

CALL OF THE WATCHMEN

July-August 2022

Drinking together from the wells of salvation

"With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation." (Isaiah 12:3). As I am writing this first section of the prayer letter, I am thinking of the current sense of exhaustion and discouragement in our land. This is no wonder as we live in these fast-moving times, through major upheavals, Corona and the Ukraine war. When we are exhausted, we lack courage and energy, we feel tired and powerless, our reserves are all used up, and many things, that we do, bear no fruit despite our best efforts. We see all this as very unwelcome at a time when we really need a breakthrough. The experience of exhaustion shows us that we cannot go on living as we did before! The cisterns from which we live can no longer hold water. (Jeremiah 2:13). And so we are in a crisis from shortages in the supplies that we need, which is now also to be seen in our economy. We are worn down from a life which is dependent on our old sources of supply and support for our economy through achievement, product promotion strategies and perfectionism. But Jesus does not condemn us, but wants to lead us together to new "wells of salvation". "Are you ready to again learn how to live in a new way?", he kindly asks us.

The old life and the new life

"How does the new life differ from the old", is what I want to know from Jesus, and then I hear him say: "Be sure to strictly live only from my resources! I no longer just want to be your lifeline when you call on me in times of need, I rather want to teach you how to live under my loving care and strength from beginning to end." And then I sense his desire to live in close relationship with me, living together as partners in life. He really means it when he says he wants us to be bound together in life. His desire to be seen and loved by us is ever present. I suddenly realise how in many ways my lifestyle is different from what Jesus expects of me. I discover so much pride within me, along with the desire to perform well so as to receive praise and recognition. And I understand more and more that I need a new lifestyle. In this digital age, we are just fascinated by information. We love to analyse and classify it, but then often don't even begin to explore how all this relates to our own lives, our lives with Jesus and with others. We "generate" an endless amount of theoretical knowledge and thus miss out on being engaged in enriching our lives and relationships. How often do we run out of time, rush to catch up, and spend so little time just to experience life. And while we yearn for a life in the supernatural, we constantly draw boundaries between the natural and spiritual worlds, and lack the courage to break out and try new ways to live.

Real life is present where we meet and share with others

"I want to show you the new wells of life," is what I hear Jesus speaking in my heart. It is an encounter with him and the sharing of our hearts with others that really bring change in our lives. It's like taking a seat at a large garden table, laid for many guests, in the warm evening sun. "Real life is always in meeting and sharing," says Martin Buber. Let's take a seat at this table! God will lead us into a new presence and a new close relationship with him, with ourselves and with our brothers and sisters. Let us together discover new ways and a new lifestyle!

Alexander Schlueter (AS)

Seeking heavenly wisdom (Proverbs 8)

God is the architect and creator of this world. He is equally Lord over the heavenly realm as well as the earthly realm. These two realms are closely bound together. Through Jesus' death and resurrection we have been raised to the heavenly realm. It is increasingly important for us to be more conscious of this realm and to set our minds on it. (Colossians 3:1). Whether we are praying for a solution to the Ukraine war, or the anticipated energy shortage, the disrupted supply chains, inflation, riots in the USA after the change in the law on the right to abortion, the promotion of abortion in our land, peace in our land, renewed extension of Corona measures, etc. - we can no longer rely solely on our own understanding! (Proverbs 3:5). In the many crises at this time, we need the involvement of the heavenly realm and cannot do without God's wisdom. How can we grow in wisdom? It all begins with having a genuine longing in our hearts to understand more deeply the heavenly realm and the workings of the kingdom of God at this time. Let us earnestly ask God during these two summer months to open up new opportunities for spiritual growth and for heavenly wisdom. With the help of Proverbs 8:1ff, we want to seek his wisdom - for the needs of our time, our politicians and business leaders, our economy, families and for ourselves.

-AS-

Refreshment and restoration for students and teachers

Summer holidays are just around the corner. Not only schoolchildren look forward to this, but also employees in the education and training sector. Although spared from Corona lockdowns lasting several weeks, the past school year has also had to face many challenges: the effects of the pandemic were still evident (social distancing and mask requirements in schools and day-care centres), remote learning and laptop computers which have become part of life in everyday teaching, the admission of Ukrainian children and young people in schools and day-care centres (refugees from the war zones), etc. In addition, there is a low staffing level in most schools, resulting in having to manage and teach with a large number of burned-out and overworked colleagues. The same applies to children and young people who – increasingly because of the pandemic conditions - show clear behavioural deficiencies in social interactions and emotional responses. The challenges of the past school year have left their mark on many. Let us pray for real refreshment and restoration of body, soul and spirit, which will be more than can normally be gained by just a few days off during the holidays.

God can touch people in deep and truly effective ways that lead them to know Him for the first time or to know Him better. **As love for Christ grows, love also grows for people.**

Let us pray that this love will grow in both students and teachers and that they will experience healing from the inner wounds and the stress in the experiences of the past months. (Ephesians 3:14-19).

Frank Laffin (Prayer House Bremen)

Desire for a life with close relationships

The main desire now at this time is for closer relationships within our society. What an opportunity for the body of Christ when we have the way to form relationships through Jesus! The last few decades have been characterised to a great extent by the encouragement in all possible ways for each person to develop their individuality. It has been important to form opinions to differentiate oneself from others and to think and develop independently. Due to a lack of measures to encourage closer and personal interaction, more and more people feel isolated, lonely and "disconnected". While the things we have traditionally relied upon in our society to make us feel secure are falling away in these days, there is a faint yet clearly audible call for help that often gets lost in the bustle of activities for polarization and division. We concentrate on developing our intellectual capacity, but it is our hearts that need our attention. Jesus looks at our land with love and he wants us to hear the call for help at this time and provide the answer.

What can we do as the body of Christ? How can we be an example and model for what life with close relationships looks like? How can we free ourselves from competitive behaviour, support each other, share resources and move from "me" to "us"? What can we offer in the various sections of society (school, family, business, economy) that will provide solutions and answers? In 1964, for example, the Steyler Missionaries founded their own bank in Germany. God is the source of the inspiration to build up a new lifestyle to meet the needs of our time. Let us seriously look for new possibilities.

Be still and listen to what God wants to tell you. Is there an aspect that you (as a group) would like to release in your prayer time?

-AS-

Tourism

After two years of travel restrictions due to measures to control the Corona pandemic, tourism should be able to start again this summer and the industry is hoping for a recovery in their operations. However, many employees have refused to stay or return in the tourism industry. Hotels, restaurants, airports and leisure facilities can no longer fully utilize their capacities because there is a lack of staff. Airlines will have to cancel hundreds of flights in the coming summer months because passengers are already having to queue for hours and not all of them can finally be checked in as required to meet security regulations. Domestically, the "9 Euro ticket" for local and regional train transport has significantly increased the number of passengers on some routes and the Deutsche Bahn (German Rail) is not able to expand its capacities to accommodate them on the trains in the short term.

As in other sectors, there is an increasing gap between demand and supply. On the one hand, the market was flooded with money to spend, but on the other hand, the economy can no longer respond to the opportunities for lack of new people to fill the available jobs and this in addition to current material supply bottlenecks. This puts severe limits on the return of the mass tourism of recent years. Travelling and discovering the world is also a basic human need, it broadens the horizon beyond one's own culture, and forms and establishes relationships.

Prayer:

- **For the restoration of the right to freedom of movement for people and passenger traffic in the European Union - (the EU Digital Covid Vaccination Certificate has been extended again until June 2023).**
- **That a healthy balance develops between our demands for vacation and leisure time and our responsibility for our fellow human beings, for adequate provisions and care, and for protection of resources. (Galatians 5:22ff)**
- **For a qualitative restructuring of the tourism industry so that it serves our need for recreation and education, both creatively and sustainably. (Matthew 11:28)**

Karin Heepen (KH)

Becoming those who find/offer/bring peace

The book of the Song of Songs (Song of Solomon) is the story of a bride. It describes the development of the King's girl-friend and beloved into a mature bride who has got to know her bridegroom and has taken her identity from him. A bride who is built, strengthened and mature within herself to provide shelter and sustenance to others and to find peace and let it be released as an offering to bring peace. (Song of Solomon 8:10 – RSV).

The path of this bride passed through the passionate heights of community life, of getting to know and experiencing being with her bridegroom, but all this through painfully dark depths of loneliness and the search for his tangible presence. Again and again she set out to meet him at a more intimate level and to know him even more. Until finally she found her identity solely in her belonging to her beloved and his longing for her (Song of Solomon 7:10-11) - in this close relationship and being fully conscious that she was his property, but also in what was a clear orientation and calling towards him. This journey has made her a person capable and desirous of offering peace, bringing hope, being a place of refuge, pointing to a place of safety and taking others into it.

The book of the Song of Songs can also be considered as a representation of God's destiny for the church community as the bride of Christ. The book can become your story and mine – and the story of all of us together. In this story we hear Jesus calling us to focus our eyes and our hearts on him alone and to base our identity on the knowledge that we belong to him as our bridegroom, but also on his desire to always be with us. In this way we become those who find and offer peace and bring hope where the forces of terror and division want to captivate not only our society, but also the church community.

Prayer:

- **That the church responds to Jesus' appeal for closer fellowship and relationships, gets to know him at a deeper level, and matures into a bride who brings hope, new life, protection and peace. (Song of Songs 2:13ff, 8:10; Isaiah 52:7)**
- **For your personal experience with regard to a growing relationship with Jesus, becoming more mature, and discipleship. (Song of Songs 1:4, 7:11; Ephesians 4:11ff)**
- **For the proclamation of the gospel, which brings salvation and peace. (Colossians 4:2-6; Isaiah 61:1-3).**

Tanja Frank (TF)

*Wishing you blessed and relaxing summer days,
Alexander Schlueter and Team*