

Peace Road 2024 Berlin, Germany: Respect - Reconciliation - Unity: We Are One Human Family

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Under the motto 'Respect - Reconciliation - Unity: we are one human family', Peace Road Berlin 2024 participants visited several landmarks that motivated us to think, pray, talk and sing about suffering, injustice, war, forgiveness, reconciliation and peace.

Cyclists and marchers started together at the Brandenburg Gate with an orientation and explanation of the inner meaning of the event. Our route from the US embassy towards the nearby Russian embassy symbolized bridging Alaska and Siberia. In 1981, Father Moon proposed a major tunnel-and-bridge project as part of the International Peace Highway to connect the two nations.

We sang "Let there be peace on earth - and let it begin with me" in the median strip facing the Russian embassy, where Ukrainians had set up a small informative memorial.

At the Holocaust memorial, Hilke Ganz offered a moving prayer, touching on the importance of the mission of we who are alive today to heal the crimes of our forefathers. From there, the marchers and the cyclists went on different routes, only to meet again at the Chapel of Reconciliation at the Berlin Wall memorial - a couple of hours and an unexpected strong downpour later.

The cyclists, passing thousands of soccer fans in downtown Berlin (assembled for the EM finals later that evening), rode to the embassies of South Korea and Ukraine and other sites connected to current and past conflicts to pray and envision scenarios of reconciliation and peaceful new starts.

The marchers passed by the North Korean embassy, the Peter Fechter memorial, and the busts of Gorbachev, Bush, and Kohl, the 'fathers of German Unification.'

The Peter Fechter memorial pays tribute to a young man of that name who, as an 18-year-old, bled to death in the so-called death strip in 1962 after being shot down from the wall as he and a friend tried to escape to West Berlin. This memorial now stands exactly where in 1987, the affiliated student organization CARP held a large rally calling for the Berlin Wall to be torn down.

As we walked and shared a light lunch, many stories were shared about Germany's division and reunification.

Peace Road Berlin 2024 was made particularly special by the participation and input of several members of two meditation and healing groups, as well as a married couple who are pastors and ambassadors for peace. Their input made our short closing event rich and peaceful.