

# PRAYER ALERT...

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## PRAISE REPORTS

### ■ Numbers rise at London churches

London's churchgoing population is increasing by leaps and bounds, according to an authoritative survey for the London City Mission. Results just released from the London Church Census, carried out by Brierley Consultancy, show that nearly 100,000 more people were attending church in the capital in October 2012 than the last time the count was made seven years ago, an increase of 16 per cent. At 720,000, the rate of churchgoing is more than three per cent higher in London than in the rest of England. Because of the capital's size, this means that a quarter of all English churchgoers attend church in London. According to the survey, the growth is 'largely driven by London's ethnic diversity'. Of the two new churches opening every week between 2005 and 2012, two-thirds were Pentecostal Black Majority and a third catered for a particular language or ethnic group.

**Praise:** God for the growth of His Church. (Gen.17:2)

**More:** <http://www.methodistrecorder.co.uk/mrhlines.htm>

### ■ Christian broadcaster SAT-7 earns Human Rights Journalism Award

The Lebanese Center for Human Rights recently granted Juliana Sfeir, on behalf of SAT-7, the Human Rights Journalism Award. According to a news release from SAT-7, Sfeir is a special projects manager at SAT-7 Lebanon and an executive producer of social impact programmes for SAT-7. The Lebanese Center for Human Rights granted the award to five recipients 'for their dedication to promoting Human Rights through the media.' SAT-7 said it has produced programming advocating for human rights since 2003. The Human Rights Journalism Award specifically recognizes the efforts of two campaigns - the inclusion of people with disabilities and advocating for the rights of female heads of households. SAT-7 said it is honoured to be recognized for its work, alongside several other organizations such as L'Orient le Jour, The Daily Star and IRIN, and blogger Salim al Lawzi.

**Praise:** God for the work of SAT-7 and its Human Rights programming. (Pr.31:9)

**More:** <http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/2013/s13080014.htm>

## BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

### ■ UK challenged on treatment of disabled and older women

The UK government must take action to offset the impact of its austerity policies on disabled and older women, a United Nations committee says. The call came following in-depth evidence provided to the UN by a user-led women's co-operative, Sisters of Frida (SoF). The UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has expressed its concern over the 'negative impact' on disabled and older women of serious cuts in funding imposed by the Westminster government. The cuts have hit women's groups, disabled people, those on low incomes and social programmes supported by local authorities. UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has looked at examining the UK government's commitment to the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). It has therefore called upon the UK government to 'pay special attention to the health needs' of disabled women.

**Pray:** for the Government to take heed of this report and to act upon it. (Ro.2:11)

**More:** <http://www.ekklelesia.co.uk/node/18768>

#### ▣ Samaritans aim to cut suicides on railways in Wales

Volunteers from Samaritans are hoping to reduce the numbers of suicides on Welsh railways by visiting stations to raise awareness of help available. The charity says the number of suicides in general is rising, with anecdotal evidence that people are concerned about jobs and benefit changes. Leaflets will be given to passengers at south Wales stations to encourage them to call the charity if they need help. On average, one person a day tries to take their life on the UK's railways. The volunteers from Samaritans' Cardiff branch - which also covers the south Wales valleys - decided to 'reach out to the community' because they said they were getting more calls for help. It is part of a wider national campaign being run by the charity and Network Rail, launched in 2010, to reduce suicide on the UK's railways by 20% in five years.

**Pray:** for the Samaritans, their work and the people they help. (Ps.51:12)

**More:** <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-south-east-wales-23641945>

#### ▣ Conversions from Islam in Wales

Last May, the Evangelical Alliance (EA) conducted research on the experiences of 15 Christians in Wales who had converted from Muslim backgrounds. Muslim-background believers (MBBs) in Wales number approximately 300, with the majority coming from a Persian background. Apart from Persian MBBs, there are also individuals in Wales from other backgrounds, some British born, others not, including Somalian, Afghan, Turkish and Pakistani. MBBs in Wales enjoy, as would be expected, a great degree of religious freedom, there is also the possibility of individuals feeling threatened or intimidated by their community or family members because of their decision to convert. The trend of Iranians leaving Islam is a social phenomenon occurring throughout the West and is rooted in a number of issues: the perception that Islam is a foreign religion that has been foisted upon them (Zoroastrianism was the ancient religion of the region) and their exposure to a particularly harsh version of political Islam in Iran are both contributing factors.

**Pray:** that the Holy Spirit will continue touching the lives of Muslims and pray that Christians will come alongside and encourage. (Mk.16:15-18)

**More:** <http://revivalmedia.org/2013/08/04/conversions-from-islam-in-wales-319-report-5/>

#### ▣ Marriage not a priority for prospective parents

A new poll has found that most young people do not plan to get married before starting a family. Their thinking has been put down to uncertainty over the cost of living and the current job market and reflects a very different understanding of settling down to that of their parents. 54 per cent say they do not expect to be married before having their first child, according to the research by Santander Insurance. Only 45 per cent believe they will own their own home before having children and only four in ten expect to begin parenthood with a secure job or a regular income. Andrea Minichiello Williams, CEO of Christian Concern, commented: 'The link in people's minds between marriage and having children has been severed. This is not for the best. Research, such as that done by the Centre for Social Justice, has repeatedly shown that family breakdown is far less likely when parents are married.'

**Pray:** for a wider understanding of the benefits of marriage particularly in family life. (Eph.5:33)

**More:** <http://www.christianconcern.com/our-concerns/family/marriage-not-a-priority-for-prospective-parents>

#### ▣ Christians lose out to atheists for senior jobs

Christians are less likely than atheists to be promoted to top jobs, official figures show. Nearly a quarter of people with no religious belief live in homes headed by someone with a senior executive position or a job in one of the professions. However, well under a fifth of Christians work in the best-paid and most influential jobs or are married to someone who does. The breakdown of employment and religious belief, produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) from the 2011 census, comes as campaigners claim it is becoming harder for Christians to get to the top. Barrister Andrea Minichiello Williams, a member of the Church of England's General Synod, said: 'If you hold views that are contrary to the prevailing orthodoxy you are seen as potential trouble. This is a real phenomenon. Christianity is now a bar to appointment or promotion.' But others believe the Christian majority are being out-paced by more ambitious religious groups.

**Pray:** that Christians will be inspired to take up the roll of workers willing to bring glory to God. (Ps.90:17)

**More:** <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2383925/Christians-lose-atheists-senior-jobs-religious-people-held-positions.html>

#### ▣ BBC to air kids' show on 'gay marriage'

The BBC broadcasted a reality-style children's programme on a gay couple preparing for their civil partnership ceremony. The show had been re-named for the edition, and was called Marrying Dad and Dad instead of Marrying Mum and Dad. The format of the series involves the couple's children organising the day as a surprise, and the episode showed the same-sex couple's children putting together a James Bond-themed day. Monday's show featured Mark and Paul, who were the first same-sex couple to adopt children on the island of Jersey. Marrying Dad and Dad was aired on the digital channel CBBC on Monday 12 August. In January this year a BBC report recommended that children should be introduced to homosexuality from an early age on TV. The report said 'incidental portrayal' of lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people should be incorporated within programming aimed at children.

**Pray:** for the BBC programmers that they will not increase the number of such shows aimed at young children. (Pr.3:1)

**More:** <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/bbc-to-air-kids-show-on-gay-marriage/>

#### ▣ Bible could be cast away by BBC's Desert Island Discs

The Bible could be jettisoned by the BBC's popular radio show, Desert Island Discs, according to a source within the broadcaster. The show asks guests which records they would take with them if exiled on an island, and they have been given the Bible and the complete works of Shakespeare as well by default. But, according to a report in The Independent, a BBC source says there have been discussions about whether to end the presumption about the Bible after more than 70

years on the show. The BBC has denied that there are any plans or discussions to remove the Bible from the programme. The alleged discussions have come months after the death of the show's creator's widow, who previously owned the rights to the programme. The National Secular Society has called for the Bible to be dropped from the show. But atheists including author Philip Pullman have responded positively to the inclusion of the Bible.

**Pray:** against any further cutting of our Christian foundations. (Ps.11:3)

**More:** <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/bible-could-be-cast-away-by-bbcs-desert-island-discs/>

## EUROPE

### Spain: PM 'is behaving like Galtieri

Gibraltar's chief minister Fabian Picardo accused Spain's prime minister of behaving like Argentine dictator General Galtieri as Spanish officials again blocked the border. Fabian Picardo said Mariano Rajoy was fuelling the crisis to distract from his domestic troubles - just as the military junta in Buenos Aires did by ordering the invasion of the Falkland Islands in 1982. The minister said, 'What is happening in the background is that the Spanish government has been engulfed in allegations of corruption which affect Mr Rajoy himself.' Mr Rajoy had to deny accepting illegal payments from a political slush fund while the country's economy is a disaster area. Mr Picardo said a British prime minister facing the same allegations as Mr Rajoy 'wouldn't last five minutes and yet in Spain Mr Rajoy remains comfortable in his post trying to create diversions like this one'. The director general for foreign affairs at Spain's foreign ministry, upped the rhetoric further by telling Channel 4 News, 'We are confident that in the end that we will have Gibraltar as part of Spain.'

**Pray:** against cross border reckless reactions and for positive negotiation asking God to reveal and remove any hidden ungodly agendas. (Ps.37:1)

**More:** <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2391491/Spain-behaving-like-Argentinas-aggression-Falklands-1982-Gibraltars-chief-minister-claims.html>

### Spain and France bust people-smuggling ring

Scores of people have been arrested in Spain and France in a crackdown on a gang smuggling Chinese nationals into Europe and the United States. Spanish police said on Saturday that 51 people had been arrested in Spain, with another 24 arrests were reported in France, following a two-year joint investigation. The bosses of the operation were arrested in Barcelona. The Spanish interior ministry said the gang charged up to \$66,700 to transport mainly Chinese and Malaysian nationals to the US, Britain, Spain, France, Greece, Italy and Turkey. Some of the people trafficked ended up in the sex trade, the ministry said. The gang's main European hub was Barcelona airport. It allegedly used the city as a stopping-off point for Chinese while false documents were prepared. A total of 81 false passports from South Korea, Taiwan, Malaysia and Japan were recovered in raids, as well as fake immigration stamps, Chinese and European currencies, and weapons including a handgun.

**Pray:** for the continued success of the authorities in bringing those to justice who organize such crimes. (Ps.11:7)

**More:** <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2013/08/201381013145843784.html>

## WORLDWIDE

### NIGERIA: Progress against Boko Haram

Abba Moro, Nigeria's interior minister, said the army is making progress in the war against Boko Haram despite the killing of 44 people in a mosque on Sunday. He dismissed the attack as 'desperate' and 'isolated' telling the BBC 'The security agencies of Nigeria have been able to push the Boko Haram sect from their major strongholds.' Thousands of extra soldiers have been sent to the north-eastern states since a state of emergency was announced in May. On Monday 32 militants, 2 soldiers and a policeman were killed in clashes with Boko Haram in Borno state when troops successfully repelled terrorists who attacked a military base. We are asked to continue to pray that Boko Haram's plans to establish an Islamic caliphate in the country will fail. More than 2,000 people have died since terrorists commenced killings and bombings mostly in the northern part of the country. See also: [http://zeenews.india.com/news/world/nigeria-clashes-between-boko-haram-and-army-35-killed\\_867088.html](http://zeenews.india.com/news/world/nigeria-clashes-between-boko-haram-and-army-35-killed_867088.html)

**Pray:** God will continue to strengthen the resolve and abilities of Nigeria's government and army in its fight against terror. (Ps.37:10-11)

**More:** <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-23689074>

### Israel: Negotiations

Peace efforts restarted after three years when Israel began to release 26 Palestinian prisoners. However diplomacy was overshadowed by Israeli proposals to build 3,000+ new settler units, 900 in East Jerusalem. A senior PLO official said the proposed Jewish settler homes could 'collapse' the talks. A spokeswoman for Israel's interior ministry said more approvals were needed and it could be years before building began. Israel's 'Peace Now' organisation disputed this, believing that construction could begin within weeks. A spokesman for Benjamin Netanyahu said Palestinians shouldn't be surprised - Israel had rejected Mr Abbas's demand for a freeze on settlement building as a precondition for talks. Abdullah Abdullah, a member of the legislative council and a supporter of Mr Abbas said Palestinians would not stay in the talks if Israel continued with the settlement surge. 'We have other options,' he said. US Secretary of State John Kerry hopes to achieve a peace deal within nine months.

**Pray:** for positive perseverance and cooperative clarifications by all involved in these negotiations. (Jer.30:10)

**More:** <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/peace-talks-at-risk-as-israel-approves-900-more-settlements-despite-palestinian-prisoners-release-8760194.html>

### Egypt: Islamists take revenge on Egyptian Christians

Anti-Christian violence swept Egypt Wednesday in the bloodiest day yet of Egypt's revolution. World Watch Monitor reported, 'Islamist protesters took out their anger Wednesday on government and dozens of Christian buildings and homes.' The Bible Society of Egypt reported 15 churches and three Christian schools being attacked, and two Christian bookshops

completely destroyed by fire. Attacks by Islamist protestors recently forced Coptic Orthodox Pope Tawadros II to cancel speaking engagements and prompted 16 human-rights groups to voice concern. On June 30th the President of Cairo's Evangelical Theological Seminary said, 'Previous regimes pushed the Church to give them support, by controlling Christians and calling them not to oppose standing regimes. This minimized the effectiveness of Christians, separating them from the rest of society and depriving them of the liberty to act independently according to their faith and conscience. Now we have learned our lesson and refuse to be a tool in the hand of any regime.'

**Pray:** for the Lord to protect Egypt, ask Him to give Church leaders special wisdom and unity, may they positively engage in this season of change and transformation. Pray against corruption, injustice and division that could damage communities. Pray for Egyptians across the country who are caught in a climate of fear and uncertainty. (Ps.1:6)

**More:** <http://www.christianitytoday.com/gleanings/2013/july/egypts-pope-praises-recovery-of-stolen-revolution.html>

#### ■ Iran: Three Iranian-Azeri Christians fate unknown

As pressure increases on Christian communities three Christian converts Farshid Modares-Aval, Mohammad-Reza Pirri and Yashar Farzin-No were arrested on July 20 when authorities searched their homes and seized a number of their personal belongings. They are in Tabriz prison. Security and judicial authorities have not provided any reason for their arrest or given any information regarding their health. Usually when families of detainees go to the authorities about the plight of loved ones they hear promises for early release if they keep silent and don't publicize the case. Eventually when nothing happens families tell their stories to the media. According to reports received the three men have been beaten during interrogation. Mohammad-Reza Pirri's brutal beating put him in the prison hospital for four days. Iranian law enforcement has always tried to relate house churches to foreign governments as political groups intending to overthrow the Islamic regime.

**Pray:** for God to hold these men, their families and all illegally held detainees in His hands, ask Him to strengthen and encourage them as they experience suppression and persecution. (Ps.32:7-8)

**More:** <http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/2013/s13080054.htm>

#### ■ Somalia: British aid stolen by Islamist militants

The UK Department for International Development revealed on Sunday that members of the Shebab Islamist group have stolen £480,000 worth of British government-funded humanitarian materials and supplies in Somalia between November 2011 and February 2012. The theft that was revealed in the fine print of annual accounts is likely to fuel concerns about how Britain is spending its foreign aid at a time of budget cuts at home. The loss was out of more than £80 million of aid allocated for Somalia in 2012-2013. Britain's aid budget is protected from the government's austerity programme and has recently reached the U.N. target of 0.7% of gross national income. A spokesman for DFID said there were always risks working in unstable countries such as Somalia but it was doing everything it could to stop such thefts from occurring.

**Pray:** for flawless systems of aid distribution to be implemented. Pray for authorities to successfully tackle the root causes of poverty and instability in Somalia. (Ps.140:12)

**More:** <http://www.france24.com/en/20130812-somalia-al-shabaab-islamists-stole-thousands-worth-uk-aid-supplies>

#### ■ USA: Mental Illness and the Church

Suicide kills more people in the United States every year than homicide, hypertension or motor vehicle crashes. Yet it's seldom discussed in the Church. Southern Baptists Dr. Frank Page and his wife hope to build on the growing national awareness of mental health issues. At the Southern Baptist annual convention in Houston this week the denomination have been working to promote awareness of mental health issues and begin to remove some of the stigma attached as they encourage churches to more pro-actively minister to those who are suffering. Page says, 'These are legitimate, serious issues that people struggle with and the church needs to be the place where we say 'we understand'. The local Church can help through support groups, counseling or simply awareness of what the community has to offer. It's an enormous challenge but with more than 36,000 people taking their own lives each year it could meet an enormous need.'

**Pray:** for the success of this initiative, may the North American Church save many in every sense of the word. (Is.25:4)

**More:** <http://www.cbn.com/cbnnews/healthscience/2013/June/Removing-the-Stigma-Mental-Illness-in-the-Church/>

#### ■ Korea: Prayer for peace and reunification

August 15 is Korea's Liberation Day when liberation in 1945 from Japanese colonial domination is celebrated. This was soon tragically followed by the division of the Peninsula by the western powers. In 1989, the WCC agreed that WCC member Churches throughout the world would be asked to pray on a Sunday near August 15 for the Peace and Reunification of Korea. Therefore each year since then Christians of the NCCK and the KCF, (Korean Christian Federation of North Korea), have been preparing a common prayer for use on one of the Sundays around the 15th. Korean Christians are grateful each year for the prayer support and solidarity of Christian partners throughout the world. Again this year they want to share this joint prayer for peace and reunification in the Korean peninsula. You can read and pray the prayer by clicking the more link.

**Pray:** that we live no more with confrontation and conflict between North and South Korea. Make them recover their national community with love. (Ps.120:5-7)

## PRAYER FORUM OF THE BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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