

# 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 49-2014

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Thursday 18 Dec 2014

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## PRAISE REPORTS

### ■ Faith schools top latest primary league tables

Close to two-thirds of the UK’s best performing primary schools have a religious ethos, according to the latest league table results. The tables showed that out of the 693 schools in which all pupils achieved the Government’s expected standards, 62 per cent (427 schools) had a religious ethos. That is despite faith schools making up just a third of all primary schools in England. The faith schools include 330 Church of England and 88 Roman Catholic primaries. Nigel Genders, the C of E’s Chief Education Officer, said: ‘I’m delighted that Church of England primary schools are leading some of the outstanding practice going on in schools across the country and congratulate the pupils, teachers, support staff, parents and communities who have worked together to secure success.’

**Praise:** [God for the success of faith schools. \(1Sam.18:14\)](#)

**More:** <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/faith-schools-top-latest-primary-league-tables/>

### ■ USA: From riots to potential for revival in Ferguson

Chaplains from the Billy Graham Rapid Response Team are now deployed to bring hope and healing by fanning out and ministering in the city of Ferguson, Missouri USA - following riots that erupted after the recent Grand Jury decision not to indict a local police officer in the Michael Brown shooting case, according to Erik Ogren, writing for the Billy Graham website. ‘We’ve heard from several pastors, and they view this as raw spiritual warfare. That’s what it is and it’s very obvious,’ said Jeff Naber, one of the Rapid Response Team. ‘With that said, the potential for revival here is extreme. This is different from a tornado or flood,’ said Billy Graham Rapid Response Team chaplain Strib Boynton as he manoeuvred his truck through the streets of Ferguson. ‘This is changing the hearts of people, of a whole community.’

**Praise:** [God for His ministry of hope and healing through His people. \(Pr.12:18\)](#)

**More:** <http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/2014/s14120056.htm>

## BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

### ■ ‘Tolerance doesn’t mean apologising for Christianity’

British society must not shy away from its own beliefs or traditions such as saying ‘Happy Christmas’ instead of ‘Happy Holidays’, former Cabinet Minister Liam Fox has said. In an online video message, former Cabinet Minister Dr Fox said that Christmas is ‘a time of hope and renewal, a central part of our religious belief’. He explained that was why he wished

everyone 'a very happy and peaceful Christmas', instead of 'Happy Holidays'. He added, 'because we tolerate and respect views different to our own, does not mean that we have to apologise for our own beliefs, traditions or culture. In the Christian tradition, Christmas is a time of hope and renewal, a central part of our religious belief.' Earlier this week a Christian Institute survey revealed that many of the UK's local councils are abandoning the true meaning of Christmas in their Christmas cards.

**Pray:** for the true message of Christmas to be proclaimed loud and clear across the land. (Ro.1:16)

**More:** <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/tolerance-doesnt-mean-apologising-for-christianity/>

#### ■ Symphysiotomy – Ireland's brutal alternative to caesareans

They were never asked for their consent – but symphysiotomy caused the Irish mothers subjected to it catastrophic long-term health problems. Symphysiotomy is a controversial operation that was seldom used in the rest of Europe after the mid-20th century, but was carried out on an estimated 1,500 Irish women, during childbirth, between the 1940s and 1980s. The procedure involves slicing through the cartilage and ligaments of a pelvic joint (or in extreme cases, called pubiotomy, sawing through the bone of the pelvis itself) to widen it and allow a baby to be delivered unobstructed. In July, the UN Human Rights Committee called for the Irish government to hold an investigation into the issue. Mark Kelly of the Irish Council for Civil Liberties says, 'This remains just one of the most appalling things that we have come across'.

**Pray:** for all the women who underwent symphysiotomy without consent to have their cases acknowledged and to receive support if required. (Amos 5:24)

**More:** <http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2014/dec/12/symphysiotomy-irelands-brutal-alternative-to-caesareans>

#### ■ Churches facilitate social integration, research suggests

Churches are among the few places in the UK that successfully bring people together from different ethnic backgrounds and from different financial circumstances, new research for the Social Integration Commission suggests. The commission appointed Ipsos Mori to carry out a study of the social habits of a cross-section of 400 people, aged from 13 to 80. Its survey suggested that attending a place of worship was the most 'socially integrating' activity that people could take part in - bringing together people from across the divides of age, income, and ethnicity. Churches attained twice the average score at bringing people together, far ahead of sporting events. Events such as parties, weddings and going to restaurants scored least well at bringing people from different groups together. Churches also led the way at bringing people of different social backgrounds together.

**Pray:** for Churches to continue working to involve a wide spectrum of society and that God will be honoured for their lead in this work. (Ro.2:11)

**More:** <http://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2014/12-december/news/uk/churches-facilitate-social-integration-research-suggests>

#### ■ Do kids know the true meaning of Christmas?

Roger Bolton writing in the Radio Times asks the question: 'Do British schoolchildren know what Christmas is?' In some schools in this country, little is taught about the true meaning of Christmas, possibly because secular staff are unsympathetic to religious education or because of the fear of offending those of other faiths and broadcasters aren't doing much to remedy this ignorance. It is difficult to find any children's programmes that regularly deal with faith issues. The Bible Society published a survey earlier this year that claimed that 'a quarter of children indicated that they had never read, seen or heard of Noah's Ark', that a similar proportion had never heard of the nativity, that 43 per cent had never heard of the crucifixion and that 53 per cent had never read, seen or heard of Joseph and his coat of many colours. Does this matter? Roger Bolton says 'I think it does, for both cultural and communal reasons.'

**Pray:** for the nativity story to reach as many children (and adults) as possible this Christmas time. (Ps.96:3)

**More:** <http://www.radiotimes.com/news/2014-12-08/do-kids-know-the-true-meaning-of-christmas>

#### ■ No room at the inn for baby Jesus in school nativities

As annual school nativity play season gets under way, survey shows baby Jesus being edged out to make room for Elvis, spacemen, footballers and Lord Sugar. Christianity is being banished from school nativity plays as the annual performance of the Christmas story is replaced with bland 'winter celebrations', research among parents suggests. Even in schools which retain religious themes, most now opt for a modernised version of the nativity story, often featuring elaborate twists and children dressed as unlikely additions such as punk fairies, aliens, Elvis, lobsters, spacemen and even recycling bins. Examples cited in the survey conducted by Netmums, the parenting website, even included a retelling of the story modelled on The Apprentice. Others told of children dressed as ingredients in a Christmas lunch including carrots, sprouts and – confusingly – pumpkins. Meanwhile, one in eight had said their children's school had dropped the Christmas story altogether for a modern alternative without religious references.

**Pray:** that the real message of Christmas will not be lost in the confusion of so called winter celebrations. (Is.41:29)

**More:** <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/11264641/Christmas-no-room-at-the-inn-for-baby-Jesus-in-school-nativities.html>

#### ■ GCHQ to help tackle 'dark net' child abuse images

Intelligence experts and organised crime specialists will join forces to tackle child abuse images on the 'dark net', David Cameron has said. The prime minister said a joint GCHQ and National Crime Agency unit would hunt online paedophiles with the same 'effort' used to track terrorists. Speaking at a London summit, he said online child exploitation existed on an 'almost industrial scale' worldwide. He also unveiled a law to stop adults sending children 'sexual' messages. Labour said it had suggested the same law six weeks ago and the government had said it was 'not necessary'. Mr Cameron said the new unit was part of a drive to remove millions of 'sickening and depraved' images from the internet. The term 'dark net' refers to parts of the internet that are hidden and can be hard to access without special software, and Downing Street said the new unit would be able to analyse huge volumes of images.

**Pray:** that the new unit will locate the so called dark areas of the net by the light of truth. (2Cor.4:4)

## EUROPE

### ■ Sweden: Refugees and Roma people

A Swedish Christian writes, 'Here in Sweden the 'Roma people' from Romania is quite an issue. Hundreds of them beg on the streets in the cities. In many places churches are arranging overnight places for them. We also have an influx of refugees especially from Syria. We receive many, many more than other EU countries. For this reason the party in Sweden similar to your UKIP received 13.9% in the recent general elections and this has caused a political crisis. This party, The Swedish Democrats, were able to vote down the new government, so we will need to have a new election in March.' We enjoy lots of lights and candles in our communities and homes during this very dark time of the year, during Advent and Christmas. We've had wonderful Christmas concerts giving out the message of the Light coming into the world. George Verwer has said: 'Let's not fight the darkness, let's spread the Light!'

**Pray:** for Swedish Christians as they spread God's Light to all who visit their country and churches this Christmas. (Is.9:2)

**More:** <http://www.varromskahistoria.se/en/what-happened-sweden/>

### ■ France: Police raids dismantle French jihadist network

French police launched nationwide raids early on Monday to dismantle a network that was sending jihadists to Syria, a police source said. Elite and anti-terror police units descended on around a dozen targets, mostly in the southern region of Toulouse, but also around Paris and in the northern region of Normandy, the source told AFP, on condition of anonymity. It was not immediately clear how many people were arrested. In recent months in France - which has Europe's largest Muslim population - there has been growing concern over the hundreds of nationals joining jihadist groups in Iraq and Syria. The new reality was driven home in a video from the Islamic State (IS) group, released in mid-November, showing three Kalashnikov-wielding Frenchmen burning their passports and calling on Muslims to join them or stage attacks in France.

**Pray:** for the success of the authorities in their action to dismantle the jihadist network. (Pr.5:22)

**More:** <http://www.france24.com/en/20141215-france-police-dismantle-network-sending-jihadists-syria/>

## WORLDWIDE

### ■ Pakistan: Peshawar school massacre

145 families have lost precious members after six gunmen walked from classroom to classroom in a school killing-spree. It's Pakistani Taliban's deadliest attack to date. They shot at random until army commandos arrived at the scene. 'My son was in uniform in the morning - he is in a casket now,' said Tahir Ali, who lost his 14-year-old son. 'My son was my dream. My dream has been killed.' Local hospitals are treating dozens of the injured. 136 children and nine staff have died. Mourners staged candlelit vigils overnight. Pakistani Nobel Prize winner Malala Yousafzai said, 'I, along with millions of others around the world, mourn these children, but we will never be defeated.' A Taliban spokesman said the attack was revenge for Taliban members being killed by Pakistani authorities. His organization, Tehreek-e-Taliban, is a military group working to overthrow the Pakistani government.

**Pray:** for those in mourning, in shock and recovering in hospital: pray also for Pakistan's military and intelligence offensive against jihadist forces. (Ps.6:8)

**More:** [http://www.breakingchristiannews.com/articles/display\\_art.html?ID=15127](http://www.breakingchristiannews.com/articles/display_art.html?ID=15127)

### ■ Ghana: Economic woes and Christianity

Twenty-five years ago the Christian message in Ghana was, 'Repent and accept Jesus and you will be saved.' Today, in many places, salvation is presented as an experience with Jesus Christ that will give Ghanaians the power to be successful in life, rub shoulders with the rich and be happy. The word 'faith' has a changed meaning in many Christian quarters to mean a power to 'get what you want'. Theologians call it Prosperity Gospel. Also Ghana's once stable economy is no longer on a firm footing. There are sharp rises in inflation, frequent power cuts, crumbling roads and dramatic plunges in the value of the currency that is causing unrest. The government recently requested a bailout from the International Monetary Fund, despite discoveries of vast oil reserves. Many are saying Ghana has gone the way of other African oil producers who became riddled with corruption when oil was discovered. See also:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/talktojazeera/2014/12/john-mahama-saving-ghana-troubled-economy-20141213125049737515.html>

**Pray:** for the leaders of commerce and the government as they address mismanagement of the economy. Pray for the Church to return to a loving God who cares for those who live by His word. (1Tim.6:9-10)

**More:** <http://www.modernghana.com/news/564356/1/unmasking-the-prosperity-gospel.html>

### ■ Lebanon: No more Syrian refugees

Lebanon has announced it will not accept any more Syrian refugees. Lebanon has over a million officially-registered Syrian refugees (25% of the population) with an untold number of unregistered refugees living under overpasses, renting tent space in Bekaa Valley, hiding out in warehouses, garages, (in any space they can find). Some sources say there are over two million refugees in Lebanon. They have stretched the country's infrastructure and residents resent losing low-paying jobs to non-Lebanese. The government is encouraging Syrian refugees to leave. Where can they go? They can't go back to Syria. Many have lost their homes. It's too dangerous for them to go back. There are very few options available to them. The weather in Lebanon is cold and few refugees have shelter that will withstand the conditions. There's no education, no healthcare and food shortages.

**Pray:** for the exiles in Syria and elsewhere who are really struggling through no fault of their own. (Ex.22:21)

**More:** <https://www.mnnonline.org/news/lebanon-says-no-more-syrian-refugees/>

#### ■ **Egypt: Unrest, military courts & Christian protests**

On Tuesday a research project reported 714 protests nationwide in November after charges were dropped against Mubarak over complicity in killing protesters during the 2011 uprising. Recently students nationwide staged demonstrations on university campuses and generally protested against the government - mainly against the detainment of their colleagues. In Egypt the army plays an influential role in political and economic spheres. President Abdel Fatah al-Sisi was previously chief of the army, which toppled Mursi. On Monday an Egyptian prosecutor referred 399 civilians to a military court, including four top leaders, as the state expands a crackdown against political opponents, - causing more protests. Recently the Coptic Church marched to draw attention to the 'lack of justice' for 28 Christian deaths during the 2011 protests. See: <http://www.christiannewswire.com/news/353974925.html>

**Pray:** for the government to honestly and peacefully address the public calls for justice (Ps.3:4)

**More:** <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/118115/Egypt/Politics-/Mubarak-verdict-sparked-more-protests-in-Egypt-Rep.aspx>

#### ■ **Israel: Netanyahu applauds Christian IDF soldiers**

At a gathering organised by Father Gabriel Naddaf, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu applauded Christian soldiers who fully integrate with Israeli society. Netanyahu said, 'We are brothers in arms. I commend you for the will to be full partners in contributing to defending this nation.' Netanyahu noted that it was not always easy for Arabic-speaking Christians to so fully join themselves to Israel, but vowed 'We will firmly support you against all that would harass you. - Christians are suffering in the Middle East.' The Israeli leader recalled the recent shrinkage and disappearance of entire Christian communities that were in the region since the birth of Christianity. He insisted that all who criticise Israel and work toward the birth of a Palestinian state (that would most likely fall to Hamas) must compare this larger situation to Israel, the only nation in the region where the Christian population is growing.

**Pray:** for continued growth of Christianity in Israel. (Ps.28:8-9)

**More:** <http://www.israeltoday.co.il/NewsItem/tabid/178/nid/25649/Default.aspx>

#### ■ **Canada: Prayers for the coming year**

A Canadian prayer network reports, 'Across Canada there has been a marked increase in speedy answers to prayer. It's as if we have come into a time of fulfillment.' Canadian intercessors ask us to join them as they pray for the following:- for God to move in new ways among the First Peoples (native Canadians), bringing life justice, healing, and redemption. Muslims: Last summer a great promise was given regarding a visitation of God to the Canadian Muslims. Radical Islam has been rising, pray for Muslims to begin to question their teachings and seek God anew. Prince Edward Island: Pray for the province of PEI as they are currently without a premier, and this province has been aggressively targeted by the pro-abortion special interest group. Pray that the birth place of confederation remains an abortion-free zone.

**Pray:** for the prayer networks across Canada to continue to see answers to prayer and for an increase of hunger among Canadians who don't yet know the Lord. (Ps.80:3)

**More:** <http://www.ears2hear.ca/prayer>

#### ■ **India: The Christmas of Hindu radicals**

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a radical paramilitary group, is planning to convert 4,000 Christian and 1,000 Muslim families to Hinduism by the next 25th of December in Uttar Pradesh. Militants call it the 'returning home' programme. Father Francis Arackal, a Dominican priest and head of the department of Communication at St Joseph's College Bangalore said, 'The RSS claims to be upholding the culture of India and Hinduism. They are doing cheap conversions. The proposed reconversion drive is being planned as a conspiracy politics. The State Assembly elections are due in Uttar Pradesh in 2016. This is a 'diverting attention' trick. The other intention is to hide all the wrong doings, criminalising politics and communal violence in India.'

**Pray:** for the grace and mercy of the Christ to be proclaimed, heard and believed by many in 2015. (Eph. 2:8)

**More:** <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/The-Christmas-of-Hindu-radicals:-We-will-reconvert-5,000-Christian-and-Muslim-families-32917.html>

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**