

Health, growth, completion

Vision



New Apostolic Church USA

District News

www.nac-usa.org

Winter 2015

Dear brothers and sisters,

Welcome to 2016!

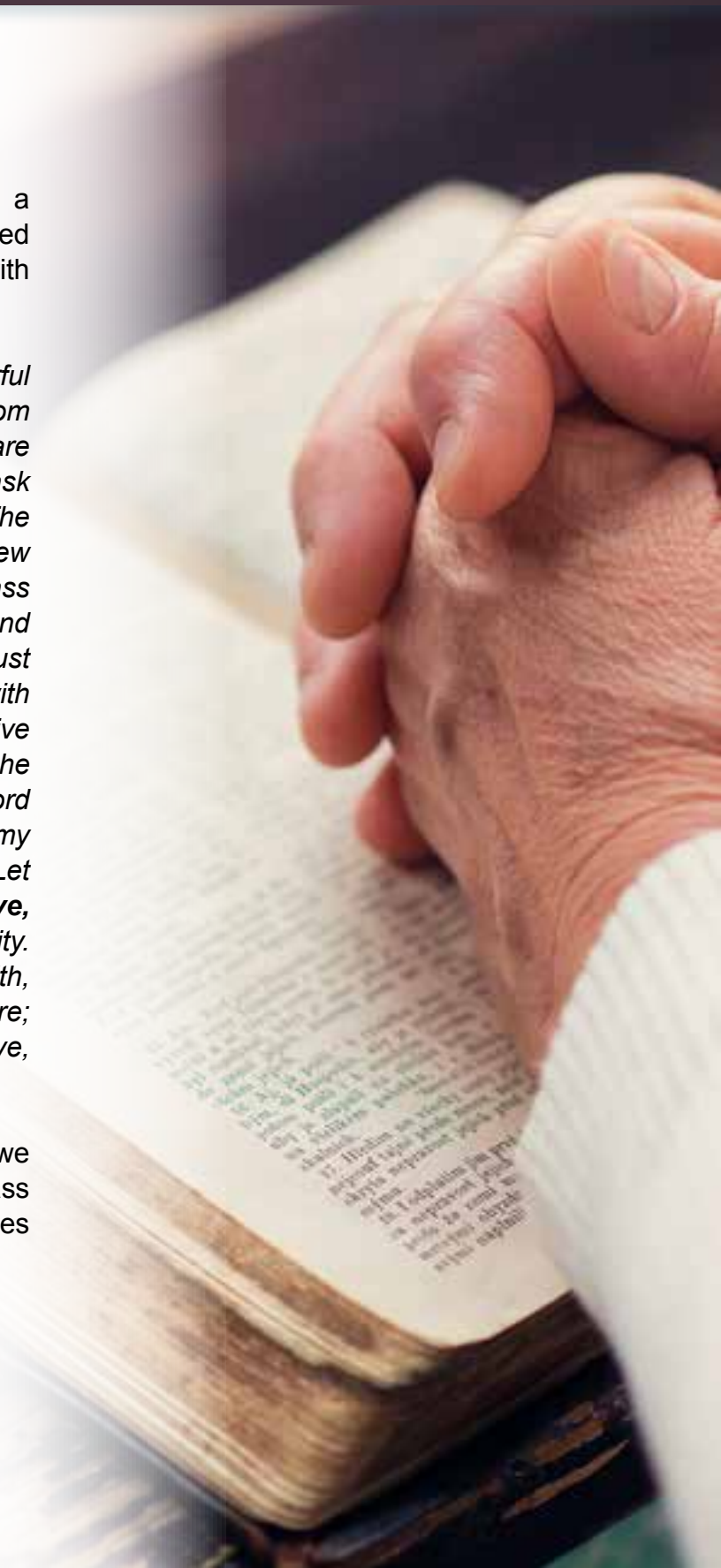
In preparing this Winter VISION I came across a message from our Chief Apostle that he expressed recently in Cape Town, which I would like to share with you.

*My brothers and sisters, we have a wonderful heritage, a wonderful capital we have received from our ancestors, from our predecessors and we are thankful for that, but never forget that now it is our task to pass it on to our children. That is our task today. The story must go on and as the Christian faith, the New Apostolic faith is part of our heritage, we have to pass it on to our children. It is our responsibility – yours and mine – that our children receive a **living faith**, not just a tradition. We want them to receive a **true love** with deeds, not only with words. We want them to receive a **joyful hope**, not just a hope of, “Yes, one day the Lord will come.” I cannot wait for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ without being joyful. If there is no joy in my heart, then there is something wrong with my hope. Let us transmit to our children a **living faith**, a **true love**, and a **joyful hope**. That is our task and responsibility. Let us think about the way we speak about our faith, the way we love, the way we speak about the future; these things teach them our living faith, our true love, and our joyful hope.*

Therefore dear loved ones, let us ensure that we strengthen these important traits in ourselves and pass them on to the next generation in preparing ourselves for the Lord's return.

With loving greetings,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'R. K. K.', located at the bottom left of the page.





WAITING
ARE WE STILL WAITING FOR THE LORD?

Many of us can probably remember a time within the church when more attention was given to events of the future. More discussion and elaboration was dedicated to describing phrases like the Wedding Feast in Heaven, the Man-child, the Woman Clothed with the Sun, and the Thousand Years of Peace, than we experience today. All of these phrases describe future concepts that follow the First Resurrection or return of Christ. Often in the past we have also clung to certain phrases, such as waiting for “the last soul” and for “the numbers to be fulfilled,” while we “wait for the Lord.” These mottos-of-sorts help us put complex meaning into simple lines. Many of the phrases we have embraced in the New Apostolic Church have been about the doctrine of future things, and this is not surprising considering that the commission of the Apostles, a defining ministry of our church, “is to prepare the church of Christ for the reunion with Jesus Christ at His return.” (CNAC 10.1.3) In an earlier section, the catechism states more comprehensively:

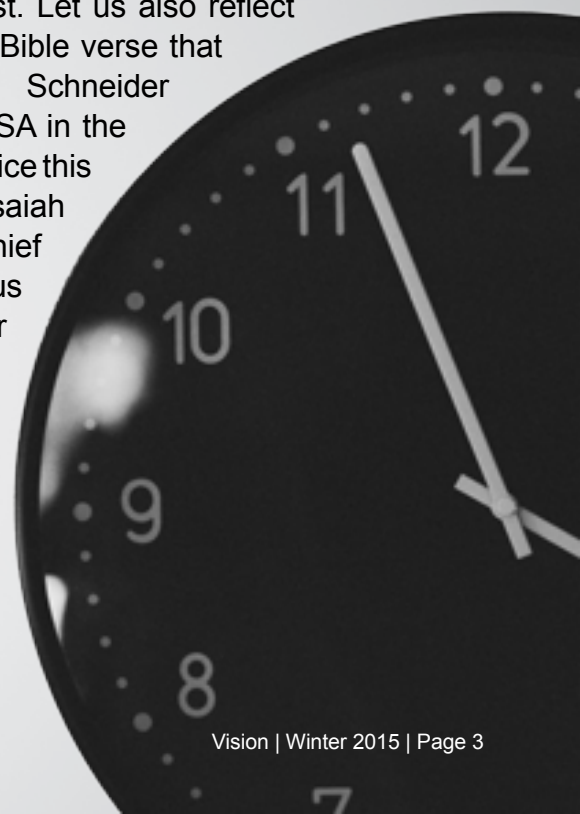
Jesus Christ Himself directly gave His church only one ministry, namely the Apostle ministry. In His stead and by His commission, the Apostle ministry is to build the church and make redemption in Jesus Christ accessible to human beings who long for salvation. Furthermore, the Apostle ministry is mandated to prepare believers for the return of Jesus Christ. (CNAC 7.4)

But the importance of the return of Jesus Christ raises the question, why does it seem like the Lord’s coming is being spoken about less? We might think, “I never hear those familiar phrases of hope and anticipation anymore. **Are we still waiting for the Lord?** This expectation is what I live for and die hoping in!”

I would like to shed some light on this concern by reorienting our focus onto the preparation aspect of waiting. We must shift from “waiting for the numbers to be fulfilled” to the preparing of the bride—a “ripening” of souls as Chief Apostle Leber once put it. We are not in the business of checking souls through the gate, but rather forming the

people of God into citizens of His kingdom. The Apostles’ work is focused on the Lord’s coming, but there is much that needs to take place before that day. They help the souls to prepare, or “ripen”, before the day of the Lord so that all can have access to salvation. This is the function of the Apostles.

Sometimes I have seen excitement of the future kingdom function like a pacifier. It may be used to dull the pain of current struggle or burdens. We might say, “I struggle with illness now, but I will be happy and healthy in Heaven.” In so doing, we reduce life to a waiting period, as if we have already bought the ticket, and simply wait for departure. We have to move away from this understanding. As Chief Apostle Schneider said in Miami last year, “We have this strong desire. We want to become like Jesus and we suffer because we are not yet like Jesus.” Later in the year in Venezuela he said something similar, “We suffer because we were disobedient towards God.” God reveals something similar through Micah to Israel and Judah of His love and justice shown in the form of discipline. Struggle is a formative exercise. Struggle is not simply there to build the anticipation for pending relief (though it does that also). Struggle can drive us towards righteousness that comes by grace and faith. All this is clear when we recognize ourselves as sinners in need of serious reform to be like Christ. Let us also reflect on the special Bible verse that Chief Apostle Schneider gave for the USA in the Woodbury service this year out of Isaiah 44:21. The Chief Apostle told us to remember that we have to struggle to be saved. Let us also keep in mind the words of Jesus to the disciples on the Mount of



Olives: *But he who endures to the end shall be saved.* (Matthew 24:13) Yes, we have to struggle, but if we can endure this struggle, we shall be saved.

No one can be worthy just by talking about or hoping for the day of the Lord. In divine services and in our small group discussions, when we hear and talk about how to transform ourselves into

Christ, we are actually still focusing on the Lord's coming. The words "Lord's coming" or "second coming" might not actually be spoken, but we have to learn how to ready ourselves for His coming, and we do that by learning how to model our lives on Him.

So are we still waiting for the Lord even if we don't talk about it as much as we used to? YES!

We are waiting and also **preparing** for the Lord's coming.

This is the focal point of our future, but in order to prepare for our future, we need to work on our current selves and the world we find ourselves in right now.

So if waiting for the Lord's coming is really about preparing, what are we doing today to refine ourselves to be ready for the Lord's coming?

- Thinking back on Chief Apostle Schneider's thoughts on Isaiah 44:21, ripening our souls for the Lord's coming is not something that always happens easily, it requires us to struggle and persist in our learning and growing.
- We can pray for the Holy Spirit to guide us so that we may be prepared for the Lord's coming.

- From Isaiah 44:21, the Chief Apostle also told us to remember that we are called to serve God in whatever situation we find ourselves in. Being able to serve God and others before ourselves at any point in our lives is a sign of the ripening of our souls.
- We can grow in our small group discussions with our brothers and sisters. In these discussions we learn more about Christ and how we can strive, individually and as a community, to become more like Him in our everyday deeds.
- To ripen our souls, we can extend the divine service experience, starting with the worship before a divine service. We can realize that it is not just about the song that's being played, but rather is about the worship of our great God and expressing to Him our thankfulness, joy, and awe. By participating in the worship before service, we can prepare ourselves to receive God's word, which we can then reflect on and apply to our lives after the service is done.

In the past few years our understanding has further developed regarding our life of faith. Through these teachings, we have deepened our understanding of Christ and this prepares us for His return, and we need to continue our journey forward.

The question posed earlier — are we still waiting for the Lord? — can be answered with a simple yes, but we must see the activity that runs alongside waiting for the Lord. To be prepared, we must struggle to be ripened by the Holy Spirit. Micah poses rhetorically, "*And what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.*" (Micah 6:8) Let us not **simply** wait for the Lord, but struggle towards being a holy people prepared to stand with our Lord when He returns. Let us prepare for the Lord, spending our time discussing and acting upon how we can become more and more like Jesus.

-LRK/AG/VB

Brush off the dust.

JEREMIAH 29:13

STEWARDSHIP

LIVING A LIFE RICH TOWARD GOD

As promised in the Autumn 2015 Vision, we will include an ongoing series of articles on the subject of stewardship and this is the next installment. You may remember that the concept of Christian stewardship revolves around the belief that all that we have in life is a gift in trust from God. This gift is given to us to manage as stewards - to His glory and for His purpose. It includes every aspect of our life: our time, energy, passions, spiritual giftedness, relationships, and possessions. They all belong to Him and He has given them to us, but expects us to account for them one day as Jesus described in the parable of the talents.

In this article we will focus on this powerful idea that God has a unique purpose for each of our lives. Our Chief Apostle spoke to this concept in a recent service in Switzerland using Jesus' teaching parable of the rich farmer (Luke 12:15-21). It may be helpful to read these verses carefully and then consider these points which our Chief Apostle highlights:

- Jesus has no quarrel with the farmer's prosperity. He earned it fairly. But notice that he does not see his good fortune as a gift from God and gives Him no thanks or honor for it.
- Furthermore, the farmer decides that all of his prosperity should be dedicated to self-gratification. His conversation is with no one but his own soul and his plans include no one but himself. We see no vision of a God-directed purpose for his life or a sense of responsibility for others.

The Gospel is so clear on this point! Jesus taught and lived a life dedicated to others. He referred often to His life's purpose: to do the will of God who sent Him, who loves Him and whom He loves in return. His love and

compassion for others, especially those who were in need, also drove His decisions and plans. This is a special life, a life richly lived. In the parable, Jesus calls this a life "rich toward God."

- Lastly, notice how Jesus points out the danger of the man's short term view of life. At that single moment in time, his life appears to be successful, rewarding and well lived. But see how quickly the accounting changes when in the next moment, God requires his soul. When the perspective shifts and a lifetime is viewed from eternity, the definition of a rich life changes. Now the moments lived to the glory and purpose of God and for the good of others can be seen in their true light and their true value.

This closely mirrors Jesus warning to the church in Revelation 3:14-17: *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.*

That's so tragic. Who wants that said about their life?

*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.***

So with our Chief Apostle's urging in mind, I would be wise to ask myself some important questions:

If my life were lived "rich toward God" what would it look like? Would it look (perhaps feel) different than it does right now? Is it time to make some changes? - WJ



SYNOD UPDATES

From September 25-27, district leaders, bishops, and apostles were invited to the National Synod, the annual meeting that deals with governance issues and provides transparency of projects and programs to the leadership of the NAC USA. In this year's Synod, representatives from some of the flagship congregations were also invited to participate in the meeting. Some of the items discussed in the Synod included:

- **Work Group Updates** – Project managers of the work groups Leadership, Effective Preaching, Work of Ministry, Children, Youth, Small Group, and Giving provided updates on the work they have been doing over the past year.
- **Midweek Experience** – The challenges and successes of the midweek experience were also discussed. There was a survey in the Autumn Vision regarding the midweek experience that provided feedback on each individual's experience of the midweek options.
- **Children's and Youth Services** – It was discussed that children and youth services can be opened by the officiant and another "focused" minister or teacher may hold the majority of the sermon to connect it better to the children or youth.
- **Member Booklet** – This is a booklet that will be released in the upcoming month. It will be given to all new members as they decide to be a part of the New Apostolic Church and also to existing members. Besides telling readers what the New Apostolic Church believes in, the booklet also details what they can expect from the church and what the church expects of its members.

After discussion with the Apostles and Bishops, there are two new guidelines regarding ministers:

1. ***When an individual or a couple require a blessing or a sacrament***, it is important to understand the difference between the two. Sacraments bind a person to the Triune God. The sacraments of Holy Baptism, Holy Sealing, and Holy Communion are experiences that bring one further into the church of Christ and also links one with their congregation. Blessings are deeply personal experiences where God's help, strength, and love is sought in a particular moment of life (i.e. anniversaries, weddings, etc.). Because blessings are personal and may not necessarily happen in front of an altar, an individual or a couple may want to choose a specific minister to deliver the blessing. However, a specific minister cannot be requested to administer a sacrament. As we step forward, please keep this guideline in mind.
2. In the past, ***ministers called to serve in the divine service in which they were to be retired*** may have used the occasion to reflect on personal feelings and experiences. In our understanding of the divine service, our Heavenly Father speaks to us by the prompting of the Holy Spirit. Because of this, it is not really appropriate to share personal sentiments in a divine service that don't pertain to the Gospel message. When called up to serve at the altar for the last time, I've asked ministers to refrain from using the occasion to share their personal feelings and history. Naturally, a short expression of thanks may be appropriate.

Thank you for your acceptance of these changes from our former traditions. **-LRK**

JAMAICA'S 50 YEAR JUBILEE: A JOURNEY OF TRANSFORMATION

The beginning of the overseas work from North America began on the island of Jamaica. Jamaica was under the care of Canada until 2007 and is now cared for by the USA. A 50-year anniversary celebration of the establishment of our church in Jamaica was held during the weekend of August 1-2, 2015. On August 1, 1965, the church in Jeffrey Town, Jamaica was dedicated by District Apostle M. Kraus. It was out of that congregation that the church spread throughout Jamaica. To spread the news and joy of this anniversary, a marching band walked through the town to announce the jubilee celebration to the townspeople and inform them of the journey of transformation they have been on for the past 50 years. On Saturday, August 1st, a festive congregation praised and worshiped God with a daylong presentation of song, music, and history. Overall, there were more than 500 who attended the Saturday activities. Thankfulness was the theme and many participated in singing and watched pictorial presentations of pioneers throughout the 50 years. Musical presentations were performed by the Sunday school, youth groups and the different choirs from the surrounding congregations. Guests and church members could

share in conversation and the day was filled with much joy as they celebrated each other and God for all He has done through the church in Jamaica. Several of the retired and active ministers who had worked in this country from Canada and the USA were able to participate in the celebration, as well as District Apostles Woll and Kolb.

On Sunday, August 2, District Apostle Woll conducted the service in Jeffrey Town and District Apostle Kolb conducted the divine service in the Kingston congregation, with 167 people in attendance.

These celebrations are not about accomplishments though, as District Elder Stephenson from Jamaica points out: "Our celebration is not about us, nor the Canadians, nor the Americans. It's not an event that excites us about achievements or accomplishments. It's about the Lord's grace; **His journey with us over these 50 years – A journey of transformation.** This is what we celebrate." The celebration of the jubilee continued through the year with various activities in all the Jamaican congregations. -VB







TRUST IN GOD: A MATTER OF LOVE

In the US, there is a tradition of public trust in God. On our currency we see the inscription “In God We Trust.” Likewise, on certain public buildings like courthouses, we find similar inscriptions. But it’s interesting to dig into the history of these traditions. We find that very often they were inspired during times of great national stress and uncertainty. These were times when the very survival of the nation was in question and the answers did not seem humanly possible. When human solutions were exhausted, people often turned to God in desperation. King David voiced this sentiment so powerfully when he found himself facing only bad choices: “Let me fall into the hands of the Lord.” (1 Chronicles 21:13)

This picture brings to mind the team building exercise some organizations use to inspire trust between fellow workers. An individual is encouraged to fall blindly backwards into the waiting arms of team members. Anyone who has tried this can testify of the uncomfortable sensation of dependency that is experienced at the moment of truth.

In a similar way, Jesus spoke of this relationship also in the 6th chapter of Matthew. He describes the simple existence of the birds of the air and the lilies of the field who are dependent on God who cares for their every need. He continues:

Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. Matthew 6:31-34

But why is it that we rediscover this simple truth often only during the darkest moments within our own lives? Why are we so often resistant to being dependent on God? Why does it take a crisis to turn back to Him? Why is He so often our last resort?



There is no single answer to these questions. We can point to many factors. From day one of mankind's creation, God gave the gift of free will and independence. He placed within our capabilities the gifts of reason and resourcefulness. Trust is a choice and within this choice lies the possibility to be seduced by our own resourcefulness and knowledge. The evil one exploited this human tendency in the Garden of Eden: *You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.* (Genesis 3:4-5) To become "Godlike" to ourselves is a constant temptation.

We also receive many messages during our life encouraging us to become independent and self-reliant. As children, we were rewarded for these traits and accomplishments. The trend continues throughout our adult lives. Recognition and financial rewards often come to us as we become more resourceful and knowledgeable. These discoveries shape our thinking and make us vulnerable to a great miscalculation that we see described in Revelation: *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.* (Revelation 3:16) These are harsh words, but from God's perspective, we can recognize the simple truth.

Then, at the other extreme, there is another danger. Within the disappointments, disillusionment, or hardships of our human experience, it's possible to become cynical. We can become convinced that no one can be trusted. In this condition of mind and soul, we superimpose these negative human characteristics we have experienced on God as though He too will act in a flawed human way. Seemingly, this leaves us no recourse but to trust only in ourselves.

So what is the prescription for trust in God? This could seem quite complicated, but let's put some simple truths in the right order:

- **GOD IS TRUSTWORTHY BECAUSE HE LOVES US.** There is no remedy for trust that

does not begin with a recognition that God loves us completely and perfectly. He desires our eternal nearness and reconciliation and has made a solution path to make it so. His love is more powerful than our enemy and accuser, and His grace is greater than any sin or human condition. Within our New Apostolic Mission statement, we find these words "that all may feel the love of God." It is so critical that our congregations become the refuge for every soul regardless of their circumstances to experience the words of David, "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalm 34:8).

- **JESUS CHRIST IS THE OUTLET FOR GOD'S LOVE IN OUR LIVES.** He is the solution path that brings us to eternal salvation. He is the evidence that God loves us so perfectly. We need Him and must be convinced that our lives are incomplete without Him. Our relationship with Him today brings the love of God into our lives and into the lives of our neighbors when we live in Him. We can depend on Him.



WHY IS GOD SO OFTEN OUR LAST RESORT?

Before the birth of Jesus, we can examine the Old Testament teaching of Job regarding an almost inconceivable trust in God. Despite every hardship, disappointment, and injustice that makes up the human experience, Job declares these well quoted words: *The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord.* (Job 1:21) It's hard to imagine this degree of trust under the circumstances of his life. However, when we look deeper, we see that his trust is fueled by a powerful, prophetic belief in the coming victory of

Christ: *For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God.* (Job 19:25-26)

Likewise, Christ speaks simply and directly of His role to bring us into the love of God just hours before His death to His disciples: *for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God.*(John 16:27)

And lastly we find this testimony from the Apostle Paul: *For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* (Romans 5:6-8)

In conclusion, we should never underestimate the power we have to inspire trust in God within others. When we live in Christ, we live a life of love and compassion that affects those around us. As disciples, Jesus expects us to testify of Him and His Father through our love for one another. Please look around you. Equipped with the love of Christ, who can you inspire to trust God?

- LRK/WJ/VB



USA DISTRICT NEW CONGREGATIONS

PORTAGE, MI:

The congregation of Portage is the newly opened flagship congregation in Michigan. The new building, purchased in August of 2014, had always been a church building since its construction in 1968. The church is now the new congregation for over 200 members. Dedicated on October 11th of this year, the grand opening of the building for the community was November 8th.





RANDOLPH, NY:

Dedicated on July 26, 2015, the Randolph congregation in New York is the new home to 65 members. The building used to be a medical center. The congregations of Olean, Cattaraugus, and Jamestown consolidated into the new Randolph congregation.



Financial-OF-Publication_2014_World

Facts and Figures 2014

Income in EUR	2010-2014	2014	weight
Offerings / donations		168'685'839	79.8%
Other income		10'497'375	5.0%
Asset management		32'107'367	15.2%
Total		211'290'582	100.0%

Income worldwide:

"Offerings / donations" include thank offerings, amounting to Euro 18.0. mio. The total worldwide income in Euro has increased by 4.5% as compared to previous year.

Excluding currency effects the worldwide total income increased by 8.2%. The main driver for the increase are higher realized profits in asset management.

Operating Expenditure in EUR	2010-2014	2014	weight
Personnel		-48'183'316	35.6%
Travel		-19'212'627	14.2%
Other expenditures		-40'682'872	30.1%
Real estate operation		-27'145'668	20.1%
Total		-135'224'483	100.0%

Operating expenditure worldwide:

Total operating expenditure in Euro has decreased by 2.9% as compared to 2013.

Excluding currency effects the expenditure has increased by 1.7%.

Result I		76'066'099
Building Program		-80'722'960
Sales of Buildings / Plots		22'777'106
Result II		18'120'244
Increase of reserves		-18'120'244
Result III		0

In 2014 the investments in church buildings have further increased, whereas sales of buildings have decreased.

The surplus has been added to the reserves.

These reserves are to cover future financial obligations e.g. increased expenditures for the maintenance of the aging buildings, worldwide pension obligations of the church have to be secured and certain reserves are needed because of the expectation that income will decrease in the western world due to demographic development.

Explanation:

Figures:

All figures are based on a monetary view. Balance sheet aspects such as capitalization, depreciation and provisions are not taken into consideration. The presented result is not the balance sheet result, rather the difference between income and expenditure.

Other income:

Bequests, earmarked donations etc.

Other expenditure:

Materials (e.g. teaching materials), insurance, office, communication, transmission etc.

Building program:

New buildings, alterations, renovations and equipment of church buildings



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THANK YOU...

...FOR YOUR CONDOLENCES

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your condolences over the past months concerning my father's passing. Our families accept that his passing was God's will and we find joy in that his life was filled with God's blessings. Thank you again for your thoughts and prayers which provided much comfort for us all. - LRK

...FOR FILLING OUT THE MECS SURVEY

Thank you for taking the time to fill out a Midweek Experience Survey! We received many responses and will be compiling and assessing the information over the next few months. I hope that the midweek experience can continue to be a source of learning about the Gospel and building relationships with each other in this new year. - LRK