

Prayer Alert

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How lovely is Your dwelling place, Lord Almighty! Blessed are those who dwell in Your house. Blessed are those whose strength is in You. (Psalm 84:1,4a,5a)

We are pleased to enclose this week's edition of Prayer Alert.

Can you help? - Prayer Alert is brought to your inbox without charge thanks largely to the generosity of individuals and organisations that freely provide most of the resources we need to operate. However, we would be grateful for donations from appreciative subscribers towards our costs. Please go to the 'Donations' link that follows to make a contribution: <http://www.prayer-alert.net/contact/donate>

Thank you again for standing with us in prayer over the nations.

David Fletcher – Editor

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Praise Reports

Rapper: 'God changed me'

Christian rapper Lecrae visited Yale University recently to talk about mental health and social justice. He had been sexually assaulted when he was seven, a trauma that was never dealt with. His drug addict father disappeared when he was four. He focused so much on trying not to be like him that he didn't consider who he was supposed to be. 'To the world, I was this level-headed, God-fearing man; behind the scenes - a ticking time bomb.' He went on to tell of spiralling down into a world of gun violence, hatred, witnessing murder, experiencing rejection, having PTSD, and losing his faith. His powerful message ended by telling the students how God had healed him and restored his faith.

Praise: God for testimonies that tell the world 'God loves you', unconditionally. (Psalm 66:20)

More: www.christianheadlines.com/blog/christian-rapper-lecrae-talks-about-how-trauma-changed-his-life.html

A tool to help people share Jesus

Whilst we might not be facing the persecution that first-century Christians encountered, faith-sharing is still challenging. Recent research found that 67% of the population know a practising Christian, and conversations with Christians are one of the most important influences in bringing people to faith. Christian Vision's 'yesHEis' free smartphone app makes evangelism easier. It is available to download from the Google Play and App Stores, and hosts a variety of videos including short testimonies and inspiring films. The concept is easy: watch some videos, and if there's one you think friends or family might enjoy, send it to them. Then you can start a conversation about Jesus. The videos, on a wide range of subjects, can be shared on Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp or text message. There are already 300,000+ active users of yesHEis around the world.

Praise: God for Christian apps; may this one produce abundant fruit. (John 15:8)

More: www.eauk.org/news-and-views/yesheis-app-a-tool-to-help-you-share-jesus

Building Canada's prayer ministries

With the second largest land mass in the world and a sparse population, it is easy for a Canadian prayer ministry, house of prayer or city-wide worship ministry to feel isolated. Ears to Hear responded to this need with a prayer network connecting and uniting senior leaders of Christian ministries for mutual encouragement, support, growth, and much more. They have been active and growing for ten years.

Praise: God for this powerful expression of prayer across Canada. (Psalm 133:1)

More: www.ears2hear.ca/

British Isles & Ireland

Archbishop and Universal Credit

The Archbishop of York, John Sentamu, wrote in the Yorkshire Post, 'It is five years since Universal Credit was launched to simplify the UK welfare system. Had everything gone to plan, it would have been up and running across the country by now. Instead, the policy remains a source of ongoing controversy. As a follower of Jesus Christ, my greatest concern is how this policy affects the poorest members of our community. In the Bible, we are called to uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed. It is right that we look at the impact which Universal Credit, in its current form, is having on our poorest neighbours. We must listen to them, pay heed to what they are telling us, and add our voices to theirs in pointing out where improvements might be made. For it is the person who wears the shoe who knows where it is pinching.'

Pray: for the Government to identify the financially-fragile situation that so many people are in and remove unnecessary poverty. (Leviticus 25:35)

More: www.archbishopofyork.org/news/news-2018/archbishop-writes-universal-credit

Conservative party conference

Government exists to serve the people, but as Conservatives gathered in Birmingham for their last party conference before leaving the EU, relationships between government members were fraught. Many media interviews at the conference were about Brexit rather than about government policy. Divisions over Europe caused MPs to be focused on internal debates; but as they face the Brexit challenge they need to be outward-facing to negotiate in good faith. Dominic Raab summed up the controversies: 'I'll tell you what's not democracy: the efforts of a small, influential group of senior politicians and establishment figures to overturn the result of the referendum. You can just picture them, sitting in an expensive advertising agency, discussing how to claim that black is white. "Our research shows that the public doesn't like the idea of a second referendum. That's all right - we'll rebrand it a people's vote. They might buy that.'"

Pray: for the Conservative party to begin working as a team, serving the country. (Philippians 2:3)

More: www.theguardian.com/politics/blog/live/2018/oct/01/conservative-conference-hammond-says-johnson-will-never-be-pm-politics-live

Criminalised for being homeless

Liberty, a leading human rights group, is urging Nottingham City Council to scrap 'cruel' proposals which could criminalise the area's most vulnerable people. Liberty said the council's proposed Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) 'punishes charitable acts in a bid to airbrush their streets'; the proposals would 'essentially ban homelessness', in a move which ignores Home Office guidance. PSPOs are drawn up by local councils to prevent anti-social behaviour, deemed detrimental to the area's quality of life. Nottingham plans to prohibit members of the public from making 'unauthorised requests' for money, personal items, or other donations, and would also ban obstruction of building entrances and exits. It could be a criminal offence to give out free items to someone unknown. Those in breach of the PSPO could be fined up to £100, and offenders could be prosecuted if unable to pay.

Pray: for Nottingham City Council to help those in need, not outlaw acts of charity. (Mat.25:34b,35)

More: www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/nottingham-city-pspo_uk_5bb23858e4b027da00d5b730?utm_hp_ref=uk-news

'Shameful' restraints in hospitals

The use of restraints on adults with learning disabilities in hospital units in England rose by 50% between 2016 and 2017. Former social care minister Norman Lamb said the use of restraint was 'shameful'. The Department of Health said it was committed to reducing the use of restrictive force in hospitals. The data, covering both adults and children, also revealed that patient-on-patient assaults rose from 3,600 to more than 9,000 over the same period, and instances of face-down restraint, banned by government guidelines, increased to 3,100. Pray for more finances to be available to ensure that vulnerable people receive the safe support that meets their various social care needs. Pray for better training for those working with adults and children with challenging behaviour and moderate or severe learning disabilities.

Pray: for all carers to have the wisdom to recognise potentially distressing and, damaging situations, and do all they can to avoid explosive situations. (Psalm 49:3)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-45652339

Pro-prostitution stall at Freshers' Fair

MPs and campaigners have criticised the decision to allow the Sex Workers' Outreach Project (Swop) to have a stall on the University of Brighton's Eastbourne campus over the three days of Freshers' Fair. Writer and campaigner Julie Bindel, who has written widely on prostitution, called the move 'disgraceful' and demanded an enquiry. Labour MP Sarah Champion tweeted her outrage at the decision. Swop defended its attendance in a tweet (that was later deleted) saying, 'Rising living and tuition costs mean that more students than ever are turning to sex work, and Swop believe that they deserve our help. Sex work is work.' CARE's spokesperson said, 'Swop's inclusion at Freshers' Fair is irresponsible. It normalises and glamourises prostitution, showcasing it as a harmless option to alleviate student debt, and sending damaging messages to vulnerable students, many of whom are away from home for the first time.'

Pray: for the University's investigation to bring about legislation that protects students. (Proverbs 2:11)

More: www.care.org.uk/news/latest-news/university-criticised-allowing-pro-prostitution-stall-freshers-fair

Proposed covenant for clergy care

A CofE working party has drafted 'A Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing', and are inviting people to comment on it. The 'Big Conversation' about clergy care will aim to prevent burnout in church leaders, who are always 'on duty' in a job that could never be 9 to 5. The draft document sets out some ways of changing the culture of the Church to enable the care and wellbeing of its clergy to be more fully addressed.

Pray: for the covenant to be a responsibility shared by ministers, laity, local church and diocese. (Isaiah 35:3)

More: www.churchofengland.org/more/clergy-resources/national-clergy-hr/supporting-clergy-health-and-wellbeing/proposed-covenant

Open-air prayer at West Ham

There will be a prayer meeting on 6 October in West Ham overlooking the site of a radical Islamic group's proposed 'mega-mosque'. Three years ago the Government refused the appeal of the Anjuman-e-islahul-Muslimeen Trust against Newham Council's decision not to grant them planning permission for the development, which would be the largest place of worship in Britain. Legally, Newham could now send in the bulldozers. But this decision will be taken by new mayor Rokhsana Fiaz, whose election promise to 'tax the value of development land to help our housing programme' could impact the trustees of the site. An option open to the trust is a new planning application for mixed use, not for using the site as a place of worship, but instead they are going to the European Court of Human Rights to try to keep alive their dream.

Pray: for this group, described by the USA as a recruiting ground for Al-Qaeda, and by the French intelligence as an antechamber of fundamentalism, to be denied access to UK land. (Psalm 2:8)

More: www.christianvoice.org.uk/index.php/open-air-prayer-at-west-ham/

Europe

UK government attacks EU

The UK government is demanding action from the EU amid strong frustration over the lack of proposals from Brussels on a post-Brexit relationship. Speaking to CNBC recently, several members of the Government appeared frustrated about the EU's attitude. Chris Grayling said, 'At the moment, it is very much a question of Europe responding with its proposals. Currently there is nothing on the table.' Trade secretary Liam Fox said it is the EU's 'duty' to help the UK and put forward their proposals. 'They said they were not very happy with what the UK offered; in which case let them bring forward their own proposals. Under Article 50 we have the right to leave the EU, and they have a duty to help us in that future relationship. Let's see them now deliver what they promised to do in that treaty.'

Pray: for God to open minds to heaven's wisdom as they debate Article 50. (Proverbs 8:9)

More: www.cnn.com/2018/10/01/six-months-before-brexit-the-uk-government-is-attacking-the-eu.html

Russia cyber-attacks

Dutch military intelligence disrupted a Russian cyber-attack on the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. The attack, which was thwarted with the help of British officials, came after Russia had also attempted remote attacks on the UK Foreign Office in March and the Porton Down chemical weapons facility in April. Both attacks were unsuccessful. The Dutch defence minister said that four Russian intelligence officials from the GRU's cybercrime unit, known as Sandworm, had been expelled from the Netherlands after being caught spying on the chemical weapons body in April. Jeremy Hunt said that a number of hackers widely known to have been conducting attacks around the world were covers for Russia's GRU intelligence service, and their attacks had been undertaken with the consent and knowledge of the Kremlin. A Russian spokeswoman dismissed the hacking accusations as 'big fantasies'.

Pray: for tougher financial penalties to be actioned when hard evidence of a crime is proven. (Psalm 7:6)

More: www.theguardian.com/world/2018/oct/04/netherlands-halted-russian-cyber-attack-on-chemical-weapons-body

Worldwide

Indonesia: earthquake, tsunami, volcano eruption

Air traffic controller Anthonius Agung died after waving out the last flight from Palu airport on 28 September (see <https://www.yahoo.com/entertainment/air-traffic-controller-dies-while-191749802.html>). He was one of the first casualties of a disaster that has taken at least 1,407 lives, injured many thousands more, and left most of the 350,000 residents homeless when a 7.5 magnitude earthquake struck the island of Sulawesi. It triggered a ten-metre, 400mph tsunami that dragged cars, trees, houses, boulders, logs and mud inland. Three days later, Mount Soputan erupted, spewing ash clouds that make air flights hazardous. Clinics have no power and low medical supplies. Many communities have received no aid at all; other areas are experiencing looting. The tension is palpable with fights breaking out for food. Unless the government and agencies can deliver aid, there is a risk that tensions could spill over. Bridges must be repaired and roads restored before essential aid can reach points of need. Boats from other islands are delivering food, water and medicine.

Pray: for those searching for relatives, and for survivors sheltering in various locations. Pray for doctors, electricians, and councillors to travel to Sulawesi and assist with rebuilding communities and lives. (Psalm 10:14)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-45663055

Indonesia: Christian agencies join forces

Four leading Christian humanitarian organisations are joining forces in a fundraising campaign to try and help survivors of the Indonesia earthquake and tsunami, as authorities fear the number of fatalities, casualties and people displaced will rise in the coming days. See <https://www.premier.org.uk/News/World/CAFOD-Christian-Aid-Tearfund-and-World-Vision-join-forces-for-new-Indonesia-appeal> Tearfund is also working with Indonesian churches still looking for whole families and congregations and burying their dead. Rev Kris Gosal said, 'Survivors are hungry, babies are crying for milk. We asked church networks to share the burden by donating food, tents and funds and they are uniting with one heart to express their solidarity with Palu, Donggala, and Sigi.' Christian agencies have deployed emergency doctors, nurses, an orthopaedic surgeon, and a team with a midwife to affected areas. A possible 1.5 million people could have been affected. The Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) has also opened an Indonesia appeal.

Pray: for clear communication between the various churches and aid agencies. (Psalm 28:7)

More: www.premierchristianradio.com/News/World/Churches-unite-to-shelter-Indonesian-Tsunami-survivors

UN assembly: climate change a 'global responsibility'

The foreign minister of Dominica, Francine Baron, addressing the UN General Assembly on climate change, stressed that it is a global responsibility. Ms Baron noted that the global community has neither implemented plans for the 2015 Paris commitments nor mobilised the agreed \$100 billion annually to assist the most vulnerable against harmful climate change effects. 'While we have failed to live up to these commitments, Arctic ice shelves continue to melt at an alarming rate, oceans continue to get warmer, hurricanes and storms continue to

develop and threaten our countries, drought becomes more severe, and flooding more pronounced.' Last year Hurricane Maria brought Dominica to its knees. Immediately afterwards, 'our people raised their battered and wounded selves, and began the daunting task of search and rescue, clearing roadways and moved into rebuilding mode.' The cost of rebuilding a nation is far more than a small country like Dominica can meet single-handedly.

Pray: for all global leaders to agree on and begin to implement action that will bring change in the right direction for our climates. (Psalm 115:16)

More: news.un.org/en/story/2018/09/1021792

Israel: 20,000 Palestinians protest along Gaza Strip

On 28 September, the IDF neutralised 100+ explosives thrown at them by over 20,000 people rioting at five locations along the Gaza Strip frontier. At the border fence protesters, encouraged by Hamas, burned dozens of tyres, using the thick black smoke as a screen to throw rocks and explosives at Israeli troops. IDF soldiers responded with tear gas and gunfire, and Israeli aircraft carried out two airstrikes on Hamas positions in the Strip. A statement said, 'With armed terrorists only minutes away from Israeli families, it is the IDF's duty to protect them'. A tweet said, 'Imagine a mob of 20K people, throwing bombs & grenades, attempting to reach your home. The people of southern Israel don't have to imagine; this is happening right now, regularly, on Israel's border with Gaza.'

Pray: for an end to cries for violence. May God continue to protect Israeli civilians. (Isaiah 62:6-7)

More: worldisraelnews.com/idf-finds-bombs-in-israel-morning-after-violent-gaza-border-riots/

Palestine: Gazans protest against Hamas

Virtually all media outlets are unaware of the protests in Gaza by opponents of Hamas. Palestinian media in the Strip do not dare to publicise the underground protests against the terrible injustice imposed on Palestinians by Hamas since it took control of Gaza by force in 2007. Al-Monitor has learned that recently dozens of Palestinians have demonstrated in different refugee camps, claiming Hamas had taken the Strip back to the Middle Ages and accusing leading Hamas officials and activists of corruption and of favouring their supporters over the general population. They called on Hamas to take care of its people or 'disappear'. A few waved signs against what they termed Gaza's 'dictatorial regime'. Similar protests took place in 2017; they were violently suppressed by Hamas security forces.

Pray: for fair distribution of basic commodities to the tired, hungry and fearful in camps. (Psalm 31:22)

More: www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/10/israel-gaza-strip-hamas-fatah-unrwa-demonstrations-border.html#ixzz5Sxj7mtj

Caribbean: surge in Venezuelan asylum seekers

Until a week ago, Enrique Ceballos was a high court judge in Venezuela. Now, because of threats around his work as a judge, he is waiting on a plastic chair outside an NGO-run registration centre for asylum-seekers in Port of Spain, the capital of Trinidad and Tobago, along with his wife, son, and daughter. 'I needed to rule in favour of the government,' he said. 'It's really difficult to work like that.' Over 1.6 million Venezuelans like Ceballos have left the country since 2015, leaving behind a crumbling economy and a political crisis that has triggered shortages in food and healthcare. Hundreds of thousands are in Colombia, others in the Caribbean - a few kilometres from Venezuela's coast. Venezuelans are often helped to apply for asylum and to integrate by Christian NGOs, as the soaring numbers have taken small island governments by surprise.

Pray: for the Christian witness of aid workers to reap a refugee harvest. (Luke 15:6)

More: www.irinnews.org/news-feature/2018/10/01/caribbean-local-aid-helps-tackle-surge-venezuelan-asylum-seekers

USA: refugee numbers reduced again

A maximum of 30,000 refugees will be allowed to resettle in the United States in the next fiscal year. The new ceiling marks a dramatic decrease from this year's 45,000-person cap, which had also been a significant reduction from previous years. Evangelical and Catholic advocates for refugees were quick to argue that reducing the number of refugees allowed into the USA is a continuation of a series of unprecedented attacks on American values and on the humanitarian nature of the refugee resettlement programme; they said it falls far short of helping the large number of vulnerable people around the world. This argument over quotas comes as the number of displaced people worldwide reaches a record high. UNHCR said there are 68.5 million displaced people in the world today, more than 28 million of whom are considered refugees or asylum-seekers. The Trump administration says Christians in Iraq face genocide; yet only 18 have been allowed to resettle in America this year.

Pray: for the US government to live up to its declared commitment to 'help persecuted Christian and religious minorities in dangerous and oppressive countries'. (Proverbs 10:3a,8b)

More: www.christianitytoday.com/news/2018/september/refugee-resettlement-trump-pompeo-asylum-immigration.html

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