



Edition 214 – May 2023

Good News: Berlin Remains the Startup Capital

Last year, Berlin was once again the start-up capital of Europe last year. This was announced by the Berlin Partner business development agency. It is number one ahead of London, Barcelona, Lisbon and Amsterdam.

Prayer: Thank God for creativity in start-ups that are working on the future of our country and for often flexible jobs through start-ups, especially for young people

Prayer for the Districts: Lichtenberg

The Evangelical Alliance Berlin and Together for Berlin are organizing a monthly prayer for each district in 2023. Each month, we accompany this in the prayer mail with an article for the respective district. Here is the information for the district of Lichtenberg.

The old stereotypes for Lichtenberg of the “Stasi, Platte, Neo-Nazis” of the 1990s have long been outdated. Over the last 13 years, the two formerly independent districts of Hohenschönhausen and Lichtenberg have experienced rapid population growth to currently over 308,000 inhabitants. There are suburban villas, quarters with Wilhelminian charm and socialist prefab blocks. The district has repeatedly been certified as a “family-friendly municipality”. The residents have to adapt to the cultural change in the population structure, to building consolidation processes and sometimes significantly rising rents. Despite drastic expansion measures, the children's boom of recent years has pushed the capacity of the day-care and school system to the limit. As elsewhere in the city, there is a housing shortage in Lichtenberg. In addition, many migrant families have moved here as part of the refugee movement, most recently from Ukraine. The new cultural and ethnic heterogeneity requires tolerance to engage with the new diversity. The earlier activities of right-wing extremist groups in the district have decreased significantly. After the repeat election, for the first time in the history of the district, the CDU provided the strongest fraction and, with the former Baptist pastor, Martin Schaefer, also the district mayor. State and free churches are also held in high esteem in the political sphere, as they sometimes play a constructive role that serves the community.

They have taken responsibility in the social area and opened up to the district. The Coptic Church provides a presence of an Orthodox Church in the district.

Prayer:

- **Pray for solidarity between the residents of the district, especially between locals and migrants**
- **Pray for constructive factual politics across party lines, especially for the new district administration**
- **Pray for a publicly interested, socially committed and spiritually vital Christian scene**

The New Governing Mayor

Kai Wegner, 50, was elected the new Governing Mayor of Berlin on April 27 in the third ballot. Some SPD representatives who are against the coalition with the CDU had probably previously refused to give him their approval. However, the AfD had also announced that it would vote for Wegner in the third ballot. All this puts a strain on his start. Wegner has been a member of the Berlin House of Representatives since November 2021, where he was parliamentary group leader of the CDU Berlin from 2021 to 2023. From 2005 he was a member of the German Bundestag. He has also been state chairman of the CDU Berlin since May 2019. Wegner grew up in Berlin-Spandau, the son of a construction worker and a retail saleswoman, and after high school trained as an insurance salesman. He was part of the management of a construction company, then an independent management consultant. He has two children.

Prayer:

- **Pray God's protection and favour for Wegner**
- **Pray that after the bad start, he will quickly take action with the Senate to tackle our city's problems**
- **Pray for good cooperation in the coalition**

New Senators From CDU and SPD

The new members of the Senate were appointed and sworn in last Thursday: in addition to Governing Mayor Wegner, seven women and three men. Five senators each belong to the CDU and the SPD. The new Berlin state government is quite diverse. Four women born in East Germany belong to the Senate.

Almost 35 years after the fall of the Wall, East Germans are still significantly underrepresented in politics. With Joe Chialo (CDU), Felor Badenberg (independent) and Cansel Kiziltepe (SPD), three people with non-German roots also belong to the new Berlin Senate. That corresponds to around a third of the posts, i.e. roughly the proportion in the Berlin population. For many people with a history of migration, the three will be role models. Without quotas, the diversity of the city is shown.

Prayer:

- **Thank God that a new Senate with great diversity has been formed**
- **Pray that the new senators quickly find their way into their new offices after a bumpy start and do a good job for the city**

Demos and Prayer on May 1st

Since 1987 there have repeatedly been violent riots on May 1st. In recent years this has steadily decreased. And last year police said it was the most peaceful May Day since 1987. Thank God he answered our prayers! The official news attested to the police's de-escalating tactics, which helped to reduce the violence. We prayed for that. This year the infamous 6 p.m. demo is planned and registered again. It starts in Neukölln on Boddinstr. and runs via Reuterstr. and Kottbusser Damm to Oranienplatz. There could be riots at the new police station at Kotti. The traditional Myfest has been cancelled this year.

Prayer:

- **Pray for a peaceful May Day without injuries**
- **Pray that all planned demos take place and legitimate concerns are heard**
- **Pray for good police tactics**

Climate Blockades of the So-Called "Last Generation"

Hundreds of activists from the group "Last Generation" want to paralyze Berlin indefinitely in order to push through their demands for a radical climate change. Initially, disturbances and blockades in the government district were planned. However, in the week beginning April 24th, they are all over town. A spokeswoman for the Berlin police said on request that they were preparing for the blockades, but could not give any details about the operational planning or the expected locations. But the situation continues to escalate: car drivers often react angrily, in some cases attacking activists or dragging them off the road. Hundreds of lawsuits are pending against the climate activists who are gluing themselves to roads for coercion and other crimes. A video shows two police officers dragging and carrying a young man off the street by using pain grips. According to surveys, a majority rejects the group's forms of protest, and the Fridays for Future climate movement has also criticized it.

Prayer:

- **Pray that the Last Generation group find ways of protest that do not coerce or harm others**
- **Pray that people who are blocked respond with patience and without aggression**
- **Pray for protection for all using roads and that emergency services are not hindered**

Impending Shortage of Administrative Staff

Around 127,000 people work in the Berlin administration - around 102,000 in the main administration, 25,000 in the districts. Of these, more than one in three is expected to retire by the end of the decade for reasons of age. The districts are hit particularly hard: Here it is even 41.4 percent who will leave - and with them a lot of knowledge and experience. Around 6,100 positions, or a good 10 percent, are currently vacant. The recruitment process is lengthy. When a position becomes vacant, it takes a year in the district office before it is finally filled. Administration, districts and politicians are not well prepared for this situation, criticizes the State Audit Office in this year's report. The policy challenge, then, is threefold: to fill the vacancies and those that will be vacated - and create new positions to meet the growing administrative needs.

Prayer:

- **Pray that it will be possible to fill vacancies with qualified personnel quickly and unbureaucratically**
- **Pray for new ideas in human resources policy**
- **Pray that finances will be freed up for administration**

Keeping On: Situation in the Schools

Lack of staff, classes that are too large, and dilapidated school buildings continue to be pressing problems.

Let's keep praying for effective measures in education policy, now also through the new Senate.

Dates

May 1, Noon-2pm: Prayer for a Peaceful May 1st in the Gebetshaus 'Tag und Nacht', Schivelbeiner Str. 7, 10439 Berlin

May 10: Prayer for City Politics, 6-7 pm, Rotes Rathaus, in front of the main entrance