

Prayer Alert

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The Lord is the strength of his people, (Psalm 28:8)

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

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Thank you for partnering with us in praying for the nations.

Blessings,

David Fletcher and the Prayer Alert Team

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Praise Reports

[Hope for the Middle East](#)

On 3rd September, a group of Christians uploaded a video on YouTube, entitled The Greater Middle East Blessing. In the video, Christians from 11 nations in the greater Middle East, sing The Lord's Prayer and The Blessing in 8 different languages. The opening sequence of the video states that they came together across political, ethnic and language divides to pray for, and bless, their region. It communicates hope to the hearts of those who watch it and hope for the Middle East because Christ is there through His Church. May it also encourage people to pray for, and stand with, our brothers and sisters in the Middle East, as they continue to be salt and light in the region. [see](https://www.incontextinternational.org/videos/)

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Praise: God for this demonstration of Christian unity in the midst of trouble and persecution. (Matthew 5:13a)

More: <https://mailchi.mp/3b96542ffae7/hope-for-the-middle-east>

[Deeper friendship between Israel and Germany](#)

During the last two weeks in August and for the first time ever, 185 Israeli Air Force pilots went to Germany for training in joint manoeuvres with German pilots. They also joined together to remember victims of the Holocaust and the massacre of Israeli athletes at the Olympic Games in Munich in 1972. This was a very moving expression of a growing trust and deeper friendship between Israel and Germany. God uses our hearts as places of transformation in order to literally turn the world up-side-down.

Praise: God for touching hearts and minds to bring transforming forgiveness and respect. (Psalm 7:10)

More: <https://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&sl=de&u=https://www.waechterruf.de/&prev=search&pto=aue>

British Isles

[Vaccine trial paused after participant falls ill](#)

AstraZeneca and Oxford University's final clinical trials for a coronavirus vaccine were put on hold after a participant had a suspected adverse reaction. AstraZeneca described it as a 'routine' pause in the case of 'an unexplained illness'. The AstraZeneca-Oxford University vaccine is seen as a strong contender among dozens being developed globally. Hopes have been high that the vaccine might be one of the first to come on the market, following successful phase 1 and 2 testing. Phase 3 vaccine trials often involve thousands of participants and can last several years. Although the cause of the illness has not been confirmed, the New York Times reported the volunteer was diagnosed with transverse myelitis, an inflammatory syndrome that affects the spinal cord and can be caused by viral infections.

Pray: for the recovery of the volunteer and for independent investigations to speedily discover whether there is any link to the trials. May the pandemic be brought to a close with a trusted vaccine. (Proverbs 3:8)

More: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-54082192>

Boris Johnson's proposed Internal Market Bill

The proposed Internal Market Bill was published on 9th September. It addresses the Northern Ireland Protocol - an element of the withdrawal agreement designed to prevent a hard border returning to the island of Ireland. The bill proposes no new checks on goods moving from Northern Ireland to Great Britain. It gives UK ministers powers to modify or 'disapply' rules relating to the movement of goods that will come into force from 1st January if the UK and EU are unable to strike a trade deal. Mr Johnson defended the bill, saying it would 'ensure the integrity of the UK internal market' and hand power to Scotland and Wales while protecting the Northern Ireland peace process. Critics say the move will damage the UK's international reputation after a minister admitted the plans break international law. The EU president is 'very concerned' following the tabling of the bill in Parliament, saying such actions 'undermine trust' between the EU and UK.

Pray: for the spirit of Brexit according to negotiated treaties to be respected. (Psalm 18:36)

More: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-54097320>

Students returning to universities

A leading epidemiologist warned the country is at a 'critical moment' in the pandemic, as students prepare to return to universities. Students moving across the country could cause a wave of infection. Data showed the highest number of detected infections was in younger people. Government scientific advisors said 'significant outbreaks' linked to universities were likely. Pray for University administrators and lecturers to have heavenly wisdom as they take steps to minimise risks on campuses. Current strategies include online teaching, grouping students together within year groups, putting in place local testing and tracing policies and no freshers' week for 1st-year students. The University and College Union cannot see why the government insists students move around the country and engage in unnecessary face-to-face interactions. Also, online learning 'would remove any need to open doors and windows in the winter months as the guidance suggests'. See also <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-54089036> NOTE: The Students Union wants a balance between personal teaching and online teaching; not least because many have paid £ thousands for local accommodation!.

Pray: for a broader adoption of online learning by the universities and for students to exercise responsible behaviour after classes by not mixing outside the lectures they attend. (Psalm 4:8)

More: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-54040421>

90,000 DIY lockdown abortions?

In March 2020, just before the national lockdown began, a notice appeared on the government website seeming to allow women to conduct their own medical abortions at home. Outcry followed and the notice was removed, the government website claiming that it was 'published in error'. Website visitors were reassured that there would 'be no changes to abortion regulations'. The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care assured the House of Commons, 'There are no proposals to change the abortion rules due to Covid-19.' However, now 3 months later the government said, 'DIY abortions could be a permanent fixture in the UK'. The media reported that up to 90,000 women have used the DIY service since it was introduced in March. The government will release official statistics next week. If 90,000 abortions took place it would make DIY abortion the biggest silent killer of lockdown, more than twice as many fatalities as Covid-19. See also <https://christianconcern.com/cccases/diy-abortion/>

Pray: for God to raise up more individuals and agencies to defend the lives of the unborn so that abortion is made unthinkable and inaccessible. (Psalm 139:13)

More: <https://christianconcern.com/news/temporary-diy-abortion-measures-could-become-permanent/>

BBC's radical overhaul as new news channels are on the horizon

Ofcom reported, 'the BBC is too white, middle class, and London-centric' and the new BBC director-general believes 'comedy output has left-wing partiality and needs a radical overhaul as TV and radio comedy are unfairly biased against Tories, Donald Trump and Brexit. He wants to restore 'trust and confidence' by reflecting all sides of the political divide. Tory MP Ben Bradley said that BBC comedy is Left-wing Tories and Brexit rants. 'If they truly represent all licence-fee payers, that needs to change.' Meanwhile, a new news channel is to be launched that will be 'distinctly different from the out-of-touch incumbents' and has already been awarded a licence to broadcast by Ofcom, under the name GB News. Its founder has said the BBC is a 'disgrace' that 'is bad for Britain on so many levels' and 'needs to be broken up'. A rival project is also being devised by Rupert Murdoch's British media empire. See <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2020/aug/29/rivals-plan-fox-news-style-opinionated-tv-station-in-uk>

Pray: for UK media to be balanced, wisely researched and free of propaganda or prejudice. (Det. 16:19)

More: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/09/05/exclusive-bbc-comedy-shows-appear-overwhelmingly-biased-against/>

The distanced church

The following is based on 'Reflections on Doing Church Online' by a researcher in digital religion who points out that people are realising that online church can spiritually interconnect us when we are physically separated. Technological social interaction is growing with weekly congregational rhythms of regular online morning and evening prayers, musical worship (streamed or interactive) throughout the week; there are daily activities for children, regular 'Sabbath' breaks from news and digital media; eating meals together as a family, prayer and contemplation connections; assistance for working from home, shared Bible reading, the encouragement of responsible contact with neighbours, and recruiting for all manner of community support. We can pray that pandemic lockdown re-awakens the church to her mission and calling through fresh expressions of church. Many are saying building-centred churches may never recover from low attendance, and thus low collections, compounded by pandemic-related recession.

Pray: for churches to hear God's call for a mission-shaped church full of disciples with a spiritual hunger, trusting God for meeting their needs. (Luke 12:24)

More: <https://oaktrust.library.tamu.edu/bitstream/handle/1969.1/187891/Distanced%20Church-PDF-landscape-FINAL%20version.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

Europe

Greece: Fire destroys Lesbos refugee camp

A fire has destroyed Greece's Moria migrant camp on Lesbos. 13,000 are sleeping rough in fields, car parks and roads. Authorities have sent three ships to temporarily shelter 2,000 and are working to provide [emergency accommodation](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-54094683) (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-54094683>) near the destroyed camp. Germany called the blaze a 'humanitarian disaster.' Some locals attacked and prevented fleeing migrants from passing through their village. The UNHCR said it was aware of 'tensions' between nearby townsfolk and the migrants. Pray for those working to arrange shelter for 13,000 refugees. 70% are Afghani with 30% from 70 different countries. Authorities placed Moria under quarantine last week after a Somali migrant tested positive for the coronavirus. There are now 35 confirmed cases.

Pray: for the EU to unite and co-ordinate immediate assistance at all levels. (Job 29:12)

More: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-54082201>

Belarus: Church request prayer

Leonid Mikhovich from the Baptist Union in Belarus said recent events have divided the church, 'The situation has created a lot of tension in society as well as among Christians and churches. There are several dividing lines between churches so we have a lot of discussions and tensions. The Church in Belarus has historically been separate from politics. During the Soviet Union, the Church was an enemy of the state, and most churches still feel this way today. Consequently, only the Catholic Church has publicly sympathised with the anti-government movement while others have focused on prayer and street evangelism'. Mikhovich has asked Christians around the world, 'Pray for churches. We need unity in this time, to work together, especially evangelical churches. Pray for our society, to keep us from hate, revenge and bitterness.'

Pray: for Belarusians to have peace and justice, for all in leadership to be guided by God and for the various churches to have grace and unity as they seek righteousness. (Ephesians 4:3)

More: <https://premierchristian.news/en/news/article/pray-for-unity-says-belarusian-baptist-leader-as-political-turmoil-in-the-country-continues>

Belarus: Russian influence

On 7th September Maria Kolesnikova, a Belarus opposition leader was forced into a van by masked men. She was next seen on 9th September at the Ukraine border where she prevented officials from forcibly expelling her by tearing up her passport and throwing it out of the car window. She is one of three women who joined forces to challenge Lukashenko in August's election. The other two, Svetlana Tikhonovskaya, who won 60-70% of votes and Olga Kovalkova, both fled the country. Thousands have been protesting since the disputed vote even though President Lukashenko insisted he will not step down from power. He calls Vladimir Putin 'big brother' and is increasingly dependent on Russia for support. In an interview he said that Moscow needs him too, saying, 'if Belarus breaks, Russia will be next.' Lukashenko seemed to be saying to Moscow, back me up and Russians won't get any ideas about ousting a long-standing leader through popular protests. Mr Lukashenko will meet Vladimir Putin on 14th September.

Pray: for fresh, open and democratic elections; for the release of the innocent protestors who have been detained; pray that Russia does not interfere with the situation. (Matthew 6:13)

More: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-54068451>

Worldwide

Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe: New charge 'a political game', says husband

A new charge against Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, the British-Iranian woman jailed in Iran, is "a new stage in a long-running political game", her husband Richard has claimed. "She is clearly being held as a bargaining chip," Mr Ratcliffe said. Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe is nearing the end of her sentence for spying charges, which she denies. But on Tuesday, she was told she would face a new trial. The Foreign Office said British officials will try to attend the trial. Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe was arrested in Tehran in April 2016. She had been visiting her parents with her young British-born daughter, Gabriella, who is now six. The dual national was sentenced to five years in prison over allegations of plotting against the Iranian government - although no official charges have ever been made public. Gabriella has now returned to the UK. Mr Ratcliffe said his wife and other dual nationals are being held hostage because Iran wants the UK to pay a decades-old debt (£400m) over an arms deal that was never fulfilled.

Pray: that Nazanin and others who have been unjustly imprisoned will be freed; pray that this long-running dispute will be resolved between Iran and the UK Government. (Isaiah 1:17)

More: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-54085814>

Doomsday Glacier is melting from the inside

Antarctica's 'Thwaites Glacier' which is a thousand miles from the nearest research base, has been investigated by scientists from the British Antarctic Survey. The glacier is melting rapidly due to warmer water entering the glacier via huge oceanic channels 600 meters below the surface. This glacier, roughly the size of Great Britain, already accounts for 4 per cent of world sea level rise each year. The accelerating meltdown of the most vulnerable glacier in Antarctica would add over 25 inches to global sea levels - inundating coastal areas and cities such as London and New York.

Pray: For world leaders to wake up to a far greater threat than Covid 19 as Climate Change develops. Genesis 1: 26-28; Psalm 24:1

More: <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/09/09/weather/thwaites-glacier-antarctica-scli-intl/index.html>

Afghanistan Peace Talks Resume in Qatar

Talks are now set to begin in Qatar this week, aiming to put an end to two decades of war and the loss of thousands of lives in Afghanistan. They were meant to begin in March, but instead were held up for months by wrangling over a prisoner exchange plan. The final batch of 400 Taliban prisoners were released last week clearing the path for these talks. The next stage of the process, talks between the Taliban and Afghan government, or "intra-Afghan negotiations", will revolve around an actual "peace deal". Officials, and indeed ordinary Afghans, hope a ceasefire can be agreed although, until now, the Taliban have seemed determined to continue fighting until their demands are met.

They see violence as their best form of leverage, and are cautious of allowing their fighters to lay down their weapons, in case it becomes difficult to redeploy them or they drift towards rival militants in the Islamic State group. Negotiators will also try to establish some kind of agreement on a political future for the country. The task seems daunting. How to reconcile the competing visions for the country? On the one hand the "Islamic Emirate" that the Taliban adhere to, on the other, the more modern, more democratic Afghanistan built over the past two decades.

Pray: for an end to the violence and atrocities; pray that these negotiations will lead to a lasting peace in Afghanistan. (Matt 5:9)

More: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-54016760>

Global pastors face destitution as tithes dry up in Covid crisis

Pastors around the world are facing destitution and even starvation because of the devastating impact of Covid on church tithes. Churches in countries that rely on cash tithes are forced to close their doors. Many pastors are struggling to feed themselves, let alone give anything to those turning to them for help. Wage earners are unemployed or unable to work due to the pandemic. In India, finding alternative sources of income has been virtually impossible for some of the pastors. Relief distributions are carried out by local administrations but Christians are ignored for being Christians. Sub-Saharan Africa reported similar situations. Pastor Adane in rural Ethiopia said Covid had affected all church income streams, making it impossible to pay staff. He said, 'Because of Covid-19, the church is in great trouble'.

Pray: for Open Doors and other charities to be able to provide provision for locked-down churches. (1 Samuel 2:8a)

More: <https://www.christiantoday.com/article/church.pastors.facing.destitution.as.tithes.dry.up.in.covid.crisis/135532.htm>

USA: Historic wildfires Update

Commissioner of Public Lands said new fires are starting in every corner of the state. 60+ hikers and campers were rescued by military helicopters. A fire in Southern California was sparked by a smoke-generating pyrotechnic device used to reveal a baby's gender. That fire is only 7% contained. Hundreds of homes have been lost. From California to Minnesota millions are choking and wheezing from toxic smoke blanketing the area and blocking sunshine. Pray for those with chest complaints struggling to breathe. See also <https://www.washingtonpost.com/weather/2020/09/09/western-fires-live-updates/>

Pray: for the vulnerable to be kept cool and hydrated, for wise decisions to be made by families watching distant flames approaching, for stamina and protection for firefighters and emergency agencies. (Psalm 16:1)

More: <https://eu.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2020/09/08/california-wildfire-updates-lake-edison-power-outages-oregon-evacuation/5743310002/>

Jordan: First COVID-19 cases in camp for Syrian refugees

They are the first cases to be detected among Syrians living in Jordan-based refugee camps, the UN refugee agency in Jordan said on 8th September 'It is a reminder that everyone has been affected by this epidemic, and solutions must be addressed through international solidarity and cooperation.' At the time of writing the two affected refugees have been transferred from the Azraq camp to the Dead Sea Isolation Site. Testing plus isolation procedures are being implemented for all individuals who have been in contact with them. The Azraq camp is Jordan's second-largest with almost 37,000 refugees. Jordan hosts over 1.2 million Syrian refugees, including 650,000 registered with the UN. To date, the kingdom has reported 2,478 coronavirus cases and 17 related deaths.

Pray: for the virus to be contained and for God to protect the vulnerable and defenceless in closely packed, overcrowded refugee camps. (Psalm 40:17)

More: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/09/covid-19-cases-confirmed-jordan-camp-syrian-refugees-200908121425186.html>

World Prayer Together – 19th September – 1200 UTC

Jesus Christ, awesome King of the Universe, is connecting His Body as never before and you are invited to World Prayer Together - a global online prayer experience of repentance, reconciliation, revival and reaching all with His Gospel. Ministry leaders representing 10 world regions will 'stand in the gap', identifying and confessing major corporate sins that characterize their regions as those from other regions empathize and pray for revival and mission breakthroughs for each of those regions. Participants will be led in worship and celebrate His forgiveness by taking communion together globally, and then, since this is also the Feast of Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah), we will blow shofars or other indigenous instruments all around the world at the same time! Details to connect to the call www.worldprayertogether.com. Please pass this invitation on to others in your networks, churches and prayer groups, so they can also join in this magnificent flowing together of His people.

Pray: for Kingdom breakthroughs for our nations and world during September's special season (Joel 2: 12-13)

More: <https://www.ipcprayer.org/ipc-connections/item/13329-world-prayer-together-19th-sep-2020-1200-utc.html>

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