



Prayer for Berlin

October 2011

- Pray that political means can be found to cut off the influence of radical preachers
- Pray for protection of youth against Islamic allurements—and salvation through Jesus

The Entrance of the Pirate Party— a Surprise

The surprising entrance of the Pirate Party into Berlin's Parliament sent a clear signal to the established parties. The Pirates received 8.9% of the votes and now have 15 seats in Parliament. This was made possible by voters changing parties, but also by winning 23,000 new voters who had not previously been voting.

The Pirates campaigned with radical calls for freedoms such as free local mass transit, free and uncontrolled internet, the right to determine one's own gender, and basic income without conditions. The voters appeared to be attracted by the radical call for an alternative political style of more transparency, co-determination, and proximity to the general public.

The party practices direct democracy and opinion formation internally, for instance through "liquid feedback", a free software for interactive political decision-making (www.lqfb.piratenpartei.de). On their blog the parliamentary group of the Pirates, publishes all minutes and processes (www.piratenfraktion-berlin.de).

Their entrance into Parliament has resulted in new political interest on the part of young people, but it is also a chance for democracy. The Pirates are inexperienced in politics. They gain sympathy through their unaccustomed, candid, and modest handling of their inexperience and with creative solutions. As "political newcomers" however, they are unprepared for their large responsibility. In Parliament, old patterns are being questioned by the "chaotic" unconventionality of the Pirates. Therefore, established parties must do some honest evaluating of themselves.

Prayer:

- Pray for strength and protection for the mostly young people who must face pressure from the press, politicians, and their new responsibilities
- Pray the destructive tendencies in society will decrease and for an increase in democracy-strengthening tendencies on the part of the Pirates
- Pray that the Pirates will be able to contribute constructively to true democracy—pray that the established parties will be willing to learn how to be more transparent in their politics

Good News: Terrorist Attack Prevented

On Sept. 8, two men with an Islamic background were arrested in Berlin. They had bought a large amount of material that can be used in making bombs. What they were planning is still under investigation, but most probably they planned to use the material to cause harm to people. In our prayer mail, we have continually asking for prayer that planned attacks can be discovered ahead of time. We see these arrests as a direct answer to our prayers.

Prayer:

- Thank God that the planned attacks were discovered.

Increased Danger of Terrorism by Salafists

The men arrested in Berlin in September, who are suspected of preparing for a bomb attack, are said to be part of the radical Islam movement of Salafists. The Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution is concerned about the strong growth of this movement, which describes itself as the only representatives of the "true Islam". The Salafists are aggressively recruiting on their own internet site as well as at public meetings. Above all, young people are being drawn by the teachings which call for a radical Islamic lifestyle. Many youth who had previously been consuming drugs or were involved in criminal activity are seeking to find meaning in life through following strict Islam.

A Berliner rapper who converted to Islam in this way has released CD's with Islamic battle songs which call for violent Jihad (war against unbelievers). One CD cover shows the Jihad-flag flying over the Brandenburg Gate. His renown as a rapper is providing the platform for winning youth to radical Islam.

The step from radical Islam to terrorism is not far. The danger is growing that young people will be recruited for terror activities.

Prayer:

- Pray for further successes on the part of the Office for the Protection of the Constitution—and for watchfulness on the part of the general public

Coalition Negotiations

Although the SPD together with the CDU would have a much more stable majority in Parliament, the parliamentary group of the SPD decided to negotiate with the Greens Party. However, red-green would have a majority of only one seat in Parliament, which is a really small margin for an election period of only five years. Whether or not the coalition negotiations have accomplished anything was not known at the time of the editorial deadline. The further construction of the Autobahn 100 to Treptow, which had been one of the main controversies, has been eased by a “soft compromise” (Berliner Zeitung).

Prayer:

- **Pray for a coalition according to God’s will which will be able to work and govern well**
- **Pray that differing positions can be clearly named during the negotiations and that no half-true compromises will be agreed upon**
- **Pray that the most effective solutions for the problems of our city can be identified, along with ways to implement them**

Teacher’s Aids

Berlin is required to implement the UN-Convention to include disabled children in regular schools. The city must give every disabled child, including the severely disabled, a place in a regular school.

However, autistic children or physically or mentally disabled children need individual, personal support in order to attend regular schools. This help is to be provided by individually by teacher’s aids.

The education administration has put a cap on funding for teacher’s aids at 8.7 million Euros per school year—this is not enough for everyone. The education administration has given schools an across-the-board amount of hours, which is not adequate to meet the individual needs of the children. Many schools have received only a fraction of the teacher’s aids hours they applied for and need. It is unreasonable for both parents and teachers to integrate disabled children without providing enough funds. More and more parents are going to court to sue for a teacher’s aid. These parents are already nearly challenged to the limit by just taking care of their disabled children.

Prayer:

- **Pray that the need for teacher’s aids will not be ascertained by across-the-board numbers but rather by the individual needs of the children**
- **Pray for support for the parents of disabled children**

- **Pray that the integration of disabled children in regular schools will not only be sought after, but also actively politically supported**

Literature Festival Berlin

The 11th international Literature Festival Berlin (ilb) took place from September 7-17. It is the largest literature festival in Europe—in spite of financial insecurities. In readings, discussions, and reflections, authors and representatives of international literature invited the public to an eloquent broadening of their horizon for global relations and national conditions.

The arts, in this case, literature, communicate large topics through tangible speech and help people to experience appealing artistic-aesthetic forms. In this way, Berlin once again provided the platform for people of various cultures and nationalities to engage the general public in current political debates and the cultural preservation of values.

The organizers of the ilb made the cultural area of the Asian Pacific the main emphasis this year. Their authors picked explosive topics which are still blocked in their countries, such as the boatpeople in Vietnam, the reign of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, torture in China or religious fanaticism in India, and an unusually strong political discussion.

Prayer:

- **Thank God for the international exchange and the cross-cultural bond through the arts, regardless of official political relationships**
- **Thank God for the arts and artists who awaken, confront, and break the silence, and for the courage of the Berlin curators to engage in political dialogue**
- **Pray for a stabilisation of the annual financing through sponsors or other creative solutions**

Dates

GIVING THANKS, CELEBRATING, and PRAYING - 21 years of German unity—intercultural and ecumenical

October 3, 3-6:30 pm

3pm – GIVING THANKS and PRAYING

St-Sebastian-Kirche, Feldstr.4, 13355 Berlin-Wedding

5pm – CELEBRATING and meeting each other
Christus-Kirche, Anklamer Str. 31, 10345 Berlin-Mitte
U-Bahn Bernauer Straße

10/9-16: Activities week of the Micha-Initiative Berlin: www.micha-initiative.de/mitmachen/reichtfasten