

January 2017

New Year

We have wished one another a "Happy New Year". This is also very much needed at this time! For as we observe the course of events around us, we become more apprehensive than optimistic. What will happen next in Syria? What will happen to Europe between Trump and Putin? Will the European Union fall apart completely? How will the German national elections turn out? And the elections in France, Holland and possibly in Italy?

Many people are fearful as they stand on the threshold of this new year. Will we Christians in 2017 be seen as optimistic or as havens in the storm? Will our hearts really be set at peace by God or will we just pretend? God wants to give us a firm foundation through his word.

So let each one of us earnestly seek a word from God that will set our hearts at peace for 2017. The word for me is found in Psalm 97:9 – "*For you, O Lord, are the Most High over all the earth; you are exalted far above all gods*" – and all Trumps and Putins as well. Thanks be to God! -OS-

Terror attack in Berlin

Despite the many plans of terrorists that have been discovered and prevented in the last months, the terrible attack at the Christmas market in Berlin with 12 deaths could not be prevented. However we continue to pray in faith for God's grace and protection over our land and for all the security forces. Those who have lost loved ones need comfort – we all need protection from the rule of fear: Lord, deliver us from evil!

Let us pray the Lord's Prayer over this tragic situation. -RS-

Election year

2017 is an election year – and a very special one. For the first time since 2005 we face the possibility that Angela Merkel could be ousted as Chancellor of Germany by a left-wing coalition of SPD, Leftists and Greens (Red-Red-Green). The influence of social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) will be playing a greater role than ever before. Because users are able to remain anonymous, the level and quality of the political discussion becomes uncontrollable and can lead to an unacceptable intensification of the election campaigns. Therefore the initiative of one of the SPD members of parliament to form an "alliance of fair play" is to be welcomed.

What is new however is the emergence of a party that is not at all approved but could get involved in many ways: Russia. The German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (internal security agency) has already given a warning of this danger. As one could see in the USA, the already evidenced cyber attacks by Russia were clearly intended to interfere in the election campaign to the benefit of certain candidates and to discredit others with "disclosures" and even deliberate lies. With cyber attacks on the German parliament and the CDU, Putin may have been able to obtain political ammunition. From this information it would then be possible, just before the election, to suddenly publish "new revelations" and in fact

maintain the connection with Russian propaganda channels through certain parties. Since we live at a time when information is accepted based on emotions rather than by seeking some proof or actual facts, misleading reports from Russia have a good chance of achieving their goal.

Prayer:

- **Thanks for our democratic state which makes free elections possible without fraud and deception. (1 Timothy 2:1-2)**
- **For fair play in the political debates and speeches that are necessary in an election campaign. (2 Timothy 2:5)**
- **Protection and discovery of Russian cyber attacks and misleading reports; discerning evaluation of all election information by our citizens. (1 Timothy 5:19) -OS-**

"Post-factual" society – and the battle for truth

Post-factual (or *Post-truth*) is the "Word of the Year 2016" and stands for a fundamental change in the presentation of news and information in our society. Increasingly political and social discussions are based on emotion rather than facts. An emotional perception of what is real then replaces the *factual* reality. The "truth" now rests in what everybody is talking about irrespective of the underlying facts. And so myths and rumours spread like wildfire. *Post-factual* also stands for the deliberate spreading of untruth for the purpose of moulding and shaping agreements and opinions, often through social media. For a long time now the overall control of news distribution has no longer been exclusively in the hands of the press. The news is now increasingly created and spread through social networks. *Post-factual* however also perfectly describes the general attitude in our post-modern society and is a mirror image of how we no longer feel compelled by the one who is the Truth – Jesus. We now decide for ourselves what is true and (morally) right. We need to once again place ourselves and our land under God's truth and protection from emotive deception.

Prayer

- **That people will commit themselves again to the truth, strive to make this a reality in their lives, and no longer contribute to the spread of lies. (Ephesians 4:25)**
- **Wisdom for political leaders in how citizens can be protected from the deliberate manipulation of facts and make the spreading of untrue information a punishable offence. (Psalm 91)**
- **That the love of truth through following the one who is the Truth - Jesus - will grow in our land. (John 14:6) -AS-**

The plight of Christian refugees in Germany

A new extended study, by Open Doors, documents over 700 religiously motivated attacks on Christian refugees in Germany. The complete report in English is available at:

https://www.opendoors.de/downloads/Berichte/Open_Doors_survey_Lack_of_protection_for_religious_minorities_in_Germany_2016_10.pdf.

The first study was alleged to be insufficiently conclusive. So after further investigation the new study substantiates in detail that Christian refugees in refugee homes are

excluded, victimised and threatened with death because of their faith – and in every German state without exception. In most states the problem was denied. Only in Hessen has a comprehensive protection plan been developed.

There are many Christians who have come to faith in Christ in Iran and in Afghanistan, but have had to keep their faith secret. In Germany they now look for churches where they can receive teaching in the faith and be baptised. They base their application for asylum on their conversion and the persecution of Christians in their home country. At their hearing with mostly non-Christian workers at the Federal Agency for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), they are suspected of only feigning a conversion. A reference from a pastor confirming participation in church activities and attending a training program is generally not accepted. To confirm that the asylum seeker is guilty of a fake conversion, they are asked the most impossible questions to test their “faith”. For example: what is the name of the capital city for Christians, why were you baptised in an evangelical church, so what would the Pope say about this, why would one want to believe in Jesus when forgiveness of sins is offered by all (!) religions. An online petition directed at the BAMF management demands a stop to systematic disadvantaging of Christians seeking the right to asylum.

Prayer:

- **Call out to God, bringing before Him the urgent plight of our Christian brothers and sisters. (Psalm 27:7-12)**
- **That the persecuted Christian refugees will receive protection and justice in our land. (Proverbs 31:8-9)**
- **That those in the BAMF who hear and make decisions for refugee converts will receive proper training. -RS-**

Wisdom and courage in foreign policy

The work of the Foreign Minister has a direct and important influence on the image of Germany abroad. Frank-Walter Steinmeier (SPD), who has had a diplomatically stabilising influence, has now been nominated by the governmental Grand Coalition for the election to the next German Federal President on February 12th 2017. His replacement could be Michael Roth, Minister of State for Europe, or the current President of the European Parliament, Martin Schultz. The change in the holder of such an important office needs our prayers. At a time when it appears as though Donald Trump wants to completely change the parameters of world politics, an ever increasing responsibility for vigilance rests on Germany in the centre of Europe. Rex Tillerson, a friend of Putin, will be the next American Foreign Minister. What should be the main focus in German foreign policy in view of the possibility that America turns more attentively towards Russia? German foreign policy will then have to find answers to such questions as:

- Should Germany initiate a new EU treaty in which the emphasis will be less on uniformity and more on diversity of the member nations and in which countries like Great Britain, Norway and Switzerland also have a place?
- How do we address the possibility of American-Russian cooperation that in the long run is intended to weaken the EU and its economic influence?

- What will be the position of the German government with regard to the growing move by the Turkish leadership from democracy to autocracy and the related issue of the control of refugees coming from Turkey into Europe?

Prayer:

- **For an experienced and a far-sighted, long-term thinking successor to Steinmeier. (Psalm 2:10)**
- **For German leaders involved with foreign policy (Chancellor, Foreign Minister, other Members of Parliament...) to have the courage to find new ways and be equipped to fulfil the responsibility of Germany for the future prosperity of Europe. (1 Timothy 2:1-2)**
- **Clarity for the future relationship with Turkey. (Psalm 86:11)** -JB-

Special time of reflection for Israel

The Moravian text for 2017 from Ezekiel 36:26 speaks in the full context of verses 24 to 28 directly into the jubilee year for Israel – 50 years after the reunification of Jerusalem.

On June 7th 1967, on the third day of the six-day war, East Jerusalem with the Old City and Temple Mount was brought under Jewish control by the Israeli army. With this the division of the city since the war of independence in 1948/9 was brought to an end. In 1980 the Israeli parliament declared Jerusalem as the indivisible capital of Israel. This was however not recognised internationally. All international embassies moved away and are now in Tel Aviv. As a response to these moves, the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem (ICEJ) was opened – a representation for all Christians of the world which today has special recognition and is estimated highly by the State of Israel. More than 20 years ago the US Senate voted to move the American embassy to Jerusalem. But up until now nothing has happened. Could it be that, as announced by Donald Trump, America will move its embassy back to Jerusalem in this year of jubilee?

On November 2nd there will be another anniversary: 100 years since the Balfour Declaration (see December prayer letter: “**The battle for Jerusalem**”), and then November 11th will be the 70th anniversary of the UN resolution which opened the way for the declaration of the State of Israel.

Prayer:

- **We thank God for his promise in Ezekiel 36:24-28 and proclaim it over the land of Israel today.**
- **Pray for a political breakthrough in the recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. (2 Chronicles 6:6)**
- **Blessings on the work of the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem which represents us as citizens of the Kingdom of God. (Psalm 138:8)** -RS-

Dates for your diary

Advance notice: Our next Prayer Conference will be in Berlin, September 1-3, 2017. More information to follow.

- 05-08.01** MEHR Conference in Augsburg
- 08-15.01** Evangelical Alliance Prayer Week
- 27.01** Holocaust Remembrance Day

*Blessings for the New Year 2017 from
Rosemarie Stresemann, Ortwin Schweitzer and Team*