



# Prayer for Berlin

February, 2009

## ***Good News – Enough votes for ProReli***

The Referendum for free choice between religion classes and ethics classes in Berlin's high schools passed the first hurdle by reaching the required number of signatures. 181,000 signatures have been officially confirmed. 170,000 was the minimum necessary to bring the referendum to a popular vote. When the counting is done, the number of signatures collected will probably be over 280,000. This is an amazing success for the campaign and a real answer to prayer! Now the second step is being planned – the preparation for the popular vote, which will probably be most advantageous if held together with the election for the European Parliament in June.

### **Prayer:**

- **Pray for the best solution for Berlin's students and society in general which would encourage religious education, freedom of choice and integration**
- **Pray for the best timing for the popular vote**

## ***Good News – Kinderclub can continue***

A great number of volunteers have been ministering for many years to students with Moslem backgrounds at this meeting-point for students after school in the Soldiner Straße in Wedding, a troubled district. Their desire is to give assistance to students and parents, thus showing them the love of God in practical ways. The Kinderclub will be able to continue thanks to the support of the district office and the commitment of donors and volunteers.

## ***Autonomists setting cars on fire***

For the past two years, arson attacks on cars have been continually registered. In 2007, there were 113 such attacks. In 2008 68 cars were set on fire. For quite some time, the police were in the dark as to who was behind the arson attacks. Now a group of autonomists called "Movement for Militant Resistance" has admitted to setting fire to several very expensive cars in order to protest the city restructuring. Further such arson attacks are planned.

Among autonomists there is great opposition to changes in city districts in which they have been able to live out their own ideas of "freedom". These districts are Kreuzberg, Friedrichshain, Neukölln, Prenzlauer Berg and Mitte. Redevelopment in these areas has led to a higher quality of living and higher rents. The social structure is changing – low-income people must move away, and residents with higher incomes are moving in.

### **Prayer:**

- **Pray that all those affected find ways to address their issues without violence**
- **Pray that the police will be able to prevent violent activities**
- **Pray that enough affordable housing remains available for low-income people**

## ***School Reform and New Problems***

Education Senator Zöllner is planning a reform in the school structure in 2010 which is designed to give every student the opportunity to achieve the Abitur. The central idea is to join the Hauptschulen, Realschulen, and Gesamtschulen to a new school type called the "Sekundarschule". The "Gymnasium" will remain as its own independent school-form. For all schools affected by the consolidation, this causes huge additional burdens. In addition, all secondary schools are to become all-day schools and must therefore be remodelled.

An urgent letter from school directors in the district Mitte about serious deficiencies in their schools showed however that a reform in the structure of schools will not solve all the problems. In order to solve the manifold problems, the schools need new concepts on how to better support the teachers in their responsibilities.

### **Prayer:**

- **Pray that ways can be found to improve the financial and personell situations of schools in problem districts**
- **Pray that the structure reform can be planned enough in advance so that everyone involved has enough time to prepare for the changes**
- **Pray that God will bless all those who work in schools and in the area of education**

## ***»The Sweeping of Berlin« - BSR***

In the next months we want to pray for those working in the areas of provision of services for the city. This will include such things as hospitals or utilities. We want to begin with waste management, a service

which functions well here, in contrast to other large cities such as Naples, Italy, which often has problems with waste disposal. Waste disposal is carried out by the Berliner Stadtreinigung (BSR). Gathering up Christmas trees after the Christmas season, cleaning up after demonstrations and after New Year's Eve parties, recycling electronic waste, sweeping the streets, snow removal, garbage removal, and composting horticultural waste are some of the many activities of the 5,500 people who work in the area of waste management. They work in every kind of weather and during every season of the year. Without them, our city would soon become very filthy. In their last annual report it was stated, "The BSR, a modern company providing service to the city owned by the city-state of Berlin, possesses the know-how and the qualified personnel as well as the flexibility to ensure that we will dependably and continually reach our goals in waste management as well as fulfil all the requirements of the cleaning-up of the capital city."

The BSR has been conspicuous through its intelligent and humorous image campaign. Using advertising from bumper stickers to billboards, the BSR has attempted to encourage Berliners to join in the responsibility for keeping the city clean and protecting the environment. Slogans such as "die Bekehrung Berlins" (a play on words—"Bekehrung" normally means conversion, but in this context it uses the verb "kehren" meaning to sweep) make people smile, and perhaps also cause some to think about the topic of waste management. Berliners are challenged to "work together to make our city shine—yesterday, today and tomorrow". That is a good wish in a double sense of the word!

**Prayer:**

- **Pray that the services provided by the 5,500 waste management employees will be recognized. Their jobs are often unattractive, but they are crucial to the quality of living and to the image of the city**
- **Pray for good decisions on the part of the company for the good of employees and city**
- **Pray for an increased willingness on the part of Berlin's citizens to contribute to a clean and attractive Berlin**

**City Planning: Tempelhof Airport**

The Senate Administration recently began a competition for ideas for the urban designing of the area which was formerly the Tempelhof Airport. A jury

has now narrowed the 80 competitors down to 12. Among them is a design which includes the construction of a red-light district within the area. According to the Senate Construction Director, however, this idea will not be considered. The idea of building up to 5000 new residences in three areas on the edge of the airport is controversial. There are doubts as to whether this area between three large highways is attractive enough. A separate competition is underway for ideas as to how to use the airport building, which is under protection because of its historical heritage. Ideas have also been submitted from countries other than Germany.

The Mayor of Berlin, Klaus Wowereit, called the development of the former airport area the "largest challenge for the city planning commission". In any case, the grounds surrounding the former airport are to be converted into a park. A competition for the design of the park will begin this year.

**Prayer:**

- **Pray that the jury will recognize the idea that leads to the optimal usage of the area for living and working**
- **Pray that detrimental ideas and suggestions will not reach a majority vote**
- **Pray that God's good ideas for the city will be achieved in this area**

**40 Days of Prayer and Fasting**

The sixth annual prayer initiative "40 Days of Prayer and Fasting for our Country" will take place from February 25 until Easter. This year, the central theme is the Ten Commandments. A brochure with "daily rations" for personal prayer or prayer in groups has been prepared. Each day begins with introductory information followed by two prayer requests and tips for implementation. In 2009, 15 elections will take place: The European Parliament, the Federal President, State Parliament, local elections, and the Bundestag elections. In this "super election year" of 2009, the prayer initiative desires to remind people of the foundations of our society. The prayer texts (also in English) can be downloaded at [www.40Tagebetenundfasten.de](http://www.40Tagebetenundfasten.de).

**Dates**

**February 5, 6:30pm: Prayer for Berlin** in the Foyer of the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche.

**February 7, 6pm: Interdenominational praise evening GoWorship**, Turnhalle of the Freikirchliche Gemeinde Schöneberg, Feurigstraße 28