



120th edition - December 2013/January 2014

## **Good News: More taxes, no new debt for Berlin**

The parliamentary groups from the SPD and CDU have agreed on a state budget for 2014. Berlin, which has a debt of 63 billion Euros, will not need new credit if the current economic situation remains. This goal has been reached a year earlier than planned. The reasons are: Higher federal tax income, low interest rate, and the austerity plan of the Senate—and the Berlin economy, which grew 17.4% in the last eight years alone.

The Start-Up scene is flourishing, tourism is booming, and even industry, which was long believed to be lost, is returning to the city. The gross domestic product has been growing faster than average for years, driven by creative research companies. Thus the Senate can probably keep its (desperately needed) school social workers' jobs and even raise the reserve assets for probable higher costs of the construction of the BER-airport. (Numbers and facts: Der Tagesspiegel from Nov. 20, 2013)

### **Prayer:**

- **Thank God for this surprisingly quick and positive development**
- **Pray that the good economic situation and development will continue**
- **Pray for good budgetary discipline for all involved**

## **Restriction of Prostitution**

Since 2007 there have been plans for a large brothel on the corner of Potsdamerstraße and Kurfürstenstraße. The district municipal office Tempelhof-Schöneberg has rejected the usage of the floors above the sex-shop "LSD" as a brothel, citing the additional strain on area residents and shops as a reason. The administrative court of Berlin as well as the higher administrative appeals court followed the arguments of the district and dismissed the lawsuit of the brothel operator. Now the Federal Constitutional Court has decided that the higher administrative court must reassess its decision.

In the meantime the controversy concerning a ban on prostitution, which was begun among others by Alice Schwarzer, continues. Berlin's Senator of the Interior Frank Henkel (CDU) is currently thinking about temporary restricted areas. The Senator is against a

complete ban on legal prostitution, a spokesperson said, because this would only suppress the problem and turn the women into criminals. Mr. Henkel could imagine, for instance, a ban on prostitution for the Kurfürstenstraße from "mornings until early evenings". The Senate could also ban prostitution during certain hours in certain areas because of youth protection. Mr. Henkel plans to talk with the Senate department for women and with the department of education, which is responsible for youth protection. A corresponding administrative order would have to be agreed upon by the three authorities and then decided on by the Senate. The districts would initially be responsible for the enforcement of the restricted areas.

### **Prayer:**

- **Pray there would be no large brothel on the Potsdamer Straße**
- **Pray for reasonable and enforceable measures to restrict street-prostitution**
- **Pray for control of human trafficking and wide-spread forced prostitution**

## **Poverty-stricken Children / Christmas**

During the Christmas season, there are over 80 large and small, traditional and alternative Christmas markets. The economic barometer has risen, and it is expected that many Germans will spend more on gifts this year.

But there is also the other side—the number of those who can afford only a few or no Christmas gifts is growing. The gap between the poor and the rich is growing in our city. Unfortunately, Berlin is the front-runner in terms of the number of children and youth who are living from welfare. The capital city has the highest rate in the nation of children and youth living in households on welfare: 34.3% (Numbers from September, 2013).

How do these children and their parents (many of whom are single parents) experience Christmas? Who gives them gifts? Who tells them about the birth of the Saviour Jesus? It's all the more important that Christian facilities such as the „Arche“ (ark) or the „Haus Jona“ offer care, warm meals, places to play, help for homework, and last but not least the message of the love of God, throughout the year. It's wonderful that at least some Christian churches invite both families and singles to a Christmas Eve

party where the guests can experience the love of God in word and deed!

**Prayer:**

- **Pray that those families and children impacted by poverty experience the love of God somehow**
- **Pray for the Christmas celebrations in churches**
- **Pray for the continuing work of facilities for underprivileged children**

### **Görlitzer Park**

Over one hundred Kreuzberg residents met recently in a town-hall meeting sponsored by the district administration to talk about the problem of the Görlitzer Park and its future. A solution must be found for the more than 100 active drug dealers in the park, the littering, and the noise annoyance. The meeting was an attempt on the part of the district administration Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg to change the park together with the residents. The park has become a problem area because of the massive increase in illegal drug dealing. Many residents no longer feel safe in the park because of the drug traffic and the frequent sexual advances.

The park used to be a place for residents to celebrate and relax. Some attempts have been made to make the park nicer—the main paths are lighted, the Drachenspielplatz (dragon playground) has been renovated, a barefoot path was constructed, a place to let dogs run around was created. Discussions as to what further measures would be useful to restrict the drug dealing, the low moral standards, and the problem of trash are taking place. (Source: Berliner Zeitung, Nov. 9, 2013)

**Prayer:**

- **Thank God for residents who are getting involved to change the situation**
- **Pray for a decline in drug dealing**
- **Pray for useful measures against drug dealing and littering, and that Christians in the area would take action**

### **Repentance Service at Marienkirche**

On November 10, there was a public repentance service on the former Neuen Markt near the Marienkirche, in which the wrongdoings of robbery and murder of Jews since the founding of the city was confessed to God. The specific occasion was the terrible execution of the Jewish coinmaker Lippold Ben Chluchim in the year 1573. The Jerusalemgemeinde now uses the building that once housed the mint belonging to Lippold. Kurfürst Joachim II left his successor with a huge debt in 1871, and Lippold was falsely accused of murdering the Kurfürst. The Jews were robbed and banished from Berlin and the Mark

Brandenburg for 100 years. Since the founding of the city, there has been a recurring pattern of repression, robbery, murder and forced displacement of Jewish residents. A current exhibition in the Ephraimpalais titled "The Robbed Mitte" shows the abundance of Jewish households which were disappropriated by the Nazis in order to carry out their capital city planning "Germania". Even yet today, many owners of property have not been recompensed. This is an injustice which is just now being investigated by the city of Berlin as the new owner, which wants to take that into account in the renovation of the district of Mitte. During the repentance service therefore, the old and the newer guilt, which reaches into the present, was confessed to God. When the service, which was attended by about 100 people, began, the sky was covered by dark clouds, but by the time it finished, the sun was shining—an encouraging sign from heaven for all participants that God's grace is shining over Mitte.

**Prayer:**

- **Pray that the Senate would make an intense effort to recompense Jewish owners who lost their property during the time of the Nazis.**
- **Pray that the hearts of the people in Berlin would be filled with love for their fellow-residents who are Jewish**
- **Pray that new blessing will come from the renovation plans for Mitte**

### **Keeping On: Housing for Refugees**

Housing has been found for the refugees who had come from other parts of Germany and had been camping in tents for months on the Oranienplatz. Housing has also been found for those protesting by hunger strike in front of the Brandenburg Gate. The Protestant church Heilig-Kreuz-Gemeinde and the Catholic Caritas have made temporary accommodations available. However, new refugees have moved into the tents. Please continue to pray for more humane treatment of refugees on-site and for legal and just arrangements on a federal level.

**Dates:**

- Dec. 13, 6pm: **Prayer for City Politicians** in the Berliner Abgeordnetenhaus (Room 320)
- Jan. 8, 6pm: **Prayer for City Politicians**, meeting place yet to be determined
- Jan. 12-19: **International Week of Prayer** sponsored by the Evangelical Alliance „With Spirit and Courage"—many prayer meetings in Berlin. Meeting places and dates can be found at: [www.evangelische-allianz-berlin.de/](http://www.evangelische-allianz-berlin.de/) - **Worship Service** for all at the end of the week: Jan 19, 3pm Ev.-Freikirchliche Gemeinde, Tempelhofer Damm 133-137, 12099 Berlin