

Health, growth, completion

Vision



New Apostolic Church USA

District News

www.nac-usa.org

Winter 2019

Dear Brothers and Sisters,


Once more, a new year lays before us. Only God knows the content of the hours and days that we will encounter. Naturally, we want to have a bright and positive outlook considering what is to come. We wish for health, success, and good things to happen; there is nothing wrong about such wishes, and we know, with God, all things are possible. In this regard, we are mindful of what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:19 - *If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable*. Perhaps this verse becomes a little clearer in a different translation: *If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied* (NIV). It is a strong, yet truthful statement that if we only rely on Christ for things of this life, we have missed what His divine, and eternal, intention is for us.

On the other hand, it is also in our human nature to look towards the future negatively, with fear of the unknown, dread for an approaching concern, or anxiety over present shortcomings.

Let us consider a different perspective through the eyes of our faith. We approach each day with confidence and courage in the belief and knowledge that the almighty God, our Father, is with us! With such an understanding, we recognize the fact that whatever the day brings is of little consequence to us. When we live in the Spirit and abide in the environment of God's will, we live a life of freedom procured for us by Jesus, and our future is secure.

Continued on next page...





Here, the Magnificat of Mary, gives us the right attitude:

My soul magnifies the Lord,

And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.

For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant;

For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.

For He who is mighty has done great things for me,

And holy is His name. (Luke 1: 46-49)

Mary composed this prayer in a time of uncertainty, not knowing the full extent of God's plan. Yet, strengthened by her cousin, she remained resilient and exclaimed such a hymn of confidence.

It is wise for us to be aware that the time prior to the coming of Christ will, at times, be fraught with difficulty and tribulation, causing one to even question the Lord's presence in their life, the church, or even His power in the world. At such times of disappointment and misunderstanding, the evil one will attack with doubt, and try to create distance, damaging our relationship with the Lord.

As in the time prior to Christ's birth, this also occurred during His Passion with the disciples. We can imagine the dismay and confusion when Jesus told them of His impending captivity, torture, and death. How was this possible? It seemed everything was on a positive track. However, the intentions of God did not coincide with the ideas of the disciples, especially Peter, whom Jesus warned in Luke 22:31-32.

We live in a similar circumstance today. At one time, we thought the church would continue to grow and triumph in the circle of Christianity, and then the Lord would come. We may have thought that large numbers are a measure of success. But it becomes more and more apparent that the Lord's measurements for success are vastly different than ours. We can see this in the small number of disciples that He left when He ascended, and yet, from these, Christianity spread and has endured over 2000 years!

Dear ones, let us not be dismayed because we do not understand the ways of our eternal Father. He does not expect us to understand. He simply has called us for His mission; to do what Jesus Christ commissioned His apostles to do...



Preach the gospel.

Make disciples of all people.

Prepare for His return.

This is our task and we will continue in it.

Yes, we do not know what the future days will bring, but this we do know: over the past years, under the activity of the Holy Spirit, the Lord has always allowed us the opportunity to grow and become closer in our relationship with Him. One knows it and can feel it! Let us not become tired in advancing the mission He has given us, even if we cannot understand or comprehend His entire plan. The Lord is with us, come what may.

We join with the psalmist - *Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You...in God I have put my trust; I will not fear* (Psalm 56:3-4).

Thus, we rest in our hope in the Lord. This is not wishful thinking, but a true hope in the biblical sense - the confident expectation in the fulfillment of the Lord's promise:

I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. - John 14:3

However, even as we look towards this future, Jesus wants to fulfill this word already today! Believing souls, *here and now*, can perceive His presence in the prefiguration of His kingdom as we share in the fellowship of Holy Communion. Our desire to live in this promise, *that where I am, there you may be also*, is articulated in our plea – *Your kingdom come!*

So, while we wait to be with the Lord, in the most complete and perfect way when He comes, we can already tangibly experience that He is with us already today. May this give us strength, courage, and confidence as we look into the year ahead.

With loving greetings,

Dear brothers and sisters,

Today marks the start of the New Year. Hopefully, the last year was a good one! It is my hope that you may always find enough reasons to give thanks to our Lord and give Him the glory for all the benefits He has bestowed!

Together with all the Apostles, I wish you a blessed and peaceful new year. And here too, my wish applies: may it be a year of joy into which we can look with confidence!

It has become something of a tradition for me to publish a message for each New Year. In agreement with the district apostles I will do the same this year as well. Our motto for the year 2020 is:

CHRIST MAKES FREE!

This motto derives from a Bible passage which we find in Apostle Paul's letter to the Galatians: *Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage* (Galatians 5: 1).

Liberty—this is a great and precious gift! We all know this. As children of God we know that this not only applies to our earthly existence. We make liberty in Christ our top priority. So what does it mean to be free in Christ?

I would like to answer this question as follows:

- 1. The triune God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - is completely free from all constraints.** For Him there are no boundaries, no restrictions, and no rules set by others. His love for mankind is unconditional. Neither an individual's conduct nor any human imperfections have any influence on this.
- 2. As human beings, it is completely up to us to answer this love of God—or not.** We can choose liberty. In order to be redeemed, we must follow Christ.
- 3. Christ makes us free!** He desires to liberate us from sin, from evil, and from all afflictions.

Therefore our focus is on a completely different kind of freedom, namely the liberty of the soul. This is granted to us by God, and is an expression of His love for us.

For the year 2020, I recommend that we concentrate on this spiritual dynamic:

CHRIST MAKES FREE!

There is one thing that is especially important to me in this context.

Liberty in Christ is not an end unto itself, nor is it merely a token, nor is it anything we could have earned through our own merit. Liberty is a gift from God, which no one can earn. The Lord does not impose this upon us. But He does liberate those who desire to be liberated!

Let us allow ourselves to be liberated by the Lord by surrendering ourselves completely to the activity of the Holy Spirit. He reminds us that we are God's children. Because we know that the almighty God loves us, we can look to the future with confidence. Even in distress we trust in God. This liberates us from unnecessary worries about ourselves.

By remaining faithful to Christ, we decide over our future. Our desire is to be with Christ forever in the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Together with all the Apostles, I extend warm greetings to all of you, and wish you a good and blessed New Year filled with confidence!

- Chief Apostle Schneider
2020 Year Beginning Message



Thoughts on Acknowledgement

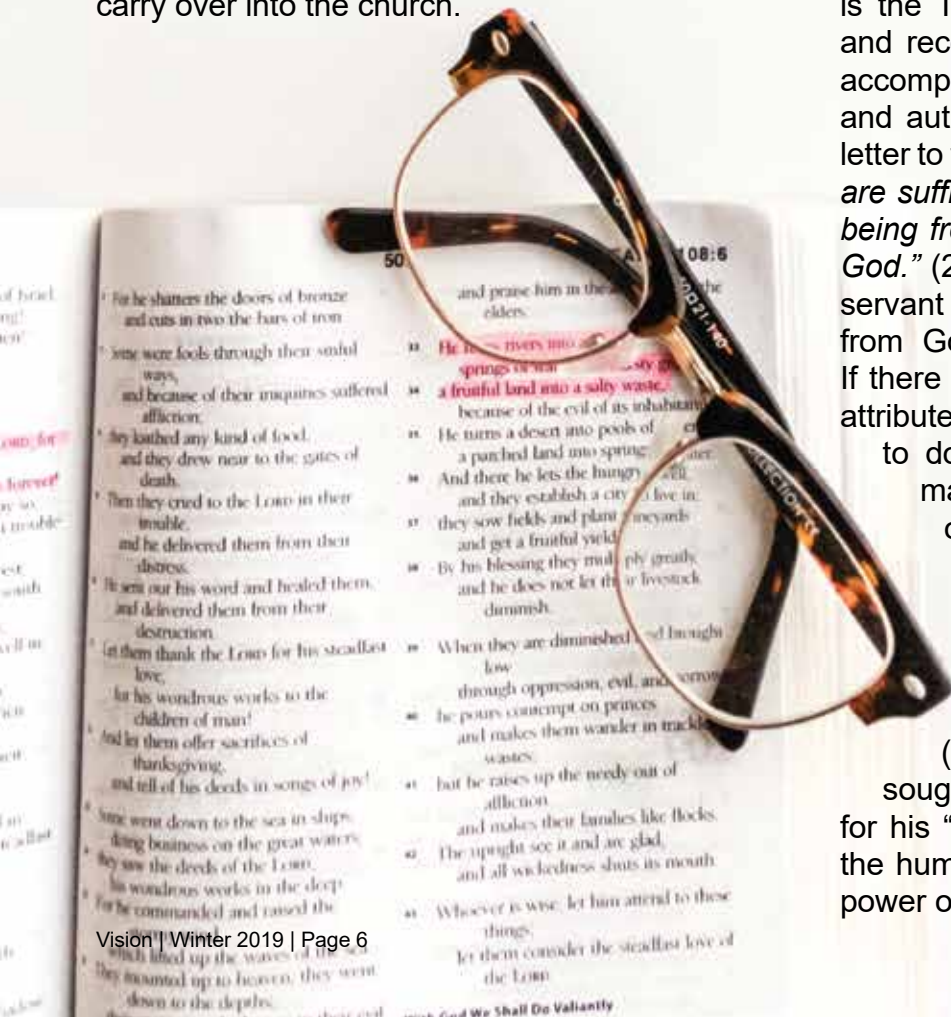
As human beings, we desire acknowledgement. For some, having their activity acknowledged might even be considered a necessity. In many human endeavors, acknowledgement is provided through either a kind word or gesture, and sometimes even through criticism. Acknowledgement serves as feedback, helping us to know that the things we are doing matter, that our work is being done properly and effectively, and that it (and we) are appreciated.

This desire for acknowledgement reflects the circumstances and attitudes of the world around us. People expect lightning fast responses to inquiries, almost immediate delivery of goods, and instant gratification. And social media doesn't help. Almost immediately, one can receive feedback on their thoughts, opinions, haircut, wardrobe, good deeds done—you name it. We desire acknowledgement, and we desire it quickly. It's no surprise, then, that this attitude can all too easily carry over into the church.

Even Christ's disciples wanted to be acknowledged. They showed this very clearly when they argued amongst themselves as to which one of them should and would be the greatest (we find that they had this argument on two different occasions in the book of Luke, actually!). *Twice* they argued over who was the greatest. And you remember Christ's response: *"For he who is least among you all will be great."* Christ's response was direct, to the point, and clearly highlighted the importance of humility.

What is our motivation to serve and to sacrifice? Is our motivation humble, or is there some pride involved? Do we serve out of love for Christ and neighbor, or do we serve to be recognized and acknowledged?

In Proverbs 3:6 it says *"In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."* There is only one who is worthy of acknowledgement, and that is the Triune God. Only He is worthy of praise and recognition. Anything that we accomplish is accomplished by His grace, and with His strength and authority. Paul speaks to this in his second letter to the Corinthians when he says *"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God."* (2 Corinthians 3:5) Paul was an incredible servant of God, but even he realized that apart from God, he was incapable and inadequate. If there was any level of sufficiency, it was to be attributed to God. Anything that Paul was able to do, and any impact that He was able to make, could only be attributed to the power of God working in and through him. Paul reiterates something similar again in his first letter to the Corinthians: *"...and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power."* (1 Corinthians 2:4) Paul could have easily sought recognition and acknowledgement for his "persuasive words of wisdom," but made the humble decision instead to acknowledge the power of the Holy Spirit working through him.



We can find some additional guidance from Paul in Romans 1:8-9: ***“I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers.”***

First, it's important to note that Paul is thanking God for the believers and their faith; his thanks is not directed to the people themselves. Second, he refers to their faith that has served as a witness to others. In other words, their actions have served as a testimony to the gospel rather than any individual or group 'advertising' their faith or good works. Finally, **as a way of giving thanks to these souls**, Paul assures them that he prays for them constantly. In this letter to the Romans, Paul acknowledges their works, *but not in a manner that honors them*. He thanks God 'through Jesus Christ.' Jesus Christ is the Author and Finisher of God's work of salvation, not any individual human being.

As children of the most high God, our motivation must always be love—love for God, and love for those whom He has called us to serve and to shepherd. The more we realize that God has called us, the less we will seek recognition and acknowledgement. If we come to expect these things, then we will be constantly disappointed. More often than not, the things that we do for the Lord and for His children won't be recognized or appreciated, at least by those we serve. Many times, they go unseen and unnoticed.

...your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

Matthew 6:6

There is One who does see what is done, however, and His reward and recognition is to be valued far more than any reward or recognition we could receive from anyone here on this earth. Our Heavenly Father is omniscient; He is the knower of all things. In Matthew 6:6 He is described as a Father who *“sees in secret, and will reward you openly.”* What a powerful and hope-inspiring thought! The Almighty One sees everything that is done in His name and to His honor and glory—even those things that are done in secret—and will someday *openly* reward those that have faithfully loved, served, and followed Him. And what is this great reward? Salvation through Jesus Christ!

Let's resist the natural desire for recognition and acknowledgement, dear brothers and sisters. Rather, let us rejoice over the fact that *“great is our reward in heaven.”* (Matthew 5:12) It is there that our names are written. This truth, combined with our love for God and for our neighbor, compels us to fulfill our calling, and to carry out the great commission of Christ.

- MNJ/LRK



Financial Overview 2017 / 2018

The church's annual synod in October 2019 ratified the annual audit 2018, a summary of which is presented on this page.

On the church income side, stable Thanksgiving offering marked a very positive aspect; regular offering income, however, decreased from 2017 to 2018, reflecting demographic and general attendance trends.

Some of these decreases were offset by stable and or higher income from renting out unused church properties and the church's reserves. The latter category can fluctuate significantly year over year, depending on the situation in the financial markets.

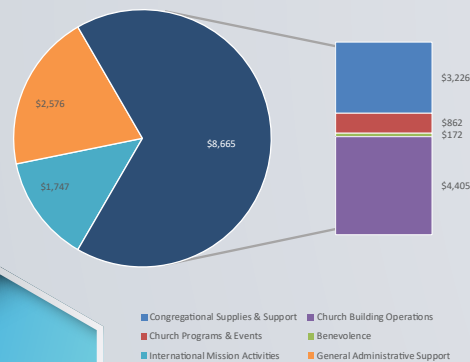
Two-thirds of the church's annual expenses are directly supporting spiritual activities in the congregations, districts and on the national level. The majority in this category falls on the maintenance and operation of the church's approximately 200 buildings around the country, which includes rent, utilities, insurance, as well as regular repair & maintenance (but not major new construction projects, see below).

Nationally developed and prepared Soulcare materials and programs and congregational activities form another major part, which also includes the church's Apostle employees. In 2018, our Chief Apostle visited the USA for a District Apostles Meeting (DAM), an event that rotates among all worldwide district churches. All participants commented on the special event in Washington, DC that the New Apostolic Church USA hosted in 2018.

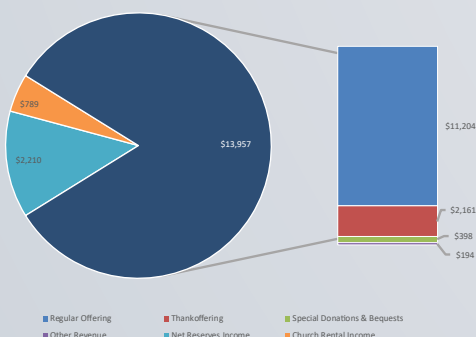
Support for the church's internationally linked areas, in particular in Mexico, Central and South America and the Caribbean, totaled approximately 13% in 2018. The remainder of the expenses was for the necessary administrative support of our congregations, including the church's office personnel.

Any surplus of annual income over annual expenses is added to the church's reserves and supports the church's ongoing operations and building activities (major renovations and new construction, acquisition). With various major projects scheduled for 2019/2020, the surplus of 2018 will be utilized for these purposes.

Uses of Funds 2018 (Church Operations)
(in \$ '000)



Sources of Funds 2018/2017 (Church Operations)
(in \$ '000)



Uses of Funds 2018 & 2017 (Church Operations)* (in \$'000)	2018	2017	% Chg. to previous year	% of Total Funds Used (2018)
Congregational Supplies & Support	\$ 3,226	\$ 2,893		24.8%
Church Programs & Events	\$ 862	\$ 541		6.6%
Benevolence	\$ 172	\$ 209		1.3%
Church Building Operations	\$ 4,405	\$ 4,512		33.9%
Total Domestic Church Funding	\$ 8,665	\$ 8,155	6.2%	66.7%
International Mission Activities	\$ 1,747	\$ 1,717		13.4%
General Administrative Support	\$ 2,576	\$ 2,744		19.8%
Total Church Expenses	\$ 12,987	\$ 12,617	2.9%	

* all information on a cash basis

Sources of Funds 2018/2017*	2018	2017	% Change to previous year	% of Total Funds Available (2018)
in \$ '000				
Regular Offering	\$ 11,204	\$ 12,269		
Thankoffering	\$ 2,161	\$ 2,066		
Special Donations & Bequests	\$ 398	\$ 796		
Other Revenue	\$ 194	\$ 367		
Church Revenue	\$ 13,957	\$ 15,498	-9.9%	82.3%
Net Reserves Income	\$ 2,210	\$ 1,396		
Church Rental Income	\$ 789	\$ 781		
Reserve Management Income	\$ 2,998	\$ 2,177	37.7%	17.7%
Funds from Church Operations	\$ 16,956	\$ 17,675	-4.1%	

* all information on a cash basis

Puget Sound Metro

The Seattle and Tacoma congregations have come together to form the Puget Sound Metro congregation. In January, Apostle Buehner dedicated a church building for this newly merged congregation.

The church, which was converted from a retail space in a shopping plaza, has a large fellowship area, and is on one level, making it easier for all members to access and navigate. It also has classrooms and meeting spaces for the Sunday School.



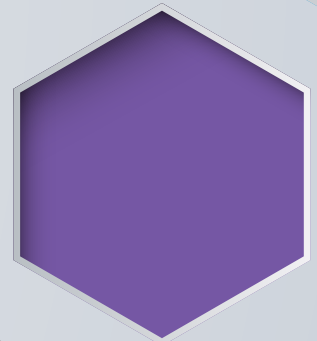
Building Updates



Raleigh

Our church purchased a building for the Raleigh congregation composed of three rental units. The members meet in a newly renovated area, which was dedicated on May 19, 2019 by Apostle Ferguson. This modern

building provides sufficient, easily accessible space for our congregation to worship in, and also provides additional income.



CONNECTING OUR MEMBERS



Over the past decades, a “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 separated from their congregations. This practice still continues today, but has gone through a few adjustments. It remains a vital part of soul care for our linked members, those individuals separated from a physical congregation. At present, around 240 packages are prepared and mailed every other month.

The contents of the package include:

A pastoral care letter written by one of the USA apostles, including the absolution

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

Questions may arise regarding the validity of sending consecrated Holy Communion wafers via the mail. Our catechism sheds light on this subject and explains our understanding that the consecration remains valid until it is received by the soul for whom it was intended. In our congregations, the consecration is repeated in each divine service for the members present in the respective congregation. This celebration of the offer of Christ is according to our liturgy.

In following the teaching of our church, Apostle Orlofski regularly visits the Chicago office, and in a solemn ceremony in the Chicago Northside church, consecrates the Holy Communion wafers to be mailed out in the linked member packages. For these members, the consecration remains valid for the two months as intended. We recognize that the eternally valid sacrifice of Jesus Christ as offered within the sacrament of Holy Communion is only fully valid to the degree that it is believed and received by a prepared recipient, celebrated in the fellowship of believers. Because this may not be possible for our linked members, they still receive some benefit in sharing in the body and blood of Christ.

This process, coupled with the possibility of connecting to live divine services through NAC USA Online, allows our linked members the possibility to hear the Word of God and celebrate Holy Communion. In this way, we hope they are able to continue to deepen their relationship with Jesus Christ and prepare for His return.



Holy Communion Pocket Chalices

An element of pastoral care in our congregations are the periodic visits by our priests to members who are shut-in, sick at home or in the hospital, or in institutions and cannot attend divine services. If desired by the member, and where possible, the priest celebrates Holy Communion with them.

As shown, the pocket chalices used to hold the communion wafers from years ago were ornately decorated. Sadly, these types of chalices are no longer available to us and we now have a simpler style. Some ministers may even have an older version, given to us by our fathers or a senior minister.

For this reason, I ask that if you no longer use your chalice, please consider passing this on to your rector or a newly ordained minister. Not only does this allow the active ministers to make use of a vintage pocket chalice in continuing to serve Holy Communion, but it is also a way of passing down a piece of our history and sharing it with our younger generations. Also, if you wish, it can be sent to our Chicago office.

Thank you for your consideration. - LRK





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DEACON CONFERENCE

2-4 October 2020

Chicago, IL

Hyatt Regency O'Hare Chicago

*More information
will be coming soon!*

