



Edition 171 – February 2019

Good News: Day of Prayer EINS (ONE)

On January 19th, the Berlin Day of Prayer (also as the conclusion of the Alliance Week of Prayer) took place for the second time. Together for Berlin with its youth network Berlin United, the Evangelical Alliance and the Ecumenical Council organized the event—most probably unique nationwide because of its unique breadth. Around 450 Christians from 95 (!) churches and fellowships celebrated and prayed together. Two short plenary parts with spiritual input, musically enriched by the praise band of a Russian-German worship band and the choir of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, were the framework of the event. 18 prayer stations helped people to get to know different Christian prayer traditions or to intercede together. Participants then had the opportunity to fellowship with one another over a meal. In the evening, around 500 mostly young people came together for a prayer concert.

Prayer:

- **Thank God for the blessed day and for the testimony of unity in diversity**
- **Pray that a movement will evolve that honours God and transforms the city**

Less Crime, more Violence

Police chief Barbara Slowik presented the 2018 crime statistics. In 2018, there were positive developments in crime. The total number of offenses fell by 1.5 percent, and the number of thefts decreased. The number of pickpockets fell by more than 20 percent. Also, the number of burglaries in single-family homes fell again by about 16 percent. Better cooperation with the Polish police resulted in 15 percent fewer car thefts. The number of bicycle thefts also fell. However, the number of serious violent crimes is still alarmingly high. Also, the number of violent crimes against the police increased again last year by 3 percent. Most attacks do not happen during riot demos, but in everyday operations - such as in traffic controls, when drivers feel wronged. It can also quickly become dangerous when the police are called because of disturbing party noise. Even if police are alerted about domestic violence, they must pay more attention to "self-security", because not infrequently, the aggression of a violent man will also be directed against the officials in such situations. The focal points of violence against police officers are, above all, certain neighbourhoods in Neukölln, Ge-

sundbrunnen and Marzahn-Hellersdorf. Slowik identified a latent aggressiveness and a lowered inhibition threshold as the reason behind many attacks on police officers. There is also a problem of lack of appreciation and recognition for the police in the general population. (Source: Berliner Kurier 12/27/2018)

Prayer:

- **Thank God for the decreasing crime rate**
- **Pray for protection of the police against violence**
- **Pray for effective action to reduce violence and crime**
- **Pray that God's peace will touch the hearts, minds and deeds of the perpetrators**

Apartments – building new or buying back

Berlin urgently needs more apartments. The Senate clearly lags behind its self-imposed new building goals. Many accuse the Senate of doing too little. The Governing Mayor Müller, SPD, supports a proposal of his coalition partners from the Greens and the Left, which is being discussed very controversially. The Senate plans to buy back up to 50,000 apartments from the private housing company Deutsche Wohnen. This should mean that the rents will remain affordable. The former municipal apartments were privatized in 2004 when public coffers were empty. Finance Senator Kollatz, SPD, has now warned against exaggerated expectations. The financial resources of the federal state of Berlin allow for at most "selective acquisitions" and would have to be economically justifiable. Critics complain that no new apartments would be made available through repurchase and that billions are no longer available for the much-needed new housing construction.

Prayer:

- **Pray that the Senate will make housing construction a real priority**
- **Pray for a de-ideologisation of the debate about buying back flats**
- **Pray for effective measures to cap rents**

More anti-Semitic attacks

Since four months, the Prosecutor General's Office has an anti-Semitism commissioner, Chief Prosecutor

Claudia Vanoni. She said, "There has been a recent increase in hatred against Jewish citizens. I have the impression that anti-Semitism is becoming louder, more open and aggressive. In addition, in Berlin, the most anti-Semitic offenses are recorded in relation to the number of inhabitants nationwide." Jews often try to avoid places where anti-Semitism is bad or could be expected to hit them. This is often not possible for schoolchildren. They are particularly vulnerable because they have to go to their school. Based on 227 interviews, the Frankfurt sociologist Julia Bernstein came to the conclusion that teachers often fail to recognize the anti-Semitic nature of the increasingly common curse word "Jew" and that school leaders deny that there is anti-Semitism - out of fear that the reputation of the school could be harmed.

Prayer:

- **Pray for state protection for Jewish people and institutions and that Christians will play an active role in advocacy against anti-Semitism**
- **Pray for blessing for the anti-Semitism commissioner**
- **Pray for help and support for teachers in dealing with anti-Semitic incidents**

Anniversary year: 30 years of the fall of the Berlin Wall

30 years of the fall of the Berlin Wall in Berlin: In 2019, Berlin and Germany celebrate the anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. To celebrate this historic event, a large number of events and exhibitions will take place in the capital, dealing with the construction of the Berlin Wall and the division of Berlin, the Cold War and the Peaceful Revolution of 1989. Not only in the run-up to and around the 9th of November, but all year long, such events will be taking place in Berlin. An overview of events already planned can be found here: <https://www.visitberlin.de/de/veranstaltungen-30-jahre-mauerfall>

Prayer:

- **Pray for further promotion of the culture of remembrance**
- **Pray that God gets the honour for intervening in our history 30 years ago**

Urban research series: quality of life is deceleration

Good quality of life requires open spaces, which means green areas, but also that not every wasteland space is built up. In addition, quality of life means a Berlin neighbourhood structure where you can reach everything for everyday needs by foot or by bike. Ariane Sept is doing her PhD on deceleration in urban development. Core ideas are similar to the Slow Food initiative, which places value on proximity to the product

through local cuisine as opposed to fast food. This means building a stronger connection of the residents to their city, perhaps by creating meeting places and reducing distances, so that people have to commute less. After all, how should one build a connection to a place through which one only passes through? That's why, according to Septs, active civic engagement is the best way to do that, as it strengthens identification with the place and the neighborhood.

Prayer:

- **Pray for more spaces of recreation, of respite, places to meet others, which also counteract the reciprocal alienation**
- **Pray that the people of our city time and again have moments of reflection, contemplation and reflection, in which they encounter questions about life and God**

Hotspot Schools

Language deficits, truancy, violence – teachers at hotspot schools in Berlin often have to deal with these problems. There, more than 80 percent of children are freed from having to pay for books and learning material, because their families are poor. Most of them also have a high proportion of children from Hartz IV households or migration families. In December, it was decided to pay teachers 300 Euros a month more with retroactive effect at the beginning of the school year. This is to acknowledge the particularly difficult work of the teachers in these schools. The new allowance will benefit 2,298 educators at 58 facilities. The regulation also applies to those who are changing careers and also indirectly to the staff in day-care centres.

Prayer:

- **Pray that educators will have strength, patience and love**

Keeping on: Speed limit 30

At six measuring points in the city, the annual limit of 40 micrograms was exceeded last year. This is shown by an evaluation of the preliminary hourly data of the Berlin Environmental Senate Administration, published by the Federal Environment Agency. At all 17 Berlin measuring points, the air quality improved after April 8th - although speed limits had not been introduced everywhere. This suggests that so far no impact on air quality has been detected by speed limit 30 km per hour. - Let's continue to pray for air quality improvement, especially on busy roads!

Dates

Jan. 29, 7:30pm: Holocaust Remembrance Event sponsored by the Initiative January 27, Centrum Judaicum, Oranienburger Str. 28

Feb. 13, 6pm: Prayer for City Politicians in front of the Rote Rathaus