



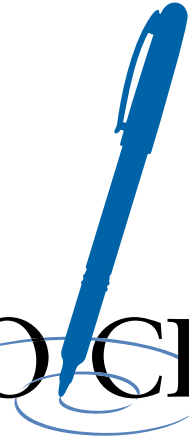
### About the Author

The Rev. Daniel G. Conklin is an alumnus of the Philadelphia Divinity School and the Universität Tübingen. He spent 23 years of his ministry in Germany as a teacher, scholarship secretary of the German Protestant Churches for an ecumenical exchange program, and as priest with the German Old Catholic Church. In Seattle he served in the German United Church of Christ, Epiphany Parish, and at St. Mark's Cathedral. For ten years he was Pastor-Theologian of the Center of Theological Inquiry at Princeton University. He has been living in Berlin, Germany, since 2010. His email address is [daniel.conklin@gmx.de](mailto:daniel.conklin@gmx.de).

### About Vintage Voice

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# VINTAGE VOICE



## Retiring Abroad in Berlin

By the Rev. Daniel Conklin

Approaching retirement seven years ago, after 17 years of ministry in Seattle, I pondered returning to the country where I spent 23 years of my ministry: Germany. I started serious planning two years before my retirement in 2010. I set up some prerequisites for myself: First, the legal aspects of residency needed to be clarified and settled. Second, the city (and it was never a question that it would be a city) needed to be affordable on my retirement income. Third, my retirement life needed to be possible without a car. Fourth, and not least of all, the city where I chose to live needed to be filled with cultural options: theater, opera, concerts, museums, and interesting things to be active and involved in.

All four of my prerequisites were fulfilled with the metropolis of Berlin. I moved here at the end of 2010. Of course, living in Germany was not new for me. I already knew the language and culture very well even as there were changes since the time of my moving from Hannover to Seattle. The Berlin Wall was torn down, East and West were reunited, there was a new currency. In many ways, however, it was like coming home again for me.

I have now spent five years of retirement in Berlin. For six months during that time I went back to a part-time ministry as interim in a local (German-speaking) Lutheran Church and I continue to help my colleagues on a non-stipendiary basis at St. George's Anglican/Episcopal Church. Otherwise, I enjoy the company of old friends again as well as a wonderful circle of new friends I've made since moving here.

Having lived and worked here for so long and receiving German social security, I acquired legal status as an alien resident easily. I was also re-registered in one of the German statutory (non-profit) health insurance plans, which includes hospitalization, medical, prescriptions, dental, and long-term care. (In the United States, unfortunately, we can only dream of such comprehensive insurance coverage!) I found my apartment quickly in a central but quiet corner of "downtown" Berlin. It's in a renovated building over 100 years old, high ceilings, large rooms and windows, just one block from two different U-Bahn subway lines and two blocks to a S-Bahn light-rail station. A wonderful bakery and grocery store

are nearby; Alexanderplatz (one of the most high-energy spots in the city) is just two subway stops away with multiple shopping options. My senior monthly ticket is for the use of all public transportation (subway, light-rail, streetcars, buses, and regional trains) not only in the city of Berlin but for the whole province of Brandenburg, which extends to the Polish border. In effect, my monthly ticket covers all day-trips in the wider area. It's such a joy to have this easy and affordable mobility without the stress of driving a car!

For an opera fan like me, Berlin is Opera Heaven with its four opera houses. (In Germany as a whole there are more than 80 opera houses.) Of the four, three give a 25% senior discount on tickets. Hardly a week goes by that does not include at least one night at the opera, symphony, or theater. As an ardent movie-watcher, I also enjoy the many options for going to the movies, many of which offer "original versions," i.e., not dubbed, but in English. Frequently I take advantage of Berlin's wonderful spectrum of museums and I have a yearly ticket for all the Museums of Prussian Cultural Heritage.

Although St. George's Anglican Church is my new "home" parish, I also attend regularly St. Mary's Lutheran Church near my apartment as well as the Berliner Dom, the Lutheran Cathedral built by Kaiser Wilhelm and restored after the fall of the Wall. The German State Choir of Men and Boys sings there regularly. There are often ecumenical and interfaith events in the city, many of which I enjoy attending. A new sacred space is being built even as I write called "The House of One," a sacred building used by all three of the world's monotheistic religions — Judaism, Christianity, and Islam — under one roof, a house of learning and prayer. It may be unique in the world and one can only hope that it will be imitated in other places.

In short: I feel blessed to live my retirement in the culturally diverse, historically fascinating, and lively city of Berlin. I definitely recommend to colleagues contemplating retirement the option of living abroad. Do your homework beforehand; learn the language, if you don't already know it; and consider pitching your tent in a place you've always dreamed of.



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