

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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Donations

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■ Praise Reports

- [Rapid church growth in Iran](#)
- [Record number of Bibles given out in 2014](#)

■ British Isles & Ireland

- [Prayer for steelworkers](#)
- [Slavery in the United Kingdom](#)
- [Wilberforce Academy](#)
- [Poor-quality apprenticeships 'not worthy of the name'](#)
- [Restricting free speech could undermine British values](#)
- [MP calls for protection of Christian religious sites in Israel](#)
- [The only division that matters is whether a church is dead or alive](#)

■ Europe

- [Hungary: Prime Minister Orban calls on EU to change immigration policies](#)
- [Germany: anti-migrant protests and violence](#)

■ Worldwide

- [Israel: A prayer walk by Israeli and Palestinian Christians](#)
- [Syria: Aleppo offensive sends 70,000 Syrians fleeing from homes](#)
- [Lebanon](#)
- [Turkey: Kurdish refugees suffer and Jesus saves](#)
- [General elections with global repercussions](#)
- [Nigeria: 'She Is in the hands of God'](#)

PRAISE REPORTS

■ Rapid church growth in Iran

The Iranian church is growing with increased momentum, as daily reports indicate. Despite persecution, Iranian Christians are courageously preaching Christ. More than one million Scriptures have been distributed to Iranians since 2003. Believers are involved in regular evangelism, and report that most receive the Scriptures with joy. Christian TV, beamed into Iran by satellite, is reaching private living rooms of families that otherwise may never hear the Gospel. The response is significant, with thousands responding to programmes every month. Although satellite dishes are banned, an estimated 28 million people have access to satellite TV (dishes are hidden in the lofts of houses). The official Churches in Iran are closely monitored by the government, so believers meet in house churches, mostly with eight to twelve members. For security reasons, they are forced to multiply once they reach about twelve people. This helps spread the Gospel even more.

Praise: God for innovative evangelism transforming Iran. Praise Him for the openness of Iranians who are being healed from sickness, delivered from addictions and restored from painful pasts. (Joel 3:18)

More: <http://www.elam.com/page/rapid-church-growth-how-it-happening>

■ Record number of Bibles given out in 2014

Last year saw the highest number of Bibles ever distributed globally by bible societies. Nearly 34 million Bibles were handed out, a 6% rise on 2013; that's 428.2 million Scriptures distributed. The figure includes full Bibles, Testaments, Gospels and other smaller scripture items. The Americas have reported the highest rates of distribution, with 341.5 million Scriptures, including 14.4 million full Bibles. Brazil gave out more than any other country - 7.6 million full Bibles; it is thought that this was boosted by the many thousands distributed during the FIFA World Cup. Cuba gave away 1.5 million - more than double the total distributed in 2010. The Bible Society reported that more than five times the number of Testaments were distributed in Syria in 2014 as before the conflict began, in 2010.

Praise: God for ministries that turn every situation into an opportunity to share His Word. (Mt.24:14)

More: <http://www.premier.org.uk/News/World/Record-number-of-Bibles-given-out-in-2014>

BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ Prayer for steelworkers

Revd Peter Vickers, a chaplain working at a Tata Steel site where 900 jobs are being axed, is asking Christians to pray for those facing uncertainty, saying, 'You've got fear of what is going to happen; you've got people feeling anger because

others should have done something to stop the situation; then there's the whole worry about their future. Pray for those on the journey of uncertainty - the number given is 900 but that doesn't mean that 900 will walk away without a job. Pray that they can keep a calm head as they look for other employment. Pray also for the emotional ripple effect that Scunthorpe itself will feel. Pray for those with power to make decisions; there are an awful lot of people feeling powerless, and they need to know that those people will use their power wisely.'

Pray: pray for the Church and Christian ministries stepping in to give physical, mental and spiritual sustenance to those in challenging situations that they face and will face.

More: <http://www.premier.org.uk/News/UK/Chaplain-calls-for-prayer-following-Tata-Steel-job-cuts>

▣ Slavery in the United Kingdom

Last Friday, the country's first anti-slavery commissioner spoke out against the treatment of modern-day slavery victims by the UK authorities. Kevin Hyland said officers don't know how to handle victims and there could be as many as 13,000 here, but the way they're received by authorities is morally unacceptable. He plans to train forces to react better when they discover victims (predominantly from Albania, Nigeria and Vietnam). Human trafficking has an annual trade of \$32 billion and trafficking is not in any way removed from us. It's close. It happens where we live, in the nice quiet towns and villages or amid the buzz and loudness of big cities. God cares deeply for humanity and is constantly moved to action. We have the opportunity to intervene proactively in the lives of those who are bound by fear, who have no freedom and who see no way out.

Pray: for authorities in the United Kingdom to develop better strategies to recognise and release slaves in farms, nail bars, homes and wherever there are those who need release from darkness. (Is.61:1,2a)

More: <http://www.eauk.org/culture/friday-night-theology/will-your-heart-be-stirred-by-slavery.cfm>

▣ Wilberforce Academy

Every year Christian Concern runs an academy for young people called the Wilberforce Academy, named after the famous reformer William Wilberforce. It's a four-day residential course to train and equip the invited students on what it means to proclaim Christ in public life. It is the academy's desire to raise up the next generation of Christian leaders to take a bold stand for Christ within their spheres of influence. Just as God blessed Wilberforce and his fellow reformers it is hoped that God will mightily use those being trained. The course has proved very popular, with great potential impact on our nation, and Christian Concern is now developing a network to encourage Wilberforce graduates to build relationships and connect for the future. They have a passion to serve Jesus in law, politics, education, media, arts and business; please pray for them.

Pray: that all the academy graduates will develop lasting friendships with their peers and mentors which will be a source of support, encouragement and accountability for years to come. (Ps.72:6,7)

More: <http://www.christianconcern.com/campaigns/wilberforce-academy-equipping-the-next-generation-of-christian-leaders>

▣ Poor-quality apprenticeships 'not worthy of the name'

The head of Ofsted reports that employers are offering poor-quality, low-level apprenticeships that are wasting public funds and abusing the trust placed in them by the Government and apprentices. Retail and care workers are particularly likely to be signed up for low-level apprenticeships that do not provide them with sufficient training, stretch them, or improve their skills. Instead, they are frequently being used as a means of accrediting existing low-level skills, like making coffee and cleaning floors. In a major report published this week, Ofsted concludes that many courses are failing to give learners the skills and knowledge employers are looking for, or add value to the economy. Some interviewed for the report were not even aware that they were on an apprenticeship programme. The Government intends to deliver three million apprenticeships over the next five years, but poor-quality courses have devalued the brand.

Pray: for God to direct and teach the government and Ofsted. May they work together to fulfil promises to put vocational learning on an equal footing with academic studies. (Ps.119:66)

More: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/poor-quality-apprenticeships-are-not-worthy-of-the-name-warns-ofsted-head-a6698411.html>

▣ Restricting free speech could undermine British values

The Government's counter-extremism strategy could seriously backfire and damage the values it is intending to uphold, a range of critics have warned. A senior police chief, a national newspaper and a legal commentator have all highlighted flaws in the strategy, which includes controversial Extremism Disruption Orders (EDOs). Concerns have been raised that the terms for the orders are being 'far too broadly drawn'. Writing for the Guardian online, legal commentator Joshua Rozenberg noted that according to the Government, extremism is the vocal and active opposition to values such as the rule of law. But he said expressing ideas that offend is an 'essential part' of our fundamental values. Rozenberg also criticised part of the strategy which proposes an extremism community trigger, whereby anyone will be able to complain about extremism to the local council or the police. This might mean the police turning up at a street preacher's home to question them.

Pray: against unnecessary limits to free speech that go far beyond the people they are intended to target. (Pr.24:9a)

More: <http://www.christianheadlines.com/>

▣ MP calls for protection of Christian religious sites in Israel

Christian Tory MP Mark Pritchard has urged ministers in the UK Government to speak to their Israeli counterparts about reducing the number of attacks on Christian religious sites in Israel. He spoke out just months after the Church of the Multiplication on the Sea of Galilee was victim to an arson attack. Shortly after the blaze, Bishop Declan Lang said, 'Attacking, desecrating and damaging any church or house of worship anywhere in the world is an inexcusable act. This is more so in the Holy Land that is home to followers of the three monotheistic traditions.' There have been a number of attacks on Christian sites in recent years as well as a rise in anti-Christian graffiti.

Pray: that the voices of David Cameron and Philip Hammond will be heard as they call for the protection of Christian sites and peace in the region. (Pr.15:23)
More: <http://www.premier.org.uk/News/World/MP-calls-on-UK-government-to-protect-Christian-religious-sites-in-Israel>

■ **The only division that matters is whether a church is dead or alive**

Richard Chartres, Bishop of London, has said that the Church must be 'vision-led, not problem-led' in the post-denominational phase we are now entering, seeking street-level co-operation between the Anglican Church and the wider Church body. The key to growth, according to Chartres, is 'refusing to see the many divisions in Church life, between High Church and Low Church, between Catholic and Protestant tradition. There is only one division that truly matters, and that is the division between dead church and live church. That can embrace almost any expression of Christian faith.' Strong ecclesial identity is now history, according to Chartres. Rather, we are in a post-denominational phase. 'Very few of the hundreds of thousands of students studying in London arrived with any clear ecclesial identity. They are looking for churches and congregations of varied and contrasting styles that are living and not dead,' he said.

Pray: for a Spirit-filled continuity of the Church's life through our nations. (Jn. 16:13)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/bishop.of.london.the.only.division.that.matters.is.whether.a.church.is.dead.or.alive/66305.htm>

EUROPE

■ **Hungary: Prime Minister Orban calls on EU to change immigration policies**

Viktor Orban urged European leaders to change their immigration policies and involve voters in a debate about the continent's future; otherwise they face a political crisis. Hungary built a steel fence along its borders with Serbia and Croatia that was meant to turn migrants back from Europe, not divert them along a different path to Germany. Orban articulated his party's hard line against the tide of immigrants on state television. He said that European leaders had no mandate to let hundreds of thousands of migrants enter the EU with little or no control and destabilise Europe, saying, 'We need to start the debate about the future of our continent honestly, without the muzzle of political correctness, without pretence, talking straight. The further migrants travel from their troubled countries, the more difficult it will be for them to return. They must remain in their region and humane conditions must be created for them there.'

Pray: that the migrant crisis does not turn into a European political crisis. (Phil.2:3)

More: <http://news.yahoo.com/hungarys-orban-urges-eu-migration-debate-sees-threat-071447107.html>

■ **Germany: anti-migrant protests and violence**

Every Monday evening thousands gather in front of Dresden's Opera House carrying German flags and singing nationalist songs. One protester said he fears German traditions are being eroded by Muslims. Elsewhere violent attacks and hate speeches are exploding against asylum seekers. Der Spiegel reported a threefold increase in attacks compared to the same period last year. Last Friday night about a thousand people demonstrated in Heidenau against an expected arrival of refugees. The police intervened with tear gas grenades. The refugees are creating a kind of German martial law, where it has been necessary to use schools, gymnasiums and campsites as temporary accommodation centres. The attacks against refugee centres in Germany are so strong that Google deleted a map showing their locations, fearing hate crimes. On Wednesday a converted Christian migrant in a refugee centre was severely beaten up by an Afghan man, who declared that his conversion to Christianity was 'a sin'.

Pray: for God to step into the situation which open borders have created. Pray for wisdom and compassion towards the 800,000 people expecting to seek asylum in Germany by the end of the year. (Ps.77:1,2a)

More: <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/10/19/world/dresden-protests-against-immigrants/>

WORLDWIDE

■ **Israel: A prayer walk by Israeli and Palestinian Christians**

Recently twenty Palestinian and Israeli women met in a small village in the north of Israel. This village is not well known - there is not even a sign from the main road pointing in its direction - but Al-Jadeida has been in the news lately because of the violence there. Whole groups of people have been relocated there from low-income neighbourhoods in Acco and Gaza. Al-Jadeida is 97% Muslim and 3% Christian. Organised crime has taken hold, and the local municipality has all but stopped the city services. For the evangelical families and local Catholic and Orthodox churches, this is unacceptable. This has been the subject of prayer for some time now. As a result intercessors met to pray with the local women's group. They had no physical weapons of protection, but went armed with hope, faith and boldness, walking through neighbourhoods in two groups and praying that the municipality will be cleansed and that any who won't bend the knee to God will be changed.

Pray: for change as Israeli and Palestinian women seek God together. (Eph.4:2,3)

More: <https://www.musalaha.org/articles/a-prayer-walk-in-jadeida/>

■ **Syria: Aleppo offensive sends 70,000 Syrians fleeing from homes**

Another wave of Syrian refugees have started their hazardous journey to safety as forces loyal to President al-Assad moved in on Aleppo last Friday, backed by Russian warplanes, Iranian ground troops and militia fighters. An estimated 70,000 fled the southern Aleppo countryside as a result of an assault moving in on three sides of the shattered rebel-held city. 'People are scared to death, everyone is on the move,' said the head of the Union of Syrian Medical Relief Organisations, as he returned from the area. 'People are sleeping in the streets and the fields, but there is nowhere for them to go.' The Syrian Network for Human Rights, a monitoring group, said there had been 'massive displacement' in

recent days. An aid worker in southern Aleppo said that several villages stood almost empty. 'The strong travel on foot, pushing the elderly in wheelbarrows; those left behind face severe medical shortages.'

Pray: for the desperate who simply do not know what to do, and for international leaders to act in unity to prevent further suffering. (Ps.5:2)

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/11941549/Aleppo-offensive-sends-70000-Syrians-fleeing-from-homes.html>

■ Lebanon

Embroiled this year in mounting discontent, Lebanon's protesting population has called for government replacement due to 'political garbage'. At least 1.5 million refugees from war-ravaged countries like Syria constitute nearly 25% of the population. They have overburdened Lebanon's severely deficient water and power infrastructure. Pray for Christians in Lebanon as they continue to reach out to refugees. They are putting on children's clubs and doing food distribution. Praise God that Christian leaders in Lebanon are being challenged and encouraged in transformational ministry; there is a willingness to train and build healthy leaders. Pray for the continued ministry to Muslims. May they come to know the Lord, and may He draw more Lebanese to Himself. For a prayer guide to help you pray for Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Jordan click the 'more' button.

Pray: for the continued training, growth and ministry of Christian leaders in Lebanon, may they be going deeper in Him as they seek to care for others. (Eph.2:4)

More: <http://www.cryoutnow.org/images/pdfs/30-day%20prayer%20guide.pdf>

■ Turkey: Kurdish refugees suffer and Jesus saves

The escalation in Turkey's fight with Kurdish rebels has made life harder for Kurdish refugees from Syria, and indigenous Christians are working with them. Kurdish refugee families find that the Turkish government is unwilling to help them when officials discover they are from a predominantly Kurdish area of Syria. Now they have another problem because Kurds are fighting against Turkey in the southeast of the country. These families have nowhere to go and do not know what to do. In one refugee camp most of those who have fled the terrorist advances of IS are Kurdish. IS had terrorised them in the name of God. But now Christians are ministering to them with clothes, food and vitamins for their health, saying, 'Here I am. Jesus sent me to you.' A grandmother said in Arabic, 'Thank you! So many wounds. Tell Jesus to save us.'

Pray: for Jesus to meet with and save the refugees. May God bring them peace. (Ps.28:2)

More: <http://www.christianaid.org/News/2015/mir20151015.aspx>

■ General elections with global repercussions

On 19 October Canadians chose Justin Trudeau to be their new prime minister as Liberals returned to power. A Liberal government will change Canadian politics and be felt on the world stage as Canada ends its participation in the coalition against IS, refocuses military efforts on training local forces and humanitarian efforts, and launches a national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women. On 17 October Guinea's president won re-election but the opposition leader is calling for protests against fraud. On 25 October three elections will be held. One is in Côte d'Ivoire, where the incumbent will be seeking a second term to promote stability. The Tanzanian general election on the same day could be controversial, while Poland's election results will have repercussions beyond Warsaw - from the role Poland will play in Europe's refugee crisis to David Cameron's chances of success in renegotiating Britain's status in the EU before holding an in/out referendum.

Pray: for believers to have the faith to trust that their votes on Sunday will make a difference and for God to lead and direct newly formed governments into his purposes for the nations. (Jas.1:5)

More: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/22/polish-elections-2015-a-guide-to-the-parties-polls-and-electoral-system>

■ Nigeria: 'She Is in the hands of God'

Twelve fathers of the 200+ schoolgirls kidnapped by Boko Haram from Chibok spoke out about the dangers their families face on a daily basis, and shared their pain of not knowing what has happened to their daughters. They are refusing to give up hope that one day they will return to them. One of the fathers, when asked, 'Where do you think your daughter might be?' said, 'She is in the hands of God'. It was a sentiment echoed by all the parents. They are not going to think about any other reality. Despite the media attention on Chibok, the whole region remains under heavy threat by the Islamic militants. Some of the fathers sneak out at night to be the first line of defence against Boko Haram and to protect their families. The challenge to international organisations is that Chibok is incredibly dangerous to reach. Earlier this month it was reported that one of the schoolgirls was pregnant and carrying diseases by Boko Haram terrorists. See:

<http://www.christianpost.com/news/christian-chibok-schoolgirls-alive-pregnant-boko-haram-terrorists-diseases-147662/>

Pray: for the girls suffering greatly under the jihadists, for the families in despair, for the communities living in fear. Pray that the government will know what to do next. (Is.25:3,4a)

More: <http://www.christianpost.com/news/chibok-schoolgirls-nigeria-bring-back-our-girls-148229/>

IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE WORLD PRAYER CENTRE, BIRMINGHAM, UK

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