

December 2013

Recognising a season of grace

God has spoken through his prophets that we are again in a season of grace. But the time is limited. Therefore it is important that we make use of this time and not miss what God is now offering to us. Is it possible to fail to recognise a season of grace? Yes! Jesus wept over Jerusalem and foretold judgement on the city, *“because you did not recognise the time of God’s coming to you.”* (Luke 19 v.44). Grace is a gift – an undeserved love gift from the heart of God. We can choose to pay no attention to gifts and do nothing with them. But the gift of grace is intended to make a difference.

Let us as intercessors earnestly desire more than ever to remove all hindrances and sinful attitudes in our hearts that stand in the way of the work of God in this land. Repentance and receiving God’s grace go hand in hand. We clearly see this for example in the growth of anti-Semitism. God wants our country to stand firmly on the side of Israel. But for this our hearts need to be still more deeply purified so that we have sincere love for our elder brother Israel (1 Peter 1 v.22). -RS-

Answers to prayer

The voting period for the European Citizens Initiative “One of us” ended on November 1st. At the close 1,896,852 signatures had been registered – a tremendous success!

Let us now pray that the requests and concerns expressed in the initiative will be accepted by the EU Commission.

With another refugee boat disaster off the coast of the island of Lampedusa, our prayers in October for a change in the policy for asylum seekers came at the right time. Much has happened in Germany since then. In the current coalition negotiations the CDU/CSU and SPD have agreed to make changes in the policy. The asylum application processing time will be reduced to 3 months and it will be possible to take up employment after 6 months (now 9 months). Residency permits in future will only be restricted to the local state and short visits to other states within Germany will be allowed.

We thank God for these answers to prayer. -RS-

The new government coalition

On December 17th the new CDU/CSU/SPD (black/red) coalition should be in place with Angela Merkel elected as the new (existing) Chancellor and the new cabinet of ministers sworn in.

Everything seemed to be going well at first. Everyone was happy with the good relationships between the coalition partners. Even the detailed discussions in the various negotiating committees appeared to be making progress – until ... until November 5th when all three committee leaders made an urgent appeal to stop drawing up “wish-lists” but rather to start compiling financially viable proposals. Thus began the tug-of-war over compromises. At the outset Angela Merkel suggested: “The more clearly the coalition agreement is formulated, the less will be the

need for discussions later.” For the party meetings on both sides this meant however that intermediate proposals could be submitted for discussion before final agreement. The SPD members will decide whether to accept the final coalition agreement by a ballot, the outcome of which is by no means certain. The decision of the SPD party conference to no longer distance itself from the Leftists party leaves the back door open for the future collapse of a coalition and changed the basis for the coalition negotiations with the CDU/CSU. In the political world the assignment of ministerial posts is not determined primarily by competence to do the job but unfortunately by the need for proportional representation of the regions, by gender, and by political camp (or wing) within the party. But God can appoint the people who best serve his purposes for our nation.

Prayer:

- **That despite the “proportional representation” requirement, the most competent men and women who are ready to serve will be appointed to lead the various ministries. (Luke 1 v.51-52)**
- **That divine wisdom will reign over the necessary compromises in all decisions. (Proverbs 8 v.12-15)**
- **For a blessed start for the new government, “conscious of their responsibility before God” (as written in the German Constitution).** -OS-

USA and Germany

A deep crisis of trust between our two countries arose as it became known, through the fugitive US Security Service agent Edward Snowden, that millions of phone calls by German citizens have been listened into daily by the American National Service Agency (NSA). This trust was completely shattered however as it became known from reliable sources that Chancellor Angela Merkel had also been listened into and that President Obama must have known about it. There is great disappointment within the German people and German government over this “grave breach of trust” (Frank-Walter Steinmeier).

The suggestion that Snowden ought to be flown into Germany to testify before the parliamentary committee – which he was prepared to do – was short-lived. Since there is a “binding extradition treaty” between the two countries, the failure to extradite Snowden would have turned into a serious political crisis. Merkel commented: “The transatlantic alliance is and remains of paramount importance for Germans.”

With this the Chancellor was taking into account the long history between the two nations since 1945 as well as their future relationship. And the current discussions between Europe and the USA over a free trade agreement are a part of this, as it will be of significant importance for both sides in view of the changes that are taking place at the global level. Furthermore only the good cooperation between the German security services and the NSA up until now has prevented Islamist terror attacks. However

the cooperation between the security services must now be established on a new basis of understanding, which should be completed by 2014.

Let us as intercessors not get drawn into the general feelings of outrage, but pray that the former good relations with the USA will be restored.

Prayer:

- **Clarification of all the security issues as well as for the rapid establishment of a new basis of understanding for the cooperation of the “services”.**
- **Restoration of trust which is essential for a good political relationship.**
- **A stop to anti-American feelings in Germany that only distort the past and stand in the way of future cooperation.** -OS-

Prostitution and human trafficking

Since we have been praying already twice this year for more agencies and organisations to take up this issue of human trafficking, it is amazing how much has happened. There has not been one month when this issue has not been reported publically. Television and print media have widely treated this as a critical issue. Government and society in general have been made aware of the dramatic increase in the extent of human trafficking that also followed the passing of the prostitution law in 2002. Now the well-known feminist Alice Schwarzer is campaigning for the abolition of prostitution. In a public appeal, that many prominent people have now signed, she is demanding a change to the law and the abolition of the whole prostitution system in the long term. Prostitution offends the human dignity of both men and women and also the dignity of the so-called “prostitute by choice”. The CDU/CSU and SPD have already agreed in the coalition negotiations that the prostitution law needs to be improved. Women must be better protected against human trafficking and forced prostitution. When the new government has been formed, the details will still have to be worked out in a bill before parliament.

Prayer:

- **Thanks for God’s light that is bringing the hidden practices of human trafficking to public notice. (Ephesians 5 v.9)**
- **Further success for all initiatives to combat human trafficking and prostitution. (James 2 v.14-17)**
- **God’s wisdom and insight for the drafting of the bill to change the law – so that this crime is successfully brought under control. (Proverbs 31 v.8-9)** -RS-

Negotiations with Iran

Since the beginning of November there have been new negotiations in Geneva between the “5+1 Powers” (USA, Russia, China, UK, France and Germany) and Iran over its nuclear program. These negotiations hold immense risks for Israel’s security. Iran has many times openly called for the annihilation of Israel. Islam claims that there cannot be a state of Israel on an area of land that was once conquered by Islam. The land has to be taken back for “Allah”. Islam teaches that, in jihad (holy war), lies and

deceit in dealing with the enemy are permissible. From a position of weakness, time to gather new strength can be won by a feigned willingness to compromise. Because of tough economic sanctions Iran is under so much pressure that it has now offered to suspend parts of its nuclear program. For this Iran is looking for the lifting of sanctions. President Obama as well as other government leaders reacted immediately in a very accommodating fashion. They have great interest in an agreement with oil-rich Iran for economic reasons. At the moment Iran is enriching uranium to 20% and it only would take a small step to bring it to 90% in order to make an atomic bomb. The countries which have been allies of the USA in the Middle East up until now (Egypt, Saudi-Arabia and Israel) are extremely concerned by the rush for the negotiating powers to make a deal with Iran. They can see no reasonable grounds not to keep up the pressure of sanctions right now and fear – as in the past - a deliberate strategy of deception.

Prayer:

- **Exposure of all attempts at deception and firm resolve on the part of the negotiators (including Germany). (Psalm 62 v.4,5,10)**
- **No easing of sanctions without a clear agreement and a verifiable course of action.**
- **That the USA continues to regard the security of Israel as the highest priority.** -RS-

A request

For the first time I am writing to you as the chairman of the new association “Waechterruf e.V.” with the request for your annual donation of 10 Euro for 2014.

With organisational independence comes full financial responsibility. For this reason we will be thankful for an increase in donations this year. (The bank details are given below.) As well as our running expenses we also now have to cover all of our personnel costs.

We are always pleased to hear how much we are trusted and appreciated for our ministry as we travel around the country. Thank you – this encourages us to continue.

Prayer:

- **Thanks for the spirit of unity and cooperation that is felt within the Call of the Watchmen (Waechterruf) prayer network.**
- **Pray that all contributions will be a blessing to those who give and to those who receive. (2 Corinthians 8 v.13-15)** -OS-

*God’s blessings for the Christmas season
and for the New Year from
Ortwin Schweitzer and Rosemarie Stresemann*