

Authenticity and vulnerability

Who are we, when we are doing nothing in particular, when we have put aside all our roles and tasks, and are just being ourselves? So much in our lives is related to our actions and achievements, and it is only in times of crisis in our lives that we question our authenticity, who we really are deep down. The question may seem to be trivial and yet it is central in getting to know ourselves. Our perception of how we view God and what he can do in us is determined by what we perceive and think about ourselves. We must not separate building our relationship with God from an understanding of our relationship with ourselves. Much of our life is based on the fear of rejection and of not being good enough, and on the feeling that we are not in the place where we should be. We hide away so as not to displease others. Deep down, we long to express ourselves honestly and authentically and at the same time we are afraid and fight against being ourselves. What would happen if I took off all my masks and people saw me as I really am?

In order to feel close and bonded to others, we need to be close and bonded within ourselves. Being bonded within ourselves brings our whole being - our heart, our thoughts and emotions, our mind and body - into harmony. This brings with it a deep peace and a new spirit is released within and from us. Being bonded and reconciled within ourselves also means lovingly accepting those thoughts and emotions within us such as fears and weaknesses. There is a secret in doing this, as everything in us initially tries to suppress these emotions. In fact, God is not displeased by our weakness, but rather attracted, because he wants something in us to resonate with him, to draw us into understanding and harmony. He knows that his glory is revealed in our weakness.

It is also easier for those around us to feel close with us when we show ourselves to be vulnerable. Vulnerability creates closeness. We open our hearts, show real love, and accept being misunderstood. Being open to letting others come close to us and speak to us is the door to the deeper relationships that we all long for. Whenever I show my weaknesses, God's strength is able to find its place and grow within me. Everyone around us senses something of the glory of God in our weakness. God wants to clothe us in authenticity, closely founded within ourselves. In this way he takes us out of our hiding places into the glorious freedom of the children of God (Romans 8:21). Our longing to escape from our limitations comes from him. We can be so much more. Jesus Christ lives in us - the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27). Such authenticity brings us into our God-given true self and being - into our standing as true sons and daughters! The world does not need someone who just looks like you, but it needs the real you openly expressing your true self and being, with authenticity and vulnerability in the strength of God.

Alexander Schlüter

Elections in the USA

The USA is still the most powerful nation in the world and the elections on November 5th are of great importance with respect to NATO, Europe, and the Middle East. Political polarisation, streams of refugees, geopolitical conflicts and hurricanes pose far greater challenges to the country than parallel developments in Europe. While the party landscapes within European states have currently brought forward more diverse variants in the main political/ideological movements, the election in the USA is just between Democrats and Republicans and is dividing society even more deeply. The election result will influence future US policy in the UN (United Nations), towards Israel and Iran, in NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation), in the Ukraine war with Russia and in Europe.

Germany has been linked to the USA with gratitude and friendship since World War II. At the same time, anti-Americanism is spreading here, which often goes hand in hand with anti-Zionism and sees the USA as the originator of a new global world order. Germany is the USA's most important ally and German-American relations influence the stability of Europe and the world.

Prayer:

- **Give thanks for all the support that Germany has received from the USA since World War II: economically, militarily, politically and in the many relationships between our countries. (Psalm 50:23)**
- **For grace, wisdom and understanding in relations with the USA and for unity among Christians. (Psalm 85)**
- **That Germany finds its own strong position politically and militarily in solidarity with the USA.**
- **That the USA and Germany pave the way for peace in Israel and in the Ukraine. (Matthew 5:9)**

Karin Heepen

Proposal to ban the AfD political party in Germany - (Alternative für Deutschland – Alternative for Germany)

The leaders of the CDU, SPD and FDP political parties have so far been sceptical about proposing to ban (outlaw) the AfD political party in Germany. Nevertheless, the supporters see growing chances of success for their group application and may still want to put it to a vote in the Bundestag (German Federal Parliament). But is such a process conducive to democracy and to cohesion within our society? There is great dissatisfaction with the current policy of the "traffic light" coalition (SPD red, FDP yellow, Green parties) which is currently in power in the Federal Government, and generally with the old traditional parties. There is a longing for a new beginning in the political system in Germany. In view of the growing approval of the AfD and the BSW (another brand-new political party with a specific agenda), democracy is believed to be in danger. But do not parties have to be "challenged" with arguments and citizens be given sufficient expert knowledge and sovereign choice in elections? There is disagreement on this.

It is problematic in a democracy when an open and wide-ranging interaction (with arguments and people) is limited or prevented, because democracy thrives on debate. Democracy has to take risks in doing so. There is no way around an open discussion with people who evaluate something completely differently than you do yourself. Opinions are now often so emotionally charged that people separate from one another when they see something in a different way. The complexity of life in our times is so great that forming a reliable common opinion is extremely difficult; the possibility of being wrong, on the other hand, is still somewhat great. Thinking things through together is enormously important for us as a society. No one can do this on their own.

Many people would like to see stronger regulations from the state. But democracy requires more personal responsibility and maturity from its citizens right now. We must not give up our freedom of thought and creativity and our judgment lightly. Let us ask God how we can release a new shout in **prayer** that will counteract political polarisation in Germany and release more trust and a sense of togetherness in this land. Let us pray for a new beginning, for bridge-builders in politics and society who know how to transform crises into new opportunities.

Alexander Schlüter

Relationship between Germany and Hungary

Hungary has held the EU Council Presidency since July of this year. Prime Minister Orbán is considered to be the EU's strongest opponent. Some governments are boycotting the EU Council meetings because of Orbán's disloyal behaviour towards the EU. He is fighting against the current influence of the EU on national responsibilities, especially in migration, education, and family policy, and for Hungary's sovereignty. The basis for its national identity is the new basic law that Hungary set for itself after the Fidesz party's election victory in 2011. It enshrines Christianity, the nation, and the family as the most important pillars of society and replaced the socialist constitution of 1949, which was then extensively amended in 1989 but its basic features remained. Hungary is thus on a course against the tendency of the EU to undermine and devalue Christian-based political positions. Although Hungary commemorates the popular uprising against the Soviet occupation in 1956 and its bloody suppression with thousands of dead and injured on its national holiday, Orbán is now considered a friend of Putin and accuses the EU of dragging Europe into a third world war in Ukraine. In domestic politics, a new opposition party has formed since the European elections in June, which is almost on a par with Fidesz in current polls.

Germany and Hungary have both endured periods of National Socialist rule and communist occupation in their recent history since World War I. Let us build roads of peace through Europe and bridges between our countries in **prayer**:

- **Hungarian kings have repeatedly dedicated the country to God, and three of them have been canonised. We bless this Christian heritage of Hungary for the good of Europe. (Psalm 33:8-12)**
- **That the Hungarian Basic Law shapes Hungarian domestic and foreign policy not by force, but by the Spirit of God. (Zechariah 4:6)**
- **That the Hungarian EU Council Presidency bears good fruit for the EU and for Hungary. (Matthew 7:15-21)**

Karin Heepen

Lack of living in a partnership within Generation Z

Almost half of all 18- to 29-year-olds (Gen Z) in Germany live as singles. The trend seems to be continuing to rise. This means that fewer and fewer of our young people are living in committed relationships or getting married. The reasons recognised for this range from the social distancing which came during the Corona pandemic, the rise of the importance of personal freedom and self-realisation and a higher level of self-satisfaction, to a new openness to alternative relationship models. There are certainly many other reasons and ways of thinking that contribute to this development. But more important than all these reasons are God's thoughts for this generation, which should reach the hearts of young people! They are thoughts of (inner) peace, restoration and integrity, hope and future, and the liberation from distress. God's word and promise that "it is not good for man to

be alone" should resonate over this generation. He offers them the blessing of a partnership in their lives in a committed relationship between man and woman, which he ordained at the time of the creation, as well as the blessing of a close family - a small community of man, wife and possibly children - giving hope for the future.

Prayer:

- **Let the Lord fill you with thoughts of peace, salvation, hope, and the future for Gen Z and proclaim your thoughts over these young people. (Jeremiah 29:11)**
- **Pray for harvest workers to be active among the young generation and that this young generation will hear the good news and find God. (Matthew 9:36-38)**

Tanja Frank

The power of the body of Jesus to bear witness in unity

Have you recently encountered the distinction between the terms "Bible based" and "charismatic" that are often quoted within the body of Jesus? It shocked me a little but also made me pay attention – both to the distinction within the terms themselves and to the judgments of differences in faith and practice that are hidden in them.

When the Bible speaks of God's face, the word "Panim" is used in Hebrew. This word is plural, that is, it actually means "faces". No one is able to grasp, recognise and reflect all of God's "faces", all the facets of his being and how he works and is - not even one individual, nor one denomination, one congregation, nor one movement. Everyone carries a part within themselves that they themselves have received and recognised as a treasure. Our knowledge, even the knowledge within a denomination or group, is always only fragmentary and will remain so - and everyone finds there something to confirm their beliefs and of course something that in their view is missing.

I believe that it is God's will for us to seek and honour the face of God in one another, to grow together, to rejoice in the benefit of our complementary understanding, and to use this to be able to paint together the larger lovely picture which will indeed show and express oneness and unity in faith and understanding, and by which the world can recognise Jesus and the Father.

I feel an urgency to not set back the Holy Spirit (as happened 115 years ago in the Berlin Declaration), but to recognise his divine power and to honour and welcome his work and presence. As a person of the Godhead, he too has different "faces" - different facets of his work. And here too, our understanding is and will remain piecemeal. Instead of speaking against one another, brother against brother, let us expose the works of the devil.

Our country needs the witness and spiritual power of the body of Jesus to be exercised in unity.

Prayer:

- **Where do I recognize tendencies in myself to judge other denominations and congregations? (John 13:34f)**
- **For a rethinking in the body of Jesus, for unity, and for an increase in witness and spiritual impact. (John 17:20-23)**
- **Take time to thank God for all the different churches in our country and to worship and praise God for them. (Romans 1:8; 1 Corinthians 1:4; Philippians 1:3-6)**

Tanja Frank

God's blessings for your times in prayer,

Alexander Schlüter and Team