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Good News: More Berliners

Berlin is growing and now has 47,803 more residents than it did a year ago. 3,417,424 people are now living in Berlin. No surprise: Most of the new Berliners have moved into Prenzlauer Berg.

The biggest surprise: Districts with prefabricated cement block buildings in the western part of the city are growing, such as Märkische Viertel in Reinickendorf, which grew by 3.5 %. In spite of challenges, this is a good development which shows that the city remains attractive, and that its attractiveness is actually growing.

Prayer:

- **Thank God for the nearly 48,000 new Berliners**
- **Pray for a good climate between old Berliners and new Berliners**
- **Pray for the construction of affordable living space**

Good News: Ruling against human trafficking

In February, Berlin's Parliament made an important ruling against human trafficking. The ruling declares emphatically "that the victims of human trafficking should be given a perspective for a safe and self-determining life no matter what their residence status is....The Parliament values tremendously the dedicated and professional work of the women in the consulting centres and the NGO's....and wants to express its deep appreciation for their tireless efforts in the fight against violence against women.....The Parliament asks the Senate to see that all measures on a national and state level in the fight against human trafficking will be reviewed with regard to the effects on the victims and their ability to claim compensation in Germany."

Prayer:

- **Thank God that this issue is being addressed**
- **Pray for effective measures on both federal and state levels**

Referendum to vote Wowereit out of Office

On Feb. 5, 2014 the citizens' initiative "Wowereit's Resignation" began a media campaign to call for the

resignation of the Ruling Mayor, Klaus Wowereit. The Initiative criticizes "Wowereit's dealing with the tax scandal surrounding ex-Senator for Culture André Schmitz, the standstill in the city development, and the huge discontent in the Berlin Senate." In addition to the resignation of the controversial Mayor, the goal of the Initiative is the early dissolution of the Berlin Parliament combined with new elections. 50,000 signatures are necessary for the first step of the process. The gathering of signatures is expected to begin the end of February.

The initiator is Felix Herzog, who also initiated the successful referendum against the building plans of the Tempelhof airfield. That referendum, which gathered enough signatures, will be voted upon the same day as the election of the new European Parliament (More information: <http://bit.ly/1ha2AKF>).

Prayer:

- **That both God's will and the will of the people in terms of Wowereit's staying or going will be accomplished**
- **Pray that true alternative people can be found in all political parties**
- **Pray that the process will bring about transparency and integrity in Berlin's politics**

Portraits of Refugees on Facades

Harald Geil, a Bavarian artist, is currently raising money for his project "Familiar Facades". His plan is to print out portraits of immigrants six by twelve meters and stick them on facades. A QR-code will be on each portrait. When passers-by scan in the code on their smart-phones, they will be directed to a video interview on the home page of the project. The person on the portrait will tell the story of how they came to be a refugee or about their process of applying for asylum. The project is being sponsored by "Memos", a Berlin association which gives people from conflict zones an opportunity to process their traumas. On the webpage, in addition to these interviews, there will be statements from academic researchers as well as an interactive map which shows all the portraits in Berlin, so that you don't miss any.

In July, the first posters will be hung, and if all goes well, Berlin will become the first city taking part in the initiative, which hopes to spread all over the country. In addition to the money, building owners who will



agree to have such portraits hung on their buildings are needed. The biggest hurdles are still the administrative authorities who must grant permissions and are still unsure whether they should consider this initiative an art project or a political project.

Prayer:

- **Pray for the success of the project**
- **Pray that many people will come to a better understanding of the situation of refugees and asylum-seekers through the project**

Campaign for a Peaceful May 1

Presently a team from Together for Berlin is looking for ways how Christians can contribute to a peaceful May 1 in Berlin. Over the last 11 years there have been prayer events and worship services.

An application for a stage on Kottbusser Tor has been made, where intercultural music and gospel would be played, interspersed with interviews with immigrants. The motto: "Kreuzberg's Colourful Heart". The music groups would be provided from Berlin's immigrant churches. In addition, there will be 50 continuous hours of praise and worship music in the Gebetskeller at the Kottbusser Tor (Adalbertstraße 97 in the corridor behind Rossmann) – from April 30, 8pm until May 2, 10pm. Entrance allowed on the hour.

Prayer:

- **Pray that the use of the stage will be authorized**
- **Pray that the proposition can be communicated well**
- **Pray for a peaceful May 1**

Damaged Streets and Bridges

More and more streets and bridges in Berlin are showing damages. For instance, the bridge of the six-lane Heerstraße over the Havel had to be closed for lorries and buses. These so-called infrastructure issues present a huge challenge for the next years, which can only be solved with substantial additional money. But more funding in one area always means cuts in another.

Prayer:

- **Pray for wise and socially appropriate distribution of money for the tasks of the future**

Airport BER –no end in sight

The construction of the airport continues to produce bad news. The director, Harmut Mehdorn, unexpectedly dismissed the project director, Regina Töpfer, who was the successor of the technical director, Horst Amman, even before her trial employment ended in February. Frank Röbbelen, a civil engineer from Borken, will most likely be hired. The

personnel merry-go-round is turning fast, but nothing much seems to be happening. Mehdorn will not be able to produce the long-overdue financial and deadline concept for the BER in March.

The board meeting of the shareholders (the states of Berlin, Brandenburg and the federal government), which had been moved up to March has now been moved back to April. In addition, Mehdorn's planned trial run on the North Pier has been cancelled, allegedly due to opposition from the board, and because of the lack of noise control measures for the surrounding residents. Mehdorn announced that the opening could be possibly delayed until 2016.

Prayer:

- **Continue to pray that light will shine on unclear issues**
- **Pray for an constructive atmosphere of cooperation for all those working on the construction site**
- **Pray that the construction of the airport can finally move ahead and not swallow up even more of the taxpayers' money**

Corpses beneath the TV Tower

The preparateur Gunther von Hagens wants to display his controversial work "Körperwelten" (plastinated parts of dead bodies) in a new museum beneath the TV tower. Details are still unclear. The Lutheran Church has expressed its criticism of this undignified dealing with the dead. An intense debate about human dignity and the peace of the dead is expected, as well as about the commercialization of human corpses.

An Initiative is looking at in the same place for a 24-hour house of prayer. Source: Berliner Zeitung 25.2.2014

Prayer:

- **Pray that the administrative authorities for Berlin's Mitte will decide according to human dignity and good taste**
- **Pray that the rooms beneath the TV tower will be used for positive purposes**

Keeping On

Senator for Integration, Dilek Kolat, has been negotiating with refugees on the Oranienplatz since January. Please continue to pray that a good solution for all involved can be found soon.

Dates

3/6-8/2014: Transforum-Conference United Diversity—many cultures, one city, one mission - with morning prayer on 3/7 and 3/8, led by Korean and African Christians www.transforum-berlin.de