

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

■ Coptic girl rescued from Islamist kidnappers

Marilyn, a 16-year-old Coptic Christian girl kidnapped on 28 June to be 'converted to Islam, then married off or sold', was released and returned to her family on 30 September after police found her in a city just outside Cairo. The city, named 10th of Ramadan, is several hundred kilometres from her village. Her village priest, Father Boutros Khalaf, found out where she was being held and notified the local police. They managed to arrest her kidnappers, Taha and his brother Gaber, and released Marilyn. She was returned to her family after 92 days. This was one of a series of kidnappings by Islamist networks. Pray that other victims will be safely restored to their families.

Praise: God for answering the prayers of Marilyn's friends and family. (1 Chronicles 5:20b)

More: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2017/10/coptic-teenage-girl-rescued-92-days-islamists-kidnapped/>

■ 40 stories of hope

'There is no one, no life, no story that is beyond God's power to love and transform', writes Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, in his foreword to the book '40 Stories of Hope'. The book was launched at Lambeth Palace at a gathering of prison chaplains and prison volunteers. Catherine Butcher compiled the book with Pastor Osien Sibanda, who contributes some stories drawn from his work in Bristol Prison. The book contains forty different stories of faith and hope from prisoners, prison chaplains, and ex-prisoners. These remarkable testimonies speak powerfully about life-changing encounters with Jesus. Readers can explore how we can all find hope in Jesus, no matter who we are. Prison chaplains will be giving copies of this book to inmates along with forty daily readings and prayers, and group sessions which can also be used.

Praise: God for the generosity of CWR and HOPE, who are sending 15,000 copies into prisons across the UK; may these books and accompanying resources be used widely. (Psalm 22:5)

More: <http://www.cwr.org.uk/store/p-2103-40-stories-of-hope.aspx#.WeychmhSyM9>

BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ Friday Focus: hunger for God's word

Isaiah 55:1: this ancient invitation to God's people to feast on God's word and His promises at a time of national despair continues to echo even today as we frantically consume perishable goods in vain. Let us be bold to draw people to the life-giving nourishment of the Scriptures, so that the deeper longings and thirst for life can be fully satisfied. (Oldi Morava, Bible Society)

Pray: Our Father, give us the hunger and the thirst for Your word, so that like the Psalmist we can all say, 'How sweet is Your promise to my palate, sweeter on my tongue than honey!' Through the life-giving transformation of the

Scriptures, may we arouse the same hunger and longing for Your word in others. Amen.

More: http://www.hopetogether.org.uk/Groups/283989/Friday_Focus.aspx

■ **Brexit: poll backs walking away**

An online poll conducted by the Observer found that British voters would back a no-deal Brexit rather than another referendum on EU membership. People are now more pessimistic about the process than optimistic. In the poll, 54% agreed that 'Brexit is a good idea in theory, but is being badly executed'. Pray for clarity, not confusion in Whitehall; pray for an end to disagreements within the Cabinet and disarray amongst backbenchers. Ask God to replace uncertainty in our politics with a double portion of wisdom and the firmness that comes from being in His will and fulfilling His purposes. May this be communicated not only to our nation but to the other EU nations with whom we are trying to negotiate an exit treaty.

Pray: for an end to any hint of ungodly political, vengeful or social agendas. (Isaiah 42:16)

More: <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/869606/brexit-latest-observer-poll-finds-voters-back-no-deal-not-second-referendum>

■ **End slavery and trafficking**

18 October was Anti-Slavery Day. 40 million people are trapped in slavery worldwide, and have no one to protect them. In many places laws against slavery are not enforced by police, so slave owners and traffickers can prey on the poor and vulnerable without fear of consequences. According to a report, UK police don't tackle modern slavery because cases are too difficult and senior officers believe the public lack sympathy for the victims. Sky news reported that 17 police forces held data on convictions for slavery; 1,265 slavery offences were reported but only 25 people were prosecuted. In the UK, slavery is not just a bad working condition. People are living under constant control and fear and facing daily physical, verbal and sexual abuse. They are trapped. The charity Hope for Justice described the current situation in the UK as 'a human conveyor belt of slavery'. See also <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/24/police-forces-failing-to-tackle-modern-slavery-in-uk-report-shows>

Pray: for the police, non-government agencies and politicians to network to end modern slavery, may all reports of slavery lead to convictions, and many lives restored. (Proverbs 31:9)

More: <https://www.awarenessdays.com/awareness-days-calendar/anti-slavery-day-2017/>

■ **NI supreme court examines abortion law appeal**

Northern Ireland's supreme court judges are considering whether abortion laws breach human rights. Currently abortion is illegal unless a woman's life is in danger or if continuing the pregnancy would cause mental or physical harm. On 25 and 26 October a number of contributors explained why they believe the law is incompatible with human rights, while others explained their opposition to any law changes. Ireland's attorney general and lawyers for the department of justice argued for the status quo. Christian politician Jim Shannon said democratic values must be upheld, amid supreme court scrutiny of the abortion laws; and the majority of people in Northern Ireland support current laws. See also the next article.

Pray: for any further discussions of changes to include the opinions of people of Northern Ireland, and for the proclamation of God's word to be included in debates. (Psalm 139:16)

More: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-41743629>

■ **Archbishops speak out on abortion**

In a statement to healthcare professionals and others involved in terminations, Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster, and his Scottish counterpart Archbishop Philip Tartaglia called for a change of attitudes, in favour of greater protection for human life. Over eight million pregnancies have been aborted since David Steel's private member's bill became law fifty years ago. Urging a period of prayer and fasting, the 2,000-word document signed by the Catholic leaders also expressed concern that there are not enough safeguards protecting unborn children with disabilities. They said there was an urgent need for parents and teachers to promote the sanctity of human life. See the previous article.

Pray: for this statement to cause healthcare professionals to think deeply about the changing attitudes of society around the sanctity of life. (Psalm 139:13)

More: <https://www.premier.org.uk/News/UK/Catholic-bishops-respect-for-pro-life-doctors-waning>

■ **Islamic finance in the UK**

Islamic finance has been welcomed uncritically into the UK. Today there are over twenty lenders in the UK offering Islamic financial services. The British government has been promoting Islamic finance for some years, and in 2014 the UK made history by becoming the first non-Muslim country to issue a sovereign Islamic bond. However, there are serious problems and concerns about Islamic finance, which is why Christian Concern have produced a booklet on the subject. Islamic finance is based on the idea that the Qur'an prohibits all forms of interest; it also aims at increasing the influence of sharia law.

Pray: for the Government, and Western financial institutions, to recognise these problems and to stop promoting Islamic finance. (Matthew 22:29)

More: http://www.christianconcern.com/sites/default/files/docs/islamicfinance_resource.pdf

■ **Recovering patients to be put in people's spare rooms?**

A pilot scheme in Essex, called Care Rooms, would have patients waiting for discharge from hospital staying with local residents who have a spare room. Increasingly, hospitals are full of patients who have nowhere to go. NHS figures show that last year 2.2 million hospital 'bed days' in England were lost due to delayed transfers of care. NHS bodies and local authorities are in preliminary discussions on the project. Chief Medical Officer Dr Harry Thirkettle said that such patients would be transferred to residential homes because they either live alone, don't have support, or have mobility issues. So someone with a leg fracture and unable to go up and down their stairs until that fracture is healed, could come and stay in ground-floor accommodation. Hosts would be paid for this service; they could earn up to £1,000 a month.

Pray: that if this goes ahead the NHS would provide wise, rigorous vetting and training of hosts, astute safeguarding and sensible support monitors in the homes. (Proverbs 2:6)

More: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/nhs-airbnb-spare-rooms-trial-patients-essex-recovery-operations-a8019746.html>

■ **Tory MP accused of McCarthyism over Brexit**

In 1947 people suspected of un-American activities were asked by Senator Joe McCarthy, 'Are you now or have you ever been a member of the Communist Party?' Recently, Conservative government whip Chris Heaton Harris asked vice-chancellors for the names of professors who favour Brexit. A number of academics think that the staunch Brexiteer's letter smacked of McCarthyism when he asked for copies of the syllabus and links to the online lectures which relate to this area. Many believe it contained an implied threat that universities would be challenged for any bias.

Pray: for free speech in universities, with open debates on every subject. (Proverbs 17:7)

More: <http://www.totalpolitics.com/articles/diary/tory-mp-accused-behaving-joseph-mccarthy-over-brexit>

EUROPE

■ **'Protect' Europe from sharia law**

Christian Concern has intervened in a case at the European Court of Human Rights, which is set to rule whether sharia law should be applied to a dispute between Greek citizens who are Muslims. The ruling will determine whether sharia law can ever have supremacy over a country's domestic law. Mrs Molla Sali inherited the entire estate of her husband when he died, under the terms of a will that he had drawn up in accordance with Greek law. Two sisters of her husband are claiming that since he was a Muslim, the inheritance should be allocated according to sharia law, adjudicated by the mufti. A ruling at this level could have dire effects on the Council of Europe, including the UK. Christian Concern said it will highlight in court that sharia law is out of line with European law.

Pray: for the rejection of any parallel legal system that can undermine current national laws of the land. (Deuteronomy 28:12)

More: <https://www.premier.org.uk/News/World/Christian-group-intervenes-to-protect-Europe-from-sharia-law>

■ **Germany's 2017 Reformation?**

31 October 2017 marks 500 years since Martin Luther rebelled against the Catholic Church with his 95 theses - the beginning of the Reformation. Today, Germany is in a tense period politically as Angela Merkel, representing the CDU/CSU 'party-union', negotiates a coalition agreement with the FDP and Greens to form a new federal government for the next four years. Meanwhile the political challenges from the EU need her attention. A Watchmen Team International prayer letter request is, 'As we remember and celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation in Germany, let us continue to pray for a "new reformation" and spiritual revival in Germany and in Europe, and indeed in all our nations.' Much has been lost in Europe and Germany because of unbelief and rejection of God. We cannot be restored by a political party or ideology: we need humble repentance before God, prayer for His solutions, and faith in His saving power. Let us station ourselves as intercessors on the ramparts like Habakkuk and trust in God's promises.

Pray: for the release of godly answers to difficult political questions. (Isaiah 11:2-3)

More: https://www.waechterruf.de/gebetsbriefe/gebetsbriefe/gebetsbrief/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=951&cHash=5da4e46f7b82f533dcfe6abb9b99be48

WORLDWIDE

■ **Syria: praying for the children**

International news outlets tell us that the Syrian crisis has created a lost generation of children. But we can pray that this generation will be found by Jesus. Mission agency Cry Out Now has prepared a 30-day prayer guide to help us pray for Syrian children. Its vision is especially that other children will pray for them. God sees children's faith when they pray; often it is very powerful! Our God is a God of hope, and His desire is that out of the turmoil and chaos of the Syrian crisis, He will have a people that belong to Him.

Pray: That this resource will be widely circulated, and that many families, churches and Christian youth workers will use it. (Proverbs 23:18)

More: https://www.cryoutnow.org/uploads/7/3/5/6/73561751/syrian_childrens_us_letter.pdf

■ **USA: recent instances of corruption**

In this fallen world people in positions of authority break laws. The following are instances of corruption in a three week period. Four Baltimore police detectives distributed heroin. A congressional staffer organised fraudulent money laundering schemes. A deputy secretary of state committed perjury. A Detroit deputy chief of police committed bribery and conspiracy. A Navy comptroller accepted illegal gratuities. A state judge dismissed cases in exchange for personal benefits. A Philadelphia judge and a witness made false statements to the federal election commission. Audio evidence in a federal investigation was tampered with for financial gain. A construction company paid \$1 million in bribes for Atlanta contracts. A Drug Enforcement Administration special agent obstructed justice, committed perjury and other crimes; a former Task Force officer was also charged. A Pine Bluff man stole \$1 million intended to feed hungry children. A Vigo County sheriff's deputy committed fraud. Corruption damages the economy, reputations of businesses and of those fighting for justice.

Pray: for leaders to resist temptation, and for wisdom for those investigating crimes. (Matthew 6:13)

More: <https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/public-corruption/news>

■ **Pakistan: policemen charged with murdering a Christian schoolboy**

In a highly biased legal system where Christians are normally denied fair trials, the family of a Christian youth killed by police may actually receive justice. Six officers were charged with murder after they dragged Arslan Masih out of his schoolroom, intent on revenge. He had successfully fought a Muslim boy who had been bullying him, and one officer, the

boy's uncle, found it unacceptable that Arslan had stood up to his nephew. Arslan was regularly bullied and in this instance fought in an attempt to stop the daily torment and attempts to convert him to Islam. He is not the first Christian to have died in Pakistan's police custody, but it is the first time it has happened with many witnesses.

Pray: for justice to be done in the forthcoming trial. Pray for progressive changes to policing structures and monitoring, particularly for minorities and minors. (Psalm 51:6)

More: <https://www.britishpakistanichristians.org/blog/murdering-police-officers-arrested-and-charged-with-murder-for-killing-christian-school-boy>

■ **Iraq: Christians ponder options after Kurdish independence vote**

Iraqi Christians are divided over whether their areas in northern Iraq should be a part of Kurdistan, the Iraqi central government, or an entirely new autonomous area. The Chaldean Catholic patriarch, in an interview on 16 October, expressed his concern that the Kurdish crisis would put the Christians' presence in Iraq at risk. He said the current conflict in the disputed areas between Baghdad and Erbil would impede the Christians' return to their areas, and prompt them to rush to leave their country for good. He said they should unite and engage in dialogue to preserve the Christian component in Iraq. Nevertheless, this appeal may not gain much traction because of great differences of opinion, particularly after the Kurdish independence referendum on 25 September - see the Prayer Alert article at <http://www.prayer-alert.net/worldwide-pa-site/item/9814-iraq-kurds-vote-for-independence>.

Pray: for Christians, the indigenous people of the area, to be protected; for Joseph Saliwa, a Christian member of Iraq's parliament, and for a God-inspired new start for Iraq's politics. (Psalm 51:12)

More: <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/10/christian-iraq-minorities-kurdistan.html>

■ **First official sentenced in US FIFA scandal**

Former Guatemalan soccer federation official Hector Trujillo, arrested in December 2015 in Florida, has become the first person to be sentenced in investigations into corruption in FIFA. He had accepted almost \$200,000 in bribes from a sports marketing company. A further forty football and marketing executives have been accused. Many of the charges involve bribes paid around the organisation of regional tournaments and World Cup qualifying games. Prosecutors in Switzerland have also been investigating, and FIFA has conducted internal enquiries.

Pray: for this 'tip of the iceberg' sentence to lead to more convictions and a complete cleansing of international football and other sports where people cheat and accept bribes. (Genesis 30:33a)

More: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-41757309>

■ **Columbia: conflict over coca crops**

Cultivation of coca, the base ingredient for cocaine, is booming in Colombia. The government tries to slash production by employing hundreds of people and police officers to destroy crops, but armed gangs and drug traffickers oppose them. People have died in recent clashes over coca; others have been injured by landmines laid to scare people away from destroying coca plants. The minister of foreign affairs blamed coca growth on the scheming of drug-trafficking gangs and peasants planting more coca to take advantage of the new substitution initiatives under the peace accords. However, the government should be offering peasant farmers better incentives to grow alternative crops. After 200 years of reforms and many billions of pesos invested, the same inequality in agriculture persists. There is a lack of political will on the part of the state to make the peasant farmers' economy viable. See <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2017/04/coca-production-rise-colombia-170419130227958.html>

Pray: for land equality in one of the most unequal countries in the world, for new laws to end the takeover of land in conflict-ridden areas by large landowners, and laws that give justice to the poor. (Psalm 9:16)

More: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/10/deadly-clashes-colombia-destroys-coca-crops-171025150023316.html>

■ **USA: child brides**

The BBC's America First series reported on Angel, who was 13 when her mother forced her to marry and start a family. 'I felt like a slave,' she says of her childhood. Zimbabwe, Malawi and El Salvador have recently banned child marriage, but it remains legal in the USA - and half of states have no set minimum age below which you cannot get married. Recently the Independent reported that in the last fifteen years, more than 200,000 children were married in the USA. The minimum age for marriage is usually 18, but there are exemptions - such as parental consent or pregnancy - which allow younger children, sometimes as young as ten, to tie the knot. See <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/200000-children-married-us-15-years-child-marriage-child-brides-new-jersey-chris-christie-a7830266.html>

Pray: for policymakers and politicians across the United States to recognise the health and social issues involved in child marriages and make changes where they need to be made. (Psalm 103:6)

More: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/world-us-canada-41727495/why-does-the-us-have-so-many-child-brides>

IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE WORLD PRAYER CENTRE, BIRMINGHAM, UK

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