

### Our relationship with creation

What comes to mind when you think of nature? Forests, lakes, rivers, and mountains? Seeing these as ideal recreational areas, we think of our relationship with nature in terms of a splendid summer vacation. We often regard nature in complete contrast to our everyday lives. Our everyday life takes place in the house, in the car, in the office - increasingly in front of a computer screen - and perhaps just in our local community. Mentally, we have mainly distanced ourselves inwardly and outwardly from nature and the wider environment. Until we become aware again that God has placed us all in within his wonderful creation of nature. It was God's idea before it became the central policy of the Green parties! Our awareness of nature often only arises when, for example, a storm sweeps over, or when the river overflows, or we see that trees and forests are not flourishing and even declining! Then we think how unfortunate it is that this is happening to us! But the thought that we also have some responsibility for the care for our environment is often far from our minds. We lack the awareness that we have a direct relationship with creation, that nature is a part of us and we are indeed a part of nature.

We can learn much from church history. There was a time when our brothers and sisters were more closely connected to nature. We can learn from them how we can live in relationship with creation. Francis of Assisi, for example, would have much to teach us. He even once preached to the fish when the village he was sent to would not listen to him. On that day, instead of people, a shoal of fish gathered around him. Creation responded to him wherever he went. This shows that we can build a direct contact with creation.

In our desire to end pagan worship of creation and the false spiritual world that is behind it, we have completely failed to realise that creation does have a spiritual dimension which is inseparably linked to God. Our Christian Celtic brothers and sisters are known to have preserved this awareness while it has been completely rejected by large parts of the church as they moved away from paganism. As part of the scientific revolution with its ability to understand and predict natural events through research and calculation, the lack of awareness of the spiritual dimension has been further advanced. A clarification on how we should view creation and nature has taken place, which was necessary because of the paganistic viewpoint but has contributed greatly to today's unawareness of our true relationship with creation. We now have the chance to get to know creation once again, to become aware of our relationship with creation and thereby automatically come closer to God. (Psalm 24:1). Let us pray that our eyes and minds will be opened wide again.

Alexander Schlüter

### Drought has ended: thanks for high rainfall

In May 2023, there was great concern that the groundwater level in many places in Germany had fallen to its lowest level in more than 30 years. The summer months of the previous five years were significantly very dry, especially in the extreme drought during the summer of 2018. This led to a worrying fall in the level of the groundwater. Experts spoke of the soil drying out in many regions, and of a drought that could take many years to correct. 70-80 percent of German drinking water is obtained from groundwater. Despite all fears, the groundwater level has now again been completely restored due to the heavy rainfall this winter. We have had one of the rainiest winters in Lower Saxony, Bremen and Hamburg since weather records began. The higher amount of rain this year was also urgently needed to preserve the environment. Let us thank God for hearing our prayers!

Alexander Schlüter

### Repentance and standing for truth

The 40-day period of Lent leading to Easter commemorates the 40 days that Jesus fasted in the desert to prepare himself for the beginning of his public ministry. (Mark 1:12). For us it is a time for us to cleanse ourselves and repent from behaviour, habits and wrong attitudes that make life difficult for us personally and destroy relationships with others. At this time the political parties in Germany are facing their own political Ash Wednesday – where instead of self-reflection and repentance for their own failures, they continue to attack their political opponents. At the beginning of Lent, the Ministry of the Interior and Family Affairs, drawn along in the slipstream of the recent strong demonstrations against the right-wingers,

reissued the “Democracy Promotion Act” that had already been passed by the Government Cabinet in 2022 in a more stringent form.

With reporting and monitoring information for evidence and a lot of money for politically left-wing organisations, the published act focuses almost exclusively on right-wing extremism. It therefore serves mainly to maintain the power of the government, but not democracy. Legitimate criticism of the government and an opinion expressed without direct penal relevance should not be interpreted and criminalized as being right-wing extremist.

The truth is not left-wing or right-wing, but Jesus Christ. Let us follow Jesus into the desert during this time, cleanse ourselves from all ideological fixations and stand for our country in the breach which lies between the population and the political camps. Every false accusation and every demonstration based on the exercise of human power is shattered on the cross of Jesus. Only in love can we overcome the evil that is becoming more and more apparent in this political confrontation.

#### Prayer:

- **Thanks for this time of repentance, in which our land is called back to the cross where we will find reconciliation with God. (2 Corinthians 5:20)**
- **Humble yourselves before the Lord and He will lift you up. (James 4)**
- **That we stand up with Jesus to be publicly effective in our land of Germany. Repent and believe the good news! (Mark 1: 15)**

Karin Heepen

### Dealing with the Corona crisis

As a society, we shy away from dealing with crises and tackling current ones constructively together. One thinks of the flood disaster in the Ahr Valley, but also the current migration crisis. It is important to learn to talk openly with each other. It is not about assigning blame or having exactly the right information, but about taking responsibility and what each of us can learn from it. The future will never be free of crises and mistakes, but we do need the courage to speak out about injustice. This also includes the Corona period, which was overshadowed far too quickly by the Ukraine war. Much has already come to light in the past two years. This includes the fact that the side effects of the vaccines could be more serious than previously assumed and, as a result, quite a few people have suffered some discomfort or repeated illness after being vaccinated. A political action plan was also implemented that deliberately put the fear of infection into people's minds in order to achieve a high vaccination rate. Governments like to see themselves as educators of their people even when there is no emergency situation. We cannot agree that discrimination against unvaccinated people is socially and ethically justifiable. From today's perspective, the closing of schools was also a big mistake. Objections from those who have expressed their concern about vaccination were dismissed as not scientifically based. Unvaccinated people were accused of not showing solidarity with the majority, were accused of actually "spreading the pandemic", and their freedom was restricted with exclusion from social life. Undoubtedly, it was a crisis of unusual proportion and no one allowed themselves to be vaccinated or not vaccinated without some careful and personal thought.

Today we know that objections to vaccination were justifiable, but above all that people should not have been subjected to such unrelenting pressure. The body of Christ also needs some time to work through the matter. Where have we perhaps followed the advice and instructions from politics and science too readily? What can we learn for the future?

#### Prayer:

- **For the healing of the rifts and the division in our country during the Corona period – between the vaccinated, the unvaccinated, children and young people. (Psalm 60:4)**
- **For vigilance in the body of Christ for a righteous handling of all possible reactions with God's love in times of crisis.**
- **For people who have suffered physically or emotionally as a result of a corona infection or vaccination and especially for those with long-term effects. (Jeremiah 17:14)**

Alexander Schlüter

### Violence among children and young people

Police crime statistics, published for the year 2022 on suspected offenders under the age of 18, recorded an increase of around one third in violent crime. These statistics include homicide, grievous bodily harm and robbery. In March 2023, a girl in North-Rhine-Westphalia was stabbed by her peers. In April 2023, an eleven-year-old strangled a ten-year-old in Wunsiedel, Bavaria. In January 2024, a 14-year-old in Lohram-Main was charged with the murder of a girl his age. There were further cases of brutal violence among minors in Freudenberg, Heide, Erfurt and most recently in Wuppertal. The proliferation of weapons also contributes to the problem.

In 2022, 30.9% of male young people who were surveyed said that they occasionally do carry at least some potentially offensive weapons such as batons, knives, gas pistols or airsoft (sporting) guns in their free time. In 2022, one in four students agreed with the statement: "If I have to show what I can do, I would also use violence.". Also new is the role that smartphones and social media play in the spread of violence, and even the use of child pornographic material, and when, for example, pictures of a naked classmate are passed around in group chats. Children and young people are increasingly becoming mentally ill. Teachers repeatedly point out that, as a result of modern digital technology, young people may have smartphones, but they lack media skills and ethics in digital communication. Can we feel the Father's heart wanting to have mercy on our children? I believe that the Father invites us to serve these children and young people in prayer this month. Let us speak to their hearts and bring healing and compassion to their hurting souls.

Alexander Schlüter

### The emotional distress of Israeli soldiers and reservists

Since October 7th more than 5,500 wounded people have been admitted to the Israel Defence Ministry's rehabilitation department. 95% of them are men under 30 years old. 70% of them are reservists. In addition to limb and internal injuries, psychological and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) reactions are among the most common injuries. A drastic increase in psychologically traumatised people is expected and is already to be seen in the records. Therapists report cases of severe shock that have never occurred there before on this scale. It is hard to even imagine the cruel scenarios which they were and are exposed to. Soldiers and reservists, who have now been released from the battlefield back into everyday life, feel somewhat emotionally separated from their families due to their experiences. They have difficulty to come close to family members, are haunted by what they have experienced in dreams, and have difficulty concentrating. In some cases, it has already come to divorce. A Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) therapy centre near Gaza acts as a kind of emergency room for soldiers and endeavours to treat traumatic stress experiences before they become permanent disorders. The Ministry of Defence is in the process of expanding its psychological treatment capabilities with personally tailored treatment. And yet this will scarcely be enough to treat all the emotional distress in these thousands of reservists and soldiers.

All therapeutic efforts will require the supernatural intervention of Yahweh Shalom (The Lord of Peace) and his creative work of healing and restoration.

#### Prayer:

- **Proclaim the name Yahweh Shalom over all these soldiers and reservists in emotional distress. (Judges 6:23,24)**
- **For a revelation of Jesus as the Prince of Peace, Saviour and Redeemer within their hearts. (Isaiah 9:5ff; Colossians 1:13)**
- **For more workers to care for the needs of these soldiers and reservists, needs which at the same time present a plentiful harvest field for the good news – "the kingdom of God is near you". (Luke 10:2ff)**

Tanja Frank

*God's blessings for your times of prayer,*

Alexander Schlüter and team