

# PRAYER ALERT...

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

Informing and equipping Christians - Online and to Inbox

[www.prayer-alert.net](http://www.prayer-alert.net)

[editor@prayer-alert.net](mailto:editor@prayer-alert.net)

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## PRAISE REPORTS

### ■ Created for a purpose

God has a purpose for each one of us, something unique that He calls us to respond to. Dallas Derksen thought he already had his plan, but then realised that the Lord had another path for him and his family. He faithfully followed God’s calling, and is now leading the MAF team in Mongolia, a vast and beautiful land that is difficult to travel in, with extremely cold and turbulent winters. MAF light aircraft support the work of a small but growing Church, development agencies and government bodies across Mongolia. They provide inflight patient care, training for local doctors, and enable NGOs such as Reaching the Light to offer physical, speech and education therapy to children. Dallas says, ‘Our plane also becomes an air ambulance as we carry out many emergency airlifts for the sick and injured.’

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**More:** <https://www.maf-uk.org/place/mongolia>

### ■ Iraq: victory parade

On 9 December, Iraqi forces recaptured the last areas still under IS control along the Syrian border and secured the western desert. This ended the war against the militants, three years after they had captured about a third of Iraq’s territory. The following day a military parade in Baghdad’s heavily fortified Green Zone celebrated the final victory, with prime minister Abadi looking on as troops marched in formation, their bodies spelling ‘victory day’ in Arabic. He announced that 10 December would be an annual national holiday. However In his victory speech he did not mention the Peshmerga, who played a big part in the fight against IS. Instead he hailed the Iranian-trained and backed PMF Shiite militias, many of whom are loyal to Iran.

**Praise:** God for the end of this chapter in Iraq’s history. Ask Him to crush any aggressive tribal friction or guerrilla unrest that may extend hostility in the region. (Psalm 44:7)

**More:** <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-parade/iraq-holds-victory-parade-after-defeating-islamic-state-idUSKBN1E407Z>

## BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

### ▣ Friday Focus: Christmas outreach

In a world of instant results, it's good to remind ourselves that the journey of faith is a long one for most people. Let's make a decision today that, 'short time or long', we will use all the opportunities that Christmas brings to care, invite and pray for those we know to come to know Jesus. (Mark Greenwood, National Evangelist for Elim Churches, HOPE Leadership Team)

**Pray:** Dear Lord, I pray for opportunities to share my faith with someone over this Christmas. I pray that their heart will be 'strangely warmed' and that they might consider You over the Christmas season. Help me to know what events would be best for them and how I can help them along their journey towards You. (Acts 26:27-28)

**More:** [http://www.hopetogether.org.uk/Groups/283989/Friday\\_Focus.aspx](http://www.hopetogether.org.uk/Groups/283989/Friday_Focus.aspx)

### ▣ Intercessor Focus: Advent for refugees

This week, as we look forward to Christmas, we remember our Saviour who was born in a stable to parents who were forced to flee their home country. This week in the United Kingdom there are an estimated 118,995 refugees who were born on a different continent and forced to flee their home country. They are experiencing uncertainty about their future, and many have no knowledge of the true meaning of Christmas. In the festive buzz leading up to the 25th, we can pray that many will have divine appointments with Christ, and will hear about and believe in the Father who loved them so much he sent His Son to earth just for them. May these 'foreigners' living in an unfamiliar culture find hope and a future living in God's family, growing and flourishing as Jesus leads them.

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**More:** #

### ▣ Archbishop urges Christmas 'ceasefire' in Brexit dispute

Justin Welby called for a Christmas truce in the increasingly bitter Brexit row. He called for a 'ceasefire' on insults and personalised attacks as the process of leaving the EU continues. His intervention came after Dominic Grieve was accused of 'treachery' after the Government was defeated in a Brexit legislation vote. Conservative rebels have been subjected to intense criticism from newspapers as the EU Withdrawal Bill goes through the Commons. He said, 'In Christmas 1914 there was a ceasefire. It would be very good to have a ceasefire from insult and the use of pejorative terms about people at this time. As a country, we have a future ahead of us, we have made a clear decision about Brexit. How we do it is a question for robust political argument, but personalised attacks have to be avoided.' See also next article, 'Spiritual Brexit battle'.

**Pray:** for a united political leadership in their attitude to the future, even if divided on policy. (Luke 12:58a)

**More:** <https://www.expressandstar.com/news/uk-news/2017/12/14/archbishop-of-canterbury-urges-christmas-ceasefire-in-brexit-dispute/#TjGsZI7eseukcRfU.99>

### ▣ Spiritual Brexit battle

Theresa May, David Davis, and the negotiating team showed tenacity and skill to achieve breakthrough in the Brexit negotiations, despite derogatory comments by political opponents and anti-Brexiteers. This significant step recognised that Britain will leave the EU in 15 months' time, with or without a trade agreement. Then on 13 December an amendment was thrown out, meaning an even more compressed timescale to pass secondary legislations to implement Brexit. The next day Shadow Brexit secretary Sir Keir Starmer demanded assurance that government will not overturn that decision. The battle goes on. But the God of Creation holds the nations in his hands. The Brexit battle is primarily a spiritual battle, and evidence of this has been seen as powerful personalities and media conspire to undermine this agreement. See also <http://prophecytoday.uk/comment/editorial/item/913-brexit-breakthrough.html>

**Pray:** for God in His mercy to guide the destiny of the UK, direct and inspire our leaders. (Jeremiah 6:16a)

**More:** <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/blog/live/2017/dec/14/brexit-eu-summit-commons-defeat-not-going-to-stop-brexit-says-government-politics-live>

### ▣ Bishops in the House of Lords

Twenty-six C of E bishops have reserved seats in the House of Lords, with the right to debate and vote on changes to the law. Recently the Archbishop of Canterbury led a debate on education, in which three other bishops spoke about values, schools, early years, further education, and skills. Bishops also spoke in debates on the autumn budget, and in response to Government statements on Zimbabwe, the social mobility commission, and terrorism. They asked questions about social housing in rural areas, and rough sleeping. In the House of Commons the second church estates commissioner answered questions from MPs on her bill to enable mothers to have equal status on marriage certificates, and on religious minorities in Egypt. Our bishops' words have an influence on Westminster, so pray for God's Spirit to fill each one of them and spill out in all that they say and do.

**Pray:** for the Lord to move with great authority through the House of Lords. (Deuteronomy 10:17)

**More:** <https://churchinparliament.org/2017/12/08/week-in-westminster-4th-8th-december-2017/>

### ▣ The Church and royalty

According to the National Secular Society, Prince Charles's accession to the throne could trigger a national debate about the relationship between the Church of England and the state, providing an 'opportune moment' to make the case for

disestablishment. Debate about whether an established, privileged 'state church' is appropriate in an increasingly multi-faith and secular society is seen by many as off-limits while the Queen remains monarch. But the society's report says Charles's coronation is likely to throw up pressing questions about the institutional links between church, monarchy and parliament, claiming that the disestablishment of the church is now necessary and inevitable. Only two countries in the world, Britain and Iran, have religious leaders in their legislatures by right. Pray for the continuation of a monarchy crowned and anointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury at Westminster Abbey.

**Pray:** for God, through His church, to continue to hold the keys of authority of our monarch and our nation. (Jeremiah 10:7)

**More:** [https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/dec/10/prince-charles-ascension-time-for-debate-on-disestablishment-says-report?CMP=share\\_btn\\_tw](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/dec/10/prince-charles-ascension-time-for-debate-on-disestablishment-says-report?CMP=share_btn_tw)

#### ■ The Church and mental health

More people are reporting consistent unhappiness, with women more likely to do so, an NHS survey has found. The Royal College of Psychiatrists said women are more likely to bear the brunt of domestic and caring responsibilities. Almost a quarter of 45- to 54-year-olds are mentally ill, but numbers drop as women get older. 16% have severe problems past 65, and 14% at 85. Christians are recognising the need to reach those with mental health diagnoses, but often those in the church with these diagnoses suffer in silence. Having heard that the joy of the Lord is their strength or that they need only pray more to be healed or that happiness will accompany the faithful, many who suffer from mental illness keep their diagnosis a secret. Pray for all those in need of counselling and pastoral care, and for Christian counselling services to be known about more widely. See also <https://www.acc-uk.org/news/prayer-diary.html>

**Pray:** for the ongoing work of the Association of Christian Counsellors to develop and champion Christian counselling in many more ways. (Psalm 43:3)

**More:** <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-5178261/Women-unhappy-men-entire-lives.html>

#### ■ Christian teacher's transgender row continues

Please remember Joshua Sutcliffe, the Christian maths teacher facing discipline for 'misgendering' a student: he is now taking his employer to court after being dismissed for gross misconduct. See <http://www.prayer-alert.net/british-isles-ireland-pa-site/item/10008-christian-teacher-disciplinary-hearing>

**Pray:** for a school culture that gives appropriate emotional support to children through puberty. (Genesis 1:27)

**More:** <https://us2.campaign-archive.com/?u=bed173cc9adfcad1e0e442a35&id=e341375923&e=354f1ab5aa>

## EUROPE

#### ■ Finland: monitoring Palestinian education

EU officials supervise and fund the Palestinian Authority (PA) education system. A series of Helsinki talks examined the new PA curriculum and agreed that the new textbooks stir up further radicalisation and hatred. They concluded that radicalisation is persistent throughout the curriculum, grooming children for martyrdom and jihad war, with a fundamentalist worldview. 'This curriculum is not only a catastrophe for Palestinian youth but also for the reputation of the Finnish education system, as the curriculum was reviewed under the supervision of Finnish experts and officials,' said the spokesperson for the EU consultations. An elementary mathematics book asks, 'If the number of martyrs from the first intifada is X and the number of martyrs from the second intifada is Y, what is the total number of martyrs?' In basic physics, Newton's law of gravity is explained by a picture of a young Palestinian aiming a slingshot at an Israeli officer. See [http://www.impact-se.org/wp-content/uploads/PA-Curriculum\\_2017-Grades-5-11.pdf](http://www.impact-se.org/wp-content/uploads/PA-Curriculum_2017-Grades-5-11.pdf)

**Pray:** for European governments to promote peace in the Middle East by making their support to the Palestinian Authority conditional on ending radicalisation by school textbooks. (Proverbs 19:18)

**More:** [https://gallery.mailchimp.com/ffd99da83edd4244458b59317/files/077507a9-17a7-4cdd-b82a-739f340aff1a/Canopy\\_33\\_english.pdf](https://gallery.mailchimp.com/ffd99da83edd4244458b59317/files/077507a9-17a7-4cdd-b82a-739f340aff1a/Canopy_33_english.pdf)

#### ■ Juncker and wiretapping scandal

The European Commission president's informal manner at EU meetings has been criticised. He denies accusations that he has a drink problem. Now he must now take urgent steps to explain his role in an illegal wiretap scandal. In 2013 Jean-Claude Juncker resigned as Luxembourg prime minister after his intelligence chiefs were accused of tapping phones, bugging politicians and keeping 13,000 secret files. He denied any involvement, but was dragged back into the scandal after fresh claims that members of his staff had tampered with crucial evidence. Now a secretly recorded telephone conversation between him and his intelligence chief in 2007 shows them discussing an interference that he denies ever authorising.

**Pray:** for clarity and honesty to be the mainstay of European Commission members as they establish, implement and uphold EU treaties without veiled agendas. (Proverbs 27:19)

**More:** <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/12/13/jean-claude-juncker-drawn-back-wiretapping-scandal/>

## WORLDWIDE

#### ■ Israel: Gaza tunnels and fighting

Six weeks after blowing up a Palestinian jihad tunnel, the Israeli army demolished a second, 'substantial' attack tunnel that began at the southern Gaza Strip and finished 0.6 miles away in agriculture fields near Kibbutz Nirim in Israel. In the 10 December blast, no Palestinians were killed. The military is currently constructing underground barriers around the Gaza Strip that are meant to prevent future attack tunnels and discover ones already constructed. The military's 'toolbox' for underground warfare is improving. Pray that future tunnels do not become death traps for the terrorists digging them.

Hamas is responsible for everything that happens in Gaza, in the air, on land and underground. Meanwhile the Anglican archbishop in Jerusalem has called for tolerance, harmony and mutual respect for all, as sporadic fighting continues after President Trump decided to move America's embassy there. See <http://www.anglicannews.org/news/2017/12/archbishop-calls-for-tolerance-harmony-and-mutual-respect-in-the-holy-city-of-jerusalem.aspx>

**Pray:** for God to direct teamwork between Israeli engineering, intelligence and ground force units and for Him to turn his face towards Israel and give her peace. (Numbers 6:26)

**More:** <https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-destroys-gaza-attack-tunnel-crossing-into-israeli-territory/>

#### ■ Petition for persecuted Christians presented to UN

The 'Hope for the Middle East' petition, signed by over 800,000 people, was presented at the United Nations on 12 December, urging the protection of Christians and other persecuted minorities in Iraq and Syria post-IS. It calls on the UN to work with religious leaders to maintain peace and rebuild Iraq and Syria.

**Pray:** for Christians in Iraq and Syria to be empowered by the support of the UN, and for strong political decisions to support Christians to stay here in this land. (Jeremiah 29:11)

**More:** <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2017/12/800000-call-un-protect-christians-middle-east/>

#### ■ Syria: peace-making in Russia

As 2017 closes, Syrian warring parties are moving towards reconciliation - but America is not among them. IS is all but defeated: the Syrian army and its allies are closing in on the few remaining pockets occupied by other extremists. Donald Trump may have hinted at changes, but he's treading the same path as Obama on Syria. Determined to oust Syria's President Assad as a means to weaken Iran and re-establish American regional control, Barack Obama gambled on two pathways to this goal: 1) military strategy to snatch control over Syria from the regime; 2) UN/American mediation in Geneva to remove Assad. Washington lost its military venture when the Russian air force entered the battle; next it resuscitated a limp Geneva peace process for political settlement without Assad. It failed. But a fresh process is being established in Sochi, not Geneva, with Iranians, Russians and Turks carving out ceasefire zones and negotiating peace.

**Pray:** for this new regional and international power base to negotiate a ceasefire and lasting peace in Syria, without any hidden agendas or divisive religious undertones. (Proverbs 20:11)

**More:** <http://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/in-syria-peacemaking-is-no-longer-made-in-america/>

#### ■ Global: coping with disasters

In Bali huge plumes of smoke continue to stretch 1,500m above Mount Agung as eruptions and low frequency earthquakes continue. The eruption threat remains at its highest level but it is not known when a major eruption will occur; so 70,000+ evacuees remain banished from their homes. In California wildfires have destroyed 1,000 structures to date, and six major fires still roar. Tens of thousands of people have been forced to flee their homes. Smoke continues to obscure the sun in both places. Hundreds of people were forced to leave their homes in the Solomon Islands after several rivers overflowed on 5 December. After torrential rainfall on 1 December in Albania, 5,000 households suffered flood damage and 600 families are still homeless. In all of these instances people comfort each other after losing livestock, livelihoods, homes and possessions. Many are still living in fear. See <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/12/11/us/california-wildfires/index.html> and <http://floodlist.com/news>

**Pray:** for God to comfort the children, elderly and infirm living with loss and confusion. (Psalm 9:18)

**More:** <https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/891304/Bali-volcano-eruption-latest-update-video-Mount-Agung>

#### ■ Palestine: a call to recognise East Jerusalem

Leaders of over fifty countries condemned US president Donald Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and called on the world to respond by recognising East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine at an Istanbul summit. They added, 'We invite the Trump administration to reconsider its unlawful decision that might trigger chaos in the region, and to rescind its mistaken step'. Turkish President Erdogan also said, 'It is out of the question for a biased US to mediate between Israel and Palestine; that period is over. We need to discuss who will be a mediator from now on.' There have been riots and protests by Palestinians ever since Trump's decision. On 14 December undercover police officers arrested rioters outside Ramallah. See <http://www.jpost.com/printarticle.aspx?id=518032>

**Pray:** for God to bring peace through the people He chooses. (Proverbs 17:11a)

**More:** <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-israel-oic/muslim-leaders-call-on-world-to-recognize-east-jerusalem-as-palestinian-capital-idUSKBN1E70KM>

#### ■ Iran: Boris Johnson's visit

Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe's court case, at which she was expected to have her jail sentence extended, was postponed following the Foreign Secretary's visit to Iran. Boris Johnson has said he held 'worthwhile' meetings in Tehran over the case of the jailed British-Iranian woman, but warned that he did not wish 'to raise false hopes' for her release. He believed his messages had been understood by senior Iranian figures, but admitted it was too early to be confident of the outcome, casting doubt on her family's hopes that she might be released in time for Christmas.

**Pray:** for Iran's courts to rescind all their charges. (Proverbs 24:14)

**More:** <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/nazanin-zaghari-ratcliffe-boris-johnson-iran-release-meeting-latest-false-hope-warning-a8104446.html>

#### ■ Philippines: Christian city gives refuge to Muslim refugees

In October Philippines president Rodrigo Duterte declared Marawi city liberated from the terrorists led by Malaysian Mahmud bin Ahmad. Marawi is now battle-scarred and broken, after two months of fierce fighting destroyed half of the homes and killed more than 1,000 people. Countless Muslims like Alayssa Macabaya were forced to flee after their homes were destroyed. Now, he lives 2 hours away in the predominantly Christian city of Cagayan de Oro. He and other Muslim

refugees receive food, shelter, and basic necessities from the Christians who live there. 'We are not driving them from the city. They can stay as long as they want,' said Mayor Oscar Moreno. 'Who knows, maybe some will settle down here.' However, not everyone is happy about the mayor's decision. The city's social welfare officer said that he has received numerous security concerns from residents.

**Pray:** for the Christian compassion towards their neighbours to bring peace not friction. (Matthew 22:39)

**More:** <http://www1.cbn.com/cbnnews/cwn/2017/december/christian-city-in-the-philippines-opens-its-door-and-heart-to-muslim-refugees>

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