

PRAYER ALERT...

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PRAISE REPORTS

■ Egyptians unite for third national Day of Prayer

On November 29th, over 6,000 Egyptian Christians gathered for a third annual National Day of Prayer. Hundreds of thousands more participated through a live television broadcast on the SAT-7 ARABIC channel. Handheld cross at Egypt Day of Prayer entitled, 'They shall come to the Desire of All Nations,' the event was held at the Wadi Natroun Convention Centre midway between Cairo and Alexandria. SAT-7 aired a live broadcast from 10 am to 5 pm Cairo time. Some came from nearby Alexandria and others travelled all the way from Aswan in southern Egypt to join in prayer. SAT-7 began airing the National Day of Prayer as Imed Dabbour, host of the programme Forbidden, held an exclusive interview with Revd Dr Sameh Maurice, pastor of the largest evangelical church in Egypt. Rev Maurice said it was a time for unity and although different denominations have varying faith practices, they share the same core beliefs.

Praise: God for the many who gathered to pray for the nation and unity of the believers. (Ps.133:1)

More: http://www.wazala.org/2013-12-egyptians-unite-for-third-national-day-of-prayer/?utm_source=December+2013+Wazala+Briefing&utm_campaign=Dec+2013+Wazala+Briefing&utm_medium=email

■ 1,300 weapons recovered in Dominican Republic guns-for-Bibles programme

Evangelicals and local authorities are asking some residents of violent Dominican Republic neighbourhoods to put down their weapons and pick up a Bible. Santo Domingo authorities recovered more than 1,300 firearms, knives, and machetes in communities known for corruption and violence, in a guns-for-Bibles programme, aimed at reducing the country's crime rate. Church leaders went into some dangerous neighbourhoods to spread the Word of God to gangsters and other criminals as part of the recent month-long initiative. 'We congratulate all the young people, and everyone who turned in their weapons, that was an act of goodwill,' said Braulio Porte, a Santo Domingo pastor, according to the Christian Post, citing Spanish news website AconreerCristiano.com. 'When they say they won't continue with that knife, and prefer a Bible instead, that is transformation and a blessing for our country,' Porte said.

Praise: God for the wonderful response to this initiative; pray that it will bring many blessings through His Word. (Dt.28:2)

More: <http://www.worthynews.com/top/foxnews-com-world-2013-12-09-1300-weapons-recovered-in-dominican-republic-guns-for-bibles-program-/>

BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ UK Parliament debates persecution of Christians

Last week MPs met in the House of Commons to discuss the 'Persecution of Christians in the 21st Century'. The debate lasted for three hours and Open Doors were delighted to see this issue firmly placed on Parliament's agenda. Members of the House of Commons were told that the persecution of Christians is increasing around the world, that one Christian is killed around every 11 minutes, and that Christianity is the 'most persecuted religion globally'. A long list of countries in which life as a Christian is most difficult was discussed, including Syria, North Korea, Eritrea, Nigeria, Iraq and Egypt. MP Jim Shannon said the persecution of Christians is 'the biggest story in the world that has never been told'. He said that

although the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, there are many countries in which these rights are not given.

Pray: for the UK Parliament to take a lead in persuading the international community that this persecution must be addressed. (Mt.5:10)

More: http://www.opendoorsuk.org/news/stories/world_watch_131205.php?src=InstoryInk

■ Nine in 10 Britons rarely perform a simple act of kindness

Nine in 10 Britons admit they regularly go through a day without performing a simple act of kindness to another person, a study has found. Almost a quarter of the population admit that they cannot even remember the last time they went out of their way to show kindness to someone else. Meanwhile a third of people say they have never considered performing an act of kindness for an older person – many of them because they say they cannot 'relate' to other generations. The findings emerge from polling commissioned by the charity Friends of the Elderly which is running a campaign to combat loneliness among older people at Christmas. Friends of the Elderly is attempting to recruit thousands of people to sign a pledge to perform simple acts of kindness which they might not have considered before for older people.

Pray: for the lonely and for as many people as possible to regularly undertake simple acts of kindness for others. (Eph.4:32)

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/10489732/Nine-in-10-Britons-rarely-perform-a-simple-act-of-kindness.html>

■ No sign of recovery for poorest, says foodbank operator

The Trussell Trust, a Christian charity that partners with churches and communities to open foodbanks across the UK, has reported that over 500,000 people have received at least three days' emergency food since April this year. With almost 400 foodbanks currently running nationwide, the charity has experienced a huge increase in demand in recent months, which stems from increased poverty in the UK, despite the government's assurance of an economic upturn. Chris Mould, Executive Chairman of the Trussell Trust, says, 'We can't ignore the reality for millions of British citizens who are facing a tougher winter than ever. Real wages are down, the cost of food is rising rapidly and so is the cost of heating your home. Recovery is not filtering down. Low-income families are teetering on a financial knife-edge,' he says. He is calling for urgent action to combat food poverty in the UK and an inquiry into the causes of hunger across the nation.

Pray: for a recognition of the urgency of this situation by the Government and praise God for all the volunteers who run the foodbanks. (Pr.31:9)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/no.sign.of.recovery.for.poorest.says.foodbank.operator/34968.htm>

■ Church of England makes Sunday worship more accessible with new app

The Church of England has released a new free app to help more people follow Sunday services using their mobile devices. 'Sunday Worship' presents the full Bible readings for the main church service, along with the Collect and post-Communion prayers for the week in a simple, easy-to-follow format for use on iPhones and iPads. The launch of the app follows that of two others published to support and engage congregations. 'Reflections for Daily Prayer', which offers daily Bible readings, prayer and inspiration, was released on 28 November, and 'The Lectionary' is now available as an app, Kindle e-book or printed booklet. Thomas Allain-Chapman, Publishing Manager for Church House Publishing, has said that he hopes the digital resources will make things 'just a little bit easier' for church leaders, while also helping members to find out more about services and to prepare well for taking part in worship.

Pray: for success in the development of such technology that it will allow easier access to worship for some people. (Jn.20:31)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/church.of.england.makes.sunday.worship.more.accessible.with.new.app/34924.htm>

■ Servicemen and women away from home at Christmas

As Christmas approaches please remember the men and women away from their parents, spouses and children this Christmas time. Many work in a variety of places around the world as well as those on deployment in Afghanistan. Many personnel from all three services were sent at short notice to the Philippines to help following the destruction of Typhoon Haiyan and won't be back for Christmas. Please pray for those who will be lonely as a result of being away and for good communications home to loved ones.

Pray: for these service families separated this Christmas and particularly for the children. Please pray for safety for those deployed and a peaceful and quiet time for them. (Ps.68:6)

More: <http://www.afcu.org.uk/prayer.htm>

■ Children copy TV's foul-mouthed stars with swearing in classrooms and playgrounds

Bad language in family TV shows is to blame for an explosion of swearing in classrooms and playgrounds, a leading headteacher has warned. Ray McGovern, the new chairman of the Boarding Schools Association, said foul language has become so common on screen that children repeat it at school without realising the words are offensive. This could blight their futures as they are more likely to let expletives slip out at work or in job interviews. 'Celebrities have a responsibility to control what they say and how they say it, particularly if children might be listening – and now programmes can be watched on catch-up TV and YouTube any time,' said Mr McGovern, headmaster at St George's School in Harpenden, Hertfordshire. Comedians such as Alan Davies and Lee Evans were particularly to blame, he added, describing how Evans rarely swore when he began his career.

Pray: that those in positions of influence will control their language and recognise their responsibilities. (1Cor.12:2)

More: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2520445/Children-copy-TVs-foul-mouthed-stars-Headmaster-blames-shows-explosion-swearing-classrooms-playgrounds.html#ixzz2mz4jm4Wx>

■ Government fails to curb high stake gambling machines

The Government has failed to curb fixed-odds betting terminals, dubbed the 'crack cocaine' of gambling. MPs backed changes to stakes and prizes for gambling machines last week – but the amendments do not lower the maximum stake for the machines from £100. Labour MPs were told to vote against the proposals – yet it was a Labour Government that liberalised laws which formally allowed betting shops to have fixed-odds betting terminals (FOBTs) in 2005. John Leech MP,

the Lib Dem culture, media and sport spokesperson, said: 'It was Labour who introduced these highly damaging and addictive gaming machines that have wreaked so much damage to people's lives'. He added: 'We are pleased that Labour has finally woken up to the damage that their policies have caused on deprived High Streets up and down the country'. Statistics from a gambling charity show that people in poorer areas are being sucked into using FOBTs.

Pray: that the Government will see the damage that gambling can do especially to those in poorer areas.

More: <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/government-fails-to-curb-high-stake-gambling-machines/>

EUROPE

■ Europe needs to shelter more Syrian refugees

The Council of European Churches (CEC) appealed to European governments to offer asylum to more refugees fleeing the Syrian conflict. There are concerns for the six million who have been displaced. Over 2.2 million Syrians are either registered or awaiting registration in Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and parts of North Africa. The CEC said the resources of neighbouring countries are at 'breaking point' and the EU needs to make it easier for suffering refugees to come to member countries. An overwhelming humanitarian crisis unfolds as refugees struggle on a daily basis to access shelter, health, water, sanitation and primary education. From the start of the conflict in 2011 up until August 2013, there have been approximately 53,000 applications for asylum from Syrian nations to European countries, most of these to Sweden or Germany. The CEC's ecumenical charter commits member organisations to doing their part 'towards giving migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers a humane reception in Europe'.

Pray: for a greater coordination between European countries to receive and support a larger volume of refugees.

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/europe.urged.to.shelter.more.syrian.refugees/34979.htm>

■ Ukraine: Three weeks of protests

Hundreds of thousands of demonstrators are in the streets of Kiev 24/7 seeking the resignation of the government for refusing a deal on closer ties with the European Union. (see last week's Prayer Alert) An Orthodox priest sang prayers and a popular Ukrainian rock song with the lyrics 'I will not give up without a fight' into loudspeakers in Independence Square. Pop singer Ruslana kept up morale by singing the national anthem and cheering protesters from a stage. Then Tuesday night squadrons of riot police tried to violently break up the demonstration. Wednesday morning EU representative Baroness Ashton and the assistant secretary at the State Department Victoria Nuland spoke out against actions by riot police who converged on Independence Square during Tuesday night. Demonstrators have occupied the City hall for two weeks and are using it as a makeshift hospital.

Pray: against violent police actions and for positive dialogue between political powers and society. (Ps.122:7)

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/ukraine/10510306/Ukraine-police-pull-back-after-overnight-clash.html>

WORLDWIDE

■ North Korea: Political prison camps

A gruesome reality of North Korea's continued investment in a vast network of repression has been exposed in new satellite images showing the on-going development of two of the country's largest political prison camps. In comprehensive assessments of camps 15 and 16 - known as 'kwanliso'. Amnesty International found new housing blocks, an expansion of production facilities and continued tight security. The analysis along with newly released testimonies is included in Amnesty's latest briefing. A former security official at kwanliso who has never spoken publicly before described detainees being forced to dig their own graves and women being raped and then disappearing.

Pray: for the authorities to immediately and unconditionally release prisoners of conscience held in political prison camps. Pray for an end to human rights abuses in North Korea. (Ps.5:2)

More: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/news/new-satellite-images-show-scale-north-korea-s-repressive-prison-camps-2013-12-05>

■ Central African Republic: Christian & Muslim fighting

Elisee Zama was a Bible translator in war-ravaged CAR He was killed last week attempting to transport family members away from mounting violence in Bangui. Violence has been intensifying in CAR following last March's coup and many humanitarian organizations have left the country or cut back services. Government health clinics have largely been abandoned. 'Reprisals against Christians in particular in Bangui are of great concern,' said a spokesperson for Wycliffe Bible Translators in CAR. 'There have been reprisals in certain neighborhoods of Bangui resulting in thousands seeking refuge on the airstrip of the international airport.' On Sunday CAR Prime Minister Nicolas Tiangaye said more troops are needed to stabilize areas where rising violence between Muslim and Christian militias continues to claim lives. France's presence of 1,600 troops and the African Union (AU) troop contingent of 6,000 is not enough in an area where 394 people were killed in just 3 days of fighting last week. See also <http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/2013/s13120027.htm>

Pray: for God to comfort the relatives of the dead and protect innocent families. Pray for missionaries and NGOs working in dangerous environments. (Ps.23:4-5)

More: <http://sheikyermami.com/muselmaniacs-slaughter-hundreds-of-christians-in-central-african-republic/>

■ Syria: Peace talks scheduled

Please continue to pray for God's solution for Syria as peace talks are scheduled for January 22, 2014. Up to now negotiations have not yielded agreements. Pray that weariness with the war will cause both sides to cooperate in bringing an end to a tragic conflict that has left 110,000 dead and several million homeless refugees in Syria and neighboring nations. The UN and other humanitarian organizations are working hard to keep the millions who have fled safe, and provide immediate and urgent aid of shelter, food and medical care. More resources are needed. As the Syrian refugee exodus continues to escalate, millions more remain displaced within their own country and are also in need of life-saving aid. There is concern for the children in particular. Children are at risk of forced labour, sexual exploitation and trafficking. Agencies need to be able to prioritize specialist child services to ensure their safety. Meanwhile on Monday the Council of

European Churches appealed to European governments to offer asylum to more refugees fleeing the Syrian conflict. - see Europe Article above.

Pray: for January peace talks to go ahead and be productive, resulting in a transitional government. (Ps.33:8,9)

More: <http://www.ipcprayer.org/index.cfm?&menuid=2>

■ Lebanon: Hezbollah commander killed

Senior Hezbollah commander Hassan al-Laqis was assassinated last Wednesday in southern Beirut - a sharp blow to the Iranian-backed Shiite group. Hezbollah has no shortage of rivals eager to strike at its strongholds and leadership and were quick to blame Israel for al-Laqis' assassination. Enmity runs deep between them. Hezbollah waged an insurgency against the 20-year Israeli military occupation of southern Lebanon before Israel withdrew in 2,000 and Israelis have been suspected of killing high-ranking Hezbollah figures for decades. More recently the Syrian civil war's sectarian overtones reveal Hezbollah and regional Shiite power in Iran supporting Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. Saudi Arabia fears what it sees as Iran trying to spread its influence across the Arab world. Under this thinking a Saudi strike against Hezbollah would be a blow to Iran and its regional ambitions. The kingdom does not however have a known history of sponsoring assassinations. Sunni extremists linked to al-Qaida are staunch opponents of Hezbollah.

Pray: for the innocent families and communities living in the midst of wars and under the threat of rumors of wars. (Ps.46:9 & Mat.24:6)

More: <http://www.utsandiego.com/news/2013/dec/04/possible-culprits-in-hezbollah-commanders-killing/>

■ Iran: Prayer request and cause to rejoice

In May we asked you to pray for Robert Asserian, the pastor of an Assemblies of God (AoG) church in Tehran who was arrested while leading a prayer meeting. His church was closed by government officials. There's an ongoing attempt to stop worship services from being conducted in Farsi, the language of the majority of Iranians. Pressures on 'officially recognized' churches in several cities has increased with greater surveillance and restrictions imposed and some services stopped, especially Friday or Farsi-language services. Meanwhile some of the Ayatollahs opposing the regime believe the large increase in the frequency of arbitrary detention and harassment of Christians is because the younger generation is increasingly dissatisfied with the Islamic faith. There is a wide range of Iranians watching Christian television or accessing Christian websites resulting in an increase of Iranians converting to Christianity. Pray for continued increase of Christianity in Iran.

Pray: that officially recognized churches across Iran will be allowed to meet for worship, prayer, Bible teaching and fellowship and that officials involved will love mercy, act justly, learn about Jesus and choose to follow Him. (Mic.6:8)

More: http://www.christiannewstoday.com/Christian_News_Report_900354.html#

■ India: 7-year-old Christian boy in Rajasthan killed for his faith

A seven-year-old boy was brutally tortured and murdered in India in an attack apparently provoked by his family's Christian faith. The family are a main target for persecution since Harish the boy's father, became a Christian in 2003 and his brother was miraculously healed. This act of God resulted in 45 other conversions to Christianity in the community. Those opposed to the spread of the Gospel in the area have been persecuting the Christian community, particularly Harish and his family who have had death threats for 10 years. A correspondent for Gospel for Asia said, 'It was very clear the murderer had tortured the child in an inhuman way'. Harish gave the names of those who had threatened his family to the police but they have not taken any notice. Church leader the Rev PS Jose reported to the chairman of the Rajasthan State Minority Commission that police have been slow to investigate the crime that happened in November.

Pray: that Harish and his family will be comforted, the community protected and sectarian violence end in Rajasthan. (Mat.24:9-14)

More: <https://barnabasfund.org/Young-Christian-boy-brutally-tortured-and-murdered-in-India.html>

■ Uganda: Schools

Uganda, like many sub-Saharan African countries, faces major challenges to build up its education system. At the most fundamental level it has to provide enough places for one of the world's fastest growing populations. There are more Ugandans under the age of 18 than there are adults. 'Teacher absenteeism' is a major barrier to Uganda's education system. When teachers fail to get their salaries, or don't earn enough, they take second or third jobs to pay the bills which means no-one is there to teach the children. It's encapsulated in the pages of a local newspaper. On the front page is a big story about pupils taking national exams and how significant it will be for their future. It shows a country that really values education, where children will walk for miles under the equatorial sun to study. Open the next page and there's a threat of strike action by teachers still waiting for last month's pay cheques.

Pray: for administration and application of teacher training and school management. Pray for innovative partnerships between government bodies with inspiring curricula and technology to take Uganda's children forward. (Pr.23:18)

More: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-25304848>

PRAYER FORUM OF THE BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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