



Edition 132 – March 2015

Good News: Budget Surplus

The State of Berlin achieved a budget surplus in 2014, and it is expected that there will be a surplus again in 2015. This made a special investment program of the Senate possible. This is a great answer to prayer after decades of rising debt. Although the economic power of Berlin continues to grow, the number of poor is increasing in the city. The social gap is widening.

Prayer:

- **Thank God for the success of the Senate's austerity programme in recent years**
- **Thank God for Berlin's growing economic power**
- **Pray for good distribution of resources - particularly for schools, roads and additional housing**
- **Pray for effective measures to reduce poverty**

Occupational Groups: Retail Sector

Every one of us meets them almost daily, usually at supermarket checkout. We often stand impatiently in line and are happy as soon as we have paid for our bread and milk so that we can leave the store and pursue other activities. In contrast, the retailers serve hundreds of customers. In addition to sales, their daily duties and challenges include store maintenance, stocking and clearing shelves, and of course competence and friendliness in dealing with customers. This is easier to see than to describe here.

We want to encourage you this month to go shopping with "eyes wide open". When you reach for the butter, be aware of the retailer who is sorting the yoghurt packages onto the shelves. Maybe you would even want to say thank-you that she is filling the shelves for you? Don't just dodge the fork-lift—smile at the retailer behind the pallets of milk. How about if you don't get irritated by the stress at the checkout, but rather thank God for the cashiers and bless them?

Of course, these people are "just doing their job", but that job is vital and valuable for all of us. The trend of shops being open sometimes on Sundays is on the rise. This results in additional stress for

employees. Let us pray that an understanding of the need for a day of rest will increase.

Prayer:

Thank God for people who provide us with services which are often overlooked

Pray for a reduction in stress through more friendliness in everyday shopping

Jewish Life in Berlin

In Berlin's Jewish community, there are synagogues with eight different orientations, from liberal to orthodox. Jewish life has changed. It is finding new forms, since more and more young Jews are moving to Berlin. The synagogue on the Fraenkelufer is particularly appealing. There is an initiative called "Friends of Fraenkelufers" which meets there once a month for a meal with those who have gathered to pray. During the week there are also lessons or discussion groups on Jewish topics. The young people are looking for new, authentic ways of living as Jews. Rabbinical students, for example, offer casual meetings to pray and study together, which attract young people who do not go to synagogue worship otherwise.

Though the Jewish community has suffered for years because it is deeply divided, a new beginning is happening. Many young Israelis come to study in the city or just to live a few years in Berlin. It is estimated that there are up to 50,000 Israelis in Berlin. During the last years, rabbis have once again been trained at the Abraham-Geiger-Kolleg for German-speaking congregations. About 100,000 members of Jewish communities are registered in Germany, 10,157 of which live in Berlin.

However, increasing anti-Semitism is causing distress among Jews in Berlin. Because of fear of attacks, the Jewish community newspaper is now being delivered covered with a protective envelope. Following the attacks in Paris and Copenhagen, older Jews in Berlin in particular are experiencing an increase in anxiety. The 14th European Maccabi Games in Berlin will be a special highlight. It is the largest Jewish sports festival in Europe and will take place from July 24 to August 15. Around 2,000 athletes will compete in 24 disciplines. The Maccabi Games will be held for the first time since its incep-



tion in Germany! Intense planning for this event is currently taking place, especially because of special safety standards.

Prayer:

- **Thank God for attractive new awakenings of Jewish religious life**
- **Pray for protection of all Jewish citizens**
- **Pray for wisdom and success for the planning of the Maccabi sports games in the summer**

Screaming instead of Discussing

The Senate is currently trying to discuss with residents in town meetings the possibility of hosting Olympic games. However, in a first public forum, no discussion could take place, because a group of Olympics opponents screamed loudly at everyone else. The same thing happened to the discussions with local residents about transforming the Görlitz Park in Kreuzberg. Three events have already taken place, and at each meeting, those who expressed an opinion a particular group did not want to hear were shouted down. This is a new form of opinion terror. Thus, good approaches designed to include residents in specific planning are being carried out ad absurdum. The organizers have yet to find a good way to deal with it.

Prayer:

- **Pray that even politically sensitive discussions with residents can remain possible**
- **Pray for wisdom and courage for all those who carry the responsibility of protecting the freedom of opinion**

Application for Hosting the Olympics

Berlin, as well as Hamburg, is applying to host the Olympics and Para-Olympic Games in 2024 or 2028. The end of March, the German Olympic Sports Confederation will decide which city can apply internationally. Berlin's residents are to have a say in the decision. In the coming weeks, the concept will be presented in residents' forums. In an initial survey, approval for an application was higher in Hamburg than in Berlin. The telephone survey was repeated the end of February.

Prayer:

- **Pray for a clear decision for or against Berlin in the next few weeks**
- **Pray for God's will to be done in this decision**
- **Pray that the Olympics will not become a new point of contention**

BER: The new Airport CEO

The long-standing Rolls-Royce Manager Karsten is the new airport manager. Getting something that went wrong back on the right track is far more difficult than starting something from scratch. In an interview he said, "I'm not relaxed. But optimistic." In addition to the many technical challenges, a major challenge is the formation of the company. Both the federal government and the States of Berlin and Brandenburg are involved. They do not always agree. For instance, the two representatives of the federal government voted against the staff proposal to which Berlin and Brandenburg had recently agreed. Mühlenfeld needs clarity, discretion, perseverance, and unity within the team and between shareholders for his task.

Prayer:

- **Pray for clear strategies for solving problems and how to make progress with the project BER**
- **Pray for unity between the shareholders and among employees**
- **Pray for blessing and protection for Karsten Mühlenfeld and his family**

Keeping On: Body Worlds

The exhibition "Body Worlds" was allowed to open for the time being. The decision to allow the exhibition is currently being appealed on the grounds that the exhibition contradicts Berlin's laws concerning internment. Churches and many prayer partners are against the exhibition.

Dates

- **March 11, 6pm: Prayer for city politicians** in front of the Rote Rathaus
- **March 21, 4-8pm, Together for Berlin-Festival** Evangelisch-Freikirchliche-Gemeinde Schöneberg, Hauptstr. 125. Christians, churches, and initiatives from various churches and spiritual traditions, generations and nations will celebrate together. A stage program will introduce creative models and ways the gospel can be lived out in Berlin. A gospel group will provide the music, and international food will be available.
- **March 28, 3-7pm: Seminar to prepare for a repentance service** for the German complicity in the genocide of Armenians, Christus Kirche Anklamer Str. 31; the film Aghet will be shown, beginning at 7:30 pm.
- **March 29, 6pm Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche, Breitscheidplatz: Ecumenical Repentance Service** for German complicity in the genocide of Armenians 100 years ago. The Armenian Archbishop from Germany will participate.