

Prayer Alert

ISSUE 39-2020 | Friday 25 September 2020
www.prayer-alert.net | editor@prayer-alert.net

Lord, hear a just cause; pay attention to my cry; listen to my prayer free from lips of deceit. (Psalm 17:1)

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 click the 'Donations' button above to make a contribution.

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

Blessings,

David Fletcher and the Prayer Alert Team

Praise Reports

[Boris Johnson's son baptised](#)
[Eritrea: 69 imprisoned Christians released on bail](#)
[Thailand: record-breaking baptism despite Covid](#)
[15 rescued from sexual exploitation, five arrested](#)

British Isles

[Coronavirus: ministers balance science and politics](#)
[Justin Welby comments on PM's tighter restrictions](#)
[Kickstart - churches and charities working together](#)
[Abuse at NHS health unit](#)
[Climate Week: Prince Charles calls for 'swift' action](#)
[Christian organisations banned from Twitter](#)
[UK volunteers could be given virus to test vaccine](#)

Europe

[Europe: coronavirus second wave](#)
[Belarus: protests and sanctions update](#)

Worldwide

[Global: digital divide](#)
[Taiwan tells China to back off as airspace 'incursions' rise](#)
[Pray for the Philippines](#)
[USA: Breonna Taylor protests erupt across USA](#)
[Hong Kong: more arrests ahead of rally](#)
[Afghan president addresses General Assembly](#)

Praise Reports

Boris Johnson's son baptised

Boris Johnson and his fiancée Carrie Symonds have confirmed that on 12 September they had their four-month-old son Wilfred baptised by Father Daniel Humphreys at Westminster Cathedral. While little is known about the PM's religious beliefs, Carrie Symonds is a practising Catholic. As it happened, this event provided a solid alibi for Boris when he was accused of travelling to Perugia for a short holiday. The accusation was withdrawn after it became apparent they had mixed up Johnson with former PM Tony Blair. A spokesman said that journalists could 'confirm with the priest' that the PM was not in Italy but instead at his son's baptism.

Praise: God for this news of faith and facts. May Boris, Carrie, and Wilfred be blessed with faith and a future full of God's presence. (Psalm 16:11)

More: premierchristian.news/en/news/article/boris-johnson-s-son-baptised-at-westminster-cathedral

Eritrea: 69 imprisoned Christians released on bail

The Eritrean government has released 69 Christian prisoners, many of whom have been in long-term detention without trial for their faith. Following the release of more than twenty male and female prisoners on 4 September, the authorities are continuing to make conditional releases from the notorious Mai Serwa prison which is known to put detainees in underground cells and metal shipping containers. The releases, linked to Covid-19 policies, are made on condition that bail securities are lodged, usually in the form of property deeds, with guarantors held liable for the detainees' future actions. Christian leader Dr Berhane Asmelash hopes for further significant releases from the 300+ Christians, including children, who remain incarcerated.

Praise: God for the positive actions of the government, may they all be released soon. (Ephesians 5:20)

More: news.barnabasfund.org/Eritrean-government-releases-on-bail-69-Christians-imprisoned-for-their-faith/

Thailand: record-breaking baptism despite Covid

Thailand was the second nation to report coronavirus cases, but now has effectively contained it with countrywide lockdown and continued precautions, now celebrating 100 days without a Covid case. Now a church-planting movement celebrates another milestone that wouldn't be possible without word of mouth conversations, house gatherings, and in-person testimonies. The Free in Jesus Christ Church Association, a Thai-led movement which focuses on village-level evangelism, held the largest baptism in its history. They baptised 1,435 people in one day; twenty ministers lined up across a waist-deep reservoir waiting for new believers to come one-by-one from the shore to proclaim their faith and be submerged for the sacrament. Bob Craft of Reach a Village ministry said, 'We believe it is the merciful hand of God to allow the gospel to spread at this crucial time.'

Praise: God for sparing Thailand and saving so many who had not heard of Jesus until this year. (Titus 3:5)

More: www.christianitytoday.com/news/2020/september/thailand-largest-baptism-covid-fjcca-reach-village.html

15 rescued from sexual exploitation, five arrested

Praise God for a rescue last week that resulted in the arrest of 5 suspects and the rescue of 15 victims from online sexual exploitation. This rescue was the result of close collaboration between Philippine authorities, Australian law enforcement, and IJM. Pray for the survivors as they receive care and for continued strong collaboration efforts with international law enforcement. Read more on the story [here](https://www.ijmuk.org/news/13-children-and-2-adults-in-bislig-city-rescued-from-online-sexual-exploitation-5-traffickers-arrested): <https://www.ijmuk.org/news/13-children-and-2-adults-in-bislig-city-rescued-from-online-sexual-exploitation-5-traffickers-arrested>

Praise: God for the compassionate work of IJM and all who bring freedom to captives. (Job 3:18)

More: mailchi.mp/2d44cfcd54c5/ijm-prayer-update-pray-for-6-children-now-free-663568?e=b13bf09a3f

British Isles

Coronavirus: ministers balance science and politics

On 21 September the government's chief scientific adviser said that without further action the UK could see 50,000 new coronavirus cases daily by mid-October, leading to about 200 daily deaths a month later. He stressed the figures were not a prediction but an estimation if nothing is done to curb the current doubling of numbers every seven days. Speedy action is required to bring numbers down: see <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-54234084>. On 23 September, the day after a Cobra meeting chaired by the PM, new rules were declared: closing pubs, bars and restaurants at 10 pm, and more face masks rules. Fines for breaking rules were increased. The motto 'Stay At Home, Protect the NHS, Save Lives' has been retired after an intense period of lockdown. Now Boris Johnson wants to 'save lives, protect the NHS' and 'shelter the economy'.

Pray: for people to keep within the rules now so that tougher measures later will not be necessary. (1 Peter 1:14)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-54253980

Justin Welby comments on PM's tighter restrictions

The limit for wedding ceremonies and receptions is now only 15, a figure which includes the couple, the officiant, and guests. Funeral numbers remain at 30. Boris Johnson said, 'I am deeply, spiritually reluctant to make any of these impositions, or infringe anyone's freedom, but unless we take action we risk having to go for tougher measures later, when the deaths have already mounted and we have a huge caseload of infection such as we had in the spring.' The Government's rule of six for social gatherings excludes weddings, funerals, baptisms, and organised outdoor sports. Justin Welby said, 'It's clear that the next six months will be challenging. It's an urgent reminder that we must keep supporting each other - especially those who are struggling financially, physically, or emotionally.'

Pray: for God to shine on all communications between the Church and government departments as they review, update and advise churches on ceremonies. (Isaiah 60:1)

More: www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2020/25-september/news/uk/weddings-shrink-again-as-new-covid-rules-kick-in

Kickstart - churches and charities working together

A new government scheme is enabling churches and charities to support some of the most vulnerable in the job market. The pandemic has disproportionately impacted those aged 18-24. Between March and August there was a 124% increase in claims for Universal Credit from people in this age group. With the economic future remaining uncertain, Rishi Sunak announced a new job creation scheme to help avoid damaging long-term employment for young adults. Dubbed the 'kickstart scheme', this package of support will subsidise the employment of 16 to 24-year-olds by providing six-month quality work placements that don't cause existing employees or contractors to lose work; give a minimum of 25 hours per week for six months; paying at least the national minimum wage for their age group; and should not require people to undertake extensive training before they begin the job placement.

Pray: for many churches and charities to succeed in helping participants to develop communication, teamwork skills and a godly basis to build their future on. (Proverbs 16:9)

More: www.eauk.org/news-and-views/kickstart-work-scheme-an-opportunity-for-churches-and-charities

Abuse at NHS health unit

Ten workers at a hospital in Essex were suspended and two members of staff referred to the police amid claims that vulnerable patients with autism or learning difficulties were 'dragged, slapped and kicked'. CCTV footage at the hospital, showing episodes of physical and emotional abuse, was passed to police after an unannounced visit by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection unit. At the time, the ten-bed hospital held eight adult female patients, who experienced 'abusive, disrespectful behaviour' by staff. Staff failed to use 'appropriate restraint techniques', became angry with residents, and dragged them across the floor. Suspended workers included some who witnessed incidents but failed to report them. Pray for greater scrutiny of safeguarding procedures in care homes; for godly principles to generate the visible and hidden wellbeing of vulnerable communities; for complaints made by residents to be investigated and acted upon if necessary; and for God's comfort for the abused.

Pray: for social services and the NHS to be more alert to warning signs in residential homes and hospitals when a culture of poor care has been allowed to be established. (3 John 2)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-essex-54255514

Climate Week: Prince Charles calls for 'swift' action

The Prince of Wales has warned the climate crisis will 'dwarf' the impact of coronavirus. In a recorded message at the virtual opening of Climate Week on 21 September, he said that Covid-19 provided a 'window of opportunity' to reset the economy for a more 'sustainable and inclusive future' and the pandemic was 'a wake-up call we cannot ignore'. In his message, he said, 'Without swift and immediate action, at an unprecedented pace and scale, we will miss the window of opportunity to "reset" for a more sustainable and inclusive future. The environmental crisis has been with us for far too many years - decried, denigrated and denied. It is now rapidly becoming a comprehensive catastrophe that will dwarf the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.' There is growing concern among citizens globally about climate change, although there are big differences about the level of urgency required to tackle the issue.

Pray: for Prince Charles's comments to prompt political leaders to embrace the sustainable future discussed at the Davos summit, so that the world reverts to how it is meant to be. (John 1:3)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-54229229

Christian organisations banned from Twitter

Without warning and with no explanation, Twitter suspended the accounts of Voice for Justice UK, ParentPower, 40 Days UK, and RSE Authentic. Twitter has not responded to requests for an explanation and for reinstatement. All four UK organisations are conservative and support traditional family values in education, seeking to protect children from abuse and exploitation. They also seek to uphold Christian belief and freedom of speech. None of them has at any time expressed or endorsed views contrary to or prohibited by Twitter's terms of service. On the contrary, while supporting the family and upholding traditional moral values, all four respect individual freedoms and the right of choice, and campaign for children to be protected from exposure to materials that will cause demonstrable harm.

Pray: for Twitter to uphold free speech and reinstate all four accounts. (Hebrews 13:18)

More: www.citizengo.org/en-gb/signit/182307/view

UK volunteers could be given virus to test vaccine

The UK could carry out Covid 'challenge trials', where healthy volunteers are deliberately infected with coronavirus to test possible vaccines. Challenge studies were used to test vaccines for flu, cholera and typhoid, but there were treatments to prevent volunteers from falling ill. Coronavirus trials have the added risk that should volunteers become unwell, the only drugs available will control the disease not remove it. University student Alastair Fraser-Urquhart will volunteer if the trial goes ahead. He said, 'I think it might save thousands of lives and bring the world out of the pandemic sooner.' Professor Peter Horby said the trials have the potential to advance science and help us to better understand coronavirus. 'The risk in a healthy young adult with no underlying conditions is extremely low. What's been holding things up are ethical considerations.'

Pray: for scientific ethics to be scrutinised before any contracts are drawn up, and discussions around challenge trials to be laced with uprightness as they look into research. (Psalm 25:21)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-54275096

Europe

Europe: coronavirus second wave

Countries across Europe are seeing a resurgence in Covid-19 cases after successfully slowing outbreaks early in the year. Albania, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Montenegro, and North Macedonia saw higher case numbers in August than they did earlier in the year. Belgium, Italy, and the UK, Europe's worst-hit countries, are seeing a resurgence but, so far, nothing like March and April. Of the three, the UK's figures look the most worrying. France, Poland, the Netherlands, and Spain are taking action to curb a second wave. WHO's regional director hopes the number of confirmed infections worldwide, creeping towards 30 million, will serve as a wake-up call. He said, 'We have a very serious situation unfolding before us. There have been five million confirmed cases and more than 228,000 fatalities across Europe since the pandemic began. But we can fight it again'. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-54189575>

Pray: for informed decisions result in united actions that save lives. (Ephesians 5:15)

More: www.euronews.com/2020/09/22/is-europe-having-a-covid-19-second-wave-country-by-country-breakdown

Belarus: protests and sanctions update

Opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya urged the EU to approve sanctions on officials accused of rigging the recent presidential election. Despite six weekends of mass protests against President Lukashenko over the disputed vote on 9 August, the EU has not followed through on its threat to impose sanctions on 40 Belarusian officials. 'EU leaders have reasons not to push sanctions but I asked them to be more brave'. The opposition leader, who fled to Lithuania after the election, said: 'Sanctions are important in our fight because they could force the so-called authorities to start dialogue with us in the opposition council.'

Pray: for appropriate sanctions against those involved in the crackdown and for political prisoners to be released so that free elections can be held. (Isaiah 1:17)

More: www.france24.com/en/20200921-belarus-opposition-urges-brussels-to-be-more-brave-on-sanctions

Worldwide

Global: digital divide

Covid-19 has plunged the world into an economic crisis and accelerated digitisation in the workplace. Adopting digital technology creates opportunities for millions of new businesses and jobs, but millions without access to technology are left jobless. Unequal access to the internet and technology will impact the unskilled and offline communities in the developing world where connectivity is expensive, slow and unreliable. For example, a vegetable trader in Nairobi may make basic mobile phone payments but cannot sell his produce online because most of his buyers are neither online nor aware of e-commerce. Governments in developing countries lack the funds, and private companies lack financial incentives to invest in broadband for all. The economic crisis triggered by the pandemic will discourage investing digital infrastructure where it is most needed. Pray for the 3.2 billion people who will remain unconnected, those who don't have laptop jobs or access to virtual education or work, to find ways to survive in post-pandemic times.

Pray: for leaders to plan and provide resources to educate those who are unskilled in technology, so that they can benefit from the future digital hiring spree. (Proverbs 19:21)

More: www.gzeromedia.com/unga/

Taiwan tells China to back off as airspace 'incursions' rise

Taiwan has reported a sharp rise in incursions by Chinese warplanes into its air defence identification zone. Foreign minister Joseph Wu urged Beijing to 'return to civilised international standards' after a Chinese foreign ministry spokesman said there was no so-called median line in the Taiwan Strait 'as Taiwan is an inseparable part of Chinese territory', to be taken by force if necessary, even though the island has been self-ruled for more than 70 years. Beijing has ratcheted up pressure on the democratic island since the 2016 election of President Tsai who rejects its view that Taiwan is part of 'one China'. Taiwan accuses China of violating a long-held tacit agreement after China's fighter jets began crossing the median line of the waters that separate the two sides. Now tension between the two is at its highest in years, with Taiwanese fighter jets scrambling to intercept the Chinese aircraft last week.

Pray: for the international community to ensure the median line continues to prevent military conflicts. Pray for peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait. (Isaiah 5:20)

More: www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/09/taiwan-tells-china-airspace-incursions-rise-200922055823777.html

Pray for the Philippines

The Philippines have a Christian majority, with a population of over 100 million. 8-10 million Filipinos live abroad, working as nurses, engineers, domestic servants, nannies, casual labourers and sailors. Many are enthusiastic and effective witnesses for Christ, often in countries where Christianity is most restricted or persecuted. Some have suffered greatly for their faith. The Philippines struggle against poverty, injustice, corruption, poor infrastructure, unreformed land laws, tropical storms, and heavy-handed government. A rampant drug trade has evoked the murder of thousands, with victims rarely those responsible for drug trading. The government's 'war on drugs' looks like a war on slum-dwellers - where most victims come from. The Church includes vibrant and charismatic grassroots movements devotedly following Jesus and moving in the Spirit. Their problems are those associated with rapid growth: splits, false teachings, personality cults, and widespread poverty. Pray for continued growth of Christian ministries among the urban poor.

Pray: for a hunger for the fruit of the Spirit as much as for His power and gifts. (Galatians 5:22-23)

More: www.lausanne.org/pray

USA: Breonna Taylor protests erupt across USA

A Louisville nurse, Breonna Taylor, was asleep with her partner Kenneth Walker III, when they heard a noise. They got up and went to the door shouting 'Who is it?' and got no reply. Plainclothes police entered the home without knocking, mistakenly thinking they would find drugs. Walker said he couldn't see but he fired one shot at the intruders, thinking they were burglars, hitting an officer in the leg. Next, the police fired over 30 rounds and killed Breonna. Their trial for murder was this week, but only one of the officers was indicted, on the charge of first-degree wanton endangerment. No-one was charged with murder. People are protesting nationally, saying that the message of this indictment is, 'We don't care about you, especially if you are black, and even more if you are a woman.' Police are using violence and pepper spray as the situation escalates in Philadelphia, Portland, Seattle, and elsewhere.

Pray: for the frustration and anger of the people to bring a change of attitude so that justice replaces prejudice. (Matthew 5:38-39)

More: edition.cnn.com/us/live-news/breonna-taylor-announcement/index.html

Hong Kong: more arrests ahead of rally

Opposition activist Joshua Wong was arrested over illegal assembly last October and the anti-mask law, which bans people from covering their faces during protests. He spread the news of his arrest via Twitter. Veteran social activist Koo Sze-yiu was also detained in connection with the incident. Referring to a rally planned for National Day, Wong said, 'The government wants to produce a chilling effect on Hong Kong people in order to frighten people away from the 1 October march. I will continue to resist, and we should also let the world know Hong Kong people will not easily surrender. They can't censor our commitment to fight for freedom. The chilling effect will not work and is not the way out.' It is the third time he has been prosecuted since June.

Pray: for successful, peaceful judicial challenges on 1 October so that civil liberties and human rights are restored. (Proverbs 31:8-9)

More: www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/3102855/hong-kong-opposition-activist-joshua-wong-arrested-over

Afghan president addresses General Assembly

President Ashraf Ghani said Afghanistan had UN values enshrined in its constitution, but the pandemic has exposed vulnerabilities. He said: 'The industrial revolution is a driver of inequality and unemployment and we must think ahead of our time. Violence and warfare are another source of turbulence in the fifth wave of global terrorism. Peace talks with the Taliban are not enough: we must get to the root of the terrorism blighting our region and address it as the global phenomenon and threat that it is. Climate change brings floods and drought needing regional solutions based on international models. Afghanistan is the 17th worst-affected country. All the above culminates as an explosion of inequality. But Afghanistan is in the heart of Asia. Our water ties us together; our cultures and languages give us a common denominator; South Asia needs energy resources, and Central Asia's abundance of them makes Afghanistan a connector.' For the full statement, [see https://estatements.unmeetings.org/estatements/10.0010/20200923/aCaK5IQSX0PR/uSRBDvfl7jO_en.pdf](https://estatements.unmeetings.org/estatements/10.0010/20200923/aCaK5IQSX0PR/uSRBDvfl7jO_en.pdf)

Pray: for Afghanistan to step into the potential that God has planned for the nation. (Jeremiah 29:11)

More: news.un.org/en/story/2020/09/1073362

Please feel free to distribute Prayer Alert to anyone you feel will benefit from its ministry. All we ask is that you do not edit or change it in any way or charge for its use without contacting us first for written permission

Prayer Alert is produced in partnership with

The World Prayer Centre, Cornerstone House, 5 Ethel Street, Birmingham, B2 4BG, England.

The views expressed in Prayer Alert and on our website are those of the authors, organisations and websites named, and are not necessarily those of the Prayer Alert Editorial Team, the Prayer Alert Steering Group or the World Prayer Centre or any of its employees or trustees. While we try to ensure that the information we provide is correct, mistakes do occur and we cannot guarantee the accuracy of our material. If you do notice any mistakes then please let us know.