

PRAYER ALERT...



‘If my people....will humble themselves and pray’ 2 Chr 7:14

Informing and equipping Christians - Online and to Inbox

www.prayer-alert.net

editor@prayer-alert.net

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Donations

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■ Praise Reports

- ✦ [Incredible church growth](#)
- ✦ [Pakistan: great church growth](#)

■ British Isles & Ireland

- ✦ [Middle East campaign launched](#)
- ✦ [Brexit battle](#)
- ✦ [Police corruption](#)
- ✦ [Archbishop tells watchdogs, ‘practise what you preach’](#)
- ✦ [Refugee children and UK response](#)
- ✦ [‘The equality law needs to change’](#)
- ✦ [Winter night shelters](#)

■ Europe

- ✦ [Spain: storm in a petrol pump?](#)
- ✦ [Hungary: government influence on media](#)

■ Worldwide

- ✦ [Iraq: what you need to know about Mosul](#)
- ✦ [Israel: Arab peacemakers imprisoned by Palestinian Authority](#)
- ✦ [Turkey: entry ban for Christian student](#)
- ✦ [Ukraine: bitter winter brings great suffering](#)
- ✦ [Yemen: the toll of war](#)
- ✦ [Pakistan prayer letter](#)

PRAISE REPORTS

■ Incredible church growth

Where is the greatest church growth today? In Iran. Even though Open Doors USA includes it in the top ten hardest countries to be a believer, last year Iran saw a 19.6% increase in the number of Christians, more than any other country. Authorities are working hard to eliminate Christianity, particularly Muslim conversions, and most registered churches are closed. But Iran house churches are growing the fastest. Iranian Christians say the greatest missionary there, the greatest evangelist they’ve had, was the Ayatollah Khomeini. When he took power he converted Iran to the Islamic Republic saying, ‘We’re going to run our country according to the Qu’ran.’ More than thirty years later Iranians are rejecting Islam precisely because of that philosophy. However, we need to pray for protection and comfort for Christians in prison for their faith, and for the deep hunger for the Bible to continue.

Praise: God for the perseverance, courage and bold witness of Iranian Christians. Praise him also for all the missionaries and Bible translators who have paved the way for this Christian revolution. (Ps.40:3)

More: <http://www.interserve.org.uk/iranian-church-growth>

■ Pakistan: great church growth

A missionary writes, ‘During a prayer seminar in one Christian church about 300 people attended. It poured with rain all day, and with it God’s spirit really descended. They were challenged to begin 24/7 prayer. They now have prayer each evening from six until midnight, many early morning prayer meetings, 24/7 prayer one day a week and once a month three days devoted to 24/7 prayer. There was training for children and now their prayer groups are expanding into other villages. They had built a church to house 350 people. Now they have outgrown the church and have a congregation of 1500. They are debating if they can get the money to buy adjacent land for expansion. God is at work; miracles are taking place; people are being healed; evil spirits are being driven out. Many converts are from the majority community who now put their trust in Jesus Christ.’

Praise: God for what He is doing in this church, and for non-believers coming to Christ. Pray for their protection as this is in a very vulnerable area of the country. (Hab.3:19)

More: <https://twitter.com/prayforpakistan>

BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ Middle East campaign launched

Dozens of MPs attended a Hope for the Middle East event, hosted by Kate Green MP. They heard talks by Baroness Anelay, Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, a Syrian Christian, and Open Doors representatives. Baroness Anelay spoke on the role the UK Government plays in defending freedom of religion and belief internationally.

The important historic and future value of Christians remaining in the Middle East was discussed, as was the vital reconciliation work that Christians are doing in Syria and Iraq at a local level. The findings of the Hope for the Middle East report showed that Christians in Syria and Iraq are asking for equality, dignity and responsibility. Delegates and MPs were urged to take action on behalf of Christians and other minorities in Syria and Iraq. To read the report on the significance of the Christian presence in Syria and Iraq - past, present and future - click the 'More' button.

Pray: for wisdom for our political leaders as they consider how they can most effectively bring hope to the Middle East, and for all who attended the event to work wisely on behalf of Christians. (Pr.8:6-8a)

More: <http://www.opendoorsuk.org/campaign/documents/H4ME-report.pdf>

■ Brexit battle

Last week Labour lobbied 170 questions for the Government, all designed to throw stumbling blocks into the path of negotiations to get Britain out of the EU. As a nation we can come through this and see considerable prosperity in the future, provided we hold onto a steady negotiating path that seeks the ways of righteousness, truth and justice. Christians have a role to play in upholding in prayer all those who are involved in the negotiations. Not all of our negotiators, businessmen, lawyers or politicians are committed Christians, although some are, and we can pray that God will use their words to steer a clear path of truth and to be the most influential. God loves to use small numbers and those whom the world considers weak.

Pray: for God to lead the United Kingdom through the minefield of the Brexit battle. (Pr.28:2)

More: <http://labourlist.org/2016/10/keir-starmer-labour-will-demand-a-commons-vote-on-brexit/>

■ Police corruption

On 7 October the Scotland Yard unit dealing with sensitive police inquiries was found to be 'corrupted' by a firm of private investigators run by retired detectives who targeted former police colleagues to secure information about the progress of sensitive Met inquiries. Internal Scotland Yard documents described them as operating like 'an organised crime network'. Last week police anti-corruption investigators arrested two fellow officers from Scotland Yard intelligence, following claims of a luxury car-hire company being used to launder money and make false insurance claims. Seven others were arrested as part of the operation. The detained police are a detective constable from the Met intelligence unit, on suspicion of money laundering, fraud by false representation, perverting the course of justice and offences under the Computer Misuse Act, and a constable on suspicion of fraud by false representation. See also: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/10/06/scotland-yard-corruption-scandal-met-police-feared-officers-were/>

Pray: for investigations by anti-corruption officers from the Met's directorate of professional standards and the police watchdog to be detailed and effective, as the police investigate the police. (Pr.28:13)

More: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/sep/20/met-police-arrest-two-officers-in-anti-corruption-operation>

■ Archbishop tells watchdogs, 'practise what you preach'

Justin Welby is urging the UK's financial watchdogs to 'practise what they preach' amid concern that regulation aimed at preventing another financial crisis is weakening. The Archbishop, who sits on the advisory board of the think-tank New City Agenda, is backing its report on the need for improvements in the regulatory culture of the Bank of England, Financial Conduct Authority and Prudential Regulation Authority. The New City Agenda report warns that without this, the UK will be 'sleepwalking into the next financial crisis', and that 'crucial change' following the 2008 financial crisis 'is already being watered down'.

Pray: that suggestions made by this report into cultural change to be received and adhered to, and for improvements to be made. (Ps.73:12)

More: <http://www.cityam.com/252118/box-ticking-watchdogs-accused-allowing-uk-sleepwalk-into>

■ Refugee children and UK response

The Calais clean-up mission is accomplished. In May the Home Office confirmed that 3,000 child asylum seekers had been returned to conflict-torn countries in the past decade: today many single-minded children are back, trying for a second time. On Thursday, British charity Calais Action said 'We are begging the French authorities to actually do something about the refugee children, but nothing is done.' 1,500 minors have been processed; the remaining under-16s are in a small fenced-off 'container village'. Hundreds are to be brought from Calais in coming weeks, but one in four UK local authorities 'cannot take responsibility for them'. On 19 November the bishops of Manchester and Stockport will host a conference aiming to equip churches and communities to respond practically to the needs of refugees and asylum seekers. The Church of England said that the 'conference will help people explore how they might welcome more effectively people who have been displaced and are seeking refuge.' See:

<http://www.christiantoday.com/article/bishop.of.manchester.it.is.our.god.given.duty.to.help.refugees/99009.htm>

Pray: for youth workers to help and calm the 'up to 1,000' young people and children still in Calais; for the UK Church to play an important role in helping communities to welcome and care for refugees. (Ps.37:18)

More: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/24/uk-to-take-hundreds-of-children-from-calais-home-secretary-says>

■ 'The equality law needs to change'

Ashers Baking Company was asked to make a cake saying 'support gay marriage' but declined, saying it would compromise their Christian beliefs. LGBT activists launched a civil action against Ashers. Throughout legal proceedings Ashers repeatedly said their refusal to bake the cake had nothing to do with discrimination. On Tuesday they lost the case and said, 'We're extremely disappointed with today's ruling. If equality law means people can be punished for politely refusing to support other people's causes, then equality laws need to change. The judges accepted that we did not know Mr Lee was gay and that was not the reason we declined the order. We have always said it was never about the customer, it was about the message. The court accepted that. But now we are being told we have to promote the message even though it's against our conscience.'

Pray: for authorities to give serious consideration to conscientious objection and a business's freedom as to whom it can sell its products or services. Pray for Ashers as they consider how to proceed. (1Tm.1:3b)

More: <http://www.christianconcern.com/our-concerns/freedom-of-speech/ashers-ruling-undermines-democratic-freedom-says-bakery-owner>

■ Winter night shelters

Night shelters supported by Church Urban Fund (CUF) are to increase their provision to nearly 4,000 bed spaces this winter in response to growing homelessness. Over 800 volunteers will work in shelters in Manchester, Salford, Birmingham, Mansfield, and Great Yarmouth, backed by CUF and Church of England dioceses. Night shelters are often more than just somewhere to sleep. For example, a night shelter in Manchester offering twelve beds for seven nights a week will double the length of time it operates to six months when it opens at the end of October. Another Manchester night shelter, based in seven locations, will offer 24-hour care to homeless guests including an evening meal and bed and breakfast, with advice and support available during the day. Guests and volunteers eat together each night; sometimes they play pool or table tennis together and develop positive relationships.

Pray: for the organisers as they begin to set up these shelters. Pray that good volunteers will be appointed, able to counsel individuals taking the first steps into employment and permanent homes. (1Sa.2:8a)

More: <https://www.cuf.org.uk/blog/providing-4000-beds-to-the-homeless>

EUROPE

■ Spain: storm in a petrol pump?

Russia withdrew its request to refuel its warships in a Spanish port, so Moscow and Madrid both found a diplomatic way to get themselves off a difficult hook. However, the passions aroused by Spain's willingness to refuel Russian vessels were real, especially since this time the Russian task group was on its way - as the British Defence Secretary Michael Fallon put it - 'to bomb Syrian civilians in Aleppo'. How would it look, just as NATO defence ministers met to strengthen their forces in the Baltic, Poland and around the Black Sea, if one of their members was helping a Russian task group on its way to a conflict where many Nato governments have accused Moscow of carrying out war crimes through its indiscriminate bombing?

Pray: for European countries to unite even more in their stand against war activities / crimes. (Pr.29:4)

More: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-37779204>

■ Hungary: government influence on media

For decades Europe has maintained an exemplary level of respect for democratic standards and human rights, and has generally continued to do so in recent years despite serious economic turmoil. Nevertheless, many countries have developed problems related to their treatment of immigrants and minorities, and press freedom faces threats in a number of states. Through its presence in Brussels, Freedom House (an independent watchdog organisation) works to address these issues and to increase Europe's role in supporting the spread of democracy abroad. In response to a businessman close to Hungary's prime minister purchasing the country's most prominent opposition newspaper, Nepszabadsag, last Tuesday, Freedom House said that the action shows the government's growing influence over Hungary's media. The sale took place two weeks after its previous owner unexpectedly suspended publication, blocked its journalists' access to their emails and offices, and pulled the paper's online edition.

Pray: for continued freedom of the press in Hungary and across Europe. (Pr.6:13-15a)

More: <https://freedomhouse.org/article/hungary-sale-nepszabadsag-shows-government-influence-over-media>

WORLDWIDE

■ Iraq: what you need to know about Mosul

It was from Mosul, Iraq's second largest city, that IS took to the world stage in 2014. It is now the last major IS stronghold, so the battle for Mosul is a critical and decisive one. Thousands of lives hang in the balance: innocent civilians, Iraqi soldiers, Islamic State fighters - Jesus died for each one. What happens in Mosul directly impacts the lives and eternities of many. Up to 1.5 million civilians are still in Mosul. Up to 5,000 IS fighters also remain. Thousands of Iraqi soldiers, Kurdish fighters, and Shia militiamen are involved. It is feared that IS will use human shields and chemical weapons. Those who escape Mosul face ill-equipped refugee camps unable to provide for their basic needs. Beyond the desperate humanitarian realities, these masses are largely unprepared for eternity. Awaiting a military deliverance, most remain unaware that their only true Deliverer is Jesus.

Pray: for all in Mosul waiting for deliverance, and for God to deliver Iraq from all foreign gods (Jn.14:27)

More: <http://www.prayercast.com/iraq.html>

■ Israel: Arab peacemakers imprisoned by Palestinian Authority

Four Arab guests who came to visit Efrat Local Council head, Oded Revivi, at his 'Sukkah of Peace' last week during the Jewish festival of Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles) were imprisoned for their neighbourly act by the Palestinian Authority. They were released on the start of the Jewish holiday of Simchat Torah, after intervention by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who appealed to world leaders on behalf of the Palestinian Authority citizens who had done nothing more than act as good neighbours and who were punished by their government in response. The four were accused of 'meeting baby killers' the day after visiting the sukkah, where they sat with Jewish neighbours and talked about peace. 'Where is the intervention of human rights organisations?' Netanyahu asked world leaders. 'These groups prove again and again that they have no real interest in human rights, but are interested only in shaming Israel.'

Pray: for peaceful co-existence and good relations between such neighbours, not only at holidays but through the year. (Ps.118:15)

More: <http://www.jewishpress.com/news/breaking-news/peacemaking-arab-neighbors-freed-from-prison-for-visit-to-efrat-mayors-sukkah/2016/10/24/>

■ Turkey: entry ban for Christian student

Ryan Keating, a Christian PhD student in the department of Philosophy of Religion at Ankara University has requested prayer for his situation as his residency has been cancelled and he has been issued with an entry ban into Turkey. On 17 October Ryan returned to Turkey after a week-long trip abroad. At the airport, police took him into custody and told him that he had been issued with a life-long entry ban into Turkey. No explanation was given as to the reason for the ban despite Ryan asking for information. Ryan had Turkish residency because of his enrolment at Ankara University. Ryan's wife Ness and their children remain in Ankara, and it is not known if their residency has also been cancelled. Ryan was involved with the Ankara Refugee Ministry and is a member of Kurtulus Church. It is believed the entry ban is related to these activities, which are completely legal.

Pray: for an end to the Turkish government's crusade to remove 'undesirable' Christian individuals from spheres of influence. (Ps.119: 22,23)

More: <http://www.meconcern.org/2016/10/20/turkey-entry-ban-for-christian-student/>

■ Ukraine: bitter winter brings great suffering

The Ukraine war is entering its third year of daily bombardment. Homes, churches and businesses are ruined. The conflict is in the 'Grey Zone' between western Ukraine, held by the army, and the eastern Donetsk and Lugansk regions held by separatist forces. Those who could flee the Grey Zone have left. Those remaining are the most vulnerable - families with children, widows, the elderly, the sick, people with disabilities, and those displaced by conflict. Most factories have closed, miners have not been paid for seven months, and people can't support themselves. Life is hard. There are no government pensions or social security, and some towns lack water. In November temperatures plummet to -20°C (-4°F). People cannot afford coal or gas for heating. The winter temperatures will kill. Western Ukraine churches have provided basic crops in season - potatoes, tomatoes, cabbages and carrots. Russian churches are providing food in eastern Ukraine, prioritising elderly church members, but they do not have the resources to help all who are in need.

Pray: for immediate practical support through NGOs and local churches; pray also for the conflict to end. (Hab.1:10)

More: <https://barnabasfund.org/appeals/Christians-suffering-in-Ukraines-conflict-will-you-help-them-survive-the-bitter-winter-months>

■ Yemen: the toll of war

The Yemen war combines tragedy, hypocrisy and farce with 10,000 casualties, almost 4,000 of them civilians. The Saudis have included in their bombing targets cows, farms and sorghum – which is used for bread or animal fodder – as well as numerous agricultural facilities; funerals and markets are 'military' targets. Britain and America help the Saudi onslaughts. Theresa May has failed to say whether civilians in Yemen were killed by British bombs. This war costs Saudi Arabia over £200m a month, but Saudis cannot pay debts to construction companies. There is substantial evidence emerging that the Saudis and their coalition allies are deliberately targeting Yemen's tiny agricultural sector in a campaign which, if successful, would lead a post-war Yemen not just into starvation but total reliance on food imports for survival. Much of this would undoubtedly come from the very Gulf states which are currently bombing the poor country to bits.

Pray: for the implementation of the Geneva Conventions prohibiting destruction, removal or rendering useless objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, such as areas producing foodstuffs. (Hos.4:1a)

More: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/saudi-arabia-s-bombing-of-yemeni-farmland-is-a-disgraceful-breach-of-the-geneva-conventions-a7376576.html>

■ Pakistan prayer letter

A believer writes, 'Pakistan and India have fought three major wars over Kashmir or over water rights of five rivers flowing into Pakistan. There is a UN resolution that allows India to use the water from two of the rivers. India has built dams on two more of the rivers and is now planning to build a dam on the fifth, the Indus. Pakistan has the largest canal system in the world and totally depends on the water from these rivers for their crops. There have been droughts and starvation leading to war when the water from the rivers was cut off. The line between these two countries is the "zero line". Both countries have nuclear weapons. War is being talked about in both countries' papers and news media. War happens here when the leadership is about to fall, to divert people's attention and rally people behind them. In each country there have been calls for their prime minister to be removed.' (There is no More link for this article)

Pray: for the situation to be calmed down, and for people on both sides of the border to pray for peace. (Nu.6:26)

IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE WORLD PRAYER CENTRE, BIRMINGHAM, UK

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