

Prayer Alert

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When they arrived in Bethlehem, Mary went into labour, and there she gave birth to her firstborn son. After wrapping the new born baby in strips of cloth, they laid him in a feeding trough, since there was no available space in any upper room in the village. (Luke 2:6,7, TPT)

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

[A zealous Muslim finds a path to Christ](#)

Hassan, a fervent Muslim in an African country, was fanatical about converting Christians to Islam. He accepted a missionary organisation's offer to help translate the Bible into the Ndam language. After all, many Christian scriptures are deemed holy books in the Koran. In a secular country where tolerance marked relations between Muslims and Christians, he welcomed the opportunity to discuss Scripture with prospective converts to Islam, but he was constantly exposed to Scriptures at translation workshops, and ended up accepting Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. Now he is growing through discipleship and constantly interceding for the salvation of his community.

Praise: God for all Bible translators across the nations, reaching formerly unreached people groups. (Romans 1:16a)

More: www.christianaid.org/missions-insider/2019-zealous-muslims-in-africa-find-paths-to-christ/

[God is ceaselessly sovereign](#)

2019 has been a year of great triumphs and unimaginable tragedies. As we enter 2020 we remember and proclaim that God is sovereign over every corner of the globe, the hope of the nations. Though some situations appear hopeless, we can rejoice that He reigns 'far above all rule and authority, power and dominion', and 'all things are under His feet'. Nothing is impossible for Him. He rules over Iran and China, North Korea and Syria, a deluge in Mozambique, and a water shortage in India. He rules princes, presidents, and prime ministers. He rules over cyclones and volcanoes, floods and fires, protests, perpetrators, persecution and refugees. He rules over corporations, celebrities, and sports. He rules over galaxies, stars and planets, 'and calls them each by name' (Psalm 147:5).

Praise: God and thank Him for his rule over the nations. (Ephesians 1:21)

More: prayercast.com/you-reign.html

[Iraq: mini-paradise in a refugee camp](#)

Baadre refugee camp in Iraq houses 15,000 Yazidi refugees. The leader of Baadre children's centre said that it was her dream that orphaned children freed from IS would find a place full of love and joy. In the 18 months since it opened there has been a huge change in the children. Their eyes now shine again, something they had lost through their terrible experiences with the IS militants. Some were born of rape, the sons and daughters of Yazidi girls and women held as sex slaves. But now they are in a mini-paradise, receiving the love they need, and learning Christian values of mutual respect, help in difficult times, comfort and encouragement.

Praise: God for those able to offer compassion, healing, and a fresh start to vulnerable war orphans. (1 Peter 5:7)

More: www.shelter-now.org/news/news/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=234&cHash=26197b15f2abc94c8b895773f93d2f4c

Pakistan: Christian media

Christians in the world's 6th largest nation make up just 2.5% of the population. Many are poor and experience discrimination because of their faith. The struggle to survive is silencing the voices and eroding the faith of many young people. But also there are remarkable leaders emerging in the Church - strong in the Lord, intellectually bright, culturally aware. PAK7 is a new approach to strengthen and support the Church in Pakistan and her witness for Christ to 200 million countrymen, many of whom know nothing about Jesus. It empowers young Pakistani Christians in the use of media so that they have strong faith, confident voices, and a platform to explain who they are, what the Bible means to them, and the difference Jesus makes in their lives. Click the 'More' button to watch a short video about PAK7's work.

Praise: God for Christian media, shifting attitudes towards Christians and the Gospel. (Psalm 46:2)

More: www.youtube.com/watch?v=HCb_E7U428I&feature=youtu.be&list=PLIWX3tuv-f5LUSS4Slu8poGKOgweNTg4

British Isles

'Let the healing begin'

1 Timothy 2:2 tells us to 'pray for all who are in high positions'. Boris Johnson's first speech after the election urged 'everyone, on either side of an increasingly arid three and a half year argument, to find closure and let the healing begin'. We can pray that his words will be a prophetic declaration, and the division and pain will give way to healing and restoration of our nation. After accepting the Queen's invitation to form a government, he spoke of a 'one-nation conservative government, acting for everyone in the UK'. Pray for the new legislation which will pave the way for the UK leaving Europe on 31 January. Pray for the future trade and security talks that will begin almost immediately.

Pray: for our Government to prioritise according to God's agenda, be a powerful voice for positive change, find closure, and allow healing to begin. (Hebrews 13:17, TPT)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/election-2019-50786580

Quakers challenge the new government

Quakers in Britain are challenging Boris Johnson's new government to give priority to its promise to take action on climate breakdown. They are urging him to ensure that the economic transition puts the most marginalised people first. They want the government to create a humane and fair immigration system and a culture of welcome. They will encourage the Conservative party to focus on its manifesto pledges on crime prevention and rehabilitation, rather than on longer sentencing, to transform justice; and also to promote peace and nonviolence across the UK and abroad. Quakers want to work with the new government to build a fairer, greener society, and encourage politicians from all parties to come together in the national interest. See also @PoliticalQuaker.

Pray: for the Quakers who hope to work with the new government to centre Quaker values and commitment to peace and reconciliation. (Psalm 29:11)

More: www.quaker.org.uk/news-and-events/news/quakers-challenge-new-government-on-top-priorities

Children told not to sing 'Lord' in carol

The headteacher of a London primary school ruled that children should sing 'baby boy Jesus', not 'little Lord Jesus' in the carol Away in a manger (so that pupils of all beliefs could join in). Children also sang edited versions of modern hymns at a carol service and nativity at a nearby church. Margarita, whose children attend the school, said: 'As a family we go to church, pray together, and celebrate Christmas as the birth of Jesus the Son of God. If he was just a baby boy named Jesus, there wouldn't be a celebration in the first place. He is our Lord and Saviour and King of all Kings - that's the whole point.'

Pray: for an end to over-sensitive politically correct attitudes that remove central truths of Christianity. (Psalm 35:20)

More: www.premierchristianradio.com/News/UK/Parents-outrage-as-school-tells-children-not-to-sing-Lord-in-Christmas-carol-classic

Many at risk of flu this Christmas

The flu season has started early this year. Doctors are predicting a rise in cases, with hundreds of thousands possibly having Christmas ruined by flu. GP consultations for flu-like illness were up by a quarter to 7,500 visits in the week ending 8 December. Grandparents visiting grandchildren could be particularly at risk. Children are 'super-spreaders' of flu, and the elderly can develop complications if they catch it. While more over-65s are having a free flu jab this year, coverage among two- to three-year-olds is lagging behind previous seasons, following delivery delays of nasal flu vaccine. These have now been resolved, but some school flu programmes will not begin until January. Experts are urging anyone who has not yet had their vaccination to do so.

Pray: for the vulnerable and not yet immunised to recognise the need to have the inoculation this side of Christmas to help stop the virus spreading. (Proverbs 8:33)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-50807003

280,000 homeless in England this Christmas

Shelter revealed that 135,000 children are homeless in Britain, one in 200 people in England are without a settled home, and 280,000 people are recorded as homeless. However, the charity pointed out that these statistics could be the tip of the iceberg, with hidden homelessness and rough sleeping difficult to document accurately. The scale of the challenge that Boris Johnson's new government must face is daunting. Pray for government action to address the lack of social homes. A spokesman for the ministry of housing said, 'Everyone should have somewhere safe to live, and councils have a duty to provide accommodation to those who need it, including families with children'. There are 1,450 Big Issue sellers working on the streets each week. Homelessness blights lives, leaving lasting imprints of trauma, and many are only days away from becoming homeless.

Pray: for God to touch the lives of those facing serious ill-health or even death from sleeping rough this winter. (Psalm 20:1)

More: www.bigissue.com/latest/280000-people-are-homeless-in-england-this-christmas/

Northern Ireland: strike and Stormont

On 19 December, 15,500 NI nurses began a twelve-hour strike over pay and staff numbers. The NI secretary, Julian Smith, believes the action illustrates why it is important that power-sharing is restored. He is leading political talks which he hopes will lead to a restored ministerial executive early next year. When devolved government was operating, decisions on health sector needs were taken by individual ministers from different parties. But for almost three years, the parties have been absent from Stormont following the collapse of devolution, and it has been left to civil servants, without power to make or overturn decisions, to hold the fort on health. Hours before the strike, party leaders urged Mr Smith to order civil servants to release the money health unions were asking for. It was too little, too late.

Pray: for power-sharing to be restored, and health service negotiations to begin. (Psalm 37:30)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-50839705

Modern slavery: prayer and praise

Pray that the new UK government will prioritise efforts to eradicate modern slavery, both in the UK and around the world. Pray that the departments with responsibilities to tackle slavery will be strengthened, and their efforts focused on achieving sustainable change by protecting those who are vulnerable to abuse, and ending impunity. Also let us praise God for the rescue of 24 modern slavery victims in Southwark this week. The 19 adults and five children rescued by police from five different nail bars in London are thought to have been trafficked from Vietnam. They are now being supported by specially-trained officers, and receiving medical care. Pray that God gives them a hope and a blessed future.

Pray: for networking and laws to put slave traders out of business at home and abroad. (Psalm 82:3)

More: <https://www.ijmuk.org/our-work>

Europe

Albania: unethical building leaves 5,000 homeless

Illegal construction is rife in Albania: many buildings lack permits and don't adhere to safety codes. The earthquake on 26 November killed 51 people, injured 900, and left 5,000 homeless. Nine people were suspected for homicide and abuse of power. Seventeen builders, engineers and officials are suspected of breaching building regulations, causing the collapse of buildings during the 6.4-magnitude quake. Eight of the suspects are still being sought by police. Preliminary investigations have established that irregularities had been the cause of buildings collapsing. Albania lies near a tectonic fault line; pray that the vulnerability of the land will be a major consideration when further construction work commences. Pray for a strict review of building regulations, and for the homeless to be rehoused in appropriate accommodation speedily and to be fairly compensated.

Pray: for all who cut corners in planning and development be exposed and convicted. (Psalm 101:1)

More: www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/12/15/world/albania-arrests-nine-building-violations-quake-killed-51/#.XfZAht2T7SM8

Italy's gospel radio

European Gospel Radio (EGR) is a non-denominational Christian radio touching any country in the world 24/7 on shortwave, streaming and satellite. It is a non-profit organisation, staffed by volunteers and professional broadcasters based in Milan. Since 1988 Christian broadcasters from around the world have trusted EGR to provide a radio link between their radio programmes and listeners globally. They cover Europe, Africa, Asia/Pacific, and the Middle East with daily Bible programmes, Christian news, and information both in English and in regional languages. There are still many places globally and millions of displaced people out of reach of modern communication - FM, AM, TV, satellite, Internet - and even without electricity. However, shortwave radio reaches anywhere.

Pray: for God to continue to grow and protect Christian media. (Psalm 147: 5,6a)

More: www.nexus.org/member-services/radio-and-tv/european-gospel-radio/

Worldwide

Christmas celebrations worldwide

At the Philippines' giant lantern festival on the Saturday before Christmas Eve, villages have a competition to build the most elaborate lantern. In secular Japan, Christmas dinner consists of a feast of Kentucky Fried Chicken with their special festive menu. Saint Nikolaus travels by donkey on the night of 6 December, leaving little treats in the shoes of good children all over Germany, particularly in the Bavarian region. Australians have barbeques, and Santa swaps his reindeer for white 'boomers' (kangaroos). Armenians fast the week before Christmas, and break their fast with a special meal (khetum). Canadian children have an actual postcode to send letters to the North Pole, and thousands of volunteers help Canada Post to respond to the letters received, even in Braille. Since 1979, a nine-metre menorah has been raised on the White House grounds for the eight days and nights of the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah.

Pray: for all celebrating Hanukkah, Christmas, or a more secular occasion to be blessed. (Psalm 45:17)

More: www.elitedaily.com/life/culture/christmas-done-13-countries/874504

Vulnerable churches at Christmas

Here are a few of the many incidents of Christmas attacks on Christians in 2018. Two days before Egypt's Christian celebrations, a specialist in mine clearance died defusing a bomb hidden next to a church in Cairo. On 24 December a Methodist church in Bury offering night shelter to homeless refugees was attacked by arsonists who also stole their laptop and projector equipment. In Indonesia over 90,000 police and soldiers helped guard 50,000 churches across the country, including those previously attacked by terrorists. In India on 23 December a mob attacked forty people worshipping at a church in Kowad, injuring ten people. Militants increase their attacks on Nigerian churches at this time, and in Pakistan a planned attack was foiled in Karachi. [See https://cruxnow.com/church-in-asia-oceania/2018/12/indonesian-police-muslim-youth-to-help-guard-churches-at-christmas/](https://cruxnow.com/church-in-asia-oceania/2018/12/indonesian-police-muslim-youth-to-help-guard-churches-at-christmas/)

Pray: for God to protect His people across the nations who are vulnerable to terrorism during the Christmas period. (Psalm 5:11)

More: releaseinternational.org/christian-persecution-set-to-rise-in-2019/

South Sudan: floods displace thousands

Heavy rain and severe flooding in South Sudan have caused severe damage to refugee camps, destroying housing, roads, and schools. Many have been left in search of dry ground. With water levels often over a metre high, 200,000+ people are estimated to have been affected, causing large displacement of local and refugee communities. Significant damage to food crops and livestock has diminished the communities' ability to begin effective recovery from the most devastating flooding experienced in over four decades. Infrastructural damage to bridges and roads prevents access to communities whose day-to-day survival is dependent on humanitarian assistance. Agencies reported serious flood damage in office compounds, warehouses, staff housing, and student learning and sleeping areas.

Pray: for adequate funding to be available to agencies responding to disaster and helping thousands rebuild their lives. (Psalm 111:5)

More: jrs.net/en/news/south-sudan-devastating-flooding-displaced-thousands-of-people/

Brazil: 'Gay Jesus' film sparks backlash

A comedy depicting Jesus as a gay man has prompted almost two million Brazilians to sign an online petition calling on Netflix to remove it. Netflix has not yet responded or commented. 'The First Temptation of Christ', created by the group Porta dos Fundos, portrays Jesus bringing home his boyfriend Orlando to meet the Holy Family. The petition calls for the 46-minute holiday special to be removed, as it had offended Christians. Porta dos Fundos won an international Emmy for its holiday special last year. Brazil is a deeply religious country, where the Catholic Church and the evangelical Christian movement frequently criticise LGBT+ rights.

Pray: for Netflix to stop abusing freedom of expression with an offensive programme. (Genesis 1:27)

More: www.reuters.com/article/us-brazil-lgbt-media-trfn/netflix-gay-jesus-film-sparks-backlash-in-brazil-idUSKBN1YK1S9

Yemen: continue to pray

Yemen has suffered a three-year civil war. Over 10,000 people have died, and three million have been displaced. Many are starving or on the verge of having nothing to eat. Malnutrition and infant mortality are becoming normal. Pray that ships, aeroplanes and trucks will be given permission to bring the abundance of food and supplies that are needed. Pray that those who seek to exploit others due to high prices will be led by God to put aside greed and help the many who are battling poverty. Pray that those who are fighting one another will put aside their differences and go to the negotiating table to work together for peace. Roads, houses, schools, factories, oil fields, and hospitals are destroyed. Pray that peace will come so that rebuilding can begin.

Pray: for God to bless the charities helping the three million displaced. (Matthew 5:7)

More: www.pray-ap.info/yemen.html

Tornadoes, fires, floods

Tornado activity is not rare in the United States at this time of year, but the impacts and width of recent storms are notable, creating more fatalities in one day than from tornadoes in the past three Decembers combined. Pray for those who have lost homes, possessions and loved ones in parts of Louisiana ransacked with 160 mph winds. Please continue to pray for Australians living in areas under a total fire ban amid dangerous record-breaking heat and wild winds. 100 wildfires are still scorching 5.3 million acres and covering Sydney in toxic smog. In Malaysia, by 18 December over 10,000 flood victims had been evacuated and taken to 100 relief centres. Pray for the people with disabilities, the elderly and children affected by an extreme unabated monsoon season with flood waters reaching 2.5m deep. See [and https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/more-than-10000-evacuated-from-floods-in-malaysia](https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/more-than-10000-evacuated-from-floods-in-malaysia)

Pray: for God to give comfort and peace to all victims of extreme weather this December. (Psalm 23:4)

More: www.theguardian.com/australia-news/live/2019/dec/19/nsw-and-qld-fires-australia-braces-for-extreme-bushfires-danger-amid-sweltering-heatwave-live

North Korea: another rocket and threats

North Korea performed another 'crucial test' successfully at its long-range rocket launch site. The Trump administration is under continuing pressure for major concessions as it approaches an end-of-year deadline set by leader Kim Jong Un to salvage faltering nuclear negotiations. Kim has hinted at resuming nuclear and long-range missile tests if Trump fails to make substantial concessions before the new year. The US ambassador said that ballistic testing was 'deeply counterproductive' and risks ending prospects for negotiating peace, adding that Trump is 'prepared to be flexible' on resuming talks. North Korea called her comments 'hostile provocation', warning that Washington may have squandered chances to salvage fragile nuclear diplomacy. Pray for an end to words of offence and anger.

Pray: for healing to be poured into the rift between the two nations. (Revelation 22:2)

More: www.foxnews.com/world/north-korea-test-long-range-rocket

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