



Edition 210 – December 2022 / January 2023

## **Good News: Advent and Christmas Even in Times of Crisis**

Isn't it really good news that even in times of war and crises, climate and Corona, it will be Advent and Christmas again? God wants to come close to us, not only "every year" as a German Christmas song indicates, but in a completely new way, especially in light of the current challenges. Because this is what Advent means: God is coming to be with us. And that's what Christmas means: Jesus becomes like us as a child, in order to connect and reconcile us with God. The "God who came down" - in two senses. We should celebrate this in 2022 and thus set a counterpoint against all fear and hopelessness: God comes to us, he is close to us - despite everything! May many in Berlin hear this good news!

### **Prayer:**

- **Thank God that he came to us and for his indestructible nearness**
- **Pray that the message of God's incarnation can be heard by Berliners through all channels**
- **Pray for blessings, protection and power for all Christmas services**

## **Hanukkah**

The Jewish Hanukkah festival from December 18th to 26th commemorates the rededication of the temple in 164 BC. The oil for the menorah lamp in the temple miraculously lasted eight days before new oil was made. It is a festival lasting eight days, during which one additional light is lit on a candlestick every day. This contrasts with a renewed increase in the number of anti-Semitic incidents in Berlin. The Antisemitism Research and Information Centre (RIAS) documented around three incidents a day in our city for 2021. There was property damage, threats, anti-Semitic mass letters and violence. Standing up for Jewish life is the theme of this year's rally on December 19, 2022, at 7 p.m. at the Brandenburg Gate.

### **Prayer:**

- **Thank God for strengthened Jewish life in Berlin**
- **Pray for protection for Jewish institutions (synagogues, community centres, schools...)**
- **Pray for courage to speak out against anti-Semitism**

## **Three Million Euro Relief Package**

The Berlin House of Representatives was the first German state parliament to pass a comprehensive relief package of three billion euros, which supplements federal aid. These include the 29-euro ticket for all Berliners, a nine-euro ticket for poor people, the termination and rent freeze for municipal tenants, the school construction offensive and other energy aid for administration, private individuals, clubs and social organizations. According to the Governing Mayor Giffey, Berlin can afford this because not only does it have more tax revenue from inflation, but it has also weathered the pandemic better than other federal states.

### **Prayer:**

- **Thank God for this massive aid package**
- **Pray that it goes where help is needed most**
- **Pray for relief for low-income households**

## **Social Cohesion**

Recently, the ARD theme week "Searching for 'Us' - what keeps us together?" aired. A representative citizen survey was also done by an opinion research institute. The majority saw major conflicts between rich and poor, over Corona, and migration problems. More than half are afraid that Germany will be drawn into the Ukraine war. Only 27% believe churches play a role in cohesion. On the other hand, three quarters see club life (sport, culture, leisure time) as an important factor in creating a sense of togetherness.

### **Prayer:**

- **Pray that churches can address the worries and fears of people - very practically through conversations and prayer**
- **Pray that churches will once again become role models for solidarity between poor and rich, East and West, locals and immigrants**

## **Fewer Apartments Again**

Around 100,000 apartments are lacking in Berlin. Despite this, fewer and fewer new buildings are being approved. From January to September this year, building permits were issued for 5.4 percent fewer apartments in multi-family houses in Berlin than at the

same time last year. In the case of one- and two-family houses, the permits were a quarter less. However, analyses show that depending on the location, more or less is being built. Many new apartments are still being built in popular districts such as Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf and Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg. In Spandau, on the other hand, around 60 percent fewer new buildings were approved. The situation is similar in Marzahn-Hellersdorf. Another problem: The construction costs are increasing more and more - and with them the rents and purchase prices. The Senate therefore wants to promote the construction of social housing more in the future.

**Prayer:**

- **Pray for more affordable housing for people with lower incomes**
- **Pray for more new buildings also in less popular districts**
- **Pray for attractive Senate subsidies that promote the construction of social housing**

### ***Accommodation of Refugees***

Around 150 refugees continue to arrive in Berlin every day. In addition to Ukraine, many of these people come from other Eastern European countries, most notably Moldova. Now in winter more refugees from the Ukraine are expected to arrive in Berlin. As a result, there is less and less space in shelters for people who have fled. Social Senator Katja Kipping therefore wants to set up lightweight buildings and tents to accommodate refugees. Up to 10,000 people are to receive accommodation in this way. However, gymnasiums should not be used. Refugee initiatives are protesting against accommodation in tents, even if, according to Kipping, these are to be equipped with solid floors to protect against ground frost. According to the Senator for Social Affairs, Terminal A at the old Tegel Airport could also be used as accommodation for refugees in the long term.

**Prayer:**

- **Pray that a ceasefire will happen soon in Ukraine**
- **Pray for enough alternatives to accommodation in tents**
- **Pray for more employees (including volunteers) for the accommodations**

### ***Attacks on Political Party Offices***

There have been at least six attacks on party offices in Berlin since the end of October. Various parties and neighbourhoods were affected. There were paint splash attacks, stone throwing and arson attacks. The perpetrators have not yet been caught, there has only been one confession on a left-wing extremist platform on the Internet for the sixth attack on a Lichtenberg constituency office. Parliament President Dennis

Buchner (SPD) was appalled: These are attacks on free democracy.

**Prayer:**

- **Pray that these crimes will be solved**
- **Pray for protection for our politicians**
- **Pray that the climate of fear and intimidation will be curbed**

### ***ONE Day of Prayer (EINS-Gebetstag) on January 14th***

For the sixth time, the broadest Christian alliance in the capital invites you to the ONE Day of Prayer: "There are so many things that can separate us. But we want to look for what unites us: Jesus Christ! We want to gather to worship him in different ways, to intercede for others and to be united by him." 3 p.m. prayer event with many prayer stations, 6 p.m. snack and encounter, 7 p.m. prayer concert. Location: Baptisten Schöneberg, Hauptstraße 125 A, 10827 Berlin. Details soon at [einsfürberlin.de](https://einsfürberlin.de)

**Prayer:**

- **Pray for successful planning and implementation**
- **Pray for wide participation from the different churches and denominations**
- **Pray that the Day of Prayer positively changes the spiritual atmosphere in the city**

### ***Keeping On: Repeat of Elections in Berlin***

After the election failure in 2021, the elections to the House of Representatives and the district parliaments will be repeated on February 12, and the federal election later. According to current surveys, there could be shifts in the results for the parties. Berlin's political future is open again.

**Let's keep praying for an orderly election, for a fair campaign and for God's leadership in politics.**

### ***Dates***

**Dec. 12 and Jan. 11: Prayer for City Politics**, 6-7 pm, Rotes Rathaus, in front of the main entrance

**Dec. 12, 7pm, Brandenburger Tor: Demonstration against Anti-Semitism**

**Jan. 14, 3-9 pm: EINS Gebetstag**, Baptisten Schöneberg, Hauptstr. 125 A, 10827 Berlin

**Jan. 8-15, 2023, Evangelical Alliance International Week of Prayer:** Dates and topics:

<https://www.evangelische-allianz-berlin.de/aktuelles/allianz-gebetswoche/>

**Jan. 18-25, Week fo Prayer for the Unity of**

**Christians:** Dates and Topics: <https://www.oerb.de/>