



Prayer for Berlin

December 2012 / January 2013

Good News: Financial Emergency Ends

For a long time Berlin was known as the capital of debt. Since 2002, a rigorous savings plan has been in effect - and it's showing results. Berlin is now no longer a budget emergency state. The most recent tax assessment is predicting additional hundreds of millions of Euros in extra income. If the delays in the airport construction with its 444 million Euro increase in taxes had not happened, Berlin would have had a balanced budget in two years. The new debt brake signed into federal law calls for balanced budgets not until the year 2020. We see this positive development as a wonderful answer to prayer. Since we began this prayer mail in 2003, we have prayed again and again for the development of the potential of the city, for an increase in employment, and for a stable financial situation. All of this is now visible. **Let us thank God for this.**

Risk of Poverty has grown

The risk of poverty in Berlin grew again last year. 21.1% of Berlin's residents live below the level of poverty. In 2010 the quota was 19.2%; in 2006 it was 17%. In each case, the capital was way above the national average. Those at risk for poverty are those who earn less than 60% of the average income. In 2011 that was 848 Euros for singles. Nearly every third child is dependent upon government assistance. (Study Hans-Böckler-Stiftung, Der Tagesspiegel Nov. 15, 2012)

Prayer:

- **Pray for more jobs with salaries that are high enough to eliminate the need for government help**
- **Pray for effective help for children below the poverty line**
- **Pray that Christians and churches can develop good models for aid projects**

Positive Development in the Job Market

There is an upward trend in jobs with social insurance benefits. Within a year, 40,000 such jobs were created. Nevertheless, unemployment continues to be higher in Berlin than anywhere else in the coun-

try. This is due to the fact that companies are unable to fill all their positions for skilled workers from within Berlin. When companies decide to settle in Berlin, they often bring employees from other regions or the urban hinterland. Industry is on the rise. For a long time, this sector did not look good in Berlin. There is strong growth in jobs in mechanical and electrical engineering.

The former Senator for the Economy Sibylle von Obernitz stated that Berlin was on its way to becoming the "economic metropolis of innovations". The Senator sees young digital businesses as a new focal point of support. They have a high need for venture capital. Berlin is leading in the area of internet start-ups.

Prayer:

- **Pray that ways can be found to break through long patterns of unemployment in Berlin. Pray for positive development among unemployed youth.**
- **Pray that God will bless the many innovative companies and that they will receive the financial support they need**
- **Pray for continued recognition and development of the city's economic potential**

Senator for Finance Dr. Ulrich Nußbaum

Dr. Ulrich Nußbaum, a 52-year old politically independent lawyer, has been the Senator for Finance in Berlin since 2009. He is the former Vice President of the Chamber of Commerce in Bremerhaven and has held various executive positions in administration, finance, and commerce. As the Senator for Finance, he not only controls public funds, he also controls the state-owned companies. Here he has uncovered problem areas. For instance, at the beginning of the year, the construction company Howoge fired its CEO because she had granted contracts without tendering them. In November, the Chairman of the Board of Degewo had to resign, because Nußbaum accused him of a conflict of interests and inadequate transparency. Unfortunately, these incidents have created enemies. In November, an anonymous letter was sent to various media accusing the Senator himself of conflict of interests.

Dr. Nußbaum wants to continue the strict financial policies begun under the red-red government under the present coalition. That means that spending is essentially frozen. In 2016 Berlin should no longer be acquiring new debt. The Budget Act for 2012/2013 requires that new indebtedness be reduced by half within 2 years.

Prayer:

- **Thank God for the successful work**
- **Pray for protection from attacks designed to destroy the attempts to uncover dishonesty**
- **Pray for good cooperation with the other members of the Senate**

Remodeling of the historical Mitte

The Berliner Zeitung reported, "Following the fatal attack on the 20-year old Jonny K. on the Alexanderplatz mid-October, the district Mitte is accelerating its plans to remodel the area between the Bahnhof Alexanderplatz and the Spanndauer Straße. Visitors to the area should be able to feel more comfortable. Currently the space around the Fernsehturm is being remodeled. Now the area surrounding the Marienkirche is to be redone. The Protestant St. Petri-St. Marien church complains that portions of the church cannot be used on weekends because "the urine runs in under the doors of the church". Young people often meet in the area surrounding the church to drink. They use the bushes around the church as a bathroom. New lamps have been installed in an attempt to make the Alexanderplatz safer, but a more extensive plan has not been made. What is to become of the Alexanderplatz when the U-Bahn renovation is completed is just now beginning to be discussed.

Prayer:

- **Pray for all those who are involved in city planning in this district - that they will discover God's good plans for the entire area**
- **Pray that Berlin's Mitte will be filled with the Spirit of God**
- **Pray that ways can be found to end binge drinking, etc.**

Christmas

Joy or burden, the best time of the year or the worst? The high numbers of suicides during Christmas and New Year's call us to prayer. A number of churches offer Christmas parties on Christmas Eve for those who are alone, for those who are desperate, and for the needy. But in view of the many in need, there are still too few such events. The worship services on Christmas have the highest attendance of the entire year. Bringing the message to the hearts of "Christmas Christians" is a difficult task for preachers. But there is no more comforting message than the fact that "God became one of us", "the Savior has come", and "peace on earth".

Prayer:

- **Pray that the joy of the birth of Christ will reach those who need it**
- **Pray that Christmas church services will reach and change hearts**

Keeping On: Refugees

The problem of finding places for refugees in Berlin to live was in the news in November. In light of the onslaught of applications, Berlin's districts did not have enough accommodations. Since then the problem is being worked on more intensively. Empty rooms in community buildings could be made available, but have not been offered up until now. **Let us continue to pray for dignified admission and accommodations in our city for refugees many of whom are traumatized.**

Dates

January 13-20, 2013: International Week of Prayer sponsored by the Evangelical Alliance "Walking with God": A printed prayer brochure is available, or the file can be downloaded at: <http://tinyurl.com/c48cpez>; the Berlin prayer events are also in printed form and available online at: <http://tinyurl.com/cj5txee>

January 18, 2013, 7pm: Evening of Prayer for Victims of Trafficking and Sexual Violence Lukas-Gemeinde, Kurfürstenstr. 133, 10785 B-Schöneberg sponsored by: Alabaster Jar e.V. & Neustart e.V.

January 27, 2013: Holocaust - Day of Remembrance: Worship services in Berlin churches held by the "Aktion Würde und Versöhnung – Deutschland hilft bedürftigen Holocaustüberlebenden in Israel" (Dignity and Reconciliation - Germany helps needy survivors of the Holocaust): <http://tinyurl.com/bpk6s6t>

Turn of the Year

This issue is a combined issue for December and January. We wish all our prayer partners a joyous celebration of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ and a New Year's celebration full of hope. Even though the verse of the year for 2013 points us to the temporariness of our lives ("We do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come" Hebrews 13:14), we nevertheless have a hope that helps us to pray in faith and act with determination in 2013. Warm greetings from the editors - Kerstin Hack, Rosemarie Stresemann, Andrea Specht und Axel Nehlsen