

Prayer Alert

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Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the Lord. (Psalm 31:24)

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

[Niger: abducted priest freed after two years](#)

When Fr Pier Luigi Maccalli, now 59, was kidnapped two years ago by unknown armed men from his parish of Bamoanga, it left the communities he had served for 11 years in shock. Now he is understood to have been freed in northern Mali with four other hostages also held by Islamist extremists. The new Malian transitional government met the hostages. Their release, and that of some suspected militants, fuelled expectations of an imminent prisoner swap. It is not clear if ransoms were paid.

Praise: God for the release of Fr Maccalli, and ask for more detainees to be released soon. (Psalm 118:5)

More: www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2020/10/priest-held-by-islamist-extremists-for-two-years-freed-in-mali/

[Corrupt Kenyan police found guilty](#)

This week the International Justice Mission invites us to join in praising God for a huge step forward in the class-action lawsuit that IJM Kenya helped bring against police, demanding greater accountability. One of the requests in the petition has been granted, and the court has ordered the inspector general to investigate 22 cases of police killings that were documented and presented as part of this petition. This case is important because it shows that the Kenyan government can be held accountable for the actions of its officers.

Praise: God for this result, and ask for the other 22 cases to be similarly investigated. (Amos 5:24)

More: twitter.com/IJMKenya/status/1313860614830391300

British Isles

[Prayer canopy: British values](#)

From a prayer letter sent to European intercessors: 'The British Empire once believed "the sun would never set" based on a firm belief that God was with us because of our faith built on Christian values. The Church can no longer say, "British values are Christian values". To be British is no longer to be Christian. UK's leaders increasingly move us further away from the Biblical values that once underpinned both our democratic and legal systems, which were envied by much of the world. I paint a gloomy picture of the nation I love, but if we are to pray effectively in the current worldwide pandemic, I believe nations should be questioning their values and morals. Do we first love God and secondly love our neighbour as ourselves? The future of the UK depends on the next few months. Pray for the national day of prayer currently being proposed. Pray also that the European Union of Prayer meeting will still be allowed in London from 26 to 30 October with current Covid 19 restrictions. May God make a way with a reduced number of participants.'

Pray: for the increased hunger for seeking God brought about by the virus would continue to grow and lead to a turning back to God at all levels of society. (Psalm 33:12-15)

More: https://mcusercontent.com/ffd99da83edd4244458b59317/files/0a83ffd2-ec59-4c4d-89f2-e8746b37e2aa/Canopy_94_English.pdf

New coronavirus constraints

On 14 October England's chief medical officer said a three-tier alert level system would not be enough to get on top of the coronavirus, and local authorities on very high alert would likely have to introduce further restrictions. On 21 September the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) warned that failure to implement tighter coronavirus restrictions would have 'catastrophic consequences'. SAGE recommended the imposition of a two-week 'circuit-breaker' lockdown to curb coronavirus spread, but the Government ignored this advice (see <https://www.newscientist.com/article/2237475-covid-19-news-uk-government-ignored-scientists-advice-on-lockdown/>) Meanwhile England's three-tier restriction system has begun, with most areas currently in the lowest tier. Northern Ireland will extend the half-term holidays for schools, as well as other new measures aimed at curbing the virus spread. Wales is considering a short circuit-breaker lockdown.

Pray: for people of all ages to be convicted that they must abide by the rules for their community and for businesses to survive this season. (Romans 13:1,2)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-54533924

Boris Johnson to make big Brexit decision

The prime minister is hoping for some progress at the current EU Council summit in Brussels before revealing whether he wants the trade deal talks to continue. The two-day summit is the EU's first Brexit meeting since the start of the coronavirus pandemic. The talks began on 15 October, the day that the PM previously set as his final cut-off point for an agreement. However, on the previous day he indicated he would 'reflect' on the outcome of the summit before making a decision. Stark differences still remain between the two sides on fishing, and the EU wants a deal, but not at 'any price'. France is adamant it should maintain long-term access to British waters as part of any trade deal; 'Britain's demands for annual negotiations over fishing quotas are unacceptable'. Pray for God to give Downing Street wisdom and strength over politically sensitive issues.

Pray: for the interests of UK fishermen to be protected. (Isaiah 30:18b)

More: www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/brexit-news-live-boris-johnson-no-deal-latest-trade-uk-updates-b1041484.html

Care home visitor scheme to be piloted

A scheme to allow family members to regularly visit loved ones in care homes will be piloted in England. The trial will allow a relative or friend to be treated as a key worker and given frequent access, while abiding by the same rules as staff - weekly testing and wearing PPE. Campaigners said the value of regular contact to dementia patients would be huge, but action was needed immediately. All face-to-face care home visits were banned during the height of the first wave of the pandemic. While current guidance in England allows visits on a 'limited basis' where alternative arrangements are not possible, visits have been severely curtailed or prohibited entirely in those areas subject to enhanced restrictions. The care homes will determine their own policies, following the advice of local public health officials and carrying out dynamic risk assessments on the impact of visits on residents and staff.

Pray: for wise health and safety plans to be applied soon, and for all residential settings to be kept free of coronavirus. (1 John 3:18)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-54528021

Covid: school disruption worsening

The number of secondary schools in England sending home pupils because of Covid is increasing rather than diminishing. 21% of secondary schools are not fully open - up from 18% the previous week and 8% in mid-September. This is usually because they have sent home pupils in response to Covid cases. About 7% of primary schools had to send home pupils, up from 5%. These weekly figures from the Department for Education show a worsening picture for secondary schools being disrupted by the pandemic, with the highest figure for groups of pupils being sent home since schools went back in the autumn. Pray for the teachers having difficulty operating in the midst of rising infection rates. Pray for God to give them the stamina and wisdom to successfully balance complex control measures while delivering education for those in school as well as those who are self-isolating at home.

Pray: that councils and the NHS will administer testing systems so that no pupil or teacher is out of school any longer than necessary. (3 John 2)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-54524291

Church anti-racism taskforce pressing for urgent action

The co-chair of the new anti-racism taskforce, the Revd Sonia Barron, has said that the Church of England must not just 'pay lip service' to issues of racism. On 13 October the Church announced the launch of a taskforce, which will propose actions that the Church should take to promote greater racial equality across the Church. The work of the group will include sifting through 160 recommendations that already exist, most of them made by the Committee for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns (CMEAC) since 1985, and identifying any that have been ignored and could be implemented. Their recommendations will be presented to the Archbishops' Racism Action Commission, which will be launched in spring 2021.

Pray: for the Church and movements like Black Lives Matter to successfully address the sin of racism so that racial justice is done. (Malachi 2:10)

More: www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2020/16-october/news/uk/new-anti-racism-taskforce-will-press-for-urgent-action

Migrant dinghies could be disabled with nets

A plan to use nets to stop dinghies carrying migrants across the English Channel is being considered by the Government. Dan O'Mahoney, who leads the Home Office's efforts to tackle illegal crossings outlined the strategy to the Sunday Telegraph. 'We definitely are very, very close to being able to implement a safe return tactic where we make an intervention safely on a migrant

vessel, take migrants on board our vessel and then take them back to France. The problem with that currently is that the French won't accept them back.' He said this was just one of a number of methods his team has considered deploying over the next few months, but he did not go into further details.

Pray: for governments to catch people-smugglers, care for refugees in danger of losing their life at home, and discourage unnecessary financial migration to the UK. (Psalm 31:16b,17)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-54499958

Europe

France, Germany, Spain - coronavirus second wave

President Emmanuel Macron has announced a night-time curfew in Paris and eight other cities to try to curb the rapid spread of coronavirus. It affects 22 million people and will be applied for four weeks, possibly extending to six weeks. Germany announced that bars and restaurants in higher-risk areas must close by 23:00 as the country recorded the highest daily infection figure since the start of the pandemic (6,638 in 24 hours). Private gatherings are limited to ten people from two households. Meanwhile, as Spaniards prepared to travel for a long weekend national holiday, Madrid residents were told to stay home as another state of emergency to curb rising coronavirus cases was implemented. Madrid's leader wants a partial lockdown to avoid deeper damage to businesses: [see https://us12.campaign-archive.com/?e=2b376728db&u=7404e6dc8018f49c82e941d&id=82d44f1281](https://us12.campaign-archive.com/?e=2b376728db&u=7404e6dc8018f49c82e941d&id=82d44f1281) Pray for the businesses facing bankruptcies, for the millions now unemployed, and for the governments running out of resources for furloughed workers.

Pray: for governments across Europe now introducing new restrictions to battle a second wave of infections. (Proverbs 1:5)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-54535358

Belgium: Brexit fish fight fallout

Fish are one of the main issues at the centre of Brexit negotiations. Three times a week, at 6 am, vessels return to Ostend loaded with fish for the auction. Three-quarters of the fish sold here were caught in British waters, which contain more fish than those of the North Sea. Many Belgian fishermen hope that after Brexit they'll keep on having a good catch. Bruno Decordiar spends 60% of his time fishing solely in British waters. He's worried that Brexit could harm his activity. 'We are often at English ports and when we speak with British fishermen they tell us that we take all their fish,' he said. 'If they close the waters I'm sure we'll lose half of our income.' Most fish landed by British fishermen are sold to the EU. A no-deal Brexit 'fish fight' increases competition between Europeans. If there is no fishing agreement, there will be no global trade agreement.

Pray: for justice and fair trading to be upheld according to God's agenda. (1 Timothy 6:10)

More: www.euronews.com/2020/03/02/belgian-fishermen-fear-brexit-fish-fight-fallout

Worldwide

Climate change: better warning systems needed for extreme weather

On 13 October, the International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction, the UN released a report saying the world needs rapidly to raise investment for early warning systems for extreme weather events. Over the past 50 years, recorded disasters have increased five-fold and could increase by 50% over the next decade; one in three people on Earth are not adequately covered by warning systems. The researchers are calling for a change in emphasis, from simply forecasting what the weather will be to showing the impact of that weather system. Pray for good-quality warning systems in the least developed countries and in small island states. The advent of coronavirus has made building early warning systems more difficult. Pray for governments to add climate change threat to pandemic threat as they strategise to save lives and livelihoods, and to focus investment on turning early warning information into early action. [See https://www.un.org/en/observances/disaster-reduction-day](https://www.un.org/en/observances/disaster-reduction-day)

Pray: for sustainable financing of global early warning systems, to enable our planet to fight against the climate emergency on our doorstep. (Leviticus 25:23-24)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-54514008

Philippines: gospel in the midst of obstacles

Local missionaries are finding ways to expand God's kingdom on Mindanao island by holding Bible studies and church services in areas so remote it requires three hours through rough terrain to reach by motorcycle, and five hours during the rainy season. Although the island is untouched by coronavirus it is a nest for communist rebels, the New People's Army, and the Islamic extremist Abu Sayyaf Group. Terrorism is rampant. The armed wing of the Communist Party has waged a protracted guerrilla war against the government since 1969. The government, USA, and EU have designated it as a terrorist organisation. Where the pandemic has reached and lockdowns are in effect, missionaries are using Zoom, Facebook messaging and other internet means for regular fellowship, prayer meetings and Bible studies. Filipinos sharing the Good News of Jesus need our prayers as they face Islam and Communism.

Pray: for God's continued anointing on Filipino missionaries in dangerous outlying Islands. (Mark 16:15)

More: www.christianaid.org/missions-insider/2020-gospel-overcomes-pandemic-other-obstacles-in-philippines/

Sudan: starvation is a war weapon

Starvation is being intentionally used as a war tactic in South Sudan's brutal conflict, a UN-backed human rights panel report stated. South Sudan gained independence in 2011 but descended into conflict 2½ years later, following tensions between President Salva Kiir and his deputy. Most South Sudanese are Christian, whereas the majority in Sudan belong to the Sunni branch of Islam. Religion deeply influences governance and daily life, playing a dominant role in the nation's politics. The brutal fighting has caused incalculable suffering to civilians, and resulted in staggering levels of acute food insecurity and malnutrition. 7.5 million South Sudanese, in several areas, currently require humanitarian assistance. Both governments and opposition forces have deliberately used the starvation of

civilians as a method of warfare in these areas, sometimes as an instrument to punish non-aligning communities, as in the case of Jonglei.

Pray: for God to use this report to activate further international action to end pillaging, deaths, rapes and arson, and for truth, reconciliation and healing to be established. (Ephesians 4:32)

More: news.un.org/en/story/2020/10/1074742

Chad: Christians on the brink

There is 'a serious threat to the survival of the Christian faith in Chad,' says Rev Clément Hlama. Islam dominates Chadian society, and discrimination against Christians is normal. Poor and uneducated Christians are vulnerable to exploitation and are the most severely affected by 2020's multiple disasters. Flooding affected 400,000 people. Christians in rural areas lost homes and harvests. Covid-19 lockdown damaged small businesses and prevented farmers travelling to their fields. Food prices shot up, causing malnutrition to escalate. Measles and meningitis outbreaks earlier this year are in decline, but the viral disease chikungunya and a type of vaccine-derived polio is continuing to spread. Cholera is endemic in parts of the south. This would be bad enough for any country, but Chad's frail health resources cannot begin to cope. Islamic charities are active amongst the Christians, Islamising them through offers of aid.

Pray: for God to help and anoint Christian charities and the church to raise support and aid and renewed dependence on the Lord in Chad's disaster-prone 2020. (Romans 16:17)

More: mailchi.mp/barnabasfund/christians-on-the-brink-hope-for-the-hopeless-in-chad

Latin America: call to pray as Covid cases surpass ten million

Latin American churches have played a key role in helping those affected by coronavirus. Their role goes beyond running food and medicine banks. 'It's a case of being there for people and keeping in contact, without a religious agenda. Sometimes all you can do is hold somebody's hand in the dark.' The Most Rev Gregory Venables said: 'Pray that we will have wisdom in accompanying people through the next weeks and months. Because it's not going to go away quickly, we've got to act wisely.' This area has five out of the ten countries globally with most coronavirus cases. There's illness and insecurity. Most Latin American countries are economically bankrupt. People live hand to mouth; they have nothing. The situation is very desperate. Some of the longest lockdowns in the world and strict rules don't seem to have stopped the spread.

Pray: for the churches as they continue to learn how to be more present in the community. (Isaiah 41:10)

More: <https://www.prayer-alert.net/pa-pray/regions/worldwide/item/13468-latin-america-call-to-pray-as-covid-cases-surpass-ten-million>

China: fears for health of Christian activist in detention

CSW has called on China to release Christian human rights defender and former lawyer Zhang Zhan, who is on a hunger strike, causing fears for her health, after 150 days in detention. She posted videos and articles from Wuhan about the Covid-19 outbreak. Social media platforms are blocked in China. She questioned whether the authorities' response to the epidemic infringed on human rights, and asked if the severity of the outbreak had been covered up. She was deeply concerned about the voiceless Wuhan citizens who face destitution after losing livelihoods. She is accused of 'picking quarrels and provoking trouble' and refuses to plead guilty. Zhang's lawyer met her for the first time in detention on 18 September and reported she was still on a hunger strike and had lost weight. Detention staff are force-feeding her as she refuses to eat or drink anything.

Pray: for Zhang Zhan's immediate, unconditional release. Also, pray for the government to allow activists, lawyers and journalists to exercise their rights to freedom of expression. (Proverbs 31:8-9)

More: www.csw.org.uk/2020/10/13/press/4848/article.htm

Senegal: pilgrimage goes on despite pandemic

On 5-6 October pilgrims from across Senegal flocked to the holy city of Touba, where they slept, ate and prayed together for the Magal religious festival, lasting about a week. Despite coronavirus, roads to Touba were congested. Buses packed with pilgrims inched along and tollbooth attendants greeted people with ungloved hands held out for change. It was one of the biggest events to be held anywhere in the world since the start of the pandemic. Up to five million came after the leader of the Mourides, the Muslim sect that organises the event, issued a call for pilgrims to come despite the pandemic. The Magal's emphasis is on community and hospitality. Pilgrims don't book hotel rooms. Touba's residents open up their homes and travellers bed down, many in each room. Lunch and dinner, in the Senegalese tradition, are usually eaten off a communal plate.

Pray: for Senegal's potential super spreader pilgrims to act wisely now that they have returned home. May they have guidance by local authorities. (Proverbs 11:14)

More: www.nytimes.com/2020/10/06/world/africa/magal-touba-senegal-coronavirus.html

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