



Edition 142– March 2016

Good News

6.000 University Places for Refugees: In our December mail we reported about the Kiron University. With crowdfunding and funding from two foundations, the first 1,000 places have been funded. Now a foundation has pledged 5,000 more scholarships.

Further increase in tourism: In 2015, Berlin had more than 30 million overnight stays (2010 there were 21 million), of which 39 percent came from abroad. This is an increase of 5.4 percent over the previous year.

Reduction in poverty: In Berlin the risk of poverty has declined noticeably for the first time since 2006. According to the latest poverty report from February 23, the poverty rate fell in 2014 to 20 percent - a decline of 1.4 percent from the previous year. Despite positive trends, Berlin continues to be one of the poorest states in Germany - after Bremen, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and Saxony-Anhalt. Let us continue to pray for this issue.

- **Thank God for the university places and for the growing attractiveness of Berlin for tourists**
- **Thank God for the reduction in poverty, but continue to pray for those affected by persistent poverty**

Refugee Housing

The plans of the Senate to accommodate more refugees on the grounds of the former Tempelhof airport are encountering much criticism among the population. They want to avoid making a ghetto and plead for more decent accommodation for refugees. More than a dozen different initiatives help refugees find housing – in shared flats, families, and homes. Or they develop common housing options such as the Share House Refugio or ideas to use vacancies or piggyback residential cubes that you can build on flat roofed-buildings – for instance government buildings or workshops. The creativity is almost unlimited, but implementing these ideas often fails because of financing or sluggish bureaucracy. Good solutions are being sought.

Prayer:

- **Thank God for all the creative approaches**
- **Pray for favourable and smooth cooperation between initiatives and authorities**

- **Pray that many families and shared apartment groups will offer refugees a place to live**

Network for Christian refugees

At the LaGeSo and in the mass accommodations, Christian refugees have frequently been attacked by radical Muslims because of their faith—they have been mocked, threatened, and beaten. Security personnel (often Muslims) have looked the other way, or in some cases have even taken part in the beatings. To effectively protect the Christians, it would be necessary to alert officials to the situation—for example through petitions or letters to parliament representatives—and to create living spaces where endangered Christians can stay. Christian churches could do this. An ecumenical initiative has been launched.

Prayer:

- **Pray for the protection of fellow Christians**
- **Pray that more people would support persecuted Christians, also here in Berlin**
- **Pray that Christians can develop solutions for housing for Christians who are being threatened**

Housing Construction

According to the Senate, it is possible that Berlin will reach the 4-million mark in four years. Thus, an estimated 20,000 new housing units will be needed annually for the estimated annual growth in the population of 40,000 people according to Lütke Daldrup, Secretary of Housing and the Berlin Senate Department for Urban Development and Environment. But in 2015 only 11,500 new homes were built of the 15,000 which had been planned. In recent years, more expensive housing has been built, and the "back-log of social housing is huge," says Daldrup. Now, the construction of 60,000 state-owned apartments is planned by 2020. In addition to the housing, the surrounding areas and mass transit and digital infrastructure must be included in the urban planning. (Tagesspiegel.de)

Prayer:

- **Pray for wisdom for the Senate in all decisions**
- **Pray for fast and good implementation of the plans**

- **Pray for the expansion of social housing projects**

Masterplan Integration

A similarly strong influx of refugees is expected for the current year as in the year 2015. Consultants from the McKinsey Company have been mandated by the Senate to draft a master plan for the integration of refugees. Now is the time when the integration process must be planned and initiated. This complex task cannot be done by the administration in such a short time. Issues concerning education, integration into the labour market, housing, security issues and the coordination of volunteers must also be considered collectively. This plan is to be completed in March. McKinsey has already been helping the Senate on a voluntary basis in the reorganisation of the LaGeSo.

Prayer:

- **Pray for wisdom for this plan**
- **Pray that new ways to integrate refugees can be developed**

Myfest on May 1st uncertain

For 13 years the Myfest in Kreuzberg on May 1 has been an attraction for people far beyond Berlin. It has successfully helped to prevent violence (along with much public and private prayer). In recent times, May 1st has been almost nonviolent. But whether the 14th Myfest can take place in 2016 is uncertain. Currently a last effort is being made to save it. Interim District, police, Senate and House are discussing intensely in order to find another solution. There is fear that without the MyFest violence would once more threaten May 1st. Can this festival which aims to curb violence be registered as a political meeting or demonstration with the police authorities? Or is it to be regarded as street party such as the Carnival of Cultures, which would greatly complicate the preparations and the approval process? This is the question that is being wrestled with. As of March 1 there was still no result.

Prayer:

- **Let us support this wrestling for a solution with our prayers**
- **Pray for nonviolent demonstrations and peace on May 1**

Violence at Kotti

Lately criminal activities have been increasing in the inner-city area of Kottbusser Tor. There have been 50 percent more assaults, 100 percent more thefts. Ex-squatters and Turkish restaurant owners are demanding more strict action. According to "Tagesspiegel" (2/18) in recent months, passers-by were surrounded almost daily at Kottbusser Tor. Wallets,

phones, and handbags were stolen. If that didn't work, the perpetrators assaulted the victims. Some sprayed their victims with pepper spray or pulled knives on them. Some grabbed women's bosoms or punched them in the face. The same sorts of scenes that happened in Cologne on New Year's Eve have been happening here with the same offender profile. The police have compiled statistics for pickpocketing at Kotti. The perpetrators come from 17 countries. Eastern Europeans and German citizens are also represented, however Tunisians, Libyans, Moroccans, and Egyptians are at the top of the list. The number of Arabic-speaking perpetrators is increasing rapidly - and the violence and even murder as well. Although there is more police action, there has been no improvement. Now the residents are starting to help themselves: Pub owners and shopkeepers warn each other through a telephone chain. If a gang is seen walking through the district, they call each other. Bouncers guard bars on the weekends. Perpetrators, who are used to much harder reprisals in their home countries, have no respect for the police. Neither the police nor the justice system scares them.

Prayer:

- **Pray for support for Interior Senator Henkel in not allowing a lawless area**
- **Pray that this very real danger for residents will be recognized and that police and the justice system take appropriate measures to curb it**
- **Pray for protection for residents and passers-by**

Keeping On: Homeland Security

The non-specific threat posed by Islamist terrorist attacks also remains high in Berlin. Let us pray especially that God's angels will protect the "soft targets", such as train stations, major events such as soccer matches, festivals, concerts, etc. - and for effective investigative work on the part of security authorities well in advance of planned attacks.

Dates

March 3-5: Transforum-Conference about life worlds in Berlin, Christus Gemeinde Hohen-schönhausen. Early morning prayer Friday and Saturday at 8:30. Many workshops, among others about "Exploring worlds through prayer walks" and "Are your prayers changing your district?" More at www.transforum-berlin.de Please register even if attending only some parts!

March 9, 6pm: Prayer for city politicians in front of the Rote Rathaus

April 1 and 29, 5pm, Gebetskeller on the Kotti, Adalbertstr. 97: **Prayer walk in preparation for May 1st**