

Health, growth, completion

# Vision



New Apostolic Church USA

District News

[www.nac-usa.org](http://www.nac-usa.org)

Spring 2013



Dear brothers and sisters,

As I write these words in the middle of a cold, wintry day, I am inclined to look forward to the warm breezes of spring that will bring a newness of life. The Apostle Paul speaks of this “newness of life” in Romans 6:4 with regards to our spiritual life in growing in the mind of Christ.

Just as the buds open during this time in the natural creation, our Chief Apostle exhorts us also to open our hearts and with our voice and conduct, profess our relationship with the Lord Jesus. In this Year of Profession it is important that all of us give expression to how our Heavenly Father’s guidance and love has touched our lives. Our baptism with water and Spirit as well as the continual blessed celebration of Holy Communion together, are a vital foundation of this expression. Please take the time to meditate and remember the incredible journey we have taken – designed and navigated by our Father’s hand. Truly He has brought us through difficult moments, but has also permitted us joyful days.

This journey is our story. Let’s share these stories with our families, friends, acquaintances, coworkers, neighbors, and all who will listen. This is the testimony of our faith, i.e. how we experience our God throughout our life. You will find an example of profession later in this issue.

And so, as we step forward in this year of 2013, I again ask you all – What’s your story?

With love,

# A RENEWED LOOK AT CHURCH

In this edition of the VISION, I would like to elaborate further on the subject of our strategic plan for the NAC-USA district called Stepping Forward. The previous VISION newsletter (Winter 2012), contained a detailed review of our plan as well as a candid assessment of our progress toward our goal of congregational health. Today, let us focus our attention on two very important concepts that are foundational to our future plans but require a change in the way that we have done things in the past.

With this in mind I offer the following Perspectives. They should be the subject of honest and transparent discussion over the next months within our congregations. If these concepts are to be truly foundational and worthy of our confidence, they should withstand our scrutiny and inspection. If you have questions or comments, please send them to [communications@nac-usa.org](mailto:communications@nac-usa.org).

Before we begin, it is important to visualize our four objectives that lead us to congregational health. Everything that we do must pass through this filter. These objectives once again are:

- Improve the quality of our **Divine Service Experience**
- Change our **Culture**: learn to live and lead like Christ
- Improve the quality of our **Pastoral Care**
- Create a more sustainable **Structure**

## SHARED LEADERSHIP AND WHY WE ARE REALIGNING OUR ORDAINED MINISTERS

With the exception of the apostles, our ministers work in a lay capacity and are not financially compensated for their service to Christ and their congregations. Therefore, they are employed in outside professions and volunteer their time, spiritual gifts, and efforts. And like all of us, they must care for the spiritual needs of their own families within their home life.

Their voluntary ministry is an indispensable and invaluable asset of the church; and like every asset

it must be preserved, developed, and maximized. Often in life, we are tempted to consume our assets out of current necessity or want. But we find we have satisfied ourselves today at the expense of tomorrow (the fable of the goose that laid golden eggs comes to mind).

This in no way minimizes the incredible investment of previous generations of New Apostolic pioneers that built our congregations by self-sacrifice. Their work speaks forever to the honor and glory of God and to their love of Christ and His church. However, in every great movement, the efforts that sustain are different than the efforts that created; not wrong, just different and necessary for their time. We look to the continual impulses of the Holy Spirit and the direction of our Chief Apostle to determine what is right for our time and our environment within the USA.

From this inspiration, we have created a congregational leadership model that supports our current needs and we call this “shared leadership” (first introduced in the Summer 2010 VISION newsletter). While every congregation will have a rector, he will share the leadership responsibilities with broader teams of ministers and members organized according to their spiritual gifts and servant profile that were discovered through the Work of Ministry assessments. This requires a culture of mission-filled members who are empowered to serve and share their gifts and passions within the body of Christ. Interestingly, this is not a new culture; this is an authentic culture that we can see demonstrated in the first apostolic church and in our renewal as the New Apostolic Church 150 years ago.

Likewise, the congregation is where we need our ordained ministers. Therefore we are realigning our ministries across the USA. Many district evangelists, shepherds and evangelists will be reconfirmed into a priestly ministry and take a shared leadership role within local congregations.

There is no stigma to this reassignment; rather quite the opposite is true. Our ministers have voluntarily engaged in this strategy in the most humble and effective manner demonstrating their nobility to serve Christ above all other motivations. Jesus Himself

# LEADERSHIP & PASTORAL CARE

created the servant leader model by His personal example when He washed the disciples' feet, and in His teaching: "...called the twelve, and said to them, "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all." (Mark 9:35) It is this servant leadership role that creates the true inner authority and credibility of our ministers and inspires our love and respect.

With more ordained ministers within each congregation, there will be the opportunity to specialize; each according to their spiritual gifts. In the past, it was customary for every ordained minister to serve at the altar, engage in pastoral visits, and care for administrative matters. In some congregations, we may now experience priests who do not serve at the altar but focus their time and attention on pastoral care; of huge benefit and value to our members and equally important to our future health and growth.

## VISITING AND PASTORAL CARE

Historically, our ordained ministers, as well as interested members, would meet at the local church and then go "visiting". It was the staple within our understanding of pastoral care. Members were visited and matters of faith were discussed. In the best of circumstances, this was planned in advance and the whole family would gather with their minister for an evening of spiritual teaching and fellowship.

When we fast forward to the current day, we often hear from our older members that this is done with less frequency and is missed. The connection to their minister and the fellowship is welcomed. Within the time challenged lives of our younger members, this practice is not so expected and hard to schedule.

In addition to this purpose, there are also the visits made necessary by the critical needs of life; sickness and specific trying circumstances requiring a pastoral connection. Visitation was also a means to testify to nonmembers and invite them to attend the services.

Is there a new model that replaces the old? Yes and no. Clearly, there is no substitute for a pastoral visit, made necessary by an urgent situation like a critical illness. Additionally, it is still important that our members have a pastoral connection with their minister that is proactive. This connection is not driven by crisis or emergency, but is a moment whose purpose is to strengthen and equip the soul for a closer relationship with Christ. In today's fast paced world, it may require more planning and creativity to make this work.

There is also a need for a change in culture. Our member's expectation should be realistic regarding the role of our ordained ministers. We should not become overly dependent upon them for advice in matters of daily life or intercession over routine matters of faith.

In addition to the pastoral visits of our ministers, some benefits of pastoral care can be found within our small groups, first introduced in the Spring 2012 VISION newsletter. Although the primary focus of these groups is the discussion of matters of faith and spiritual development between group members, there is a strong pastoral bond that develops naturally under the direction of the Holy Spirit. A prayer network for specific needs begins to form and with time the group begins to minister to one another in a very biblical and authentic Christian manner.

Likewise, Small Group has an element of Christian outreach based upon the purpose of creating disciples. At the completion of its term, it is customary for the members to begin their own small group and add new members often from among interested friends and acquaintances who also seek spiritual discussion and fellowship.

The creation and support of these groups is an important focus for 2013. A Small Group Resource kit has been developed to help supply study material on various topics of interest. It can be found on Minister Companion and is accessible by your local ministers.



# A Charitable Ministry of the New Apostolic Church USA

*re Charitable Ministry* is a new outreach effort within the New Apostolic Church USA combining three strategic focus areas:

 Disaster Relief

 Humanitarian Missions

 Grassroots

Firstly, inspired by the events of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the New Apostolic Church USA established the NAC USA World Relief Fund (WRF). To this day, the WRF has continued to coordinate and implement the Church's response to natural disasters.

Next, and shortly after the WRF's five year anniversary, a broader review and discussion of the WRF's mission and future began. The church's Vision and Mission direct us to initiate and support a more comprehensive humanitarian effort. These efforts would be designed to build long-term relationships and make lasting, communal changes in areas of need.

Lastly, a need was identified to support small, grassroots programs. The objective of these programs is to inspire and strengthen the activities of our members and churches to express the love of Christ in their local, domestic communities.

Together, all three strategic focus areas, disaster relief, humanitarian missions, and grassroots projects form the new *re Charitable Ministry*.

The name *re Charitable Ministry* is based upon the following core values:

**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 growth in faith, hope and excitement. This work brings us to new perspectives and a renewed relationship with Christ.

With the formation of this new ministry and the unveiling of [re.nac-usa.org](http://re.nac-usa.org), members everywhere can donate to relief projects, sign up for mission programs, and learn how to turn "loving our neighbors" into real world service.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us at [re.charitableministry@nac-usa.org](mailto:re.charitableministry@nac-usa.org).

# CONNECTING OUR ISOLATED MEMBERS

Over the past decades the “bread letter” was created and mailed to provide elements of pastoral care for geographically isolated members. It has provided an important link between the church and our brothers and sisters during times of separation from their congregation.

This practice still continues today but has gone through a few iterations. It remains a vital part of soul care for our linked members; those individuals separated from a physical congregation. At present, roughly 180 packages are prepared and mailed each month. If you know of someone that qualifies for this mailing, but is currently not receiving it, please contact your apostle.

The contents of the packages include:

- A letter written by one of the USA apostles
- The divine service guide so that the members know the essence of the services being conducted in the congregations
- Consecrated Holy Communion wafers for the entire household for one month

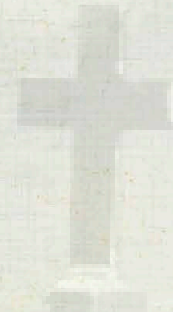
and on a quarterly basis:

- DVD of a Chief Apostle or District Apostle service
- VISION newsletter

Questions may arise regarding the validity of sending consecrated Holy Communion wafers via the mail. Our new catechism sheds light on this subject and explains our understanding that the consecration remains valid until it is received by the soul for which it was intended. Therefore each month Apostle Orlofski visits the Chicago office and in a solemn ceremony in the Chicago Northside church, consecrates the Holy Communion wafers to be mailed. For these linked members the consecration remains valid for the entire month as intended. However, in our congregations, the consecration is repeated in each divine service because there is an intention to celebrate the offer of Christ according to our liturgy.

Ultimately, we recognize that the eternally valid sacrifice of Jesus Christ as offered within the sacrament of Holy Communion is only really valid to the degree it is believed by the recipient. We believe in the power of our omnipotent and loving God. He is big enough to solve our human limitations of time and distance.

It is our sincere wish that this process, coupled with the possibility of connecting to live divine services through NACTv, will bring our linked members into our spiritual fellowship, further their relationship with Jesus Christ and prepare them for His return.



## THE PROCESS



# A DROP OF PROFESSION

A retired minister was helping out by filing his congregation's tax exemption at a local government office. For years he had filed at the main office downtown, but learning of a branch closer to home he went there instead, only to find 29 customers ahead of him. He thought of leaving, but being assured the line would move quickly, he stayed and took a seat in a group with three other people. He began speaking with the man next to him, who happened to be a minister applying for a church tax exemption. The two spoke of their faith and experiences, and the challenges facing their smaller Christian congregations. Each invited the other to church. Soon the other minister was called to the counter, so he thanked our minister, completed his business, and left.

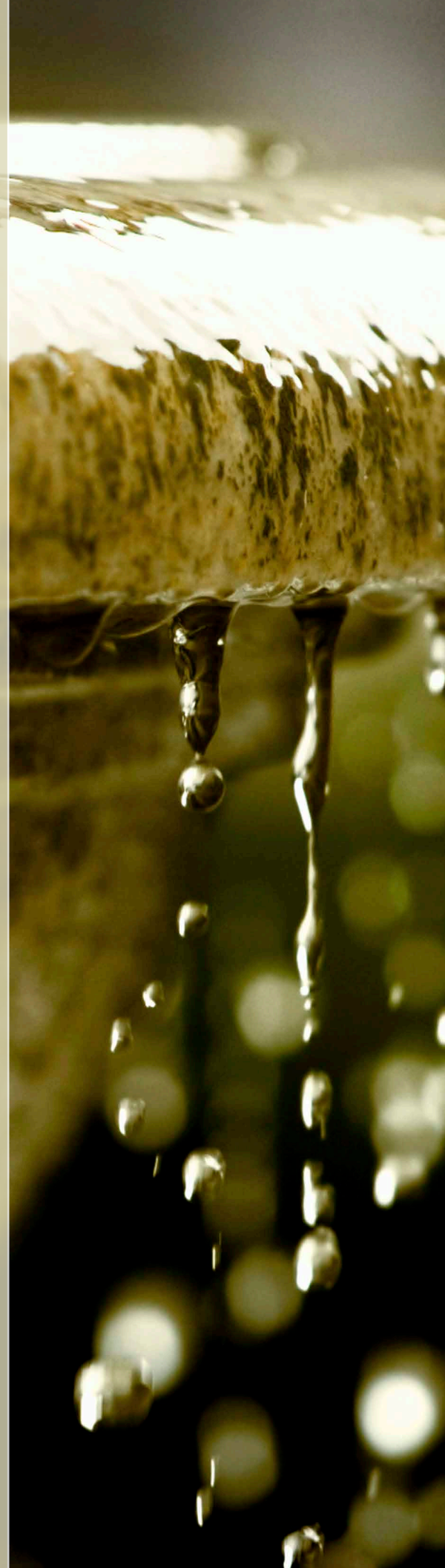
Our minister then asked the woman next to him why she was there. She said she'd recently been widowed, and was applying for a widow's exemption. This struck a responsive chord with our minister as his daughter was also recently widowed. He expressed his condolences and asked her how she was coping. Did she have family and friends? Was she attending church and finding strength and comfort there? She replied, "I don't go to church, and I don't get out much. I realize I probably should change that." Our minister told her of his daughter's experience, how her faith in Christ, the strength she received in the services, and the loving fellowship of the congregation all helped to carry her through a very difficult time. He expressed how great it would be if she could meet his daughter, and also experience these wonderful blessings. He gave her a church card and directions to the church. She promised to come.

This widow came to service, and she brought a friend. Soon, eight more friends and family started to come to services. Of the ten, five have received the gift of the Holy Spirit through Holy Sealing. All from our retired minister's secondary conversation with a person he met in a place he normally would not have gone to.

## What can we learn from this?

- We always want to place a drop of spiritual substance in every conversation, as Chief Apostle Leber has advised.
- We do not need to explain every detail about our doctrine when meeting people, but simply provide an invitation as Philip said to Nathanael in John 1:46, "...come and see."
- We touch souls when we meet them where they are. Our minister perceived what this widow needed, and tailored his invitation to that need.
- Our "success" when inviting is not determined by whether our invitation is accepted, but by sharing God's love with those around us.

**What's your story?**





On March 22, 1936, Apostle Erb ordained Shepherd Rettberg of New Jersey as Elder for the Detroit District, which at the time included Cleveland and Cincinnati.

The congregation was quickly outgrowing the Arndt Street building and something had to be done to provide more room.

### The Jefferson Avenue church



### A look at the Detroit district: 1900-1970

In 1901 Chief Apostle Krebs ordained Evangelist Mierau as an apostle for the United States, where he took up residence in Detroit. Apostle Mierau ordained George Steiner as the first minister in the Detroit area. Brother Steiner was ordained Deacon on April 15, 1903 and Priest on August 22, 1905, and cared for the congregation.

Between 1910 and 1913, Detroit was blessed to receive various ministers who moved from New York and Buffalo.



In 1937, Apostle Hiby heard that a former Lutheran church on East Jefferson Avenue had gone into foreclosure and was quickly purchased by the New Apostolic Church. Renovations began immediately and the church was dedicated on Easter Sunday, April 17, 1938.

By 1919, under the leadership of then Elder Muellershoen and with the assistance of Evangelist Niehaus and Priest Steiner, the membership of the Detroit church grew to over 30 members. Many immigrants settled in Detroit and were introduced to the New Apostolic Church. This more than doubled the membership by 1926.

With the retirement of District Elder Rettberg, District Apostle Kraus sent Ev. Wilbert Vovak, formerly from Cleveland and Houston Texas, to Detroit as the District Leader. He was later ordained an apostle.

A sister recalled that by 1928 the church on Arndt Street, which had a seating capacity of 100, was nearly full for every service.

The year 1967 was a time of racial unrest and rioting in neighborhoods near the church. National Guard troops were brought in to control parts of the city. With the deterioration of the area and the lack of parking space, it was determined that the Jefferson Street church should be sold.



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# INTRODUCING THE MUSEUM OF THE NEW APOSTOLIC CHURCH USA

In January 2010, an initiative was started in order to document and preserve the history of the congregations and USA districts. Over 40 volunteer historians from the various districts worked diligently to gather narratives, pictures and video clips of their respective congregations. This huge gathering of data was completed in 2012. In 2013, the last phase of the project began; to build a museum to house and display the histories, as well as artifacts that some members so graciously donated.

A decision was made to locate the museum in Chicago's North Side Church, which was built in 1917 and is part of our history. The museum, currently in the construction process, will contain a timeline, stories of each congregation, with a slide show of the pictures that were gathered and some video presentations. It will also house an artifacts area displaying music, jewelry, periodicals, books and more. If anyone would like to donate artifacts to the museum, please contact the Chicago office with a description of the item.

The History Project Group is pleased to share the history of our church and it would be a worthwhile trip to Chicago to visit the museum which is targeted to open sometime later this year.

