

# Prayer for Berlin



September, 2006

## *Good News – Summer in Berlin*

Millions of people from all over the world were on the streets celebrating peacefully and joyfully during the World Cup. Churches used this opportunity to invite non-members to watch the World Cup together with them and to engage them in conversations. Berlin Christians and international teams were also active along the “Festival Mile”. There were many good conversations and some people turned to Jesus. The World Cup was untouched by terror or violence—a big answer to prayer, for which we are very thankful.

One week after the end of the World Cup, 22,000 Christians from approximately 40 countries celebrated a festival of praise to Jesus in the Berlin Olympic Stadium – “Calling all Nations”. Even though the number of participants was less than we had hoped for, it was nevertheless wonderful to publicly honor and praise Jesus with so many people from all over the world, a good portion of whom were young people. Three days of concentrated prayer and praise before the event was an unforgettable experience.

## *The new school year*

School began again the end of August. During the last school year, the many problems at Berlin’s “Hauptschulen” gained national attention. A social worker is now to be present at each “Hauptschule”—that is just one of many new reforms beginning this school year. The central “Abitur” in German, math, and foreign languages will happen for the first time, and ethics classes (starting step by step from the seventh grade on) will be required. This happened in spite of protests from churches and individuals. Churches are currently using billboards with the message “Values need God” (Werte brauchen Gott) to protest this political decision.

Primary schools had a number of changes last year: After-school care was integrated into the schools, children are entering school at 5 ½ years of age, and pre-school has been eliminated. Children who are not quite ready for school can no longer be held back a year and must be integrated into first grade. These many and varied changes created additional burdens for principals and educators alike. And now there are to be even more changes. The phase in which first and second grades are being combined has begun. Students in these two grades will be taught together in one classroom.

Many of these reforms are a reaction to the PISA-shock and are designed to better the educational system. At the same time, however, new problems are being created, and there is no guarantee that the goals will be reached. For this reason, it is imperative that mistakes in this school reform be recognized and corrected early on and that further necessary reforms, for instance in the “Hauptschulen”, be made.

### **Prayer**

- **Pray for motivation and God’s help for teachers and students**
- **Pray for the willingness to recognize possible mistakes in the reform and to correct them**
- **Pray the religion classes will become an elective along with ethics classes**

## *Berlin Mitte*

### **History and Politics**

The administrative district Berlin Mitte is comprised of many smaller districts: Mitte, Moabit, Hansaviertel, Tiergarten-Sued, Wedding and Gesundbrunnen. This month we want to highlight the historical district of Berlin-Mitte. 77,800 people live in the district; approximately 17% are non-Germans.

This is the birthplace of the city: Berlin grew out of two merchant settlements, Berlin and Coelln, on both sides of the Spree. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Hohenzollerns began building their city.

Many important political events occurred in Berlin Mitte: From the rule of Friedrich II to the occupation by Napoleon, the settling of the Huguenots, the March revolution of 1848, the colourful Jewish life up until the burning of the synagogue in November, 1938, to the peace demonstrations that prepared the fall of the Wall in 1989, there was always something happening in Mitte.

From 1949 until the reunification of Germany, Mitte, as part of former East Berlin, was the representative center of the capital of East Germany with its Palast der Republik, which is currently being torn down, and many other important buildings and institutions. Today, Mitte is once again the seat of the government and parliament and many federal and state facilities, as well as many political, economical, and cultural organizations. Because of its broad cultural and culinary range, Mitte is also frequently visited by tourists.

### **Ecumenism**

The district of Mitte has changed more than perhaps any other since the fall of the wall. This can clearly be felt in the churches. A snap-shot from an area northeast of the Spree: For a number of years, the pastoral staff of the Lutheran Sophiengemeinde, the Methodist Erloeserkirche, the Herrnhuter Bruedergemeinde and the Catholic Herz-Jesu-Gemeinde have been meeting for an “ecumenical breakfast” for prayer, sharing, and the planning of common events, one of which is the St. Martin’s procession with

800 children plus adults, an event with a growing evangelistic emphasis.

The very young and strongly fluctuating population is reflected in the churches. The Alpha courses of the Herz-Jesu-Gemeinde are being well accepted in this target group, and some are coming to faith.

Since 2004 “Net for God”, an ecumenical center operated by the community Chemin Neuf has been in the St. Adalbert church. Primarily it is a place for prayer for unity among Christians, but it also a meeting place for Christians of different denominational backgrounds, state churches and free churches and movements.

West of the river Spree there are several churches with a very visible presence. Many tourists visit the Dom, the Marienkirche and the Hedwigs-Kathedrale, but they are also used for other purposes. For instance, the Marienkirche hosts the ecumenical Stadtkirchenfest, and the Dom hosts many services related to federal political events. Both the Lutheran and the Catholic churches also have academies here.

#### Prayer

- **Thank God for the successful renovation of the historical city center and the new signs of life found there**
- **Pray that Berlin Mitte will also be rejuvenated by God’s Spirit...**
- **Pray for a further deepening of ecumenical emphasis and for blessings for their projects**

### *Sept. 17- Elections in Berlin*

The countdown is running. On September 17<sup>th</sup>, elections will be held for the state parliament. This governing body then elects the ruling mayor who appoints the state senators. Leading candidates for the office of mayor are Klaus Wowereit (SPD), Friedberg Pflueger (CDU), Harald Wolf (PDS/Linke), Franziska Eichstaedt-Bohlig (Gruene), Martin Lindner (FDP).

At the same time, 12 local parliaments will be elected. Many voters have complained about the absence of ethical and politically convincing alternatives among the political parties in Berlin. In the face of massive challenges, future Berlin politics need our faith-filled prayers so that blessing can go out from the city.

#### Pray for:

- **Members of parliament with expert knowledge, independence and servant attitudes**
- **More representatives who respect Christian values, or better yet, live according to Christian values**
- **Politics which will take Berlin into the future, developing Berlin’s potential in business and science and good concepts for safety and integration**

### *The Moslem Way of Thinking*

The one who impacts the thinking of people early in life can determine, support, or change their values and outlook. This is the opportunity for our educational system. It can

acquaint children from Moslem backgrounds with a worldview of society and mankind that is different from their home culture, however most teachers are not really able to engage the Moslem culture because they usually have only superficial knowledge of Islamic cultures. In addition, language barriers prevent them from understanding the influence of the media on their students. For instance, when the President of Iran denies the Holocaust, Moslem youth take him seriously.

Arab and Turkish media impart and strengthen a negative view of Jews and often stir up hate. Agitation against Jews is found even in children’s programs. For instance, in the series “Saras blaue Augen” (Sarah’s blue eyes), which was shown on “TV 5” from 2005 to 2006, Palestinian children are shown being abused as spare parts and killed by Jews. Moslem children are increasingly bringing these views into the schools by using the term “Jude” (Jew) as a swearword, by denying the holocaust, and praising the Hisbollah and suicide bombers.

Teachers are often not prepared for such arguments. The fact that there is such a thing as “Islamic Anti-Semitism” was not widely known. Schools and institutions for youth could possibly have a greater influence on the thinking of youth if they were better informed and trained, but this would require the development of special training modules which currently do not exist. (Source: Berliner Zeitung Aug. 9, 2006 Page 2)

#### Prayer

- **Pray for the development of learning modules for Moslem youth that pry open their prejudices**
- **Pray for more intensive and honest serious discussion about the Moslem way of thinking in politics, the media and on the universities**
- **Pray for effective political measures against the media who are producing anti-Semitic agitation**

### *30 Days of Prayer for the Islamic World September 24-October 31*

Once again this year during Ramadan, the Islamic month of fasting from September 24 to October 23, Christians all over the world will be praying for a breakthrough for the gospel in the Islamic world.

Each year the Evangelical Alliance produces a prayer calendar „30 Days of Prayer for the Islamic World“ which can be obtained at no cost at: DEA, Esplanade 5-10a, 07422 Bad Blankenburg. [www.ead.de/gebet](http://www.ead.de/gebet)

#### *Information and Dates*

##### **9.9. Ecumenical Stadtkirchenfest (Festival of churches in the city)**

On the square in front of the Rotes Rathaus, churches and Christians in the city will present themselves in all their ecumenical variety—with booths, forums, worship service, and encounters. Together for Berlin, the Forum Islam, and the Christian Volunteer Agency will also be taking part.