

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

■ Singer and boxer share their faith

Canadian singer Justin Bieber turned a pop concert into a megachurch service when he shared why he loves God so much. After riding his skateboard into the arena at the start of the show, he sang a number of songs. Then Bieber sat on a stool next to Judah Smith, the man described as his pastor, and more or less preached. He credited God for helping him back onto his feet after a string of widely-publicised troubles. Meanwhile, Filipino boxing champion Manny Pacquiao and his wife visited Israel and shared on social media how it had impacted their faith. Underneath photos they wrote, 'Live your life in a way that brings honour and glory to God' and 'Because God is love, He gives us the opportunity to share His love with others'. His wife posted her reflections on the Garden Tomb, asking people to consider the crucifixion and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. See <http://www.christianheadlines.com/blog/christian-boxer-manny-pacquiao-and-wife-share-scripture-on-social-media-while-touring-israel.html>

Praise: [God for Pacquiao and his wife, and for Bieber's transparent awakening and image change. \(Ro.1:16\)](#)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/justin-bieber.turns.los.angeles.concert.into.megachurch.service.as.he.shares.why.he.loves.god.so.much/71215.htm>

■ UK spending review - tax credits protected and no police budget cuts

Chancellor George Osborne has surprised critics by doing a U-turn on tax credit cuts and also vowing to protect police budgets in his spending review. Millions of low paid families will not now see their benefits cut in April. Rather than phasing the cuts in, as he had been expected to do, he decided the 'simplest thing' was 'to avoid them altogether', even though it would mean missing his own target for overall welfare spending in the early years of this Parliament. This announcement was followed by the surprise decision not to cut police budgets, amid security concerns sparked by the terror attack in Paris. This declaration was met with disbelief and 'euphoria' among senior police officers, according to the BBC's Danny Shaw.

Praise: [God for answered prayers, and that the official state of the country's finances is improved. \(Is.41:10\)](#)

More: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-34915218>

BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ Cameron calls for airstrikes against IS in Syria

Prime Minister David Cameron told MPs on Thursday it was time to join airstrikes by other nations against Islamic State militants in Syria, saying Britain cannot 'subcontract its security to other countries'. He needs to persuade several MPs in his

own Conservative Party and some in the opposition Labour Party to back his cause if he is to win Parliament's backing for military action. Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee criticised extending airstrikes into Syria earlier this month, saying that without a clear strategy to defeat the militants and end the civil war such action was 'incoherent'. However since IS claimed to have killed 130 people in Paris, some MPs who had been reluctant to launch new strikes in Syria have increasingly felt action was needed to protect Britain from such attacks. Cameron's response to the committee's objections was, 'We do not have the luxury of being able to wait until the Syrian conflict is resolved before tackling IS'. See also this week's Prayer Alert World article, for a different opinion.

Pray: for God to halt IS's supply lines, and to release financial support and manpower; also to give wisdom to our politicians as they ponder this new phase of developments. (Ps.10:12)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/cameron.calls.for.air.strikes.against.islamic.state.in.syria/71741.htm>

■ Alarm voiced over ban on Lord's Prayer

Pressure is mounting on cinema advertising chiefs to reverse a ban on an advert featuring the Lord's Prayer. The cinema chains, Odeon, Vue and Cineworld, banned the one-minute film earlier this week in case it 'offends' non-Christians. In it the Archbishop of Canterbury and members of the public recite the Lord's Prayer. It was due to be screened throughout the week before Christmas and was given a Universal certificate by the British Board of Film Classification and approved by the Cinema Advertising Association. However the cinema chains said it could be 'offensive' to movie-goers. The Church of England is considering legal action, saying it was the victim of religious discrimination by Digital Cinema Media, which handles adverts for the cinema giants. Now politicians, including David Cameron, describe the ruling as ridiculous. Stephen Fry, a critic of religion, said it was 'bizarre, unfair and misguided', while Boris Johnson condemned it as outrageous. Watch the ad at: <http://www.justpray.uk/>

Pray: that the cinema agencies will bow to pressure, change their mind, and allow the advertisement to be shown. (Mt.6:10)

More: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/23/cinema-ban-for-lords-prayer-ad-is-ridiculous-says-cameron>

■ Iain Duncan Smith's comments on terror and the faith of politicians

Iain Duncan Smith, the Work and Pension Secretary, says that after the Paris terror attacks, 'people need to know there is something else in their lives', and that politicians need to be more open about their faith. He feels that MPs are 'very wary' about the role of religion, and added: 'Everywhere, faith is a natural discourse. In Italy, nobody would get bothered about faith being involved in politics. I think the political class in Britain is kind of ridiculous about talking about faith.' He also said that he has the 'highest respect' for faith-based charities which tackle alcohol abuse and other deep-rooted social problems.

Pray: for the United Kingdom's secular society to wake up to their need for God in their lives. (Mt.24:14a)

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/12015059/Paris-terror-attacks-show-importance-of-faith-Iain-Duncan-Smith-says.html>

■ Jeremy Hunt and junior doctors in talks to avert strikes

Hopes are rising that a series of strikes by junior doctors can be averted as their leaders and the health secretary hold talks at ACAS to try to settle their dispute. Negotiations to find a compromise agreeable to both sides over a new contract have begun - the first formal face-to-face discussions in thirteen months between representatives of the British Medical Association, NHS Employers, and Department of Health civil servants. As recently as last weekend Hunt had ruled out direct talks without preconditions between the two sides, despite NHS bosses and senior doctors making it clear privately that he should be more flexible to avoid industrial action.

Pray: for both sides to agree a way forward. (Ro.8:28)

More: <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2015/nov/25/junior-doctors-strike-jeremy-hunt-agrees-to-acas-talks>

■ Alarming scale of steroid abuse in Welsh rugby

UK anti-doping figures reveal that Welsh rugby players constitute 34% of all sportspeople serving drugs bans. An ex-player told BBC Wales he is surprised more people have not been banned, but WRU chief Martyn Phillips says he is 'not overly concerned'. The player, who would not be named, said, 'It's totally off-the-scale. I think people are probably blind to it and if the truth came out there would be a lot more players who are banned from playing.' An anti-doping expert said it was easy for cheats to avoid being caught because some drugs leave the body quickly. Seventeen Welsh rugby union and league players, from grassroots to semi-pro, are currently banned, with the majority found to have traces of anabolic steroids in their systems. In a survey of one hundred rugby union clubs, fifteen players said they had used a performance-enhancing drug, but only five had been drug tested.

Pray: for improvements in anti-doping technology to apprehend all cheating sportspersons. (Pr.11:1)

More: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-34902105>

■ Talking Jesus: New Year prayer call

The Evangelical Alliance, HOPE, and the Church of England are launching a time of prayer from 31 December 2015 to 3 January 2016 in response to the game-changing research about perceptions of Jesus published earlier this year, 'Talking Jesus'. The three organisations have collaborated on resources to encourage churches and individuals to pray during watch-night services on New Year's Eve and on the first Sunday in 2016 that more people would come to understand better the hope that is in Jesus. The research showed that an increasing number of people in the UK have little understanding of who Jesus is. Christians are being encouraged to respond in prayer to the publication, as well as to embark on a long-term commitment to changing the story in the UK, so that people might meet Jesus, love him and follow him. Resources include a video to play at the prayer events, a Talking Jesus New Year prayer, and a leaflet to equip congregations to pray.

Pray: for churches and prayer groups up and down the country to catch the vision and pray. (Ex.15:2)

More: <https://www.eauk.org/church/stories/talking-jesus-new-year-prayer-call.cfm>

■ Don't approach Synod as a place of suspicion and conflict

On Tuesday, at the beginning of the tenth Church of England General Synod, Archbishop Justin Welby used his presidential address to say he had two fears for the Synod. 'If I might begin with the worst,' he said, 'it is that we approach this Synod as a place of suspicion and conflict. To use Pope Francis' phrase, we cannot come together in a "hermeneutic of conspiracy"'. The Archbishop said the system of Synod suggested one side must win and the other lose, but this was not the case. 'If any lose, we all lose. If any win, we all win. The Church must not be ashamed that it has its arguments in public, it is healthy and good.' He cited the Church's discussions on sexuality as a successful way Christians were able to discuss a controversial issue in a respectful way but he accepted the next five years of Synod offered 'enormous challenges to the future of the Church'.

Pray: that members would build together, listen, hear and be faithful to Jesus Christ. (Eph.4:1-4)

More: <http://www.premier.org.uk/News/UK/Justin-Welby-Don-t-approach-Synod-as-a-place-of-suspicion-and-conflict>

EUROPE

■ Climate Change Summit in Paris

The twenty-first session of the Conference of the Kyoto Protocol will take place from 30 November to 11 December 2015, in Paris. The preliminary list of speakers (139) includes all the leaders who have registered to deliver a statement at the Leaders' Event on Monday, the first day of the summit. Due to the number of speakers, two meeting rooms will be available for delivery of these statements, and the list is divided into two segments - morning and afternoon. Even then, it will be necessary to limit the duration of each statement to three minutes. An alliance of Catholic development agencies advocating protection for the world and its people from the impact of climate change will also meet in Paris, even though the French government has cancelled public rallies in association with the summit, citing security concerns. See: <http://www.catholicerald.co.uk/news/2015/11/24/catholic-groups-to-attend-climate-summit-despite-paris-attacks/>

Pray: that Catholic organisation representatives will be heard as they lobby delegates. Pray that, through the many voices and agendas, God will be in every decision and direct the paths of the event. (Ps.32:8)

More: <http://newsroom.unfccc.int/paris/>

■ MEPs strongly criticise Bahrain's human rights record

Following the release of a Human Rights Watch (HRW) report assessing the human rights situation in Bahrain, MEPs are calling for an urgent rethink of relations between the EU and the Gulf states. Ten detainees interviewed by HRW had been subjected to electric shocks, suspension in painful positions, forced standing, extreme cold, and sexual abuse. They reported that government interrogators boasted of their reputation for inflicting pain on detainees. MEPs said that given the unrest and violence in the Middle East, it is key that Bahraini authorities accept their responsibilities and work on democratic reform, calling on the Bahraini government to investigate all allegations immediately. All of the EU's 'international partners' must adhere to the same high standards of human rights as the EU, and any accusations of torture must be taken seriously. HRW said there is still a 'culture of impunity' among security forces, which has not yet been tackled.

Pray: for the Bahraini government to react responsibly to these reports, and for Bahrain's pro-democracy movement to establish free speech. (Ps.38:22)

More: <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/news/meps-strongly-criticise-bahrains-human-rights-record>

WORLDWIDE

■ Israel: the battle against terror

During the first thirty days of the new Jewish year which began on 13 September, there were 778 terrorist attacks in Israel. Fourteen Jewish people were murdered in these attacks, 167 were seriously wounded, and twenty are fighting for their lives. Since the beginning of October stabbings, shootings and vehicle rammings have killed another 22. Over 80% of the perpetrators came from the West Bank. Neither Mahmoud Abbas nor the Palestinian Authority (PA) have condemned any of these hundreds of acts of terror against innocent Jewish civilians. Instead they have encouraged them with PA-produced videos such as 'Nothing is as Sweet as Martyrdom' which encourages Palestinians to murder Jews (see link below). This week new measures were introduced in the West Bank to tackle Palestinian terror attacks. IDF soldiers have set up checkpoints surrounding Hebron, Hawara, and Nablus, and around villages adjacent to the Etzion settlement bloc. See also: <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/202514#.VISULHbhCM8> and Palestinian video link: <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/203522#.VISR33bhCM9>

Pray: that God will continue to watch over the land, strengthen His people and swiftly bring about justice. Thank Him for averting many terror attacks in answer to prayer. (Ps 121:4)

More: <http://www.timesofisrael.com/more-checkpoints-troops-arrests-west-bank-crackdown-gathers-steam/>

■ India: Nellore floods prayer request

Nellore is a city on the banks of the Penna River in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. The city is the fourth most populous settlement of the state, well known for its agriculture and aquaculture. There have been horrendous floods in Nellore district for two weeks, with a calamitous impact on families and industry, destroying homes and farming equipment. A pastor living there writes, 'Please pray for our state as there is lot of flooding. My family and many more relatives are stuck in this situation. My nephew is crying every day. I don't know how many people are crying like that; they are unable to come out of that place and we cannot reach them. Please watch and please pray for us. No power for three days, many lack food. As we help and support them please stretch your blessed hands towards these people who have lost everything due to floods.'

Pray: for God's power and strength and authority to pour through each individual, giving support and hope of renewal to those who have suffered. (Ps.108:5,6)

More: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Vijayawada/floods-in-nellore-may-hit-seafood-exports-this-year/article7918457.ece>

■ Turkey: will anybody support the Turkmen?

Turkish-Russian relations, already tense due to Moscow's military engagement in Syria to aid President Bashar al-Assad, took a dangerous turn when a Russian fighter jet was shot down by the Turkish military. Ankara said the plane had violated Turkey's airspace, a claim that Russia is rejecting. The incident follows angry statements in recent days from Ankara aimed at Russia for hitting targets in an area where Turkmen fighters armed and supported by Turkey are fighting the Syrian army, which is supported by Russian fighter jets. A fuming Russian President, Vladimir Putin, warned Ankara after the downing of the jet that there would be 'significant consequences,' signalling Turkish-Russian ties changing radically as Turkey faces Moscow's increasing resolve to fight anti-Assad groups supported by Ankara. Ankara insists that there is no IS presence where Turkmen are located. The Turkmen are ethnic Turks who have lived in the region since the 11th century.

Pray: for God's spirit to brood over the area, removing death and war and protecting Turkmen families. Pray against a further escalation of Turkish-Russian discord. (Eph.1:21)

More: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/11/turkey-russia-downing-of-russian-jet-ties-take-serious-turn.html>

■ Mali: Christians vulnerable following attack

Gunmen shouting Islamic slogans attacked the Radisson Blue Hotel, frequented by foreigners, early last Friday. After Malian commandos stormed the hotel, a large number of hostages were freed. Although it is suspected that the attack was sparked by terror attacks on Paris last week, it is important to keep in mind that the attack happened within the context of insecurity that has been lingering since the 2013 Islamic rebellion. A fragile peace accord reached in June 2015 has so far not succeeded in brokering lasting stability. An Open Doors worker said, 'Some of the Christians who were forced to flee the North during the 2013 rebellion have ventured back, but have found it very hard to cope with the destruction of their properties and the ongoing anxiety. However, as this attack clearly shows, Christians in the South also continue to face insecurity.'

Pray: for God's sustaining grace for our brothers and sisters as they face uncertainties. (Ps.3:8)

More: <https://www.mnnonline.org/news/malis-christians-vulnerable-following-attack/>

■ Syria: the West has betrayed Christians

The head of the Syriac Catholic Church has accused Western governments of betraying Christians in the Middle East, and said it was 'a big lie' to suggest Islamic State could be defeated with airstrikes. Syriac Patriarch Ignace Joseph III Younan said, 'All Eastern patriarchs, myself included, have spoken out clearly to the West from the very beginning: be careful, the situation in Syria is not like Egypt, Tunisia or Libya. It's much more complex, and conflict here will create chaos and civil war. They disagreed, saying the Assad regime will fall soon. That hasn't happened and five years later, innocent people, especially Christians, have no support. The West has betrayed us.' The West is now stepping up attacks after terrorists killed 130 in Paris and dozens in Beirut, but the patriarch said airstrikes were ineffective at targeting IS because its religiously-indoctrinated operatives are well financed and well armed, and have infiltrated local populations.

Pray: for the church to continue to defend justice. Pray for solidarity amongst Middle East Christians. (Ps.7:9b)

More: <http://www.catholicerald.co.uk/news/2015/11/23/islamic-state-cannot-be-defeated-by-airstrikes-says-syrian-patriarch/>

■ Somalia: Islamic extremism and tribal antagonism

The militant Islamist group al-Shabaab has publicly declared that it 'wants Somalia free of any Christians'. Those who are suspected of being Christians are frequently killed on the spot. Christians must keep their faith hidden. Believers are isolated, and meet in small groups. They cannot own Bibles, as this could put them in danger. Islam is enshrined as the state religion in the nation's constitution, making apostasy illegal, and those who attack Christians do so with impunity. A believer says, 'We are experiencing horrible things here every day. It appears that I live in hell on earth. I wish I could just stand inside a church and cry out in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.' The government is barely functional and the nation is largely governed by a tribal system. Somalia has become a safe haven for Islamic radicalism. But one Somali Christian has regular contact with camel-herders and has given them a radio tuned to a Christian station.

Pray: for future stability, religious freedom and more Christian media broadcasts. (Ps.22:31)

More: <http://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/worldwatch/somalia.php>

IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE WORLD PRAYER CENTRE, BIRMINGHAM, UK

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