

## CALL OF THE WATCHMEN

January 2020

### **As we enter a new decade ...**

What comes to mind when we think about the next decade (2020 to 2029) which lies before us? We all know that thoughts of the future can be influenced by feelings of insecurity and anxiety. However, has the future not been especially entrusted to us as God's sons and daughters? God, the creator of each day and hour, is Lord over all time. Not a single day slips by unnoticed by him, and with Him we are always in a secure place!

### **The promise of hope and a good future in peace**

In Jeremiah 29:11 we read: "For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord. They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope." (NRSV). This great promise was given to his people Israel in an extremely difficult time as a nation, being then in exile in Babylon. There was no way in which they could even imagine being free and the trauma from being taken into exile lay deep in many. But in this situation God now required his people to firmly seize his promise of hope and a good future. To draw them completely out of passivity and any mental fixation from the shock, he called them to: "Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. ... Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper." (Jeremiah 29:5,7 - NIV). What an unusual and clear order from God, which is also important and relevant for us at this time!

### **The power of peace from God**

God's command to us includes: (1) taking hold of his promise of hope and a good future and (2) willingly and joyfully coming to terms with the difficult circumstances of our time, in that we do not inwardly distance ourselves from the current social and political developments and rapidly growing problems. Like the people of Israel, we want much more to set aside any form of passivity or apathy, and to firmly grasp hope for the future and in this way see God's kingdom coming. This is only possible when a "supernaturally divine hope" truly finds a place in our hearts – in other words, the peace from God. Peace is more than the absence of trouble and unrest. Peace is a person – Jesus himself. (Ephesians 2:14). Then in Philippians 4:7 we read: "And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.", - and thereby protect us from the problems of our time! Furthermore, grace and peace will be ours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. (2 Peter 1:2).

When we obey God's command, this peace will have a noticeable impact in the various areas of society for which we intercede, and in which we invest our time according to his command. Our hearts will then have power to "radiate" God's peace. This country is yearning for hope and a good future in peace, which we can bring to our land only if we have really made room for the peace of God within ourselves!

### **Say "yes" to our future**

With this peace in our hearts and the expectation of hope and a good future as promised by God, we can enter the new year with confidence. We will see how the peace of God dynamically changes the spiritual atmosphere, and is fundamental for unity in Jesus (Ephesians 2:14) and the increase of his future kingdom of peace. (Isaiah 9:7). We say "yes" to the ways of God in our land in the new decade!

**Let us now begin our prayer time by proclaiming (in our own words) the faithfulness of God.** His promises to us and our land will endure. (Psalm 117:2; 2 Timothy 2:13). In a time when there is so much negative talk, often with curses on people and current political issues, this proclamation is all the more necessary: God is faithful! -AS-

### **Prayer initiative for the German national parliament**

At the beginning of this year we want to set up an important prayer initiative to specifically place all of the 709 parliamentarians – in person by name – under God's blessing and guidance for this new decade. We are called to bless all rulers and those in authority and to intercede and give thanks for them in their various areas of responsibility. (1 Timothy 2:1-2). In so doing we will become more aware of the power of our words in speaking out blessings. (Proverbs 18:21). Those, who bless, open doors through which God can work and release his power; by grace those, who bless, "equip" people for service; those, who bless, create an opportunity to change the "spiritual atmosphere" in our government and land. (1 Peter 3:8-11, esp. 9b).

Would you like to take part in this prayer initiative? Then write a message to [mdb@waechterruf.de](mailto:mdb@waechterruf.de) and we will send you by mail the name of your personally assigned parliamentarian for whom you can pray specifically. If many of you take part, we can cover all the parliamentarians with one great "wave of blessing". This will work wonders! -AS-

### **Prohibition of "conversion therapy"**

The draft legislation of the national government for protection from sexual conversion therapy, which was passed on December 18<sup>th</sup>, is intended to prohibit such treatment for children and adults alike where the validity of their consent can be challenged because of a lack of full understanding of all the possible consequences. This occurs when the patient has not been sufficiently advised of the risks or the absence of evidence for the effectiveness of the treatment. The prohibition will apply to the healing professions as well as to religious communities and approved welfare or education institutions, when they "grossly abuse" their trust, duty and obligation to fully protect clients in the course of their work. Such violations will be punished with imprisonment for up to one year or a fine. Advertising, promotion and agency services for conversion therapy in the public domain will be prohibited as a breach of the law with a fine of up to 30,000 Euro. For

children any form of advertising, promotion or agency services, public or private, is banned.

With this new proposal, the previous draft legislation from the Health Ministry has been considerably tightened up, but it also does clarify many legal terms. The law considers "conversion therapy" to be a treatment which is offered with the sole objective of changing or suppressing of a person's sexual orientation or self-perceived sexual identity. On the contrary, the conversion therapy which is being offered today by practicing therapists to those who genuinely want to change to their sexual preferences is considered to be just a normal therapeutic procedure as used in many other areas of counselling, with no preconceived outcome. In any case, the law deeply restricts the freedom to offer therapy, the ability for those seeking help to determine for themselves what therapy they need, and the freedom of religion.

**Prayer:**

- **We praise our Lord and Redeemer for his order in creation. (Isaiah 66:2)**
- **That the Health Minister Jens Spahn will repent and that the law does not pass in parliament in its present form. (Romans 1:24-28)**
- **For the protection of therapists and counsellors from interference by the state. (Romans 13:3)**
- **That those seeking advice will find help from God and from people who He has called to offer his counsel. (2 Corinthians 5:17)**

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#### **Reformation of the health system**

The German health system is one of the oldest in the world. People in Germany now live seven years longer on average than 30 years ago. We have excellent health care to thank for this. The health care is financed by contributions from employees and employers as well as subsidies from the tax office. This financing system is now endangered by our ageing society, particularly by the ever-increasing costs to provide health care for everyone. The state controls the overall framework for medical care, but the way in which it is organised in practice is controlled by the various departments of the self-governing health care sector. So there are many players involved. They are all in agreement that, despite various health reform efforts, the high standard of health care can only be safeguarded for the future through a comprehensive renewed reform of the system. This requires radically new ideas and concepts.

There are many problems to be solved: lack of skilled workers/shortage of nursing staff, especially in country areas, rising costs for increasingly more expensive technical equipment, inefficient hospital buildings, and also the continual advancement in research and medicine all require additional investment.

The lack of skilled workers weighs heavy in hospitals and care centres: already quality standards cannot always be maintained and the working conditions for doctors and nurses are unbearable. A change to immigration laws will make it easier for skilled workers from abroad to come to Germany. Pray for wisdom and for God's intervention.

**Prayer:**

- **Thanks for the high standard of health care in Germany for more than 100 years.**
- **For new ideas and concepts for the financing of the health care to enable the high standard to be maintained in the future.**
- **For encouragement and greater support for all doctors and nurses in hospitals and care centres.**

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#### **Voting behaviour of Germany for Middle-East Resolutions at the United Nations**

Each year the UN General Assembly holds a debate on the situation in the Middle-East. According to the Foreign Office, Germany is taking a stand within the UN Human Rights Council that the number of resolutions concerning Israel has to be reduced and that resolutions which remain should be taken out of the context of the "Middle-East conflict" and debated separately without prejudice. Nevertheless, one-sided condemnation of Israel to which Germany agrees time and time again is all-too-frequent.

However in a publication on November 19<sup>th</sup>, the German government expressed its deep concern that Israel is continually being unreasonably criticised, unfairly treated and ostracised by UN committees. This is a first sign of hope in a sad state of affairs which is very much on the increase.

For about 15 years there has been a close partnership between EU member states in the UN General Assembly as well as in the UN Security Council. Resolutions are evaluated according to EU foreign policy and international law considerations, which normally lead to a unified voting behaviour, as a result of which Israel is regularly condemned. Recently however Germany, independently from its EU partners, voted for the first time against a resolution to affirm the establishment and mandate of the Office for Palestinian Rights within the UN Secretariat. With its "no" Germany brought clear attention to its criticism of the disproportionately high number of anti-Israel resolutions. Observers now recognise that Germany was able to exercise a positive influence on other nations, as seven other nations, including Lithuania, the Netherlands, Romania, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, also voted against the resolution.

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**Prayer:**

- **Thanks for the growing awareness in the government of the anti-Israel behaviour of the UN. (Isaiah 5:20)**
- **For a clear new positioning of Germany towards Israel in voting at the UN. (Zechariah 2:8)**
- **For representatives of Germany in UN committees to always seek to support Israel. (Proverbs 19:21; 21:1)**

#### **Dates for your diary**

01.01.-30.06. Croatia holds EU Council Presidency

12.01.-19.01. Evangelical Alliance Prayer Week

29.01.-31.01. Board Meeting of Call of the Watchmen

*God's blessings for the New Year  
from Alexander Schlueter and Team*