

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

■ Theresa May: faith is 'part of who I am'

The newly appointed Prime Minister of Great Britain identifies with the Christian faith but is not likely to talk publicly about it. In 2014 Theresa May told a BBC interviewer that she valued her Christian beliefs. 'It is part of me,' May said. 'It is part of who I am and therefore how I approach things.' However, she likes the fact that faith is not discussed in UK politics as much as in the USA. 'I think it's right that we don't flaunt these things here in British politics,' she said. May told the BBC that she's a practising member of the Anglican Church. Her father was an Anglican vicar. Mrs May was officially appointed Prime Minister on Wednesday afternoon. She succeeds David Cameron and is the country's second female prime minister after Margaret Thatcher.

Praise: God for Theresa May's unashamed Christian faith. Pray that she will continue to uphold Christian values in all that she does. (2 Tim 2:15)

More: http://www.breakingchristiannews.com/articles/display_art.html?ID=18654

■ God 'allowed a shark attack for a reason'

Bethany Hamilton of Kansas City pulled off a major upset on Monday, beating some of the best surfers in the world in Fiji. Thirteen years ago, Bethany lost her left arm in a shark attack while surfing in Hawaii, but instead of shying away from the ocean, she was catching waves again just three weeks later. Bethany talked to the Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA) about how her strong faith in God helped her through the ordeal that put her on an international stage. 'In early October 2003, my mom and I started praying and asking God to use me and show me His purpose for my life. So, after the shark attack, I accepted that God allowed this to happen to me for a reason. ...I want people to see where my hope and strength comes from: Jesus Christ. And hopefully they'll consider having a relationship with God, too.'

Praise: God for Bethany's resolve and her testimony to God's faithfulness and grace. (Luke 12:8)

More: http://www.breakingchristiannews.com/articles/display_art.html?ID=18661

BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ What is the real priority?

Britain's vote to leave the European Union sent shock waves around the world. The results of the referendum brought immediate confusion and uncertainty: the Prime Minister resigned, financial markets fell sharply, the British Pound sank to its lowest level since 1985, and some are asking whether other nations might leave the EU as well. As England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Wales - the United Kingdom - struggle to find a path forward, we are confronted with the temptation to find our hope and security in a government or political system. But the hope and salvation of the British people is found in Jesus Christ alone - and at least 40% of Brits have no relationship with Him. As we watch the uncertainty unfold, we praise God for His sovereignty over both Britain and the EU.

Pray: for God's mercy on the British people, that He would soften even the hardest hearts and draw millions to Himself, to true freedom, and to forgiveness at the foot of the cross. (Jer.24:7)

More: <http://myemail.constantcontact.com/What-Brexit-teaches-us.html?soid=1112512753992&aid=LvSRRZ6iWi8#blike>

▣ Theresa May our new PM

It was widely predicted, but nobody could have foreseen the rapidity of the events which led to Theresa May taking over from David Cameron as Prime Minister of this country on Wednesday. We thank God for her willingness to serve the nation at this time. In her opening speech, she promised to lead a 'one nation' government that worked for all, not just the 'privileged few'. She added, 'That means fighting against the burning injustice that if you're born poor you will die on average nine years earlier than others'. Pray for her as she seeks to shape policies which will enable such promises to be fulfilled.

Pray: that God will bless Theresa May with great wisdom and insight as she works on her priorities as Prime Minister. (1 Kings 3:9a)

More: <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2016/15-july/news/uk/vicar-s-daughter-in-no-10-will-need-our-prayers>

▣ New Cabinet members

Theresa May has already named all her major Cabinet members. Perhaps the biggest surprise is the appointment of Boris Johnson as Foreign Secretary. Amber Rudd, the new Home Secretary, is the highest-placed woman. Philip Hammond, defence secretary for the last two years, has become Chancellor of the Exchequer. Arguably the most important task is given to David Davis, who campaigned to leave the EU and now has become the 'Brexit secretary', responsible for negotiating that departure. Theresa May is expected to name several more women to important posts.

Pray: for all the new Cabinet members, as they take up their new responsibilities. Pray that as further ministerial appointments are made, every position will be decided according to God's purpose and will. (Prov. 21:1)

More: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-36785814>

▣ Chance meeting led to ordination

Catherine Okoronkwo, who was ordained deacon at Lichfield Cathedral on 26 June, is now serving at Streetly, near Sutton Coldfield. She puts her decision to become a priest down to a chance meeting in 2006 with the Archbishop of York, John Sentamu, in the Birmingham church where she worshipped. 'I was introduced to him, and as I shook his hand he just said: "Have you thought about ordination?" There was no preamble, no discussion: that was it. I was "Oh? Gosh!" I hadn't really thought about it, It was just so bizarre.' Ms Okoronkwo, who is 44, and the daughter of a Nigerian UN diplomat, worked as a teacher for a time before applying for ordination. She sees that meeting with the Archbishop as a key moment, adding, 'I think I needed to have a bit of life experience first, but I think I will make a better minister for having had that experience.'

Pray: for God's great blessing on Catherine, and the many other CofE deacons who have recently been ordained. (Jer. 17:7-8a)

More: <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2016/8-july/features/features/sentamu-sowed-the-seed-in-her-mind>

▣ Early warnings of serious diseases

People with persistent coughs, or who get out of breath doing things they used to be able to - such as running for a bus or mowing the lawn - should see their doctor, a new campaign warns. Public Health England wants to raise awareness of the warning signs of lung conditions - including cancer - and heart disease, because finding them early makes the illness more treatable. The campaign is predominantly aimed at older men and women, who are most at risk of coronary heart disease, the single biggest cause of death, accounting for more than 56,000 deaths in England each year; lung cancer, accounting for about 28,400 deaths; and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), accounting for 24,000 deaths. PHE estimates 1.7 million people in England could have one of these conditions without knowing.

Pray: for those who are responsible for our health - which means both medical specialists and ourselves. (1 Cor. 3:16)

More: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-36785774>

▣ US church singers compared to IS and Nazis

A US church choir has been compared to neo-Nazis and Islamist terrorists by a newspaper columnist. Shona Craven, who writes for the Herald, said the King's Project singers were part of a church that 'ticks every box on the Ugly Religious Fundamentalism checklist', because of their pro-marriage and pro-life views. The choir, which is on a tour of the UK, said that they have found people very receptive to their message of hope in Jesus Christ, and asked for prayer that they would be bold in sharing the Gospel. A spokesman for Waverley Mall in Edinburgh, where the choir sang on Saturday, did not think the choir sang anything that would upset anybody. He added: "I was unaware of their views, and my views are completely different. But the plaza was packed, and it was well-received."

Pray: that the choir will be able to continue presenting the Gospel message of hope in the rest of their tour. (Heb.11:1)

More: www.christian.org.uk/news/church-singers-compared-to-isis-nazis-by-columnist/

▣ URC to allow same-sex marriages

The United Reformed Church (URC) has overwhelmingly voted to allow same-sex marriages to be held in churches. The 240-21 vote took place last Saturday during the URC's General Assembly. A two-thirds majority was needed for the passage of the proposal. 'Today the URC has made an important decision at which some will rejoice and with which others will be uncomfortable', URC general secretary John Proctor said. 'Those of our churches who now wish to offer full marriage services to same-sex couples are free to do just that, and those churches who do not wish to are not compelled to.' But Rev Malcolm Hanson, though admitting the matter was puzzling, said that we cannot simply ignore what Scripture says. 'We

have commonly understood marriage to be based on the Genesis model, endorsed by Jesus and confirmed by nature', he wrote.

Pray: for great wisdom for URC ministers who have to decide whether to conduct same-sex marriages in their churches or not. (Prov. 8:1)

More: <http://christiannews.net/2016/07/12/uk-united-reformed-church-votes-to-allow-same-sex-weddings-in-houses-of-worship/>

EUROPE

■ Scores killed in Nice attack

On Thursday night, a lorry ploughed into crowds who had gathered to watch a traditional Bastille Day firework display in Nice, killing at least 84 and wounding many others. Hundreds of people were knocked down by the lorry, according to local reports; when it was eventually brought to a halt, the driver opened fire on people in the crowd, but was eventually shot dead by police. He was a local man, originally from Tunisia, with a history of petty crime but no known links to terrorists. In an unrelated incident, nine cars were set on fire in Brussels, causing a massive blaze, but it is not thought that there was any terrorist involvement. See <http://www.smh.com.au/world/brussels-bombings-fears-of-terror-attack-in-belgium-capital-20160713-gq5bgp.html>

Pray: for those who have the unenviable task of maintaining security in different European countries. (Is. 21:11)

More: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-36801671>

■ Italy: train collision kills at least 25

A head-on collision between two trains in southern Italy left at least 25 people dead and dozens more injured, authorities said. The trains crashed on a stretch of single track through an olive grove between the towns of Corato and Andria in Puglia on Tuesday. 'Tears and pain for the victims and their families. But also a lot of anger. We demand clarity on what happened in Puglia this morning,' said Italy's prime minister, Matteo Renzi. Three carriages were torn apart by the impact between the two trains. Rescue operators warned the death toll could rise as some of the roughly 50 injured were in a serious condition. Authorities urged blood donors to go to local hospitals. The crash happened at around 11.30am on a hot summer's day. 'It looks as if there has been a plane crash,' said the mayor of Corato, Massimo Mazzilli, who published photos of firemen working through the wreckage.

Pray: for those who have suffered bereavement, for comfort and grace. Pray for the doctors and surgeons as they treat the many injured passengers. (Ps. 147:3)

More: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/12/several-killed-as-two-trains-collide-in-southern-italy-puglia>

WORLDWIDE

■ Russia: 7,000 churches fast and pray about persecution law

Russian President Vladimir Putin signed an anti-terrorism law, but for the country's many churches, the signature sparked a demand for prayer and fasting. The bill toughens punishment for acts deemed to be terrorism and for the organisation of 'mass unrest'. It would also introduce prison sentences of up to a year for those who fail to report such crimes. There are also severe restrictions and penalties on visiting Christian speakers (from other countries) to churches or house-churches, and strict regulations on proselytising / missionary activity and the development of buildings into churches. Citizens are obliged to report their neighbours' religious activity. In response, 7,000 Russian churches have come together to cry out to God with prayer and fasting. Hanny Haukka, of Great Commission Ministries, says, 'Russia is closing down in an awful way. The new law is in total conflict with the purpose and the task given to the church by the Lord. The law will send the church back into Soviet-era Communist persecution.'

Pray: For protection for the Russian Churches and house churches; that the outworking of the great commission will not be hampered by this law. (Rom. 8:35)

More: <http://www.charismanews.com/world/58295-7-000-churches-fasting-praying-over-terrifying-new-persecution-law>

■ South Sudan: ceasefire in capital

South Sudan's vice-president has withdrawn with his troops to outside Juba but is not planning for war, his spokesman said on Wednesday. Forces loyal to longtime rivals Vice-President Machar and President Kiir had fought street battles in the capital for five days until a ceasefire was reached on Monday. The events mirror those of December 2013, when a two-year civil war began after Machar, sacked from his post as Kiir's deputy, withdrew his forces from Juba and launched a full-scale insurgency. 'We had to move away from our base (in Juba) to avoid further confrontation,' Machar's spokesman James Gatdet Dak in Nairobi told Reuters. It was not clear what caused the latest rift between the two men who have long jostled for power, even before South Sudan's independence from Sudan in 2011. Gatdet Dak said Machar would stay away from Juba until ceasefire details were worked out. See also: <http://www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2016-07-13/saving-the-world-s-newest-nation>

Pray: for a lasting settlement to this deep-rooted situation. Pray also for the many issues affecting South Sudan, including the economy, displaced people, poverty and widespread hunger.

More: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-southsudan-security-idUSKCN0ZS19V>

■ Venezuela: army deployed

Venezuela's military has taken control of five ports in an effort to guarantee supplies of food and medicine. In a decree, President Nicolas Maduro has ordered the army to monitor food processing plants, and co-ordinate the production and distribution of items. Venezuela is going through a deep economic crisis despite having the world's largest oil reserves. Basic products are increasingly hard to find and many say they struggle to feed their families. The Venezuelan Bishops' Conference said the rise of the military is a 'threat to tranquillity and peace'. Mr Maduro says the measure is to fight the

'economic war' he claims is being waged against his government by political foes and businessmen, with US backing. But the opposition says the government has mismanaged the economy, and has called for a referendum to oust the president. Venezuela grows and produces very little except oil and has historically relied on imports to feed its people. Oil prices have plummeted leaving the government with a shortfall of i

Pray: that food, medicine and essential supplies will be made available to all. Pray for economic stability and an end to corrupt practices and illegal trading. (Gal. 6:2)

More: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-36776991>

■ Japan vote strengthens PM's goal to change constitution

Tokyo voters have helped prime minister Shinzo Abe move closer to securing the support he needs to revise a pacifist constitution that has been in place since American occupiers created it in 1947. An official count on Monday morning showed the governing coalition and its allies had captured two-thirds of the seats in the upper house of Parliament, the number required to proceed with the constitutional revision. Despite a weak economy and divided public opinion on the expanded role for Japan's military that Mr Abe is seeking, his Liberal Democrats and their allies again won a commanding majority in the upper house. 'This is the people's voice letting us firmly move forward,' Mr. Abe said. Whether Mr. Abe will be able to pursue that ambition - to overturn the constitutional clause that calls for the complete renunciation of war - remains to be seen. While partners in the governing coalition have indicated some support for amendments, different groups have divided opinions on which clauses they want to change. Still, the election outcome is sure to give Mr Abe more leverage.

Pray: for peaceful and stable international relations to prevail in the region. (James 3:18)

More: http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/11/world/asia/japan-vote-parliamentary-elections.html?_r=0

■ China 'has the right' to air defence zone

A senior Chinese official has said China has the right to set up an air defence zone over territory it claims in the South China Sea. The statement from Vice-Foreign Minister Liu Zhenmin comes a day after an international tribunal said there was no legal basis for China's claims. China has overlapping claims with other countries to reefs and islands across almost all of the South China Sea. It has already said it will ignore the tribunal's findings. President Xi Jinping has said China's 'territorial sovereignty and marine rights' in the seas will not be affected by the ruling 'in any way'. On Tuesday, in the Hague, the tribunal ruled against China in a case brought by the Philippines. It said China had violated the Philippines' sovereign rights and had caused 'severe harm to the coral reef environment' by building artificial islands.

Pray: for the situation to be resolved peacefully; for the preservation of the delicate reef environment. (Matt 5:9)

More: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-36781138>

■ IS numbers drop, but now around the world

Classified data obtained by NBC News shows that the number of foreigners fighting for IS in Syria and Iraq has dropped by half in the past year, but those fighters who have returned to their native countries - or have never left home - are now launching attacks across the globe. Earlier this month, IS fighters killed hundreds with attacks in Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh and Baghdad. Last month a suicide attack killed 45 people at Turkey's main international airport. The data indicates that the number of foreigners fighting for IS in Syria and Iraq is now 12,000, about half what it was in early 2015. 145 people from the USA are currently estimated to be fighting in Iraq and Syria, along with 1,200 French nationals and 335 from the UK. And a stunning thirty percent of those who have fought in the war zone have now returned to their home countries - a rate of 3,000 IS adherents per month.

Pray: that the work of the security services will continue to thwart the efforts of terrorists; against the attempts to radicalise young and vulnerable people. (Ps. 78:53)

More: <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-uncovered/isis-numbers-drop-fighters-now-attacking-around-world-n604206>

■ Obama balances respect and frustration

On Tuesday President Barack Obama emotionally hailed the bravery of America's police forces at a memorial for five officers gunned down in Dallas, but warned that the despair of minority communities who see the criminal justice system weighted against them must not be ignored. In a soaring address, one of the most searching discourses on race in his presidency, Obama said that a week of violence and racial tension had exposed the deepest fault-lines in American democracy and acknowledged that the events of a traumatic week left the nation shocked and fearful. 'I know that Americans are struggling right now,' Obama said at an interfaith service in Dallas, also attended by former President George W Bush. Yet he struck the consistent theme of his political career since bursting onto the scene at the 2004 Democratic National Convention: that Americans can bend the curve of history toward justice. 'We are not as divided as we seem. I know that because I know America,' Obama said, adding that the way the residents of Dallas of all races came together after the tragedy that unfolded last week proved his point.

Pray: that the concerns of minority groups will be addressed; for impartial and fair treatment by the police and judicial systems. (Lev. 19:15)

More: <http://edition.cnn.com/2016/07/12/politics/dallas-shooting-obama-george-w-bush/index.html>

IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE WORLD PRAYER CENTRE, BIRMINGHAM, UK

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