will generate income from the sale of excess energy. As property managers, we simply cannot afford to sit still. Our mindset is nicely expressed in this Chinese proverb, "When the winds of change blow, some build walls and others build windmills." ✳