

Apostolic History Network, Uhlandstraße 6, 33803 Steinhagen

To  
Dr. Haubrock  
GENO Immobilien GmbH  
Lower Monument Protection Authority/City of Bielefeld  
Building authority of the city of Bielefeld  
New Apostolic Church Western Germany K.d.ö.R.  
Ladies and gentlemen of the local press

### **Statement on the planned demolition of the former New Apostolic Church in Dorotheenstraße in Bielefeld-Mitte**

Brockhagen, January 18, 2025.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dr. Haubrock drew attention to the planned demolition of the former New Apostolic Church in Dorotheenstraße in last week's Westfalen-Blatt. He also pointed out that the building's stained glass windows are worth preserving.<sup>1</sup>

The Netzwerk Apostolische Geschichte e.V./Apostolic History Network as an interdenominational church history research association expressly agrees with Dr. Haubrock's wish. Our association has 180 members in eight countries and is based in Steinhagen.<sup>2</sup> We deal with the denominational family of apostolic communities, which includes the New Apostolic Church.<sup>3</sup>

In Steinhagen and Bielefeld, an important root of the community that would later be called the New Apostolic Church emerged from 1868. However, architectural evidence of these groupings from that time can hardly be found today.

The church in Dorotheenstraße, however, is - it is a functional building that developed from a restaurant, but from 1920 it represented the worldwide center of the New

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.westfalen-blatt.de/owl/bielefeld/buntglas-kirchenfenster-seltene-zeugnisse-aus-bielefeld-vor-dem-abriss-bewahren-3225588>.

<sup>2</sup> The association was founded in 2010 and is registered as a charity at Gütersloh Local Court (VR 1665). Our website can be found at <https://www.apostolische-geschichte.de/en>. For a self-presentation, see the menu item "About us" - "About the Apostolic History Network".

<sup>3</sup> See [https://www.apostolische-geschichte.de/wiki/index.php?title=Konfessionsgruppe\\_der\\_Apostolischen\\_Gemeinschaften](https://www.apostolische-geschichte.de/wiki/index.php?title=Konfessionsgruppe_der_Apostolischen_Gemeinschaften).

Apostolic Church for several years, together with an ensemble of buildings in Steinhagen, where an international administration building was built as early as 1906.<sup>4</sup>

In terms of religious history, the church building is thus the last witness to a time of growth and expansion of a church whose congregations and branches today number around 20 million people on all continents worldwide.<sup>5</sup> "Bielefeld" is still known to these people today, and the name of the then Chief Apostle Hermann Niehaus is closely linked to the history of the building.<sup>6</sup>

The building is also significant in terms of the history of the city of Bielefeld. During the heyday of the New Apostolic Church in Bielefeld in the 1960s and 1970s, many thousands of citizens of the city and district of Bielefeld belonged to this church - and at least occasionally attended services in Dorotheenstraße as the central church of this denomination at the time.<sup>7</sup>

It would be desirable if buildings belonging to smaller Christian communities were also considered in the context of heritage conservation. The importance of the former church building in Dorotheenstraße for the history of Christian communities, not only in Germany but also internationally, can hardly be overestimated.

From the point of view of church history, and without being able to make an economic assessment of a possible preservation of the property, it would be highly desirable to protect the building complex, or at least the church interior and its windows, in order to preserve this cultural asset in the long term.

If this is not possible, we at least hope that the valuable windows themselves will be preserved.

We believe that the owners of the building and the commissioned architect have a special responsibility for the irreplaceable cultural asset that has been handed over.

With kind regards

The Board of the Netzwerk Apostolische Geschichte e.V.  
Mathias Eberle - Hans Kuritz - Volker Wissen - Lasse Eggers

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<sup>4</sup> For the history, see for example <https://www.nak-west.de/db/7630930/Meldungen/Neuapostolische-Kirchen-in-Bielefeld-feiern-150-Jahre>.

<sup>5</sup> The largest of these is the New Apostolic Church with around 9 million members. The Old Apostolic Church of Africa is reported to have around 6 million members. Numerous smaller church communities also exist.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, the internationally and multilingually published article <https://nac.today/a-vibrant-congregation-bielefeld-turns-150/>.

<sup>7</sup> A wealth of information and photos on the history of the congregation can be found at the Central Archives of the New Apostolic Church: <https://www.nak-zentralarchiv.de/db/6789133/Gemeinden/Bielefeld-Mitte>.