



Edition 121 - February 2014

Good News 1 – Fewer Break-ins

The number of break-ins in flats in Berlin has dropped for the first time in years. The police were called because of burglaries 800 times less than in the previous year. This is a decline of 8%. Free consulting offered by the police led to better protection and a higher awareness among residents. However, the relatively low rate of solved break-ins and “crime tourism”, the high number of gangs that travel here from other countries in order to break in and steal, remain a problem. Source: Berliner Zeitung on 1/13/2014

Good News 2 – Cocaine Discovery

In January, the discovery of 140 kilograms of cocaine hidden in banana boxes of the discount grocery Aldi was a huge sensation. Even though it was a chance discovery, we can be thankful that the drugs were found and did not land in the hands of users.

Good News 3 – More Jobs

There is more confidence in Berlin concerning social problems and the many areas of hardened poverty in Berlin than for quite some time. In recent years, the rate of unemployment continually declined. Employment has risen a quarter since the low point of 2005. The trend continued in 2013. Unfortunately, across the country, the number of unemployed rose slightly for the first time in four years, but in Berlin the number of unemployed decreased—by an annual average of nearly 5300. The rate of unemployment sank on average by 11.7 percent in 2013; unemployment among long-term unemployed decreased noticeably, as well as among young people under than 25. The unemployment office is predicting that even more jobs will be available in 2014. Source: Der Tagesspiegel on 1/8/2014

Prayer:

- Thank God for so many positive developments
- Pray that God will continue to extend His grace to the city in its problems

Oranienplatz – What now?

In December, Caritas agreed to temporarily accommodate 120 refugees who had been camping on the Oranienplatz for over a year. Most of them came

through Italy to Germany and have no official refugee status.

According to European asylum law, the country where asylum was applied for must continue to care for them. Italy likes to give refugees money, put them on a train, and send them away. Thus, even in Berlin there are many refugees from Africa and Asia who have arrived – in some cases very dramatically – on boats on the Italian island of Lampedusa. They live here illegally and are being treated not as refugees but as homeless people. Thus they have no legal rights to long-lasting housing. Although the refugees no longer need their tents on the Oranienplatz for sleeping, the tent-city is still there, even though it should have been cleared away long ago. The new district mayor, Monika Herrmann (from the Greens party), is tolerating this. Frank Henkel, Senator of the Interior had given the district an ultimatum for clearing the square. Although the deadline has passed, he cannot order the square to be cleared because a senate resolution would be necessary. The coalition partner SPD has refused to be part of such a clearing.

District mayor Herrmann is apparently caught in the middle of an inner conflict—her personal opinion does not agree with that which she should do in her official capacity. She likes to post on Twitter and recently spoke out in favour of a call to a violent protest match from the leftists. Up until now the only strategy she sees is negotiations. There are no solutions in sight.

Prayer:

- Pray that the district mayor can find a fair settlement between the refugees on the one side and the district and residents on the other
- Pray that all sides will really desire and actively work for peaceful solutions
- Pray that Christians will see opportunities to bring God's peace into the situation

Occupied School in Kreuzberg

For many months there have also been conflicts about how to accommodate refugees who have been illegally occupying a school in the Ohlauer Str. since December, 2012. There continue to be violent altercations there. The police can move in only with large numbers, because otherwise they will be attacked.



Sympathizers with the refugees are quickly ready to proceed against the police. The exact number of people living in the school is unclear—some estimate as many as 400. They are living in disastrous conditions with only two showers, cold water, and dirty toilets. Here, too, the district is tolerating conditions that are illegal. Even the fire code does not allow such conditions. District mayor Herrmann also wants to continue to negotiate with those living in the school. An ultimatum set by Senator of the Interior Henkel to end these illegal conditions ran out on January 16.

But nothing has changed. However, the ultimatum caused the left-wing activists to be bound together even closer. They are even willing to violently oppose an eviction of the house should it come to that. The faction leader of the Greens, Ramona Pop, termed the conditions in the occupied school untenable. She views the attempt at self-government through the residents as an obvious failure.

Actually the district has once planned to make the school into a centre for social projects. Project groups which had won the bid are still waiting to move into the school.

Prayer:

- **Pray for courage for District Mayor Herrmann to carry on in spite of unpopular measures**
- **Pray for spiritual solutions for the difficult situation**
- **Pray for specific help and God's comfort for the hardships of the traumatized refugees**

Transforum-Conference

DIVERSTIY IN UNITY – MANY CULTURES, ONE CITY, ONE MISSION – this is the theme of the conference from March 6-8, 2014 in Berlin-Hohenschönhausen.

This topic is crucial for the future of our city, especially because of its multicultural setting. Can we as Christians from differing ethnic backgrounds not develop a model for reconciled coexistence? Heaven will be very diverse. The redeemed from all peoples, ethnic groups, and nations will celebrate together. The earthly body of Christ can already reflect that fact through patiently building relationships and praying and celebrating together. Working together across denominational lines and various styles of spirituality is already a trademark of Gemeinsam für Berlin (Together for Berlin). The redeemed from various nations living in the city will be together.

Brothers and sisters from immigrant backgrounds have been involved in the preparation of the Forum and are involved in nearly all parts of the program. There will be a strong international participation. www.transforum-berlin.de

Prayer:

- **Pray for blessing and success for the preparation**
- **Pray that reconciliation will be lived out and that God will change hearts and attitudes**
- **Pray that the way that costs will be covered (through offerings and donations) will exemplify fair balance**

Referendum concerning Tempelhofer Airfield

Currently, signatures which were gathered by the initiators of the referendum against the planned development of the area surrounding the Tempelhof airfield are being examined. In order for the referendum to come to a popular vote, at least 174,117 signatures must be valid. The Senate had presented it plans for the development of the surrounding areas. Three new urban housing developments with 4,700 flats are to be built, and commercial space providing 7,000 new jobs is planned. In addition, the construction of a new city and regional library is planned. In spite of the fact that these plans make sense in the midst of the lack of housing in Berlin, the measures are being strongly opposed by a citizens' initiative called "Hundert Prozent Tempelhofer Feld" (one hundred percent Tempelhofer Feld). Nevertheless, at the moment, the Senate is not letting go of its plans.

Prayer:

- **Pray that moderate development, including housing space, can be accomplished on the Tempelhof airfield**
- **Pray that possible necessary corrections in the plans can be recognized and made through dialogue with residents**

Keeping On: BER Airport

Mr. Mehdorn, the head of the airport, continues to hold on to his plans to begin a test mode of the airport Berlin-Brandenburg (BER) on July 1. Three to ten flights would be scheduled per day. There is opposition to this plan. The Board of Directors has not yet decided. Logistic questions concerning passengers and baggage are still unanswered. In addition, technical problems (for example, possible overheating of cable ducts) continue to surface and are not solved yet.

Continue to pray that all problems can be discovered, that additional costs can be minimized, and for the success of the entire project.

Dates:

- **City-wide prayer for politicians: Feb. 12, 6pm, Meeting point in front of the Rote Rathaus (dress warmly!)**