

# Prayer for Berlin

December, 2006



## **Good News: Berlin near the top in ideas and patents**

“Just a few weeks following the disappointing decision of the Federal Constitutional Court concerning the financing of the city-state Berlin, two studies have shown where the strengths and potential of the capital city lie: According to a recent assessment, Berlin is the third most innovative region of Europe, following Baden-Württemberg and the Ile de France.”

Berlin was assessed very strong in the two strategically important functions as capital city and city of knowledge. The Senator of Economics, Harald Wolf, declared that he wants to draw on this potential more in the future. He told the Tagesspiegel that he will soon set more “common goals” for science and the economy. Berlin’s good ranking is due above all to the strong Berlin scientific community, its research institutes (separate from the universities), and the many newly-formed companies. Herein lies the most potential, according to the Mr. Wolf. He wants to bring young businesspeople and researchers together. Mr. Wolf feels there is a “lot of potential” in this area.

Jan Eder, the Chief Executive Director of the Chamber of Commerce (IHK) of Berlin, and member of the Enquete-Commission of the House of Representatives “A Future for Berlin”, warns, “Berlin has tremendous potential, but we must take care that it stays that way. It would be a mistake to believe that opportunities will happen all by themselves. Excellence costs money.” (Tagesspiegel Nov. 20, 2006)

We have continually encouraged people to pray for the strengthening of the potential of Berlin and are thankful for these good developments.

### **Pray:**

- **Thank God for the positive development**
- **That the potential of the city would be used and strengthened**

## **New District Mayors**

The recently newly-formed district parliaments (BVV) have elected the district mayors. A CDU mayor will be governing in three districts; in the rest, a SPD mayor is in charge, with the exception of Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg, which is governed by the Greens (Franz Schulz) and Lichtenberg, where Christian Emmerich (Left Party) remains mayor. The right-wing extremist party, NPD, reached the necessary 3% to become part of the

parliaments in several districts in local elections in Berlin on Sept. 17<sup>th</sup>: Treptow-Köpenick, Lichtenberg, Neukölln, and Marzahn-Hellersdorf. The Republikaner (extreme right-wing) will now be represented in the district parliament of Pankow. We desire to stand against the increase of right-wing extremist parties in Berlin in prayer, so that more people will take initiative against right-wing extremists.

BVV members and residents of Marzahn-Hellersdorf have decided to take the initiative against the NPD. Various events are planned to demonstrate that the district is “diverse” and will stay that way, according to the BVV provost Petra Wermke. Many district representatives will be wearing black shirts with the words “Fascism is not an opinion—Fascism is a crime”.

### **Pray:**

- **For good and effective work in the district parliaments**
- **For the district mayors and their city councils**
- **For good strategies on how to have a clear stand against representatives from right-wing extremist parties**

## **Steps against Right-Wing Radicals**

In order to strengthen and better coordinate efforts against right-wing extremists, various passages were written into the coalition agenda. All efforts to strengthen democracy and the fight against right-wing extremists are to be united. A new initiative, “Berlin Counsel for Democracy and Against Right-Wing Extremism and Anti-Semitism”, will begin. Various groups will be invited to take part, for instance, churches, unions, Jewish religious groups and clubs, foreigner’s organisations, and local networking groups. For the first time in the history of Germany, these efforts will be evaluated by scientific advisors in order to determine their effectiveness. Educational efforts will be emphasized. In addition, sports, clubs, renter’s associations, tradesmen’s groups, and projects emphasizing the fight against right-wing extremism, racism, and anti-Semitism will be supported, and networking will be encouraged.

With God’s help, this could become a new model that would provide positive input for other states as well.

### **Pray:**

- **For God’s help in uniting efforts against right-wing extremism**
- **For path-breaking insight leading to effective efforts**
- **That churches and Christian initiatives will participate in a constructive way**

## **Spandau – a unique district**

Spandau is the district farthest to the west in Berlin. It wasn’t until 1920 that it lost its municipal independence and became part of the capital city. Somewhat humorously,

and yet with a reflection of their feelings for independence, even yet today, residents of Spandau refer to “Spandau near Berlin”.

This district was the only one that was divided during the East-West conflict (West-Staaken was separated from 1945 to 1990). During the district fusion in 2001, Spandau remained and was not combined with another district.

This inner distance of many Spandau residents to the capital city that remains even today is not only a result of the late incorporation, but also because of many historical issues. Spandau appears in historical documents earlier than Berlin, although it was always the smaller and less important of the two. Spandau, a fortress city, with its well-known citadel, provided important military protection for Berlin. Because of its armaments industry, it was an important military supplier, although it didn't make much profit from it.

However, not only weapons and munitions, but also thoughts and ideas found their way from the city on the Havel to neighbouring Berlin. In 1539, the Nicolai church in the old city of Spandau was the source of the spread of the Reformation to Berlin and Brandenburg. On the other hand, Goebbels asserted that the Nazis “took over” Berlin beginning in Spandau.

Statistically, Spandau is quite an average district. In March, 2004, 225,000 people were registered in Spandau. 12.4% of those were foreigners. The average income per household was 1500 € (compared with Steglitz-Zehlendorf with 8.9% and 1800 €; Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg 22.6% and 1200 €). These numbers, however, fluctuate between parts of the city. In the south, Kladow offers a “good place to live”. The Kiez “Heerstraße-Nord” has a high percentage of Russian-speaking immigrants and is a “prevention area” (with district-quarter management). In Spandau Neustadt, where there is a high proportion of Turkish immigrants, a Representative recently commented, “The social foundation is crumbling”.

Christians from State churches and free churches alike are ministering to people in such difficult areas of the district, showing love in practical ways. A Lutheran church is attempting to alleviate the “desolate social circumstances” in the Neustadt. A Charismatic free church is reaching out to children and youth from German and immigrant families. A Protestant church has begun reaching out in Heerstraße-Nord. An Evangelical Free church is trying to find good ways to counteract increasing vandalism in its neighbourhood. Another church sponsors open-air events in its area which are attended by many “old-junkies”. A Christian trust does youth work in Staaken. A Catholic church sponsors a soup kitchen for the homeless. In some areas there has been good cooperation with local politicians and public institutions who also desire the good of the city.

**Pray:**

- **For a growing love and increased activity level on the part of Spandau Christians**
- **For effective means to help deprived areas**

- **For many to come to Christ through the increase in evangelistic events**

## **Child Poverty**

An increasing number of children in Berlin are dependent on welfare. They are often hungry; they have no winter boots or warm clothing or other needed things. According to a recent report of the Senate Social Administration, more than a third of the 270,000 welfare recipients in the city are underage; 27% of those under 3 years of age – in Neukölln 40%! – are dependent on welfare.

The main cause is the parents' unemployment. According to the Senator for Social Affairs, Heidi Knake-Werner, one of the main emphases of the Senate is to give needed help and to develop measures against demotivation and the “inheriting” of poverty. She is demanding related political measures that would ensure that federal help actually reaches these children. Plans are being made to invest in education and vocational training in order to break down the “inheriting” of poverty.

Up until now, politicians in Berlin have been unable to solve this problem or even slow down the development; the number of children affected by need is growing. These intentions are to be applauded, but they do not lessen the immediate need.

Unfortunately, it is not always easy for Christians to continue offering direct help, as the example of the “Arche” (the ark) in Hellersdorf shows. The District Office has once again cut its funding for the Arche in half. Nevertheless, even in spite of resistance, it is necessary that more Christians and churches get involved in helping the needy.

**Pray:**

- **For effective means of helping families**
- **For thorough removal of the causes of child poverty**
- **That more churches and Christian organizations would help the needy children and families**

## **Christmas**

Christmas gives us the opportunity as Christians to tell others about the message of Christmas. Once again this year, the “Christmas story told in the Berlin dialect and in 8 other languages commonly found in Berlin” will be distributed.

This CD for distribution can be obtained at various places in Berlin. Call Ruth Ladner for information 030-6 94 17 35

The love of God will also be shown to many, including singles and the homeless, through many worship services and Christmas parties throughout the Christmas season.

**Pray:**

- **That people will meet Jesus during the Christmas season**