

CALL OF THE WATCHMEN

December 2021

Growing in love and devotion to God and to one another

"Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful!" (Luke 6:36) – was the Bible verse for the Year 2021 from the Herrnhut/Moravian Brethren. Let us now look back as we approach the end of the year. Did this verse influence our lives in any significant way? Was it not when we have shown love to others, warmly welcomed them, forgiven them, and responded to bad experiences with good deeds? Or when we ourselves were shown mercy as others responded to our failures with love? Did we learn to love? Did we at any time feel closer to Jesus and experience how passionate his love is for this world? We will always be recognised as Christians by our love, as revealed in our devotion to Christ, and by loving our enemies. The experience of suffering is part of this. We *"want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing of his sufferings..."* (Philippians 3:10). This is our calling and we should have an ever-growing love for Jesus and show his mercy to others.

As we love God and people, God's kingdom comes in power and spreads even in the most difficult of circumstances. We can be assured of this as we remember that God's kingdom was revealed on earth as he sent his Son Jesus to be born and live among us (Luke 1:32,33).

Together with Saint Francis of Assisi we want to pray:

"Lord, make me a channel of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; Where there is injury, pardon; Where there is error, truth; Where there is doubt, faith; Where there is despair, hope; Where there is darkness, light; And where there is sadness, joy. O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled, as to console; to be understood, as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen." -AS-

The new German Parliament

The 20th national parliament is larger, has more women and more young people. With 736 MPs, it has more members than ever - 279 members are new. The number of women rose to 256. Now 50 members are under 30 years of age, and 143 members are 30 to 39 years of age. This means that one in four politicians in the parliament is still under 40 years of age. As the new legislative period begins, we do not want just to observe "from the sidelines" and wait and see what happens. Let us as a network of intercessors be ready to be used by God to pray. We want to give every single member of parliament "start-up help" and at least stand by them with our prayers for a few weeks. Are you willing to take part? Every MP should have a prayer partner! Send a blank email without a subject to: mdb@waechterruf.de, and you will automatically be assigned a member of the new parliament for you to support in prayer. -AS-

Federal Commissioner for Worldwide Religious Freedom

In the last legislative period, the office of "Federal Government Commissioner for Worldwide Religious Freedom" was created. The office which was set up by the Federal Cabinet at the time is located in the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. Freedom of religion as a basic human right was to come more into focus in dialogue with other nations and in development aid. Markus Grübel (CDU) was the first incumbent

of this office and since then he has compiled a Federal Government report on religious freedom every two years, which covers all religions and faiths. The largest group of religious believers who are subject to victimisation in the world are Christians and they are indeed exposed to the most serious human rights violations. The new government coalition (without CDU membership) now needs to appoint a new advocate for Christians and other persecuted minorities. After 27 years, Volker Kauder (CDU) is also leaving the parliament. He has tirelessly brought the concerns of persecuted Christians into German political life. Both he and Markus Grübel maintained an exchange of information with Christian aid organisations committed to supporting persecuted Christians. Most recently, in connection with asylum procedures for refugees who have converted from Islam to Christianity, Grübel pointed out that it is not the task of the state to decide who is Christian and who is not. The largest numbers of converts come from Iran, where they are often threatened with death. As unity within the body of Christ worldwide increases, so does the awareness of our responsibility to our brothers and sisters in the persecuted church worldwide and to know how much they are suffering.

Prayer:

- **Thanks for all who work to provide practical and spiritual help for the persecuted church. May they receive new strength. (Isaiah 40:28-31)**
- **That the office of the Federal Commissioner for Worldwide Religious Freedom will soon be filled again and that many new advocates will be found in politics for persecuted Christians. (Acts 13:22b)**
- **For more awareness and a deeper concern within the hearts of Christians in our land for the persecuted church worldwide. (1 Corinthians 12:26)** -AS-

Measures to control corona and peace in society

Vaccinated or unvaccinated - a dispute has broken out in the land, and the tone in discussions is getting increasingly harsh. Social peace is threatened and our society is increasingly divided in a climate of fear. It is important that those who think differently should not become opponents or enemies. For then our society will suffer permanent damage. It is not just about getting through the pandemic, but also how and with what mindset. The new measures to control the spread of the corona virus, agreed at the Conference of Prime Ministers (of Federal States) and already approved by the Federal Council in Berlin, envisage, among other things, a compulsory vaccination for employees in nursing homes and hospitals in order to protect those most vulnerable. In addition, the "3G" regulation (tested, vaccinated or recovered) will apply to workplaces and local public transport. The "2G" (vaccinated or recovered) regulation is planned for the leisure and sports sector, which is based on hospitalisation data that includes the availability of beds in intensive care units. Encroachment on fundamental rights has therefore been justified to limit the burden on the health system. In the work-place and in leisure activities, including those of children and young people, the separation of vaccinated and unvaccinated people becomes even more evident and the exclusion of unvaccinated people from activities is enforced. The call for the introduction of a compulsory vaccination for all is getting louder. The legality of such a

measure under the constitution must be checked. Politicians have a tremendous responsibility and they need our prayer. However, politicians must not see themselves as “educators of the unwilling” and condemn the unvaccinated as being morally misguided and treat them to be “scapegoats”. We need to communicate with one another and be reconciled, and avoid putting people under pressure. Individual freedom and the protection and security of society in general have always been in conflict with one another. Individual freedoms have been hard fought for in Europe. To curtail them for the promotion of ideals related, for example, to safety and health in society in general represents a serious encroachment on fundamental rights. We may each regard this differently, but we want to remain vigilant together for all that is happening around us. Let us strive in prayer to know whether the state is really doing the right thing for the general health of our land in seeking to oblige people in such a tense situation to have a vaccination when many do have sincere reservations. As intercessors, vaccinated or unvaccinated, we - all the more closely united together - must step “into the breach” for our country.

Prayer:

- **Lord, we come to you as the only Saviour in the corona crisis. Have mercy! (Psalm 57:1,2)**
- **We stand in the breach on behalf of our land for peace and reconciliation amid the threat of division in society. (Ezekiel 22:30)**
- **For the protection of those who are now particularly under pressure within themselves or from outside. (Psalm 7:1)**

-AS-

Growing monopoly of the large technology corporations

We are all now networked with Facebook, Google, Twitter, Amazon and Apple. Without a doubt, the large technology corporations have completely changed and enriched our lives. But more and more people are now becoming aware of the danger they pose for free democracy. Due to their standing as having a monopoly in digital communication, they control the flow of information and news and can thus influence how we form our opinions in a systematic manner. The amount of concentrated data that they can collect on individuals and groups is unprecedented, and with this data human behaviour can be analysed and foreseen to an extent that has never been possible before. The effect on our society and in our economy is so fundamental that experts are talking about the development of a new form of capitalism. In addition to the economic influence and billions in profits through the sale of personal data and behaviour patterns, the impact that this new level of power may have on the principles of free democracy and on the formation of political opinion must be recognised. These corporations want to make people believe that there is nothing they can do about it, as these are the inevitable consequences of digitalization. While not denying the positive effects of progress and not out of fear, we must pray that the effects that the technology corporations are having on our society will be discussed and that possible legislation to better protect democracy in Europe and the USA will be considered.

Prayer:

- **For changes to the relevant laws to enable the inclusion of conditions that limit the influence of large technology corporations with an effective monopoly in digital communications to protect our democracy. (Psalm 25:4)**

- **For us all to learn new skills in the healthy use of social media and the Internet to limit the capture of personal data for financial gain. (1 Kings 4,29)**
- **For the protection of the young generations who are growing up and being educated in this digital age. (Psalm 139:4-6)**

-AS-

Experience Christmas in a new way

We can spread the news that Jesus has come into the world in a completely new way this year. The Christmas message contains joy and hope for our whole lives - especially in times of crisis! Together with Christian movements and churches, crossing all confessional boundaries, we want to raise a clear sign of our faith again this year with the “24xWeihnachten” (“24xChristmas”) campaign. With ideas for the 24 days of Advent in the campaign manual, materials for the community and families, as well as a Christmas TV show, we can simply draw people's attention to the Christmas message.

See: <https://www.24x-weihnachten-neu-erleben.de/> for more information – but in German only).

How can we make Jesus real to people in our land? It is when we take our minds off the corona crisis and look to the true Saviour and Redeemer. Let us courageously tell our neighbours and friends about Jesus, invite them into our houses and let them be filled with the light of God. Many people in our land should to get to know Jesus at this time of the year.

Prayer:

- **That the message of joy, hope and redemption will be known at Christmas time. (Luke 2:10)**
- **We bless all people with “open eyes” so that they can recognise their Saviour. (Luke 2:29-32)**

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Israel is preparing for an emergency situation

According to the assessment of the Israeli Defence Minister, Benny Gantz, Iran is on the verge of obtaining the materials necessary for a nuclear weapon. Specifically, this means that Iran will increase uranium enrichment from the permitted 3.67% percent to 60%. For a nuclear weapon 90% is needed. The step to achieve this is relatively easy, say experts. Since Israel's very existence is threatened by Iran's nuclear ambitions, it is preparing for an emergency situation. Israel's air force is training to strike against Iranian nuclear facilities. The Iranian leadership maintains that it only wants to use nuclear power for peaceful purposes. But there are considerable doubts concerning this statement. Many suppose that Iran is only playing for time. The negotiations on a new nuclear agreement have been suspended by Iran for months. The new Iranian President Raisi is calling for an end to the economic sanctions imposed on his country. Meanwhile, the USA and Europe continue to seek a diplomatic solution, but patience seems to be running out.

Prayer:

- **For the protection of Israel and the fulfilment of God's promises and plans. (Isaiah 54:17)**
- **That Germany stands by Israel's side and that God's promises to Abraham will be fulfilled. (Genesis 12:3)**

-AS-

Our Saviour has come! Rejoice as you remember His birth!

Alexander Schlueter and Team