

March 2013

Blessing the land of Germany

The assignment of the Levites under the Old Covenant was: "...to stand before the Lord to minister and to pronounce blessings in his name..." (Deuteronomy 10 v.8). We are also now called to the ministry of blessing (1 Peter 2 v.9). Blessing is not the same as intercession. When we bless this land in the name of Jesus, we look to the inherent "good" in God's creation. We see through the surface which has been defiled by sin. What was God's intention? We bless this land and all of its people as the work of *his* hands. We praise him for the "good" land in which we are privileged to live. So we bless this land together with words such as: "We bless the hearts of all who live in Germany, that the hardness of their hearts will be softened. That they will be receptive to the voice of the Holy Spirit. We bless the people in this land with protection, health and prosperity in everything that is wholesome and pleasing to God." Begin your prayer-time this month simply with a time for blessing Germany. -RS-

Threat of terrorism

According to German security services, Salafists, who were prepared to use violent means to achieve their aims in Germany but moved back to Egypt last year, have now built an Islamist media centre which has been publishing propaganda videos and recorded messages in the German language for several months. Already in September there were threats of attacks in Germany. A video has now come to light which calls for the assassination of Obama and Merkel and threatens terror attacks on the German parliament in Berlin. The aim of this media campaign is to incite other Salafists in Germany to carry out attacks.

But there is also a real threat of terrorism from right-wing extremists. Groups committed to use violence are planning to destabilise our society. It is still not clear which terrorist group was responsible for the thwarted attack in the main railway station in Bonn.

Prayer:

- For protection on the lives of us all – especially for leaders and politicians. (Numbers 6 v.24-27)
- Blessings on the work of the police and security services, such that plans of terrorists can be uncovered and attacks prevented. (Psalm 90 v.17)
- For vigilance within the population. (Eph. 5 v.11) -RS-

No place for freedom of expression in homosexuality

Articles 4 and 5 of the German Constitution guarantee freedom of religion and of expression. So much for the theory – in practice it now applies only to what is "politically correct". The homosexual lobby strongly objects to all expressions of opinion that do not conform to their fundamental conviction that "homosexuality is innate and cannot be changed". In a recent speech Claudia Roth (Federal Chairperson of the Green Party)

redefined "human dignity": "The dignity of *homo-lesbian love* is inviolable." Human rights and even the definition of "human dignity" are now being biased towards the interests of homosexuals, who define their sexual disposition as "inborn". But the opinion of people who say that their sexual desires are not inborn and that they indeed want to change them is suppressed. These people really exist and they are looking for help. The few organisations, groups and experts who concern themselves with the questions of sexual identity and the possibilities for change face opposition in every way. A recent example: the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs and the German Protestant Church Youth Association are investigating whether it is acceptable for the ecumenical youth organisation OJC (www.ojc.de/en/home.html) to be part of the "Voluntary Social Service" state-funded work program for young adults leaving school. Why? Because the "German Institute for Youth and Society" which is affiliated with OJC answers questions about homosexuality and is concerned with the problems of people with homosexual sensibilities. It was therefore assumed that this would include the possibility of changing homosexual orientation – and there lies the offence! The OJC organisation was then threatened with the withdrawal of funds and approval for youth training, although homosexual orientation has absolutely no bearing on their work. Only an affiliated institute is carrying out research in this area and publishes some different opinions which are not "politically correct".

Prayer:

- For protection and God's help for all who are under pressure because they stand for God's Word and truth; and for all who want to exercise their right to seek help to change their path in life. (Psalm 12)
- May the Holy Spirit give wisdom and boldness to organisations like "Living Waters", who are actively engaged in alternative approaches to research and teaching on homosexuality. (Acts 4 v.29-30)
- Pray for forgiveness for all deviation from God's Word especially within the Protestant Church in Germany. (Isaiah 5 v.18-21) -RS-

Israel after the elections

National parliamentary elections took place on January 22nd 2013 in Israel. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the former Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman merged their two parties into "Likud-Beiteinu" in the hope of building the largest possible elected group in parliament. This hope was only partially realised. Likud-Beiteinu was by far the strongest party, but they lost 11 of the 42 seats that both parties gained in the 2009 elections and landed up with only 31 of the 120 seats in the Israeli parliament. The task of building a government coalition then lay with the former PM Netanyahu, but the centre-

right block had altogether only 61 of the 120 seats – conceivably a very narrow working majority. The success of the new Yesh Atid party under the leadership of the well known and popular journalist TV host Yair Lapid was a great surprise. After the election, Benjamin Netanyahu announced his desire to form the broadest possible coalition of the centre and “of national unity”. As I write, the coalition negotiations are underway.

Apart from this, the days following the elections saw heavy rainfall. The Sea of Galilee has been filled well beyond seasonal average. In Biblical times rain was always a sign of blessing.

Prayer:

- **That God sets up the government in Israel that he can use to protect and bless his people.**
(Daniel 2 v.21)
- **May the Lord keep his hand over the coalition building process and give a good start to the new government, whatever form it takes. We pray blessings according to 1 Timothy 2 v.1-4.**
- **Thanks for the sign of blessing in the abundant rainfall. Pray for the Holy Spirit to rain on his people and for peace in the entire Middle East.**
(Psalm 68 v.10) -HE-

Sexism

A young female journalist reported in “stern” magazine how a well-known high-level politician that she wanted to interview made a pass at her with comments about her breasts, took hold of her hand and kissed it, until his party spokeswoman at last sent him to bed in his drunken state. Within days, on Twitter – under “outcry!” – came a tsunami of posts from women with similar experiences. There were sales women, doctoral students, reports from all walks of life, from young and old, who all had kept quiet, and now – anonymously – at long last they could talk about it. According to a survey, more than half of the women had their experience in Germany where men had made a sexist pass with suggestive remarks about their appearance or with touching of their breasts or bottom, or with direct or indirect offers of sex.

These may have been colleagues, but more often they were men in a position of power or authority over women (politicians, bosses, ski trainers, professors, etc.).

A feeling of superiority is a mark of sexism. This is mostly inherited through status in society. It however always results from a brash and mostly surprising lack of respect. The woman feels cheap and degraded, treated as an object, robbed of self-worth and left in a state of helplessness. In most cases this prevents her from reacting immediately in the decisive way that this treatment deserves.

But it is important to react. It does not require lengthy discussion or ingenious clever talk, but rather plain talking in clear and simple words and with distinct body language. Men understand this – and act accordingly.

Women who live by their faith know that their self-worth

is grounded in their God-given equality from birth with men and in the knowledge that “Christ lives in me”.

Men who live by their faith must take the admonition of Paul seriously: “But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality ...” (Ephesians 5 v.3ff) as well as the words of Jesus: “You are the salt of the earth ... You are the light of the world.” (Matthew 5 v.13-14). Salt is an *active agent* that cleanses the environment!

Prayer:

- **Thanks that it has come to light how much sexual immorality and many needs lie hidden in our society.**
- **Pray for repentance and cleansing in our land, especially for those in authority, that they will learn to behave as fathers and guardians for their people.**
- **Pray for renewed self-confidence and self-worth awareness for all women, especially those who have been hurt.** -OS-

The German political parties – an interim report

The election in Lower Saxony resulted in an extremely narrow majority of one seat for the SPD/Green coalition. However Lower Saxony is no indicator for the national elections. In Lower Saxony the four main parties arranged themselves into two camps such that the CDU could help the FDP over the 5% hurdle to enter parliament by way of the second vote system.

At national level the parties have not agreed to such an arrangement. So the field is open for any coalition to form a majority by choice or necessity. Because of this the FDP which has only reached 3-4% support in polls since October 2012 will not benefit from second votes. The Pirate party is already running under “others”. The Leftist party is steady at 8%. But as it is not regarded as a serious coalition partner, there appears to be three possibilities with popular support in % according to “forsa” polls:

1. SPD-Green 40% 2. CDU-Green 55% 3. CDU-SPD 65%
So it is clear: if nothing changes there can only be a majority with the CDU (steady at 40%) and Angela Merkel as Chancellor after the election on September 22nd 2013.

Since the election in Lower Saxony the government no longer has a majority in the Federal States Council (Upper House). All proposals for laws can be blocked there. This will make things difficult in the remaining months of the current term of the Federal Parliament (Lower House).

Prayer:

- **That the election campaign will be fought fairly.**
(1 Peter 3 v.9-11)
- **That able and believing candidates will be elected.**
(1 Peter 3 v.12)
- **That the Federal Parliament and Federal States Council again will be able to work together.** -OS-

Other events for prayer

03.03-10.03 ProChrist Event in Stuttgart

25.03-02.04 Biblical Feast of Passover.

*God's blessings from Ortwin Schweitzer,
Rosemarie Stresemann and Markus Egli*