



Prayer for Berlin

March 2012

Good News: More tourists

More tourists visited Berlin last year than ever before. Hotels and bed-and-breakfast places registered 9.9 million guests in 2011. Guests stayed an average of 2.3 days. This caused the record number of 22.4 million guests. The number of foreign guests grew disproportionately high by nearly 10 percent, but stayed low in comparison with other European cities such as London or Paris. Berlin's new Senator of commerce, Sybille von Obernitz (politically neutral) said that the Senate wants to see the number of overnight guests rise from 22.4 million to 30 million by the year 2020. (Source: *Der Tagesspiegel* 16.02.12)

Sandra Scheeres, the new Senator of Education and Science

Sandra Scheeres, 41, SPD, is married and has two sons. In North Rhine-Westphalia, she worked as a pre-school teacher and studied education. Since 1994, she has been active politically there. From 2001 on, she has been working in Berlin for a SPD Member of the Bundestag. As Senator of Education and Science, she is facing huge challenges. She has aggressively begun her new job and has met with Berlin school directors. She wants to put an emphasis on primary schools. She will also need to make improvements in the reform of secondary schools which has already been put into place. In addition, Berlin desperately needs more day-care places, because the birth rate is rising. On the one hand, this is good news (we prayed for this), but on the other hand, this was not in the prognosis of the Senate or the districts. The salaries of teachers and pre-school teachers do not match those of other states in Germany. Coming up with incentives for staying in Berlin will be one of Sandra Scheeres' challenges.

Prayer:

- **Pray that the Senator can quickly familiarize herself with all aspects of her new job**
- **Pray for protection and blessing for her family**

- **Pray for wisdom in solving the many problems in day-care centres and schools**

Christian Volunteer Agency

The Christian Volunteer Agency offers competent consultation for all those desiring to volunteer to help people in economic or personal difficulties in our city. The Agency can help individuals find an appropriate place to volunteer and is also actively looking for ways to help churches to develop social projects for their districts. They are aiming to help put words into action within the churches in Berlin. Small-group Bible studies can also participate in one-time or ongoing group activities. On the new website you can find a list of "currently needed" volunteers for social service. The list can be sorted by target groups, form of service, and geographical districts. (www.christliche-freiwilligenagentur.de). The ministry of the Volunteer Agency is financed by donations. It is a challenge to work effectively with little money. The Agency itself needs volunteers. Currently they need people who would enjoy being "Event Attendees" who would staff informational/consultation booths at churches and Christian events. In addition, the Agency needs people who would like to investigate social services facilities in Berlin.

Prayer:

- **Thank God for the well-thought-of ministry of the Agency and its staff**
- **Pray for new volunteers and for wisdom in finding places for them to use their gifts**
- **Pray for the financial situation—that new donors can be found**

Preparation for May 1st

A project group is already preparing for the open-air worship service and the prayer events for May 1st based on this year's Verse of the Year (2 Corinthians 12:9). As Christians, we once again want to create a contrasting alternative in our city.

However it is not yet clear whether we will have a stage for the worship service at Myfest. The stage that we have been using may not be available. In addition, the position of Chief of Police has been vacant for a year. This means the acting Chief of Police, Margarete Koppers, will be preparing the police operations for May 1st.

Prayer:

- **Pray that we will be able to find a different stage for the worship service**

- **Pray for a peaceful May 1st and for a further decline of right-wing and left-wing violence in our city**
- **Pray for the acting Chief of Police—for wisdom as she leads police operations, especially on May 1st.**

40 Days of Prayer and Fasting for our Land

Since 2004, approximately 70 prayer movements and initiatives from various denominations in Germany have been calling Christians to pray for various areas of life in our nation during the 40 days before Easter. The prayer initiative 2012 began on Feb. 22. The motto is from Luke 10:2 “Pray to the Lord of the harvest...” and is emphasizing the topic of evangelism and prayer in cooperation with ProChrist e.V.

(www.40tagebetenundfasten.de) Material can be ordered at: info@werte-stiftung.de

Prayer:

- **Pray that the city and the nation will see more change through prayer and that many will participate**

Rapid Asylum Procedure at the new international airport Berlin

At the new Berlin Brandenburg International Airport, a detention facility is to be built to inter refugees in the transit area who arrive without valid passports or those not arriving from “safe countries”. The rapid asylum procedure would decide within 48 hours about deportation. Such a quick procedure often leads to wrong decisions which have momentous consequences and endanger people in their home countries. In addition, according to asylum law, refugees applying for asylum are guaranteed a legally binding assessment, which is not possible in such a situation. Churches, social agencies, and aid organisations are protesting against such a procedure which is “contrary to the rule of law”. The state Brandenburg wants to abolish this rapid asylum procedure or at least suspend it until a revision of the rules of admission procedure have been decided upon by the European Union, which may declare this restrictive procedure illegal. The federal government however, which has the decision-making authority in the area of asylum law, wants to put the rapid asylum procedure in place in the Berlin Brandenburg International Airport soon, thus using the “accomplished fact” to

strengthen its position during discussions on the European Union level. As the airport partner, Berlin is staying in the background, pointing to the fact that the federal government has the authority to make decisions.

Prayer:

- **Pray that Berlin, which historically has offered protection to many refugees, will continue to stand up for accepting and treating refugees with justice**
- **Pray that the Berlin Senate will take a clear political stand against a system which turns away refugees too quickly**

Citizens’ Platform Neukölln

On Jan. 25, the third Citizens’ Platform was founded in Berlin. 33 different groups have formed a network named WIN – We in Neukölln. Among the groups are churches, associations of mosques, schools, day-care centres, and social and cultural associations. Together for Berlin is represented by an ecumenical group of Neukölln Christians by the name of “Friends of Jesus and Neukölln”. Over 1000 people attended the opening event.

What makes a Citizens’ Platform is special is its neutral political stand and its emphasis on social commitment based on long-term relationships. The Platform is financed through the dues of the participating groups, through foundations, and through companies in Neukölln, thus being intentionally independent of government funding. The Platform is now in the process of deciding which topics to address first. The decision will be made democratically and put into practice together. Further groups in Neukölln are welcome to join. Together for Berlin is also open for more Neukölln residents who want to become active. Contact info@gfberlin.de Further information can be found at <http://www.dico-berlin.org>

Prayer:

- **Pray that the work of the new Citizens’ Platform will be successful**
- **Pray that a consensus concerning relevant topics can be reached quickly**
- **Pray the groups will be successful in working together with respect and without prejudice**

Dates

May 1, probably 12:00 Prayer Service in Kreuzberg for Peace in the City