



Prayer for Berlin

February 2010

Good News

In January, charities, churches, unions and non-profit organisations founded the Berlin Poverty Conference (Landes-Armutskonferenz Berlin—LAK). This consortium is designed to help to prevent the poor from having to carry the cost of the financial crisis. They plan joint conferences, campaigns and political consultations. Their first meeting will take place in April.

Social Gap is growing

The social gap between Berlin's problem districts and the rest of the capital city has continued to grow. According to the latest research, unemployment, poverty, and the feeling of "no-future" have not noticeably declined. The problems are concentrated in Kreuzberg-Nordost, Neukölln-Nord, Wedding-Moabit, Marzahn- and Hellersdorf-Nord, as well as in Spandau-Mitte. Twenty percent of all Berliners live there.

A new study of the Bertelsmann-Stiftung shows that the risk of poverty is higher in Berlin than anywhere else in Germany. According to the study, Berlin has the highest contingent of federal transfer payments such as Hartz IV. Nearly 20 percent of all Berliners depend on federal aid. (Source: Der Tagesspiegel; Die Welt from 1-21-2010) Recently the ruling SPD fraction decided to work more on the issues of integration and poverty.

Prayer:

- **Pray for more effective social-political measures**
- **Pray that churches will be open to people who are dependent on social services**
- **Pray that Christians and churches will use the crisis as a chance for creative care projects**

Berlin, the city of refuge

In the last month, Berlin's emergency shelters for the homeless were overfull. 70 facilities run by churches and charities take care of homeless people in Berlin. Only a portion of the costs are paid for by public funds. The Berliner Stadtmission counted 20

percent more people seeking help compared to last winter, partly because of the extremely cold weather. Because of the eastern expansion of the EU, an increasing number of Eastern Europeans are coming to Berlin. This is causing more problems for those facilities that are taking care of the needy. People from the EU are not eligible for German social welfare. Berlin's Kältehilfe (help for the cold) cannot place these people in other facilities, so they remain dependent on the emergency shelters. Berlin has always been a city in which people have sought refuge. Many Christians are helping to make sure it stays that way.

Prayer:

- **Pray that churches and charities will receive enough financial aid so that they can help the needy**
- **Pray that appropriate sustainable forms of social support can be found for needy EU residents**

Child Abuse in Berlin

Both physical and mental acts of violence as well as sexual abuse and neglect belong in the category of child abuse. Offenders are often parents or close relatives. Each year, over 1000 incidents of sexual abuse are registered with the Berlin police. About one fourth of them are boys, three-fourths are girls. Unreported cases are probably 20 times higher. That would mean that approximately 60 children are victims of sexual abuse in Berlin every day.

In addition to sexual abuse within and surrounding the family, some children become victims of organised crime (paedophilia) or ritual abuse through cults. In 2008 Berlin had the highest number (17 per 100,000 residents) of registered child abuse. In all of Germany, Berlin is the only state that has a special commissariat that deals with crimes against children

Prayer:

- **Pray that children can be effectively protected from violence**
- **Pray for an increasing alertness in the surroundings that will help prevent, recognize, and expose crime**
- **Pray for effective measures on the part of police and Public Prosecutors that will expose and track down organised crime against children by paedophiles.**

Preparations for a peaceful May 1st

In the years 2004-2008, the rioting in Kreuzberg declined noticeably. Christians who prayed and ac-

tively got involved for a peaceful May 1st helped make this difference. In 2009, there were once again serious hostilities against the police, including incendiary devices. Since then, the city hasn't settled down. Every month cars are set on fire. The number of crimes committed by left-wing extremists doubled in 2009. Police or federal facilities are continually being purposely attacked. Recently even self-made bombs were used.

For this reason, Berlin's Christians are inviting churches and individual prayer partners to join in fasting and participating in a prayer chain from April 5 – May 5 to pray for a peaceful May 1, 2010. The "MyFest" will take place again, but with some changes. At present, the district is looking for a person who could be an acceptable contact person and organize the fest. Following the riots last year, the previous organizer, Silke Fisher, stepped down in protest.

Please note: March 21, 7pm, City-Kirche Kreuzberg, City-wide prayer service for a peaceful May 1st

Prayer:

- **Pray that an appropriate person can be found to organize the street festival, who will also be open to Christians and their initiatives**
- **Pray for a noticeable decline in the violence (among other things, cases of arson) even before May 1st**
- **Pray for wisdom and success for all who are involved in efforts and preparations for a peaceful May 1st --the police, the residents and the worship service team**

Projects of Hope (2): Straßenkinder e.V. and Haus Bolle

The ministry of Straßenkinder e.V. (Street Kids) grew out of the spontaneous desire to help punks and youth, especially those around the Gedächtniskirche. It has been an established association since the year 2000. Since then, a successful re-socialisation concept has grown out of this initiative. Young people desiring to leave the streets and become re-integrated into society are being supported. The supporting organisation is a Christian interdenominational association which belongs to the Diakonische Werk, and is active in problem areas such as Alexanderplatz and Ostbahnhof. The "Kinder- und Jugendhaus Bolle" (Children and Youth House Bolle) is currently being renovated and will re-open soon. It's in a problem district of Marzahn, which

has a Hartz IV rate of 42%, and is the district with one of the highest rate of children in all of Berlin. For quite some time, the connection between growing child poverty and street kids has been observed.

An increasing number of outwardly inconspicuous children and youth from socially disadvantaged families are landing for a time on the street. The "Kinder- und Jugendhaus Bolle" wants to counteract that by offering various programs that will keep kids off the streets.

Prayer:

- **Pray for blessing and success for the last phase of the renovation and the start of Haus Bolle**
- **Pray for a qualified Christian team with love for the children**
- **Pray for an effective reduction in neglect of children and youth**

Keeping On: Protection from terror

It is not to be taken for granted that our city has been spared from terror attacks. Please continue to pray for our city and that planned attacks can be uncovered before they happen!

40 Days of Prayer and Fasting for our Country

For the seventh time, the initiative 40 Days of Prayer and Fasting for our Country will take place during Lent. This year's motto is "True luck". The initiative begins on February 17 and ends on April 3. The brochure can be ordered for a small donation by: info@campus-d.de, Tel. 0641-975180. The prayer texts (also in English!) can be downloaded from www.40Tagebetenundfasten.de

Dates

Transforum-Conference Feb. 25-27, 2010: **The joy of serving the city - Social change as an opportunity for Christian involvement**

This is the topic of the 4th Transforum conference sponsored by Together for Berlin. This conference wants to awaken hope instead of resignation, to discover opportunities instead of being fixed on problems, and to activate the joy that comes from faith instead of moaning about things that have gone wrong. A theologian's day will take place the day before. Detailed information about seminars, workshops and speakers can be found on the website: www.transforum-berlin.de