

# THE HOUSE OF ONE BERLIN

**Three Religions. One home.**

A House of Prayer and Learning  
For Good Relations among  
Judaism, Christianity, and Islam  
in the Heart of Berlin





**IN BERLIN SOMETHING  
UNIQUE IS CREATED,  
THE HOUSE OF ONE:  
THE WORLD'S FIRST  
COMMON HOUSE  
OF PRAYER AND  
LEARNING BUILD  
BY JEWS, CHRISTIANS  
AND MUSLIMS –  
SYNAGOGUE, CHURCH  
AND MOSQUE UNDER  
ONE ROOF.**

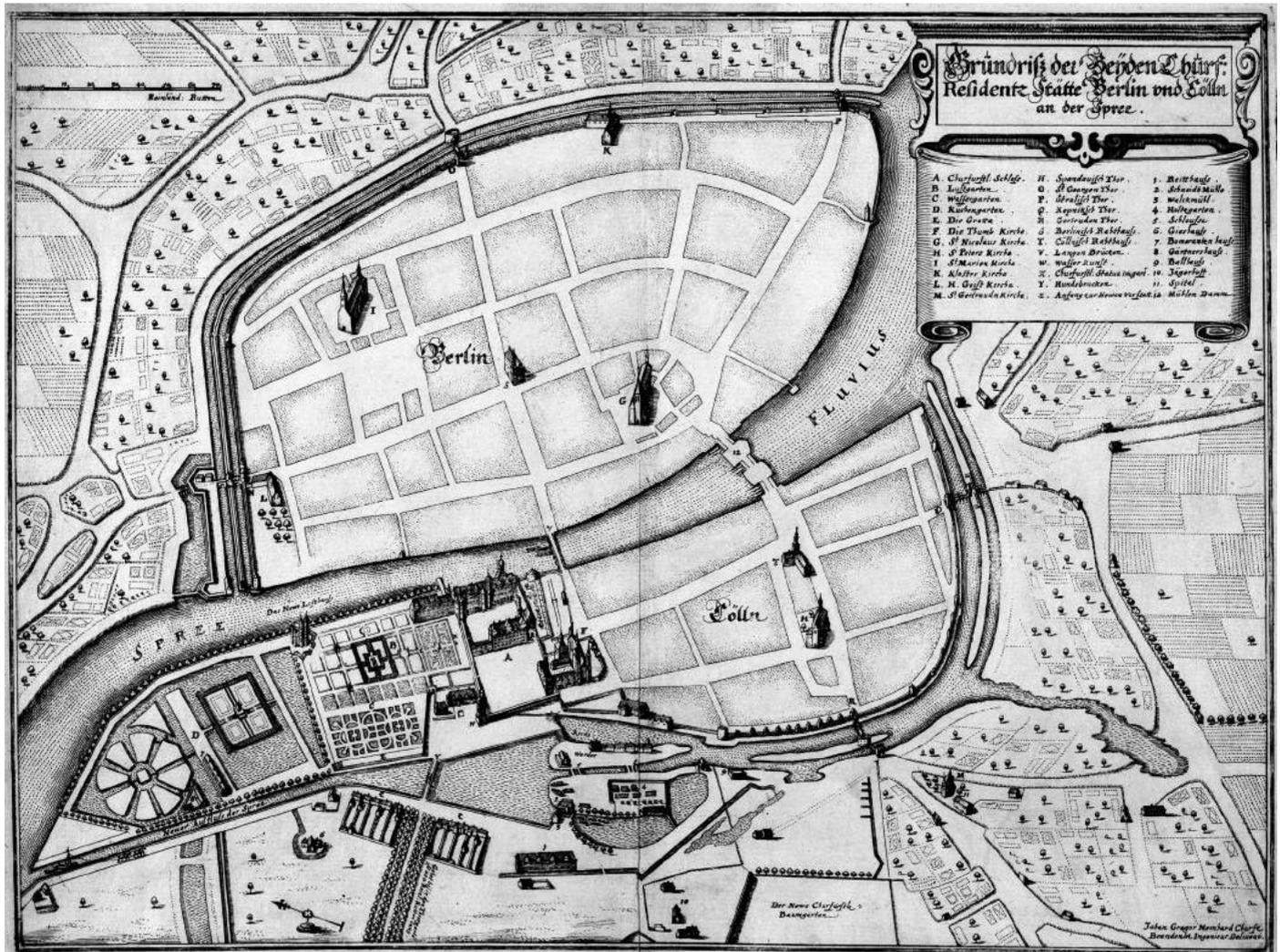
A HOUSE IN WHICH A SHARED CENTRAL SPACE GIVES ROOM FOR ENCOUNTER AND DISCUSSION.

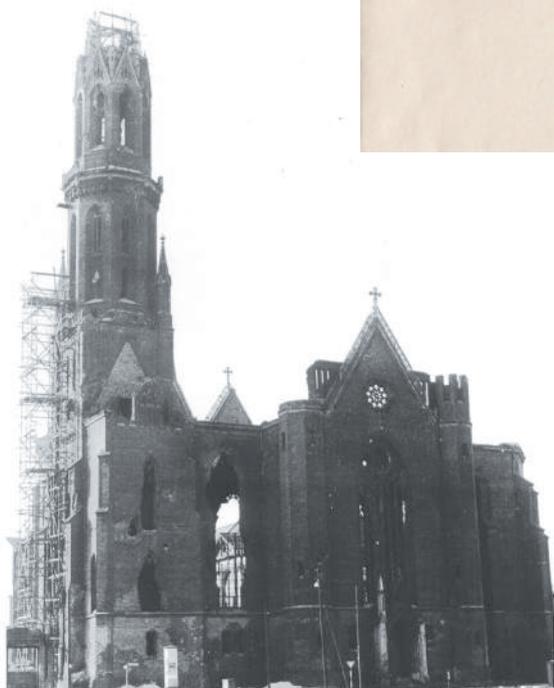
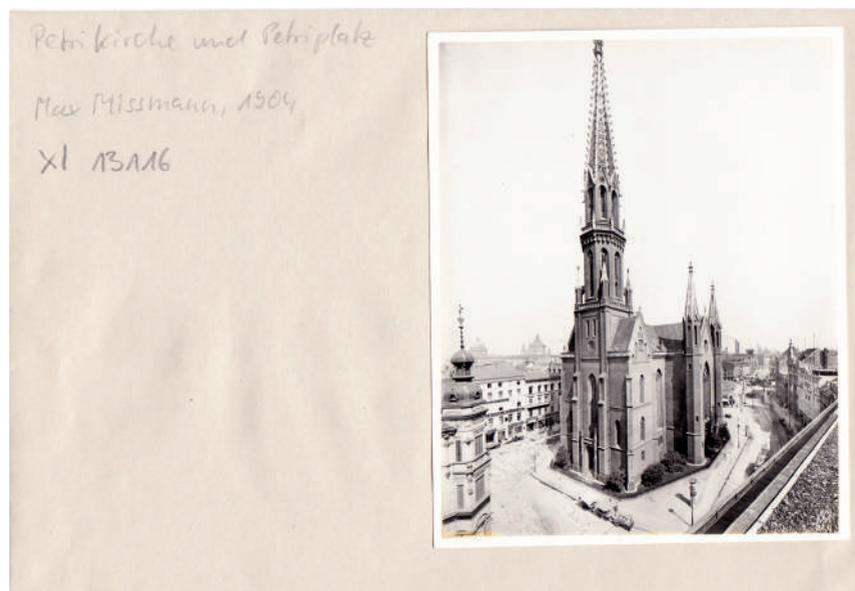
A HOUSE OF DIALOGUE, UNDERSTANDING AND PEACE.

# THE SITE

# PETRIPLATZ IN THE HEART OF BERLIN

The twin cities of Berlin and Cölln in the 17th century with the church of St. Peter on the island in the river spree





Top right: the church of St. Peter and Petriplatz in 1904 © Max Missmann /  
left: St. Peter in 1960 © Gerhard Boß / above: remains of the pulpit © Gerhard Boß

**BERLIN IS A CITY WITH GREAT SUCCESSES IN IT'S HISTORY, AS WELL AS IMMEASURABLE GUILT.** THE EMANCIPATION OF THE JEWS IN 1800 AND THE HOLOCAUST 1933-45, THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE WALL IN 1961 AS A SYMBOL OF A DIVIDED WORLD, AND THE PEACEFUL FALL OF THE WALL IN 1989. ON THE MEDIEVAL FOUNDING PLACE OF THE CITY, THE HOUSE OF ONE WILL ADD A NEW, PROMISING CHAPTER TO THIS STORY.



Petriplatz, in the center of Berlin, was the seed from which this modern metropolis sprang forth. Situated just 200 meters from the Schlossplatz, it was long forgotten.

This is the site where the medieval twin city of Berlin-Cölln was founded in the 13th century and later became the urban heart of Cölln. In 1964, the East German authorities ordered the last of the churches of St.Peter built on the site demolished. A parking lot ef-  
faced the original structure of the square completely.

Archeological excavations carried out between 2007 and 2009 helped raise awareness of the enormous significance of this place from which Berlin originated. Among the traces of history discovered under the pavement were a Latin School, 220,000 artifacts from Berlin's history, and the foundations and construction blocks of three churches of St.Peter. This posed an important question: **What does Berlin need to have, in this place at its very center, a place laden with symbolism, where that began what is now a metropolis called Berlin?**



left: Petriplatz today © Peter Rogge

right: The House of One, view from Petriplatz © KuehnMalvezzi



“AT THE BIRTHPLACE  
OF BERLIN, WHERE ITS  
FIRST CHURCH STOOD,  
**SOMETHING NEW** IS  
ABOUT TO HAPPEN.

FROM THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE OLD CHURCH WILL NOW GROW A SACRED HOUSE OF SEVERAL RELIGIONS. THE PEOPLE IN IT WILL REMAIN TRUE TO THEIR OWN FAITH, LIVING OUT OF ITS STRENGTH, AND ENTER INTO A CONVERSATION WITH EACH OTHER AND WITH THE SECULAR URBAN SOCIETY. IT WILL BE A HOUSE OF JUSTICE, PEACE AND RECONCILIATION.”

—

MINISTER GREGOR HOHBERG

# THE CONCEPT

Petriplatz must be reclaimed for the city. We want to restore this place's symbolic importance as a traditional locus of interplay between religious and civic life in a way that also points the way forward.

The fundamental idea is as follows: as the “coming together” of the religions becomes increasingly perceptible, our task is not merely to stand by as observers, but rather to boldly engage with the process, in the knowledge that there is a growing need for interaction among people with different religious and philosophical views and that it is absolutely imperative to deal with socially controversial issues related to religion(s). This will help us get beyond hasty judgments and pigeonholing to initiate a religious discussion in our city that enlightens, seeks the truth, and exudes positivity.

Accordingly, we are building something new on Petriplatz: a new type of building, a house of prayer and learning, open to all, in which Jews, Christians, and Muslims can worship and get to know one another while engaging with the secular majority of the city as well, seeking dialogue and discourse – a house of prayer and at the same time a house of interdisciplinary study of the religions, their history, and their current role in Berlin and in Germany.



The House of One, view from Brüderstraße © KuehnMalvezzi

**SOMETHING ENTIRELY NEW IS TO TAKE SHAPE ON PETRIPLATZ:**

A HOUSE OF WORSHIP THAT THE THREE MONOTHEISTIC RELIGIONS, JUDAISM, ISLAM, AND CHRISTIANITY, HAVE JOINTLY CONCEIVED AND CONSTRUCTED AND THAT THEY WILL RUN TOGETHER WITH EACH OTHER, WITHOUT EVER MIXING THEIR INDIVIDUAL IDENTITIES.



above: *The House of One*, view from Gertraudenstrasse © KuehnMalvezzi | right: *The House of One*, Urban loggia © KuehnMalvezzi





The central domed hall © KuehnMalvezzi

**SOMETHING ENTIRELY NEW IS TO TAKE SHAPE ON PETRIPLATZ:**

A UNIQUE, PEACEFUL PLACE FOR ENCOUNTER AND EXCHANGE BETWEEN PEOPLE OF DIFFERENT RELIGIONS AND OF THOSE WHO ARE FAR FROM THE RELIGIONS. EVERYONE IS INVITED TO COME. EVERY INTEREST, EVERY QUESTION, EVERY SUPPORT IS WELCOME.

**SOMETHING ENTIRELY NEW IS TO TAKE SHAPE ON PETRIPLATZ:**

A RELIGIOUS BUILDING, INITIATED AND RUN BY THE RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES THEMSELVES IN ORDER TO EXPRESS THEIR FAITH IN GOD IN A WAY THAT RESONATES WITH THE MODERN WORLD AND TO CREATE A LASTING SPACE FOR REFLECTION AND DISCOURSE.



Winning design by the architectural firm of Kuehn Malvezzi in the Architectural Competition 2012, model of the building in its urban context © Michel Koczny

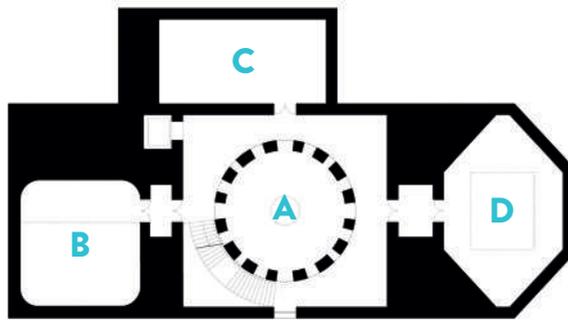
# THE ARCHITECTURE

Given the three religions' respective self-conceptions, this can only happen in a way that preserves theological differences and contradictions rather than glossing over them. The physical form of this new building will therefore be based on the principle that each of the religions should have its own separate worship space (House of Prayer), which opens into a shared central space (House of Learning). Separately (in their respective Houses of Worship) and yet in direct contact with one another, the new building will be a church, synagogue, and mosque under one roof.

As a contemporary expression of religious life, or, more poetically, the realization of the three religions' vision of heaven in brick and mortar, the new House of Prayer and Learning requires an up-to-date architectural vocabulary. Thus, it should neither be a convention center nor an office building, but rather an edifice that addresses the spirit, a house that evokes the grandeur, tranquility, otherness and beauty of that different, transcendent reality that we can only approach.

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*Accordingly, the architectural competition, a limited, one-stage competition launched in 2012, was of primary importance. Our main objective was not simply to choose architects who had already designed and built significant religious buildings – in light of the novelty of the architectural task, we wanted to solicit the greatest possible spectrum of architectural ideas. To achieve this, the competition was structured such that ten architectural firms were invited directly to submit designs, while other participants were selected through a world-wide application process prior to the actual competition. A selection committee chose 32 participants from among the 208 applications received from 14 countries. Thus, a total of 42 teams of architects were requested to submit designs. The jury chaired by Professor Hans Kollhoff selected the design of the Berlin firm Kuehn Malvezzi the winner by a unanimous vote.*

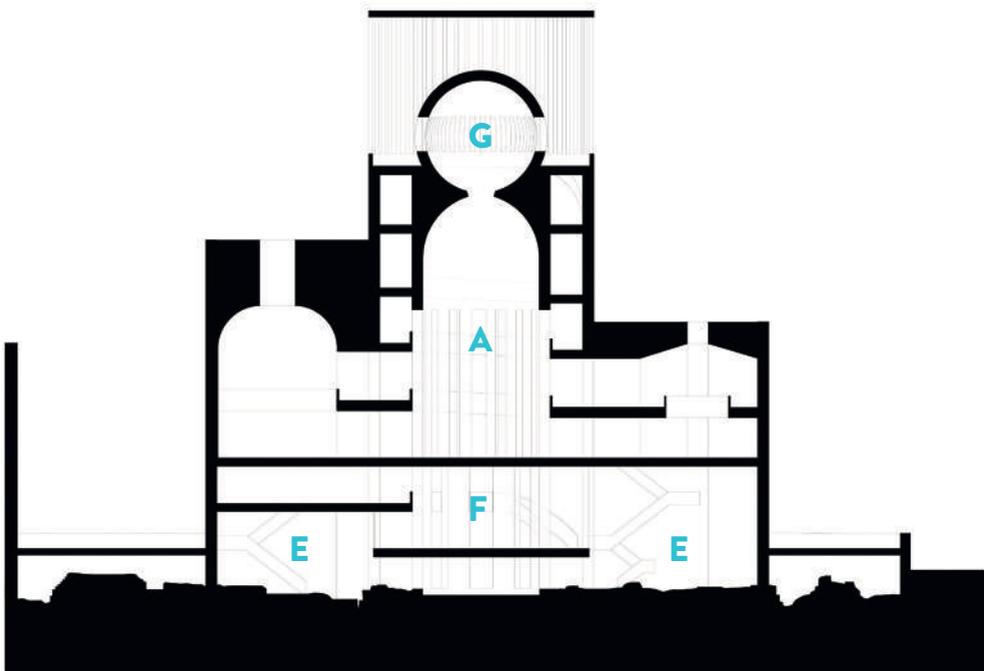


### Grundriss

#### The House of One, arrangement of the four interior spaces

© KuehnMalvezzi

- A central domed hall
- B Mosque
- C Church
- D Synagogue



#### The House of One, cross-section of the building

© KuehnMalvezzi

- A Domed hall and sacral spaces
- E Archeological site, library and meeting room
- F Foyer
- G Urban loggia

# “THE SHARED DOMED HALL AND THE TOWN LOGGIA SERVE AS A **SYMBOL**

OF THE TELEOLOGICAL ASPECT, THE GOAL OF OUR LIFE IN PERFECTION. THE THREE DIFFERENT PRAYER ROOMS, WHICH ADJOIN THE HALL, STRENGTHEN THE INDIVIDUALITY OF EACH ONE. IN THE DOMED HALL THE CONNECTION IS MADE. IT SERVES AS A BRIDGE. THIS IS SOMETHING REVOLUTIONARY IN EVERY RELIGION: THERE CAN BE NO TRUTH, BASED ON THE DENIAL OF THE RIGHT TO EXIST OF THE TRUTH OF THE OTHER.”

—  
RABBI TOVIA BEN CHORIN



# THE PARTNERS

**FOR A GOOD RELATION AMONG JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM:** ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ASSOCIATION  
BET- UND LEHRHAUS PETRIPLATZ BERLIN E. V. IN 2011



The partners responsible for this new religious building are the Jewish Community of Berlin, the Abraham Geiger College, Forum for Intercultural Dialog and the Protestant Congregation of St. Peter and St. Mary. Each of these institutions represents its respective religion. However, none of them claim to be exclusive representatives. Other institutions or groups invited and approved by the partners jointly can also lend their voice, thus giving expression to the full diversity of life in each of the three religions.

Through a charter governing interactions between the partners – comparable to “House Rules” – the four institutions have created a binding commitment and the basic regulations governing honest dealings with one another. The binding quality of the Charter, which extends beyond a mere declaration of intent, derives from its connection to the by-laws of the non-profit organization “Bet- und Lehrhaus Petriplatz Berlin e.V.”, which was founded in October 2011 by the partners in the construction project.

Along with the association’s board of directors, a high-ranking Board of Trustees will present the idea and concept of the new building to the public, supervise the planning and construction processes, and work to ensure that the community of religions in the House of Prayer and Learning is based on rigorous scholarly and theological underpinnings in order to foster productive and meaningful dialogue.

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*According to its bylaws, the purpose of the association consists of the “promotion of the construction of a House of Prayer and Learning for the three monotheistic religions, Islam, Judaism, and Christianity at the site of the former Church of St. Peter in Berlin-Mitte, of the provision of consultancy during the construction, and of its operation. By its work, and in coordination and dialogue with the Land of Berlin, the association aims to contribute to mutual understanding among the religions by practicing forms of coexistence and cooperation that promote peace and social justice while protecting creation. The core conceptual principles of the new House of Prayer and Learning as well as the binding agreements for the coexistence and cooperation of the three religions at this site have been laid out in a ‘Charter for a Partnership of Judaism, Christianity and Islam in the Conceptual Development, Construction, and Use of a new House of Prayer and Learning on Petriplatz Berlin in Berlin,’ which is attached as an appendix and constitutes an integral component of the bylaws and delineates the substantive framework for the association’s activities.” (Section 2)*

## MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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**Dr. Bertold Höcker** Superintendent of the Ev. Kirchenkreis Berlin-Stadtmitte (Protestant Church District of Berlin-Stadtmitte)

**Prof. Dr. Walter Homolka** Rector of the Abraham Geiger College

**Gabriel Goltz** Federal Ministry of the Interior, Intercultural Dialogue

**Dr. Gideon Joffe** Chairman of the Jewish Community of Berlin

**Regula Lüscher** Senatsbaudirektorin (Director of Urban Development for the Senate of Berlin)

**Prof. Dr. Dr. hc. mult. Hermann Parzinger** Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz (President of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation)

**Dagmar Reim** Intendant of Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg (rbb)

**Katharina Steer-Beck** Chairwoman of Evangelische Kirchengemeinde St. Petri – St. Marien

**Tim Renner** State Secretary for Culture, Berlin

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**Imam Kadir Sancı / Cebrail Terlemex, Forum für interkulturellen Dialog e.V. – FID (Forum for Intercultural Dialog)**

**Rabbi Dr. Tovia Ben-Chorin / Maya Zehden, Jüdische Gemeinde zu Berlin (Jewish Community of Berlin)**



“THE HOUSE OF ONE IS IMPORTANT FOR US AS A PLACE WHERE QUESTIONS ARE ANSWERED ABOUT ISLAM, WITHOUT ANY DISTORTIONS THAT SOLIDIFY THE ENEMY OF ISLAM; IN AN

ATMOSPHERE  
OF OPENNESS  
THAT GIVES US AS  
MUSLIMS A  
**HOME** IN THE CITY  
AND IN THIS  
COUNTRY.”

—

IMAM KADIR SANCI

# CHARTER

## FOR A PARTNERSHIP OF JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM **IN THE CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT, CONSTRUCTION, AND USE OF A NEW HOUSE OF PRAYER AND LEARNING ON PETRIPLATZ IN BERLIN**

### PREAMBLE

On Petriplatz, where the medieval city of Berlin-Cölln was founded, something new is about to arise: a new edifice, a house of prayer and learning, open to all, in which Jews, Christians, and Muslims can worship and get to know one another and engage with the secular majority of the city as well, seeking dialogue and discourse – a house of prayer and at the same time a house of interdisciplinary study of the religions, their history, and their current role in Berlin and in Germany. Petriplatz, the seed from which this city grew up, was shaped by religion in significant ways. From its beginnings through the centuries, it has witnessed the interpenetration of religion and the city's civic culture. The first resident of the city whose name is known was a pastor of the Petrikirche, mentioned in a document dated 1237. That year has been taken by the history books as the year of Berlin's founding and has served as the point of reference for the city's anniversary celebrations.

The House of Prayer and Learning will breathe new life into Petriplatz as a landmark representing the engagement between the three monotheistic religions and the city, and among the religions themselves, that is free from bias and prejudice. In this way, it will restore this place's symbolic importance as a traditional locus of interplay between religious and civic life, while taking into account the changed circumstances of our time. If we succeed in granting each of the religions a space in which they can live openly and engage with the public; if we succeed in fostering reflection on our own identities and those of others from multiple perspectives while also being accessible to others, and that together; if the representatives of the three religions engage with one another such that those who seek and inquire about religion find our approach enriching and come to us for (three) initial answers; if we succeed in all this, then Berlin will find its future in the very place of its birth, and the city will benefit from the best that the three religions have to offer.

Given the three religions' respective self-conceptions, this can only happen in a way that preserves theological differences and contradictions rather than glossing over them. The new building will therefore be structured to grant each of the religions its own separate worship space (House of Prayer), which opens

into a shared central space (House of Learning). Separately (in the respective Houses of Worship) and yet in immediate, tangible proximity, the new building is a church, synagogue, and mosque under one roof.

Judaism, Islam, and Christianity share a faith in a "world-transcending creator, who created humankind and made men and women free so that they might be stewards of the world and work to make it just." (Wolf Krötke) The three religions are related through their orientation toward canonical scripture and their – thoroughly diverse – references to biblical figures such as Noah, Abraham, or Ismael. A more critical examination yields an even greater array of commonalities and structural parallels. "In the back and forth between religious traditions with regard to various specific problem areas, [we must] discover anew those things that unite and separate us," and the ways in which they are interwoven with each respective religious practice and way of life (Klaus von Stosch).

Notwithstanding all that divides the religions, which will endure and which should not be buried but rather, honored with the "praise of difference" (Navid Kermani), there is a shared history among the religions, a history of suffering and injustice, but also of successful coexistence.

The foundation on which the construction and future use of the new House of Prayer and Learning will rest is our commitment to carrying this history forward each and every day in the middle of Berlin, writing the next chapters as a story of peace rather than as a story of evil. "People and nations and creeds will remain separate. They will live on as different entities. But they will know that they belong together, that they are all part of one humanity, that they should live together on this earth, recognizing and understanding one another, and, when there is need, helping one another." (Leo Baeck)

In this spirit and in an earnest effort to achieve mutual understanding, the undersigned pledge to pursue ways of living together that promote peace and social justice and preserve nature.

## I.

The faiths and traditions of the three religions have in common several core values meant to be lived and realized, in our hearts and by our deeds. From these are derived corresponding fundamental intentions to act, which are of critical importance to the undersigned, who will build and use the new House of Prayer and Learning (cf. Parliament of World Religions, Chicago 1993).

### A. Commitment to a culture of non-violence and respect for all life

In times in which violence in word and deed threatens peace within each religion, in the city, and in the nation, the interactions among the three religions and between the religions and the larger society must be governed by a culture that serves as a beacon to the city, one in which prejudice and injustice are countered non-violently, so as to safeguard and accept the dignity and identity of each and every person and in this way satisfy the rights and duties enshrined in the Basic Law of Germany. Accordingly, the signatories will not oppress or harm any other person. They reject any kind of violence as a means of dealing with differences and likewise pledge not to provide material or moral support to third parties whose actions run counter to this culture of non-violence.

### B. Commitment to a culture of solidarity

It is the wish of the involved parties that the construction and future use of the House of Prayer and Learning should be distinguished by mutual respect, a desire for exchange, and reciprocal consideration. The undersigned pledge to respect the life, dignity, individuality, and diversity of their partners.

### C. Commitment to a culture of respect and a life of integrity

Respect for others grows with respect for one's self. If a dialogue among the monotheistic religions were to descend into sanctimonious lecturing on the one hand or, on the other, a white-washing of differences that effaces one's own identity, then it has failed. Instead, the purpose of this enterprise concerns the public and transparent representation of each of the religions through worship as well as through conversation with the other religions – and all those who are interested and seek out the House of Prayer and Learning with curiosity and questions.

### D. Commitment to a culture of equal rights

The participants in the construction and use of the House of Prayer and Learning, invited by the Protestant Congregation of St. Peter and St. Mary, shall be equal partners and accord one another mutual respect in all their dealings. None of the religious communities intends to connect their involvement in the construction and use of the new House of Prayer and Learning with the goal of proselytizing to the other religious communities. No person, whether man or woman, should be viewed or treated as a second-class citizen or exploited in any way.

## II.

In accordance with Section 1 and thus with the basic principle the Charter and the purpose of the bylaws of the non-profit association, "A New House of Prayer and Learning for Good Relations among Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in the Heart of Berlin" (Ein neues Bet- und Lehrhaus auf dem Petriplatz für eine gute Nachbarschaft von Judentum, Christentum und Islam im Herzen Berlins), the undersigned, who will construct and use the new religious building, explicitly reject the following:

**A.** Actions that belittle or disparage the other religious communities or which encourage third parties to such belittling actions. These include actions and words that serve to disseminate false claims about the other religious communities which the party making the claims knows to be false.

**B.** Actions that directly serve political purposes, i.e. which directly further the intentions of a country, a party, or a political organization.

## III.

The representatives of the religious communities are subject to the following binding agreements with regard to their work together on the construction and use of the House of Prayer and Learning:

**A.** The individual institutions, which are responsible for the project through their membership in the association "House of Prayer and Learning Petriplatz, Berlin" (Bet- und Lehrhaus Petriplatz Berlin e. V.), each represent their respective religions. However, none of them claim to be the exclusive representative. Subject to the requirement of unanimous approval by the board of the association, other institutions may also join the project and lend their voice, thus giving expression to the full diversity of life in each of the three religions, as long as they also pledge to uphold the principles of this Charter in their use of the House of Prayer and Learning.

**B.** Disputes between the institutions representing the religions regarding their substantive work or the use of the facility will be decided by the board of the Bet- und Lehrhaus Petriplatz Berlin e. V. association after consultation with the Board of Trustees and/or the academic advisory council. Each of the religious communities shall have equal representation on the board.

**C.** Actions in contravention of the principles and stipulations of this charter or the mission of the association as set forth in the bylaws will result in the offending institution being excluded from the board of the association. The procedure for such an exclusion from the board is laid out in the association bylaws.



# SUPPORTERS

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The House of one is a project by Bet- und Lehrhaus  
Petriplatz Berlin e.V.



**BET &  
LEHR  
HAUS**  
BERLIN

# DON'T JUST DREAM ABOUT PEACE. BUILD IT NOW.

The House of One will be a unique, peaceful place for encounter and exchange between people of different religions and of those who are far from the religions. Everyone is invited to come.

Constructing the House of One is a grassroots project rather than one initiated by the major »umbrella organizations.« As such the house is to be built with the help of many.

**HELP BUILDING THE HOUSE OF ONE.** Become a part of this hope-giving new beginning.

**DONATE BRICKS** for the construction with a value of EUR 10 under [www.house-of-one.org](http://www.house-of-one.org)

## ACCOUNT NUMBER FOR DONATIONS:

(for donations in Eur)

Account holder: Bet- und Lehrhaus Petriplatz Berlin e.V.

Bank: UBS AG

IBAN CH64 0020 6206 1765 9360 B

SWIFT/BIC: UBSWCHZH80A

**START YOUR OWN FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN** in your family, with your friends, with colleagues, with your students, in your community. Learn more at [www.house-of-one.org](http://www.house-of-one.org).

Every donation, every prayer, every offer of dialogue, every good word counts:

**SEND US A MESSAGE!**

**[WWW.HOUSE-OF-ONE.ORG](http://WWW.HOUSE-OF-ONE.ORG)**

