

Service of Confession and Repentance by Families of Nobility in Germany
Kaiserdom in Frankfurt - 27.07.2014 (one day before 100th anniversary of declaration of WWI)

“Remembrance, Repentance, Release”

We received the invitation to this event (attached in German and English) via Rosemarie Stresemann, one of the leaders of the Call of the Watchmen prayer network in which we are involved.

The three meetings on this very special day were each attended by about 200 people. The Catholic service in the Kaiserdom at 10am was followed at 11am by a meeting in the nearby “Haus am Dom” and then after lunch at 3pm there was the ecumenical (Catholic/Lutheran) service of confession and repentance service, again in the Kaiserdom. We were pleased to see friends and leaders from churches and ministries in Berlin and other cities in Germany. Andreas Bauer, the pastor of the “Jerusalem-Gemeinde”, a free-church in Berlin, and founder of houses of prayer in Berlin and Jerusalem, described the events of the day as “taking the cork out of the bottle”, allowing a new release of blessings and of the calling of Germany! Waltraud Keil from “Die Brücke (Bridge) Berlin-Jerusalem” commented that it was truly amazing what God did on this day and that this is just the beginning for a significant breakthrough for God's kingdom in Germany. Anna Beyersdorfer, a young lady from Erfurt, (former East Germany), proclaimed that the blessings from this event would flow right through German society, from the families of nobility at the top to the entire population!

Catholic Service in the Kaiserdom

We were very impressed by the Catholic service in the morning. The City Dean of Frankfurt, Johannes zu Eltz, preached on the parable of the hidden treasure in the field and the pearl of great value (Matthew 13:44-45), and on how we need the wisdom to know what we have to give up to truly follow Christ. The Old Testament reading was the passage on Solomon, who as the new king of Israel after his father David, humbled himself and asked God for wisdom (1 Kings 3:7-12).

Introductory Meeting in the Haus am Dom

The meeting that followed in the “Haus am Dom” was moderated by Prince Michael zu Salm-Salm. He gave a personal testimony on how he had struggled with the concept of repenting on behalf of his family of noble descent. The concept of a service of confession and repentance came from his wife, Philippa, who had attended the conference in Leipzig in June 2013 (we also were there!) with the title “Eine neue Zeit” (“a new season”), held to proclaim a time of spiritual renewal for Germany. When she returned home she shared her experience with her husband Michael and they began to ask the Lord what they, as members of the nobility, were being called to do to release this new spiritual awakening in Germany. The Lord brought to their minds the date of the assassination of the heir to the throne of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire in Sarajevo (June 28, 1914), which led to Germany and the Central Powers declaring war on July 28, 1914. They felt that he was calling them at this time to identificational repentance for the involvement of their family in this decision, exactly 100 years later. They contacted the Christian members of the noble families with whom they have close relationships. They met and shared and prayed together many times. They all realised that they were very thankful for all that was good in the inheritance from their families. But when they faced the dark side of their family history, which included the abuse of power, discrimination against their women members and oppression of servants, they could not find any evidence of any public repentance. It became clear to them that the roots of their wrong attitudes and behaviour were still in their family lines. Now as peacemakers in God's kingdom, they needed to plan a day of confession and repentance, asking for healing in their families, forgiveness, and for blessings on Germany. They wrote to leaders in the Catholic and Lutheran (Protestant) churches who they knew well and shared the idea of having a service of confession and repentance on behalf of their families. They had very positive responses of agreement, offering their full support and blessing.

Jesko Graf zu Dohna then presented an overview of the political attitudes and mentality of the German nobility at the beginning of the 20th century. Germany was united as a country only in 1871 under the Kaiser of Prussia and the ideology of the elite ruling classes at that time was dominated by

nationalism, militarism, imperialism, anti-Semitism, pride and honour. Today members of noble families follow careers in law, banking, business, communications and community support. At that time the men sought the hard discipline and honour of a military career. Many moved from their country estates to Berlin. Up to 8,000 of the officers in the German army in 1914 were in fact nobles, and this clearly shows the involvement and responsibility of the nobility for the pursuance and ensuing disaster of the First World War.

Prince Philip Kiril of Prussia, who is a Lutheran (Protestant) pastor in Berlin, then explained the Biblical evidence for the need for confession and repentance of our sins and for the sins of our fathers, and how healing and blessings flow from God as a result. The Catholic City Dean Johannes zu Eltz explained that confession has traditionally been exercised in the Catholic Church as more of a ritual between the individual and the priest and admitted that the church is now learning from the Lutheran (Protestant) understanding of confession.

We felt the presence of the Holy Spirit in this meeting. The humility, faith, love and unity among the noble families who were represented there was clearly evident. Despite their serious and uncomfortable confrontation with the past, the conduct of the meeting was relaxed and informal. We had expected a much more formal event. As the meeting proceeded we sensed a growing peace and joy in the room. Prince Michael said that representatives of all of the 14 families on the invitation letter were there and also some from other families of nobility. It was an amazing experience!

Paul, the 18 year old eldest son of Prince Philip of Prussia, led worship with two other young people who we assume are from the Benecke family, with several songs by the German song-writer and singer Albert Frey which were so fitting with the spirit of the occasion.

There was then a time of quiet for personal reflection and to allow the Holy Spirit to speak to us. I, Margaret, heard from the Lord: "I am so thankful that my children among the nobility in Germany are turning to me. I have heard them; I will forgive them and heal Germany. They have the authority and responsibility to stand in the gap for this land. Keep praying for them through all the next steps in which I will lead them. I am with you all now and I will be glorified this afternoon in the service of confession and repentance. They are humbling themselves before me and are united. I am so pleased with them. I love them."

The meeting was followed by a time for questions and sharing of thoughts. Ortwin Schweitzer, leader of the Call of the Watchmen prayer network, thanked the nobles for this event and called it a historical day for Germany and God's kingdom. We certainly could agree!

We then had an opportunity to pray in small groups. We believe that the Lord was working powerfully through all the sharing and praying. We had a precious time in prayer with our good friend, Gerlinde Link, now living in Berlin.

At the close it was emphasised that the events of the day were specifically concerned with the sins of the noble families leading to and during World War I. They were expecting the Lord to bring healing and blessing through the prayers of today. However this day was just a beginning and would lead to more such events associated, for example, with the 70th anniversary in May 2015 of the end of the World War II and the 500th anniversary celebration of Martin Luther in 2017. They would be seeking the Lord for guidance.

We had a wonderful short conversation with Paul and Prince Philip after the meeting. We mentioned that we had seen them on video when they spoke at the Alpha Leaders Conference with Nicky Gumbel in the Royal Albert Hall in June. Paul is godly young man and has such a marvellous relationship with his father! Please pray for them - and for all the members of these noble families.

Lunch Break

During the lunch break we went to a local restaurant with a German/Ugandan couple who run a counselling ministry. They had brought Anna and a Ugandan missionary family from World Trumpet Mission (John Mulinde) who are in Germany to pray for revival in Germany. These were the only non-German people that we met all day!

Service of Confession and Repentance in the Kaiserdom

The service of confession and repentance in the afternoon was an especially moving experience. It was led by the Catholic City Dean of Frankfurt, Johannes Graf zu Eltz, and the Protestant Pastor Philip Kiril Prince of Prussia.

Worship was a mixture of traditional hymns to organ music and more recent songs led by the same worship team as in the morning meeting, all with words very appropriate for praise and confession.

We read Psalm 102 together – a lament and cry for help to the Lord which ends: “The children of your servants will live in your presence; their descendents will be established before you.”

The sermon by Prince Philip was based on the story of the tax collector in the temple who humbled himself before God asking for mercy and then went home justified before God, as opposed to the Pharisee who was so proud of his life style that he really did not see any need to ask for forgiveness (Luke 18:9-14).

Prince Philip said that it was not his intention to present an historical analysis of the sources of blame for the World War I. Many books have been written on this subject and he cited the recent bestseller, "The Sleepwalkers – How Europe went to War in 1914", by Christopher Clark, in which the British historian concludes that Germany was not solely to blame for the outbreak of WWI. Prince Philip further explained that his great grandfather Kaiser Wilhelm II really did not want war. Nevertheless, among his generals, there were those who were eager for war. "Had this one man truly had the will to serve Jesus, cost him what it may, I'm sure the story would be different. It is clear that he did not love Jesus deeply, although he was a religious man."

He then confessed the sins of his great-grandfather's generation – “I confess before you and God the enormous guilt and shame that Wilhelm II and my forefathers brought upon Germany.” Given the “great blood guilt” - with over 17 million people killed in this war - he asked those assembled there, and God, for forgiveness: “May God be merciful to our noble house.” Following his confession, others were invited to come to the microphone to make their own confession. More than 20 came forward - mostly the elders in the families of nobility, but also some young ones - and asked God for forgiveness for the sins of their forefathers. Some confessed specific areas of guilt in a very personal way.

In addition to the German nobility and elite classes, Prince Philip admitted that the Protestant clergy were also guilty and he repented for those who in 1914 encouraged the call for war and were vilifying the other nations in Europe. Johannes Graf von Eltz then confessed on behalf of the Catholic Church. He repented on behalf of all the bishops, who before the First World War did not spread the message of peace from the then Pope - Benedict XV - but instead helped to create an atmosphere that made the war inevitable. Representatives of the free churches also admitted the involvement of their denominations in supporting and even glorifying the war. We believe that these confessions have opened up the heavens to shower blessings over the body of Christ in Germany.

An atmosphere of humility and holiness filled the church throughout this time. We cannot remember all the details of the confessions and the names of those speaking - the acoustics were poor and the large pillars in the cathedral blocked our view. But all this did not matter... the Holy Spirit was present in such a profound way. We were overwhelmed by the humility, openness and heartfelt repentance of all who went forward. Several wept. We were reminded of a prophet who once said that God is looking for the sincere tears of German men, which will lead to revival.

We have been praying constantly for many years for repentance and unity in the body of Christ in our city, Dusseldorf, and in Germany (and indeed in the world!) We felt strongly that the Lord was now answering these prayers in a wonderful way. Truly God's ways and thoughts are so much higher than ours – (Isaiah 55:8-9). We had never dreamt that God would bring together such a large group of elite men and women to pray for forgiveness and repentance for the sins of their forefathers 100 years ago!! We were in a state of awe and wonder for our faithful, powerful God and deeply touched and thankful for all who had participated in the service.

During the service we were sitting by Gerlinde, behind Ortwin Schweitzer and his wife, and as the service came to an end, Ortwin led us in prayers of thanks and blessings for the noble families and we added our blessings on behalf of Britain. We then had the opportunity to speak to several of the nobles personally. As a British couple, who love Germany and have faith in its restoration and calling, we wanted to thank them for what they had done and bless them and their families. What an honour! They were all so friendly towards us.

Conclusion

It was indeed an historic, wonderful day and everyone else we talked to, had no doubt that the events of this day will bring a significant breakthrough for God's kingdom in Germany and Europe.

We are sure also that it will lead to other acts of confession and repentance in the next few years, as we are in such a time of grace and opportunity in this nation.

Please join us in praying for all these families of nobility – for blessings (Numbers 6:24-26) and protection (John 17:11,15). May they continue to be united (Psalm 133) and humbly seek God's wisdom for the next steps in confession and repentance (2 Chronicles 7:14), and have his power to obey in faith and to continue to reveal his glory in all they do (2 Thessalonians 1:11-12).

May the Lord open up the heavens to shower blessings over the body of Christ in Germany and lead Germany to fulfil its redemptive calling.

As Brits, we are praying too for the Lord to open up doors to connect these noble families with the Christian descendants of noble families in the UK.

May God now gather together his children among all the royal families in Europe - and Russia - who are descendants of those who had family blood ties 100 years ago and have had a great influence on European history since then, in confession and repentance, in order to cleanse this continent of its sins and to prepare the way for revival.

All honour to King Jesus!

(taken from the title of a song by Albert Frey: "Alle Ehre Koenig Jesus!")

Margaret and Phil Daniell