

PRAYER ALERT...

'If my people....will humble themselves and pray' 2 Chr 7:14

Informing and equipping Christians - Online and to Inbox

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Issue 04-2014

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Thursday 30 Jan 2014

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PRAISE REPORTS

■ Government admits defeat over annoyance orders

The Government is backing down over its plans to outlaw nuisance and annoyance by any person, in any place, following its big defeat in the House of Lords. Its new Injunctions to Prevent Nuisance and Annoyance (IPNA) – the proposed replacement for Anti-social Behaviour Orders (ASBO) – were widely criticised as being too vague, leading to fears that anyone from street preachers to buskers could be caught. The new changes to the Bill will mean that a much higher threshold of 'harassment, alarm or distress' will need to be met before an injunction is issued. The 'nuisance or annoyance' test will now apply only to court injunctions in the context of social and private housing. (See also Prayer Alert 02-2014)

Praise: God for the change where common sense prevails. (Gal.5:1)

More: <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/govt-admits-defeat-over-annoyance-orders/>

■ Australia: Church united nationally in prayer

The Australian Prayer Network called its member churches, prayer groups and Individuals to a night of prayer for the nation last Saturday (the eve of Australia Day). Tens of thousands of Australians in local communities joined in praying through eight prayer segments in a night of worship and proclamation. They prayed for every knee to bow and for every tongue to confess His Lordship over individuals and communities. They were calling in prayer for God's people to arise in the power of His Holy Spirit and take back that which the enemy has stolen and reclaim the Australian nation as the Great Southland of the Holy Spirit. The timing and venue for each gathering was left to the discretion of the gathering's organiser, but they all followed the same planned sections - asking for continued blessings over the nation, and crying out for a revival of faith for the Church and a return to godly values in the year ahead.

Praise: God in anticipation of answered prayers. Pray for the nation to see as well as hear the Gospel message. (Pr.20:12 & Is.32:3)

More: <http://auspraynet.org.au/>

BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ Cameron criticises swearing in pop songs

David Cameron has hit out at swearing in pop songs, saying that his children have picked up on the bad language. The Prime Minister said: 'They say, 'Daddy, that's the bad this or that word.' 'They are very conscious of that and they don't approve of swearing. They are quite right – the artists are wrong to swear', he added. Mr Cameron also said 'he was glad

his children have not connected pop star Miley Cyrus – who performs sexualised dance moves – with her former on-screen alter ego Hannah Montana.' Earlier this month, TV cookery star Mary Berry said swearing on television is inexcusable and makes children think bad language is acceptable. When asked about fellow chef Gordon Ramsay's swearing on TV' Berry commented: 'I don't like that. I don't think there is any excuse for it. If the young are watching they will think it's normal and they can do it'.

Pray: for our leaders and managers to take a proactive role in curtailing bad language in the media. (Eph.4:29)

More: <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/cameron-criticises-swearing-in-pop-songs/>

■ UK police investigate slavery of migrant fishermen

Officers are looking into claims that British fishing boat skippers are forcing migrants, many of them from the Philippines, to work unpaid 22-hour days as deck-hands. The workers are threatened with beatings and being blacklisted from the industry if they fail to cooperate, according to the Sunday Times. The National Crime Agency said raids involving more than 150 officers have been conducted along the British coast, with at least 50 suspected victims found. The Filipinos are believed to be lured to Britain by local recruitment agencies promising pay of around £900 a month after paying a fee to secure a job in Britain's fishing fleet. Instead, the seamen say their passports are confiscated and they often receive little or no wages. A port chaplain who declined to be named said he helped with a rescue at a harbour after a deck-hand contacted a trade union. Four Filipinos jumped overboard but were caught and attacked by the captain.

Pray: for the authorities to succeed in stopping this form of migrant slavery. (Js.4:5)

More: <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/police-investigate-slavery-migrant-fishermen-1432935>

■ Promote marriage to combat family breakdown

The Marriage Foundation, launched by High Court Judge Sir Paul Coleridge, is calling on ministers to tackle family breakdown by encouraging cohabiting couples to get married. The recommendation comes in the first published evidence to the Family Stability Review launched by the Work and Pensions Secretary, Iain Duncan Smith. The Foundation's report reveals that families most at risk are those with unmarried new parents. It also finds that couples living together make up less than one in five parents, but half of all family breakdowns. The aim of the Family Stability Review is to find ways the state can help strengthen families. The Marriage Foundation says families with young children face the greatest pressure and potential for break-ups, and should receive more state funding. The report also finds half of all family break-downs happen before a couple's child reaches its second birthday.

Pray: for the Government to recognise the needs of children and that a policy of supporting families can positively help them. (Pr.18:22)

More: <http://www.christianconcern.com/our-concerns/family/high-court-judge-challenges-state-to-promote-marriage-to-combat-family-breakdown>

■ British brothers become poster boys for al-Qaeda

Two British brothers have become poster boys for al-Qaeda after being killed fighting alongside Muslim extremists in Syria's civil war. Akram Sebah, 24, and brother Mohamed, 28, are understood to have died in an ambush in the north of the country. A photo of the pair grinning and holding assault rifles days before their 'martyrdom' has gone viral on social media. A second, disturbing image shows their bodies wrapped in bloody blankets. The brothers from London were among an estimated 300 Britons who have gone to Syria to fight. Up to 20 are believed to have been killed. Foreign Secretary William Hague claims there is a 'serious danger' of extremists returning from Syria and staging terror attacks in Britain. David Cameron is expected to use a parliamentary hearing this Thursday to highlight the threat. Friends of the Sebah brothers were told at first that they had died in a car crash.

Pray: for all the young men who are tempted to join the extremists and become martyrs. (Ac.4:29)

More: <http://www.dailypress.co.uk/news/uk-world-news/two-british-brothers-become-poster-3065597>

■ Resourcing new forms of Church must be 'priority'

The Archbishop's Missioner and outgoing leader of the Fresh Expressions team has expressed his delight over recent figures revealing growth in the Church of England, but cautioned that statistics do not always tell the whole story. Bishop Graham Cray was responding to figures out last week showing that within the average diocese, Fresh Expressions make up 15 per cent of the total number of churches, and 10 per cent of the attendance. 'There is certainly little point in being involved in Christian ministry which does not bear fruit; however exciting it may seem,' he wrote on the Fresh Expressions website. Calling for continued commitment to developing new forms of church, he added: 'There is still a long way to go.' Some meet in more unusual locations such as pubs or bars, though many use church buildings and take a more informal approach to services.

Pray: that all expressions of Church will be blessed with growth and new resources. (Pr.11:30)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/resourcing.new.forms.of.church.must.be.priority.says.fresh.expressions.leader/35503.htm>

■ Apathy a greater challenge for Church than persecution

The former Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Carey has given an address in which he stresses the importance of unity between Christians and combating the prevalent apathy towards faith in British culture. Speaking at Chester Cathedral at the start of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Lord Carey gave an impassioned address, sharing with the congregation about the ongoing journey of reconciliation between the Anglican and Catholic Churches. He spoke of 'a new openness in all our denominations towards each other' and 'an increasing awareness that our disunity was a disgrace to the good news we all declared we were offering to the world'. He also noted that it is Jesus' mercy that has the power to unite Christians. However, there is still some way to go in reconciling different branches of Christianity, and though believers must 'rejoice and celebrate' the progress, Lord Carey noted that it is as yet 'not sufficient'.

Pray: that the Church will continue to be open to changes that stimulate understanding and fight apathy. (Jn.17:20)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/apathy.greater.threat.than.persecution.lord.carey/35478.htm>

EUROPE

■ Secularists call for separation of church and state in Finland

Two centuries of official standing and almost a millennium of traditional connection may be unravelled if a Finnish secularist group successfully gather 50,000 signatures in the next six months. The Finnish Citizen's Initiative website began collecting 'statements of support' on Monday for a plan to introduce legislation that will abolish the privileged position of the State church. Under constitutional rules, if 50,000 signatures from Finnish voters are gathered within six months, legislation on the matter must be discussed in Parliament. If passed, this law would mean the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Orthodox Church of Finland would lose their status as public corporations, ending their inclusion in public administration. The churches are currently able to levy taxes on the population which are collected through the State, and public holidays laid out in a law known as 'the Church Act' cannot be altered without permission from the state church's General Synod.

Pray: that the secularist group will not succeed with its aims.

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/secularists.call.for.separation.of.church.and.state.in.finland/35501.htm>

■ Ex-president warns Ukraine 'on brink of civil war'

Ukraine's first post-independence president has warned the country is on the 'brink of civil war'. Leonid Kravchuk, president from 1991 to 1994, urged parliament to 'act with the greatest responsibility' as it began a debate on an amnesty for detained protesters. President Viktor Yanukovich wants any amnesty to be conditional on protesters leaving official buildings and dismantling barricades. But protesters want him to resign. Demonstrations began in the capital city of Kiev in November following the Ukrainian government's decision to reject an accord with the EU, choosing instead to deepen their relationship with neighbouring Russia. This angered many Ukrainians, particularly those in the western regions of the country, who believe that stronger ties with the European Union would strengthen economic prosperity. Christian leaders in Ukraine are calling for 'fervent and unceasing' prayer and fasting as the political conflict across the country intensifies.

Pray: for the nation of Ukraine as this conflict continues to grow. Pray for reconciliation and peace. (Job.22:21)

More: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-25939737>

WORLDWIDE

■ Pakistan: Spiritual atmosphere in the country

A Pakistani believer writes, 'We are seeing groups of people from the majority group coming to faith. This happens among tribal groups but never among the majority group. Pray for them; they are going through tremendous persecution, some at the cost of their lives. Terrorism is increasing. Several major bombing and suicide attacks are taking place every day. The leader of the Taliban in the Northwest was killed by a drone attack. He has been replaced by an even more ferocious new leader. In a country of over 200 million people how can you stop suicide bombers when women are not allowed to be searched and kids are in every alley and street. There is only one way - through prayer. Please pray for two prayer teams scheduled to visit us, one in the third week of March and the other in the first week of April.'

Pray: for the new believers to know God's Spirit and presence and for God to raise up those who will teach them. (Ro.12:7) Pray that entry papers will be granted to visiting intercessors (These are becoming more difficult to get). (Ps.5:1-3)

More: no web link

■ Nigeria: 'Boko Haram' attacks leave scores dead

50+ Boko Haram militants attacked Kawuri village in Borno State setting off explosives around the village and setting houses ablaze. (no house was left standing) This happened as a busy market was packing up last Sunday. Witnesses said 52 people were killed in that attack, while 22 died in an attack on a church service in Waga Chakawa village in Adamawa state the same day. Borno and Adamawa are two of three north-eastern states that were put under emergency rule last May in an attempt to combat insurgency. Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan sacked his military high command earlier this month. No reason was given, but the move came amid concern that Boko Haram have been able to continue their bloody campaign despite the wide-ranging powers given to the military last year to tackle the insurgency. Since the state of emergency was imposed, UN figures suggest over 1,200 people have been killed in Islamist-related violence.

Pray: against Boko Haram's desires for an independent Islamic state. Pray for Nigeria's leaders to know God's will at this time (Eph.6:10). Pray for Nigerian believers in the North to stand firm in the power of God's provision. (Eph.6:17)

More: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-25916810>

■ Iran: Glimmer of hope for Pastor Saeed Abedini

In an interview with CNN on the side-lines of the World Economic Forum in Davos the Iranian Foreign Minister replied to a direct question about American citizen Pastor Saeed Abedini by saying clemency could be an option for him. The Foreign Minister said the decision is not up to him but to Iran's judiciary. Meanwhile, Abedini has been transferred from the murderer ward to a political prisoner ward in Rajai Shahr Prison. Concerns about his deteriorating health are growing. Abedini's Iranian family said he is getting better meals but is experiencing severe abdominal pain. The American Centre for Law and Justice (ACLJ) is urging the US government to make his freedom a priority. 'When the Obama administration refused to

even ask for Pastor Saeed's release during negotiations with Iran, we not only lost a critical opportunity for his freedom but effectively insulated Iran from ever feeling the need to free this US citizen,' the ACLJ said. (See also Prayer Alert 02-2014)

Pray: for America and Iran to agree and implement Pastor Abedini's release. Pray that he will receive the recommended surgery for his internal injuries soon. (Ps.103:6)

More: <http://www.cbn.com/cbnnews/world/2014/January/Irans-FM-Glimmer-of-Hope-for-Pastor-Abedini/>

■ **Egypt: Time of transition**

Egypt's first freely elected president Morsi was deposed and now faces four separate criminal trials on various charges. His 2012 constitution was an open door for the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist groups to set up a Sharia state. Their downfall was trying to do it too fast. The military administration now governing Egypt is attempting to move Egypt towards a democratic future (post-Ottoman Egypt had a democratic structure). This could not be done without reversing the extremist measures put in place by Morsi through his constitution. Egypt has just voted for an amended constitution to be administered by a government untainted by Islamist bias and the Christian minority should have a more hopeful, less persecuted future. Meanwhile on Tuesday a ministry official was shot dead in Cairo on his way to work, and a policeman guarding a church was killed and another wounded by unidentified gunmen. The shootings follow a string of militant attacks on security services in recent days. See

http://www.thecommentator.com/article/4645/a_brighter_future_for_egypt_s_christians

Pray: for Egypt to be turned into a beacon of freedoms and rights for all its citizens. (Ps.140:12-13)

More: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-25924027>

■ **America: Obama calls for 'year of action'**

The State of the Union address 2014 is a big speech. Barack Obama is calling for a 'year of action on inequality in the United States of America' also for an increased minimum wage for federal contractors to \$10.10 and he intends to implement executive orders to bypassing the Congress. Things that the President wants to get done before leaving office are being spoken about in this address. Some people hate this speech, calling it a sycophantic orgy of self-regard on the part of the President and his party. Some believe the list of promises will be broken. While yet others believe The State of the Union address is a hallowed sacrament of American democracy, prescribed in their constitution and ratified by centuries of unbroken tradition. Thirty-odd-million people tune in every year to watch it. What the President says in the State of the Union address has the potential to change the world.

Pray: for God to bless America's leaders in all their decisions in the coming year. (Zech.4:6)

More: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jan/28/obama-state-of-the-union-address-live>

■ **International: Son of Hamas movie wins at film festival**

A film called The Green Prince has been made and has secured distribution contracts for the UK, Australia, North America and New Zealand. The feature length documentary is based on the international best-seller 'Son of Hamas' by Mosab Hassan Yousef. It tells a powerful truth that Palestinians and Israelis can live at peace with one another. It says the so-called 'Palestinian problem' is never going to be resolved by politicians sitting around a table or by walls, military incursions, blockades, or sanctions. The film tells the extraordinary true story of the eldest son of one of the founders of Hamas who, in addition to converting from Islam to Christianity, worked for a decade as a double agent for the Shin Bet (the Israeli secret police). 'Perhaps the most difficult thing about watching the new documentary,' said Israeli newspaper Haaretz, 'is feeling that you should not be there, that everyone in the theatre should be asked to leave before any more Israeli intelligence secrets are divulged.'

Pray: that as this big story on the screen is distributed across the nations, many will see and recognise the truth recounted. (Ps.122:6-9)

More: <http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/2014/s14010107.htm>

IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE WORLD PRAYER CENTRE, BIRMINGHAM, UK

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Prayer Alert is produced in association with The World Prayer Centre: Cornerstone House, 5 Ethel Street, Birmingham, B2 4BG