

Health, growth, completion

Vision



New Apostolic Church USA

District News

www.nac-usa.org

Summer 2015

Dear brothers and sisters,

Allow me to begin this summer edition of Vision with a warm, heartfelt thank you!

Firstly, thank you for your positive response to the Midweek Experience over the past year. I realize for some, perhaps this was a shocking experience to transform from listening in a divine service to openly participating in lively spiritual discussions. But more and more, I have received messages that many have embraced this way of learning, enjoy it, and look forward to each midweek discussion. I know this will deepen our understanding of the Lord and His mission for us.

Secondly, thank you for accepting and participating in the series of workshops that were held in the various congregations across the nation. They were to impart more tools to the various leaders to improve our congregational health and I am thrilled that so many could share in this unique endeavor.

Thirdly, thank you for embracing our new young Christians who professed their Confirmation vow to Christ and joined our congregations as participating, adult members. Their passion and spiritual gifts are warmly welcomed and are vital to the development of our future church.

As this year continues, I call upon our serving ministers to accept and participate in our new online Effective Preaching program. After over a year's work by some of our apostles, ministers, and staff, we are happy to introduce a contemporary course to improve the preaching capabilities of our ministers in offering powerful Sunday sermons.

All of these are efforts to advance our district in our strategic plan – Stepping Forward. We have introduced the same plan in our linked international districts in the Caribbean and Central and South America as well and they have embraced it. It is hard work! But with the strength and joy of Christ, it is possible for us to continue our transformation into the people He wants us to be.

May He grant us continued success in this fruitful undertaking.

Wishing you a blessed summer,

With love,



DIVINE CONNECTION



Human beings have a strong need to be connected: To form relationships and experience emotional contact, to learn and to communicate. In a fast paced, increasingly anonymous society, people struggle to form these connections. It's possible to be surrounded by rushing crowds of people but still feel alone and isolated. As a response, more and more we create connectivity through technology and this phenomenon impacts our lives in such a visible way.

Take a look around you. If you are in a public place, how many people are at this very minute connected to someone else via a smart phone, computer or tablet? How many of you at this moment have some device within reach which creates a portal to share information and experiences? Many of us have multiple devices, and they can be connected or synchronized so that we are always available. People and information follows us seamlessly wherever we go.

Technology alone is certainly not the magic solution that automatically brings human beings into a better life and richer relationships with each other. However, let's focus on the new possibilities that connectedness brings already into our natural lives. This understanding can then be the foundation for a richer spiritual appreciation for the divine connectedness that God offers. I see four trends that can be very powerful in our lives. Connectivity creates:

- **A virtual community.** In essence we are never alone. Someone is always "present" with us in real time.
- **Unlimited access to information and experience.** Today, no one needs to feel distant or uninformed.
- **Abundance.** Everything we need is a just a click away. Food, clothing, transportation, medicine

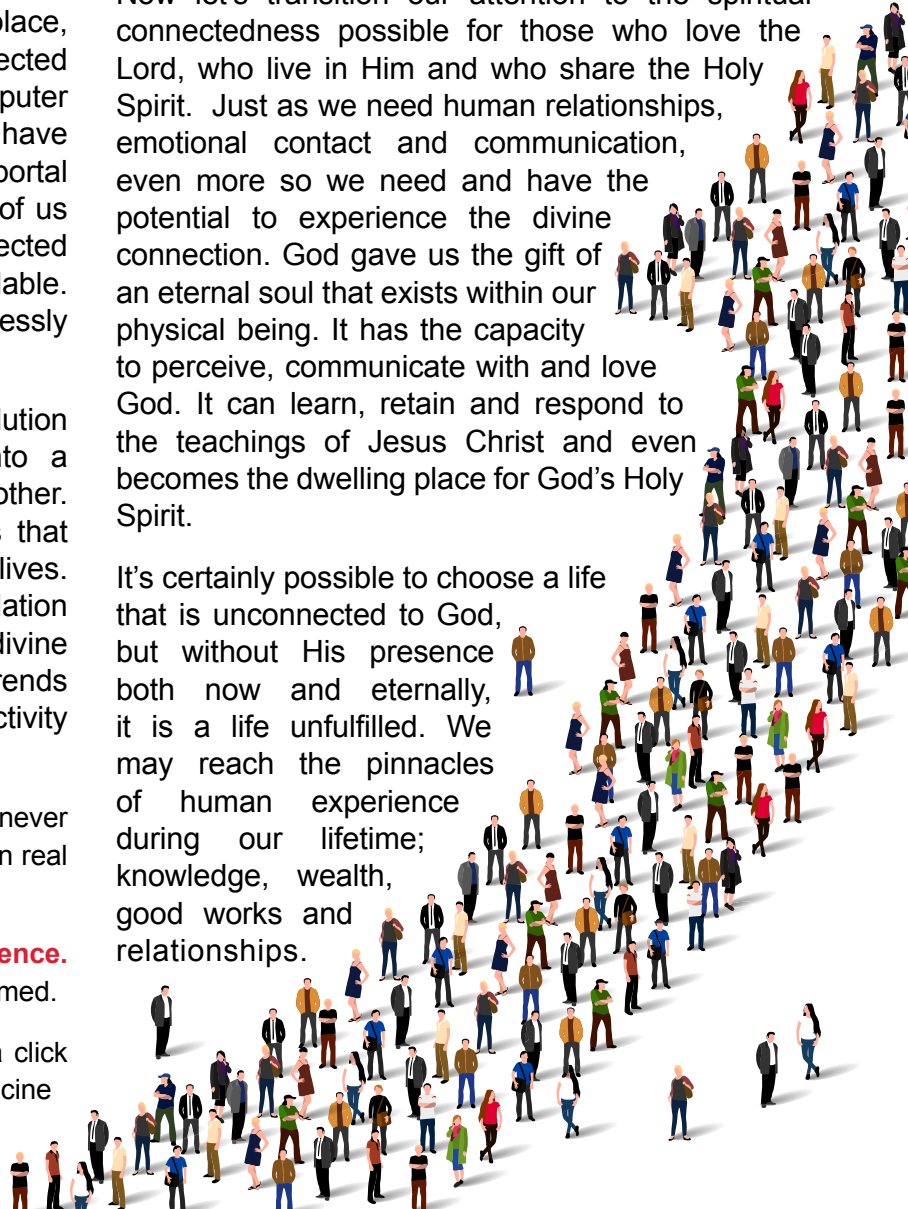
and entertainment can be researched, ordered and delivery arranged right to our front door.

- **Direction and orientation.** No one needs to be lost! We can even avoid traffic jams, accidents and bad weather that are not visible but lie ahead of us.

In summary, this natural connectedness brings us a world of unlimited possibilities. The potential is almost too much to process. It can be life changing.

Now let's transition our attention to the spiritual connectedness possible for those who love the Lord, who live in Him and who share the Holy Spirit. Just as we need human relationships, emotional contact and communication, even more so we need and have the potential to experience the divine connection. God gave us the gift of an eternal soul that exists within our physical being. It has the capacity to perceive, communicate with and love God. It can learn, retain and respond to the teachings of Jesus Christ and even becomes the dwelling place for God's Holy Spirit.

It's certainly possible to choose a life that is unconnected to God, but without His presence both now and eternally, it is a life unfulfilled. We may reach the pinnacles of human experience during our lifetime; knowledge, wealth, good works and relationships.



But without experiencing the Divine, we are incomplete. Compared to both the current and eternal possibilities that God intends for us, we are still lost, uninformed, alone, and living in spiritual poverty. This is described so powerfully in Revelation 3:17, *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.*

WHAT POSSIBILITIES DOES DIVINE CONNECTEDNESS BRING TO OUR LIVES?



GOD IS ALWAYS PRESENT "IN REAL TIME". Is God relevant to you right now? Is He real in your life? Sometimes it is easier to think of Him as a historical figure. I'm reminded of Jesus' bold confession to the Pharisees in the 8th chapter of John who rejected the living God in human form standing right in front of them in favor of the historical God of Abraham. Christ finally declared to them: *Before Abraham was, I AM!* This seems like a grammatical mistake. We know that Jesus was intentionally using the term "I AM". It was the way God described Himself to Moses, generations prior, to make a point. But it also reflects an important truth for us. Because He is God, He is always here in the present. He is available everywhere to everyone who seeks Him.

God offers us a continuous connection to Him through Jesus Christ. In every aspect of our lives, He shares Himself with us in "real time".

DIVINE CONNECTION PROVIDES EVERYTHING WE NEED IN ABUNDANCE. Let's continue with the theme of "I AM." Throughout the gospel of John, we find the seven I AM statements of Christ. Jesus says, I AM:

- The bread of life (John 6:48)
- The way, the truth and the life, (John 14:6)
- The living vine (John 15:1)
- The Resurrection and the life (John 11:25)
- The door (John 10:9)
- The light of the world (John 8:12)
- The True Shepherd (John 10:11)



Please take a quiet moment to reflect on each of these statements and the possibilities they bring to you and me. Perhaps dig deeper into each Bible reference for context and elaboration. Each one is unique and together they are overwhelming in the fullness and completeness they create within our lives, both now and for all eternity.

DIVINE CONNECTION PROVIDES DIRECTION AND ORIENTATION. We have the gift of the Holy Spirit within us. Jesus promised that He would be "the helper" and would lead us into all truths. Once again, take a moment to fully ponder what is all included in these two words, "all truths." How much knowledge, information, and experience do they contain?

If engaged, the Holy Spirit can be quite powerful in our lives. But like the GPS in our smart phone, we can choose to ignore His counsel or turn the volume down within our consciousness. Engaging the Holy Spirit requires trust and practice. It is an intentional act.

DIVINE CONNECTION CREATES COMMUNITY. So God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, are present in our lives in real time. They bring fullness, abundance and the possibilities of life eternal within the Kingdom of God. They provide guidance and truth. But there is one more dimension. Our connectedness to Him also connects us to one another. Our relationship with God was meant to be shared and experienced within a community of believers. Community is created during the divine services where we worship God and experience His Word and the real presence of Jesus Christ in Holy Communion together. It is enhanced all during the midweek when we learn the Gospel together, profess the power of God in our lives and support each other pastorally. Community is built when believers pray together.

Every week, we hear new evidence across the district that these divine connections are multiplying despite all the human barriers; work and school scheduling demands, traffic, location, health and age. Let's use every tool at our disposal to expand the ways we connect to God and each other continuously. The possibilities are limitless. **-LRK/WJ**





REGIONAL WORKSHOPS

In keeping with our summer “connections” theme, we would like to report on a unique set of regional leadership training workshops conducted across the USA over the past 6 months. A revolving team comprised of both NAC-USA employees and dedicated volunteers traveled to 13 different regional locations to make connections with local congregational leaders. In each location, a full Saturday of workshops was dedicated to sharing information and providing hands on training in selected subjects that lead to improved congregational health. Attendees from large and small congregations within the region came together to learn and share.

The morning sessions were dedicated to a renewed conviction that we are called, empowered and equipped by God to serve others within the body of Christ. We all have the opportunity to be impactful within our congregations and communities “that all may feel the love of God”.

The remaining agenda was organized into three separate learning tracks with breakout sessions:

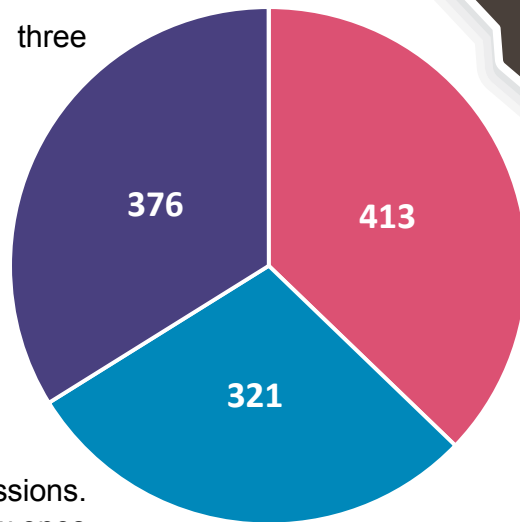
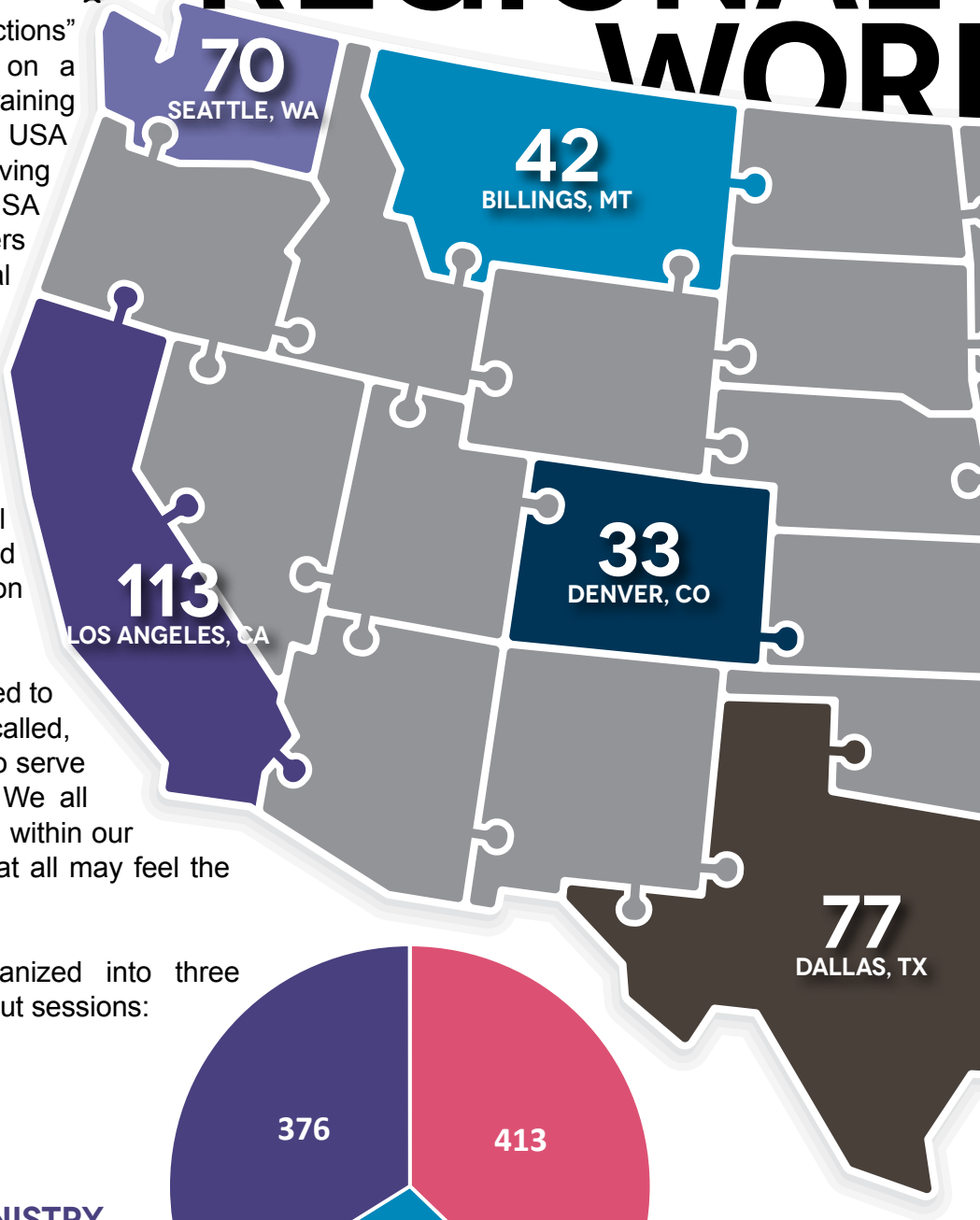
MUSIC & WORSHIP

SMALL GROUP FACILITATION

LEADERSHIP & WORK OF MINISTRY

The graph to the right shows the amount of participants that attended each track.

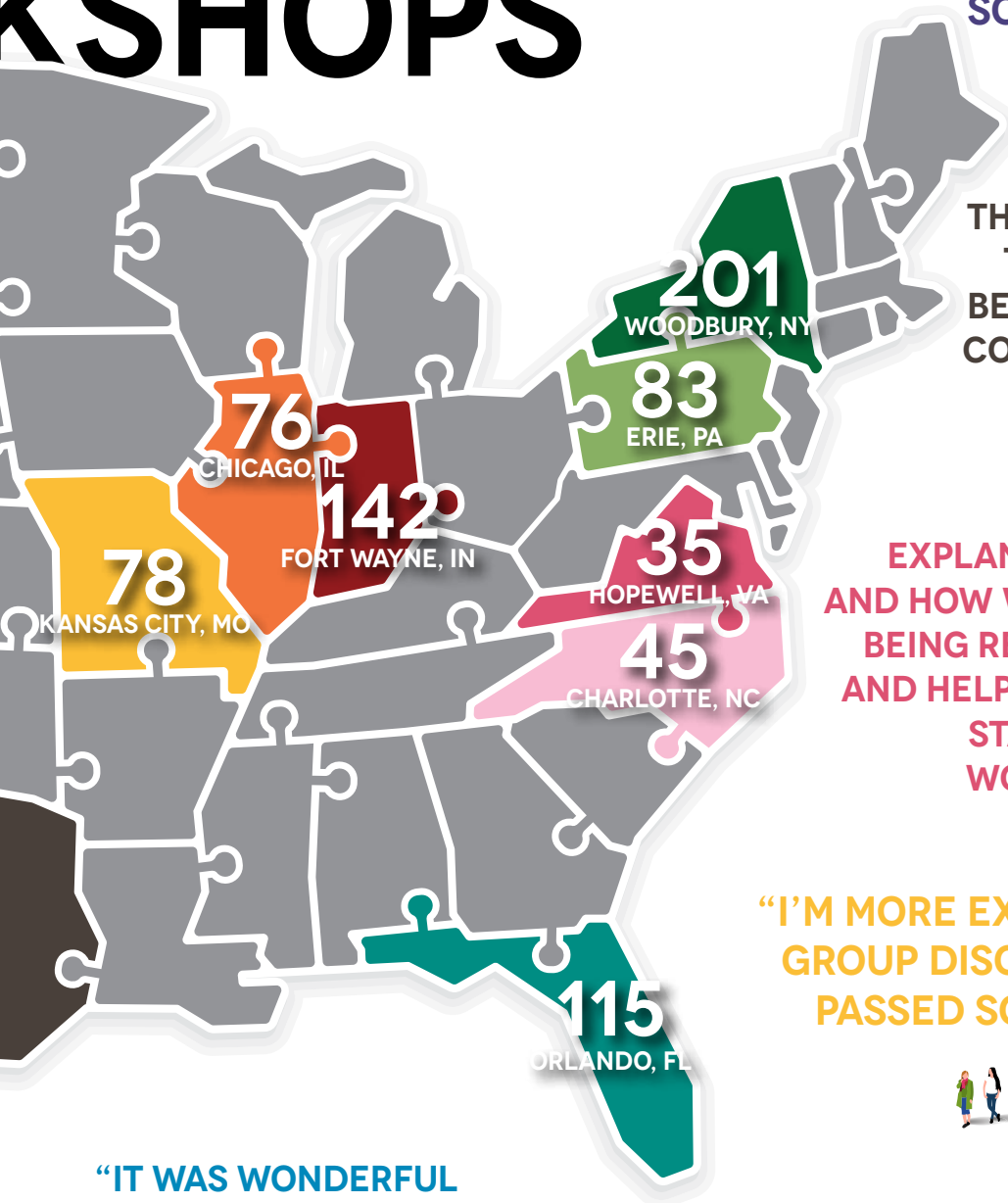
In total, over 1,000 participants attended the sessions. Existing relationships were strengthened and new ones were formed. Real life experiences, common problems and solutions were discussed freely. The results of these healthy connections are emerging across the district.





WORKSHOPS

“...SO EXCITED, INSPIRED, READY TO CONTINUE MOVING FORWARD, SO PROUD OF MY CHURCH.”



“AFTER PARTICIPATING IN THE SMALL GROUP FACILITATOR TRACK, THERE IS DISCUSSION BETWEEN FACILITATORS IN OUR CONGREGATION AS TO HOW WE CAN IMPROVE.”

“MY FAVORITE PART WAS THE EXPLANATION OF WORSHIPLEADERS AND HOW WORSHIP IS BIGGER THAN US; BEING REMINDED ITS ALL ABOUT GOD AND HELPING AND PREPARING OTHERS STARTS WITH ME PRAISING AND WORSHIPPING HIM ABOVE ALL.”

“I’M MORE EXCITED ABOUT THE SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION AND I THINK I’VE PASSED SOME OF THIS EXCITEMENT TO THE MEMBERS.”



“IT WAS WONDERFUL HAVING A ROOM FULL OF FRESH PERSPECTIVES AND A LEADER WHO WAS PREPARED WITH A MESSAGE THAT PROVIDED A UNIFIED DIRECTION TO WORSHIP, EVEN THOUGH IT LOOKS DIFFERENT IN EVERY CONGREGATION.”



“MEMBERS ARE OPENING THEMSELVES UP, GRASPING THE MIDWEEK EXPERIENCE. I AM APPLYING THREE TO FOUR NEW ITEMS LEARNED FROM THE SMALL GROUP TRAINING EACH WEEK TO TEACH MYSELF HOW TO BETTER FACILITATE AND HELP BROTHERS AND SISTERS DISCOVER THE GOSPEL TEACHINGS IN WAYS THEY CAN APPLY IN EVERYDAY LIFE.”



AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

At the end of February 2015, I was in Peru for a youth weekend. During one of the lunches, a young sister sat next to me and showed me some pictures of her small congregation in the jungle and the different events that they do there. In some of the pictures she showed me, there were festive dinners being hosted. She explained to me that her congregation has these dinners at the end of the year to show appreciation to the people who have different roles in the congregation. One dinner is for the ministers, another for the children, and yet another for the choir members.

These acts of appreciation done in this jungle congregation touched me and made me reflect on how gratitude can change our attitude towards one another. Perhaps some congregations in the USA already host dinners to show appreciation, but what else can we do to show that we value each one for their role in the congregation? More importantly, why should we take the time to let others know that we are grateful for them?

WHAT ELSE CAN WE DO TO SHOW THAT WE VALUE EACH ONE FOR THEIR ROLE IN THE CONGREGATION?

God has called and equipped us with individual gifts and skills to use in the Body of Christ. And what do we do with these gifts and skills? They are not something we use to serve ourselves; we use them in our congregations to serve each other and Christ. Next time you are in your congregation, look at your brothers and sisters and recognize that they are doing something for you by using their spiritual gifts, even if they might not think about it in that way. Looking at it in this light can help us to understand why it is essential to show our thankfulness to them.

We don't want to be passive in our gratitude towards others. By this, I mean that we can't just only think, "Wow, that's nice of this person to do this." What's stopping us from telling the person that we are thankful for them and their willingness to serve? Let us strive to be active in our gratitude, whether it's hosting a dinner, singing a song of thankfulness, or saying a simple "thank you." By adopting an attitude of gratitude, our minds are cleared of anything negative that might take its place. Criticism and complaining cease to exist when there is an environment of gratitude in a congregation.

BE ACTIVE IN YOUR GRATITUDE.

Something I recently learned is that the month of October is Pastor/Minister Appreciation Month in the Christian community. This is celebrated on the second Sunday of October. Sometimes we don't realize all of the things our ministers do for us; and that everything they do is in addition to their regular jobs and caring for their families. While our ministers don't serve in order to receive thanks or gifts, it is important that they know we appreciate everything that they do to guide and support us on our spiritual journeys. If you are looking for an opportunity to thank your minister and show your love for him, I would suggest doing something special for all of your congregational ministers on October 11, the celebratory day of Minister Appreciation Month.

Sharing our gratitude for one another is sometimes overlooked, but it is such a simple thing to do. The young sister in Peru reminded me of this and she inspired me to relay these thoughts to you. Let us all work on instilling active gratitude in our congregations to help cultivate joy in serving and the warm fellowship mentioned in our Mission statement. - LRK

NEW COURSE FOR MINISTERS

As a church that embraces change, we want to be in a state of continual learning. Striving to learn more allows us to grow in ways that will help us reach congregational health, by cultivating our culture, divine service experience, pastoral care, and structure.

In the beginning of April, the New Apostolic Church USA released a new product for ministers, called the Effective Preaching course. This is an online teaching program that helps ministers improve their preaching skills, which will in turn enhance the divine service experience. It had been discussed that there needed to be a central resource for ministers on preaching, since that is a fundamental element of the divine service. The group assigned to this project used many different resources to create the material for the Effective Preaching course. For example, they utilized input from professional public speakers and incorporated information from the past New Apostolic powerful sermon program and other preaching resources.



The Effective Preaching course is one course comprised of four main topics: Developing Inner Authority, Sermon Construction, Preaching Delivery Skills, and Utilizing Feedback. Another interesting element of the course is that after the online experience is completed, local ministers will have small group discussions, in person, to discuss the information, truly making it a team effort to digest the information and learn how to enhance preaching in the divine service.



We hope that all ministers find this course beneficial to themselves

personally and to their congregation. For all current ministers who preach in a divine service, the Effective Preaching course will be a requirement in the future.



CONFIR

WELCOME TO OUR CH

The confirmands this year heard in their special confirmation service that “The Teacher has come and is calling for you” (John 11:28). God is calling us to meet Him, and when we answer that call, we can always feel His presence. The confirmands answered the call of the Lord to serve Him and others and prepare for His return by saying their confirmation vow:

I RENOUNCE SATAN AND ALL HIS WORKS AND WAYS, AND SURRENDER MYSELF TO YOU, O TRIUNE GOD, FATHER, SON, AND HOLY SPIRIT, IN BELIEF, OBEDIENCE, AND THE EARNEST RESOLUTION TO REMAIN FAITHFUL TO YOU UNTIL MY END. AMEN.

When we surrender ourselves completely to God, we can experience true joy in the knowledge that He has a plan and that we are a part of it. After the confirmands made their vow to God, they received a blessing. This blessing strengthens the confirmands as they strive to renounce the devil and keep their vow to profess Jesus Christ in word and deed.

As a profession of faith, confirmands on their confirmation day accept and recognize that they are part of the Christian community, specifically the New Apostolic community of believers. Being a part of a community means that we care for and support one another. To welcome the 2015 confirmands, we have printed each one of their names below. We hope that you'll join in welcoming them and praying for them so that we may all feel connected to each other as we continue on this journey of faith together. - VB

MATION

CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

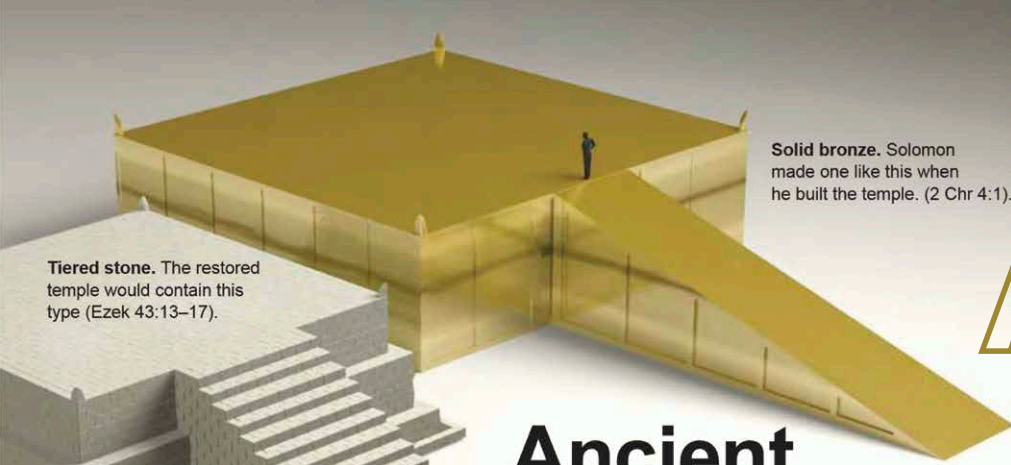
2015 CONFIRMANDS:

Mayerli Adorno
Joel Afata
Dylan Agin
Kekoa Alvaro
Courtland Anderson
Phandie Anesca
Eben Arrowood
Melissa Ayala
Seth Bainbridge
Blake Basler
Jacquelyn Bell
Rachel Bonefas
Madilyn Brooks
Madison Brune
Sarah Bun
Grace Carlino
Maylai Chamreun
Kyla Chanthanasak
Adelina Clamser
Mairead Colby
Jeffrey Cottrell, Jr
Destiny Cunningham
Emma D'Amore
Bradley Dantes
Carolyn Daulton
Bradley Deisz
Nahuel Delgado
Sage Devellerez
Joseph Doff
Jack Ehler
Anthony Febus, IV
Mia Figueredo
Jared Flick
Jami Freudenberg
Zachary Friend
Richard Gao
Abby Gardner
Dean Gjivovich, Jr
O'Darius Gould
Andrew Grdovic
Kaitlyn Gurdyal
Jacob Hallmark
Jonathan Hallmark
John Hernandez

Ivan Hernandez
Ashton Hess
Ethan Hoevelmann
Eric Hussing
Nicholas Hussing
Bertine Ilunga
Aliyah Jackson
Madelyn Jauss
Ashley Johnston
Lorraine Kaira
Kamamalu Kaleikini
Samantha Kaninda
Stella Kankam
Jonathan Kasongo
Nathan Kastell
Hannah Klapper
Kristian Kraemer
Jerome Kue
Amber Lang
Sebastian Lee
Joshua Lencse
Lucky Lisangi
Jacob Logan
Emma Lovaglio
Kameron Lowry
Kyle Luangpakdy
Tiana Luangsouphom
Philip Ly
Alec Maag
Joshua Martinez
Anderson McClelland
Erin McBride
Matthew McFail
Noah McKenzie
Benjamin Meisner
Elyse Miceli
Taylor Miller
Nathan Nelson
Jeremy Newman
Miranda Nguyen
Alexander Nytz

Matthew Oreskovich
Madison Orlofski
Jacob Patrick
Anika Patterson
Meyer Pavich
Carter Pearson
Austin Pernice
Jonathan Perthel
Christian Pfeiffer
Christian Phounavang
Krista Phu
Jillian Podgorny
Julia Poeschl
Nathan Pongsamorn
Madison Pudik
Emma Pusch
Blake Reparsky
Devin Robbins
Michael Rubalcava
Thea Ruchhoeft
Victoria Sam
Olivia Samuels
Tyler Sanchez
Jaedon Schapiro
Kurt Schultz, Jr
Amelia Schwartz
Elizabeth Shabani
Maisha Shabani
Evan Shaddon
Adelene Slade
Kyle Smith
George Son
Ava Speidel
Paige Stier
Nathan Stroud
Whitney Sussman
Abigail Swanson

Djenane Sylvestre
Michael Taylor
Caitlyn Thomas
Max Tirone
Lance Tomasko
Caitlin Tong
AnnaLiese Tschoepe
Orlando Vasquez
Alexis Vicari
Frederick Warfield
Patrick Wayukulua
Dillon Weber
Grace Weist
Jonathan Weitkunat
Matthew Wilczek
Samario Williams
Kayla Winslow
Alexander Winters
Monica Winters
Hannah Wolff
Owen Wurst
Logan Young
Jacob Yowell
Zoey Zappie



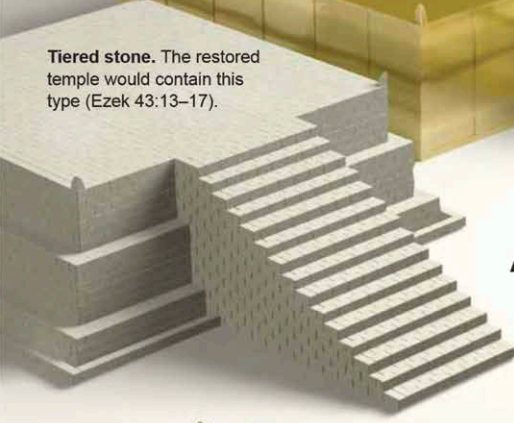
Tiered stone. The restored temple would contain this type (Ezek 43:13–17).

Solid bronze. Solomon made one like this when he built the temple. (2 Chr 4:1).

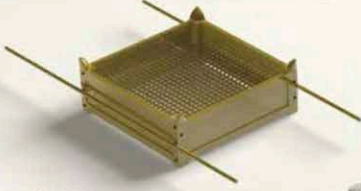
DECORATING THE ALTAR

Ancient Altars

Ancient people made offerings to appease the gods. The Israelites used different types of altars for whole burnt offerings to Yahweh.



Worked stone with horns. One like this was found at Beer-sheba.



Movable bronze-covered wood. The Israelites built this type in the wilderness (Exod 27:1–8).



Unworked stones with a hearthstone slab (Exod 20:25). One like this was discovered at Arad.



A rectangular mound of sod, clay, or mud-brick. Yahweh commanded Moses to build this kind (Exod 20:24).



Any stone of the right size and shape that was nearby (Judg 13:19).

Hebrew *mizbēah* (place of slaughter or sacrifice); Greek *bōmos* (elevated place; only in Acts 17:23; frequently used in the Greek Old Testament to translate *mizbēah*) and *thysiastrion* (place of sacrifice).

IN ANCIENT TIMES THE ALTAR WAS USED FOR SACRIFICES.

OUR ALTAR HAS A CONNECTION WITH THIS SACRIFICIAL ALTAR, IN THAT WE CELEBRATE THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION HERE, A REMEMBRANCE OF CHRIST'S SACRIFICE.

Our discussion of Thanksgiving altar decorations should begin within the context of our theological and liturgical beliefs. The New Apostolic Church liturgical tradition brings sacrament and word together in one place at the altar, where they are both focal points of the divine service experience. We may contrast this to the Catholic tradition that uses an altar for sacraments and a pulpit for the word. Additionally, many American Christian churches base their approach on the Reformed Church or Calvinistic style, which does not use an altar at all.

In the Old Testament, an altar was constructed where sacrifices were made to please God. When Christ made the ultimate sacrifice, He became the altar. Nothing else can compare with His supreme sacrifice. Through His word and His sacrament, the altar now represents divine authority. The Word of God is proclaimed at the altar, reminding us of His promise and grace. The sacrament of Holy Communion is the presence of Christ's sacrifice for us and it is also consecrated and celebrated at the altar.

Music and worship prepare us to receive the preached Word of God. The divine Word, including the proclamation of the forgiveness of sins, prepares

the way for the highpoint of the celebration of the Sacrament of Holy Communion. It is important to recognize that music and worship are offered in ways that do not distract us from Word and Sacrament. Likewise, the altar decorations should support, not distract us from, the precious main elements of the divine service.

Of times in the past, we decorated our Thanksgiving altars with canned goods or patriotic symbols such as flags. Both of these items are inherently good; the canned goods serve a wonderful humanitarian purpose and our flag evokes a strong and positive emotional connection for many souls. They may have an honored place within the church building.

However, given our understanding of what the altar represents within our Theology and Liturgy, it should be adorned predominantly by the earnings of Christ. Please make every effort to reflect this understanding when making your Thanksgiving plans. Without minimizing the importance of Thanksgiving Day, let us limit the decoration design to flowers, fruits and vegetables in a way that does not distract our attention from its higher purpose. - LRK/VB

WHO ARE YOU CONNECTED TO?

JOHN 15:5



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NEW EOFFERING WEBSITE COMING IN AUGUST 2015!

Six years after the original introduction of our church's eOffering platform we are excited to announce a major update. Our new eOffering platform is scheduled to go live in August. Announcements will be made ahead of time and you will be automatically re-directed to our new site once available.

The new site features an updated, cleaner user interface and will be available as a website as well as a mobile-optimized version, allowing easy use via your internet-enabled mobile phone or tablet.

In addition, we have worked with our providers to allow for user accounts, one of the features many of our members have inquired about. While a user account is not required to make a donation, it simplifies your regular and one-time donation process tremendously. Users will be able to maintain their mailing information, set up, review and update payment sources as well as review scheduled eOfferings. In addition, the site will allow for reporting on your previous donations in various settings. This will be especially helpful when reconciling your bank account or verifying your tax preparations.

Due to regulatory limitations, eGiving systems are not allowed to generate fully valid tax receipts at this point. You will continue to receive a donation acknowledgement receipt (DAR) from the church on a monthly basis as before.

For comments and questions on the new eOffering site, you are welcome to contact us at offering@nac-usa.org. - KSH