

Health, growth, completion

# Vision



New Apostolic Church USA

District News

[www.nac-usa.org](http://www.nac-usa.org)

Summer 2019

Dear brothers and sisters,

Today I would like to write about the word – **Wonderment!**

It is defined as a state of awed admiration or respect. I have always believed that the words *awe* or *awesome* should be reserved only for the acts and work of the almighty God, even as Jacob exclaimed in Genesis 28:17:

*How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God...!*

It is good for us to find ourselves in a state of awe or wonderment from time to time in considering the omnipotence of the triune God. Such was the case in the divine service from our Chief Apostle in Goslar, Germany on Pentecost. It was quite unique in that the message was not one of instruction nor admonishment. The message simply and beautifully revealed the wonderment of the person of God, the Holy Spirit, and celebrated His power on this earth among the believers of Jesus Christ across the ages. The sermon showed the incredible strength that has been, presently is, and will continue to be imparted into the hearts of people in the face of tragedy, suffering, and difficulty. The message did not create for us a list of what to do or what not to do, but rather, it evoked a true feeling of awe in what the triune God is doing. Further, the Pentecost divine service was a message of praise and adoration, the logical conclusion of experiencing such wonderment. As we perceive the greatness of God, we recognize our smallness, and yet, also His intensive concern for us.

Let us grow accustomed to such services. They are also necessary for our development and understanding of the kingdom. To grow in spiritual health means we need to deepen our knowledge of our Bridegroom, broaden our interest and love for those around us, and more keenly recognize the plan that the Divine has for each of us. These internal soul movements of astonishment cause us to stop, reflect, and inwardly confess:

*How awesome is God, my Father! How limitless is His love for me!*

*What a grace that Jesus Christ always comes near me and wants to forgive me!*

*What strength there is in God, the Holy Spirit, to help me endure and overcome all that I must to be ready for the Lord's day!*

And in conclusion, simply – **How rich I am!**

With love,





As part of the family of God, we are on a mission. It was given to us by Jesus Christ through the apostles. And when we choose to follow obediently and give to the furtherance of the church, then we are choosing to give to the mission of the church.

Jesus' mission when He came to the earth was to rescue humankind from their sin and re-establish their relationship with God, the Father. Nothing stood in His way or distracted Him from completing that mission. The devil endeavored to tempt Him away. The Pharisees accused Him of breaking the law so that He would be condemned. Even His disciples stood in His way from time to time before they fully understood the will of the Father. Through it all, Jesus continued on His journey to give life and peace to all who would believe in Him. Through the giving of His life, Jesus gave us all the opportunity to enter into His kingdom. He gave us all the chance to be forgiven, to be re-born, and to live in eternal fellowship with the triune God.

Before ascending back to His Father, Jesus placed His mission into the hands of His disciples.

*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*

### **Matthew 28:19-20**

When filled with the Holy Spirit, the apostles shared the gospel of Jesus and the church of Christ began. Jesus intentionally created this institution, charged it with His mission, and then placed the responsibility for managing it into human hands. We are the church, and we are called to take up this mission.

*As believers grow spiritually and mature in their faith, they gain the understanding that all they have is given by God and belongs to Him.*

With the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, believers learn to trust in God and recognize how they can use what they have been given to give generously to others, so that all people may come to know Jesus.

This means we don't just give to missions, but that Christian giving, in and of itself, is the mission to which we are called: to give a portion of that which we have for the sake of the gospel. Jesus Christ gave life to the dead, both spiritually and physically; Christians humbly follow His example by giving of themselves to the spiritual and physical welfare of others.

The mission statement of the New Apostolic Church is tied directly to the Great Commission:

*Reaching out to all people in order to teach them the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to baptize them with water and the Holy Spirit. Providing soul care and cultivating a warm fellowship in which everyone shall experience the love of God and the joy serving Him and others.*

**Giving is mission** because givers move the mission forward. Because Jesus willingly gave His life on the cross, the mission advanced. Because the apostles left the room in Jerusalem and gave their lives to proclaim the gospel, the mission progressed. If the first Christians hadn't been willing to share what they had been blessed with, whether it was great or small, how far would the message have spread? Jesus led the way for us, and He is our example to follow. We want to make His mission our mission; and as He was willing and generous to give His all for us, let us adopt the same willingness and generosity to see the mission of His church fulfilled.

What will it take for the mission to be fulfilled? What will need to be given? God sent His Spirit to lead decision-making, but not an endowment to fund the mission. He left that to us. The institutional and visible church is dependent upon the financial support of the believers to fulfill its divine purpose. When we look upon our world through the lens of the love of Christ, then we readily understand that

financial assistance, along with our time and gifts, is needed for the message to be carried forward.

To reach out to others and teach the gospel requires our willingness to devote ourselves to the teachings of Jesus Christ and surrender to the impulses of the Holy Spirit. Why would we do this? Simply because we recognize the mission of God is to save us. And we've been called for a purpose.

*Our faith in Christ is a gift, and our role in the mission of Christ is a privilege and an honor.*

When we are fully aware of how we came to be in relationship with God, then we devote ourselves to learning more about Jesus, and give our will over to the Holy Spirit.

When we take up the mission of the church, we find that we are called to share our stories of faith with others to show how we have been saved and transformed. We give of ourselves in this way to help others see the power of Christ. We may feel inadequate in our knowledge of the gospel, and we may be afraid to talk about Jesus because we've never done so before outside of the church, but give yourself fully to His mission and experience how He will provide for you. This can be seen again and again in the book of Acts. Some examples are when Peter and John spoke

before the Sanhedrin in chapter 4; Stephen boldly proclaiming the gospel in chapters 6 & 7; Philip teaching the Ethiopian eunuch in chapter 8; Peter going to Cornelius and his family in chapter 10; when Paul and Silas were imprisoned in chapter 16, and when Paul is shipwrecked in chapter 27.

Where do we start? Look around at those who are closest to you. Spouses can share and remind each other of the good news. Parents can teach their children through reading Scripture, praying together, and by being an example in their willingness to give and share with others. In our neighborhoods, let's not confine ourselves to our homes, but see whom God has placed around us, and seek His guidance in how we can impact our neighbors for the sake of the gospel. And finally, as we go throughout each day, let's be mindful of the mission, and resolve ourselves as disciples of Jesus to give what we have to help others experience the great love of God.

We encourage you to give yourself to this mission, to be united with other believers in demonstrating your willingness to share and give to the continuing spread of the gospel. Be open-hearted to the prompting of the Holy Spirit as He guides your giving, and every day, seek to do your part to further the mission by sharing the gospel and glorifying God. - **LRK / MJB / VAA**



# Loving your Neighbor

## Denver Metro

The Stepping Forward plan inspired the Denver Metro congregation to look into their community and come up with ideas to get involved. Out of the ideas submitted, a food drive won out. Two of the congregations in the Denver area collected food and donated it to a small food pantry not far from the Denver church where several members had volunteered. When the time came to centralize the Denver-area congregations into one, their new building lent itself to creating their own food pantry. After much research and working with other organizations and churches in the area, the Denver Metro congregation opened up a food pantry for their neighborhood. Along with food donations, our members spend time with the people that come into the food bank and connect them with other community resources if they are looking for assistance. They have now been serving the Denver community for three years and have set up a network between various food banks in the area to share resources, source food, and learn how to better service their food pantry guests. In just 2018, they served over 2,500 people and donated over 6,000 pounds of food. One of our members who volunteers at the food bank says she has learned that there is need and generosity all around us – even in unexpected places. The congregation has also recently started a senior lunch program on Wednesdays in collaboration with a community organization. Members open the church and serve, while the organization provides the food at a reduced cost, giving seniors a place to gather together to build community and friendships.



## Bethpage

Around five years ago, the Bethpage congregation started to have food drives around Thanksgiving time to donate to Long Island Cares, an organization dedicated to stamping out hunger in Long Island. To further help the community and local organizations, and to provide fresh food to those in need, Bethpage started a garden on the church property. During the summer and harvest season, they donate fresh fruit and vegetables one Sunday a month. On the other Sundays, the congregation shares the harvest with one another. Last year, Bethpage donated around 3,000 pounds of canned and fresh food.

## Erie

The Erie congregation built a raised bed garden in 2017 in order to grow vegetables to donate to organizations in the community. In 2018, they harvested and donated 13 different varieties of fresh vegetables to local food banks, which is something they are often lacking. Now in its third growing season, the garden team is working to involve more members in the congregation to help care for the garden and allow it to thrive so it can continue serving the Erie community.



# MADE IN HIS IMAGE

*There's a fascinating story in the Bible – one that is about us.*

It starts with these words:

*Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness..." So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.*

## Genesis 1:26-27

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We may know these verses as part of the creation story, where God created Adam and Eve to be in fellowship with Him in the Garden of Eden. But this isn't just about Adam and Eve – these verses apply to us; we were created in God's image.

What does that mean? As human beings, the crown of His creation, God has given us godly attributes. Animals function based on what God instilled in them - instincts. But we are distinct from animals and the rest of creation. Humans have speech, the ability to reason, freedom, and with it, responsibilities, consequences, and the ability to love. All of these attributes are from God and are specific to us.

Just as God exists in relationship – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – He also created us to exist in 3 fundamental relationships:

### **With God:**

We can recognize His presence and hear His voice, we can pray to, worship, and praise Him, we can experience His love and respond to it with trust and obedience.

### **With each other:**

We were created for community, we depend on and support each other.

### **With the rest of creation:**

God commissioned humans to live in harmony with creation. To protect it, care for it, unfold it, and develop it.

When we live in fellowship with God, each other, and creation in this way, we experience it the way God intended. Just think of the description of the garden of Eden; Adam and Eve walking and talking with God in the cool of the evening, caring for and existing off of the beautiful environment that God had created for them.

### **But with the fall into the sin – *everything was shattered.***

With one catastrophic choice, all of the relationships were broken, and this we still experience today:

***Our relationship with God went from intimacy to fear.*** Because of our sinfulness, we became remote from God and lived as prisoners to the evil one, with an unrelenting propensity to sin.

***Our relationship with one another went from community to conflict.*** Though man and woman were still seen as equals in God's eyes, they tried to rule over each other, which produced jealousy and hatred.

***Our relationship with creation deteriorated from care and sustenance to toilsome labor.*** We have become enslaved to material things and greed to the point that we stop caring about our fellow man. We exploit the creation's resources in a selfish manner without worrying about the cost of our behavior to others.

However, when the fall occurred, God promised Adam and Eve that a Savior would come to restore these broken relationships.

## With the coming of Jesus Christ *everything changed.*

Jesus Christ is the image of God, the second Adam, and through His life we see, again, what God intended for humanity:

### **A close relationship with God**

Jesus nurtured a close relationship with His Father through an intense prayer life, a perfect love, continually trusting and obeying Him, and faithfully living according to His Father's will.

### **A servant-minded relationship towards those around Him**

Jesus came not to be served, but to serve. He showed love and concern for all – men and women, rich and poor, children and outcasts, the upright, as well as the sinners. He treated everyone as equals.

### **A correct relationship with creation**

As a human, Jesus experienced needs and enjoyed earthly things just like we do, but it had no influence on His relationship with God or others. His commandment to "love your neighbor as yourself" also became a guiding principle for how mankind should behave in caring for and using the resources that God gives them.

## **SO WHAT SHOULD WE DO?**

We must believe in Jesus Christ and follow His example. Through our rebirth out of water and Spirit we become a new creature, a new man and woman, with the possibility of aligning our life to His.

Paul reminds us in his letter to the Romans:

*For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.*

### **Romans 8:29-30**

The Lord has predestined us for this – to be a new person in Christ! As we grow into His image, with the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit, we can also begin to live in renewed and reconciled relationships.

***The Holy Spirit strengthens our relationship with God.*** Our prayers evolve. No longer just calls for help or wish lists, they become genuine exchanges with God, filled with worship and thanksgiving. We speak more of God's works rather than our own and we express our love to God through our trust and obedience to His will.

***Our relationships with one another also begin to change.*** The Spirit helps us overcome our differences and we truly begin to understand and live by the words found in Galatians 3:28 – *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.* We love our neighbor regardless of their heritage, culture, social class, or gender. We love each one as God has made them.

We realize that we are sent to serve and do good to others and also show them that God loves them, through our actions. We can start this right in our congregations as it exhorts us in Galatians 6:10 - *Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.*

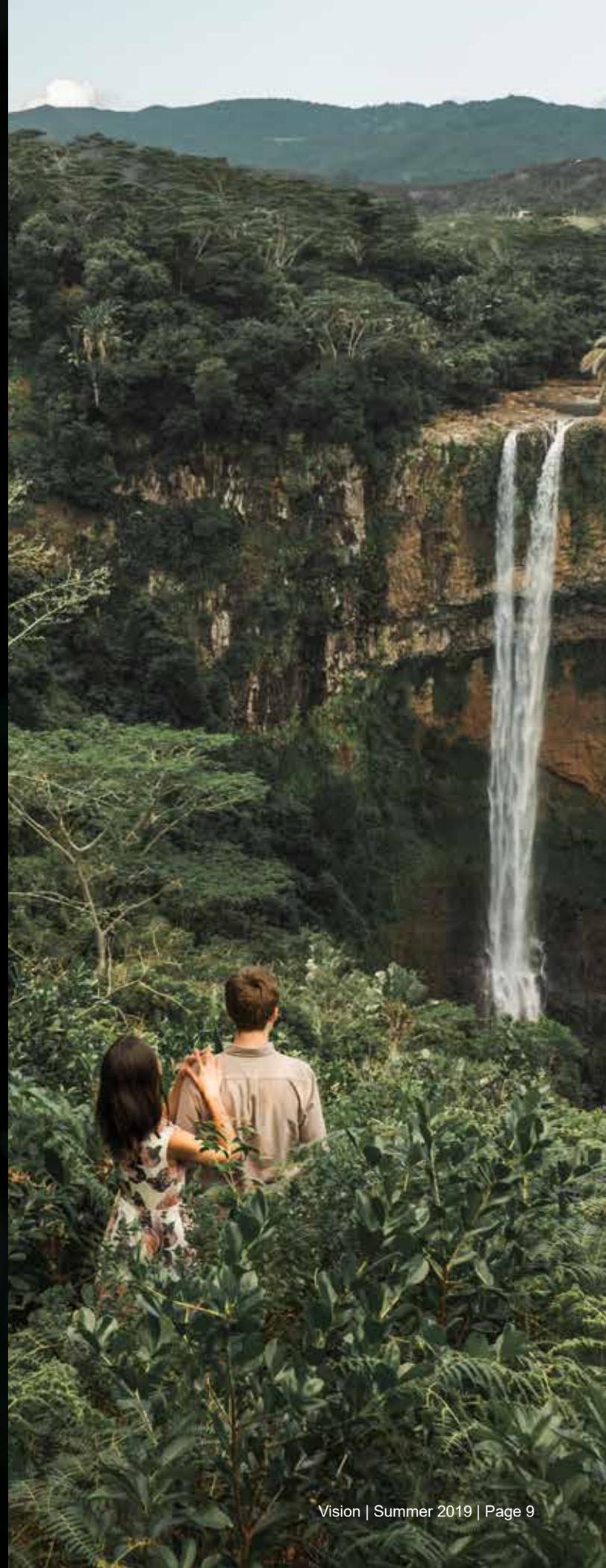
***The Spirit gives makes us wise and frees us from the dictatorship of money.*** Our decisions are not profit-driven but rather take into account our responsibility to others. We consider questions such as; What could I do to give back to society? How could I do good for someone around me? How are my actions impacting future generations?

The story that began in Genesis with the creation isn't over yet. Let us live in relationship with God, with each other, and with the rest of creation, as new creatures in the reconciling power of Christ.

*For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight— if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel...*

**Colossians 1:19-23**

- LRK / VAA / KAK



# The Christ Hymn

EXPLORING THE HYMN IN PHILIPPIANS



There are two passages in the Bible that are often referred to as “Christ Hymns:” Colossians 1:15-20 and Philippians 2:6-11. Although both passages are of importance and would be worthwhile to study, we will focus our attention in this article on the passage from Philippians:

*...who, being in the form of God,  
did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,  
but made Himself of no reputation,  
taking the form of a bondservant,  
and coming in the likeness of men.*

*And being found in appearance as a man,  
He humbled Himself and became obedient  
to the point of death, even the death of the cross.*

*Therefore God also has highly exalted Him  
and given Him the name which is above every name,  
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,  
of those in heaven, and of those on earth,  
and of those under the earth,  
and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ  
is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Scholars still argue over the authorship of this hymn. Many believe it was an early hymn that Paul

quoted, while others believe that it was written by Paul himself. Regardless of authorship, one thing is for sure: given the rich vocabulary, inclusion of poetic elements, and the fact that, with a couple small changes, it can stand alone as an independent composition, these six verses comprise a hymn.

This hymn is one of the most significant and informative depictions of the nature of Christ in the New Testament. Specifically, the poetic language expresses the dual nature of Christ, who was “in the form of God,” yet humbled Himself, “taking the form of a bondservant.” The overriding purpose of this passage is to present Christ as an example of the humility and self-sacrifice which all Christians should endeavor to possess. The hymn also enjoins the Philippian church to have a singular goal and passion, namely serving each other in the mind of Christ. Paul makes this clear with the verse that sets up the hymn, verse 5, when He says, “Let this mind be in you which is also in Christ Jesus.”

At its midpoint, the hymn highlights God’s exaltation, giving Christ “the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus” all the realms of creation are called to bow in homage and every tongue proclaim, “Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” And not only is He the Lord, but He is the Lord of all - those in heaven, those on earth, and those under the earth. This would’ve been important for the people of

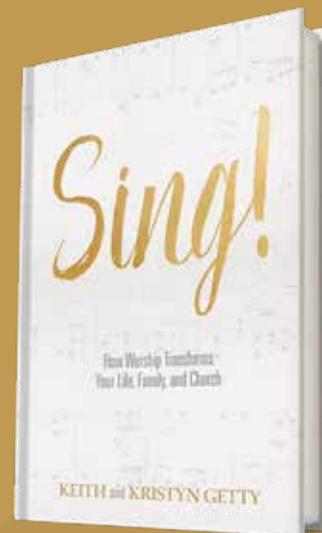


that time to hear, as many felt that they were ruled by powers, principalities, and rulers of the darkness (see Ephesians 6:12). Through Christ, they (and we) are liberated from these powers. This was a very enlightening and freeing text for the people at that time, just as it is for us today.

Christ's humility and obedience led to God's glorification and exaltation. We are reminded through this hymn that this kind of exaltation, as a reward for humility, is one that we hope to experience ourselves someday. Not only is this a hymn of humility for the past and present - it's also a hymn of hope for a future filled with the glory of God.

The beauty of hymns and choral music often lies in the lyrics. Here we have an example where no music is included, and yet, through the lyrics, we are drawn closer to the Father through knowledge of the Son. Even without music, the hymn is incredibly impactful. When we sing in worship, it's important that we are fully aware of what it is that we are singing about, and that we let the wonderful truths of God, revealed in the lyrics, dwell richly within our soul.

In light of the powerful truths found within this hymn, let us joyfully and patiently endure all suffering and hardship in the mind and name of Christ, our perfect example. - MNJ



## ***Sing!* Small Groups**

### **SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER 2019**

*Speaking of hymns...*

As a reminder, our small group discussions during the month of September and October will highlight the importance of singing and worship. Together in our groups, we will read the book ***Sing! How Worship Transforms Your Life, Family, and Church***. Written by modern day hymn writers Keith and Kristyn Getty, whose hymns include "In Christ Alone," "Holy Spirit," and "Speak, O Lord," ***Sing!*** not only highlights the importance of singing in our worship, but the necessity of it. Inspired by the depth and scriptural basis of this book, our District Apostle hopes this resource will bring new perspective and joy to our singing and worship.

**Please note that these discussions are not intended just for those who are gifted singers.** The main focus of this book and of our discussions will be on congregational singing. Together, we will learn how *all* of God's children have been created and called to sing His praises.



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DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS,  
  
FOR MY BIRTHDAY, I RECEIVED A NUMBER  
OF CARDS, GREETINGS, AND WELL WISHES. I  
SINCERELY APPRECIATE THEM ALL AND EXPRESS  
TO EACH OF YOU MY SINCERE THANKS.  
EVEN MORE, THOUGH, I WANT TO THANK  
YOU FOR YOUR PRAYERS AND SUPPORT, AND  
FOR EVERYTHING YOU DO IN ADVANCING  
GOD'S WORK AND IN SERVING OUR  
CONGREGATIONS. IT IS TRULY A GREAT JOY  
FOR ME TO KNOW AND SHARE LIFE WITH  
YOU ALL.

WITH LOVE AND GRATITUDE,

