

January 2015

Encountering Jesus in the least of his brothers and sisters

I was born in Indonesia. When war broke out in May 1940 we were forced to flee to Japan. There we sat tight until the war was over - almost six years! It was wonderful how the Japanese welcomed us as "asylum seekers".

Syria: they also had a good and comfortable life in their own homes. And then came the civil war in which their houses were destroyed. Then came the Islamic State terror which threatened their very lives. Now they are here, living in *one* room, 3-4 people or more. Everything so cramped. We say they should be grateful! But they are home-sick...

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you ... For I was [*seeking asylum*] and you invited me in.'" "Lord, when did we see you [*as an asylum seeker*] and invite you in?" The King will reply, "... whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me." (See Matthew 25:34-40).

How often in 2015 will we encounter Jesus by welcoming the least of his brothers and sisters? -OS-

Answers to prayer in 2014

A year of prayer now lies behind us – where have we seen answers? At the beginning of January the newly elected federal government started work together and we are thankful for the good cooperation. In the debates on euthanasia there was much more recognition of the role of palliative treatment.

In February we prayed for "Standing for the truth" and in May there was the call by many leaders of evangelical organisations for a "Time to stand" and 15,000 Christians have now signed the statement.

In February and March there was also talk about Germany taking more responsibility internationally. In the October letter we again addressed the question of how exactly God wants our land to exercise more international influence. The acceptance of more responsibility in international affairs has certainly increased.

Our prayers in April and October for a successful prayer walk along the old East-West German border were answered.

In the past year God has protected Germany from terrorist attacks and other internal crises. We are also thankful for the way in which God protected Israel from rocket attacks during the Gaza war.

In December there was an answer to prayer in the discovery of a human trafficking ring: the premises of an international prostitution empire – supposedly a legal provider of sexual services – were searched by a team of 900 police under the suspicion of human trafficking and cover-up. One of the four large brothels that were searched was in a region where our intercessors have been praying for many years.

We cannot measure how much trouble and harm has been averted in Germany and Europe through our prayers in 2014 – but we are thankful for every answer to prayer.

Prayer:

- **Thanks for every answer to prayer and protection because of prayer in 2014. (Ephesians 3:20-21)** -RS-

The new coalition government in Thuringia

On 5th December 2014 in the state of Thuringia, Bodo Ramelow was elected as the first Prime Minister from the Leftist party since the end of the SED (Socialist Unity Party) dictatorship in East Germany in 1989. The election can be attributed to a current peak in a political development over many years to re-establish leftist, socialist and neo-Marxist power in Germany. The centre-right parties (CDU and FDP) have increasingly lost their standing in the course of this development. The AfD party (Alternative for Germany) as the newcomer in this field is now labelled as being radically right-wing.

The Leftist party is already ruling in many states in the east and is in the Berlin government, yet without causing any great alarm. The current coalition government in Thuringia with the SPD and Greens led by the Leftists has however been a wake-up call all over Germany. Questions are being raised openly about the SED dictatorship and its lingering influence that until now have largely fallen silent. The policies of the red-red-green coalition are not so different from those in Baden-Wuerttemberg and other states under the leadership of the Greens or the SPD, particularly in education policy. But with the overstepping of what up until now has been a "taboo line", by putting the successor to the SED party in power again as head of government, this political development with its totalitarian aspirations is definitely receiving new attention: by the voters, in the media, and at national level. That Ramelow as a Christian justified not saying "so help me God" when taking oath on the grounds of the separation of church and state, leads us to suspect that his confession of faith has no direct connection with his political work.

Prayer:

- **That the Lord of history reveals light and darkness over this new state government in Thuringia. (Daniel 2:20-22)**
- **Protection for all that has been achieved for the rule of freedom and democracy in Germany.**
- **For Bodo Ramelow and his cabinet, for obedient and discerning hearts. (1 Kings 3:5-9)** -KH-

Refugees, refugees

In a recent public meeting, things really heated up when it was announced that about 160 refugees will be coming into our neighbourhood: why us? What risks and disruption will they bring with them? They will burden our social system! There are legitimate questions (medical care; schooling; language classes) that need to be answered. But many are driven only by fear and plain selfishness. After this stream of refugees, Germany will never be the same as it was.

If ever it was a time for Germany to be a blessing to the world – then it is now. The world is actually coming *to us*. So be a blessing! Now is the time.

Prayer:

- **That the mood of the population is not overtaken by a spirit of fear and rejection of outsiders. (Matt. 7:12)**
- **That Christians in the refugee accommodation will help, pray and bring healing. (Matthew 5:13-16)**
- **For peace and harmony between the residents in homes for refugees and asylum seekers.** -OS-

The 100 days of prayer begin this month

On January 27th, 70 years after the liberation of the German concentration camp Auschwitz, the 100 days of prayer "remember-repent-pray" for Germany and Israel begin. God has been infinitely gracious to our land in the past 70 years. We acknowledge this with thankful hearts. Like the prophet Daniel (see Daniel 9) we want to seek God's face and bow before him during the 100 days until May 8th when the war ended in Europe 70 years ago. A comprehensive prayer guide in German can be ordered on www.100tagegebet.de. Information on the Global Prayer Call 2015 and guidelines for prayer in English for each week of the 100 day period can be downloaded from the RESOURCES page of the website www.100-days.eu. (See also November Letter.)

Prayer:

- **That the Spirit of God will aid all intercessors in these 100 days to earnestly seek his face (Daniel 9:4-17)** -RS-

New elections in Israel

As the result of a crisis in the Israeli government at the beginning of December, the coalition under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu fell apart after just two years. The Israeli Knesset then voted with a large majority for new elections on March 17th 2015. Israel is now in the middle of an election campaign and all the political parties are looking for partners. A new party is also being formed.

As terrorist attacks by Palestinians are again increasing, EU countries are strengthening their pressure on Israel to agree to a two-state peace accord at the expense of all security considerations. After Sweden had formally recognised Palestine as a state, there came a domino effect: the parliaments of Spain, France, UK and Ireland passed similar resolutions, but these are not binding on their governments. The German government has clearly spoken out against such a one-sided step which does not require any peace efforts from the Palestinians. In the German parliament only the Leftists want to recognise a Palestinian state. At EU level Merkel has made it clear that she will veto a one-sided recognition of Palestine in the European Council of EU member heads of state.

Prayer:

- **That the election campaign in Israel by God's grace does not cause further division in the land. (Zechariah 8:14-17)**
- **That the blindness of the nations to God's plans and purposes for Israel does not blind our government. (Isaiah 25:7)** -RS-

The crisis in the Ukraine and policy on Russia

There are political voices in Germany that are calling for the government to change its policy, because otherwise North

America, the EU and Russia would "inevitably be heading towards a state of war". This call comes from the so-called "Putin-sympathisers", who are of the opinion that Russia is pursuing justifiable security interests which the western nations have violated in their policies towards the Ukraine. By doing this they are also recognising the annexation of the Crimea by Russia as a justifiable action. The German government does not however regard a violation of international law as an acceptable way to keep peace in Europe. The Ukraine must be able to independently determine its own destiny. Angela Merkel, who speaks Russian, has telephoned Putin numerous times - without any real progress. Until now there is neither a military nor a political solution to the conflict. Merkel does not want to return to the old way of thinking in "power blocks". After the fall of the Berlin wall the "cold war" seemed to be over, but now there is a renewed east-west confrontation. Russia has not yet developed a true democratic system of government. Claims to power are still exercised with the use of force. Winter has arrived in the Ukraine and the people are suffering terribly from the unresolved conflict. In the areas controlled by the separatists the law of the strongest faction prevails - governmental structures have collapsed. How Germany positions itself in this conflict and acts politically in order to reach a peaceful solution is now very critical.

Prayer:

- **That the German government together with the other EU states will make those decisions that will best serve to bring peace to the Ukraine. (James 3:18)**
- **For the governments of Russia and the Ukraine: that God will guide their hearts in the way of peace. (Luke 1:76-79)**
- **Grace and protection for those who are suffering and in great distress.** -RS-

The 15th anniversary of the Call of the Watchmen

Recently an intercessor once again told me how helpful the prayer letter is, as it gives the most important information on current affairs in Germany in a very concise manner. We are very happy that all our efforts in the Lord's name are not in vain and are bearing fruit.

We are very thankful that your annual gift enables us to continue this work. Our costs include the salary of our office manager, subsidies for travelling costs for our board members and regional leaders, and the costs to send 3,500 letters each year to intercessors that do not have email.

Thank you very much to all who contribute! -OS-

Dates for your diary:

- 03-06.01** MEHR – European Prayer House Conference in Augsburg, Bavaria
- 04.01** Youth Conference for World Mission in Stuttgart
- 11-18.01** Evangelical Alliance Prayer Week in Germany
- 27.01-08.05** 100 days of prayer for Germany and Israel (and the nations as part of the Global Prayer Call 2015)

*God's blessings for the New Year 2015 from
Ortwin Schweitzer and Rosemarie Stresemann*