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New Apostolic Church introduces ordination of women

The New Apostolic Church (NAC) is opening up the prospect of ministry for women: as of the beginning of the year 2023, women can be ordained into all levels of ministry and also be entrusted with leadership functions on all levels.

This was the announcement made by the international Church leader, Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider, on Tuesday, 20 September 2022 in the context of a “virtual congregational evening”: in the video transmission he addressed the approximately nine million Church members around the world.

Up until now, the NAC has only ordained men into the ministries of Deacon, Priest, or Apostle. In the approximately 160-year history of the Church, this practice had never been comprehensively substantiated from a doctrinal perspective, explained the Church leader in his address: “And so the question arises as to whether this traditional restriction is still justifiable.”

However, it was not social debate or state constitutions that raised this question. Rather, the question of ordaining women is just one of many aspects in the ongoing development of the New Apostolic doctrine. In addition to describing its understanding of church and sacrament, the NAC has most recently formulated its understanding of ministry. This led to a reform in its structure and hierarchy in 2019.

Answers to such theological questions can only be provided by “a proper evaluation of the biblical evidence,” stresses Chief Apostle Schneider. The leading decision-making body of the NAC, namely the District Apostle Meeting, has been discussing this issue for the past three years.

The video presentation formulates the results as follows: “Men and women are equal before God, the Creator. There are no compelling reasons to make distinctions between them, not in the example of Jesus Christ, not in the Apostles’ doctrine, and not in the New Apostolic tradition.”

It is against this background that the Church leader now declares: “The apostolate—that is, the Apostles in oneness with the Chief Apostle—decide that women can be entrusted with ministerial authority on the basis of gender equivalence and equality.” And furthermore: “the associated ministerial mandate will be issued wherever it is accepted by society and the congregation.” These regulations will come into effect on 1 January 2023.

The New Apostolic Church (NAC) is a globally active Christian church with its headquarters in Switzerland. It numbers over nine million believers in some 200 countries around the world. The NAC consists of legally independent Regional Churches under the common umbrella of a uniform teaching and collegial leadership bodies. The Church is funded by the voluntary donations of its members. Its history dates back to the Christian revival movements of the nineteenth century.