

Prayer Alert

ISSUE 46-2019 | Friday 15 November 2019
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You, Lord, will keep the needy safe and will protect us for ever from the wicked. (Psalm 12:7)

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

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

David Fletcher – Editor

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Praise Reports

[Free Bibles to Kanye West fans](#)

Kanye West's Jesus is King album has prompted the American Bible Society to offer 1,000 free Bibles. ABS said that curiosity about Christianity has soared since the US rapper released his first Christian album: 'When we saw an influential cultural figure like Kanye inspiring young people to seek out answers to their faith questions, that was an opportunity to provide God's word and point people to it as a source for their questions about faith.' Up to 1,000 copies of the Good News translation are available to fans who apply on the ABS website. According to Google Trends, online searches for 'Jesus' and 'Christianity' shot up significantly in the USA after West released his album on 25 October.

Praise: God for cultural curiosity being answered as the Bible Society stands in the gap. (Jeremiah 29:11)

More: www.premierchristianradio.com/News/World/Christian-group-offering-free-Bibles-to-Kanye-West-fans

[Ethiopia: increased spiritual hunger](#)

Ethiopia is unique. It has its own alphabet and cuisine, and the people do not fit in with either sub-Saharan Africa or the Arabised North African peoples. 98% of the people claim some sort of religious affiliation; there is a spiritual hunger among Ethiopians. Whereas 3% were evangelicals in 1970, by 2015 this figure had risen to 19%. They are becoming Christ's ambassadors to unreached peoples. The Kale Heywet (Word of Life) church supports 250 missionaries, working among 16 people groups. Wycliffe Bible Translators are working with Ethiopians to translate the Old Testament into the language of the Eastern Oromo people, most of whom are Muslim.

Praise: God for what He is doing in Ethiopia. May thousands be transformed into Christ's likeness. (Acts 4:31)

More: www.windowreporter.com/praise-reports

British Isles

[South Yorkshire floods](#)

On 11 November hundreds were evacuated from Fishlake, when their homes were flooded for the first time in a hundred years. Heavy rain has continued to fall in Yorkshire and the Midlands, flooding more areas. Two hundred army personnel are supporting the flood effort, and hundreds more are working hard to make areas safe. Villagers in Stainforth have been supporting their Fishlake neighbours. A social media appeal brought donations of food, cleaning products, toiletries and clothing from 2,000 people. St Cuthbert's Church is full of clothes and emergency supplies, while rescue workers use it as an operations and command centre. Chalets and caravans have been found for homeless families, and even abandoned animals are being looked after.

Pray: for God to give stamina and wisdom to the army and countless volunteers. Pray for the South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service, who have operational control over the area. (Isaiah 43:2)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-south-yorkshire-50408897

Hundreds of churches at risk from harsh weather

Harsh weather linked to climate change will leave hundreds of English churches at risk of destruction or closure this winter, author and activist Bill Bryson has warned. There are 900 churches registered on Historic England's 'at risk' list. Mr Bryson, vice-president of the National Churches Trust (NCT), has said it is England's 'national responsibility' to protect England's historic places of worship. The NCT received a record 593 applications from churches for maintenance and repair grants last year, but this year the figure leapt by another 37%. Bryson said, 'Nothing embodies a quintessential Christmas like a historic church in the snow, but winter is when these ancient and often fragile buildings are most at risk of serious damage from severe weather.'

Pray: for the Government and churches to work with the NCT to do more to protect buildings. (Jeremiah 2:7)

More: www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/hundreds-of-english-churches-in-danger-from-harsh-weather-this-winter-a4283636.html

Pray over the election

This week has seen examples of political trickery, lies, exaggerations - we thank God for bad practice being exposed. Pray for God's hand of protection over all who are standing to be elected; some have had horrible threats made against them and their families. The lead up to this general election and the current whirlwind of campaigning feels like being in the middle of a storm. Pray continually for honesty and integrity to be threaded through every wave of political debate and discussion. A lot rides on the outcome, both in terms of the UK's place in Europe, and potentially Scotland's place in the UK. Deep emotions are associated with all of this, and it is not surprising that many people are anxious. Pray for unity in the church, families, and friendship groups. In a time of enormous division let us be peacemakers, let us disagree gracefully, and choose our words carefully. May believers rest in the peace of Jesus throughout this election campaign, and may that be a witness to others.

Pray: for God to give His people wisdom about how to be peacemakers within our very divided society. (Romans 15:13)

More: www.worldprayer.org.uk/news/pray-blessing-over-the-election

Brexit uncertainty halts anti-trafficking work in Glasgow

A partnership between Romanian police and Glasgow Airport aimed at tackling human trafficking more effectively has been suspended. Flights between Romania and the UK have been identified as high risk for trafficking. Romanian officers had been travelling to Scotland and London to deal with the 'high-risk' flights from their country, as part of a collaboration described in an inspection report as 'extremely useful'. Inspectors were told as long ago as February that the Scottish arrangement with the Romanian police had been suspended. Staff believed that this was due to the uncertainty caused by Brexit, but the Glasgow safeguarding and modern slavery team was hopeful that it would recommence at some point.

Pray: for a solution to be found which will enable this partnership to recommence and help strengthen protection for vulnerable people. (Leviticus 19:33-34)

More: www.theguardian.com/law/2019/oct/31/glasgow-airport-anti-human-trafficking-work-brexit-uncertainty

Child abuse linked to witchcraft

Figures based on safeguarding assessment data from local authorities reported children in England being abused due to belief in witchcraft has risen by 34% in three years. Abuse is driven by believing the child is possessed by demons or the devil. Families experiencing some kind of misfortune, such as parental mental health or experiencing exclusion because of poverty, try to make sense of their experience by believing that a spiritual realm has an impact on what happens here. They treat children as scapegoats for the misfortune that they are experiencing, and by punishing them they believe they are expelling the spiritual evil. Some UK belief-based child abuse is linked to child-trafficking where children are taken through different practices like witchcraft, juju, and black magic to silence them - as a form of control.

Pray: for God to use professionals to fight for these children, giving them the religious literacy, knowledge and skills to be able to ask the right questions that save children from witchcraft abuse. (Exodus 14:14)

More: www.yorkpress.co.uk/news/national/18034931.child-abuse-linked-witchcraft-jumps-30---research/

Ex-trans regrets operation

A Christian man is calling for more caution from medical and mental health services after undergoing irreversible gender reassignment surgery. His story represents a stark warning to parents, government, and medical and educational services, at a time when figures released by the NHS reveal a 2,500% increase in referrals to gender identity clinics over the past decade. After an appointment with a psychiatrist, despite having suicidal thoughts and mental health issues on his medical records, he was automatically put on a waiting list for gender identity clinic with 'no underlying medical conditions'. The NHS paid for the operation, which he now deeply regrets, saying, 'When I see and hear of books such as "10,000 Dresses" being read to schoolchildren, I see the same influence that led me to this harmful addiction. More must be done to protect our children, not to encourage them to pursue the same destructive path that I did.'

Pray: for schools and NHS to reconsider their current policies, and for the nation to return to how God intended us to be and live. (Genesis 2: 22-24)

More: christianconcern.com/ccpressreleases/ex-trans-calls-for-more-caution-after-operation-regret/

Children in Need project

A former Blackburn day school and Sunday School built in 1834 to nurture young people will be able to continue its legacy, thanks to the BBC Children in Need annual appeal. At the parish rooms of St Silas Church (with Pudsey Bear among the congregation), Rev Sheelagh Aston quoted Luke 3:11, 'Whoever has two coats is to share with him who has none'. She threw out the challenge, 'What if we did give what we had to others?' Her comments were just one of many as people once again seek to raise money for Children in Need. By clicking the 'More' button you can read more about how Children in Need, DIY SOS, and hundreds of volunteers gave their time to come and serve the community and the church.

Pray: for millions of BBC viewers and listeners to make the most of all the opportunities they have to share God's love with others through sacrificial giving. (2 Corinthians 9:7)

More: www.blackburn.anglican.org/news/324/reflection-on-diy-sos-children-in-need-b

Europe

Venice 'state of emergency' flooding

Italy declared a state of emergency on 14 November after floods brought carnage to Venice. The prime minister described the flooding as 'a blow to the heart of our country'. The government took on 'exceptional powers' to respond to the damage, estimated at hundreds of millions of pounds, including millions in St Mark's Basilica alone. The mayor said the city was 'on its knees', and warned of 'widespread devastation' after an unprecedented combination of high spring tides and a storm surge of a 6ft 2in tide on the night of 13 November. The mayor has blamed climate change for the disaster, but there was also anger among Venetians at the corruption which has held up a flood barrier project.

Pray: for families, shopkeepers, hoteliers, and boat owners who have lost homes and livelihoods. (Psalm 102:25-26)

More: www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-7684263/Italy-declares-state-emergency-following-Venice-floods.html

Denmark: border checks

Danish authorities, struggling to quell a wave of bombings attributed to Swedish gangs, have introduced passport controls at the border with Sweden for the first time since the 1950s. Sweden has been rocked by more than 100 explosions in the first 10 months of this year, and another 13 blasts have rocked Copenhagen as well. The Swedish problem is directly correlated to their open arms policy for immigrants and refugees, especially those fleeing North Africa and the Middle East. Many consider the rise of the nationalist right in Europe is a direct result of politicians' immigration policies. Pray against what many believe is the coming wave of a possible violent backlash.

Pray: for God to watch over these borders and prevent serious and organised crime from spreading. (Psalm 91:1,2)

More: www.nytimes.com/2019/11/13/world/europe/denmark-border-sweden.html

Worldwide

Australia: removing Christian school chaplains

The Australian Christian Lobby has been asking Christians to make their voices heard, as the Labour government plans to ban public schools from employing a school chaplain from January 2020. For almost two decades, students enrolled in a public school who sought advice and counsel have been able to receive help from a chaplain with religious and spiritual capabilities. The education minister explained the move by saying, 'All we're doing is taking the religion out of it'. But banning school chaplains is a ban on spiritual support for children. The government has decided that faith does not matter to children, and that relevant questions cannot be answered for students of faith. Depression and anxiety in youth are the highest in a very long time, so this is not the time to ban chaplains.

Pray: for many to sign petitions and contact their MPs to ensure that children can continue to obtain counsel from a chaplain. (Psalm 34:11)

More: www.acl.org.au/cm_act_chaplains

Australia: NSW and Queensland bushfires

Crews are currently battling 120+ fires. 'Leave now' warnings have gone to homes and dozens more are at 'Watch and Act' level. Hundreds of homes have been destroyed, and over a million hectares consumed. A water-bombing helicopter crashed in gusty conditions. Pray for the farmers who have lost entire crops and farm infrastructures. Ask God to comfort residents told to evacuate immediately and now fearful of what they will return to. Pray for stamina for the crews fighting fires and those patrolling smouldering zones. Pray for the police to have wisdom and discernment as they contend with looters impersonating firefighters to gain access to empty homes. The deputy prime minister dismissed talk of climate change as the concerns of 'raving inner-city lefties', adding, 'We've had fires in Australia since time began'. See also <https://www.9news.com.au/national/nsw-fires-qlld-emergency-warnings-updates-bushfire-map-alerts/27c02046-4425-4e4e-8307-6d8c6c69781e>

Pray: for the government to stop 'passing the buck' on climate change, and do more to help stem the rise in global temperatures. (Exodus 23:1)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-australia-50413869

Hong Kong: chaos and excessive police force

Two protesters are in a critical condition after being shot in violent demonstrations and a pro-Beijing supporter was doused in flammable liquid and set alight after arguing with protesters, who are demanding greater democracy and police accountability. The pedestrian crossing where the first young protester was shot has become a site of considerable tension. He remains in a critical condition. The protester we prayed for last week after falling from a car park has since died. The police also drew firearms from their holsters in two other places but denied reports that they were ordered to 'recklessly use their firearms'. An independent expert said that Hong Kong's police watchdog does not have the powers or resources to cope with the scale of protests, and 'light touch' body probing by the police at demonstrations has a capabilities 'shortfall'. Powers to summon witnesses need to meet the task of examining allegations against police. See also <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/3037080/hong-kong-police-watchdog-does-not-have-powers-and>

Pray: for police activities to value freedoms and rights and for the death of the extradition bill. (Job 9:18-19)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-50370715

Israel: EU condemns rocket fire on Israeli civilians

On 12 November the Israel Defence Forces killed a senior commander of a Jihad terror group responsible for firing dozens of rockets out of the Gaza Strip. This prompted a massive retaliation of over seventy rockets fired at Israel's civilian districts. The UK's foreign office advised visitors that attacks could be indiscriminate, including places frequented by foreigners, and on public transport. Most embassies in Tel Aviv have heightened caution or have temporarily closed. Palestinian Islamic Jihad declared that it was preparing for war with Israel. By 13 November, 220 rockets had been fired as far north as Tel Aviv, with 90% intercepted by the army. Schools in the south and much of the centre were closed, keeping 1 million students at home, and a commando unit was deployed to secure border communities from possible infiltration. On 14 November a ceasefire was achieved, but just hours later five rockets were launched from the coastal enclave, with two of them intercepted by Israel's army. [See also https://www.timesofisrael.com/islamic-jihad-declares-were-going-to-war-after-idf-kills-its-strongman/](https://www.timesofisrael.com/islamic-jihad-declares-were-going-to-war-after-idf-kills-its-strongman/)

Pray: for the injured and families of the dead, for those living in fear of attack, and for a long term cease-fire. (Psalm 122:6-9)

More: www.haaretz.com/israel-news/islamic-jihad-israel-gaza-rockets-ceasefire-tel-aviv-hamas-syria-1.8122258

India: trafficking networks hidden in communities

IJM supported Mumbai authorities in rescuing five girls and young women from a small, cluttered apartment where they were being repeatedly sold for sex. Police have also arrested a 35-year-old woman suspected of exploiting these victims to a network of private customers. She would secretly share images of the girls to potential customers over social media and then, based on the customer's selection, force the girls to come to her home on demand. The girls and young women she abused lived nearby in the community. The police concentrate on traditional red-light areas, brothels and lodges to find and protect minors, and consequently traffickers have attempted to operate only through close networks and unassuming homes to avoid being caught. We can thank God for the rescue of these girls: may they speedily recover in the safe environments now being provided.

Pray: for all similar setups across poor communities to be discovered. For stronger internet policing, and wise practical teaching around pitfalls which can lead to trafficking and abuse by criminal networks. (Psalm 12:5)

More: www.ijmuk.org/news/suspected-trafficker-arrested-for-selling-five-victims-in-her-home

Global: mothers speak out on climate change

From the vanishing Solomon Islands to the burning Amazon rainforest, mothers speak up from danger zones. Alice, in Brazil, fears for her two-month-old son: 'It is hotter than when I was a child, and I don't know how it will be when he grows up. There is more pollution, he's already having breathing problems. I am privileged to live in this paradise, but I look around today and fear that we are losing it.' Baby Rafsan lives in Dhaka, Bangladesh, the most overpopulated city in the world. His mother said, 'We fear for our futures but not enough to quit using cars to save the climate'. By 2050 one in seven people will be displaced by rising sea levels - that's 18 million people. Bangladesh will not exist in 100 years if carbon dioxide emissions remain the same. 'My baby should not be wearing a mask', said a mother in Delhi.

Pray: for nations to recognise and unite in various projects to end climate change erosion of coastlines, floods, fires and pollution. (Psalm 133:1)

More: www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/newborns-who-face-extreme-weather-20877015

Persian Gulf: Operation Sentinel launched

Large navy vessels will watch at chokepoints while smaller vessels will patrol key transit lanes, and airborne assets will monitor traffic in the Persian Gulf. This stems from a new coalition officially launched on 7 November from its Bahrain headquarters. It will protect shipping in the troubled waters after a string of attacks that Washington and its allies blame on Iran, threatening the world's oil supply. Iran denies responsibility for the attacks, and has put forward its own proposals for boosting Gulf security - that pointedly exclude outside powers. The new mission, dubbed Operation Sentinel, will see vessels escorted through the Strait of Hormuz, the strategic chokepoint at the head of the Gulf and the main artery for transporting oil. Australia and the United Kingdom are the main non-Gulf countries to have sent warships to escort shipping. The newest member, Albania, joined on 6 November.

Pray: for continued freedom of navigation and free flow of commerce in Persian Gulf international waters (Psalm 27:5a)

More: thedefensepost.com/2019/11/07/us-operation-sentinel-launches-persian-gulf-shipping/

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Prayer Alert is produced in partnership with

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