

HISTORY OF THE FOREST CHAPEL

On Sunday, May 22, 1910, the Forest Chapel in Berlin-Hessenwinkel was inaugurated. It was largely built, including the bells, with the help of donations of Hessenwinkel citizens, based on the design by the architects Peter Jürgensen and Jürgen Bachmann, who also planned the Schoeneberg town hall and the Tabor Church in Berlin-Wilhelmshagen, which was completed a year and a half later.

At that time Jesus' "Call to the savior" was written on a wooden panel above the church door as an invitation for all visitors: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matth. 11:28).

The chapel was given the name "To the Knocking Christ". The name of the chapel and the depiction of the altarpiece by Hugo Spindler, both refer to a passage from the Revelation of John: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." (Rev. 3:20)

The chapel survived the two world wars unscathed and the fiftieth anniversary was celebrated worthily with guests and a large attendance of the community.

At the end of the 1960s, the temporarily incumbent pastor and some parish church councils decided to radically wash off the "magnificent" painting on the two front sides of the apse, as well as the ornamental arches (see photo from 1910 in the entrance) and whitewash them. The altarpiece gave way to a plain chrome cross (picture also in the entrance).

The Forest Chapel was just one of the four churches that belonged to the parish of Berlin-Rahnsdorf. There was also the Village Church (reconsecrated in 1887 after the village fire of 1881), the Tabor Church (1911) and the Wichernheim (1932). So it happened that for decades nothing could be done for the maintenance of the Forest Chapel due to financial reasons, so that the chapel fell more and more into disrepair until it was impossible to use it. The doors of the Chapel of the Knocking Christ remained closed. Finally, the parish church council decided to give up the Forest Chapel and not to invest in it anymore. The chapel was the smallest of the four churches in the parish and was hidden in the forest...

Digression: At the inauguration of the chapel in 1910, we are in the district of Oberbarnim, administrative district of Potsdam, Mark Brandenburg, Prussia, far from the gates of Coepenick, even further from Berlin.

The decline of the chapel happens during the time of the GDR.

The chapel could be restored after the German reunification.

The chapel was saved! In the early 1990s, the state curator and member of the community, Professor Helmut Engel, initiated the renovation of the chapel with the help of an unusual financing concept.

The renovation work, which began in January 1995, was financed, on the one hand, by the Wolfgang Langguth Foundation with support of DM 130,000 and by donations from individuals and companies. On the other hand, the repair work was made possible by businesses working for donation receipts. A building committee for the Forest Chapel was

set up, in which the individual steps were considered and determined. In fact, it was possible to restore the Forest Chapel step by step with the agreement of the monument protection authorities, without requiring the support of the regional church, the church district or state authorities.

On September 28, 1997, the rededication of the chapel was celebrated with a festive thanksgiving service. Since around 1999, the "Friends of the Forest Chapel" have been increasingly observing damage to the wooden components and parts of the interior fittings due to insect infestation.

In 2002, with the help of the Foundation for the Protection of Monuments, the wooden components, which were heavily infested with pests, were renovated.