

community

The New Apostolic Church around the world

04/2026/EN

Christ, the head of the church

Editorial

The door to heaven is open

Divine service

The body of Christ:
unity in diversity

Doctrine

More than mere ritual:
Holy Communion

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International



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The door to heaven is open

Dear brothers and sisters,

How do we gain entry into heaven? This is not merely a theoretical question, but a deeply practical one. What brings us into fellowship with God, and what keeps us outside? One aspect of the parable of the prodigal son offers us an interesting perspective.

The prodigal son returns home and asks his father for forgiveness. The father gives him a new robe, a ring, and new shoes: “My son was lost, and he has been found.” A great feast is held in his honour: a celebration of fellowship between father and son, fellowship among all those present, unity in diversity. Perfect fellowship in love. And now the question arises: “How can one be part of this celebration?”

To understand this, it helps to look at the elder son and consider what kept him outside. He was told, “Your brother has come home.” He became angry and refused to go in. His father even came out and pleaded with him to come in. The door was open, but he did not *want* to go in.

In the ensuing conversation between father and son, it becomes clear that the elder son is embittered—trapped by his own pride and self-interest.

Here we recognise that it is not the father who is preventing him from taking part in the celebration. It is the elder son



NAC International

himself who chooses to stay outside, held back by resentment, comparison, and a sense of entitlement. The door is open, the invitation has been extended, and the way is clear. But to enter, one must be willing to let go of the attitude one has been holding on to.

This is how God invites us, too: Do not remain outside. Leave behind everything that divides—self-interest, vanity, bitterness—and step into the fellowship God offers. The door is open.

With warm regards

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Helge Mutschler". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Helge Mutschler

The body of Christ: unity in diversity



NAC Southern Africa

1 Corinthians 12: 13

“For by one Spirit we were all baptised into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.”

My dear brothers and sisters, on Pentecost we commemorate the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. But it is more than just a commemoration. We give thanks to God and praise Him for this outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Thanks to this outpouring of the Holy Spirit we can experience, here and now, the presence of the Lord in our midst. Because the Holy Spirit is active on earth, is active in His church, we can experience that the Lord is truly present. He is not far away in heaven. He is in our midst. We can hear Him. We can feel His love. We can experience His nearness. Thank you, almighty God, for sending Your Spirit on earth. We also profess our faith. We believe in the church of Christ. That is our belief. Of course, when we talk about the church of Christ, when our Creed talks about the church, we do not

mean the New Apostolic Church as a religious organisation created by human beings. We mean the church of Christ as a work of the Holy Spirit. That is something holy, something perfect, a work created by the Holy Spirit.

This church of Christ is the assembly of baptised believers: those who follow Christ and profess Him as their Lord. I could talk half an hour about just this sentence: the baptised believers who follow the Lord and profess Him as their Lord. This is the church of Christ. To describe this—this is a little difficult to understand, being very theological—Paul uses an image, one that everybody can understand: the image of the body of Christ. He says, yes, Christ is in heaven. The church is His body on earth. That is easy to imagine. Christ, the head, is in heaven. His body is on earth.

This is how Christ continues to work on earth through His body. The head is in heaven, but He continues His saving activity through the body. He did not simply stop and say, “Okay, I have done My work. I am finished, I am going back to the Father. Now you are on your own.” No, He continues His work because He is still present through His Spirit. He continues the work He did when He was on earth. He carries it out through His body on earth.

What did Jesus do when He was on earth? First, He revealed the nature of God. He proclaimed His love. He proclaimed His will, His power, and His plan of salvation. That was the first part of His work on earth. Second, He called sinners to repent and invited them to follow Him. Third, He cared for the poor, for the sick, and those in need. And He helped to deliver them from their suffering. He also went to sinners and showed them: you are a sinner, but God loves you. He interceded for them—even for those who did not repent. He loved them and showed them that God loves them. And finally, the fifth point, He gathered His own, His disciples, and wanted them to be one. That was the activity of Jesus when He was on earth.

Now, He is in heaven but continues His work on earth. His saving activity continues through His body, through the

assembly of the believers who follow Christ and profess Him as their Lord. And this body, this church—that is us. It is our mission to continue the work Jesus began when He was on earth. Let us do this here and now, in the place where we live.

And so, the saving activity of Jesus Christ can be experienced on earth through the body, through the church. And we must make sure that people realise that this saving activity continues. Let us share the love of God with people. And let us call on them, “Repent and please follow Christ.” We try to help those who suffer. We try to help those who are sick and comfort them. We want sinners to know: God loves you, even if you are a sinner. And even if you do not believe, even if you do not repent, we pray for your salvation. This is how we continue the work of Jesus Christ and contribute to the unity of His people. That is the mission of the body of Christ.

The body is on earth, just as Jesus Christ was on earth. That also has another meaning: as the body of Christ, we even experience the same things that Jesus experienced on earth. When one reads the gospel, one sees that sometimes Jesus Christ seemed to be very powerful. He did great miracles.

*Christ, the head,
is in heaven. His
body is on earth*





And He was very successful. Hundreds, even thousands of people followed Him and listened to Him. He was powerful, respected, and admired. But at other times, He appeared extremely weak. He was criticised, rejected, and abandoned. Nobody followed Him. Even His disciples left Him. He was not even able to defend Himself.

In some places and at some moments, He was very strong. At other times and in other places, He was very weak. But we all know that, in reality, He was absolutely strong. His strength, however, did not lie in the number of miracles He performed or in the number of His followers. Where, then, did His strength lie? His strength was His love for God, His faithfulness to God, and His obedience. It was this obedience, faithfulness, and love that made it possible for Him to overcome death and enter the kingdom of God. That was His true strength.

Look at the body of Christ today, the church of Christ. Again, it is not the New Apostolic Church as an organisation. It is about the believers, the work of salvation. Sometimes in some places it may appear very weak, and sometimes in some places it may seem to be extremely strong. Think of the wonderful development in the past. Thousands and thousands of sealings a year, an explosion of the membership. In some countries there were so many members. The New Apostolic Church was respected. The

Christian faith was respected. Christians were respected. And they had a great deal of influence in society.

At other times and in other places, the church of Christ—or what we can see of it—seems extremely weak. There is no success. People are no longer interested in the gospel. In some places, Christians are persecuted simply because

they believe in Christ and follow Him. It is the same story: sometimes, in some places, the church is very weak, while in others it is sometimes very strong.

The mission of the Apostles is to teach believers to live according to the gospel

But the true strength is not the influence, is not the membership, is not the money. The true strength of the church

of Christ, the strength of the faithful believers who profess Christ as their Lord, is their faithfulness, is their love for Christ, is their obedience. And because they follow Christ until the end, because they remain faithful, because they respect the law of Christ and love God and their neighbour, they will experience the resurrection. That is their strength. Therefore, the mission of the apostolate is not to merely increase the membership of our church. It is not about becoming the richest church, and it is not about becoming the most influential church. The mission of the Apostles is to teach believers to live in accordance with the gospel and to do what Jesus told us to do. That is the true mission of the apostolate. Again, the strength of the church of Christ does



not lie in its membership, its financial wealth, its influence in the world, its attendance, whatever. The strength of the apostolate does not lie in its success. It is about love, faith, and obedience.

The apostolate has been sent to teach us to do the will of God. And that is why Paul said that Christ is the head of the body. The head decides what the body has to do. Decisions are made by Jesus Christ, and this has very important consequences for the body of Christ, for the church of Christ. The true church of Christ has to do the will of Jesus Christ. Jesus came and said, "I come to give you eternal life. My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18: 36). He said it very clearly. Sadly enough, many Christians have forgotten this. I say this in all seriousness. Nobody can claim to govern or

to rule a country in the name of Jesus Christ. No one can claim to go to war on behalf of Jesus Christ. No one. No one can use the gospel of Jesus Christ to justify violence and hatred. I want to make this very clear, because we live in a time where people mix these things up. The head of the church of Christ is Christ. He decides what is going to happen, what the church of Christ has to do. And He said, "My kingdom is not of this world." You cannot govern on behalf of Christ. You cannot go to war claiming to have been sent by Christ. And you cannot justify war, violence, and hatred with the gospel. That is one point.

The second point. There are so many Christians who want to use the gospel to become rich. You know this concept of prosperity gospel. Very trendy today. If you pray, if you



Left: Helge Mutschler (right) is ordained as the new Chief Apostle
Top: Chief Apostle Helge Mutschler (left) retires his predecessor, Jean-Luc Schneider

believe, if you give your offerings, you will become rich, and all your problems will be solved. Where is that written in the Bible? I don't know, we must have a different Bible. Jesus said, "You cannot serve God and money." That does not work. He did not say, "I came so that all the people who are poor become rich." He also did not say, "I came so that all the rich people become poor." No. He just said, "I came to give you eternal life." He did not want to solve all the problems on earth. Jesus Christ identified Himself with the poor, with the sick, with those who were rejected, with sinners. That is the gospel. That means we cannot use the gospel just for earthly matters. That means that earthly wealth is not necessarily a blessing. It also means that wealth does not prevent one from being saved, nor is poverty a curse. It also means that poverty is not a guarantee for salvation—because you are poor, you will be saved. It has nothing to do with it. To be saved, you need to follow Christ and to do the will of God. Jesus summarised the will of God: "Love God, and love your neighbour." Brothers and sisters, that is the gospel and the mission of the church of Christ.

It is also not the will of the head of the church of Christ that sinners are punished, or that sinners are forced to change and to repent. Jesus never forced anybody. It is not the mission of the church to establish a hierarchy of sins: these sins are very serious, they are deadly. And others ... they are not that serious. And my sins are not serious at all. It is not the task of the apostolate, it is not the task of the church of Christ, to establish a hierarchy of sin. Christ wants us to love sinners and to help them to be saved. Conversion of the sinner is a matter between God and the sinner. We cannot impose salvation. We cannot impose conversion, and we do not want to do so. And all the members—all believers—belong to this body. We are familiar with this image. We have heard about it before.

The members of the body are very different. There are big ones, small ones, rich ones, poor ones. There are very clever ones and others who are less so. That is a fact. The members are very different. But what Paul is saying with this image of the body of Christ is that each one is needed. This diversity of the members of the church of Christ is willed by God. It is no accident: "Okay, we have to make do because all of them are different." No, no, no. This is the will of God. That is the meaning of this image of the body. The members have different gifts, different missions, different tasks. They are totally different—on purpose. There are strong ones and



weak ones. Speaking of the strong and the weak: who are the weak ones? For the people here in Cape Town, the weak ones are on the other continents. Yes? This is a danger to our church, the New Apostolic Church. And at the spiritual level this poses a danger to the church of Christ. Everyone has a different understanding of weakness.

May I speak openly? Some say, “In Europe, the congregations are shrinking and faith is waning. They are weak, we are strong.” And in Europe they say, “Oh, in certain countries outside Europe, they have such a weak understanding of the gospel and of theology. They are unable to explain the Trinity. They tolerate this, and they tolerate that.” Believe me, my experience tells me that all of us, without exception, are weak in the eyes of someone. All of us. There is always someone who considers another person to be weak and considers themselves strong. But what matters to Christ is precisely how we treat the weak. Remember what Jesus said: “Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.”

Brothers and sisters, I am very sorry if I am being a little solemn, but for the future of the Church it is very important that we understand this. You may consider this person weak and that person weak. I am not even going to discuss who is right and who is wrong. I simply want to remind all of us of what Jesus said: those who are very weak in your own eyes—the way you treat them and what you do for them, you do for Me. That is essential for the future and the unity of our Church. The way the weakest among us are treated reveals and bears witness to the presence of Christ in our Church.

Please keep this thought in your heart and soul, also for the future. The weaknesses and diversity of the members of the body will not impede the completion of the body. The Holy Spirit will continue to work, and He will achieve and complete His work. Today, of course, we cannot see this completion. There is no perfection visible; everywhere we see poor sinners. But we know that the Holy Spirit does perfect work. He will complete His work of salvation, and the bride of Christ will be prepared.

What matters for you and for me? Our faithfulness, our love, and our obedience—here and now, in the conditions in which we live. What matters is how we treat sinners, the weak ones, and our neighbour. Those who follow Christ and who profess Him as their Lord will experience the resurrection.

CORE THOUGHTS

The church bears witness to Christ's presence on earth. Christ leads the church. The members of the church are one in Christ and serve one another. The Holy Spirit prepares the church for Christ's return.

Golgotha: the place of decision

Doubt or trust, accusation or prayer: the choice is yours. Those who choose Jesus Christ do not have to wait for Him until tomorrow; Jesus walks with them today already.

In preparation for Good Friday, Helge Mutschler, who was then still Chief Apostle Helper, conducted a divine service on Sunday, 15 March 2026, in Humpolec, Czech Republic.

“Our Bible text directs our attention to the place called Golgotha”—meaning Place of the Skull—“a dreadful, noisy, brutal, and terrifying place.” It was here that Jesus was nailed to the cross with rusty nails, with a criminal on either side of Him. “When we humans are on the cross, we are forced to make a decision,” explained the Chief Apostle Helper. “There are only two ways to respond to Jesus Christ.” Either to the left or to the right—there is no neutral middle ground.

The disappointment of Gestas

According to an ancient account, one of the criminals crucified alongside Jesus was named Gestas. He belonged to the political party of the Zealots and had a very specific

idea of the Messiah: one who would establish a divine kingdom on earth and finally free the people from the yoke and the oppression by the Romans. But he was disappointed, the Chief Apostle Helper said. The supposed Messiah hung on the cross with him, covered in blood, unable to save Himself nor save him.

When we look at the state of the world today, similar thoughts may arise: “God, where are You? God, you must intervene!” For this reason, we have no right to condemn Gestas.

The example of Dismas

The other criminal, known as Dismas, behaved differently. He did three things:

He looked at himself: “He did not blame God. Nor did he point a finger at others.” Without feeling sorry for himself, he simply admitted that he was a sinner.

He looked at Jesus: He recognised the sinlessness of Jesus and His heavenly kingdom. “This man is a King who stands above the cross.”

He prayed: He turned to Jesus and asked Him, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.”

“Dismas can serve as a role model. You may look at yourself,” encouraged Chief Apostle Helper Mutschler—without shifting blame. “You can open yourself to Jesus Christ. You can trust Him.” For Jesus is not a king who punishes, but one full of love, forgiveness, and mercy. No one needs to be afraid of Him, because He is the friend of sinners and those who have failed. “You can turn to this King and pray to Him,” simply and without many words: “Lord Jesus, remember me.”



The members of the congregation in Humpolec, Czech Republic



Left: Chief Apostle Helper Helge Mutschler at the altar
Below: Lifting hearts and voices: the choir enriches the divine service



The then Chief Apostle Helper Helge Mutschler
congratulates parents on the baptism of their child

Not sometime in the future, but today

On the cross, Jesus had only the barest physical strength left. “But He did not keep this last remnant of life for Himself. Rather, He acted for the sake of others.” He looked after His mother, the disciple John, Dismas, the soldiers, and the people: “Father, forgive them.”

Jesus’ reply to Dismas was: “Today you will be with Me in paradise.” The word “today” emphasises the immediacy and proximity of Jesus Christ’s help. For He does not refer us to the future, but accompanies and strengthens us right now. Jesus did not take Dismas directly into heaven—into God’s presence—but into “Paradise”. “A place in the beyond for those who have died in faith and trust in our Lord Jesus Christ,” the Chief Apostle Helper explained, referring to the Catechism. A “place of security”.

The word “Paradise” also refers to Adam and Eve. It is described as a place of relationship, fellowship, and love. That place will come, and it will be far greater than this place of refuge.

“Jesus Christ will come,” emphasised the Chief Apostle Helper. “And in that place—in heaven, where we will one day be—there will be only one thing: relationship, trust, closeness, and love. It is going to be wonderful, and we will meet Dismas there.”

CORE THOUGHTS

Luke 23: 42–43

“Then he said to Jesus, ‘Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.’”

Dismas’ actions show that honest self-reflection, trust, and prayer lead closer to Christ. Jesus meets people with forgiveness and love, offering comfort, security, and hope already today.

There is still room at God's table

Imagine coming to a beautifully set banquet table and every seat seems to be taken. You look around, hesitate for a moment, and wonder, "Is there still room for me here?"



NAC Northern and Eastern Germany



This was the image that Chief Apostle Helge Mutschler drew upon during his first divine service as Chief Apostle on 31 May 2026 in Stendal, Germany.

At the table of the Trinity

One week after Pentecost, the Church celebrates Trinity Sunday, the Christian feast dedicated to the triune God.

The Chief Apostle captured the mystery of the Trinity with the words of Jesus: "You in Me and I in you." The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are distinct, yet perfectly one: in nearness, trust, relationship, and love. To illustrate this, he referred to a well-known picture of the Trinity: three figures seated around a table, a chalice at its centre, gazing peacefully at one another. He drew attention to a striking detail. The viewer's eye is drawn to the open space at the table: "The beautiful thing is: there is another seat."

"That they also may be one in Us"

The Chief Apostle led straight into the Bible text. Jesus, he explained, not only prayed for His disciples and Apostles, but also for all who would come to believe through their word. "So, for all of us, for you and for me, wherever we may be right now, Jesus Christ intercedes for us." This is the first great promise: no one is excluded from this prayer.

"There is still room, a seat at this table for you and for me, for all of us as a congregation. God is love, and love makes room at this table." This is precisely what Jesus Christ desires: that people do not merely look at God from the outside but are drawn into fellowship with Him.

How do we receive a seat at this table? The Chief Apostle pointed to God's invitation through His word, rebirth out of water and the Spirit, and Holy Communion—the bread

The choir framed the divine service with music



and wine served at this table. “God has sent each and every one of us an invitation and has personally invited us.” So, “Come and take your seat at this table.”

This fellowship is not something we must earn. Faith means trusting in Jesus and taking a seat.

“That they may all be one”

Jesus’ second petition was: “that they may all be one”. And, as the Chief Apostle emphasised, “all” truly means every-one: the small congregation as well as the large one, those on the periphery as well as those at the centre. “The weak as well as the strong; the rich as well as the poor; the progressive as well as the conservative. All are to be one.”

“We are not expected to all think and feel the same way, share the same point of view, or be personal friends with one another. That is not what is meant at all.” Unity arises when people with different perspectives focus on the one love and the one goal: the return of Christ.

However, the reality is often quite different. The Chief Apostle spoke of a fellowship that has been broken. Since Adam and Eve, relationships have been fractured. Such fractures are evident in our relationship with ourselves, with our neighbour, and with God: when people deem themselves unworthy, push others away inwardly, or exclude God from their lives.

The way back does not begin with human achievements, but at the cross of Christ. On the cross, God reveals Himself as the Loving One. There reconciliation becomes pos-

sible. “It is God, it is Jesus Christ, who pulls our chair back up to the table for us to have fellowship.”

“That the world may believe”

Jesus’ third petition turns our gaze outward: “that the world may believe”. The world is characterised by mistrust, fear, distance, and broken relationships. Yet beneath it all there is a deep human longing. “That is what unites us as human beings; it is our human nature, the longing to take our place once more and to have peace.” Trust can grow when people experience that within the congregation—despite all its imperfections—there is genuine fellowship: a togetherness sustained by the love of God.

One day there will be perfect fellowship at the table: with God, with the living and the dead, sincere, and in perfect joy. We will celebrate God because we will recognise how beautiful God is.”

Until then, there is a standing invitation: the table is set, there is a place for us—and Christ draws the chair closer.

CORE THOUGHTS

John 17: 20–21

“I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.”

God is love in the perfect unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In His intercessory prayer, Jesus asks that we may be drawn into this love, that we may all be one, and that the world may see this and believe in it.

“Falling down is not the problem, staying down is”

Jesus’ guiding principle: to lift people up! Then as now, Christ reaches out His hand, helps us to our feet, and encourages us to be a light for others.



Chief Apostle Helge Mutschler conducted a divine service in Luanda, Angola on Sunday, 7 June 2026.

Around 2,500 years ago, the people of Israel were living in Babylonian captivity, and their joy was immense when they were finally permitted to return to Jerusalem. Upon their arrival, however, that joy turned to bitter disappointment because everything lay in ruins. The prophet Isaiah had foreseen this moment long beforehand. Through him, God’s voice had spoken these words in Hebrew: “*Kumi! Ori!*”

Arise! Shine!

“*Kumi—Arise! Ori—Shine!*” This is exactly what happened as the people looked out over the ruins of Jerusalem. They rose and rebuilt the city and the temple, and the light began to shine once more. “We are not perfect. We are all sinners,”

the Chief Apostle said. “We fail, and we fall. But falling is not the problem—the problem is staying down.”

“*Kumi—Arise!*”: It is difficult to do this on our own, but with God’s strength, it is possible. Just think of Elijah. He was exhausted and ready to die, and the angel of the Lord came and said, “Arise and eat!” Or think of Jesus’ crucifixion. “His ‘fall’ was the greatest fall imaginable.” He had dwelled in heaven and had come down to this earth. Or consider the disciples who had locked themselves away in fear: “It is all over. We have failed completely,” they thought.

However, “Jesus Christ is the power of the resurrection.” His guiding principle was to encourage people to rise again. “And He raises you as well.”

“*Ori—Shine!*”: “‘Let there be light,’ God said at the beginning of all things,” Chief Apostle Mutschler recalled. There

The divine service took place at the Dos Coqueiros Stadium in Luanda, Angola



was light in Paradise, but the fall into sin plunged the world into darkness. Jesus, however, conquered sin and death. And He not only declared, “I am the light of the world,” but also told His followers, “You are the light of the world.”

Rise up and shine in everyday life

And in practical terms, how does this play out in the various aspects of our own lives?

Faith. Our faith can falter time and again. “Jesus Christ reaches out His hand to each one of us,” the Chief Apostle said, inviting us to begin anew: to pray again, read the Bible again, and attend the divine services again. “Don’t just get back on your feet, but shine,” the Chief Apostle said. This means: “Fight for your Lord, Jesus Christ. Remain true to His gospel and refuse to compromise.”

Sin. In a world of sin, we can fall. Jesus encourages us to stand up and fight against sin: let us recognise and acknowledge it, regret it, and repent. “Start over again. Receive the forgiveness of sins.” And then shine by extending that same forgiveness to your neighbour.

Suffering. Sometimes we are utterly devastated and are overwhelmed by our suffering because we persist in anger, adopt a victim mentality, or cling to a false image of God. Then God reaches out His hand, comforts us, and helps us to stand up. The Chief Apostle’s appeal is clear: Shine! Go to your neighbour. Listen, be there for them, accompany them, and comfort them.

Conflicts. Disputes and conflicts can arise. “The problem begins when I say, ‘I will never forgive you. I have formed

an image of you, and I will never change it.” The same is true when we remain silent in someone’s presence but speak negatively about them behind their back. Christ helps us to take the first step so that we can shine and bring peace.

Hope and joy: Joy can fade, and weariness can take its place. “When we think about the return of our Lord Jesus Christ, do we lie down and take a little nap?” After all, we have been waiting for so long. “Wake up, arise, and go out to meet the Lord. Let us not merely get up, but let us also shine.” There is reason for hope and joy: Jesus Christ will come again.

CORE THOUGHTS

Isaiah 60: 1

**“Arise, shine; for your light has come!
And the glory of the Lord is risen upon
you.”**

Arise and shine! These words of the prophet apply to us too. In a world of sin, falling is a reality. What is important is that we do not stay down. Christ, the light of the world, lifts us up. Thus, in every area of life, we can rise again and share the light we have received.

THE TREASURER FROM ETHIOPIA

BASED ON ACTS 8: 26-40



One day, an angel came to Philip, a deacon of the church in Jerusalem, and said to him, "Go south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza!"

Philip obeyed and walked down the desert road.

On his way, he saw a chariot. In it sat an important man from Ethiopia, a treasurer in the service of the Ethiopian queen.



He was responsible for the queen's money. The treasurer had gone to Jerusalem to worship and was now on his way back home.

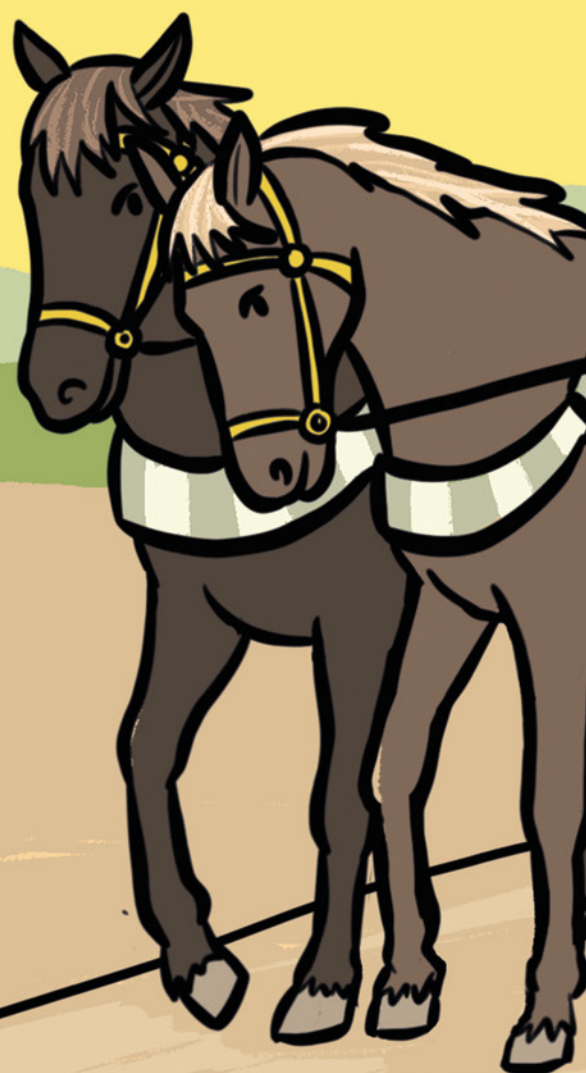
The Holy Spirit urged Philip to go to the chariot and stay near it. He heard the man reading aloud from Isaiah, the prophet. It was about someone who was as quiet as a lamb.

Philip asked him, "Do you understand what you are reading?"

The man answered, "How can I understand? I need someone to explain it to me!"

He invited Philip to climb in and sit with him. Philip explained to him that Isaiah was speaking about Jesus. The treasurer listened attentively. Philip told him what Jesus had taught the people.

While they were travelling down the road, they came to some



water. The man pointed at it and asked, "Can you baptise me?" They both went down into the water, and Philip baptised the Ethiopian treasurer.

As they came out of the water, Philip disappeared. God had taken him to another place. The treasurer never saw Philip again. He continued on his way home, full of joy.



VISITING RUSLAN IN ALMATY, KAZAKHSTAN

My name is **Ruslan** and this is my little sister, **Sofia**. We live in Almaty, which is the largest city in Kazakhstan, a large country south of Russia. Besides Kazakh, many people in Kazakhstan also speak Russian.



Meet **Alisa**, our youngest sister and the newest addition to our family.

This is my **family**. I am ten years old and go to school. My favourite subjects are maths, art, physical education, and history. I also love geography and enjoy learning about cities and their famous landmarks. **Sofia** is in grade two. My **father** works in a bank, while my **mother** stays at home and looks after us.



My dad and I enjoy doing sports together. I also like board games and computer games. Sometimes, we go to the cinema as a family or have dinner around a campfire. I love it when we are all together. I also spend a lot of time outdoors in nature, observing **animals**. I love animals!





And I love **pasta**. In Kazakhstan, pasta is often still made by hand in restaurants.

Many different ethnic groups live in Kazakhstan, and they are all on friendly terms with one another. Our culture has been influenced by our neighbouring countries, including China, Mongolia, Kyrgyzstan, and Russia. One traditional Kazakh art form is *Aitys*, a singing and poetry competition. Two performers compete against each other, accompanying themselves on the *dombra*, a traditional Kazakh instrument. They respond to one another in spontaneously composed, rhyming verses.

I am proud to live in Kazakhstan. Our country is vast and has an amazing variety of landscapes. In the west and north, the landscape is mainly **flat steppes**, while in the south-east and north-east there are high **mountains**, with **rivers** and **lakes** in between.

I believe in God and that He is always with me. My family and I go to **church** every Sunday. It always feels warm and comforting to be among my fellow brothers and sisters. They make me feel at home.





Pavlo Syvak/adobe stock

More than mere ritual: Holy Communion

Following repentance, the Lord's Prayer, and the absolution, the congregation's focus turns to the central point of the divine service: Holy Communion. The second part of this essay explores why the Eucharistic prayer, the consecration of the wafers, and receiving Holy Communion are far more than mere ritual and how Christ meets His congregation through them.

The prayer we call the Eucharistic prayer is the second freely spoken prayer within the divine service. It is spoken after the absolution (forgiveness of sins) and before the actual celebration of Holy Communion. The Eucharistic prayer is focused on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and all the gifts of salvation associated with it. For all of these things, we can bring thanks directly to God the Son, who became human in Jesus Christ, and to the Holy Spirit, who is presently active in the Church.

Thanks can be expressed to Jesus Christ for the fact that forgiveness of sins and the sacraments themselves have become possible as a result of His sacrificial death on Golgotha. The officiant can express gratitude that the sins of those who truly repent will be forgiven. At this point, it is also possible to ask for the Holy Spirit's power to help us avoid sin, overcome evil, and attain worthiness as we move forward.

Gratitude can also be expressed for the institution of the church and the mission of the Apostles, through whom the gospel is proclaimed in pure fashion and through whom the sacraments can be dispensed in their fullness to both the living and the dead. It is also important to express gratitude that we are able to celebrate Holy Communion, whereby we can partake in the body and blood of Christ for our salvation.

Petition to the Holy Spirit

The invocation of the Holy Spirit—also known as epiclesis—should likewise find a place in the Eucharistic prayer. This occurs in the awareness that it is not only the sacraments—among them Holy Communion—that are closely associated with the Holy Spirit, but that our lives as Christians must also unfold under the guidance of the Spirit (Galatians 5: 18).

The Holy Spirit is the presence of God in the period of time extending from the ascension to the return of Christ. He is the Helper and Comforter who reminds us of the words and activity of Jesus Christ, and brings them into the present (John 14: 26). The Holy Spirit glorifies Christ (John 16: 14), testifies of Him, and effects His presence in the church (CNAC 3.4.13). It is therefore only appropriate when the Catechism states that “church and the Holy Spirit belong together” (CNAC 3.5.5.1).

The Catechism states the following concerning the relationship between Holy Communion and the Holy Spirit: “The consecration of bread and wine for Holy Communion is only possible because the Holy Spirit is active in this act.



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Thus, by way of human words, the power of the Holy Spirit creates divine reality. Fully valid Holy Communion—the real presence of the body and blood of Christ—comes into being if it is supported by the power of the Holy Spirit and if the consecration of the elements of Holy Communion is performed on the basis of the authority issued by Apostles” (CNAC 3.5.5.2).

The Holy Spirit should therefore be directly addressed in the Eucharistic prayer and asked to share His effective power with the believers. At the same time, the Holy Spirit can also be asked to ensure that everyone may receive Holy Communion worthily and for their salvation.

Preparation and consecration

After the Eucharistic prayer, the officiant speaks the following words, which signal the start of the act of consecration, “And now we shall celebrate Holy Communion.” These words make it clear that Holy Communion is always also a meal of fellowship. Those who have assembled in the name of the triune God will now engage in a celebration of Holy Communion in which the Risen Lord is truly present.

The chalices are not usually uncovered by the person leading the service, but by Priests who have been previously designated for this task. If no other Priests are present, this act can also be performed by Deacons. This act makes accessible the natural elements required for the celebration of Holy Communion. The natural gifts—bread and wine—are now present. This is followed by an explicit confirmation with words to the following effect: “And now the Lord’s table is prepared.” The altar is now the table at which Jesus celebrates Holy Communion with His congregation.



In Holy Communion, the sacrifice that Jesus brought on Golgotha, along with the body and blood of Christ, are only truly present when the act is performed by an authorised minister. Apart from the members of the apostolate, only priestly ministers have this authority.

The authority of the apostolate, the elements of bread and wine, and the words spoken in the consecration formula are all necessary to ensure that Holy Communion can be celebrated in a fully valid manner. A slip of the tongue will not prevent the sacrament from being properly constituted, nor can doubts or any other human weakness on the part of the minister impair or jeopardise the constitution of a fully valid celebration of Holy Communion. Jesus Christ is the Lord of the sacrament. It is He who instituted it, it is He who has issued the authority to celebrate it, and it is the Holy Spirit who now makes this authority come to effect.

The formula and its meaning

The consecration formula is binding for all New Apostolic celebrations of Holy Communion and is spoken as follows: “In the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, I consecrate bread and wine for Holy Communion and lay thereupon the once brought, eternally valid sacrifice of Jesus Christ. For the Lord took bread and wine, gave thanks, and said: ‘This is My body which is broken for you. This is My blood of the new covenant given for many for the remission of sins. Eat and drink! Do this in remembrance of Me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink this wine, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes. Amen.”

The tripartite consecration formula begins with the invocation of the triune God. This makes it clear that it is not

the officiant who is the subject of the sacrament, but rather the triune God. Everything that happens thereafter occurs in accordance with the will of God through the power of the Holy Spirit. The consecration applies to “bread and wine”, which are the only elements that can bear the body and blood of Christ. The elements of the sacrament and their properties even constitute an object of faith. In the Seventh Article of Faith it says that Holy Communion “is celebrated with unleavened bread and wine” (CNAC 2.4.7). The Seventh Article of Faith goes on to point out that the sacrifice which Jesus brought on Golgotha is the very foundation of Holy Communion. The once brought sacrifice of Jesus Christ is truly present in the celebration of Holy Communion such that the participants in this celebration can proclaim the sacrifice of the Lord with conviction (CNAC 8.2.13).

Following this, the words that Jesus spoke at the institution of the meal (“For the Lord took bread and wine, gave thanks, and said”) are cited. This part of the consecration formula is based on 1 Corinthians 11: 23–25 and Matthew 26: 26–28. It is the body and blood of Christ that are received by the believers in the bread and wine. This sacrifice has established a new covenant in which all those who believe in Jesus Christ and are baptised can participate.

The substance of the bread and wine is not changed by the consecration and the pronouncement of the words of institution. Rather, the substance of the body and blood of Jesus is joined to it (consubstantiation). In Holy Communion, the bread and wine correspond to the human nature of Christ, while the body and blood correspond to His divine nature. Bread and wine are not metaphors or symbols for the body and blood of Christ. Rather, the body and blood of Christ are truly present. In other words, Jesus Christ is bodily present. This form of presence is known as real presence (CNAC 8.2.12).

The words of Jesus “Do this in remembrance of Me” incorporate two aspects: the word of Jesus makes it clear that this celebration is not to remain unique, as Jesus Himself gives the command to repeat it. The repeated celebration of Holy Communion, which occurs in all churches, therefore does not occur on the basis of a mere tradition that came into being in the early Christian community, but on the basis of Jesus’ command when He instituted the meal. How often Holy Communion is to be celebrated is not stated in the words of Jesus. As related in Acts 2: 42, 46, the first congregation in Jerusalem “continued steadfastly in the Apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers”. We can therefore conclude that celebrations of Holy Communion would have occurred relatively often.

At the same time, it is expressed that each celebration of the Lord's Supper is a remembrance of the institution of Holy Communion and the sacrificial death of Jesus. It is for this reason that Holy Communion is also a meal of remembrance (concerning the term "meal of remembrance", see CNAC 8.2.8).

The closing sentence of the consecration formula (1 Corinthians 11: 26) speaks of the significance of Holy Communion for those who have partaken in the celebration. This sentence is presumed to be a supplement to the original record of Holy Communion, which derives from Apostle Paul and indicates that anyone who partakes of bread and wine in Holy Communion professes the significance of the death of Jesus for salvation. The ensuing words "till He [the Lord] comes" refer to the fact that Holy Communion, and with it all other sacraments, are necessary means of salvation until the return of Christ.

Receiving the sacrament

Following the consecration of the elements of Holy Communion, the officiant first communes with the other ministers. This makes it clear that ministry and sacrament are gifts of the Lord to His congregation.

Thereupon the congregation is invited to partake in Holy Communion. The words "The Lord now invites you to Holy Communion" make it clear that Jesus Christ is calling His own to join Him for table fellowship. It is not the officiant who issues this call, but rather the Lord Himself.

The consecrated wafers are dispensed to the believers by a Priest with the words, "The body and blood of Jesus given for you." This presentation formula emphasises once again that the true body and blood of Jesus are imparted to the recipient in the consecrated wafer. For this reason, it is necessary to present the host in a dignified manner.

The fact that the members of the congregation receive the consecrated wafers together demonstrates that Holy Communion is also a meal of fellowship. Concerning this, CNAC 8.2.10 explains: "Holy Communion is a meal of fellowship in a threefold sense: first of all, the incarnate and glorified

Son of God enters into fellowship with His Apostles in the celebration of Holy Communion. Thereby the original situation at the institution of Holy Communion is repeated. However, in the celebration of Holy Communion the Risen One also has fellowship with those believers who partake of the Lord's Supper worthily for their salvation. Moreover, those assembled in the congregation for divine service also have fellowship with one another in Holy Communion."

Concluding the celebration of Holy Communion

The covering of the chalices signals that the celebration of Holy Communion has come to an end. The gifts necessary for Holy Communion are thus no longer present. The previously consecrated elements of the Lord's Supper no longer contain the body and blood of Christ. The consecrated wafers are closely linked to the entire celebration of Holy Communion and cannot be separated from it. CNAC 8.2.12 states: "The body and blood of Christ remain present in the consecrated wafer until it has reached its designated recipient." This statement should be applied to the specific congregation assembled for Holy Communion, whose members are to be regarded as the direct recipients of the consecrated wafers.



Time to reflect on Pentecost

Not every moment can be fully grasped immediately. Pentecost in Cape Town was such an experience: divine service, music, reflection, a sense of global fellowship, and the lingering question of what remains when everyday life resumes its rhythm.

Perhaps that is why we sometimes need to deliberately look back and discover which images have stayed with us. Our journey to South Africa began in an unspectacular way: with the usual commute to the office in Zurich, Switzerland. A few final documents, some last-minute arrangements, and some organisational details—and then we were on our way, via Frankfurt (Germany) to Cape Town. The first few days it felt like a normal working trip: checking technical equipment, inspecting venues, coordinating schedules. It was only on Saturday that things began to shift and the business trip noticeably turned into a Pentecost gathering.

From daily routine to Pentecost joy

On Saturday evening, the concert in Silvertown awaited us. After the opening song, I leaned over to my colleague and

whispered, “At most concerts, this piece would probably be the highlight of the entire evening—and here they are using it as an opener.” This is exactly what never ceases to amaze me about South African musicians: this ability not only to perform music flawlessly and powerfully, but to infuse it with emotion, joy, and hope. And that was exactly what could be felt throughout the evening.

At the end of the concert, Chief Apostle Schneider spoke about how often people are inspired—through music, for example—and how quickly such inspiration can fade when everyday life returns. Then, on the spur of the moment, he invited everyone to pause and reflect. To pause for a personal prayer. For a quiet moment before God. The silence that followed did not feel organised or rehearsed. It was not expressed through grand gestures, but through small, subtle movements: handkerchiefs, lowered eyes, tears that no one felt compelled to hide.

When I wake up on Sunday, the first thing on my mind is not the divine service, but the fact that in about seven hours we will already be on our way back to the airport.

But before that lies this special experience: the Pentecost service, with a worldwide broadcast. The divine service at which a new Chief Apostle will be ordained and his predecessor retired.

I pack my suitcase before breakfast. There will not be time for that later. The gap between the end of the divine service and our departure for the airport leaves little room to spare. Sitting at breakfast in my black suit, I sip my coffee, discuss the day's plans with my colleagues, and casually download my boarding pass. Everything feels ordinary





and efficient. And yet, my thoughts keep drifting back to the two men at the heart of this day: the Chief Apostle who has led the Church until now, and the one who is about to succeed him.

Next stop: Tafelsig

About 20 minutes before we set off for the church in Tafelsig, everyone disappears back to their rooms. I am already set to go and head straight for the waiting buses. As I greet the South African team I notice a commotion behind me.

Chief Apostle Schneider approaches the bus accompanied by his wife. Unusually early. I walk over to him with a smile, tap my wristwatch and say, “Chief Apostle, what’s going on? You’re never this early.”

He immediately bursts out laughing. “Yes, normally ...” Then he rubs his hands together, “But today is a very special day.”

That brief moment already reflected something of the intensity ahead: solemnity, eager anticipation, and that almost youthful joy at the thought of what lay ahead. Gradually, the District Apostles, District Apostle Helpers, and their wives arrive at the buses. Only once it has been confirmed that the Chief Apostle Helper is also on board—for today, of all days, no one wants to leave without him—do the two buses slowly pull away. The route follows the coastline. To

the right, the ocean with white-capped waves. Dune grass bending in the wind. Inside the bus it grows quiet. The sea to our right, the city to our left, and ahead of us Tafelsig.

First, we pass the New Apostolic Church in Eastridge and, about a kilometre further on, we see Tafelsig West. However, the congregation is not gathered inside the church; everyone is standing by the side of the road, waving as we pass. It is not a perfectly orchestrated reception, but something far better: genuine joy. Loud. Warm. South African. From there, it is only about 600 metres to the large Tafelsig church.

Outside, volunteers coordinate the arrival. Members stream onto the church grounds. Formal attire, embraces, brief greetings, searching eyes. Everything is in motion. The Chief Apostle and his entourage enter the building via the underground car park. He and the Apostles disappear into the sacristy. The rest of us make our way up the stairwell toward the church hall. The staircase is narrow, and progress is slow, one patient step at a time. And that’s exactly where we hear it properly for the first time. The music.

Through the open doors, the sound of the choir and the orchestra spills into the stairwell. With every step, the voices grow louder. Conversations fade away. The pace slows. And when we finally step inside the sanctuary and make our way to our seats, it feels as though we are stepping into something that has been unfolding for a long time



Above: Retirement of Chief Apostle
Jean-Luc Schneider

Right: Helge Mutschler is ordained
as Chief Apostle



already and reaches well beyond these church walls.

Once inside the church building, it takes me quite a while to gather myself and find my inner calm. So, I just sit there for a while, listen to the music, look around the sanctuary, and try to slow my thoughts down a little. Then the organ begins to play. The opening hymn begins. The congregation rises. The divine service is about to begin.

“We have a new Chief Apostle!”

Many people are familiar with the Bible text. The Chief Apostle preaches about the church of Christ, about whom it belongs to, who is its head. And he talks about how its members are meant to treat one another if Christ truly remains the head. This is followed by Holy Communion. For a moment, everything extraordinary about this day steps back behind what constitutes the very essence of every divine service.

And then comes the moment everyone has been waiting for: the ordination of the new Chief Apostle. This takes place before the altar and, because of the position chosen, right in the midst of the congregation. Although the Chief Apostle Helper had been sitting right next to the altar, it

now seems as though he is stepping forward from among the congregation—as part of the congregation—to stand before the Chief Apostle.

What remains particularly vivid for me is his yes. It is not a quick yes. Not mechanical. Not casual. There is a moment of silence between the question and the answer. It is almost as if he deliberately gives this “yes” the space to take shape. Not hesitantly. Not uncertainly. This “yes” was not merely spoken; it was truly given.

After the ordination, Chief Apostle Schneider ascends the steps to the altar with a spring in his step and exclaims, full of joy and enthusiasm, “We have a new Chief Apostle! What a blessing! What a joy!” Soft, sporadic, tentative clapping can be heard, as if uncertain: is it OK to clap now? Is it appropriate to clap now? Or is this moment too great for that? And then Chief Apostle Schneider himself resolves this awkwardness. He begins to clap heartily. Warmly. In his easy, approachable manner, with that distinctive way of never wanting to suppress emotion artificially. And suddenly the whole church bursts into applause. Not like at a



Chief Apostle Helge Mutschler concludes the divine service with a prayer and the benediction

performance, but more like a shared expression of gratitude, relief, and joy.

Before Chief Apostle Schneider finally hands over responsibility to his successor, he addresses a few more words to the worldwide congregation. Then he passes on the leadership of the Church to the man who is now going to send him into retirement. And the latter does so in exactly the right way—taking his time for it. Because gratitude, as he makes clear, must not go unspoken. After all, the man standing before him has led the Church for thirteen years—a church in which diversity is not seen as a disruption, but as a source of richness—and in which unity is nevertheless preserved.

Retirement and a new beginning

For a few minutes, two active Chief Apostles stand together at the altar. One is only steps away from retirement, the other at the beginning of his ministry. And both belong together, for the Church does not thrive by leaving its past and origins behind, but by shaping its future from them. When Chief Apostle Schneider is finally formally retired, the church hall falls silent. There is no great outward display. It is rather like a moment when thirteen years of ministry suddenly become strikingly present.

And then the new Chief Apostle concludes the divine service with a prayer and pronounces the benediction over a worldwide congregation—over people in different countries in vastly different life situations, yet united in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. As closing hymn, the choir once more sings a specially composed piece. Chief Apostle Mutschler exclaims enthusiastically, “How beautiful is that! Unbelievable! That is heaven.”

Then he adds something that sounds almost like a personal profession of faith: he has hope for the future. Hope in a time when many people are losing hope. Hope for the church of Christ. Hope for a community that does not merely respect the otherness of others, but loves them precisely for it.

As the congregation begins the closing hymn, we slowly leave the church. When we arrived, we were immediately drawn into the atmosphere. Now it accompanies us back out. Outside, we board the waiting buses. As they begin to move, everyone grows quiet. Not in a sombre way, but rather as if everyone must sort out for themselves what has just taken place.

A Pentecost that continues to resonate

When we arrive at the hotel, everyone goes up to the two Chief Apostles and, in just a few words, expresses what cannot easily be put into words. Less than ninety minutes later, we leave the hotel again and head for the airport. An abrupt transition, in a sense—yet it does not feel like one. In fact, it feels more as if something has come to a truly good conclusion. A conclusion full of gratitude for our former Chief Apostle. And a hopeful beginning with the new Chief Apostle.

At the airport, there is a lively bustle. There had been a marathon in Cape Town over the weekend. People from all over the world had come to Cape Town for the event and are now flying home again. Many are still wearing their medals around their necks. I have no medal. And yet it does not feel as though I am returning home empty-handed.

Several weeks have now passed. Weeks filled with the routine of everyday life—full of little joys and little annoyances, full of tasks, conversations, appointments, tiredness, beautiful encounters, and entirely ordinary human thoughts. Yet I notice: something of this Pentecost celebration has remained. It lives on within me as a cherished memory—not concluded, not yet fully sorted out, but alive enough to be revisited time and again.

Perhaps such memories require that we make intentional time. Time to think them over again. To listen again. To allow the images, words, and encounters to resonate once more. There is still so much to reflect on: impulses from the sermon, casual conversations, the music, little stories in between. There is too much of it to fit into a single article.

Perhaps this is precisely what such days are intended to do. They do not change our everyday lives as such, but they enrich them with something additional.

If I am to lead the Church, I must love Christ

The Petrine office: this is the term used to describe the specific mission of the Chief Apostle. In the following lines, the actual bearer of this office explains its origin and significance.



NAC Switzerland

that the leadership role as such began to take shape. A responsibility that had already been exercised in practice was given the designation “Chief Apostle”. What is essential is this: it was not the designation that gave rise to the ministry. Rather, the ministry found its name. And this ministry is rooted in biblical testimony and is directly associated with the mission entrusted to Apostle Peter.

I am intrigued by how Peter put this commission into practice in the early church. This gives me guidance. The Acts of the Apostles indicate that he made arrangements for the vacancy among the Apostles caused by Judas Iscariot’s death to be filled. Even today, the Chief Apostle ordains the Apostles himself, wherever possible. It is a great concern of mine to strengthen this circle so that its focus may remain the same: to make salvation accessible to all human beings. At the same time, this reflects the unity among the Apostles, which is also part of the Chief Apostle’s responsibility to reinforce.

To write about the Chief Apostle is to speak of a ministry which I now exercise myself. This is not an easy task. All too quickly, our thoughts turn to specific individuals, namely the Chief Apostles who have left their mark on us. My first thought, however, is not of a person, but of the mandate itself: it does not belong to me. It has merely been entrusted to me. It does not relate to the person who exercises it, but to Christ, who leads His church.

In our Church, the designation “Chief Apostle” was not the starting point, but the culmination of a function that had developed over time. The Chief Apostle is the highest spiritual authority. He is accorded a leading position in the circle of the Apostles. It was under Friedrich Krebs

The Chief Apostle defines the order within the Church as a means of fostering unity and as a reliable framework for the activity of the Church. The purpose of spiritual order is not to impose constraints, but to create space for the gospel. Peter also provided guidance in this regard when he delivered the Pentecost sermon. So it is that, to this day, this ministry serves to preserve the doctrine and ensure the uniform spread of the gospel.

But we do not stop there. Opening up new insights and the gradual and cautious development of the doctrine are also part of this responsibility. Peter is also an example in this: the Lord showed him that salvation is not restricted to a single group of people, but rather intended for all human beings. During his encounter with Cornelius, Peter recog-

nised that God excludes no one: the gospel is also addressed to the Gentiles. They too are called to share in salvation and are to be baptised with water and Spirit.

When Cornelius fell down before Peter and worshipped him, Peter helped him up and said: “Stand up; I myself am also a man” (Acts 10: 26). Peter was not a man without faults. He was conscious of his failings and well aware of the Lord’s mercy. That is why Jesus’ words to him touch me in a special way: “But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail” (Luke 22: 32). I, too, know that my faith is not strong enough on its own. It lives by the grace of God. All I can offer is my trust in Christ, however small it may be—perhaps as small as a mustard seed—but open to what He wishes to accomplish.

Jesus knew Peter’s weaknesses and limitations. He did not ask anything extraordinary of him, other than a clear answer to the crucial question: “Do you love Me?” Only after receiving the answer did Jesus entrust him with his mission: “Feed my lambs. Feed my sheep” (John 21: 15–17). Thus it becomes clear that the Petrine office is not based primarily on authority, but on love for Christ. This is a question I have been asking myself too. If I am to lead the Church, I must love Christ, and for that very reason, place myself at the service of others.



Chief Apostle Helge Mutschler (left) and his predecessor Chief Apostle (ret.) Jean-Luc Schneider

The Chief Apostles to the present day



Friedrich Krebs
1897–1905



Hermann Christoph Niehaus
1905–1930



Johann Gottfried Bischoff
1930–1960



Walter Schmidt
1960–1975



Ernst Streckeisen
1975–1978



Hans Samuel Urwyler
1978–1988



Richard Fehr
1988–2005



Wilhelm Leber
2005–2013



Jean-Luc Schneider
2013–2026



Helge Mutschler
since 2026



NAC International

A church in which everyone feels loved

Open for all people, firm in the gospel: with his last spiritual address to the District Apostle Meeting, Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider once again set clear priorities.

He began with a focus on the mission of the Apostles, namely, to call human beings to Christ and prepare them for His return. And here growth, he said, is to be understood primarily in a spiritual sense: not as a matter of numbers, but as maturity in faith.

However, he also went on to point out that the Holy Spirit is not only at work where the Apostles are active. Other churches also serve to lead human beings to Christ. He justified the ecumenical activities of the Church by stating that it is a good thing for Christians to work together in these endeavours.

Better drawbacks than false compromises

At the same time, the retiring Chief Apostle drew some clear boundaries: “The task of the apostolate is to ensure the truthful proclamation of the gospel,” he said before going on to warn against false prophets. These include all those who seek to

- exercise power in the name of Jesus
- justify violence and war on religious grounds
- make wealth more important than salvation
- exclude and condemn people
- make a business out of faith

The Chief Apostle explicitly addressed the Tenth Article of Faith, which accepts the authority of the state as long as it does not contradict any divine commandments: “Over the past years, I have observed on more than one occasion that there were forces at work trying to subjugate our Church or impose on us opinions that are contrary to the gospel.”

He called upon the District Apostles to “vigorously resist such attempts”. After all, “like Peter and the early Apostles, we believe that we must obey God rather than human beings—even if such a position is detrimental to the functioning of the Church as an institution”.

More love and fewer rules

Chief Apostle Schneider made clear that “Christ wants His church to be open to all, and for everyone to feel accepted, respected, and loved there”. He went on to add: “What is definitively harmful to the Church are rules that serve, above all, to establish the authority of those in charge!”

His question to the District Apostles: “Are all the rules we have established—and all the customs to which we are so attached—truly well-founded and useful?” His answer: “For my part, I am convinced that we could show a little more flexibility here and there without endangering the Church.”

Not an imposition, but an invitation

The mission of the Church is simply to bear witness, not to convert people. The decision for Christ remains at the discretion of the individual—and the activity of God. Therefore, what matters is not the volume of the Church’s communication, but the credibility of its messengers: love, selflessness, and steadfastness serve to make the gospel audible.

At the end of his address, Chief Apostle Schneider once again drew attention to the Church’s relationship with other denominations explaining that the New Apostolic Church is not in competition for membership numbers, and that its members do not consider themselves to be superior Christians.

“We simply believe that God has chosen us to be part of the bridal congregation in order to fulfil a specific task in the kingdom of peace,” emphasised Chief Apostle Schneider, namely to lead all human beings of all time periods and places to Christ. “It is for this task that we prepare ourselves together.”

Sunshine, water, and victory

A colourful spectacle for all ages, full of excitement, team spirit, and racing. The annual Gauteng Dragon Boat Regatta had all this plus more to offer. A picture and its story.

Elegant, swift, and with its head held high, the dragon glides through the water. There are sixteen people sitting on its back, wearing orange life jackets. Cheering, they throw their arms in the air: their dragon boat crossed the finish line first.

On Saturday morning, 18 April 2026, Florida Lake in Johannesburg in South Africa was teeming with people and dragon boats. Forty teams of paddlers had come for the annual Dragon Boat Regatta. The youth team from Soweto Emdeni congregation showed some powerful strokes and determination during their training session. Alongside seasoned veterans, the youth team Cape Town Dragons from Cape Town made their way to Johannesburg to compete.

District Apostle Peter Lambert, District Apostle Helper Patrick Mandla Mkhwanazi, and the Apostles Jerry Joubert, Jan Mabaso, Abrey Page, and Gavin Van der Hoven were also in attendance. District Apostle Lambert opened the event with a prayer. As the day moved on, more and more spectators of all ages were drawn to the cheerful spectacle. Around 2,000 people enjoyed the sunshine, food market, and other activities. In the end, third place went to the team Fast And Faithful, Zandspruit came in second, and the winners of the 2026 regatta were the Cosmo City Soldiers.





Coming up

- 4 Oct. 2026 Dinslaken, Germany
- 10 Oct. 2026 Auckland, New Zealand
- 11 Oct. 2026 Auckland, New Zealand
- 24 Oct. 2026 Zongo, DR Congo
- 25 Oct. 2026 Bangui, Central African Republic
- 1 Nov. 2026 Tuttlingen, Germany
- 8 Nov. 2026 South Bend, Indiana, USA
- 22 Nov. 2026 Zurich-Seebach, Switzerland
- 29 Nov. 2026 Abidjan, Ivory Coast
- 6 Dec. 2026 Herford, Germany
- 13 Dec. 2026 Mbombela, South Africa
- 20 Dec. 2026 Barnim, Germany
- 25 Dec. 2026 Braunschweig, Germany

New Apostolic Church
International

