



# Prayer for Berlin

June 2011

## Good News – peaceful May 1st

This year, May 1<sup>st</sup> was the more peaceful than it has been for many years. The continued efforts of Christians who have held an open-air worship service and various prayer events for the last 8 years on and around May 1<sup>st</sup> are showing results. In the commentaries of all Berlin newspapers, this peaceful May 1<sup>st</sup> was called a turning-point. The approximately 1000 violence-prone left-wing extremists were hindered from activities through good police tactics. We consider the fact that there were no uncontrolled outbreaks of violence and counter-violence an answer to prayer. Because the Bible encourages us to respond to evil with good, the 350 visitors of the open-air worship service on the Mariannenplatz were given the opportunity to be involved for a couple of hours in Kreuzberger projects. This was the motto of this-year's worship service: "Hope helps".

### Prayer:

- **Thank God for a peaceful May 1st**
- **Pray for continued fruit from all efforts to bring the hope of the gospel to Kreuzberg**

## Preparation for elections for Parliament

All the large parties that are participating in the elections for Parliament on Sept. 18 have completed writing their party platforms. Because Berlin is threatened by a "budget emergency", no election promises can be made that would cost a lot of money. The most original campaign slogan this year is that of the CDU which says, "Things must change." A list of the 100 most pressing problems were obtained through a survey taken among Berlin residents, and specific solutions to these problems have been worked out. Because very few citizens take the time to really compare the party platforms, the most important factor will be how the media deals with the individual issues.

Since the beginning of May, weekly prayer walks in the vicinity of the Parliament building have been taking place. A growing number of Christians are asking God to put men and women in place in poli-

tics who make decisions based on the word of God and want to give Him glory. (See dates).

### Prayer:

- **Pray that the various solutions put forth by the parties for the city's problems will be clearly presented by the media**
- **Pray that hidden agenda or plans that would be harmful will come to light and that the Holy Spirit will open people's minds to clearly see the candidates**
- **Pray that the number of Christians participating in prayer for the elections will increase**

## Clash between Neo-Nazis und Anti-Fascists in Kreuzberg

The Committee for the Protection of the Constitution has a record of approximately 1,600 right-wing activists in Berlin. 700 of those are deemed to be violence-prone. On May 19, there was a huge clash between Neo-Nazis and counter-demonstrators. The Neo-Nazis tricked the police by running below ground through a subway station. On the way, they ran across immigrants and attacked them. Then they clashed brutally with the counter-demonstrators. Their behaviour was shockingly violent.

Since May 19th, the office windows of a woman politician who had participated in the demonstration against the Nazis were destroyed, as well as the windows of the home of resident who had an anti-Nazi poster in the window. Nazi graffiti is appearing more often on the walls of houses, and Nazis are aggressively recruiting for the causes with handbills. It appears that the right-wing extremists are gaining strength.

### Prayer:

- **Pray that the right-wing scene will diminish**
- **Pray that police and politicians will be wise in dealing with right-wing extremism**
- **Pray that right-wing extremists will find Christ**

## Retiring and New Chief of Police

The retiring Chief of Police, Dieter Glietsch, was honoured during a ceremony on May 27<sup>th</sup>. He has been in office since 2002 and has earned the respect of all political parties and many other groups in society. He was instrumental in putting the concept of the "outstretched hand" in place to deal with demonstrators that could become violent. At first, his politics of re-structuring, transparency, and de-escalation surrounding May 1<sup>st</sup> were opposed, but after nine

years in office, there's not much room for criticism, even on the part of the opposition. The violence in Berlin on May 1<sup>st</sup>, which had been taking place for years, has been greatly lessened during his term of office, which has also been our prayer request for years.

Mr. Glietsch, amidst opposition from other police and the union, nevertheless put a policy of transparency about police procedures into place. Beginning this summer, police will wear nametags.

In an interview with the „taz“ on May 26<sup>th</sup>, Mr. Glietsch said, “We approach people and offer partnership, counsel, and support. We go into schools, kindergartens, and youth centres. We talk to organisations working with immigrants, and we go to the mosques. We communicate clearly that even on May 1<sup>st</sup> and at other events, we do not want to have to use our police batons, nor water cannons. Prejudices and reservations are dismantled. The view of the police is changing, and the attitudes of the police themselves are also changing.”

Talking about Berlin, he said, “I really like the city. It's alive, chaotic, and not as well-ordered as others. You always have to be ready for surprises. The city has really grown on me. Nevertheless, I'm moving back to North Rhine-Westphalia, as I promised my wife. In addition, because I am so attached to Berlin and to my work, it will be easier for me to retire to a totally different place some distance away from Berlin.”

Mr. Glietsch's successor has not yet been named. There are many candidates. As of May 30, Margarte Koppers will assume the position temporarily, because a successor could not be named within the legally allotted time limit.

#### **Prayer:**

- **Thank God for Dieter Glietsch's service for the peace of the city**
- **Pray for the sustainability of the good anti-violence concepts**
- **Pray for the right successor – for the city, the people, and in God's eyes**

### **Volunteer: Prison Helper**

Prison Helpers (Vollzugshelfer) are volunteers working in the prison system assisting prisoners in social matters. For example, for over two years, volunteers from the Forum Straffälligenhilfe ([www.forum-straffaelligenhilfe.de](http://www.forum-straffaelligenhilfe.de)) have been visiting A.F. After serving a three-year term in prison, he is due to be released soon. As is the case for many

others, he too will stand outside the prison gate and begin a new future in freedom. Will he be successful? Over a period of many years, he has been isolated from everything that is part of “normal” life. Everything has been regulated by laws. Others have made decisions for him. Now he must begin to make his own decisions.

What will become of the men and women who have been incarcerated in our city? Many no longer have contact to anyone outside of the prison. Do they have a chance? Parole officers and half-way houses are often not enough to meet their needs. They need more than a bed and a roof over their heads. They need people to come along side of them, people who (once again) trust them, people who help them to make the right decisions, especially in the weeks following their release from prison. This is the best way to fight crime.

#### **Prayer :**

- **Pray for those who are leaving prison, that they will find a way to lead a socially responsible life without crime**
- **Pray for the volunteers from various initiatives in the city who are ministering to prisoners**
- **Pray that more volunteers can be found and trained to do this ministry**

### **Keeping On: Arson Attacks**

In recent weeks there have been an increasing number of arson attacks against cars. In addition, there was a massive attack on the cable bridge of the train on the Ostkreuz which paralysed traffic. It is assumed that the perpetrators are associated with the left-wing activist scene.

However, even among the left-wing activists, such activities are controversial. Let us continue to pray for the prevention, solving, and hindrance of arson attacks!

#### **Dates:**

##### **Weekly Prayer for elections on Sept. 18th**

Meeting place: Either Roter Rathaus (RR) Corner of Spandauer Straße/Rathausstraße on the side of Rathausstraße or at the Parliament Building (Abgeordnetenhaus) (AH) Corner of Niederkirchnerstraße/Stresemannstraße Direction of Potsdamer Platz.

- **Every Wednesday 6-7pm: June 1 (RR); June 8 (AH); June 15 (RR); June 22 (AH); June 29 (RR)**