

# Prayer for Berlin

September, 2007

## **Good News – Babyboom in Berlin**

During the past years, we have asked for prayer for more births and a better environment for children in Berlin. The first answers to prayer are becoming evident. Berlin has become the trend-setter in comparison with other areas of Germany. The number of births in the first quarter of 2007 has risen by 5 % compared to the same timeframe last year. The national birth rate, for instance, rose by only 0.4%. This is not a “soccer World Cup effect”, but rather a general rise indicating that more people are desiring to have children. It is also a result of the change in population—the newcomers in recent years are now reaching child-bearing age. The rise in births in the inner city (Prenzlauer Berg, Mitte, Friedrichshain) is especially large, in the outlying “green” areas rather small.

Young parents and the press are praising the various childcare and recreational opportunities that Berlin has to offer. “Young fathers and mothers are now combining parenthood and urban life,” commented a city sociologist.

### **Prayer**

- **Thank God for these answers to prayer**
- **Pray for stable families and intact social environments for children**

## **School has started**

School has once again begun in Berlin. In spite of positive news--on the first-ever central graduation exams (Abitur) Berlin, graduates had an average grade of 2.5, which was the best in recent years—the situation in Berlin’s schools remains tense. As a result of increased violence, the district mayor of Neukölln has offered to place guards in the schools. Teachers are expected to “raise” the students, something which should have been done at home. The average age of teachers is over 50. Many of them are physically and mentally not able to keep up with the continued stress caused by educational reforms and the expectation that they would „raise“ the kids. The new Senator for Schools, Jürgen Zöllner, has enthusiastically taken on the challenging job of finding long-range solutions for the wide-ranging problems.

New young teachers are hardly being hired in Berlin. The State of Berlin pays for their education, but only a few get hired. Therefore, many are

leaving the city and being hired in other areas of Germany under better conditions and with better pay.

The federal government has very little to offer to stem the loss of values, which leads to disorientation among children and youth. Sex education in the schools is being used to foster homosexuality. Homosexual lobbies are working hard to develop materials in this regard for use in school sex education and are offering to “help” in such classes. For this reason, many parents are looking at private schools as an alternative. This shift is becoming stronger and stronger. The three schools of the Free Evangelical School of Berlin (FESB) are experiencing large increases in registration and are in desperate need of more Christian teachers.

### **Prayer:**

- **Pray for the Senator of Schools Mr. Zöllner and his staff**
- **Pray for effective ways of making the situation in the schools better**
- **Pray for new teachers at the FESB**

## **Safety and Police Authority**

Under the heading of “Get out! This is our district!” (Haut ab, das ist unser Kiez), the Berliner Zeitung reported on August 14th about interference during the arrest of a cell phone thief in Wedding. Such interference has been increasing in recent months. “Police operations in conjunction with comparatively harmless crimes in Wedding, Kreuzberg, and Neukölln are often hindered by angry Arabic or Turkish residents. On July 6, a group of people in the Badstrasse tried to prevent police officers from taking a bewildered person with them. “We just wanted to take the man with us, but that didn’t matter to those standing around,” a police officer commented. “They just simply hate the police.”

But there are some small creative beginnings, such as in Spandau: According to the Tagesspiegel from July 7, 2007 there were “several group fist fights in the mall “Spandauer Arkaden”. According to the police, youth plan to meet there to commit crimes. The police were at a loss to explain the extent of violence. One district after another had to be declared a “crime-ridden” area, in which police take more stringent preventative measures than in other areas of the city. But these measures did not result in much change. Raed

Saleh, a 30-year old City Council member, got an idea: Now youth and police officers are patrolling together in Spandau. Mr. Saleh calls it “Encountering instead of confronting”. An added bonus—youth can reach other youth who wouldn’t speak to the police.”

These successful patrols are part of an endeavour called “Be strong without Violence”, which Mr. Saleh initiated in partnership with Christian, secular, and Moslem social services groups.

#### **Prayer:**

- **Pray that God will bless R. Saleh and the others who have initiated “Be Strong without Violence“**
- **Pray for further success and that this Spandauer initiative will become a model for other districts**
- **Pray for recognition and encouragement for police officers who are facing these challenges**

#### ***Twice the number of violent crimes***

In spite of the general decrease in crime, Neonazis are becoming more brutal; the number of right-wing motivated crimes in 2006 rose dramatically. Berlins Senator of the Interior Ehrhard Körting declared, “Right-wing violent crimes rose 112% in 2006, from 52 to 100 registered crimes.” In addition, since the Republikaner and the NPD are represented in 4 district governments, right-wing extremists feel they are politically strengthened.

Neonazis are becoming increasingly violent. “Counselling services for victims of crime are reporting that perpetrators, above all in Friedrichshain, but also in Lichtenberg and Pankow, are becoming more brutal” reported one social service worker. Neonazis usually come from socially depressed backgrounds, and feel as though they are shut off from success. They resort to brutality to revenge themselves on those they feel are responsible for this. (Der Tagesspiegel 21.8.07).

A new network against right-wing extremists is being created. The Senate is providing finances for combining projects and endeavours against right-wing extremism, racism, and anti-Semitism into a network beginning in September. By the end of the year, they plan to have a complete concept of dealing more quickly and effectively with right-wing extremist cases and developments.

#### **Prayer**

- **Pray that these efforts will be successful and for the development of effective concepts which will stem the rising tide of right-wing violence**
- **Pray that people will become more aware of the problem and show more moral courage**
- **Pray for attractive Christian ministries that will reach people in the right-wing groups**

#### ***Intercultural Prayer for our Nation***

On October 3, a special prayer idea for Germany will be put into practice. According to statistics, people from at least 184 nations live in Berlin. Many of them have become German citizens; others view the city as their home. Among them, there are many Christians, especially from Africa or Korea. Together for Berlin is sponsoring an 8-hour day of prayer and praise for our nation, „Intercultural Prayer and Praise for our Nation, together with Christians from Africa, Korea, Eastern Europe and Germany”.

At 2pm, 4pm, 6pm and 8pm, blocks will begin with an hour of praise music, followed by a phase of prayer for our nation, which, as a reunited nation“ becomes a legal adult (18 years old) on that day. During a break before the next block, participants will offer „international food“. Wednesday, October 3, 2007 2pm-10pm, Kirche am Südsterm, Kreuzberg

#### ***Dates***

- **Prayer Forum** September 10, new participants welcome. Please contact us by e-mail if you want to join us.
- **City Prayer Service** with an emphasis on Prayer for Moslems in the city on September 23, 7pm in the EvangelischFreikirchlichen Gemeinde Bergmannstraße 22, Berlin Kreuzberg
- October 3, from 2pm on, **Praise and Prayer for Germany**. Eight hours of praise and prayer in the Kirche am Südsterm, BerlinKreuzberg. Details under Termine on the website.
- Germany-wide **Prayer Conference** in November. Information in next month’s prayer news.