

A new land in which everything is possible

"Your eyes will see the king in his beauty, and view a land that stretches afar." (Isaiah 33:17)

"... with God everything is possible." (Matthew 19:26b)

Prayer should never remain the same, but constantly change in a way that leads us to seek new ways to know God. If we sense that our understanding of prayer up until now or that our times in prayer no longer lead us to know God more deeply, then here is an invitation to a prayer life at a new dynamic level - a life with the awareness of what is possible through being truly one with God.

Our mind is not able to know what the future holds, because it can only draw on past experiences. God wants to release us from dependence on our past experiences and past thoughts for the future. Solutions that worked in the past no longer work in the same way as they used to and we need new solutions. God's goal is to release us from being bound by our limitations.

The future lies beyond what we know, beyond our own thoughts, but is still accessible to us if we dare to enter a new land with God! We are invited by the Father to enter the field of his unlimited possibilities, which at the same time can also be a field of our own unlimited possibilities, when we are no longer separated from him. One could also say that we come from the awareness of what we lack to an awareness of his abundance. This lack stands for everything that limits us personally. Now our vision is no longer hindered, but leads us to move forward into a new land.

The key to the future lies in what is unknown to us and yet all the wisdom we need to grasp it is already within us. Let us enter this new land of possibilities together. It is a land in which God, and we together with him, *"calls things that are not as though they were"* (Romans 4:17) - a land in which we create the future.

In this land, we must hand all responsibility over to God. We come under his security and total provision. Our natural nervous reaction to external change then calms down. Inner restlessness subsides. God no longer leads us primarily through our understanding, but through our trust. We notice this because, on the one hand, we reach our limits in assessing and analysing what is happening and, on the other hand, because we need a new strength and drive to face what is the realisation of a deeper connection with God and with ourselves, yes, the expression of a new level of faith and trust.

In the new land of God's possibilities, it is important to be open to learn and accept change. We do not become something new believing in perfection, but only out of the courage to be imperfect. In this way, we overcome limitations that we perceive in ourselves, but that we do not actually have, but have imposed on us in our perception of ourselves. We need to rediscover a simplicity that is no longer based on our own ability and performance, but on the connection with God who is within us. *"... you teach me wisdom in the innermost place."* (Psalm 51:6b)

In the new land of possibilities, new inner images emerge - images that give us a sense of the future and hope. (Jeremiah 29:11). On the one hand, we do not yet know what is new and cannot form any image of it, and on the other hand, we can draw new things from our inner source of wisdom with the aid of the Holy Spirit. Welcome to the new year 2025!

Alexander Schlüter

Germany and Europe at a time of crisis within governments

The Bundestag (German Parliament) withdrew its confidence in Chancellor Scholz on December 16, as requested. This means that the announced date for the election of a new Bundestag on February 23, 2025, will probably remain. However, it is already becoming apparent that the future coalitions that have now been proposed will not bring about the political change that Germany needs. The new French government lasted less than three months. It is uncertain whether the new Prime Minister Bayrou will be able to form a majority capable of government. Belgium has been without an active government since June. In the Netherlands, the break in the government coalition was arduously averted after the riots against the Israeli football fans in Amsterdam in November 2024.

Where rival ideological powers make states ungovernable, we need a vision and the will for unity, justice, and freedom for our countries. By breaking down the previous pillars of the economy and within society, we make room for new ideas. It is with hope that we best influence what is to come, instead of just nurturing worries and fears about our future. In critical times of transition, it is not the masses but creative minorities who best determine the future direction.

Prayer:

- **Let us unite and join in with God's good intentions for Germany and Europe. (Isaiah 43:18f)**
- **Salvation does not come from a new federal government, but was born at this time of Christmas which we have just celebrated! (Isaiah 9:6f)**
- **For rulers who, in humility and across party lines, pave new ways out of the crises. (1 Kings 3:9)**

Karin Heepen

Terrorist attack in Magdeburg

Our hearts are very saddened by the tragic event, when a Saudi-Arabian immigrant doctor drove a motor vehicle into families with children at the Christmas market in Magdeburg, killing at least five and injuring more than 200 others, some severely, last month in December before the holidays.

God's heart is no less moved. How can we serve the city and its inhabitants after this terrorist attack? With 240,000 inhabitants, Magdeburg is the second largest city in Saxony-Anhalt and is its state capital. Magdeburg is over 1200 years old and is the seat of both Protestant and Catholic Bishops.

As we pray, let us feel the pain of the wounded and their families and in our hearts join with them and with the city. What a shock this must have been for the whole city! Let us hold Magdeburg firmly in our hearts. In prayer, I was made aware of how angels served the city and cared for the wounded after this attack. Within our hearts and in our prayers, we can stand with them for the restoration and healing of the city and in our country. The terrorist attack was aimed at all of us and at our way of life. But we as intercessors we are reacting to it on a higher level. For it is in faith, trust, and love that we indeed overcome the world. (1 Corinthians 13:6-10; 1 John 5:4).

Let us face the tensions, fears and the political considerations and consequences that are necessary with God's strength and wisdom and pray for his ways within us as a nation.

Magdeburg means "Mighty castle". We want to stand up for the purpose and restoration of Magdeburg and include the attacker in the process. Love and forgiveness are together the answer even to the horrific and incomprehensible. We therefore put our trust entirely in God and place ourselves under his protection.

Prayer:

- **For healing of the wounds and the traumatic experiences of the victims, relatives, and the emergency services. (Isaiah 61:1)**
- **For God's guidance to better determine and implement the migration and security policies of our country.**
- **For the restoration of Magdeburg and the protection of our country from terror. (Psalm 33:12; Psalm 91:1-2)**

Alexander Schlüter

Peace for Syria

Within a few days, Islamist groups with the support of Turkey have almost completely taken over western and southern Syria and overthrown the Assad regime. After the new rulers initially acted with moderation, proclaiming a free Syria, and recalling Syrian refugees from all countries, they have imposed Islamist regulations. Christians are intimidated and were not allowed to celebrate Christmas in public. The Kurds in the northeast of Syria are particularly at risk; they have been massively threatened with the possibility of attacks by Turkey for years and now are also subject to be overtaken by the Sunni Islamist armies. The Kurds are in fact friendly towards Israel, and around 100,000 are already on the run. There is a risk that around 50,000 interned IS (Islamist State) radical fighters and their families, who are being guarded within camps by Kurdish armed forces, will be released. In the current power vacuum, terrorist cells are already carrying out attacks and the danger of a new wave of refugees is growing. The Assad regime has been kept alive mainly by Russia and Iran. Iran and its proxies Hamas and Hezbollah have been significantly weakened by Israel, and Russia is tied up in the war in Ukraine. Iran's "axis of resistance" has thus been broken down in Syria, but the danger of the Iranian nuclear program has become all the more acute. Israel has moved troops into the south of Syria, just as a precaution to prevent Islamic jihadists from entering the border region. Within a few days, the Israeli army destroyed almost the entire arsenal of Syrian surface-to-air missiles, their weapons stores, and their navy, with air strikes so that they do not fall into the hands of the new rulers.

Prayer:

- **That the Syrian Christians still see the fall of Assad as an opportunity for a "new birth" in the country. Let us**

pray with them that the sceptre will be taken from the hands of the powers of darkness. (Isaiah 9:1-6)

- **Pray for a stop to Turkish expansion through NATO and for the Kurds to be protected by the USA.**
- **Let us pray that Kurdish self-government becomes the model for a democratic Syria. (As the Lord did for Israel - Psalm 126)**
- **No recognition of an Islamist government in Syria by the European Union and the withdrawal of Germany from the failed nuclear agreement with Iran (JCPOA). For Syria to become God's handiwork. (Isaiah 19:23ff)**

Karin Heepen

Fruits of the 1968 movement: Shifting the blame

(Sequel to "Fruits of the 1968 movement" in December 2024)

People must be freed from the burden of conscience, or, to put it in the words of Adorno (one of the main representatives of the so-called Critical Theory/Frankfurt School): "Conscience is the stigma of an unfree society." People are inherently good and not created to feel guilt. We are a product of nature and society. Personal guilt does not exist, and must not exist. Instead, guilt lies in false social systems and norms, against which we must stand up and think again. – This is just a little insight into the thinking of the 1968 movement!

Today, this thinking is reflected in many ways in our society – not only in how we interact and respond with others, where personal responsibility repeatedly gives way to putting the blame elsewhere, as, for example, in discussions about our responsibility as Germans towards the Jewish people, but also generally in our everyday lives. In educational and other life-counselling programmes, we find numerous strategies for successfully dealing with feelings of guilt and a bad conscience. The option of actually acknowledging our "guilt" and dealing responsibly with our "guilt" usually plays a subordinate role, if at all – and our troubled conscience is seen as a result of the upbringing we experienced, with the values and requirements imposed on us by our environment, in other words, values based on unrealistic social systems and norms. The Word of God offers us a very clear and simple way to calm our troubled conscience and deal with our guilt, which is to acknowledge and confess our guilt, to repent and to claim the saving grace of Jesus and experience God's forgiveness, healing, and cleansing. (1 John 2:1-2).

Let go and take the path of "thinking it all over again" in the power of the Holy Spirit. This kind of repentance is not burdensome, but rather is deeply liberating. Perhaps it is actually here that lies a key to a truly free and strong society!

Prayer:

- **Where do I find it difficult to acknowledge personal guilt and deal with it in a biblical way? Have I established a lifestyle of self-exoneration – deceiving and excusing myself - and am I passing this on? (1 John 1:8-9)**
- **In which of the "seven mountains/areas of influence" do you personally notice this strategy of shifting the blame and guilt the most? Pray for true repentance particularly in this area.**
- **Pray also for a revival of biblical repentance in all areas of society through faith in Jesus. (John 8:32-36)**

Tanja Frank

With hope and confidence for the New Year 2025,

Alexander Schlüter and Team