# COMMUNITY The New Apostolic Church around the world

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**ZMW 20** 



Forgiveness of sins and the

**Apostle ministry** 

New Apostolic Church International



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## Recognising God and His creation

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This year's motto—"Glory be to God, our Father"—incorporates three tasks that we have resolved to perform in 2017. The very first thing we must do is recognise the glory of God and His activity. It is quite a challenging matter to recognise the glory of God in all its magnitude. However, with the help of the Holy Spirit, it is possible for us to grasp the activity of God. What exactly is it that we must recognise?

God has created the visible world. Everything emanates from Him. His will is the source of all things. Let us recognise God as the Creator and not allow any doubts about His authorship to arise: "But if they were astonished at their power and virtue, let them understand by them, how much mightier He is that made them. For by the greatness and beauty of the creatures, proportionably the Maker of them is seen" (Wisdom of Solomon 13: 4–5).

God has created the invisible world. In addition to the visible, material creation, God has also created the spiritual world. This world also encompasses the living soul of man. God has established the path which leads mankind back into fellowship with Him. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3: 16). That is the way! This is what the Holy Spirit tells us.

God makes the creation available to all human beings. He is and remains the proprietor of His creation. And He sees to it that all things in His creation have continuity. He has



given us human beings the charge of dealing responsibly with the visible creation: "... and subdue it" (Genesis 1: 28). Let us treat His creation with care and work with its resources in a responsible manner

Let us recognise and acknowledge God as the Creator. God has made the visible and invisible creation for all human beings. This recognition is the starting point of our praise and thanksgiving, and the foundation for us to talk about God and proclaim His glory.

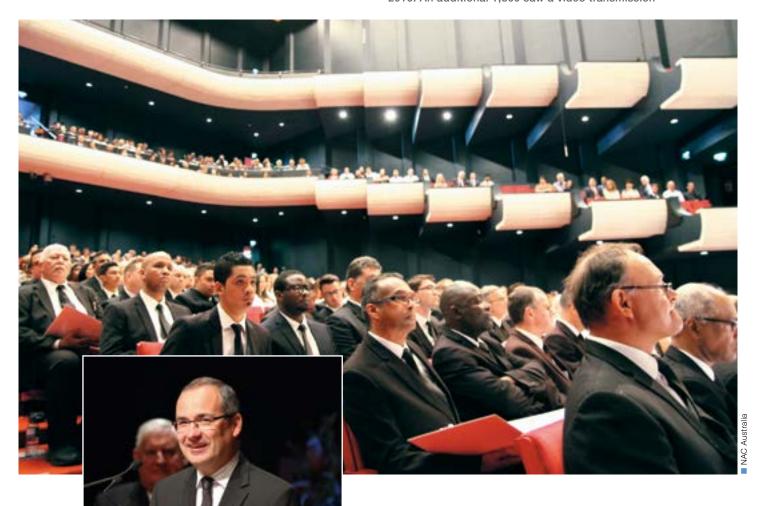
To this end, I wish us many great insights into dimensions of the divine.

Yours sincerely,



Jean-Luc Schneider

Nearly a thousand brothers and sisters gathered at Perth Concert Hall for a divine service with Chief Apostle Schneider in October 2016. An additional 1,300 saw a video transmission



Hebrews 6: 19-20

"This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."

## A sure anchor

My dear brothers and sisters here and in all the connected congregations, allow me to be the spokesman for all of us and thank the choir. It was very impressive the way you presented the song "The Lord is the light of my salvation". I am quite sure that all of us sang along in spirit because it is our wish, no, not just our wish, but our firm will to remain in God's house forever.

It is a special joy for us to be here in Australia. I must say, this time it was absolutely not difficult to motivate my brothers for the meeting here. All of them were excited to attend this meeting because it was in Perth in Australia,

God, whom we hope in,

is faithful. He will do

what He has promised

and, as expected, this meeting of the District Apostles was a blessing for all of us, because it strengthened us in faith and we were able to strengthen each other by sharing our experiences of faith, by praying together, and by being together. It was a real blessing for us to spend these few days together, which strengthened our faith and unity.

I am sure that the preparation for this day was also a blessing for you. You have done a lot of work together, you prayed a lot together, and when you work and pray together it is always associated with blessing. Now let us all together share the blessing of our heaven-

ly Father in His word and grace.

Maybe you were a little bit puzzled when I read the Bible text. Like many passages in Hebrews, it seems a little complicated. But I can assure you, it is not that hard to understand. Even I have

understood it, I think. The author compares hope with an anchor of the soul. I think that here in Perth one immediately understands this image. When a ship drops anchor, the anchor falls to the sea bottom and stabilises the boat, preventing it from drifting away with the wind or current.

In our text it says that hope is the "anchor of the soul". We hope in God, we hope in Jesus Christ, and this hope—this anchor—prevents us from drifting away. It keeps us in the house of the Lord, as you sang.

The text continues and says that this anchor "enters the Presence behind the veil". That makes it a little bit more complicated, because a second image comes into play: the veil in the temple, which separated the rest of the temple from the Most Holy Place—the special place considered to be God's dwelling place, according to the conception of the time. That means that our anchor has been dropped in a very special place, namely there where God dwells. So our hope is anchored in God Himself. I think that is how the image is meant to be understood.

Now the question arises, what do we hope for, what do we talk about? Normally, when we say that we hope for

something we usually mean that we entertain the expectation of something desired and are counting on it to happen. This is the usual definition of hope. As believers, as Christians, our hope is of a higher quality: we expect something and know that God can make it possible. He can do

things that man cannot do. We hope in God and bring Him our wishes so that He can fulfil them if it corresponds to His will. This is the hope founded on Christian faith. This hope is on another level and has a different quality than the hope we generally talk about.

We hope, in other words, we look to the future with confidence because we know that God will fulfil His promises. Such is the hope that is being discussed in this passage, our hope.

Now we have to ask ourselves, what did God promise? God has promised man eternal life, eternal fellowship with Him.

The Chief Apostle was accompanied by the District Apostles and District Apostle Helpers. They came to Perth for the second of two international meetings that take place annually





That is the fundamental promise of God, His first promise to man: I will help you to enter eternal fellowship with Me. We were given another divine promise. Jesus said: "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14: 3). This is the promise of the return of Christ.

God gave mankind a third promise: "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth" (Isaiah 65: 17). There, in eternal fellowship with God, there will be no more room for death, evil, or suffering. These are the promises God has given mankind. And when we talk about hope it is related to these divine promises, in whose fulfilment we believe. This is our hope and it is anchored in God Himself. You know, these are not promises made by a human being, but by God. They are founded in Him. We know that God is truth. The Bible says "it is impossible for God to lie" (Hebrews 6: 18).

Everything He says is truth. God, in whom we hope, is faithful. He will do what He has promised. This is a sure and steadfast anchor. God keeps His word. He is almighty, no one can prevent Him from doing His will. Our hope is anchored in God, and that is a solid foundation.

In our Bible text it says that the forerunner has entered there for us. I like this image. I do not know whether this is still the case today, but in the past when a ship could not drop anchor directly where it was stationed, a small boat was used to carry the anchor to a place where it would have enough hold on the seabed. That is the image here. Jesus was the forerunner, who as the Risen One, as the firstfruits, entered the kingdom of God. This is where He dropped the anchor. A nice image, I love it! He paved the way. He made it all possible and proved: if you believe, if you are obedient, if you follow Me, you will experience the resurrection. You will receive the resurrection body and be able to enter this special place where God is, where you will have eternal fellowship with God. I have made it and I will help you to make it too. This is what the forerunner promises.

What is He doing up there now? He is praying for us. He is our advocate who intercedes for us with God, His Father.



That is why our hope is so sure and steadfast, and is anchored in God Himself—in Him who is truth, who is almighty. This is where Jesus is, the forerunner, who has preceded us. He has paved the way and made everything possible for us, and He prays for us. With this hope, this sure anchor, we will never founder from a spiritual point of view.

Of course, we cannot yet see what we are hoping for. The Bible says that hope that is seen is not hope. And then it continues: "But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance" (Romans 8: 24–25). We cannot see what we are hoping for, but we can see the results, the effect this hope has in our daily lives. This is very concrete, it can be seen.

Sometimes we face storms. The ship is tossed about by the wind and the waves, but the sure and steadfast anchor keeps it firmly in place, and not even a severe storm can tear the boat from its moorings. The anchor keeps it securely in place. Of course it gets tossed about, but it will not lose its secure hold. That is a nice image for us.

The fact that we believe, that we are children of God, that we have hope, does not prevent us from being tossed about



by the waves. We are shaken by tribulations, we are tested, and quite often we have to suffer as other people do who do not believe and who are shaken and tossed about. But we have this sure and steadfast anchor, and we know that the glory which God wants to give us is much greater than our suffering today. Once we have reached this special place, we will no longer think about the suffering we have had

to endure during our earthly existence. And that is a very solid hope. Of course, we suffer and are tossed about like a boat by the waves, but we will not be torn away from God, from the fellowship with Him. We are firmly held by our hope.

We look to the future full of confidence

Let us remain faithful. We know that what is to come is much greater, much more important than what we have to endure today. That is the anchor of our hope—a very firm and secure anchor.

It is not always stormy, of course. Here in Perth we enjoyed a wonderful view of the ocean. It was very calm, very beautiful. But even when the water is calm the boat needs to be held by an anchor to prevent it from drifting

away with the current. So even when everything is quiet we need this anchor of hope. We do not always suffer. Often our lives run their normal course, and we are busy with day-to-day life to the point that many people even forget that God exists. They do not need Him. Everything is going well. I can imagine that here in Australia there are many people who are doing well; they are healthy, wealthy, and

happy and do not need to pray to God every day, "Oh God, help me!" Everything is fine, their life is good.

We, the children of God, have this anchor and long for eternal fellowship with God. Even if everything is okay in our lives,

we are connected with God through this anchor of hope, which keeps us from drifting away from God. We want to see our Lord, we want to have eternal fellowship with Him. We want to be with Him.

And even if Jesus has not yet returned and nothing has happened yet, the length of time will not have an adverse affect on us. We will remain in the same place, in the house of the Lord because we are waiting for something. We look to the



future full of confidence. Even if everything is fine and life runs its usual course and it seems to take forever for the Lord to come back, we will remain in our place. The anchor will keep us there.

Sometimes we become aware of our weaknesses and realise that we really are sinners. We promised to do this or that, but we did not do it. We did something wrong here and hurt someone there, and if we are honest, it can be very discouraging at times. You think: "I will never make it! It is not worth it. I am drifting away. I just cannot do it. This is not for me. I am just too weak, I am a sinner." – No! You have this anchor. Don't forget, there is someone close to God who is praying for you. He is your intercessor.

Let us hope in the grace of Christ! Even if we are weak, if we are miserable sinners, and have done awful things, we can hope for grace, knowing that our forerunner, Jesus Christ, is already up there. He prays for us. The anchor of hope keeps us securely in place and prevents us from drifting away from God. Is that not wonderful?

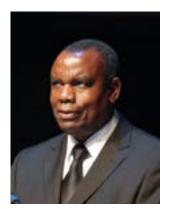
All of you, all of us, serve God in one or the other way. I am thinking especially of the brothers in New Zealand and the neighbouring countries. They have worked hard but have not had the desired results. It can become very difficult sometimes when you work and serve and do all you can and realise there is no success.

I can tell you, we all experience the power of the evil one, who does not want us to promote God's work, who does not want us to spread the gospel, and who does not want us to proclaim the return of Jesus Christ. We all experience how powerful the evil one is. This could maybe even drive us away, but then we remember that we have this anchor of hope which has been dropped in a very secure place, on a solid foundation, on God.

Jesus promised His Apostles that He would be with them until the end. Jesus promised that the evil one would not prevail over His church. We believe His promises and know that the almighty and faithful God will fulfil His promises. That is why we do not give up. As Paul said, we hope in Christ. Let us continue to work for the Lord and serve Him, knowing that our work for the Lord will not be in vain (1 Corinthians 15: 58). Brothers, this is our anchor.

One final point. Paul says, "Rejoicing in hope ..." (Romans 12: 12). This hope, this anchor, allows us to be joyful even when there is no visible reason to be joyful. The anchor, once thrown, is invisible. All you see is the effect: the boat is held in position.

This hope allows us to be joyful. Just thinking about the future and confidently expecting what is going to happen makes us joyful. The idea of being together with Jesus for all eternity, sharing His glory, being delivered from all suf-







District Apostle Michael Ehrich (Germany)



District Apostle Leonard Kolb (USA)



District Apostle Noel Barnes (Cape)

fering, from death, from evil, and to know that soon we will be with Him is a joy we can feel even if there is no visible reason to be joyful. The joy of hope: a wonderful anchor for our soul.

Now, to conclude with the image of the anchor. The hope founded in Christ is a very solid anchor, but you know, it is up to the captain to decide whether to drop or weigh the anchor. If he weighs the anchor, the ship will be carried off by the current and the waves. If a captain weighs the anchor who has little or no experience or is drunk, the ship could drift away in a storm.

It is up to us to remain anchored in Jesus Christ. Please, brothers and sisters, do not weigh the anchor of hope in Jesus Christ. How could this happen? When Jesus no longer takes first place in our hearts, we have weighed the anchor. When something becomes more important to us than Jesus Christ and fellowship with Him, then we have weighed this anchor and our soul is in danger. Or, to make it even easier to understand: if the fulfilment of our wishes becomes more important for us than the fulfilment of God's promises, then we are in danger.

It is normal and quite natural that we want God to respond to our wishes and give us what we ask of Him. That is part of Christian hope. After all, nothing is impossible for God. But if the fulfilment of our wishes becomes more important for us than the fulfilment of His promises—think of the three I mentioned at the beginning—then we are in danger.

This is a piece of advice the Holy Spirit wants to give us. Dear child of God, do not weigh the anchor of hope. Our hope is solid. It is grounded in Jesus Christ. God is faithful,

He is almighty, He will fulfil His promises, give us eternal life, send Jesus Christ, and take us to Him and establish a new creation where there will be no more death or suffering for all those who have believed and followed Jesus Christ. This He promised, and this He will fulfil.

We have received this promise and will therefore be able to remain steadfast in storms, but also in times when everything is calm and it seems to take forever for the Lord Jesus to return. Even when we are weak we hope in the grace of God. Even if there is no success because the power of evil has been at work, we will continue to serve the Lord knowing that God is with His Apostles. He will keep His promise of salvation. Our work will not be in vain. When we work for the Lord in His mind and spirit, He will bless us. This hope fills us with joy.

#### **CORE THOUGHTS**

God promised to give us eternal life and to send His Son to take us to Him. We wait with confidence and patience for the fulfilment of His promises. This hope allows us to remain faithful to the Lord no matter what happens.

# Love, comfort, and new life





An ancient message, one that is still highly topical. A Bible text that has been set to music. And a prayer that was answered a long time ago. In a recent service, the Chief Apostle examined the clean heart and the steadfast spirit mentioned in the Psalms.

About 25,000 believers participated in the divine service in Mönchengladbach in Germany on 18 September 2016 either directly or by transmission. The sermon was based on Psalm 51: 10: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me."

#### The Creator

"Why should we still pray this today?" was the question. In fact, God has already answered this prayer. To begin with, Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider gave only a single hint. With the words "create in me, God" the psalm proclaims the salvation engendered by the Creator. Therefore: "Let us take a look at the works of God."

Not only has Jesus Christ brought the gospel and given His life, the Chief Apostle said, but God also made sure that this message and the baptism to cleanse the soul of original sin

was kept alive over thousands of years despite all the wars, injustices, and human shortcomings.

#### The heart

"God has given a new heart," the Chief Apostle said. In the Old Testament it was important that the law was fulfilled. With Jesus Christ the "heart of stone—the law on stone tablets—was replaced by the motivation of love". He went on to say that God does not punish: "He loves mankind and lets them experience this constantly."

God has created the possibility that our hearts are cleansed of everyday sins. We have the grace, the chance, to start over again, as though nothing had happened. For this we need the absolution as well as the proclamation of His will: "God made sure that we can hear His word and that we can act upon it," the Chief Apostle said.

#### community 02/2017 A VISIT IN EUROPE



Seven hundred believers gathered at Rheydt City Hall for this divine service. The service was transmitted to congregations in North Rhine-Westphalia (Germany) and to countries cared for by the District Church



"God sent the Holy Spirit on the first Pentecost, and He has been active on earth ever since. He has not left the earth, nor mankind," he went on to emphasise. The Holy Spirit is always with us. He always has advice and comfort to give and refers us to Jesus Christ.

"Renew a steadfast spirit ..." That is not only a reference to the sending but also to the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is also an act of creation by the Creator, who has given us new life. We received this new life on the day of our sealing. It is a spirit of power, who always gives us the strength to overcome our old nature.

#### The answer

"See, that is how God works. That is how He answered the prayer of that believing man at the time," the Chief Apostle said. "Why should we still pray this today?" His answer: "Because we can express so much with it."

Let us first of all thank God for His saving activity and then bring our longing to expression. And then our prayer should continue as follows: "Lord, grant me Your grace, cleanse me, give me Your word and Your forgiveness, and help me. I want to become a new creation in Christ. Help me. I cannot do it without you."





#### **CORE THOUGHTS**

Psalm 51: 10

"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me."

The triune God alone is the Creator of our salvation.

- He has liberated us from original sin, constantly proves that He loves us, and grants us His grace.
- He has sent the Holy Spirit in order to comfort us and to renew us.

We honour and praise Him for the salvation that He offers us. We plead for His grace and implore Him to help and save us.



## | Clearing the way for the Almighty

What should hinder God from saving a soul? But even for the Almighty there is an obstacle. And we human beings have the means to clear the way. Here is how in five steps.

"There is only one thing that can hinder God from saving us." This is what Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider made clear in Silvertown in South Africa. "He will not save us against our own will. That is the key. God wants to save us, but we have to pave the way for Him."

About a hundred thousand brothers and sisters participated in the service on Sunday, 18 December 2016—most by video transmission.

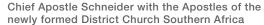
#### Step one: fighting against sin

The Chief Apostle listed five ways we can prepare the way for God. Most importantly: "We have to want to renounce sin and overcome evil." That is the principle for both Holy Baptism and forgiveness of sins. Decisive is that we do not agree to any kind of compromise when it comes to sin. "Let us renounce sin—all sins, not only the big visible ones, but every sin."

### Step two: sanctifying ourselves for divine service

The Lord wants to meet us in divine service. It is up to us to prepare the way for Him, to clear out our hearts, and set the right priorities: "You know my concerns and needs, my wishes. But You know that the most important thing for me is to enter into Your kingdom." To sanctify ourselves







Chief Apostle (ret.) Wilhelm Leber and District Apostle (ret.) Noel Barnes

for divine service, the following inner attitude is required: "God, help me to recognise You in the sinner, the imperfect servant You have sent."

## Step three: gathering in the name of Jesus

To be able to experience the presence of Jesus Christ in divine service we have to gather in His name, the Chief Apostle continued. "We have to be aware: I am together with my brother and sister in faith now, the members of my congregation. They are so important to Jesus that He died for them. Therefore I cannot just think of them as sinners and strange people." That also means that we have to clear up any differences there may be between us. God will not do this for us. He expects us to solve our problems together and reconcile. That is our task.

## Step four: taking our bearings from the gospel

God also wants to save our neighbour. Here too the faithful are called to pave the way for God. Let us conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel. Neither New Apostolic Christians are perfect nor is the Church. And it is precisely because of this that we want to do God's work by forgiving one another, loving one another, and overcoming our differences.

## Step five: committing ourselves to the congregation

And, finally, there are very practical ways of clearing the way for the Lord. "Here we are talking about our offerings

and helping along in the congregation," the Chief Apostle said and referred to concrete requests from Jesus to His disciples, such as preparing a place for their Passover celebration.

In summing it all up, the Chief Apostle said that fighting against sin, sanctifying ourselves for divine service, gathering in the name of Jesus, taking our bearings from the gospel, and committing ourselves to the congregation—this is how we can pave the way for the Saviour.

#### **CORE THOUGHTS**

Mark 1: 2-3

"As it is written in the Prophets:
Behold, I send My messenger before
Your face, who will prepare Your way
before You. The voice of one crying
in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of
the Lord; make His paths straight.'"

We clear the way for the Redeemer by fighting against sin, sanctifying ourselves for divine service, gathering in the name of Jesus, taking our bearings from the gospel, and actively participating in the congregation.

## It is not enough to just keep the commandments

For many Christians faith has become a tradition. And yet, Christian faith also entails struggle, suffering, following, and corresponding actions! This article offers some explanations from a divine service with the Chief Apostle.



Jean-Luc Schneider conducted a divine service there with the local congregation.

Chief Apostle Schneider began by filling the congregation in on the historical context of the Bible text: "The text makes reference to the act of salvation which God performed upon the people of Israel. In His compassion, He liberated the people by forcing the Pharaoh's hand and then leading them into the Promised Land." This liberation was an act of grace! Grace signifies receiving the love of God undeserved. However, the people of Israel also had to subordinate themselves to the will of God in order to reach their goal. Various efforts were necessary to this end, said the Chief Apostle: "Israel had to cross the desert and do battle against its foes!"

## Making an effort to reach the goal

"Today God seeks to liberate mankind from the rule of sin and lead them into His kingdom," said the Chief Apostle, drawing a comparison between the past and present. "This salvation is also an expression of grace that we cannot earn for ourselves. In order to attain our goal, we must likewise align ourselves with the will of God and make the required efforts."



These include believing in God's magnificent act of grace, namely the sending of His Son into the world as the Saviour. "Thanks to His sacrifice we can be delivered—provided we believe in it!" But the Chief Apostle went on to state that—in addition to believing in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and believing in His death and resurrection—believing the message of the gospel also incorporates:

- believing that which He taught!
- performing deeds that are consistent with the gospel.
- remaining steadfast in the gospel!

"One cannot make a business out of the gospel," said the Chief Apostle to clarify. It is not merely a code for good behaviour or a reference tool for good ethics, nor is it a manual for a successful life! Rather, the necessity of being reborn out of water and the Spirit, celebrating Holy Communion, and preparing oneself for the return of Christ are inseparably connected with the doctrine of Jesus Christ, he explained.

#### Following Christ is the way

"God wants to lead us into His kingdom, and also shows us how we can get there, namely by following Jesus Christ." Chief Apostle Schneider then went on to put together the pieces necessary for salvation like a puzzle: rebirth out of water and the Spirit, celebration of Holy Communion. That is how divine life can develop. And in the process it is up to each of us

whether we want to make the effort. "The path of following Christ is not a comfortable path!" In order to be saved by God, human beings must struggle and battle their way forward.

- whether we want to suffer with Christ. "It is not enough just to keep the commandments!" In order to become like Christ, human beings must overcome the old creation. This is often painful.
- whether we want to be patient. "We are on the way to our heavenly home, but we have not even seen it yet!" It is not always easy for us to wait for it in patience.

"God will grant complete redemption to those who sincerely long for it."

#### **CORE THOUGHTS**

Isaiah 48: 17

"Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: 'I am the Lord your God, who teaches you to profit, who leads you by the way you should go."

Jesus is our Saviour. He has liberated us from sin through His sacrifice. He gives us His doctrine and has made us a new creation. In order to attain salvation we have to follow His teaching and the example He set. Upon His return He will complete the work that He has begun in us.



# Forgiveness of sins: the prerequisites and effects

Forgiveness of sins lets us experience the grace of God directly. How do we attain forgiveness of sins? And what are its effects? Thoughts from a doctrinal text by Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider.

Belief in the forgiveness of sins (also known as "absolution") is a fundamental element of Christian faith: forgiveness of sins is expressly mentioned in the early church creeds—in the Apostolicum and the Creed of Nicaea-Constantinople (Catechism in Questions and Answers, Chapter 2)—as well as in the Third Article of our creed.

#### Unique and continual

Forgiveness of sins is made possible through the sacrifice of Christ. The fundamental liberation from the rule of sin occurs through Holy Baptism with water, in which original sin is washed away. In every divine service, the Apostle or a minister commissioned by him proclaims the absolution in the name of Jesus. When received with a believing heart, this ultimately erases individual sin and guilt before God. Nevertheless, neither baptism with water nor the absolution can liberate us from the inclination to sin (concupiscence). No sooner have we been liberated from our latest sins, we sin again—despite all our efforts not to.

#### Ready for the absolution

To obtain the forgiveness of sins requires intensive preparation. We must

- undertake a thorough self-examination and become aware of our mistakes.
- confess our sins before God. This not only means that

we must recognise our mistakes, but also acknowledge our guilt.

- feel remorse. Let us bring to expression our resolve to do better.
- resolutely pursue the path of reconciliation with our neighbour.

If we follow the above, it will undoubtedly contribute to our sanctification.

#### Peace with God

The absolution not only washes away our sins, but also assures us of the peace of the Risen One.

- Thereby the Lord confirms that He has not rejected us despite our sins, and that His love for us remains unchanged.
- Jesus Christ reminds us that He has overcome evil. Although Satan may succeed in causing us to fail, He cannot separate us from the love of God.
- We can dare to make a new start.

#### Nearness among children of God

What is more, forgiveness of sins helps bring children of God closer to one another and reinforces the oneness desired by the Lord.

- In the Lord's Prayer prior to the absolution, the congregation confesses its sins—all of us publicly confess our mistakes and concede that we are no better than our neighbour.
- This collective confession is associated with the plea: "And deliver us from the evil one." This plea underlines the solidarity of the congregation in the battle against sin: "Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed" (James 5: 16).
- The absolution is proclaimed to all—each and every one can hear, and delight in, the forgiveness that has been promised to his neighbour.

#### **Worthy for Holy Communion**

Beyond that, the significance of forgiveness of sins derives from its direct relationship to the celebration of Holy Communion. Worthy partaking of Holy Communion is indispensable for a life in Christ. Forgiveness of sins itself is indispensable for receiving Holy Communion worthily, and this is true for several reasons.

- We must be cleansed in order to have sacramental fellowship with Jesus Christ.
- Partaking in Holy Communion is reserved for those who have been baptised, that is to say, for those who endeavour to turn away from evil in order to follow Christ. When we show remorse in order to receive forgiveness of sins, we demonstrate that we—despite all our faults—are firmly resolved to keep the promise we gave at our baptism. (When a child is baptised, this promise to believe in Jesus Christ and live in accordance with the gospel is given by the parents and later reinforced by the young Christians in their confirmation vow).
- In Holy Communion the members of the congregation commune with one another ("communion" is the fellowship with Christ and the members of the congregation among one another). True fellowship is only possible if all have forgiven one another.

Forgiveness of sins is not a sacrament, but it is very important for our preparation to partake of Holy Communion worthily and therefore for the return of the Lord.

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Editor: Peter Johanning



# Forgiveness of sins and the Apostle ministry

Forgiveness of sins without the involvement of the Apostle ministry? Is that at all possible? In future, definitely. And today it cannot be ruled out, the Chief Apostle writes. Important is: the ministerial authority gives the faithful certainty.

After His resurrection, Jesus Christ gave His disciples the commission to proclaim forgiveness of sins in His name: "As the Father has sent Me, I also send you. ... If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (John 20: 21, 23). The Fourth Article of Faith refers to this passage. The Catechism explains how we understand this biblical reference: "A further task incumbent on the apostolate is to ... bindingly proclaim forgiveness to human beings on the basis of the sacrifice and merit of Jesus Christ" (Catechism 2.4.4).

#### From the Articles of Faith

Two of the Articles of Faith in our creed mention the belief in the forgiveness of sins and the commission which the Apostles have to proclaim it.

The Third Article of Faith speaks of forgiveness as an act of God: only the triune God can wash away sins, and He can do so at any time. Jesus, the Son of God, stated that He Himself had the power to forgive sins (cf. Mark 2: 10), and even did so before bringing His sacrifice on the cross.

The Fourth Article of Faith goes into greater detail, and references Jesus' activity in His church. In the church of Christ, those who believe in Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, can receive the grace of baptism and thus experience the washing away of original sin. Within the church, the Apostles have the commission to bindingly proclaim forgiveness of sins.

#### Forgiveness is not automatic

The Apostle proclaims forgiveness, however, it is God who forgives. The authority of the Apostles with respect to the forgiveness of sins is not automatic. The proclamation of the forgiveness of sins through an Apostle alone will not suffice in order to wash away sins. Forgiveness only takes

effect when the sinner is repentant and willing to reconcile. The Apostles act as messengers of Christ: through them, Jesus Christ Himself proclaims the absolution to the believers. The forgiveness proclaimed by the Apostle is authoritative, irrespective of the opinions or agreement of other human beings. Sinners can receive forgiveness from God even if other people continue to accuse them.

## Is forgiveness possible without the apostolate?

Does the commission to forgive sins entrusted to the Apostles rule out any possibility that forgiveness might also be attained outside of the apostolate?

Let us first remember that the commission of the Apostles is limited in duration, since it primarily consists of proclaiming the return of Christ and of preparing the believers for this event. When the Lord returns, both the living and the dead who were prepared for His coming will resurrect. They will receive a glorified body and will enter into eternal fellowship with God.

Since these are all sinners, they will also need forgiveness of sins in order to be with God. This forgiveness will not be pronounced by the Apostles, but granted directly by God. The same applies to the martyrs who will resurrect after the great tribulation. At the Last Judgement it will be God Himself who will grant grace to those who will be permitted to enter into the new creation.

Our doctrine thus expressly references the possibility of receiving forgiveness of sins even after the end of the Apostles' activity on earth. With regard to the time prior to the renewed occupation of the Apostle ministry, our Catechism explains: "It is conceivable that—even in this time—God showed His grace of forgiveness to those who believed" (Catechism 6.4.2.2).

#### Ministerial authority provides certainty

How is it in our time? The Catechism also brings a fundamental truth to expression in this respect: "God in His omnipotence has always been able to forgive sins" (Catechism 12.1.8.1). Thus we cannot rule out that forgiveness of sins is possible without the involvement of an Apostle or a minister commissioned by him.

For this reason we should not claim that it is impossible for God to forgive the sins of any believer today, even if he does not believe in the Apostles at work in the New Apostolic Church. God can also forgive sins quite independently of ministry and church!

However, only those who have received the pronouncement of forgiveness of sins through the apostolate can be certain that their sins have truly been forgiven.

#### Making its effects visible

In the past, the importance of the Apostle ministry was often associated with the commission to forgive sins. This view was based on the premise that forgiveness of sins without the Apostle ministry would call the ministry into question. At that time, the emphasis was on the forgiveness of sins, and Holy Communion was merely a kind of accessory to the absolution. In a way it was merely considered a kind of confirmation of, or receipt for, forgiveness of sins.

Today we understand Holy Communion as the central event of the divine service, and the forgiveness of sins as the indispensable prerequisite for this celebration. We believe that Holy Communion is an important means of preparation for the return of the Lord, and that the administration of this sacrament is entrusted to the Apostles.

As children of God we have the responsibility to make people aware of the activity of living Apostles. We can only do this if we are an epistle of Christ that can be recognised and read by others (cf. 2 Corinthians 3: 2). The activity of the Apostle ministry is to be clearly recognised in each and every one of us and in our congregations!

Let us also profess that the Apostles have the authority to proclaim forgiveness of sins! Let us show the world that New Apostolic Christians

- have the courage to question themselves and the resolve to change.
- are prepared to forgive and reconcile.
- strive for unity among one another.

Such an attitude will bring us the blessing of God and increase the interest of our fellow human beings in the apostolic cause.

# Ministerial authority and leadership function

It was the top subject of discussion for the District Apostles and Apostles over this rapidly closing year: work on the new concept of ministry. What is so important about this, and where will the journey take us? Following is a brief review and a look ahead.

The cornerstones are in place, the foundations have been laid: the autumn conference of the District Apostles in Perth (Australia) formulated some key statements in matters concerning the "Concept of Ministry". The Work Group Questions of Faith has now been given the mandate to draft a special edition for the *Divine Service Guide*. The *Divine Service Guide* is a publication that communicates information from the Church leadership directly to the ministers of the Church. It is produced in over 70 languages.

## Related questions: both theological and societal in nature

But why does a Church with a solid 150 years of tradition even have to give any thought to its ministerial conception? After all, with the publication of the Catechism in the year 2012, the New Apostolic Church presented the world with quite a comprehensive written foundational text. And the whole seventh chapter of this work deals with ministry. "However, other related questions are being raised now," said retired Chief Apostle Leber already in 2013. What is a ministry and what is a function? What happens during

ordination? These are just some of the basic questions. And very closely associated with these are another two questions: what is a ministerial mandate and what constitutes an organisational task? What is ministerial authority and what is a leadership function?

Once the theological aspects have been thought through, the focus would shift to the related societal questions, said Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider back in 2014 during a panel discussion at the International Church Convention. Who is permitted to bear a ministry? What will the congregation accept? What things will work on an international level and what things will only work in some regions?

### Three levels: the ministries and their powers

This much is clear—as a measure of ministerial authority, the New Apostolic faith only acknowledges three levels of ministry:

 the Deacon, who has the authority to proclaim the word of God,







District Apostles' conference in Zurich in Switzerland (March 2016)

- the Priest, who, in addition to the above, also has the mandate and authority to dispense Holy Baptism with water, proclaim the forgiveness of sins, as well as consecrate and dispense Holy Communion, and
- the Apostle, who, moreover, also has the authority to baptise with the gift of the Holy Spirit and ordain ministers.

All further distinctions—particularly with regard to the priestly ministries—derive from the basic idea that the Church was to be restored to its original structure and form. However, a holistic view of all the relevant Bible passages shows us that the early church did not possess a uniform ministerial structure. For example, Elders and Bishops both had the very same function as rectors over the congregations at the time. Even the designation only differed depending on whether they led congregations characterised predominantly by Jewish Christians or Greek Christians.

## Establishing doctrine: working together around the world

Concrete work on the conception of ministry has been ongoing since the spring of 2014. The Work Group Questions

of Faith began by assembling all the necessary foundations for theological consideration, which also included the historical background. Since then, the panel has worked to formulate various questions on the subject and prepare possible answers to them. The International District Apostle Meeting has been discussing and debating these matters regularly since March 2015.

At the initiative of the Chief Apostle, all Apostles around the world were drawn into the consultation process as of spring 2016—either in writing or in conferences such as those held in Frankfurt (Germany), Daejeon (South Korea), and Los Angeles (USA). After all, the Catechism describes the apostolate as the ministry responsible for establishing doctrine. Beyond that, the organisational structure of the ministerial concept will also take cultural dimensions into account.

During the District Apostle Meeting in Australia, Chief Apostle Schneider gave voice to his enthusiasm over the progress made to date, expressing how impressive it is to watch these diverse aspects of the subject fill up with spirit and life such that an overall context comes into being as a result

## Musi o Tunya Congregation turns 25

1, 975 members participated in a divine service conducted by District Apostle Charles Ndandula on March 11, 2017 at Livingstone's Musi o Tunya Congregation to commemorate 25 years of its existence.



District Apostle Charles Ndandula during the service at Musi o Tunya Congregation on March 11, 2017

#### "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him!"

Dedicated on 13th March 1992, by District Apostle D.B Mfune, accompanied by all seventeen active apostles for Zambia at that time, Musi o Tunya Congregation hosted the festive divine service which was conducted by Chief Apostle Wilhelm Leber in 2008. In this divine service, 4 Bishops were ordained; two (2) for Zambia - Bishop Sheme Samalela and Bishop Godwin Nyuwa (now Apostle). The other two Bishops were for South Africa (Cape Town church district). Four (4) years later, the congregation hosted a coral concert graced by Chief Apostle Leber. In 2015, District Apostle Markus Felbulm conducted the Thanksgiving festive divine service.

During the divine service on Saturday, March 11, 2017, five (5) District ministers were ordained for Livingstone Apostle area, while District Elder Abel Mudenda was placed into retirement. Retired Shepherd W.K.M Mununga and his dear wife Catherine received Ruby Wedding anniversary blessings.



During the service at Musi o Tunya, retired Shepherd W.K.M Mununga and his dear wife Catherine received Ruby Wedding anniversary blessings.

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After the divine service on Saturday, District Apostle Ndandula and his entourage visited Nakatindi Congregation in Livingstone - a proposed venue for an open air service with Chief Apostle Schneider in April 2018. About 12,000 members are expected to attend this service. A Silver Jubilee Anniversary concert with District Apostle Ndandula and his entourage was arranged at Musi o Tunya on Friday, March 10, 2017.

District Apostle Ndandula could not hide his appreciation of the splendid performance during the concert.

"Excellent! This was a wonderful performance and indeed, it was worth our time. I feel we have been fully prepared for tomorrow's divine service," he said.

Friday's musical concert and the visit of the District Apostle marked the beginning of the preparations for Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider's visit to Livingstone in April 2018. On Sunday, March 12, 2017, District Apostle Ndandula dedicated Bethel church of Choma - Kalomo Apostle area in Nakeempa elder district, to the joy of 1, 706 members that participated in this dedication service.

Psalms 147:1-4 was used as text word.

"Praise the Lord! For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and praise is beautiful. The Lord builds up Jerusalem; He gathers together the outcasts of Israel. He heals the broken wounds. He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by name."

District Apostle Charles Ndandula cuts the ribbon before the dedication of Bethel church in Choma on Sunday, March 12, 2017.

Five new Church buildings dedicated in Malawi Central Apostle Area













**MSOKONEZI** 

KAUDZU

**CHISITU** 

**MCHEWERE** 

**MBUTO** 

Members of Malawi Central Apostle area had cause to rejoice for five new church buildings were dedicated by Apostle Moses Chipanda the first two weekends of July 2016.

The congregations whose church buildings were dedicated to the honour and glory of the Lord included Kaudzu, Msokonezi, Chisitu, Mchewere and Mbuto. All these churches were built in the spirit of "Let us build a chapel", a self-help initiative implemented by the district church of Zambia, Malawi and Zimbabwe.

A total of 1,968 members and guests that included traditional rulers participated in the five dedication services in which 24 ministers were ordained.

The first service was on Saturday, 2nd July, 2016 at Kaudzu in Lilongwe west. Kaudzu congregation was established in 1986, with 12 members at that time, and has experienced growth in membership, hence the need for a new church.

The church building was built at a cost of MK550, 000.00.

In the afternoon Apostle Chipanda conducted another dedication service at Msokonezi. Members of Msokonezi congregation decided to embark on a building project after admiring the beauty of new church buildings.

#### community 01/2017 NEWS FROM DISTRICT 28

Relentlessly they mobilized resources to change the shape of the old building. The new church was constructed at a cost of MK945,600.00. The Apostle used Matthew 22:14 "for many are called but few are chosen."

On Sunday, 3rd July, 2016 brethren and guests attended the church dedication service at Chisitu in the Lilongwe West. A very simple but strong church has been constructed by members under self-help to the tune of MK510,000.00. The Church dedication service was attended by 273 souls including 9 guests. Chisitu congregation was started in 2011 by Ministers from Msada and Sinyala congregations, about 9 and 32 kilometres respectively. In 2015 through the spirit of sacrifice, members moulded bricks and pooled resources together to construct a new and modern church building. On 10th September, 2015, construction work started. Chisitu is located 64 kilometres west of Lilongwe District close to the boarder with Mozambique.

Mchewere church was dedicated in the afternoon of Sunday, 3rd July 2016. The church gobbled a total sum of MK610,200.00. The fifth church in a row to be dedicated was Mbuto on Sunday, 10th July 2017. Mbuto church was built at a cost of MK492, 000.00.

- Apostle Moses Chipanda dedicated Kaudzu church on Saturday 2nd July, 2016.
- 2. Apostle Moses Chipanda dedicated Chisitu church on Sunday 3rd July, 2016.
- 3. Mchewere church was dedicated by Apostle Moses Chipanda on the afternoon of Sunday, 3rd July, 2016.
- 4. Mbuto church was dedicated by Apostle Moses Chipanda on the Sunday 10th July, 2016.









# ... Update on the introduction of NAC schools in Zambia

The first National Education Committee meeting took place from Friday, 10th to Sunday, 12th March, 2017 in Lusaka, to receive input from the Apostle Areas for the finalization of the Draft Guide for New Apostolic Schools; and to develop an education plan for the next five years.

During the meeting, reports were given on the education projects and programmes in the Apostle Areas. Most of the Apostle Areas have community schools operating in temporal buildings. These schools are in remote areas where there are no formal schools, but our Church is there; running Sunday school classes.

Project Coordinator at the Church office, District Elder Malinda (i.r.) said three Apostle Areas, Mongu, Mansa, and Choma, have schools with permanent standard buildings and teachers posted there by the Government.

"The Sunday school teachers extend their services to the children in the locality to teach them regular lessons from Monday to Friday. This is common in the fishing camps along the Zambezi River in Livingstone.

Sesheke – Mulobezi Apostle Area has a nursery school under construction; with standard buildings to open soon. There are more children receiving some form of formal education in New Apostolic schools.

Most of the Apostle Areas reported that they are currently fundraising for school infrastructure development and expansion to meet the growing demand for school places in New Apostolic schools. Some Apostle Areas have adult education programmes, offering lessons even to ministers.

During the meeting held in Lusaka, valuable input was received from the participants for the finalization of the New Apostolic Church school guide – a vital requirement in the running of schools in Zambia.

The meeting also initiated the drafting of the work on the education plans in Apostle Areas. These will constitute the content of the National Plan to be finalized in April 2017.





1 - 2. Participants during the National Education Committee meeting held at Lima garden in Lusaka on March 10 - 12, 2017.

# A 101 years old sister called home

On Wednesday 8th February, 2017 Apostle Steven Lishebo Lindunda conducted a funeral service for the late Sister Esnart Lukanga Seulu of Chingola who died at the age of 101 years.

Sister Esnart Lukanga Seulu was the mother to the Apostle David Seulu i.r. For the service the Apostle



Apostle Steven Lindunda during the funeral service of sister Esnart L. Seulu at Chingola Central Church



Late sister Esnart Lukanga Seulu

read a text word from Jeremiah 31 v 13

"For I will turn their mourning to joy, will comfort them and make them rejoice rather than sorrow"

The Apostle was accompanied by Apostle Patrick Poho of Solwezi, Apostle Jacob Mwansa of Mufulira and Bishop Phillip Mututa of Zambezi.

OBITUARY Born: 17th October, 1916 Baptised in 1973 Adopted in 1980 Sealed in 1980 Died on 5th February, 2017

# Training of Trainers on the New Sunday School Material

The New Apostolic Church in Zambia will from April 21 – 23, conduct a training of trainers in Lusaka, for Sunday School teachers on the new Sunday School materials.

In his circular to all Apostles in Zambia, Malawi and Zimbabwe, dated July 28, 2016, District Apostle Charles Ndandula, said it will be the responsibility of those who will be trained to train other teachers in respective Apostle Areas.



District Apostle Charles Ndandula

"As you are aware, our church is developing new Sunday School learning materials. These materials will be introduced to our teachers in 2017. Consequently, Sister Catherine Weber of Canada, who is the Project Manager/Lead Writer for the Project Group – Children's Teaching Materials will come to our District Church to conduct training on the new Sunday School material. This training, which will be held from 21st to 23rd April, 2017, will be for Sunday School teachers who will in turn train others," read part of the circular.

All the Apostle Areas have nominated 2 Sunday School teachers from their areas who will attend this training. The trainees will arrive in Lusaka on Thursday 20th April and return to their areas on Monday 24th April, 2017.

Bishop Oscar Kalumiana, who represents Zambia on the Project Group for Children's Teaching Materials, is coordinating this event.

District Apostle Ndandula further said Apostles must ensure that those who will be trained in Lusaka should train others in their respective Apostle Areas.

"Therefore you should plan to have your two (2) trainers who will be trained in Lusaka to train at least 10 other trainers. The 12 trainers should plan to train all Sunday School Teachers in your areas by the end of April, 2018", read part of the circular.

Principal trainers (the two to be trained in Lusaka) will be given the format for reporting progress in this activity during the training.

Since teachers change in congregations, this will be an ongoing activity to cater for new teachers.



Bishop Oscar Kalumiana

## ...News in brief

#### NIPA to host concert with CA

The National Institute for Public Administration (NIPA) will host this year's New Apostolic Church music concert with Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider.

The music concert with choir and orchestra which will be held in the new conference hall at NIPA will start at 15:00hrs on June 24, 2017. Admission to the concert will be restricted to ticket holders. The tickets would be purchased in selected centres to be announced soon.

This was announced during the 1st Adhoc Meeting for the visit of Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider in June 2017 to Zambezi and Mansa held on Wednesday, 8th March, 2017 at Lima Garden, Lusaka.

#### CA to visit Livingstone

Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider is scheduled to conduct a Divine Service in Zambia's tourist capital, Livingstone, in April 2018.

District Apostle Charles Ndandula made the announcement during his recent Divine Service to commemorate 25 years of Musi o Tunya Congregation in Livingstone held on March 10, 2017. This would be the first time Chief Apostle Schneider will be conducting a Divine Service in Livingstone.

#### ZNBC to show NAC content

The Zambia National Broadcasting Cooperation (ZNBC TV 3) will in the second quarter of 2017, start showing New Apostolic Church (NAC) content on its Christian channel TV 3.

"I wish to inform you that the offer was tabled before the Content Committee on 11th March, 2016. The Committee commended and accepted the offer for the church programmes", read part of the letter from the Zambia National Broadcasting Cooperation Director General Mr. Robert Mwanza to District Apostle Charles Ndandula.

The content will include excerpts of Divine Services, NAC music videos, arranged and recorded bible study discussions, documentaries among others. The programme will air for two hours, weekly.

#### Apostle Mulopo's wife put to rest

974 mourners paid their last respects to late Sister Brenda Musowe Mukoma Mulopo, wife to retired Apostle Moses Mulopo of Mongu. In a burial service conducted by Apostle Godwin Nyuwa at Katima Mulilo congregation in Namibia on February 23, 2017, Hebrews 13: 14 was used as text word

"For here we have no continuing city but we seek the one to come."

She was born on January 1, 1965 and died on February 2, 2017. She is survived by a husband Apostle Moses Mulopo (i.r.) and four children, all girls.

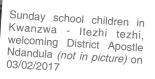




District Apostle Charles Ndandula and his entourage being welcomed by the Luyando sisters in Zambezi on 13/01/2017.

Sunday school children in Lundazi waylaid District Apostle Ndandula and his entourage with welcome songs on their way to Lundazi on 17/09/2016.

During the divine service at Evelyn Hone College Congregation, conducted by District Apostle Helper Robert Nsama on 19 March, 2017, Shepherd David Namunjebwe Sambi and his dear wife Catherine Moono Sambi were bestowed with the Silver Wedding anniversary blessings.



Pictures

District Apostle Ndandula after unveiling the plate to mark the beginning of construction work of Simoni congregation in Choma, under self-help on March 12, 2017.



Luyando Sisters in Solwezi awaiting the arrival of District Apostle Ndandula and his entourage at Solwezi airport on 04/03/2017.



District Apostle Charles Ndandula with newlywed, Lt. Samuel Kibubi and Eveness Chitumbula at Lusaka's Central congregation on 20/01/2017

Sunday school children in Mpika, during a Christmas concert with District Apostle Ndandula (not in picture) on 24/12/2016.



2 April 2017 Buenos Aires/Argentina

5 April 2017 Mendoza/Argentina

8 April 2017 Panama/Panama

9 April 2017 Panama/Panama

14 April 2017 Winterthur/Switzerland

16 April 2017 Marburg/Germany

14 May 2017 Tiling/Philippines

18 May 2017 Lampung/Indonesia

21 May 2017 Jakarta/Indonesia

zi may zori bakarta machesia

28 May 2017 Joachimsthal/Germany

4 June 2017 Vienna/Austria

11 June 2017 Chicago/USA

18 June 2017 Frankfurt/Germany

25 June 2017 Zambezi Central/Zambia

27 June 2017 Mansa/Zambia

30 June 2017 Thika/Kenya



## Coming up

Sun, April 2, 2017 Rededication service - Zambezi

Sun, April 9, 2017 Palm Sunday (With Confirmation) - Mansa

Fri, April 14, 2017 Good Friday (with Confirmation) - Monkey Bay

Sun, April 16, 2017 Easter Sunday (With Confirmation) - Chirimba

Sat, April 22, 2017 Plumtree, Zimbabwe

Sun, April 23, 2017 Mpopoma, Zimbabwe

Wed, April 26, 2017 Mbare, Zimbabwe

Sat, April 29, 2017 Eastlea, Zimbabwe

Sun, April 30, 2017 Tongogara, Zimbabwe

Sat, May 5, 2017 Divine Service - Sesheke

Sun, May 6, 2017 Divine Service - Mwandi

Tue, May 9, 2917 Divine Service - Molite

Wed, May 10, 2017 Divine Service - Linda

Sun, May 14, 2017 Divine Service - Lusaka Central

Sun, May 21, 2017 Divine Service - Chisamba

Thu, May 25, 2017 Ascension Service - Mufulira

Sat, May 27, 2017 Divine Service - Luanshya

Sun, May 29, 2017 Divine Service - Ndola

Sun, June 11, 2017 Divine Service - Zambezi

Sun, June 18, 2017 Divine Service - Mansa

Sun, June 25, 2017 Divine Service to be conducted by Chief

Apostle - Zambezi

Tue, June 27, 2017 Divine Service to be conducted by Chief

Apostle - Mansa

