

## Prayer Letter December 2016

It was in 1839 when Johann Heinrich Wiechern could stand the perpetual questions of the boys no longer. He decided to help them waiting for Christmas. He fixed twenty small red candles and 4 big white candles upon an old wheel. Each day, starting with December 1, one candle was lit: a small red one on each day of the week, a big white one on every Sunday. The small house for homeless boys in Hamburg grew into a big diaconal organization, still named *Rauhes Haus* and Wiechern ideas for diakonia changed the German evangelical church. The Wiechern tradition is still alive within our DRAE member VEDD until today.



And the so called *Advent wreath*? There is not a single church in Germany and nearly no household without one. But today we only use the four big candles, one standing for each Advent Sunday. One after the other is lit. And so the darkness becomes less and less and the time of light is approaching. Advent, time of expectation, waiting for Christmas is becoming very visible by the Advent wreath.

But waiting has become difficult. At least in my part of the world. Now, immediately, instantly – this is how it goes. Candy-Santas and ginger bread already in September, why waiting? Expecting what?

It might be worth to prepare for the event, that changed the world forever, changed even our calendar; an event that has consequences for our lives too. It might be worth not jumping into it or hasting by, but prepare; candle after candle approaching Christmas and what it has in stock for us. What we are preparing for and how does it change our life? Jochen Klepper has found timeless words for it:

Since God has come when night was deepest,  
there's no more darkness without light!

The One whose love was ever near,  
with human face does now appear.

Has life been hard, the way too long?  
He comes, our hurts too make his own.

All stands revealed before God's view,  
he shows you now your life brand new.

Christ's kindness in our hearts release,  
that we in turn might be his peace.

Should doors be closed and hearts shut tight,  
keep loving till they open wide!

Since God has come when night was deepest,  
surely our night will find an end!

Blessed Christmas!

Deaconess Ulrike Kellner, November 2016