

Prayer for Berlin

October, 2006



Good News: Economy

The economy in Berlin will grow by approximately one percent in 2006. Thus, although this is still far below the national average, after five years of decline, this is nevertheless a sign of hope. Targeting the IT and healthcare branches is showing results. However, this is not yet reflected in the job market. Berlin still has nearly 17% unemployment, 79% of those are Hartz IV recipients.

Building the government

The Berliners have voted. The SPD is once again the strongest party, the CDU, who lost votes, the second-strongest party, followed by (much lower in votes) the Leftist Party PDS, and at nearly the same level, the Grünen (Greens) (with great gains- 13.1) and the FDP. Small parties below the five-percent-rule obtained all together an astonishing 13.8%. The SPD, with Klaus Wowereit as its most likely choice as ruling mayor, can make a coalition with either the Leftist party or the Greens. In light of the massive concerns about the future of Berlin (especially in the areas of schools, finances, and integration), let us accompany the coalition discussions and the building of the government in prayer.

Prayer

- **Pray that God's will might be done and that creative concepts for the future can be put into practice**
- **Pray that people of character, humility, and good practical knowledge will be put into the Senate**

Higher Education in Berlin

The semester begins on October 1. Berlin has over 20 institutions of higher education. Although there was technically room for only 85,000 college students, there were 140,000 students enrolled in 2005.

Berlin is trying to save money – it's absolutely necessary—and even the universities and institutions of higher education must cut down. Because of reductions in personnel and costs, student enrollment must be reduced by a further 1,000. Christian groups on campus have a variety of difficulties. A student reports, "There is a lot of opposition. For instance, it's hard for Christian groups to find meeting places on campus, and professors quite often make fun of the "backwoods" Christians. Some problems however are caused by the groups themselves. Sometimes we feel like our groups are too "closed", and we discover that we talk a lot about evangelism, but that we have very few "non-Christian" friends.

We want to open up our groups and be inviting to people around us, looking at them as real people and not as evangelism objects. We need creative ideas how we can do this in practical ways. We need loving hearts. And we need your prayers."

Prayer

- **Pray for new financial resources for the universities**
- **Pray for more places at the universities and better conditions for students**
- **Pray that more Christians on the universities who live out their faith in a relaxed, attractive manner**

Foreigners in Berlin: Africans

There are 460,555 residents in Berlin (13.8%) who do not hold German citizenship. Among them, there are 17,612 Africans, a number which is growing. Most of them come from Ghana (1945), Egypt (1797), Tunisia (1520), and Cameroon (1423). These numbers do not include illegal residents or those who have become citizens.

The backgrounds of these people are quite mixed. Some came for educational reasons. Others came because of employment or because they are diplomats. Some have German spouses. Many are seeking asylum. Their circumstances are difficult; their future is uncertain. It is increasingly difficult to achieve official political asylum. But without that official recognition, it is very difficult for them in our society. Sometimes they are promised long-term residence permits if they can find a job and are no longer dependent on the social welfare system, But how should an African find a job in a city with 17% unemployment?

In our society, Africans are considered "outsiders". No-Go-Areas are more dangerous for them than for other foreigners because of their skin color. Many do not feel welcomed, not recognized, not appreciated, and most have very little private contacts to Germans. They are unable to function well in our culture because they have very little knowledge of the German language.

There are many Christians among this group of Africans. The majority of them have first attempted to find a place within German-speaking churches. But in most cases, they did not succeed, and they began to meet together in their own groups. Their style of worship is often more lively and louder than the German worship style. There is much we could learn from them, but unfortunately we don't really know much about one another.

But Africa belongs to those areas in the world in which Christianity is growing the fastest. More and more missionaries and church-planters are emerging from this continent who are also having effective ministries in Europe. They come to us not only as needy people, but also as people whom God has sent, because He wants to bless us through them. This wealth should be discovered!

Prayer

- **Pray for increasing unity among African churches and also with German-speaking churches**

- **Pray that Germans would be receptive to the impulses and the blessings of African spirituality**
- **Pray for many new relationships and friendships between German and African Berliners.**

The danger of terrorism

Ever since the foiled attempts on two regional trains, everyone can clearly see that Germany has also become an Islamic terrorist target. We thank God from the bottom of our hearts that the two bombs did not explode!

The employment of the German navy within the UN mandate against the smuggling of weapons to the Hezbollah in Lebanon has also increased the potential of terrorism in Berlin.

Among the more than 3 million Moslems in Germany, according to the Office for Protection of the Constitution, there are approximately 32,100 people (nearly 1%) who are open to Islamic propaganda. How many of those are connected to the terrorist network in some way cannot be said, however the estimate is around “several hundred”. This propaganda is spread among young Moslems through the internet or through the preaching of the Imams in the mosques.

In Berlin there are two mosques with radical influence which are being watched with concern by the Office for Protection of the Constitution. Two members of the Neukölln mosque were arrested within the past two years, because they had been planning terrorist attacks. In Wedding a number of terrorist suspects known to the police have been meeting in a mosque which also has publications written by terrorist advocates in its library. In Berlin today, there are indeed places for terrorist thinking to grow which cannot easily be controlled or stopped by the authorities.

Prayer

- **Pray for protection from terrorist attacks and that authorities can identify and successfully prosecute those planning such attacks**
- **Pray that the authorities can successfully uncover danger before it happens**
- **Pray that peaceful Moslems will distance themselves from radical Imams in the mosques**

Ecumenism in Prenzlauer Berg

Christians are working together in the district of Prenzlauer Berg. The “Kiezfest der Kirchen” (District festival of churches), which was first held in May of 2002, with 12 Protestant, Catholic, and free churches, caused a great increase in ecumenical relationships. Music, action, games and arts and crafts for children, food and drink, quietness and prayer in the churches, a concert of church choirs, gospel night—there was something for everyone. Approximately 6000 people attended. It was an important public testimony to the unity of Christians. In August of 2004, the second festival was held. The next one is scheduled for June, 2007 (www.kiezfest-der-kirchen.de).

The preparation committee also encourages and supports other ecumenical activities such as the Worldwide Day of

Prayer, the ecumenical St. Martin’s festival, and the worship service during the Week of Unity among Christians in January. Since 2002 there has been another ecumenical worship service on Buß- und Bettag. Also since 2004 believers from Protestant, Catholic, and Baptist churches have been meeting for an outdoor service on the Arminplatz on Pentecost to celebrate the birth of the church. After the service coffee and cake is served.

The prayer services for peace during the time of the fall of the Wall in the Gethsemanekirche have continued even to today. These have been ecumenical since 2003. Ministering together provides a great opportunity to work together. Such opportunities are the prayer for peace in the Mauerpark on the evening before May 1st, as well as prayer for remembrance for the opening of the Wall on Nov. 9th at the former border checkpoint Bornholmer Straße. Here and at other places, there is good cooperation between the Protestant Evangelical Alliance Prenzlauer Berg/Mitte, which also sponsors the Week of Prayer the beginning of January in addition to regular prayer meetings for leaders. The Evangelische Schule in Berlin (Protestant School) which is in this district is growing. It has a good influence and is well integrated into the community.

The Protestant Elias church began disbursing food as a part of the “Aktion Laib und Seele” (body and soul) in 2005. From its beginning, it has been an ecumenical activity. Over 40 volunteers work in this ministry to the needy. Other churches help provide the food.

The activities of Christians and churches reflect the creativity and diversity of this district which has changed considerably since the fall of the Wall and which continues to change even today. Many new church plants are attempting to minister in these varied cultures, most of which are young people. They want to reach the “scene” with the gospel using new, creative means. They also meet for worship services in secular settings.

We will report about the district Pankow, which belongs to Prenzlauer Berg since the district reform, in a later prayer newsletter.

Prayer

- **Thank God for the Christians ministering here**
- **Pray that many secular people will be reached with the love of God**
- **Pray for further creative models which will reach into the district with the gospel**

Information, Dates

- **City Prayer Service** on October 22 at 7pm with an emphasis on prayer for the Islamic world. The place will be probably the Stephanuskirche, Prinzenallee 40, Wedding. Please check again on our homepage – (www.gebet-fuer-berlin.de) under „Termine“.
- Looking ahead: **Day of Prayer for Persecuted Christians** on November 12, 2006 5pm Freie Evangelische Gemeinde Friedrichshain. Further information will be available in the next prayer news.