

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

■ Former Miss Ireland unashamed that she was healed by God

A former Miss Ireland has spoken of her divine healing after being angered by the treatment of schoolboy Joshua Martin who spoke publicly about his faith that God was going to heal him. Rachelle Liggett told the Belfast Telegraph how she had been diagnosed with an acute form of leukemia at the age of ten. ‘I was then sent to the haematology ward of the Children’s Hospital in Belfast, where I was to live for the next few months. However, during prayer, when the hand of a Christian was laid on my head, I could feel my fingertips and legs and toes tingle with pins and needles. I believe this was the cancer exiting my body. After this, everything in my life changed. My appetite returned and I started to put on weight. The doctors never again found a cancerous cell in my body.’

Praise: God that more people are seeing miracles today and hearing testimonies from those who have been healed physically, emotionally and spiritually. (Lk.10:17, 18)

More: <http://www.premier.org.uk/News/UK/Former-Miss-Ireland-unashamed-she-was-healed-by-God>

■ Christians in politics developing their faith

In recent months a Bible study group for all parliamentary staff has started on Monday lunchtimes, meeting for 45 minutes in Portcullis House. Christians in Parliament have also started a new political theology reading group which meets once a month to help develop a deeper understanding of the interaction between theology and politics. Additionally, a series of videos of MPs and peers sharing what being a Christian means to them and how it impacts Parliamentary work has been prepared for distribution. In Matthew 5:13-16 Jesus calls on his disciples to be ‘salt’ and ‘light’ in the world. We can praise God that our current Christian politicians are working towards bringing out the flavours and colours of God in our politics, giving a voice to the voiceless and helping those in need.

Praise: God for the Christians who have chosen to step up and be decision-makers in our politics. (Pr.31:8)

More: <http://www.christiansinparliament.org.uk/>

BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ A call to pray for the United Kingdom

The World Prayer Centre has made an urgent call for God’s people to stand in prayer for the UK. The nation has entered a new phase of conflict with IS, and is particularly vulnerable to terrorist attacks and fear around Christmas and New Year when people gather in large numbers. WPC believes we are in a wider time of shaking for our nations. ‘God is challenging

His Church. It is time for all God's people to pray, to be alert, to protect, guard and bless our communities and nation.' WPC have prepared a helpful guide for use in prayer groups, churches and personally, asking for God's mercy for our communities and for the UK to turn to Jesus - the Prince of peace. Many people gathered to pray between 12 and 14 December, and we are being encouraged to continue to intercede over Christmas and beyond. To download the prayer guide, click the 'more' button.

Pray: for God to fill us with His perfect love so that we can walk with Him and not in fear. Ask Him to pour out His blessing on this nation so that thousands will have a revelation of Jesus this Christmas. (Joel 2:1)

More: http://www.worldprayer.org.uk/images/PDF/Call_to_pray_for_the_UK.pdf

▣ Vulnerable young people homeless

Three months ago the Guardian reported, 'Homeless young people are being given bus tickets to allow them to sleep on London's night buses as the number of young people sleeping rough in the capital soars.' Young and Homeless research into the situation in 2015 says the problem is growing across the UK. This week police launched an appeal to find three runaway London schoolgirls, 13-year-old Fardowsa Hassan, and sisters Abir Salah, 16, and Ahlam Salah, 15. It is thought that the trio have not left the country, but are sleeping on buses or elsewhere on the transport network. Young people make up nearly half of those accessing homeless accommodation services. They are one of the most vulnerable groups in society. Without the right support homelessness can have a serious impact on a young person's life. See <http://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/201512%20-%20Young%20and%20Homeless%20-%20Full%20Report.pdf>

Pray: for more manpower and funding to support homeless young people and dysfunctional families. (Ps.94:17)

More: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/police-appeal-to-find-three-missing-north-london-schoolgirls-a6775176.html>

▣ 'Stop the Traffik' on Christmas chocolates

This month, people will be feasting on Christmas chocolates and buying sweet treats for friends and family. Christmas is a time of year when chocolate sales soar and it means big business for chocolate companies! But for the many children trafficked and made to harvest cocoa beans, December is just another month of back-breaking, dangerous forced labour. Consumers have the power to make a difference and Stop the Traffik are urging us all to join their Christmas in campaigning to protect vulnerable people by buying chocolate that is traffic-free.

Pray: for more people to send the traffic-free message to manufacturers via their purchasing power. (1Sa.2:4)

More: <https://crm.stopthetraffik.org/civCRM/mailling/view?reset=1&id=468>

▣ Christian pastor's trial: moments of theology, ideology and comedy

The three-day trial of Pastor James McConnell had moments of theology, ideology and comedy. At first people in the public gallery were struggling to hear the defence barrister, so the judge asked him to speak up, saying, 'Pretend you're a preacher.' There were 120 supporters of the 78-year-old pastor filling the public gallery. He was on trial for words he used about Islam in a sermon to his congregation that was later published online. Although he described Islam as satanic, heathen and spawned in hell, the prosecution focused on his words, 'People say there are good Muslims in Britain. That may be so - but I don't trust them', which were considered a breach of the Communications Act. The judge will decide whether the sermon broke the law or not and deliver his verdict on 5 January.

Pray: for District Judge Liam McNally, as he weighs the evidence. (Pr.21:15)

More: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-35115471>

▣ Using Star Wars to spread the gospel

As people flock to see the latest episode of Star Wars, The Force Awakens, churches are hosting Star Wars-themed Christmas services, making Star Wars-themed videos and dressing up as Star Wars characters. This is a good example of what the church was born to do: take what is culturally relevant and use it to talk about Jesus. All Hallows Church in London is led by self-professed Star Wars geek Rev Cris Rogers. It is home to a Jedi training school and has a monthly Star Wars-themed family service. He says, 'The rebel alliance fought against the empire, and kids are asked how - as Christians - we can live in the world and challenge it.' However 'the force' is not a good analogy because the Holy Spirit is a person, not a strange cosmic thing.

Pray: for this creative approach to cause people to consider the message of the gospel seriously. (Jn.14:26)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/pop.cultural.appropriation.how.the.church.is.using.star.wars.to.spread.the.gospel/73800.htm>

▣ 66 mission agency staff must leave UK

One of the world's largest mission agencies will lose 66 staff from its British office after UK Visas and Immigration officials removed its licence to sponsor visas. Following an inspection by officials, Operation Mobilisation can no longer bring in missionaries from outside the European Union to staff its UK office: non-European employees and volunteers must leave the UK within two months. Expectations and requirements on visa sponsors have increased dramatically in recent years, and unfortunately, as with many similar organisations, OM can't keep up with those requirements quickly enough. They respect the decision, and will realign protocols and internal procedures to ensure they are in full compliance with current legislation; then they will reapply for their licence in twelve months' time. Last year YWAM had 300+ missionaries and their families removed from Britain, and in 2014 Wycliffe Bible Translators had the same challenge.

Pray: that this decision will have no detrimental effect on the work of OM. (Acts 5:42)

More: <http://www.christianitytoday.com/gleanings/2015/october/66-missionaries-leave-uk-operation-mobilisation-om-visas.html>

■ Christian asylum seeker appeals to Prince Charles

Sarmed Ozam, a 24-year-old Iraqi Chaldean Christian forced to flee Mosul by IS, has appealed to the Prince of Wales for help with his failed asylum application. The Home Office rejected his bid for safety and told him to 'go to Baghdad'. Mr Ozam said, 'I can't go back to Iraq, I will be killed there. If I go there I would be a number in the subtitles of the news, no one would care about another one on the list of killed people. I would be left dead in the street for the animals.' At an Advent reception hosted by Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Mr Ozam told Prince Charles how his family had left the besieged area after militants left them with nothing. He thinks that the heir to the throne believes his personal story was really important. 'Prince Charles promised to pray for me', he said.

Pray: for Mr Ozam and his family, and for all refugees living in fear of being ousted from safe havens. (Ps.59:1)

More: <https://www.premier.org.uk/News/UK/Christian-forced-to-flee-Mosul-appeals-to-Prince-Charles-for-help-with-asylum-application>

EUROPE

■ Kosovo: opposition has unsettled parliament since October

Opposition MPs disrupted the Kosovo parliament again on Monday by setting off tear gas in chambers - the latest in a series of violent incidents against the government and politicians. Over last weekend several government-owned cars were set on fire by protesters. Such incidents began after the 25 August agreement between Pristina and Belgrade to establish Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo to champion minority Serbs' interests. The three opposition parties in Kosovo's parliament strongly oppose it, claiming Serbs will have too much power. The opposition parties also reject a border agreement reached with neighbouring Montenegro in Vienna in August, through which it says Kosovo is losing territory. (Kosovo's population is predominantly ethnic Albanian. It declared independence from Serbia in 2008, but Belgrade rejected the move and still considers the breakaway territory as its southern province.)

Pray: for healing of the ethnic divide. (Ps.106:3)

More: <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/kosovo-opposition-leaders-tear-gas-parliament-again-12-14-2015>

■ Europe: trends which are opening doors for Christian witness

Operation World (OW) reports on socio-cultural trends that are opening doors for Christian witness. There is disillusionment with the emptiness of enforced secularism and hyper-modernity, leading to a new interest in spirituality and the supernatural. OW believes that, presented rightly, Jesus is of great appeal to such seekers. Due to the upheaval and uncertainty in economics and politics, civic disintegration, crime and violence, many are asking questions about morals and meaning. In some parts of Europe, militant atheism with strong anti-Christian, anti-religious rhetoric is strident and ugly enough to cause people to reconsider questions of faith and God. Christian immigration has brought the presence of dynamic and lively congregations into nearly every part of Europe. Alongside this, the influx of non-Christian religions raises the issue of the religious identity of Europe, both in history and for the future.

Pray: for an increase in faith for the Church in Europe, making Christianity a truly global belief. (Heb.1:1)

More: <http://www.operationworld.org/region/europe/owtext.html>

WORLDWIDE

■ Israel: a typical day of violence

One day's edition of the Times of Israel reported that a 39-year-old West Bank resident with 'nationalistic' motives attacked an Israeli Jew and a Palestinian resident of East Jerusalem with a hammer in two separate attacks. Also, border police officers arrested a Palestinian woman who had planned to carry out a stabbing attack in Jerusalem with a screwdriver. The police, alerted by her suspicious behaviour, they stopped her for questioning. When they found the screwdriver, she admitted that she intended to carry out a stabbing attack. Palestinians have used screwdrivers in stabbing attacks several times in recent months. Abed el-Muhsen Hassuna, a car-ramming terrorist who injured fourteen people the previous day, lived in Hebron and possessed an Israeli ID card but was also a member of Hamas. Doctors are fighting to save the foot of a baby who was one of those hurt.

Pray: for God to watch over and protect the people living in Israel, and to help those who are acting as peacemakers with their Arab neighbours. (1Sa.12:22)

More: <http://www.timesofisrael.com/the-daily-edition/>

■ Burundi: violence ignited and exploding

87 people were killed when violence broke out at three military sites in Burundi last Friday. Eight of the dead were security officers, and 49 people were captured. Residents who found a further 34 bodies in the street accused police of taking revenge. Unrest has hit Burundi since April with continued protests after President Pierre Nkurunziza announced his decision to seek a third term in office following a disputed July election result. On Sunday the US government urged its citizens to leave Burundi immediately. African Union military observers are already on the ground assessing the situation. Hundreds have been killed since April, mostly in Bujumbura. 'We can observe today in Burundi a clear manipulation of ethnicity by both the government and the opposition,' the UN's special adviser on genocide told the BBC last week. Activists have gone into hiding, fearing attack. See: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-35083823>

Pray: for a peaceful resolution and an end to divided populations and the spread of hatred. (Ps.9:13)

More: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/12/dozens-dead-streets-burundi-capital-151212133807154.html>

■ Global: climate change summit reaches a deal

After days of nonstop negotiations in Paris, nations united around a final document that is effectively a blueprint for how the world will tackle global warming. Everything from greenhouse gas targets to finance has been discussed. The document contains a number of unresolved items, which will need to be addressed in the future. Scientists have cautiously welcomed the text. An atmospheric consultant said at the time of the document's preparation, 'Perhaps some of the more ambitious options have not reached the final document, but the fact that these targets are being seriously discussed is hugely positive.' See also: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-35084374>

Pray: that in 2016 leaders of businesses, commerce, and governments will seriously work towards implementing positive change in their particular sphere of authority. (Dt.28:12)

More: <http://blogs.wsj.com/briefly/2015/12/12/5-things-to-know-about-the-paris-climate-deal/>

■ USA: churches welcome refugees against governors' wishes

Over half of US state governors closed their state's borders to Syrian refugees after the Paris terrorist attacks, but Christians are defying orders. Their faith tells them to open their doors to the stranger. In Georgia, Johnson Ferry Baptist Church has resettled a Syrian family, despite Gov Nathan Deal. The Catholic Archdiocese of Indianapolis defied Gov Mike Pence by welcoming a Syrian family last Monday. In Ohio, Westminster Presbyterian Church will accept up to three refugee families from Syria or elsewhere. The Refugee Services of Texas, an affiliate of several Christian refugee organisations, settled six Syrian refugees in Houston and expects to settle nine more soon, despite Gov Greg Abbott and Senator Ted Cruz, who proposed legislation that would allow governors to reject refugees deemed to be a security risk. The CEO of Refugee Services of Texas said, 'We reassure all Texans that refugees are receiving a warm and compassionate welcome from staff and volunteers.'

Pray: for more Christians to be moved to put their faith into action and remind those in power that citizens have a responsibility to care for Syrian refugees. (Ps.10:17, 18)

More: <http://www.christianheadlines.com/blog/churches-settling-refugees-against-governors-wishes.html>

■ North Korea: life sentence for Canadian megachurch pastor

Earlier this year, Prayer Alert readers were asked to pray for Hyeon-Soo Lim, the leader of the 3,000-member Light Korean Presbyterian Church in Toronto. After hundreds of humanitarian trips, he was detained last January for 'intending to overthrow the North Korean government and set up a new religious state'. Detaining Christian foreigners is somewhat of a North Korean tradition, but accusing them of planning to set up a theocracy is new. We are sad to announce that North Korea has sentenced him to life in prison. According to the official Korean Central News Agency, state prosecutors argued for the death penalty against Lim in Wednesday's 90-minute trial. The defence begged for mercy, pointing to Lim as a fellow-Korean and that he readily confessed to his crimes. The Canadian government has severed consular ties with North Korea, but Sweden has an embassy in Pyongyang and does some diplomatic work for Canada.

Pray: for God to intervene through the Swedish ambassador as he advocates for Lim. (Ps.20:2)

More: <http://www.christianitytoday.com/gleanings/2015/august/north-korea-reveals-why-captured-canada-megachurch-pastor.html>

■ South Africa: three finance ministers in six days

South Africa has its third finance minister in less than a week. Pravin Gordhan was rushed into the position on Sunday night after days of confusion. Finance minister Nhanhla Nene was attempting to rein in state spending, including a controversial nuclear deal, but was fired last week and replaced with David van Rooyen, a little-known backbencher with no experience of working in the national government. The rand fell to a record low. Angry South Africans began planning marches on the presidential offices. On Sunday Mr Zuma removed Mr van Rooyen (after only four days in office) and announced that Mr Gordhan, an experienced ex-finance minister, had replaced him. It will be difficult to repair the reputational damage done by this reshuffle of one of the government's most important positions.

Pray: for changes in South Africa's government (which is noted for corruption scandals). (Ps.15:1,2)

More: <http://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21684043-investors-are-hoping-south-africas-latest-finance-minister-can-steady-ship-south?zid=304&ah=e5690753dc78ce91909083042ad12e30>

IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE WORLD PRAYER CENTRE, BIRMINGHAM, UK

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