



Edition 161 – February 2018

Good News: UNITED more than ever before!

Christians from more than 30 denominations and from at least as many native cultures prayed together on January 20 in plenary and at 13 "prayer stations" - Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox, Free Church, an African and a Coptic choir and more. "ONE - pray together, celebrate, act together" was the fruit of years of building relationships and trust. Sponsors were the Evangelical Alliance, Together for Berlin with its youth network BerlinUnited and the Ecumenical Council Berlin-Brandenburg. This response summed it up well: "To unite over confessional boundaries in prayer and to bring in their own profile and the richness of this tradition - equal and in the brotherly respect of others - that comes very close to the prayer of Jesus '... that they may all be one'. And it's a taste of what I imagine heaven will be like. Hopefully this will happen again next year." **Prayer: Many reasons for thanks!**

District Offices and Senate Administrations

In order to prevent financial collapse, the number of staff in the Berlin administrations was massively reduced beginning in 2001 (60% in the districts, and 10% in the senate administrations). In addition, state-owned or district-owned properties were sold or leased. The training of staff has been essentially discontinued, so there is a lack of younger employees in the administrations. Recently, the districts were once again allowed to recruit significantly more staff. However, there are problems: there are no qualified administrators; newcomers not only lack the expertise, but also knowledge of administrative processes; there is little time left for the transfer of knowledge from the "old hands" to younger employees; there are too few workspaces for newly hired employees. Partly because of lack of space, the new employees that are urgently needed and - finally - approved by the Senate have not been employed. In addition, the processes from application to recruitment are very cumbersome, tedious and outdated. For many applicants, an employment offer comes too late.

How to get these problems under control is controversial. The Senate blames the districts; the districts see the blame on the Senate level. The communication between both sides is clearly disturbed. The Governing Mayor now wants to extend his rights of intervention in

district powers, but the districts and the district mayors are not open to this.

Prayer:

- **Pray that the state and the districts would be willing to seek solutions together**
- **Pray for a new willingness to talk and a new culture of discussion between those responsible**
- **Pray for suitable applicants for vacancies and that positions will quickly be filled**
- **Pray for solutions for lack of space and more vocational training places**

Overload and staff shortage in the judiciary and police

The frequent outbreaks from the Berlin prisons over the past few weeks are not the only reason for the necessity of effective and rapid measures. For a long time there has been a massive lack of personnel in courts, prisons and the police. The prison system is lacking around 200 employees, though the prisons are fully occupied. The director of the Moabit prison reported: The consequence of the lack of staff is "that every prisoner gets less care and less attention than he should actually get, in order for us to fulfill our legal mandate. This results in more risk for both my employees and for the State of Berlin." The Justice Senator wants to hire more staff. This applies, on the one hand, to the 150 trainees who are finally completing their training this year and to other prison staff, but also to judges with special attention to the juvenile division. A significant increase in the number of staff in the police has already been decided, but of course, it will take time until the applicants are fully trained.

Prayer

- **Thank God that prisons are once again training staff**
- **Pray that prison personnel will be protected against overload and for good success in the care of detainees**
- **Pray for a faster resolution of staff shortages in the judiciary and police**

University Contracts

In mid-January, the university contracts between the State of Berlin and the Berlin universities including the

Charité hospital were signed. For the first time, the contracts will be valid for five years, from 2018 to 2022, thus offering universities greater planning security. The total volume amounts to 8.1 billion euros, which is to be used to improve the study and employment conditions. Thus, finally, more scientific staff of the academic middle-class can be employed indefinitely. It will also support measures that drive the digitization and free availability of research results. The topics of integration and migration research, Islamic theology, as well as peace, conflict and terrorism research will also be promoted.

Prayer:

- **Thank God that money has been put aside for education and better employment in the area of science**
- **Pray that funds will be used effectively and responsibly**
- **Pray that the responsibility for the funded research topics will be given to Spirit-filled people**

More Homeless

The number of homeless is increasing: At present, at least 10,000 homeless people live in Berlin. Some experts estimate the number even higher. Every year, between 500 and 1,000 homeless people come to Berlin, mainly from Eastern European countries. Since there is a shortage of shelters, many of them had been sleeping in the Berlin Tiergarten park, but this was cleared last year before winter came. For the first time, districts, senate administrations and NGOs jointly discussed the problem at the first strategy conference on homelessness in the capital. The goal is to be able in the future to offer every homeless at least one emergency shelter.

Prayer:

- **Thank God for the first joint search for a solution between the parties involved**
- **Pray for a sufficient number of shelters**
- **Pray for sustainable, timely and visible solutions to improve the situation**

Accelerate Housing Construction

It is undisputed that Berlin needs more housing as quickly as possible, especially housing that is affordable for low incomes. Berlin is not fulfilling the quota of 25% social housing in new construction that was intended in the "Berlin model" of the Senate. In addition, there is a growing need for housing for mid-level incomes. The housing policy of the Senate is being generally criticized, especially the Senator for City Development Katrin Lomscher (Linke), also by their coalition partner SPD. The focus on public companies does not do justice to the fact that 90 percent of the new construction in Berlin has been given to private companies

and property developers. In addition, the announced "urban development housing plan" is overdue. Apparently, in recent years the Senate has hardly ever acquired land offered by the federal government at a preferential price. The federal government and Berlin are blaming each other for this.

Another factor causing delay is the (legally stipulated) public participation: Everyone wants the construction of new apartments, but of course not on their own doorstep! The common good, however, must always be higher than individual interests. It is also urgent that the time needed for building permits and preliminary construction decisions be shortened. All in all, the new housing construction in Berlin obviously requires stronger political control and more effective cooperation between the Senate and the districts. However, whether a central Steering Committee for Urban Development should be set up is a matter of dispute between the coalition partners. The home exchange that is being set up seems to be a good new idea.

Prayer:

- **Pray for a rapid end to the roadblocks and delays in the construction of new housing**
- **Pray for agreement between the Senate departments, the federal government and the districts**
- **Pray for creative, new ideas for more living space**

Keeping on: BER and Tegel airports

Unfortunately, a continuing long-term issue! All the more reason for prayer. The fight continues: There is a new legal opinion commissioned by the Senate which makes the continued operation of Tegel almost impossible. The opposition (FDP and parts of the CDU) however continues to demand the continued use of Tegel. The federal government and the States of Brandenburg and Berlin maintain their position that Tegel must close six months after the BER opens. The construction costs of BER have risen again. The probability of the announced opening date for 2020 seems to be increasing. So keep on: Let us continue to pray for the end of the unfruitful quarrels, that sloppiness and corruption will be revealed and for a quick completion of the BER and for the optimal use of Tegel!

Dates:

February 14, 6 pm: Prayer for the City, Rotes Rathaus

February 23, 5pm: Prayer for the Kotti, Gebetskeller am Kottbusser Tor, Adalbertstr. 97

March 10, 11 am to 4 pm: Day of Prayer and Fasting for North Korea, Lukas-Gemeinde, Kurfürstenstr. 133, 10785 Berlin