

# 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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## PRAISE REPORTS

### ■ 1,360 new Christians at Soul Survivor

Christian youth organisation Soul Survivor has announced that 1,360 young people became Christians at its festivals this Summer. The events in July and September have seen tens of thousands gather at the sites in Staffordshire, Scotland and Somerset. Speaking on Premier's News Hour, spokesman Jonny Goodchild said, 'It has been absolutely amazing. I don't think we're doing anything special - we're just thankful for all God is doing.' Calling on youth workers to continue to invest in the young people who've found faith, he said, 'It's that day-to-day relational youth work, getting alongside these young people, really journeying with them. Programmes are important but I think it's far more about relationship.' Soul Survivor and other Christian festivals are, in many ways, a highlight of the youth ministry year; they're our 21st-century equivalent of a pilgrimage to the Temple. In our age of cynicism it's easy to get jaded, but this rhythm and pattern of youth ministry life is something to celebrate.

**Praise:** God for all he has done, is doing and will do amongst young adults. (Eph.3:20,21)

**More:** <http://www.premier.org.uk/News/UK/1-360-new-Christians-at-Soul-Survivor>

### ■ The faith of Usain Bolt in five tweets

He is the world's fastest man. Bolt is also a Bible-believing, God-honouring, Jesus-worshipping Christian. But other than crossing himself and offering silent prayers at the start of each race, he is relatively reserved about his faith. However, the occasional tweet reveals a faith that is centred around praise and gratitude. Here are five moments that give us an insight into Bolt's Christian faith: 'I want to thank GOD for everything he has done for me 'cause without him none of this would be possible.' 'Way up I feel blessed.' 'Never forget the true meaning of the day #GoodFriday.' 'Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me.' And 'Give thanks for another day', followed by an image of the Lord's Prayer.

**Praise:** God for those Christians in the media limelight who boldly profess their faith. (Ro.1:16)

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/the.faith.of.usain.bolt.in.5.tweets/63092.htm>

## BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

### ■ Britain one of the world's least religious countries

A survey of nearly 64,000 people across the world finds Britain has one of the lowest numbers of people who declare themselves to be religious. Two-thirds of the population describe themselves as atheist or 'not religious'. Only 30% of Britons interviewed by pollsters said they would describe themselves as religious, regardless of whether they attended a

place of worship, compared with 53% who said they were 'not religious' and 13% who said they were a 'convinced atheist'. The remainder were 'don't knows'. The study appeared to show that Christianity is on course to be a minority religion in the UK. Globally people aged under 34 tended to be more religious and the number of Muslim children in Britain doubled in a decade. The proportion of Muslims in Britain is predicted to be 11.3 per cent, or one in nine of the total population, by 2050. See also The Mill Gathering Statement at: [http://www.prayer-alert.net/index.php?view=download&alias=572-statement-from-the-mill-gathering-1&category\\_slug=insight-articles-1&option=com\\_docman&Itemid=216](http://www.prayer-alert.net/index.php?view=download&alias=572-statement-from-the-mill-gathering-1&category_slug=insight-articles-1&option=com_docman&Itemid=216)

**Pray:** for the church to wake up to her rich heritage as a beacon of Christianity. (Eph.5:14)

**More:** <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/11531005/Britain-one-of-the-worlds-least-religious-countries-says-poll.html>

#### ▣ Assisted suicide becomes 'routine' if legalised

A new review of a wide range of evidence on assisted suicide has been released ahead of a debate at Westminster when MPs will consider Rob Marris's Bill on legalising assisted suicide on 11 September. This review has revealed that the practice becomes more widespread and more routine in places where the law has been changed. Produced by the Anscombe Bioethics Centre, the review links directly to official data from the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Switzerland, Oregon and Washington, as well as UK parliamentary reports and journal research. It says there are 'common patterns' emerging from places where assisted suicide has been legalised. In every jurisdiction numbers have increased over time and continue to do so; there has also been a shift from permitting assisted suicide for cancer victims to include other diseases. In Europe, this includes psychiatric conditions and problems related to old age, which are non-terminal. For helpful prayers into this subject, go to <http://www.care.org.uk/our-causes/sanctity-life/assisted-suicide-euthanasia/what-you-can-do>

**Pray:** the government will note UK medical opinion, which consistently opposes assisted suicide. (Ex.20:13)

**More:** <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/new-review-assisted-suicide-becomes-routine-if-legalised/>

#### ▣ Silence in the Catholic church may be its weapon of self-destruction

In a day of remarkable evidence before the royal commission into institutional responses to child sexual abuse, Bishop Geoffrey Robinson offered damning assessments of the most senior Catholic clerics on the planet. Pope John Paul II 'handled the abuse poorly'. Cardinal George Pell was a 'most ineffectual bishop' and 'the majority of the priests wished he'd get transferred somewhere else.' Even Pope Francis is not providing 'real leadership'. But his most chilling and telling statement about the Catholic church was the one he made about the church hierarchy's response to revelations about child sexual abuse: 'What we got was silence, so bishops were loyal to the silence.' It speaks of the extent to which the church hierarchy exercises control – and enforces silence – through a combination of rigid orthodoxy, secretive practices, intimidation, and threat of exclusion or excommunication. Even many Catholics may not be aware of how the church leadership manages the institution, as most of us in the pews interact only with our local parish priest.

**Pray:** for open, modern, democratic, humble authority of Christ to be the power in the church. (Rev.3:2)

**More:** <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/aug/25/silence-in-the-catholic-church-may-be-its-weapon-of-self-destruction>

#### ▣ Cleaning athletics from drugs

Last week Sebastian Coe was elected as president of the world governing body for athletics. This week Usain Bolt's victory over twice banned drug offender Justin Gatlin delighted many who still appear not to trust athletes with regards to cheating. Bolt is a worthy champion and so is Jessica Ennis-Hill, winning the gold medal in the women's heptathlon just 13 months after giving birth. Not everyone has the endurance, perseverance, ability and training to compete in any kind of athletics competition, never mind a world championship. Now that Lord Coe heads the IAAF he will look to the International Olympic Committee which is the only agency with both the funds and the vested interest to operate an effective drugs-detection programme. However, if the IOC is unwilling to exclude rogue nations from membership, no amount of testing will make much difference. Historically international governing bodies don't cast off member nations, regardless of the depths of their offences. Witness state-supported athletes, Nazi repression of Jewish sportsmen, and twenty years of communist-bloc drug-programmes. All passed without a whimper.

**Pray:** for the IAAF, Lord Coe, and the world of athletics to begin to clean up sport effectively. (Job 3:16)

**More:** <http://www.theguardian.com/sport/2015/aug/23/drug-cheat-countries-should-be-thrown-out>

#### ▣ Vulnerable people not being supported by police

Up to a quarter of a million vulnerable people are not being supported by an 'appropriate adult' while in police custody, a Home Office report suggests. It said lack of awareness and a shortage of trainees meant that police often ended up questioning adults with mental illness or learning disabilities without one. Appropriate adults are trained volunteers who help with communication during police interviews. They are supposed to ensure that mentally vulnerable people who are arrested or questioned understand what is happening, and that their legal rights and welfare are safeguarded. They were introduced in the 1980s following miscarriages of justice involving vulnerable people. Local authorities are required to provide appropriate adults whenever children are in contact with police and there is no parent or guardian present, but there is no duty to do the same in respect of vulnerable adults, many of whom only have the comprehension of a child.

**Pray:** that this report would kick-start training schemes for appropriate adults to become volunteers who could support vulnerable people in custody and through the legal system. (Ps.41:1)

**More:** <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-34054636>

#### ▣ Pray for our universities

Some disturbing facts about our universities: \*100 extremists a year lecture at UK universities: \*fanatics are given a platform to spread hatred of the West despite ministers demanding crackdown on radicalism; \*last year, there were 123 speeches by extremists at leading universities; \*more than twenty university students were convicted of terrorism last year, and the University which has had the most extremists is Queen Mary, in east London. Universities should be the best place to challenge extremist ideas, yet this is not happening. Extremism on university campuses is a very serious issue. Researchers carried out an exhaustive survey of social media and university websites and other literature to log speaking events. Evidence shows the speakers expressing views such as claiming that there is 'a Western war against Islam'. They support individuals convicted of terrorism offences, and express intolerance or opposition to non-believers. Hardliners also oppose democracy and speak in favour of sharia law.

**Pray:** for the government's response to zealot and radical narratives poisoning young minds. (Ps.34:11)  
**More:** <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3145225/100-extremists-year-lecture-universities-Fanatics-given-platform-spread-hatred-West-despite-ministers-demanding-crackdown-radicalism.html>

## EUROPE

### ■ Macedonia/Albania/Bulgaria relations - refugee crisis

'The refugee issue concerns everyone and there is a need of cooperation and common efforts to tackle it.' said the Macedonian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nikola Poposki, when speaking at the annual ambassadors' conference in Skopje. The conference was also attended by the Bulgarian Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Albanian Foreign Minister. During the trilateral meeting Mr Poposki said, 'The refugee issue cannot be solved individually, there is a need for cooperation with everyone in Europe in order to tackle the pressure. Macedonia is looking for cooperation with countries in central and western Europe where these migrants are heading and where they wish to end their journey. Macedonia and Bulgaria are countries with a common border and common fate and we have to cooperate. This year we welcome foreign ministers from Bulgaria and Albania at the annual ambassadors' conference. This is proof of developing good neighbourly relations.'

**Pray:** for continued positive growth in neighbourly relations as the three countries discuss improving regional development, refugees and their road and railway infrastructure. (Ecc.4:12)

**More:** <http://www.focus-fen.net/news/2015/08/25/381492/macedonia-foreign-minister-about-refugee-crisis-relations-with-bulgaria-albania-roundup.html>

### ■ Malta: A large majority mistrust the police

72% of respondents taking part in an online poll by MaltaToday agree that Malta's police force needs a radical shakeup. The 1,586 respondents outnumbered the 550 respondents who stated they trusted the police but agreed the police needed to work hard to inspire more trust. 3.13% said they were not sure whether the force could be trusted or not. Over the years, the police have been embroiled in far too many controversies, with the most recent being the unethical behaviour of the family of police officers who had business interests with the family of a corrupt property entrepreneur. An internal police inquiry is now underway. In December 2014 Transparency International published its annual Corruption Perception Index, ranking Malta 43rd among 173 countries. Malta has dropped a percentage point each of the previous three years. The government's decisions, choices and actions over recent years have manifestly contributed to the perception that corruption has increased.

**Pray:** that the results of this survey will be taken seriously by the authorities, and initiate change. (Jer.7:5)

**More:** [http://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/national/56463/online\\_poll\\_absolute\\_majority\\_mistrust\\_maltas\\_police\\_force#.VdxqG\\_IViko](http://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/national/56463/online_poll_absolute_majority_mistrust_maltas_police_force#.VdxqG_IViko)

## WORLDWIDE

### ■ China: Between God and mammon

Alongside all the news this week about Chinese stockmarkets, Global Times tells the story of a wealthy businessman who converted to Christianity. He said that Chinese businessmen who converted to Christianity all had common characteristics - they believed their money was tainted with sin. 'They wanted inner peace, and transformed their behaviour and their companies by changing their crooked commercial dealings.' The Bible bans bribery, tax evasion and keeping mistresses - all of which are often considered standard conduct in business circles. The businessman said, 'The only thought that supported me in continuing my faith was that I was following the teachings of Jesus Christ.' This man is not unique. A number of Chinese businessmen who became wealthy by cutting corners in China's booming cutthroat business environment have been turning to Christianity for help and spiritual consolation.

**Pray:** that in China's financial turmoil, there will be an opportunity for God's values to invade industry and commerce. (Is.3:14)

**More:** <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/845019.shtml>

### ■ Global: Refugee crisis shames us all

The world is failing to give the United Nations the resources it needs to manage the worst refugee crisis in memory. For Palestinians trapped in the ruins of war-ravaged Yarmouk refugee camp in Damascus, life is 'a very slow death' from hunger, barrel bombs or being beheaded. 21-year-old Nidal told the digital media project Syria Deeply, 'Death's coming and we cannot stop it. If we don't get food, we'll all die of hunger.' Some sixty million people are on the run in Syria, Iraq and elsewhere from conflict, war and persecution; our collective moral compass seems to be failing us badly. The UN is under strain as never before. It needs \$20 billion to get into places such as Yarmouk, to help the millions of refugees in Syria, Iraq, Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and elsewhere who constitute the biggest humanitarian crisis in our lifetime. But its appeal is going largely unheard.

**Pray:** for God to prompt the US, EU and key Asian and Latin American countries to heed the UN's call for more financial resources, and open their gates to more refugees. (Hab.1:5)

**More:** <http://www.thestar.com/opinion/editorials/2015/08/24/global-refugee-crisis-shames-us-all-editorial.html>

### ■ Egypt: Bombings and terror threats don't keep Copts away from church

Christians and Muslims in Egypt flocked to churches and monasteries bearing the name of the Virgin Mary to take part in the festivities of the Assumption, which started on 6 August. Churches across Egypt's governorates held prayers and sang hymns and fasted in commemoration of the Assumption for fourteen days, despite the wave of terrorist attacks that have plagued Egypt during the past few months. The festivities appeal to non-Christians as well. In front of an image of the Virgin Mary, Samira Mohammed prayed fervently while holding another image of the Virgin Mary in her hand. She said that she always waits eagerly for the Virgin ceremony; as a Muslim, she knows the Virgin Mary is mentioned in the Quran and is the only woman to whom an entire Surah is dedicated.

**Pray:** for God to reveal the Holy Trinity powerfully to those from other faiths seeking revelation. (Mt.21:14)

**More:** <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/08/egypt-copts-muslims-religious-holiday-despite-threats.html>

▣ **Ethiopia: Orthodox leaders jailed for persecution protests**

After official complaints made to Ethiopia's government about increasing persecution of Christians in Silte (a Muslim-dominated area of southern Ethiopia) surfaced in the media, a district court charged six members of the administrative committee of an Ethiopian Orthodox church with inciting public disturbance, destroying public trust in government officials, and spreading hatred. The court found the men guilty on 7 August and sentenced them to between five and nine years in prison. The men were members of St Mary's Orthodox church in Kilito, in the Silte zone of SNNP state. The zone came into existence after the Silte people unanimously chose to form a separate zone in a 2001 referendum. A number of Ethiopia's prominent Muslim politicians come from Silte, including the current Minister of Defence, the Minister of Communications and the current caucus leader for women's affairs in the federal parliament.

**Pray:** for God to protect Christians in Silte Zone and ensure that Ethiopia's constitutional guarantee of freedom of religion is adhered to. (Pr.2:8)

**More:** <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2015/08/3982042/>

▣ **Nepal: Constitutional amendments could make Christianity illegal**

According to the Australian Prayer network, Nepali Christians fear that amendments to the new constitution, likely to come into effect after seven years of parliamentary discussions, could render all Christian activity illegal. Attempting to convert someone to another religion is already prohibited in Nepal, but the proposed amendments would mean that anything perceived as 'evangelistic' could be punishable by law and pave the way for an 'anti-conversion clause' in the penal code, resulting in prison sentences or hefty fines for offenders. Meanwhile on Monday the government enforced a curfew and sent the army to the west of Nepal after demonstrators armed with spears and axes clashed with police, killing at least eight of them, during escalating protests against the proposed new constitution. The charter was meant to draw a line under centuries of inequality, but the draft presented in parliament on Sunday sparked fury among marginalised communities, who say the new borders will limit their political representation.

**Pray:** for clear guidelines as to what constitutes an 'act to convert' and for equal rights for all. (Ps.12:5)

**More:** <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/aug/24/police-officers-killed-nepal-constitution-protests>

▣ **Burundi: Torture used to extract confessions and crush dissent**

Beatings with iron bars and acid burns are used by security forces in Burundi to extract 'confessions' and silence dissent, according to an Amnesty International briefing published on Monday. It highlights an increase in the use of torture since April. The testimonies are devastating and disturbing (torture and ill-treatment are prohibited by the country's constitution and international and regional treaties to which Burundi is party). Amnesty International said, 'Such practices must stop and those suspected of perpetrating torture should be suspended immediately pending thorough, independent and impartial investigations and prosecutions.' People are being tortured for their suspected participation in protests against President Pierre Nkurunziza's election to a third term in office. A human rights activist and a journalist were also detained and tortured. One detainee said, 'They told me, 'If you don't confess, we'll kill you.' But I said, 'How can I confess when I know nothing? You'll have to just tell me what to confess to.'

**Pray:** for the international community to urge the government to abide by regional and international human rights commitments, and for the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture to be allowed access. (Is.1:16)

**More:** <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/08/burundi-torture-used-to-extract-confessions-and-crush-dissent/>

▣ **Gaza: Disabled children who live with the legacy of war**

A journalist writes, 'For six months, I have been recording stories for a two-year project documenting the long-term impact of conflict on communities and individuals around the world. There are few places that have seen more conflict in recent years than Gaza and the resulting psychological impact on the civilian population, especially on the young, has been well recorded. Less well covered, though, are the effects on the estimated 3,000 children with autism living in the region. There are also many others with learning disabilities and mental health issues. The war and ongoing embargo have affected support networks of schools and outreach programmes for these children. This has put extra strain not just on those living with disabilities, but also on their families and carers. I can never truly express the horrors of some people's experiences – I'm not sure I even want to try.'

**Pray:** for the families trapped in a nightmare, with little support and needing security and safeguarding. (Joel 3:10)

**More:** <http://interactive.aljazeera.com/aje/2015/gazalifeoccupation/index.html>

IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE WORLD PRAYER CENTRE, BIRMINGHAM, UK

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