



Edition 127 – September 2014

Good News: Many Christians in Berlin

Many Berliners describe themselves as “without religion”. The Protestant and Catholic churches as well as the classic free churches in Berlin are continuing to lose members. But the number of members of Orthodox churches and other free churches is growing. According to a (non-representative) survey from budding journalists (www.soglaubtberlin.de), their numbers are nearly five times what they were two decades ago – from 43,421 in 1990 to 200,000 people in 2011. They report that there are 1.15 Million Christians in Berlin (32%). This number is close to statistics reported elsewhere. In addition there are nearly 250,000 Muslims. 763,000 call themselves “without religion”.

But 40% of Berlin’s population did not respond to the survey and is missing from the numbers. Most of these are probably without any formal adherence to a religion. According to these journalists, members of Christian churches are still the second-largest religious group in Berlin. Members of free churches and immigrant churches are often characterized by actively living out their faith.

Let us pray that more and more Christians in state churches and free churches, and in old and new churches of various ethnic backgrounds actively live out their faith and contribute to the spiritual and social well-being of the city.

Successor for Klaus Wowereit

On August 26, the mayor gave the surprising announcement that he will be resigning as of December 11. Pressure on him had been continually growing because of extremely bad polls for both him and the SPD. In addition, his own party was asking him to decide yet this year if he would run for the fourth time in 2016, though originally Wowereit had not wanted to decide until the end of 2015. The media are recognizing his service for the city during his 13 years as government head, but they are also not ignoring the massive problems of the last years. Above all, he has been hard-pressed by the continuing problems with the BER Airport and the fact that there is still not a definite opening date, though he himself had declared the airport construction to be his main task.

The discussion about a successor began immediately. Jan Stöß, the head of the Berlin party and Raed Saleh, the party chairman, have both already declared their candidacy. Others can declare their candidacy until

September 1. The CDU apparently wants to continue the coalition government with a new mayor. The opposition parties are calling for new elections. It is possible that the SPD will have dissention over of the question of the possible successor.

Prayer:

- **Pray that God’s Spirit will direct the choice of a successor**
- **Pray that there will be no long, drawn-out inner-party power struggle**
- **Pray that this opportunity for a renewal in personnel will be used for the good of the city**

Violence in Refugee Housing

The number of refugees in Berlin is currently rising quickly. In the month of July alone, 1,047 new refugees were received – the highest monthly increase since 15 years. 900 more refugees who arrived here were distributed to other states. There has already been an increase of over 70% compared to last year.

There is not enough housing space, even though 2,000 new units were created already this year. Currently Berlin has nearly 10,000 places in refugee housing, all of which are occupied. Another 10,000 refugees are living in flats. Now the plan is to create housing units that would be available for asylum seekers, homeless, and university students, but whether these groups could live together under one roof is questionable. In addition, tension grows when people of differing religions or people of different countries which are enemies are living together—there have been incidents of violence. Recently around one hundred Muslim Chechens beat up 30 Christians from Syria. There are Islamic radicals among the Chechens who bring along their hatred of other religions. Staff working in refugee housing are often unable to cope with such aggression and the traumatized refugees and their many needs.

Prayer:

- **Pray that God’s peace will move into the refugee housing areas and that staff will continually get new strength for the huge challenges they face**
- **Pray that conflicts between ethnic groups or religions can be avoided**
- **Pray for wisdom and insight for Senator Mario Czaja (CDU) in dealing with the problems of refugee housing**



March for Life September 20

In Berlin there are nearly double so many abortions than the national average – even among young women. But in 2013 the number of abortions in Berlin (reported cases only, there are certainly many more!) decreased by a further 5.2 percent. Nationally, there was a reduction of 3.8 percent.

Therefore, it is more necessary than ever to keep this pressing problem in the minds of the public and the politicians. This is the purpose of the annual March for Life in Berlin, which is sponsored by Christian Pro-Life groups. In 2013 over 4,000 participated, more than ever before. The March begins at 1pm with a demonstration in front of the Chancellor's office. The route will be approximately 4 km long and is suitable for wheelchairs. The March will end around 3:30pm with an ecumenical worship service.

Prayer:

- **Pray for courage to carry the child full-term, and for competent counseling and help in finding solutions for pregnancy decision-making conflicts for women (and men!)**
- **Pray for successful preparation and carry-through, and good public response to the March**
- **Pray that no violence will occur as a result of the (annual) anti-demonstration**

Vocational Field Architecture

God has given us the task of cultivating and protecting the earth. Architecture and city planning can accomplish this task by shaping the city in such a way that it offers space for good living so that both residents and guests comfortable. Even in New Testament times, large cities, with their outstanding buildings, were places for the spread of the gospel (Antioch, Ephesus, Rome). The city is even the model for the eternal dwelling of God with people in the heavenly Jerusalem, which will come down at the end of the world. Our imperfect early cities are to be at least a foretaste of that heavenly city.

Berlin has a broad range of attractive architecture - the Prussian buildings on Unter den Linden, old and new government buildings, and modern office skyscrapers such as those on the Potsdamer Platz. For more than 20 years, Berlin has been a continually changing construction site. Some projects are successful, such as the renovation of the Reichstag building; others have been a continuing problem, such as the BER airport. In addition to know-how and artistic talent, good oversight and dependable quality work on the part of all companies working on the project are needed – and above all grace and success given by God. That's why we continue to pray for construction projects such as the BER Airport.

Architects are an important part of this complex system. They have a huge responsibility while planning and carrying through on a project. The fact that often much more money is necessary than originally planned has unfortunately become the norm. The difficult competition, a comparably small salary and many overtime hours create a high degree of stress for this vocational group. Topics such as self-sustainability, economic feasibility, and yet innovation play a huge role. Therefore it's becoming increasingly difficult to design public buildings that meet all these expectations and still please the general public. The example of the reconstruction of Berlin's Stadtschloss is a good example of this.

Prayer:

- **Pray that architects will view themselves as people who are creating the vision of a worthwhile city**
- **Pray for Christians who will be/become dedicated, skilled, and creative architects**
- **Pray for wisdom for the architecture companies who are working on the BER Airport and the Stadtschloss**

Thanking, Celebrating, and Praying on October 3

Shortly before the 25th anniversary of the fall of the wall on November 9, 24 years of German unity will once again be celebrated interculturally and ecumenically: 3pm ecumenical devotional in the Kapelle der Versöhnung, Bernauer Straße, with the band of the German-Russian church "Quelle des Lebens" (Source of Life). Retired auxiliary bishop Johannes Weider will preach. A prayer walk will follow, with stations along the former border. 5pm: Interview with a pastor from Sloviansk, prayer for the Ukraine, and fellowship with food and drinks at the Christuskirche, Anklamer Str. 31, Mitte. 7 pm Movie: Nikolaikirche.

Prayer:

- **Pray for good preparation and many participants including passers-by along the former border**
- **Pray that gratitude for God's miracles will increase and be publically heard**

Dates

Sept. 6 Bürgerfest (Festival) at Schloss Bellevue

Sept. 7 at the Bundestag

Sept. 10, 6pm: Prayer for the city politicians Meetingplace: In front of the entrance to the Rote Rathaus

Sept 20.9. 1pm: March for Life (see article)

Oct 3, 3-8pm: Thanking, Celebrating, Praying – 24 years of German unity (see article)