



Dear brothers and sisters,

Recently, I have occupied myself with the thought of the “widow’s mite”, a term that the District Apostle Kraus often used to symbolize the true value of the widow’s offering as related in Mark 12:41-44 and Luke 21:1-4. In this occurrence in the temple, Christ witnessed a widow who gave two mites, the equivalent of a few cents. Yet He taught that she “*put in more than all*”...because she “*out of her poverty, put in all that she had*”. It is an example of true giving; that is to say sacrificial giving. While insignificant by human measurement, it was highly valuable when weighed on God’s scale.

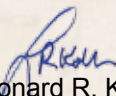
In my mind, the “widow’s mite”, given by a thankful, trusting soul in the midst of her economic uncertainty and vulnerability, represents the highest and most treasured gift of love to God. Surely, our Heavenly Father loved her in return and Christ was moved by the experience.

It also creates the weightiest burden of ongoing stewardship for the church. I am convinced that Christ, her Savior and Redeemer will require of the church leadership an accounting of how this treasure was cared for. It is the motivation for our financial controls and strict budgeting initiatives as well as a key element in our district wide strategic planning project.

So as we enter the second half of the year and ponder our New Apostolic Thanksgiving Day, may we approach our faithful God with this example in our hearts and with the knowledge that our offerings are sacred to Him and to the church.

I wish for you a pleasant summer with much joy as we continue to serve our Bridegroom Jesus.

With warm greetings of love,


Leonard R. Kolb

A Culture of Learning

We live in a dynamic time where the body of knowledge necessary to keep pace and thrive continues to expand at a breathtaking rate. Recently, one of our young college students told me of a lecture they attended where the professor advised them that they needed to learn how to learn. Upon graduation, they will be employed in jobs that haven’t yet been created and which will require knowledge and skills that don’t yet exist. I see this as a striking analogy to those who will be worthy to assist the Lord Jesus, the King of Kings, in His coming Kingdom of Peace (and will leave this as a subject for your further contemplation in a quiet moment).

But continual learning is not just for our young people. Older individuals are not spared this challenge either. Even the most accomplished men and woman, those who have reached the highest levels of expertise and acclaim in their field, must continually reinvest time, energy and resources to learn and

update their skill sets. Thereby, they wisely reject the all too human notion that they know everything there is to know.

And yet, we see from time to time individuals who resist advances in their field and cling to outdated techniques or tools that they mastered during their formative years. Likewise we find individuals or even societies who reject new discoveries and cling to flawed theories, perhaps in the field of health and science, sometimes to their own harm.

So what should we learn from this that will benefit our spiritual development? I see two distinct advantages:

Firstly, as the world evolves and our environment changes, a quest for continual learning and renewal keeps us from becoming obsolete or irrelevant. Here, within a biblical context, we might consider the reaction of the Pharisees to the teachings of Christ. Some resisted Him completely. They remained mired in their traditional understanding of God's plan *as they knew it*; the law, the prophets, the rigid hierarchy of the temple and their exclusivity as a people. They were not bad people, far from it. Yet despite living exemplary lives and attaining the highest levels of outward conduct, they became obsolete.

God introduced the next phase of His offer of salvation to mankind. He offered new commandments, a new template of grace, mercy, compassion and peace and ultimately the offer of redemption and eternal

life through the gift of Jesus Christ. His plan moved forward but only for those who were wise enough to embrace the change and immerse themselves in a new teaching.

Secondly, a continual, life long quest for Godly understanding and a healthy spiritual curiosity is a sign of humility; an acknowledgement that we struggle to truly grasp the will of our Heavenly Father. His ways are higher than ours and often a mystery to us. Saul was a well intentioned man of deep convictions who thought he understood the will of God.

...to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height— to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”

Ephesians 3:17

He experienced a crash course on the road to Damascus. He was willing to acknowledge that his previous understanding was flawed and humble enough to change his agenda. This turn around must have cost him every ounce of his pride and ego, but it was an investment that made him an extraordinary apostle for the first Christian congregations.

This then leads me to ask (firstly of myself) the following questions: Today, is our current understanding of the gospel of Christ a static event? Relative to our goal of becoming a New Apostolic Christian prepared

for Christ's return, does there come a day when we know all there is to know? I believe we all agree that the answer must be no!

While the teachings of Christ are well recorded, the Holy Spirit sent by God to comfort and lead, continually testifies of His timely word and intentions. It is a fountain from heaven that brings exciting revelations to those who seek the truth. Likewise, the Chief Apostle and the apostles of today, the ambassadors of Christ, teach us His gospel and bring clarity and inspiration. So while many consider the Gospel of Christ a constant, it is a much bigger body of knowledge than we can ever grasp, especially in its application to our own personal and unique circumstances. Perhaps, much like an iceberg, the full dimensions are only apparent when we make the effort to look below the surface. In Ephesians 3:17, the Apostle Paul sums up this lifelong quest with the words: *“that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height— to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”*

Thus, the new understandings that each soul must gain individually as part of a personal journey of faith continually develop over a lifetime as we gain greater insights into the Gospel of Christ. And with time and diligence we more and more grasp the mystery of our own calling and the unique gifts that God has given each of us to serve the body of Christ.

In conclusion and in preparation for our upcoming New Apostolic Thanksgiving Day, let me suggest that we be students together creating in our own lives of faith and our congregations a culture of continual learning through the Holy Spirit. Let us focus our immediate attention on the following “courses”:

• **Effective Prayer:** Continuing on the theme from the National Day of Prayer, what percentage of our prayers express thankfulness and adoration to our Heavenly Father in comparison to our daily petitions and supplications? *“The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much”* (James 5:16). Can we learn to “intensify” our prayers, not with more words, but deeper thoughts and expressions of praise?

• **Worship:** Abraham, Jacob and others of the Old Testament, worshipped God by creating an altar of stone, by sacrificing a clean animal and by prayer whereby they expressed their feelings toward Him. Could we learn to “intensify” our worship by creating an altar (a sanctified time and place), sacrificing (investing our time, talents and resources) and expressing our love for God via our prayers, singing, Bible reading and testifying?

• **Thanksgiving/Thankfulness:** True thanksgiving is not born out of obligation but out of sincere love. Love for God deepens when we become increasingly aware of the kindness and benevolence of our Benefactor. Searching inwardly during our experiences of faith, meditating on the words of a divine service and quietly contemplating the remarkable mercy of our Savior the Lord Jesus, opens this awareness. Our deeper love for Christ then urges us to express our thankfulness in serving Him and offering to Him. -LRK

150 Year Anniversary Preparations

The year 2013 marks the 150th anniversary of the New Apostolic Church. From our history, we can trace the origins of our present day church to Hamburg in 1863 as an offshoot of the Catholic Apostolic Church where the second calling of apostles commenced in England in 1832. To correspond with this, the NAC-USA district has created an official church history project whereby we seek to document and celebrate the growth and development of our faith within the USA.

Each of our congregations has an unmistakable identity resulting from its unique history. In wondrous and often mysterious ways our God has directed the course of events and called together diverse characters to become His children and to form congregations of believing New Apostolic Christians. While we continually strive to be transformed by the gospel of Christ and to be guided by the timely, current word of God, it is also healthy to remember our past and be inspired by stories of faith and deliverance.

With this goal in mind, the District Apostle Kolb has commissioned an enthusiastic group of our members from each district to record our congregational stories as well as compile our documents and photographs. **We are actively seeking history buffs that can assist them and writers who can help create a narrative for each congregation. If you would like to participate, please contact communications@nac-usa.org.**

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Remembering... as we *forgive*

September 11 2001 - 2011

Many Americans remember the morning of September 11th and its tragic beginning as reported on the news or by a coworker or friend. For the loved ones of victims who lost their lives during the terrorist attacks, the memory of that awful day still remains vivid in their minds. From 8:46 a.m. to 10:03 a.m., four planes were hijacked; one crashed into each of the World Trade Center's North and South towers, another collided into the Pentagon, and yet another crash-landed in a field in Somerset County, Pennsylvania, altogether resulting in the loss of nearly 3,000 lives.

To commemorate these lives, a memorial is under construction in New York City, to be dedicated on the 10th Anniversary of 9/11 this year. The eight-acre site of the Memorial will consist of a museum and two pools set within the footprint of the Twin Towers, with cascading waterfalls and the names of the victims inscribed on parapets surrounding the pools. The pools will be surrounded by trees to create a contemplative space separate from the sights and sounds of the city.

Ten years later, our intent as New Apostolic Christians is not to resurrect anger and hatred nor relive the horror and suffering of the victims. Rather, the focal point of this anniversary for us will be a divine service of remembrance for those who have entered eternity as a result of this event. At the altar of Christ we find the teaching and the power to transform, to heal, and to forgive. Surrounding this altar, we hope to become a prayerful congregation that believes deeply in the power of God's love, grace and reconciliation. Preceding this regional service in Lodi, New Jersey, will be a special Saturday Worship Evening of music, Bible readings and prayer. It will be hosted by the local brothers and sisters and dedicated to the theme of "Perseverance".

A new model for humanitarian and community outreach: Following the disaster of 9/11, the nation banded together in an unprecedented way and initiated numerous humanitarian efforts to support the affected people of New York. Members of the New Apostolic Church responded likewise by joining together to support the relief effort in many ways. The Bayside congregation became a collection point for the community to bring water, food, blankets, clothing, and other supplies, and congregations in New York City opened their doors to the community in the evenings, providing a space to pray and meditate.

Furthermore, the NAC Helping America Outreach Program provided opportunities for members to help by partnering with national organizations. Volunteers worked with the Red Cross and Salvation Army, which was one of the first relief agencies on the scene. Members participated in blood drives and worked at Ground Zero in the Spirit of New York & Marriott Hotels serving food and assisting firemen, policemen, and volunteers. 343 firefighters and 60 police officers were counted among the victims who died in the attacks, and the helping hands of our members at the crash site undoubtedly made a difference. Quiet expressions of support materialized in cards sent to families who lost a loved one in the events of that day.

NAC USA and the NAC Helping America Outreach Program also provided a conduit for generous monetary donations. NAC USA donated a significant amount directly to the September 11th Fund. Additionally, through the NAC Helping America Outreach Program, yard sales, car washes, and bake sales raised over \$17,000. A Benefit Concert for the Twin Towers Fund raised over \$5,500 alone. The events of September 11th, though awful, prompted a desire on the part of our church to give to those in need, and allowed members to respond to a hurting nation through philanthropic activities like never before.

In fact, following 9/11, our members have become more aware of the needs of the community, and the desire to serve has grown. Members' involvement in volunteer work has risen, and recent activities have included: the March of Dimes, Cancer walks and marathons, several Blood Drives a year, and coat and food drives for the needy. Members have contributed in personal ways by

cooking and serving Thanksgiving dinners to neighbors less fortunate than themselves, and sending care packages to troops in Iraq and Afghanistan – creating a powerful life-line for homesick soldiers.

Some members also support the orphanage at the SCO Residential and Treatment Center which provides services for the New York area. Each year New Apostolic members provide a barbecue for the children, as well as a Christmas event. A school supplies drive and coat drive have taken place, as well as occasional children's services.

We could never have imagined that the horrific events of ten years ago would prompt so many different humanitarian efforts. Thankfully, the Lord provided—and still provides—opportunities for us to display His love to our neighbor in times of need. ■

150 Year Anniversary Preparations

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If you have any historical items or documents that you would like to contribute please speak to your appropriate contact from the list below.

North Region

New England, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Upstate New York, Virginia

D. Elder Heinz Bauer: tbglc@aol.com

Southeast Region

Carolina, Florida, Florida Spanish, Georgia, Georgia South

Ap. K. Hoffman: khoffman122@comcast.net

West Region

Denver, Los Angeles, Montana, Oregon, San Francisco, Seattle

D. Ev. Hans Hinnen: HRHnac@aol.com

Great Lakes Region

Buffalo, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Detroit, Erie

D. Ev. Mel Hussing: nachist@neo.rr.com

Central Region

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Kansas City

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R. Wiest - rwiest2010@comcast.net

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P. Rohlmann - prohlmann@sbcglobal.net

Texas

DE G. Hildenbrand: G6502@sbcglobal.net

In addition, we will dedicate a column in each future Vision newsletter spotlighting the history of selected congregations. We can thereby relive the joys and tears of our brothers and sisters who have preceded us and praise our Heavenly Father anew for His wisdom and goodness. This will lead to a unique set of celebrations in 2013 commemorating the 150th anniversary of the international church. We are also tentatively considering a permanent home for these NAC-USA archives within the church administrative offices. ■

WORK OF MINISTRY

As we continue to discover our spiritual gifts via the Work of Ministry across the district, it is inspiring to hear of congregations that have made positive experiences. From the Cooper City Florida congregation we have the following report describing their ongoing integration of the Work of Ministry with a shared leadership approach.

Cooper City Central Planning Team Cooper City, Florida, USA

What are they thinking? They want me to be part of the Central Planning Team? Sounds like a great opportunity to serve the Lord, but am I qualified? The answer: Yes! We all have special God-given gifts and together we make a difference.

One year ago, seven of us started the Cooper City CPT. Our Rector tapped each of us on the shoulder with a special task: "step forward" to develop a team to find ways to improve our congregation. It has been a fulfilling opportunity to serve the Lord. We are very blessed with the support and guidance of our Apostle, Bishop, District Elder, Rector, and our wonderful Cooper City Congregation. Our team is respectful of each other's ideas and opinions, and is flexible – all necessary elements for a successful CPT.



Even though it is hard work, we all feel blessed. What a wonderful opportunity to serve the Lord. It really feels good.

In the first year of Cooper City CPT, our first priority was to identify and form specific Ministry Groups and appoint members to lead each ministry. In an effort to engage our congregation, we held a very informative and

inspiring meeting with the congregation. Our members surprised us with their participation and level of interest. We were able to formulate top priorities, goals, projects and events. The ministries include Visitation, Club 55, Special Events, Fund Raising, Sunday School, Youth, Choir/Orchestra, Building and Media among others.

Some of our achievements include a weekly slide presentation highlighting our monthly calendar, birthdays, special events, etc.; a strengthened visitation program, including incorporation of birthday visits to all members; a Master Annual Calendar tracking each ministry's events; and a weekly Health Program that meets after church on Sundays.

The highlight of this year was our 20th Anniversary Family Festival. We celebrated on a Saturday with a BBQ, pie contest, relay races, cotton candy, and more. Then on Sunday, Apostle Hecht held a beautiful service wherein one of our brothers was sealed. After the service and a congregational photo, we headed outside for a very moving tree planting ceremony celebrating our growth over the past 20 years and a commitment to continue serving together.

Our congregation is very special. As large congregations go, we have our share of issues as well as opportuni-



ties. We were very blessed that our congregation sees CPT as an opportunity to get involved. We have realized that small jobs make a BIG difference, and everyone deserves an opportunity to become an active participant in our congregation.

In the words of one of our CPT leads: "We realize we will stumble and fall a few times, but if we always go back to the basics and operate with love, God will bless us. Our motto is LOVE NEVER FAILS."

A special thank you to our Apostle, Bishop, District Elder, Rector, and to all our members who "step forward" every day. Together we make a difference in the Lord's work. -RGomez

PERSPECTIVE: Higher ministries sitting in services

Dear brother and sisters,

Our current congregational culture contains an expectation that the individual with the highest ministry in attendance will always conduct the divine service. While this will continue to be our general practice, our Chief Apostle in the recent District Apostle Meeting in Buenos Aires, expressed a desire for some flexibility under certain circumstances. His thoughts are as follows:

Our higher ministers conduct almost every service each month. Given the time demands of congregational and pastoral duties, occupations and families, the preparation required to achieve a consistently high level of effectiveness is difficult to sustain. It will be a welcome opportunity and a source of spiritual refreshment if occasionally these ministers will sit in the congregation or behind the altar and be served by another minister. Of course, this may also be done during circumstances of illness.

When this happens, we should not be concerned or think that something is wrong. Special care will be exercised by the ministers involved to plan these arrangements far enough in advance so as to maintain a high quality spiritual experience for our members. -LRK

Chief Apostle Visit to the USA

We are pleased to announce that the location for Chief Apostle Leber's visit to Philadelphia, PA on May 20, 2012 has been determined. The divine service will take place at the Pennsylvania Convention Center located in the heart of Center City Philadelphia at 1101 Arch Street, Philadelphia, PA 19107. More about the venue can be learned at www.paconvention.com. As the event nears, more useful information will be provided by a local website soon to be released.



Announcing the Office Max Discount Card

We realize that within each congregation, much work is done behind the scenes to support the many pastoral programs offered to our members. Often this work requires supplies, printing and technology products that are purchased by our local members and/or often donated from their own inventory.

The NAC-USA church office has negotiated a significant discount with Office Max for all of our members for any purchase and for any purpose from paper clips to office furniture. No strings attached. Simply cut out the digital scanning document below and take it to your local Office Max location. They will laminate it for you right there at the store. Then just present the discount card along with your future purchase and you will automatically receive the NAC-USA discount. In challenging economic times, every penny counts. For additional copies of the discount card, please see your rector, as it will be made available to him through the Minister Companion.

Unfortunately, customers will not be able to use both this Retail Connect Card and earn rewards towards their personal MaxPerks account on the same transaction.

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