

Prayer Alert

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'The Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.' (Isaiah 7.14)

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

['When we're weak he comforts us'](#)

A Christian footballer has expressed how his family is leaning on God following the recent death of his two-year-old daughter. Benik Afobe has spoken publicly in the wake of Amora's death on 29 November due to complications from a severe infection. 'We trust in our Lord Jesus Christ and when we're weak he comforts us. He will protect the family and give us strength always', he said. 'We want to bounce back and show people that even when we are grieving we can make a comeback and be strong and never need to quit in anything you want to do or become.' In an initial statement, the 26-year-old Congo international admitted he and his family had been left 'totally devastated and heartbroken'. In the past he has been vocal about his faith on Instagram. May God continue to support the family in the coming weeks.

Praise: God for the way He comforts and provides for us when the shadow of death appears. (Luke 1:79)

More: www.premier.org.uk/News/UK/When-we-re-weak-he-comforts-us-Footballer-issues-heartfelt-message-following-death-of-daughter

Women rescued

After raiding fifteen sites in Luton, police found eleven Romanian and Hungarian women in their twenties, speaking little or no English, believed to be victims of sexual exploitation. Eight men were arrested and charged with managing and controlling brothels and money laundering. The raids were led by 150 police officers and specialist staff, who also seized substantial amounts of cash. Women are offered contracts to come here to work in a proper job, but 'unfortunately that is not the case'. Inspector Jim Goldsmith said that there has been a dramatic rise over recent months in off-street sex trade in Luton where numerous brothels have opened. 'We try to keep these women as safe as we can after rescue, and that was the purpose of these raids - to take them out of that environment, give them the opportunity to exit that life, and get them back to their families.'

Praise: God for the rescue of these women. May there be many more intelligence-led successful rescues of trafficked women. (Psalm 17:13)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-beds-bucks-herts-50740896

British Isles

[Intercessor Focus: new ministers, new season](#)

We do not know who will be ministers in Boris Johnson's new cabinet, but we can pray that it will be God who develops and reshapes it and its various offices. May each department reflect His virtue and righteousness. In these extraordinary days of change, ask Him to use and direct the ministers who will organise the UK's exiting the EU, those supporting businesses, and those appointed to fine-tune the NHS, energy, education, the environment, and rural affairs. May all internal developments re-shape our economic structure and trading foundations with justice and fairness. May all they do be fit for purpose in this season of alterations and adjustments. Please pray that the staff of the Crown Prosecution Service, the Serious Fraud Office, and the Government's Legal Department may hold firm to truth, humility and justice as they provide advice and support to the Home Office.

Pray: for this nation to delight the Lord with a parliament that knows God's will and fulfils His purposes. (Proverbs 4:11)

More: www.businessinsider.com/what-happens-now-boris-johnson-has-won-uk-general-election-2019-12?amp%3Butm_medium=referral&r=US&IR=T

Christmas cards 'deeply offensive'

The owner of a card company has said Christmas is not just about religion after producing a range of cards which mock Christianity. One card reads, 'Mary just needs to admit she slept with someone else'. Another one says, 'Sorry your December birthday is overshadowed by a bloke who wore socks with sandals'. Christian Action Research and Education (CARE) said, 'The cards are deeply offensive to many Christians and they highlight a fundamental hypocrisy, that Christianity is seen as fair game to mock, disparage and insult. As Christians we believe it is vital to exercise respect when sharing our views and listening to what others think. These cards are the opposite of respectful. Sadly, this happens every Christmas, which is such an important time in the Christian calendar. It is just another sad example of the kind of "under the radar" discrimination Christians around Europe are currently facing.'

Pray: for more traditional Christmas cards to be produced by Christian companies and sold in secular outlets. (John 8:32)

More: www.premier.org.uk/News/UK/Outrage-over-deeply-offensive-Christmas-card-saying-Mary-slept-with-someone-else

Catholic politician sues Lib Dems

Just days after Robert Ffello, a practising Roman Catholic, was selected to stand for the Lib Dems for this week's general election, he was stood down and told by party officials that his views on abortion and same sex marriage, shared on social media, were 'not those that would be expected of a liberal' and it was therefore 'not appropriate' for him to represent them. Ffello said, 'Initially the Lib Dems told me that they were deselecting me for my views, then during the following week they gave me all sorts of other reasons and suggested that I retweeted a very aggressive tweet. But I have not done those things. So I can only conclude, in fact I'm absolutely convinced, that they are discriminating against me on the grounds of my faith.'

Pray: for Robert as he defends democracy and the public's right to vote for a practising Christian. (Deuteronomy 16:19a)

More: www.premier.org.uk/News/UK/Catholic-politician-sues-Lib-Dems-on-behalf-of-all-Christians-following-deselection

CofE Christmas advert

On 8 December the Church of England released its 2019 Christmas Advertisement, putting real-life stars at the heart of its campaign to invite people to church this Christmas. Dragons, talking carrots, and ET all vie for centre stage in the annual festive advertising bonanza. The video and digital campaign for 2019 (#FollowTheStar) tells the story of Christmas preparations at St Peter's, Stockton-on-Tees, a church with a special ministry. Featuring in it are refugees and asylum seekers who attend St Peter's, together with Stockton residents of all ages. The advert is backed by members of a gospel choir singing this year's Christmas single, a new arrangement of the favourite carol We Three Kings. The campaign hopes to reach many more than last year's 8 million through social media and broadcasts. Churches and cathedrals will display stars, hand out reflection booklets, and engage many millions more through personal invitations.

Pray: for not-yet-Christians to follow the star and discover the true joy of Christmas for the first time this year. (Matthew 2:10)

More: www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/news/church-england-features-real-life-stars-christmas-advert

Chemists demand clarity on cannabis-related goods

Cannabidiol (CBD) is not marketed as medicinal cannabis. It does not have a psychoactive element, and some studies indicate that it helps to control childhood epilepsy. Other people think it helps them too. Non-medicinal CBD is now on sale in High Street shops and chemists. Pharmacists are calling for better regulation of products supposed to contain CBD, saying that there needs to be clearer information and better checks on content. Currently, customers buying such products have no guarantees that they are safe, or even if they contain CBD oil at all. The oil is being added to water, chocolate, make-up, tea and coffee. It is illegal to print health claims on these products, but it is a grey area as to who checks the ingredients, or the amount of CBD oil actually in each item, many of which can be very expensive. UK sales are currently £300m.

Pray: for further research by the Food Standards Agency on the safety and efficacy of food supplements with CBD. (Psalm 18:25b, 26b)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-50741915

Christians urged to 'work within their means' this Christmas

A study by the British Retail Consortium predicts an additional £2billion in seasonal shopping compared to last year, and expects the average household to spend over £500 this Christmas. Becky Denharder, for Care for the Family, says that Christmas does not have to be an expensive occasion, and urges Christians not to get 'carried away' over the festive season. Although it is 'fun to spend money' on our families, it all 'adds up', so she encourages us to 'work within our means.' 'I think sometimes parents feel pressure to buy for their kids and we feel pressure to buy for colleagues and lots of different people,' she added. 'There are more long-lasting ways to bless our families. We don't often remember our Christmas gifts, but we do remember the memories. We remember the traditions that we take part in, and those are the memories that stick.'

Pray: for us to remember that Jesus is the reason for Christmas and manage our money wisely. (Proverbs 14:24)

More: www.premier.org.uk/News/UK/Charity-urges-Christians-to-work-within-their-means-this-Christmas

Britain needs its own report on Russian 'interference'

Investigative journalists who explored Russian influence on US politics say Britain's political system is also compromised, stating that it is time our institutions and media woke up to that fact. In 2016 the UK and US were targets of Russian efforts to swing votes to weaken the alliances that had constrained Putin's ambitions for the EU and Nato. Many believe Conservative-leaning media in the UK and US see little mileage in exposing meddling that helped their own side. The Mueller report found that Russia engaged in

a sweeping and systematic campaign to elect Trump. Britain's official response to meddling accusations was largely denial. Consumed by bitter Brexit divisions and public spending, it took longer than it should have for parliament to conduct an investigation of Russian penetration of British politics. Their findings are suppressed until after the election. Meanwhile UK media has started to look into these issues, shedding light on the actions of Russian-backed groups.

Pray: for the exposure of any untoward influences on UK politics that may yet need to emerge. (Psalm 25:5a)

More: www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/dec/12/britain-mueller-report-russian-media-uk-us

Europe

Greece: 'Two different hells'

Arash Hampay arrived in Greece in 2016, escaping persecution in Iran and crossing the Aegean Sea from the Turkish coast. After spending 18 months on the island of Lesbos, he now lives in Athens, where he works with homeless asylum-seekers. 'It is two different hells', Hampay, now a registered refugee and activist, said, referring to the struggles people face in both places. Greece promised to move 20,000 asylum seekers from overcrowded island reception centres to the mainland by early 2020, following a surge in refugee arrivals this summer. Since October 9,500 asylum-seekers have been moved, sparking anti-refugee protests in affected areas. Meanwhile, some 17,500 people have arrived from Turkey, and overcrowding is now worse on the islands, where 38,800 asylum seekers now reside.

Pray: for the government to end the ad hoc approach to a humanitarian disaster. (Deuteronomy 15:11b)

More: www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2019/12/5/refugee-mainland-Greece

France: Russia / Ukraine peace talks

13,000 people have died since fighting began between pro-Russian separatists and Ukrainian soldiers in 2014. On 10 December 2019 Russia and Ukraine made progress towards restoring peace in eastern Ukraine, at a Paris summit mediated by Germany and France. A joint communique stated, 'The sides commit to a full and comprehensive implementation of a cease-fire, strengthened by the implementation of all necessary support measures, before the end of the year 2019'. A prisoner exchange was also agreed. Angela Merkel said the meeting gave renewed momentum to reviving a 2015 Minsk peace agreement that had stalled. Please pray that nothing will prevent the withdrawal of heavy weapons, the restoration of Kyiv's control over its borders, and wider autonomy plus local elections for the separatist regions. The last time the four national leaders gathered in this format was in 2016.

Pray: for Ukraine and Russia to reach a further agreement for Ukraine elections to be timetabled sooner rather than later. (Isaiah 32:18)

More: www.dw.com/en/russia-ukraine-agree-to-ceasefire-by-year-end-at-paris-talks/a-51602570?maca=en-rss-en-all-1573-xml-mrss

Worldwide

Iraq: Christmas celebrations cancelled

Since the protest movement began in October, 400+ have died, twelve of them security personnel. Over 17,000 people have been injured. 'The situation is a disaster, with weapons in every corner', said the Chaldean archbishop of Basra. 'As a church, we are close to young people in the streets, providing them with food and shelter.' But violence has forced his diocese to suspend all such pastoral activities. The Chaldean church called for three days of prayer and fasting, and out of respect for the dead and in solidarity with all the injured, Patriarch Louis Raphael Sako cancelled all public and church-based celebrations of Christmas. As the Church in Iraq trades tree decorations and holiday receptions for prayers of intercession, let us pray for the current government's corrupt structure to end and for the protesters to achieve the dissolution of parliament and widespread reforms. May hope and prosperity enter Iraq in 2020, and may Iranian ballistic missiles and US troops and defence systems leave. [See https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/04/us/politics/iran-missiles-iraq.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/04/us/politics/iran-missiles-iraq.html)

Pray: for Iraq to be a place of peace, with political justice and no interference from outside the country. (1 Timothy 2:2)

More: www.christianitytoday.com/news/2019/december/iraq-protests-christmas-canceled-chaldeans-sako-baghdad.html

India: intolerance increasing

Across India, there is a rising intolerance towards missionaries, pastors and priests. Violence against Christians has resulted in loss of lives, livelihoods and property. Rights-based organisations have documented over 250 incidents of violence and hate crimes against Christians between January and November. Open Doors states, 'India continues its violence against Christians; Hindu radicals believe they can attack Christians with no consequences. The view of the nationalists is that to be Indian is to be Hindu, so Christianity is "non-Indian". Additionally, in some regions of the country, converts to Christianity from Hinduism experience extreme persecution, discrimination and violence. Pray for Christian converts from Hinduism who are pressured forcefully to return to their national religion. Pray for Christians in India to know God's provision and protection as they preach the gospel in places with anti-conversion laws.' [See also http://www.efionline.org/who-we-are/mission-vision](http://www.efionline.org/who-we-are/mission-vision)

Pray: for the government of India to be open to religious liberty. (2 Corinthians 8:13)

More: www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/world-watch-list/india/

Hong Kong: stalemate

On 24 November we praised the district election results which swept aside pro-establishment candidates and installed democratic majorities in 17 out of 18 districts, a stunning reversal attributed to the months of protests and voters' deep dissatisfaction with the government. But now, three weeks later, prayer is still needed for a commission of inquiry into allegations of police brutality. Chief executive Carrie Lam is in no haste to satisfy any of the demands, which she has repeatedly dismissed as unrealistic. Several opinion polls indicate that most Hong Kong citizens support an independent inquiry, but she insists on leaving all questions about police conduct during the protests to an independent police complaints council. Beijing is in no rush to fix the problem, stating that

Hong Kong will always be a part of China, and urges them to be more like their Macau counterparts in making the 'one country, two systems' principle work. Commentators warn of an even bigger political crisis if deep-rooted grievances are not addressed.

Pray: for God to direct the new independent review committee as it looks into the causes of the protests; may its response and judgments be honest and fair. (Genesis 30:33a)

More: www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/3041165/hong-kong-city-locked-stalemate-no-end-sight

North Cameroon: rampages by militants

Adults were murdered, children were kidnapped, and people robbed in Boko Haram attacks on mainly-Christian villages in the far north of Cameroon. The army has difficulty combatting militants in an area dotted with small, isolated villages linked by poor roads where militants strike and then escape via main roads back to Nigeria. On 1 December gunmen attacked mourners at a funeral in Kotserehé, killing four and wounding three. The following night, they murdered three and wounded another when they swarmed into Zangola, stealing food and clothing; they similarly looted Yagoua. In Mbereche, militants kidnapped 21 young people aged between 12 and 21; next they attacked Tahert, stealing a motorbike and wounding a girl. Those abducted will be forced to become Boko Haram 'soldiers' and fight for the extremists. In November a Christian boy was hacked to death for resisting militants' attempt to abduct him as a 'soldier'.

Pray: for God to comfort all who have been attacked and bereaved, and that the authorities can find the children and block the militants' actions. (Psalm 86:17)

More: barnabasfund.org/en/news/seven-killed-and-21-young-people-kidnapped-in-far-north-cameroon-as-boko-haram-rampage

New Zealand: White Island volcano eruption

At White Island, a privately-owned tourist destination, a volcano violently erupted on 9 December. A live feed showed several visitors inside the crater before the stream went dark. 47 tourists were there when it erupted: currently eight are dead, and eight more are missing. It is possible that not all the 31 patients in hospital will survive; 27 have at least 30% of their bodies burnt, and many have inhalation burns. Questions are being asked about why tourists were allowed to approach New Zealand's most active volcano three weeks after seismologists raised its alert level. Pray that the current police investigation receives honest answers to these and other questions arising.

Pray: for God to surround the families of the injured and the dead, and the medical teams in the burns units. Pray also for the safety of the teams now attempting to retrieve all the bodies from the island. (Psalm 32:7)

More: edition.cnn.com/2019/12/09/asia/new-zealand-white-island-volcano-intl-hnk/index.html

Australia: thousands in climate change rally

20,000 angry climate change protesters turned out in Sydney on 11 December, attacking Australia's leaders in their speeches and chants as bushfires suffocated the city with 'lethal' thick smoke. A firefighters' union representative said that the fires are 'the worst fires we have had in decades. Our members are saving lives, property, wildlife, stock and pets, but they are spread thinly as they are also responding to their regular work. The NSW Government has failed. We have got no water because the state and the country are in drought. We need a government that takes action.' Australia is on high-alert as temperatures soar above 40C and smoke haze blankets the cities setting off fire alarms.

Pray: for God to give stamina to emergency services, provide for those who have lost homes, land, and businesses, and give insights to the government as they address climate change issues. (Psalm 33:20)

More: www.news.com.au/technology/environment/this-is-not-normal-mp-lashes-inaction-on-climate-change/live-coverage/f90157b6caf42e612b0302578d8055bf

USA: Trump impeachment and prayers

After the House judiciary committee released a 300-page report accusing President Trump of bribery, obstructing justice, and endangering the country from foreign powers, Democrats proposed two articles of impeachment against him - abuse of power and obstruction of Congress. Many are saying that he is looking to survive impeachment the same way he built his powerful presidency - by assaulting facts and seeking to expand the limitations of the office he is accused of abusing. Meanwhile, fifty Christian pastors and worship leaders prayed over Trump in the Oval Office as he told them that he needs prayer now more than ever amid the intensifying impeachment probe. This 'faith briefing' was organised by Paula White-Cain, the president's personal pastor and special adviser to the Faith and Opportunity Initiative in the White House. See <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/pastors-worship-leaders-pray-for-trump-in-oval-office-amid-impeachment-fight>

Pray: for the impeachment battle to shine lights of revelation on truths and untruths alike, with sweeping and frank examinations. (Psalm 45:4)

More: edition.cnn.com/2019/12/11/politics/trump-impeachment-strategy/index.html

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