

April 2018

The reward for confidence and trust (Hebrews 10:35,36)

Why do we pray night and day for our land? Because we know that God hears our prayers and has “a hope and a future” for this land. (Jeremiah 29:11). But this confidence is constantly challenged. The enemy wants us to look more to our circumstances than to God and to no longer put our trust in Him. Therefore we need to keep our eyes on God and His promises. When we lose sight of God’s purposes to redeem the whole world through Christ, then it can be like the swimmer Florence Chadwick who was the first woman to attempt to swim the 34km channel between Catalina Island and the Californian mainland. 800m before the coast she gave up. She could no longer see her goal because of a thick fog. Through worship and thankfulness, we keep our eyes on our goal, hold fast to our confidence and trust, and continually hear answers to our prayers as a reward. -RS-

Answers to prayer

In the difficult and very challenging time of the negotiations to form a new government, we could clearly experience as never before how God answers prayer. God “sets up kings and deposes them”. (Daniel 2:21). We have been witnesses to numerous dismissals and many new appointments. I would like to mention five specific answers:

1. The appointment of Heiko Maas as Foreign Minister: only God knows the heart. Who knew beforehand that Heiko Maas became a politician because of Auschwitz? Maas talked about it in Israel to Holocaust Survivors, and as a schoolboy he researched to find a resistance fighter in his family but found only collaborators. So he asked himself what he might do that there would never be another Auschwitz. During his early visit to Israel Netanyahu noticed the new warm tone in the voice of our Foreign Minister and said: “You have won our hearts”.

2. Our prayers for the formation of a stable government were heard.

3. Our prayers for the appointment of God-fearing people in key positions and ministerial offices were answered with the appointment of many committed catholic believers.

4. New, younger politicians now have the opportunity to prove themselves – a generational change has been ushered in.

5. Directly after the installation of the new coalition government, a resolution to repeal the law (§219a) against the advertising of abortion services, proposed by the SPD with the agreement of the CDU, almost came to a vote. After protests from the CDU rank and file this was avoided. The issue will however have to be negotiated once again.

Let us give a mighty thank-offering to our gracious God!

(1 John 5:14; Colossians 4:2)

-RS-

Fight for life

The protection of human life at its beginning and at its end is being increasingly strongly contested in Germany. Even before the start of the new grand coalition government, the SPD along with other parties wanted to effectively annul

the law (§219a) against the advertising of abortion services. First of all, extreme displeasure among CDU/CSU members led to a back-down in the coalition; indeed the Chancellor then even made an offer to the SPD to jointly “reform” the law. The new Justice Minister Katarina Barley (SPD) was given the task to find a compromise solution such that the law does not prevent more doctors from using public information channels. It is currently a punishable offence to openly offer abortion services which constitute a “crime against human life”. “The humanity of a society is seen in the way it treats its unborn children and its old people”, Nelson Mandela once said. Since 2015, “assisted suicide” and passive and indirect help to end a life are allowed under certain circumstances in Germany. “Assisted dying” is increasingly gaining ground over “care for the dying” (palliative treatment) and is sometimes even justified theologically. Because of our belief and through our prayers we fight for life.

Prayer:

- **For a renewed consciousness of the value of human life. (Exodus 20:13; Psalm 139:13,14)**
- **Pray against the presumption of man to be lord over life and death – pray for a “culture of respect for life”. (Psalm 139:15; Psalm 31:14,15)**
- **Pray against a change or relaxation of the §219a law. (Isaiah 5:20; Romans 13:4)**

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The new German government cabinet

171 days after the elections the new German government could finally take over its official duties to govern. Never has the formation of a government taken so long and been such a challenge. From the struggles over many months it is clear that it simply cannot continue in this way. A turning back to God was and is necessary. For many weeks we have kept the negotiations continually in our prayers and sought the Lord for his grace upon our land. Now we accept the new government as from the hand of God. He has a good plan for us, for he is merciful and patient with us. (Jeremiah 29:11; Habakkuk 3:2). The new government cabinet is the 24th in the Federal Republic of Germany. We can be very thankful to God that we live in a democratic country.

Prayer:

- **Thank you Lord for the new government and help us to come before your throne of grace with new faith and confidence on their behalf. (Hebrews 4:16; Psalm 65:2)**
- **That Christian convictions will again be heard in government and that they will be expressed in wisdom and courage. (Daniel 1:17; Matthew 10:27)**
- **For good cooperation and unity within the coalition, as well as for constructive debates in parliament which generate new godly ideas. (Psalm 118:25)**

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The danger of right-wing extremist thoughts and ideas

From the very beginning of the Call of the Watchmen, God called us to be a national prayer network and to keep watch over the call of Germany to stand on the side of Israel.

God's message to us was related to the real danger that demonic, anti-Semitic powers would once again try to influence and mislead the German people – including the people of God.

Right-wing extremists refuse to accept a democratic state and would like to establish an authoritarian led, ethnically homogeneous national community. They talk about "the body politic" and dismiss the God-given worth and dignity of man that is sacrosanct. Racism, which teaches that one race has a higher value than others, is an integral part of their image of man. Anti-Semitism is a part of this ideology. The Nazi-state is said to have been harmless with no evil intent and its crimes are denied or played down.

This train of thought is promoted by members of the AfD (Alternative Party for Germany) and is getting increased attention from the public. Leaders of the AfD have described protesting students from the left-wing as "a malignant growth on the body politic", demanded a 180 degree change back to the politics of the past, and spoken of a "disgraceful monument" when referring to the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin.

The more such public statements are discussed, the more they impress on people's minds the possibility to adopt this way of thinking once again. Many people are searching for something to hold on to and for a clear identity. Right-wing extremist thoughts and ideas offer only a false identity in nationalism and differentiation.

Prayer:

- **Come Holy Spirit and help us to love all the people in our land. (Mark 12:31)**
- **That right-wing extremist thoughts and ideas do not gain further political influence in our land. (Philippians 4:8; Proverbs 15:2)**
- **Protection from right-wing terrorist attacks. (Psalm 121:7)**

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Middle-East Policy

"I came into politics because of Auschwitz." With this remark in his inaugural speech, the new Foreign Minister Heiko Maas announced the improvement of Germany's relationship with Israel as a priority item in his foreign policy. With his early visit to Israel he strengthened the friendship between Germany and Israel, but held on firmly to the continuation of the current German Middle-East policy, a two-state solution and the Nuclear Deal with Iran. Maas is clearly looking for what connects Germany and Israel – there is a new warmth in the relationship which we want to strengthen through prayer.

Because of Iran, Israel is threatened by the real danger of war. After equipping the Shiite Hezbollah in Lebanon, Iran has now built up a second spearhead against Israel in Syria, where Hezbollah is fighting on the side of the Assad regime. With the endorsement of Russia a combined Islamic front has been formed against Israel on its northern border.

The aggressive course of action of Turkey, which would really like to set up a new Islamic caliphate, is also a major threat. From the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria Turkey has also occupied Afrin with help from Islamic armies. Up until now Maas has been very critical of

Erdogan's policies. As Justice Minister he denounced the breakdown of the rule of law in Turkey and demanded that the German government take a stronger line with regard to Ankara. Unlike his predecessor Sigmar Gabriel, Maas spoke out for breaking off negotiations with Turkey for membership of the European Union.

Prayer:

- **Thanks for the new Foreign Minister – for wisdom, protection and a clear line of action. (Acts 5:29)**
- **That with Maas there will be a clear change of direction in German Middle-East policy towards unwavering support of Israel. (Isaiah 40:1ff)**
- **For a solution to correct the dangerous alliances with Iran and Turkey. (Isaiah 30:1-3)**

-KH-

Further development of the European Union

There is relief in Europe, especially in France, to again have a political counterpart in Berlin, as only over the Paris-Berlin axis will the EU train travel further. From Macron comes the vision, from Merkel comes the stability – two opposites as reflected in their different personalities but also in their nations. As both very much appreciate one another and both believe that the EU needs a renewal of purpose, a good outcome can be expected. Macron sees the future of Europe in the direction of a closer union of countries. For this the Euro-countries have already made good progress, the cohesion of which Macron would also like to strengthen with a single parliament and a single finance minister. The eastern European and Scandinavian countries however vehemently oppose this "two-speed Europe" because they fear being left behind as second class nations. Here lies the task of Germany to make itself available to keep Europe and the EU together and to underline the common areas for cooperation. But this is not easy because in important countries such as Italy, Czech Republic and Austria the populists have established themselves with their demands to move back to being an independent nation state.

The EU is swinging between the two poles of an ellipse – one pole is "community of nations" and the other "nation states". Whoever wants to eliminate one of the two poles – be it the populists or the political elite – will spoil the whole thing. Therefore Macron and Merkel ("Mer-cron") must find an acceptable solution that includes both poles.

Prayer

- **For wisdom in the French-German discussions over the future composition of the EU. (Psalm 127:1,2)**
- **For a new sense of joy about working together in Europe in peace and mutual respect. (Psalm 133)**
- **That under ordered and peaceful political conditions millions will be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. (1 Timothy 2:1-4)**

-OS-

Dates for your diary

14.04 "Heaven is open" – NRW prayer day in Bonn

18.-19.04 Independence celebrations in Israel – 70th Anniversary of the State of Israel

27.-29.04 Prayer walk for families. (www.betenbewegen.de)

*God's blessings from
Rosemarie Stresemann and Team*