

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 45-2015

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Friday 13 November 2015

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PRAISE REPORTS

■ IS releases 37 elderly Assyrian Christians

The Assyrian Human Rights Network has confirmed that the Islamic State has finally released 37 elderly Assyrian Christians on Saturday morning, following their nine months of travail under the hands of the extremists. They were captured in Tal Talmer, a city in northeastern Syria. The recently released captives were part of a group of 215 civilians who have been held by IS since February. Families of those still being held hostage are hopeful that they will also be released because Saturday's release of hostages follows recent smaller releases. 88 of those captured are now free, and the Human Rights Network is in ongoing negotiations to free the rest. See also: <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/11/07/middleeast/assyrian-christians-isis-released/>

Praise: God for the success of peaceful negotiations. May He deliver more from terrorist hands. (Ps.23:4)

More: <http://www.christianpost.com/news/isis-news-37-elderly-assyrian-christians-released-149432/>

■ Gospel advances amid war against IS in Iraq

The coalition units in Iraq during October stepped up military strikes in Ramadi in the west and Baiji in the north. At the same time, Christian workers doing spiritual battle in northern Iraq could barely keep up with area residents' desire to learn about Christ and the Bible. People in northern Iraq's Muslim autonomous region of Kurdistan have long been more open to Christianity than other Iraqis, but they have been especially keen since IS took over parts of the region. 'They're just sick of Islam,' said the director of a ministry based in Kurdistan. 'People are very hungry to know about Christ, especially when they hear about miracles, healing, mercy and love.' He has heard numerous testimonies every day; churches have emerged and people watch satellite television broadcasts of others telling how they came to put their trust in Christ. It's an 'awakening' among Muslims in northern Iraq.

Praise: God for the opportunities to share the gospel and for the harvest now being reaped. (1Ti.2:4,5)

More: <http://www.christianaid.org/News/2015/mir20151029.aspx>

BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ Prison worker forced to resign for quoting the Bible in chapel

HMP Littlehey is a 'Category C' prison (men there cannot be trusted in open conditions but are unlikely to try to escape) and a Young Offender Institute. Chapel attendance is entirely voluntary. The Revd Barry Trayhorn, an ordained Pentecostal minister, has worked as a prison gardener since 2011, and has helped with prison chapel services for the past three years at the invitation of the chaplain. Revd Barry was leading worship in the prison chapel in May last year, and his subject was

the glorious forgiveness of God for those who repent. He quoted 1Cor.6:9-11. Four days later a complaint was made. Barry was immediately suspended from helping at the prison. He was told that his comments during the service were 'homophobic' and breached national prison policy. Last November he felt compelled to resign as gardener. A hearing of Mr Trayhorn's case began last week at Bedford Employment Tribunal: the outcome is not yet known. See also: <http://www.christianconcern.com/our-concerns/freedom-of-speech/christian-prison-worker-forced-to-resign-after-quoting-bible-in-chape>

Pray: for the Prison Chaplaincy to be free to serve the needs of prisoners and staff with Biblical truths and Christian traditions. Pray for Revd Barry to be heard and reinstated. (2Ti.1:8a)

More: <http://archbishopcranmer.com/revd-barry-trayhorn-forced-to-resign-as-prison-worker-for-quoting-the-bible-in-chapel/>

▣ Pupils ordered to chant 'we don't believe in Christmas'

Asif Khan, a teacher at Oldknow Academy (implicated in the Trojan Horse scandal), allegedly led anti-Christian chants of 'We don't believe in Christmas, do we?' and 'Jesus wasn't born in Bethlehem, was he?' at assemblies. He is also accused of talking to pupils about 'hellfire' and 'prostitutes'. Some teachers, disgusted by Khan's actions, walked out of school assemblies. A tribunal hearing into his behaviour is listed to run until 18 November. Khan and former deputy head Jahangir Akbar stand accused of unacceptable professional behaviour and / or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute. Khan denies the claims. Bhupinder Kondal was head teacher there for twelve years before she left in January last year, claiming a group of teachers were trying to impose a strict Muslim ethos. Lessons were segregated, with the girls sitting at the back of the room, and pupils could not sing, use musical instruments or draw trees or eyes.

Pray: that teachers facing disciplinary action from the five 'Trojan Horse' schools wake up to the ethos of education in the British Isles. (Ps.72:4)

More: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3311670/Pupils-Trojan-Horse-school-chant-don-t-believe-Christmas-teacher-rally-style-assembly.html>

▣ Storm Abigail: damage and disruption

Storm Abigail, the first storm to be officially named by the Met Office, hit the Western Isles, parts of Argyll and the northwest Highlands and Orkney yesterday (Thursday). Gusts of up to 84 mph and waves up to forty feet high were recorded, with lightning strikes and heavy rain. All schools in the Western Isles and Shetland will be closed today. Two thousand customers in Lewis and Harris lost their power supply, though most have been reconnected. A ferry travelling from Skye to Raasay was prevented from docking for three hours due to stormy conditions, and ferry services today have been cancelled or disrupted.

Pray: for God to protect and watch over all who have been affected by this violent storm. (Gen.9:13)

More: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-highlands-islands-34786322>

▣ Archbishop of York's Young Leaders' Award reaches 315 schools!

The Archbishop of York Youth Trust announced on Tuesday that it has further extended its Young Leaders' Award with 315 schools having signed up to the Award since its launch. The Archbishop said, 'Young people have the potential to change our society for the better, and my Young Leaders' Award is helping them to do it. Up and down the north of England these young leaders are using their creativity, passion and energy to transform their communities and be the change they want to see.' For example Church Walk CE Primary School asked the council if they could put out more litter bins and signs reminding people to pick up litter and clean up dog fouling. The council visited the class and promised to put signs and bins in the churchyard and surrounding area. Young leaders have learned decision-making, compassion, interpersonal and organising skills, and being listeners to others.

Pray: for more schools to catch the vision and become involved in this scheme. (Job 21:11)

More: <http://www.archbishopofyork.org/articles.php/3348/archbishop-of-yorks-young-leaders-award-reaches-over-300-schools>

▣ Prime Minister Modi's visit to UK - and Indian religious intolerance

India's prime minister will visit London this week amid protests that his Hindu nationalist party has created an atmosphere of religious intolerance and impunity. Narendra Modi will have lunch with the Queen and address a joint session at Parliament with David Cameron. The highlight of his trip will be his rally at Wembley Stadium where 60,000 fans are expected to give him a rapturous welcome. Among all the pomp and ceremony, up to £10 billion-worth of deals are expected to be signed over the course of his stay. Meanwhile, David Cameron has been urged to highlight the increase in attacks on religious minorities since Narendra came to power. Christian Solidarity Worldwide reported 600+ cases of violence against religious minorities in that period and an estimated 43 deaths. An atmosphere of religious intolerance is further stoked by systematic attacks against the Dalit community (untouchables in India's caste system). Many Dalits are Christians.

Pray: for straight talking from David Cameron - demonstrating that trade does not trump human rights and democracy. (Eph.4:25)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/prime.minister.modi.visits.the.uk.amid.rise.of.religious.intolerance.and.extremism.in.india/70179.htm>

▣ Russia now a UK national security threat

Britain's security services published a new list of what they believe are the greatest threats to the country. International terrorism from IS and the threat of returning UK jihadists from Syria are among the top concerns and Russian aggression, in particular Putin's 'willingness to display force', has unnerved Britain's defence network, according to the security draft. The report, which will be released by David Cameron on 23 November, mentioned Russia's aggression in Ukraine and the country's soaring military budget as cause for worry. Britain's defence experts are also known to be concerned over

Russia's increased involvement in the Middle East. Russia's increasing isolation in international politics (the G8 met last year as the G7, excluding President Putin from the table), increased military spending and apparent willingness to display force in the face of universal condemnation suggest the next five years could well see an escalation of the Russian threat to security.

Pray: for wisdom and discernment for Britain's security services as they monitor world events. (Dt.4:6)

More: <http://www.express.co.uk/news/world/617913/Britain-Russia-major-national-security-threat-ISIS>

EUROPE

■ Russia: athletics scandal

The World Anti-Doping Agency said the London 2012 Olympics were 'sabotaged' by inaction by the world athletics governing body and the Russian federation who turned a blind eye towards Russian athletes with suspicious doping profiles. The IAAF president, Sebastian Coe, is seeking approval from IAAF council members to consider sanctions of provisional and full suspension and removal from future IAAF events by the Russian Athletics Federation. Interpol is now co-ordinating a global investigation into widespread doping in track and field after the former WADA president spent eleven months investigating systemic cheating and cover-up within Russian athletics and the sport's governing body. He has recommended that five middle-distance runners and five coaches be given lifetime doping bans. The Russian government is accused of complicity in widespread doping and the cover-ups exposed in the 323-page report. On Tuesday, the head of the Russian Anti-Doping Agency acknowledged there is a problem but insisted his country is moving forward to address it.

Pray: for further appropriate investigations and prosecutions, and for trust in the sport to be rebuilt. (Pr.19:1)

More: <http://www.theguardian.com/sport/2015/nov/09/wada-iaaf-russia-dick-pound-banned>

■ Spain: Catalanian parliament backs split from Spain

Catalonia's regional assembly voted on Monday in favour of a resolution to split from Spain, energising a drive towards independence and deepening a standoff with central government in Madrid. The declaration, which pro-independence parties in the northeastern region hope will lead to it splitting from Spain altogether within eighteen months, was backed by a majority in the regional parliament. The fraught debate over Catalan secession has railroaded campaigning for December's national elections away from the country's lopsided emergence from an economic crisis. Parties favouring independence from Spain won a majority of seats in the Catalan assembly in September. But the Spanish constitution does not allow any region to break away, and the centre-right government of Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy has repeatedly dismissed the Catalan campaign out of hand. The Catalan parliament wants a democratic process of massive, sustained and peaceful disconnection from the Spanish state.

Pray: that this political war for independence will remain peaceful and be resolved. (1Ti.2:1,2)

More: <http://www.france24.com/en/20151109-catalonia-spain-secession-independence-breakaway>

■ Vatican properties allegedly used as saunas and massage parlours

It is alleged that properties in Rome owned by the Vatican are being run as saunas and massage parlours, sometimes used by Catholic priests, according to leaks in the Italian press. The reports also allege that church-owned buildings are being let at low rents to powerful friends and allies. The Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith is cited as owning hundreds of high-value properties in central Rome, worth hundreds of millions of euros. Two years ago the Vatican bought a £16m stake in a Rome apartment block which housed Europe's biggest gay sauna, according to the Independent. There were many reports of priests using the sauna with the website promoting special 'bear nights' that included a video of a man stripping off to change into clerical vestments. Another report said that Vatican-owned properties in Rome are operating as places where priests pay for sex. See also: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/vatileaks-scandal-vatican-properties-used-as-brothels-and-massage-parlours-where-priests-pay-for-sex-a6729251.html>

Pray: for Pope Francis to obliterate every area of suspected sin in the Holy See. (1Jn.2:15-16)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/vatican.properties.used.as.saunas.and.massage.parlours/70285.htm>

WORLDWIDE

■ Israel: Palestinian divisions

The Palestinian political scene has yet to agree on the nature of the confrontations taking place with the Israelis since early October. Some observers define them as an intifada, while others call them 'peaceful' popular uprisings, and a third group believes they are protests against Israel's police raid on the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Palestinian forces and organisations include Hamas (a Hebrew word which means violence), Fatah (which means conquering), Islamic Jihad (jihād means struggle), the PFLP (a secular Marxist-Leninist revolutionary socialist group favouring a one-state solution), and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (which maintains a paramilitary wing called the National Resistance Brigades). They all appear to want to continue this 'intifada' until it achieves its objectives - which the various groups can't agree on. The choices include ending Israel's Al-Aqsa Mosque policies, Israel returning to negotiations with the Palestinian Authority, and Israel stopping West Bank settlement activities.

Pray: for God to be a fortress for his people and for his enemies plans to fail. (Is.17:12,13a)

More: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/11/palestinian-intifada-disputes-objectives.html>

■ Middle East: Obama and Netanyahu talk about unrest and security

Increased military aid to Israel and prospects for peace with the Palestinians were discussed at a friendly meeting between US president Barack Obama and Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu earlier this week. 'We do believe it's very

important,' said Ben Rhodes, Obama's deputy national security adviser, 'that in an uncertain security environment we are signalling our long-term commitment to Israel and its security, and are designing a package that is tailored to the threats and challenges that Israel will be facing over the course of the next decade.' Obama and Netanyahu also discussed the fresh wave of Israeli-Palestinian violence that began two months ago and has spread across Israel (see above). Officials said that Obama no longer believes that a Palestinian state can be achieved before 2017. Netanyahu said he still hopes for peace, two states for two people, with a demilitarised Palestinian state and recognition of the Jewish state's right to exist.

Pray: for Israel to depend on God and not man. Pray for wisdom for Israel's and America's leaders. (Pr.3:5)

More: <http://www.voanews.com/content/iran-israel-violence-on-agenda-for-obama-netanyahu-talks/3049705.html>

■ Myanmar: historic vote

Myanmar president Thein Sein congratulated Aung San Suu Kyi's opposition party on its success in Sunday's polls. Ms Suu Kyi has written to the leadership requesting talks on national reconciliation, but the president's spokesman has delayed any meetings until after the final results are announced. Correspondents say Ms Suu Kyi is treading carefully despite her landslide victory. The NLD won elections decisively in 1990 - only for the result to be nullified and Ms Suu Kyi placed under long-term house arrest. The ruling military-backed Union Solidarity Development Party - which won the last, widely criticised election five years ago - has only won 5% of the seats being contested. A quarter of seats are reserved for the military. An anti-persecution charity has called on Myanmar's military government to accept the will of the people in the country's first free election for a quarter of a century. See also: <http://www.premier.org.uk/News/World/Christian-advocacy-charity-urges-Myanmar-military-government-to-respect-the-people-after-historic-vote>

Pray: for the military to respect the result and the country to move forward into new a political system that respects democracy, human rights and religious freedom. (Job.17:9)

More: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-34784291>

■ Bible translation into every language

In many areas of life, we are challenged to balance speed and accuracy - for example medical researchers searching for the quickest path to a cure with the fewest side effects. When it comes to Bible translation, speed and meaningful accuracy are fundamental principles that undergird the work. Translators have an incredible sense of urgency to ensure that all people can access the gospel message, and take very seriously the spiritual responsibility to ensure that each new translation accurately relays the Scripture's full meaning and spirit of the gospel. Please pray for all those engaged in the balancing act of delivering the Bible in a new language as quickly as possible while ensuring that the accuracy of God's Word is captured. Technology has allowed translators to make huge leaps forward in accelerating the process. Pray for all who develop cutting-edge software that not only safeguards Bible translation, but also provides immediate access to collaboration tools of historical, archaeological, and linguistic value.

Pray: for all who are working on Bibles for unreached people groups. Pray for the end-time harvest of millions who will read and hear of God's love for the first time in their own language. (Mt.24:14)

More: <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2015/november-web-only/every-tribe-every-nation-mast-translation.html>

■ Turkey: EU criticisms of human rights and democracy

The European Commission has called Turkey to address urgently significant failings on human rights and democracy. An annual report on Turkish prospects for EU membership says there have been serious setbacks in the past two years on freedom of expression. It also says that the independence of the judiciary had been undermined and that new laws run against EU standards. The report's publication comes at a time when the EU needs Turkey's help in trying to control the refugee crisis. Turkey's ministry for EU affairs called the comments unfair and excessive. The BBC's Brussels correspondent said the key findings are a direct criticism of Turkey's powerful president. In Turkey there are now ongoing and new criminal cases against journalists, media writers and social media users. There is intimidation of journalists and media outlets as well as authorities blocking websites without a court order. All these are of considerable concern.

Pray: for a reinstatement of freedom of speech and a removal of unnecessary security measures in Turkey. (Ps.5:6)

More: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-34774624>

■ Syria: two-year IS siege broken by Syrian army

Syrian soldiers fought their way into an air base in northern Syria on Tuesday and freed hundreds of military personnel. A military source close to the government said the army was securing the Kweires air base in Aleppo Province, where soldiers and officers have been under attack since 2013. It is the most high-profile victory for Syria since Russia launched an air campaign on 30 September. State television broadcast live footage from the air base of an emotional fatigue-clad reporter announcing the news, played victory songs and ran archive footage of military exercises. 'We, the heroes of Kweires, are now celebrating with our brothers this victory,' one of the freed soldiers told state TV. 'We dedicate this victory to President Bashar al-Assad and we promise him we will continue fighting until all of Syria is liberated. We will not kneel to Daesh,' he said, using an Arabic name for Islamic State.

Pray: for continued regaining of territory lost to insurgents during almost five years of conflict. (1Co.15:57)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/two.year.isis.siege.broken.by.syrian.army/70250.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