<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Doctrinal points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Introductory remarks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>On ministerial authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Calling and ministry – The mission of the church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Information on our conception of ministry: initial resolutions and brief explanations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introductory remarks

Two of the articles in this issue, “On ministerial authority” and “Calling and ministry – The mission of the Church”, are based on explanations given by the Chief Apostle at District Apostle Meetings in October 2016 and March 2014. “Ministry” is central to both elaborations.

In the article “On ministerial authority” the Chief Apostle highlights the ministerial authority inherent in the Apostle ministry, which empowers Apostles to work in the commission of Jesus Christ. The apostolic ministerial authority not only applies to the dispensation of sacraments, but also to the proclamation of the gospel. This preaching is based on the testimony of the New Testament and can by no means occur independently of it. The Apostles have the authority to interpret the Bible in the proper manner. This means that both the Old and New Testaments must be interpreted and understood from the perspective of Jesus Christ. At the same time, the Chief Apostle draws attention to the fact that biblical texts always came into being on the basis of a concrete situation, and that this must always be taken into account when interpreting them. Therefore not all parts of the Bible are of the same relevance for faith and salvation.

In the article “Calling and ministry – The mission of the Church” the Chief Apostle wants to first of all reinforce the conviction of the ministers that they have been called by God. Even though all ministers are confronted by unfavourable circumstances, these must not lead them to question this conviction. This calling by Jesus Christ includes following Him, which may also take the form of suffering for Christ.

When speaking about the “mission of the church”, the Chief Apostle’s statements closely reflect the Catechism. On the one hand, the mission of the church is to make salvation accessible to mankind. On the other hand, it is the church’s task to praise and worship God. The Chief Apostle highlights the following:
“One does not require a ministry to worship God or give lively testimony of the gospel. The focus here is not on ministry but on duty.” He emphasises that every believer—ordained or not—has an important mission in the church: namely to profess his faith in Jesus Christ in word and deed, and to glorify Him.

The final article—"Information on our conception of ministry: initial resolutions and brief explanations"—imparts some fundamental statements, with brief comments, concerning our conception of ministry as they have been approved over the last few District Apostle Meetings. The broad strokes of the New Apostolic conception of ministry begin to emerge in these resolutions, which were formulated in close alignment with the Catechism.
On ministerial authority

And we have such trust through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. 2 Corinthians 3: 4–6

1 The ministerial authority of the Apostles

At the time of their ordination, God imparts to the Apostles the ministerial authority inherent in their ministry so that they can fulfill their apostolic ministry. The authority of their ministry allows Apostles to help with the salvation of mankind by acting in the name of, and in the commission of, Jesus Christ, their Sender. When they ordain other ministers, the Apostles entrust them with a portion of their ministerial authority.

The task of the Apostles is primarily to dispense the sacraments in fully valid capacity and to proclaim forgiveness of sins with authority in the name of Jesus Christ.

The apostolic ministry is also to proclaim the gospel (Romans 1: 1). The early Apostles proclaimed what they had seen and heard about Jesus (1 John 1: 1). Paul testified of his encounter with the Risen One and also taught that which he had seen and heard about Jesus (Acts 22: 14–15).

1.1 The Bible is the basis of true preaching

The preaching of the Apostles of today is based on Holy Scripture, especially the New Testament. In order to emphasize the primacy of the gospel with respect to the Mosaic Law, Paul contrasts the Spirit with the letter (2 Corinthians 3: 6). However, it would be totally inappropriate to conclude from this verse that an Apostle could ever place himself above the Bible on the basis of his ministerial authority. The preaching of the Apostles and all other ministers must always be consistent with the Bible!

In their capacity as stewards of the mysteries of God (1 Corinthians 4: 1), the Apostles of today have the commission and capacity to interpret the Bible with the help of the Holy Spirit. Guided by the Spirit, the apostolate clearly stresses the importance of the Bible for today’s believers and, with authority, teaches them how to put the gospel into practice (Matthew 28: 20). By applying the biblical text to the present in order to make it applicable for our time, the preaching of the Apostles strengthens the faith of the members, rein-
forces their trust in God, and deepens their knowledge (regarding salvation in the beyond, for example).

1.2 The Apostles are witnesses of Jesus Christ

The apostolic ministry also incorporates a third aspect: the Apostles must be witnesses of Jesus Christ. The Lord said to Paul, “I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you” (Acts 26: 16). Through his conduct Paul became a great witness of Jesus, to the point where he could even say to the Corinthians, “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ” (1 Corinthians 11: 1). Like his predecessors, he testified of Christ by sharing in His sufferings (2 Corinthians 4: 8–11). The Apostles Peter and Paul were witnesses of Jesus’ activity and looked to Him to derive morals for both themselves and the church. We need only recall the conversion of Cornelius or the Lord’s refusal to relieve Paul of the thorn in his flesh (2 Corinthians 12: 7–10).

The Apostles today too are called to be witnesses of Christ. Their life, their spiritual growth, and their attitude in affliction must testify of Jesus’ activity upon us. When the Apostles are close to the believers, they can see how Jesus helps them and, in this way, learn how to better recognise Him. Stated more broadly, the apostolate must also perceive Jesus’ will through His deeds in the presence and derive corresponding conclusions from them for His church. Following are some examples.

- It is only in exceptional cases that Jesus performs miracles through His Apostles. He expects them to devote themselves primarily to the salvation of mankind.

- The work of God has developed impressively in very different countries. In order to live in accordance with their faith, New Apostolic Christians are not required to deny their culture to conform to the lifestyle of those who brought them testimony.

- Jesus Christ clearly expressed that no human being can ever determine the date of His return. Anyone who has ever tried to do so has been disappointed. It is not the task of the apostolate to provide a date for the return of Christ, but rather to keep alive the hope of Jesus’ return.

- Contrary to all expectations, the number of sealed souls has not increased exponentially in all parts of the world. The Lord’s return is not dependent on the number of members of the New Apostolic Church living in the individual countries.
2 The authority to interpret the Bible

In addition to the thoughts outlined above, I believe it is essential to remember some rules which must be respected when we interpret a biblical text.

- Jesus Christ demonstrated that the Old Testament had announced His coming and work (John 5: 39; Luke 24: 27). The Apostles are required to interpret the Old Testament based on Jesus Christ, the Son of God. From the perspective of our faith, the content of the Old Testament writings is only relevant insofar as it conforms to the gospel as it is conveyed to us in the New Testament (CNAC 1.2.5.2).

- Each biblical passage must be read in view of its context. Its interpretation must always be consistent with the overall message of the gospel.

- Miracles and parables of Jesus should not be interpreted beyond the significance that the Lord gave them. In Luke 17, the Lord speaks of two people who are in the same situation, one being accepted, the other not. From this we cannot draw any conclusions on the percentage of those who will be saved. In the parable of the minas (Luke 19), the fact that one of the servants has authority over ten cities and the other over five does not mean that the nature of the salvation that God grants us is dependent on the measure of our work.

- One must never forget that any translation of the Bible results from an interpretation of the original text. Terms such as “ministry”, “service”, or “church” were translated very differently, depending on the language and the theological conceptions of the translators. Only by taking into account the original text can we come to a relevant interpretation.

- The gospels, the Acts, and the letters of the Apostles were written at different times, and reflect the situation at the time they were written. Thus the various letters are addressed to congregations whose composition and structures were often fundamentally different. In many aspects, the later congregations of the early Christian period differed greatly from the earliest congregations.

- Last but not least, the task of the Apostles is to proclaim and explain those statements of the Bible that are essential for the salvation of mankind. What is important is anything that relates to belief
in Jesus Christ, His life, and work. Bible passages that deal with other subjects may be of interest, but in no case are they to be assessed on the same level as the core message of the gospel.

3 Other services

Apart from the apostolic ministry, we know of many other services and duties in the church. Much can be accomplished without a ministry. However, there are some gifts and capacities that prove to be indispensable. To describe this reality, Paul used the image of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12). Each member has its own particular function. Each one is different, but each one is equally important.

The Church of course also needs leadership and administrative functions. The performance of these responsibilities requires specific capabilities and knowledge, for example, in the area of organisation and management. Even if these functions are entrusted to ordained ministers, they are not associated with their ministerial authority as such. It is obvious that the Chief Apostle and the District Apostles do not act in the name of Jesus Christ and with the authority of Jesus Christ when they make organisational or financial decisions ... However, every leader, on all levels of the Church, must decide and act in the mind and spirit of Christ!

God endows the Church with all the gifts required for the fulfilment of those services He deems essential. In most cases, these are given to individual persons. But at times these gifts can only be developed in the context of teamwork. In today’s world, the challenges are so numerous and so complex that no leader of the Church can afford to rule as absolute monarch!

Let us come back to Apostle Paul. He fulfilled various duties within the church. As an Apostle, he proclaimed the gospel and testified of Christ. But he also led the congregations for which he was responsible, taking into account the environment in which he lived. We encounter this duality again and again in the writings of the New Testament. The epistles contain definitive statements relating to salvation in Christ, stated with all the ministerial authority of the Apostle. However, they also contain guidelines concerning the management of the congregations, which do not pertain to actual doctrine. These result directly from the living conditions of the time and are only valid in that context. This includes the instruction for the women of Corinth to remain silent (1 Corinthians 14: 34) and their prohibition from teaching (1 Timothy 2: 12)—although they had the right to prophesy in Caesarea (Acts 21: 9)—as well as the various specifications concerning their hairstyle and attire (1 Timothy 2: 9).
To conclude, I would still like to comment briefly on the use of the Bible in the context of a pastoral visit. In many places, it is customary to ask the minister to open the Bible at random, read a passage, and comment on it. This tradition is certainly admirable, but it is not without its risks.

We know that a biblical passage should always be interpreted in light of its context. Yet this is hardly possible in the case of a randomly chosen Bible passage. As a result, the passage might well be interpreted inappropriately.

It also happens that members consider the passage that is read out by the minister as a kind of prophecy or divine promise. They draw from it the certainty that God will fulfil their wishes and act in a particular manner. Yet it is not uncommon for such hopes to be disappointed. Let us be aware that the minister’s role is not to reveal the future to the members! His mission is to let himself be inspired by the Spirit in order to strengthen the members in their faith and trust in God.

Let us also note that this practice may also be the cause of another disappointment. If the minister opens the Bible and comes across a pointless passage, believers might well conclude that God is not interested in them and has noth-
Calling and ministry – The mission of the church

1 Calling and ministry

One of the tasks incumbent on the Chief Apostle is to strengthen his brothers. Who are my brothers? My brothers are, first of all, my closest assistants, namely the District Apostles and their Helpers. It is my heartfelt concern to be a true support to them.

My brothers also include all the Apostles and all the other ministers. Among other things, they are strengthened by the fact that they are constantly made aware of their divine calling. Belief in this calling is based on

- the First Article of Faith, which expresses our belief in God, the Almighty,
- the Fourth and Fifth Articles of Faith, which state that Jesus rules His church and that God designates those who are called to exercise a ministry.

In places where the number of members is diminishing a minister may come to think he was only chosen for a ministry because he was the only one available. From a human point of view such a thought may seem justified. But our faith teaches us something different. God is almighty: “Whatever the Lord pleases He does, in heaven and in earth” (Psalm 135: 6). God is eternal and almighty. In His eyes, the past and the future are equally present. We believe that God has chosen those designated to serve Him. He has carefully guided things in such a way that these ministers would be in the place where He needed them at a specified point in time.

Other brothers have doubts about their calling because they think they no longer meet the requirements of their ministry or their job description.

It is reasonable to expect the ministers to be competent with respect to pastoral care and teaching the doctrine, and I encourage all initiatives heading in this direction. However, we must make sure that we never give cause for a minister to have feelings of guilt. It would be totally out of place, for example, to state that the decline in divine service attendance is the result of incompetent ministers. Such an assertion would relativise the omnipotence of God, because in the past we have often seen that God is capable of doing great things through imperfect human beings. Besides, this would be unfair and be an insult to the brothers. After all, they did not apply for their ministry—they
have merely responded to the Lord’s call. More than ever, our brothers need to feel the esteem, encouragement, and love of their District Apostle.

In countries where God’s work of redemption is still young, some brothers initially regard themselves as workers who have been “hired” by their superiors—their leaders—and not as servants who have been called by Jesus Christ. I urgently ask our local Apostles to do whatever is necessary, whether through their teaching or their example, to ensure the brothers understand that an ordination is based on a divine calling, and that this is what determines their mandate.

To believe that ordination is a divine calling does not mean that God alone is the agent. It is the triune God who chooses the brother, and it is the Holy Spirit who communicates this choice to the church. In this case, a recommendation will be made by the responsible ministers in the congregation or district, and the Apostle will make a decision regarding the ordination into ministry. It is therefore indispensable for the responsible ministers to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit and sanctify themselves before they recommend a brother for a ministry.

Normally, we are rather suspicious when a brother expresses the desire to be entrusted with a ministry. Such a reaction is understandable considering that one automatically assumes that he wants to make his mark as a minister. However, it would be wrong to simply reject such brothers. We should rather make the effort to get to know them. If they are sincere, we would be foolish to deprive ourselves of their aid!

Quite a number of brothers are discouraged because of the difficulties they encounter in the exercise of their ministry. Let us encourage them by reminding them that Jesus called upon us to share in His sufferings, but also in His joys: “Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy” (1 Peter 4: 12–13).

Jesus had to endure the same sufferings that we do. Just like Jesus,

- we are exposed to the difficulties of daily life; the commitment we have made to God does not spare us (Matthew 8: 20);
- we are not always accepted, let alone appreciated (Mark 3: 21);
- we are confronted with ingratitude (Luke 17: 17).
- we sometimes meet with incomprehension (Matthew 16: 8).
we experience setbacks.

- we suffer when children of God are divided.
- we feel totally alone at times.

However, we also experience the same joys as Jesus in the form of:

- answered prayers;
- the experience of God’s help, for example, when we serve at the altar;
- fellowship with God in prayer;
- brotherly fellowship.

If we are prepared to suffer with Jesus and for Him we will also be able to count on His help. A minister who believes in his calling and trusts in God will not impose the burdens of his ministry on those around him. However, let us not hesitate to share our joys with our loved ones. Let us share the composure and calmness and the trust in God which we derive from our ministerial activity.

2 The mission of the Church

On the occasion of my ordination as Chief Apostle I indicated that my agenda was summarised in the Vision of the New Apostolic Church. Our stated objective is to be “a church in which people feel at home and, inspired by the Holy Spirit and their love for God, align their lives to the gospel of Jesus Christ and thus prepare themselves for His return and eternal life”. I wish to further develop this idea in the following.

First of all, I would like to once again pay tribute to my predecessors, who have done an outstanding job. Inspired by the Spirit, our Chief Apostles have developed and enhanced our knowledge and allowed the Church to better respond to the mission with which the Lord has entrusted it.

It is not my intention to criticise the past, but to draw attention to how far we have come along this path. There was a time when we said that the Lord would return as soon as the last soul was sealed. To be ready it was necessary to be sealed, to remain faithful, and to have overcome the world. Faithfulness essentially consisted of attending all divine services and bringing one’s offerings. The term “world” comprised everything going on outside the Church. To overcome the so-called world it was necessary to stay away from everything outside, that
is, outside of the New Apostolic Church. The mission of the Church in general, and of the Apostles in particular, therefore consisted of sealing souls and protecting the believers from the influence of the outside world. The primary purpose of the divine service was teaching, hence the importance accorded to the sermon and ministry. Given this background, less attention was assigned to Holy Communion.

Today we have a different conception when it comes to the preparation of the bride. We are more concerned about fighting against sin and the “old Adam”, about living in accordance with the gospel, and becoming like Jesus. As a result, the love of Christ has become the standard of perfection. The mission of the Church, as it is defined today, reflects this development. To start with, we are to go to all people, teach them the gospel of Jesus Christ, and dispense the sacraments to them. But the Church is also to cultivate a warm fellowship in which the believers experience the love of God, as well as the joy of serving Him and others. The development of our liturgy is a response to this: by giving greater prominence to the celebration of Holy Communion, the intent was to make it possible for the believers to experience sacramental fellowship with Christ and among one another even more intensively.

But even so, we still have a way to go before the Church conforms to the principles of its Mission, because the Catechism presents two aspects of the church:

- first of all, it is a divine institution whose mission it is to make salvation accessible to human beings;
- beyond that, it is also a congregation that is to worship and praise God.

Our tradition was always to put special emphasis on the first point, namely to regard the church as an institution of salvation. In this context, we have always underlined—and rightly so—the great importance of the apostolate and ministry.

Concerning the second point, namely to regard the church as a community of believers who worship and praise God, we can and still must make progress. There is still room for development with respect to the communal character of the church as the “body of Christ” or the “people of God”. As such, the church as a whole is called upon to serve God. This means that all those who are reborn of water and the Spirit are called upon to bear witness of the gospel through word and conduct just as the Apostles do, thereby supporting them in their commission (CNAC 7.1). One does not require a ministry to worship God or give lively testimony of the gospel. The focus here is not on ministry but on duty.
Our Vision of the New Apostolic Church refers precisely to this communal character, and states that people—inspired by the Holy Spirit and their love for God—are to prepare themselves for the return of Jesus Christ and align their lives to the gospel.

This shows that true love plays a decisive role in the preparation of the bride of Christ. And love is inconceivable without corresponding works. To enable the believers to prepare for the return of the Lord, the church must give them the opportunity to perform works of love. We must make it possible for the believers to experience the joy of serving God and others. Christian love and serving one’s neighbour is a service incumbent on the church of Christ as a community of the faithful. We cannot simply ignore this mission of the church of Christ.

To start with, serving God and our neighbour entails that we commit ourselves and become involved in the Church. Many initiatives that are introduced cannot be completed because the demand made on our ministers is already beyond what is reasonable. Do our ordained ministers really have to take care of everything? Practising Christian love does not require a ministry. Many things can be done without the need to involve the ministers.

Charity must not stop at the doorstep of our church. To what extent do we practise charity outside of church? Practising the gospel also entails providing help to the poor and the suffering. Are we always credible in this respect? To provide funding for humanitarian projects is a good thing, but it is certainly not enough. It is not my intention to follow the example of the other Christian churches: we have neither the means nor the necessary experience. Nor do we want to compete with them, let alone make a name for ourselves. I simply ask myself what the Lord expects from us in this respect. We must reflect on this question in our future deliberations, whether with regard to the definition of our conception of ministry or the organisation of activities in our Church. For my part, I see an opportunity to approach other Christians. It is certainly helpful to discuss theological issues with other churches, but I feel it is even more important for Christians to join forces in order to do good …
Summary:

It is the task of the church to impart salvation to mankind. In the divine services, the Apostles and ministers authorised by them proclaim the word of God and dispense the sacraments. The divine service is central to the congregational life.

It is also the mission of the church to praise and worship God. This mission is incumbent on all believers. During the divine services the congregation collectively expresses praise and adoration in the prayer spoken by the officiant. But worship and praise can also be expressed without the presence of an ordained minister.

In order to prepare herself for the return of the Lord, the bride must practise works of love. It is the mission of the church to provide believers with the opportunity to serve God and the neighbour. We must reflect on the best possible means of ensuring that the church can fulfil this mission.
Information on our conception of ministry: initial resolutions and brief explanations

The following article is a summary of the essential aspects of our conception of ministry. The article is based on the Catechism as well as on resolutions passed by the International District Apostle Meeting.

1 Preliminary remarks

The ministry in the church has its source in the person and deed of Jesus Christ. He is King, Priest, and Prophet (CNAC 3.4.7) and always performs His ministry as a service: “Yet I am among you as the One who serves” (Luke 22: 27). By calling and sending the Apostles (Matthew 10: 1–4; 28: 16–20; Mark 3: 13–19; Luke 6: 12–16; John 20: 21–23), Jesus instituted the ministry for His church.

The New Testament does not contain a conclusive doctrine of ministry. We do, however, find several statements in the New Testament Scriptures on the topic of ministry and the exercise of ministry. We find references to the Apostle ministry in the second letter to the Corinthians, for example. The Apostle ministry of Paul had been called into question by quite a few. In the dispute with his opponents, Paul describes several aspects that are connected with his ministry. Like Jesus, the Apostle also understands his ministry as a service. From his statements we can derive general characteristics of the Apostle ministry. It is the ministry

- “of the new covenant” (2 Corinthians 3: 6),
- “of the Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3: 8),
- “of righteousness” (2 Corinthians 3: 9),
- “of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5: 18).

Significant statements on how ministers are expected to behave are found in the epistles to Timothy and Titus.

If one looks at the overall testimony of the New Testament, it becomes apparent that Jesus—even while He was on earth—only instituted the Apostle ministry. All other ministries have emerged from the Apostle ministry.

The Catechism of the New Apostolic Church, which was published in the year 2012, contains binding and comprehensive explanations on our understanding of church and the sacraments. Our conception of ministry is also covered, but fundamental questions
remain unanswered, for example, concerning the relationship between ministry and service as well as the relationship between ministry and person. To date, a uniform conception of ministry has not been formulated. The following explanations therefore do not constitute a new conception of ministry, but, for the first time ever, set forth a uniform conception of ministry.

2 Ministry and duties

The Catechism of the New Apostolic Church makes a fundamental distinction between ministry and duties (CNAC 7.1).

2.1 Ministry

The basis for this is the definition in CNAC 7.1: “A spiritual ministry constitutes authorisation, blessing, and sanctification¹ issued through ordination for service in the church of Christ. It is exercised in the power of the Holy Spirit.”

The Fourth Article of Faith indicates that Jesus rules His church and that He has sent His Apostles, and still sends them to this end. The Fifth Article of Faith states: “I believe that those designated by God for a ministry are ordained only by Apostles ...” A spiritual ministry is therefore always conferred by an Apostle. The New Apostolic minister can therefore only execute his ministry properly in direct relationship with the Apostle ministry and by commission of the Apostle.

The spiritual ministry is bestowed by an Apostle through ordination (CNAC 12.1.12). Concerning ordination the Catechism says: “Ordination is not a sacrament, but rather an act of blessing. The holiness of this act and the serving character of this ministry are demonstrated by the fact that the ministry is received on one’s knees. The minister being ordained makes a vow before the Apostle to remain faithful to God and follow Christ, and promises obedience of faith” (Catechism 7.7).

The Apostle ministry has been given to the church of Christ as a whole. It is visibly active in the New Apostolic Church, as are the other ministries that have emerged from the Apostle ministry.

2.2 Duty, service

The following remarks are based upon CNAC 7.1 and the resolution passed by the District Apostle Meeting in October 2014: “In the church of Christ, ‘service’ incorporates all things that are done for the church through faith in Jesus Christ. Many of these services are performed with-

¹ For explanations on authorisation, blessing, and sanctification please see CNAC-QA 415–417.
out the need for a ministry. The activity of the ministers is also a service. Above and beyond that which all believers do for the church, they also perform those services that are bound to a ministry. They receive the respective authority, blessing, and sanctification required for this purpose through ordination.”

The statements concerning the terms “duties” and “service” are very broad. Everything that is done out of faith in Jesus Christ for the church is a service in the church of Christ, in other words, in the fellowship of the baptised who profess belief in Jesus Christ and believe in Him as the only Lord and Redeemer (CNAC 6.5). In this fellowship, many services and duties are performed by believing Christians who do not bear a ministry, for example, the many teachers who teach the various classes.

In addition to this, there are services and duties that are bound to a ministry and require ordination beforehand, for example, the bestowal of Trinitarian blessings, the dispensation of the sacraments, and the proclamation of the word in divine service.

The activity of the ministers is also always a service, but one that has been invested with authority through an ordination.

2.2.1 Allocation of functions to ministerial levels

The Catechism points out that there are three ministerial levels “each with different spiritual powers” (CNAC 7.6). These spiritual powers take on concrete form in corresponding acts within the congregation. Such sacramental or confessional acts performed in authority are a service in the church of Christ for the salvation of its members. Each of the three ministerial levels—Deacon, Priest, and Apostle—have specific functions allocated to them.

2.2.1.1 Functions of the diaconal ministry

The following functions are performed by Deacons:

- preaching the gospel in a divine service and conveying the word of God in a pastoral visit.
- blessing the congregation in a word service.

2.2.1.2 Functions of the priestly ministry

In addition to the functions of the diaconal ministry, the priestly ministry performs the following duties:

- proclaiming forgiveness of sins in the commission of the Apostle and in the name of Jesus Christ.
- performing Holy Baptism with water.
2.2.1.3 Functions of the Apostle ministry

In addition to carrying out the functions of the priestly ministry, Apostles perform the following services:

- proclaiming forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus Christ.
- binding and loosing (CNAC 7.6.2)
- ordaining to a ministry.
- dispensing the gift of the Holy Spirit in Holy Sealing.

3 Ministerial authority and ministerial mandate

Resolution by the District Apostle Meeting, March 2015: “A ministry comprises ministerial authority as well as a ministerial mandate. The ministerial authority is of a theological nature, the ministerial mandate is of a canonical nature.”

3.1 Ministerial authority

Resolution by the District Apostle Meeting, March 2015: “Ministerial authority constitutes the right to act and speak in the name of the triune God, which is founded upon Jesus Christ and issued through the Apostle by way of ordination in the power of the Holy Spirit.

“Ministerial authority is issued through ordination. It ends when the Apostle accepts the resignation of the minister, with the minister’s dismissal, or at the time of the minister’s death.”

Every ministry has been equipped with specific ministerial powers.

“Authority” constitutes the right to act and speak on behalf of the one who conferred the authority. CNAC 6.2.2 emphasises that “everything that church is, and everything on which it is based, has its origin in the person and deed of Jesus Christ …” That also applies to ministry.

Authority is always conferred upon a person. It can be transferred and it can be withdrawn. The person upon whom authority has been conferred can only act within the scope of the authority given. It ends with the Apostle’s acceptance of the minister’s resignation or with the minister’s dismissal. It expires at the time of the minister’s death.

Ministerial authority must therefore not be understood as a personal possession. The minister may not freely exercise it at his own discretion or use it to pursue his own interests.
Resolution by the District Apostle Meeting, October 2016: “Upon ordination, the Deacon receives the authority to properly proclaim the word of God and to dispense the Trinitarian blessing. The authority to properly proclaim the word of God is the spiritual empowerment, conferred by the Apostle in the power of the Holy Spirit, to preach the gospel in a divine service and to convey the word of God in a pastoral visit. The authority to dispense the Trinitarian blessing is the spiritual empowerment, conferred by the Apostle in the power of the Holy Spirit, to conduct a divine service beginning with the Trinitarian invocation and concluding with the Trinitarian blessing.”

The significance of the Deacon ministry becomes apparent with this clear allocation of authority. Not everyone was aware of this in the past.

The notion of the “proper proclamation of the word” is explained in CNAC 12.1.6. The Apostles and the ministers ordained by them are called upon to proclaim God’s word in the congregation, both in divine service as well as in pastoral care visits. They have been equipped for this through ordination. The effect of the blessing and sanctification conferred through the ordination is that the proclamation of the word can occur in the power of the Holy Spirit. At the core of the proclamation of the word is the gospel, which tells of the birth, life, and activity of Jesus, His death, resurrection, ascension, and His return in an appropriate manner.

The apostolic proclamation of the word is geared toward preparing the congregation for the coming of Jesus Christ.

The Guide for the Ministers of the New Apostolic Church (1999/2004) already gave Deacons the authority to dispense the Trinitarian blessing. This provision was confirmed with the publication of a special edition of the Divine Service Guide in February 2013 (“Liturgy of the Divine Services in the New Apostolic Church, Volume 2, Special Types of Divine Services”). Here Deacons are given the concrete ministerial authority to open a word service with the invocation of the Trinity and conclude it with the closing benediction.

---

2 The notion “spiritual empowerment” in connection with a ministry is explained in a note to question 460 in the Catechism in Questions and Answers: “To be spiritually equipped for a ministry means to receive the ministerial capacity and blessing of God in order to exercise the authority contained in the ministry for diaconal or priestly service in the mind and spirit of one’s sender. The task of spiritually equipping the ministers also includes instructing the ministers and strengthening them for their duties.”
3.1.2 Ministerial authority of the priestly ministry

Resolution by the District Apostle Meeting, October 2016: “Upon ordination, the Priest receives the authority to proclaim forgiveness of sins and dispense the sacraments of Holy Baptism with water and Holy Communion. The powers of the Deacon are also intrinsic to the Priest.

“The authority to forgive sins is the spiritual empowerment, conferred by the Apostle in the power of the Holy Spirit, to proclaim forgiveness of sins in the commission of the Apostle and in the name of Jesus Christ.

“The authority to perform Holy Baptism with water is the spiritual empowerment, conferred by the Apostle in the power of the Holy Spirit, to consecrate the water of baptism and dispense the sacrament in the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

“The authority to perform Holy Communion is the spiritual empowerment, conferred by the Apostle in the power of the Holy Spirit, to consecrate bread and wine in the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and to dispense the sacrament.”

The ministerial authority of the Priest constitutes a participation in the ministerial authority of the Apostle. In addition to the powers conferred on the Deacon, the Priest also participates in the administration of the sacraments. This includes the proclamation of the forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus prior to the sacraments, which is to occur by the express commission of the Apostle.

3.1.3 Ministerial authority of the Apostle

Resolution by the District Apostle Meeting, October 2016: “Upon ordination, the Apostle receives the authority to dispense the sacrament of Holy Sealing and ordain ministers. The powers on the basis of which Deacons and Priests can act in the commission of the Apostle have their source in the Apostle ministry.

“The authority to perform Holy Sealing is the spiritual empowerment, conferred by the Apostle in the power of the Holy Spirit, to dispense the gift of the Holy Spirit in the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

“The authority to ordain ministers is the spiritual empowerment, conferred by the Apostle in the power of the Holy Spirit, to impart authorisation, blessing, and sanctification for service in a ministry in the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”

All ministerial powers which are necessary for the church of Christ have been conferred
upon the Apostle ministry by Jesus Christ. The Apostle therefore shares in the authority of Jesus Christ. He can only act on the basis of Christ’s authority. Just how completely dependent every ministry is on Jesus Christ becomes apparent in His words: “… for without Me you can do nothing” *(John 15:5).*

We must remember that ministerial authority does not issue from a human being, but is conferred by Jesus Christ, who uses the Apostle ministry to do so. All authority—that of the Apostle, the Priest, and the Deacon—is from Jesus Christ, the Lord and head of the church, and is bestowed by the Apostle.

### 3.2 Ministerial mandate

Resolution by the District Apostle Meeting, March 2015:

“A distinction must be made between ministerial authority and the ministerial mandate. In the ministerial mandate the minister is given the right and responsibility to fulfil his tasks in the ministerial authority he has received, within a framework that is limited in terms of both duration and location.

“The ministerial mandate ends when the minister moves outside the area for which his mandate applies, when he retires, after the Apostle accepts his resignation, if the minister is dismissed or dies.”

In connection with ordination to a spiritual ministry, *CNAC 7.1* speaks of a “ministerial mandate”: “The spiritual ministry is conferred by a superior, in other words, the sender. The one who is sent is responsible and accountable to his sender in the fulfilment of his ministerial mandate. Ministry is always linked to Jesus Christ and the Apostles sent by Him.”

Ministry and ministerial mandate are therefore not identical. They are distinct, but at the same time they belong together. The ministerial mandate is primarily of a canonical nature. The ministerial mandate defines the concrete area of activity—congregation or district—of the minister, in which he is to exercise his ministerial authority. At the same time, the minister is entrusted with the pastoral care of a group of congregational members. This clearly shows that ministry and congregation belong together. Because a ministry is not a personal possession, but is always oriented to people—the congregation—every ordination is combined with a ministerial mandate.

This general ministerial mandate, which is directly related to ministerial authority, must be distinguished from an appointment, which is the allocation of specific administrative functions or representative functions.
In this case, ministers are entrusted with tasks that deal with the organisation and leadership of a congregation, a district, or a District Church. These tasks are not directly related to ministerial authority as such. They are clearly of a pragmatic nature and require certain skills such as leadership qualities, organisational talent, and the ability to motivate people.

4 Ministry – beginning and end

4.1 Ordination

Resolution by the District Apostle Meeting, October 2014: “Ordination is the investiture of a spiritual ministry. It is performed in the name of the triune God by the Apostle through laying on of hands and prayer.”

The Fifth Article of Faith deals with ordination: “I believe that those designated by God for a ministry are ordained only by Apostles, and that authority, blessing, and sanctification for their ministration come forth out of the Apostle ministry.”

Here we profess that God has commissioned the Apostles to ordain those whom He has designated for a ministry. Ordination consists of three aspects: authorisation, blessing, and sanctification (see footnote 1). Blessing and sanctification are explained in CNAC 2.4.5: “Through the ‘blessing’, both the priestly ministries and the Deacons are assured of the divine support and help of the Holy Spirit in the exercise of their ministries. ‘Sanctification’ points to the fact that it is God Himself, in His holiness and inviolability, who seeks to act through the ministry. ‘Sanctification’ is also necessary because the church is ‘holy’.”

4.2 Retirement

Resolution by the District Apostle Meeting, March 2015: “A retirement is an act in which a minister is relieved of his ministerial mandate, either because he has reached the age of retirement or for other reasons. The ministerial authority remains, however, the retired minister is no longer permitted to exercise this authority unless the Apostle entrusts him with a special mandate.”

Upon retirement the ministerial mandate is revoked, however, the ministerial authority remains. This is also expressed in the fact that retired ministers retain their ministerial title. Based on the fact that ministers retain the ministerial authority even in retirement, it has become possible for Apostles to commission retired ministers to celebrate Holy Communion with the sick and the aged, and to conduct funerals if not enough active ministers are available.
4.3 Resignation from ministry

Resolution by the District Apostle Meeting, March 2015: “A resignation is an ordained minister’s declaration of intent to resign his ministry. It takes effect when the Apostle accepts this declaration of intent. His ministerial authority thus expires and the ministerial mandate ends.”

The expiry of a ministerial mandate and the ministerial authority does not depend solely on the will of the minister, but requires the Apostle’s confirmation of his declaration of intent. Although every minister has the right to resign from his ministry at his own request, the resignation only comes into effect once the Apostle has accepted it.

4.4 Dismissal from ministry

Resolution by the District Apostle Meeting, March 2015: “When a minister is dismissed from his ministry, the Apostle pronounces the withdrawal of both the ministerial authority and the ministerial mandate.”

If serious reasons exist, a dismissal may be carried out by the Chief Apostle or the responsible District Apostle.

5 The relationship between ministry and person

The ministry and the person exist in close relationship to one another. They are interwoven with each other through ordination. Nevertheless, the ministry can be separated from the person, since ordination is not understood as a sacrament. Jesus Christ, the giver of the ministry, can also take it away from the minister again through the Apostle, who is authorised to ordain and is entitled to relieve from ministry, and to accept a resignation from ministry.

The ministry is always oriented to the congregation. The minister is called upon to devote himself to the congregation in love, and to align his conduct of life with the example of Jesus Christ.

The Catechism does not explicitly address the relationship between person and ministry, but there are statements regarding ordination in which this relationship is implied (see CNAC 7.7).

The relationship between ministry and person reflects the dual nature of church. On the one hand, ministry and person—just like the visible and the invisible church—comprise a single entity. On the other hand, this entity is not perfect,

---

3 Guide for the Ministers of the New Apostolic Church 1.3.8
4 This general statement does not refer to a specific local congregation, but rather to the congregation as a whole in which the ministry exercises its serving function.
but is vulnerable and fragile on account of the sinfulness of the person. Although the person receives the ministry and is responsible for its proper execution, the ministry is always oriented to the congregation and has its place there.

If a minister moves to another congregation or a district, his ministerial authority remains in effect for the time being. He can, however, only exercise it in the new congregation or district once he has been mandated to do so (reinstatement).

6 The relationship between ministry, character, and gifts

The ministries are independent of the character of the persons who bear them. Upon ordination, the gifts which the ordained minister possesses as a person are placed into the service of the congregation through blessing and sanctification. They can develop further in the course of one’s ministerial exercise. Other gifts and talents may also be revealed.

The character and gifts of the persons ordained as ministers should be suited to managing the powers issued in the ordination in an appropriate manner. If the required conditions are not present, it cannot be assumed that any lacking talents will be compensated by the ordination.

It is not an uncommon view that every ministry lends its bearer special characteristics and that the minister’s character changes upon ordination. There is also the widely held notion that a minister receives talents with an ordination that he did not have before. Neither of these ideas are tenable. It should never be assumed that an ordination is the beginning of a kind of automatic process whereby someone who was not rhetorically talented before should suddenly become a brilliant speaker, or whereby someone with little empathy suddenly develops a high degree of sensitivity. It is more recommendable to look for candidates who already possess the necessary talents and character traits—or potential for these to develop—for the proper execution of the ministry.

The idea of a connection between character and ministry has its roots in the doctrine of fourfold ministry, which defined the conception of ministry in the Catholic Apostolic Church.

Note

The doctrine of fourfold ministry was derived from Ephesians 4:11: “And He Himself gave some to be Apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.” The fundamental idea was that Jesus Christ Himself gave four ministries to His church.
In the Catholic Apostolic Church, pastors and teachers were counted as one ministry, resulting in the doctrine of fourfold ministry (Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors). This interpretation is based more on a manipulation of the Bible text to substantiate a particular conception rather than on a proper understanding of the passage. To derive a binding ministerial hierarchy from this does not correspond to the exegetical findings.