

Prayer Alert

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I know that the Lord secures justice for the poor and upholds the cause of the needy. (Psalm 140:12)

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

We are invited to join a Month of Prayer for England during November by praying for our nation at 6pm each day. The initiative is being led by the [Archbishops of Canterbury and York](#). Full info, daily themes and a prayer guide are available [HERE](#).

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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

[Christian girl rescued from forced marriage](#)

On 2 November Karachi police recovered a 13-year-old Christian girl and arrested the Muslim accused of abducting and forcibly marrying and converting her. The action came after a rising tide of protests over the previous validation of the marriage. The girl, Arzoo Raja, was due to appear on 5 November at a court hearing which will hear evidence about Arzoo's age (her parents have provided proof that she was born in 2007) and decide whether she was forcibly converted and if her marriage is legal.

Praise: God that authorities have responded to human rights groups and the Christian community's protests. Pray for the judicial service to bring complete justice immediately. (Hebrews 13:15)

More: godreports.com/2020/11/thirteen-year-old-christian-girl-rescued-from-muslim-kidnapper-forced-marriage/

[Two teenagers rescued from brothel](#)

Praise God for the successful rescue of two teenage girls from a small-town brothel in South Asia. A partner NGO of International Justice Mission (IJM) discovered this case and worked with local police, while IJM helped provide security and legal advice. Police also arrested one man and one woman who were selling the girls for sex in the brothel.

Praise: God for the successful collaboration in this case, and pray for these two girls as they heal in an aftercare home. (Isaiah 25:1)

More: mailchi.mp/efe8a525a74f/ijm-prayer-update-pray-for-6-children-now-free-663940?e=b13bf09a3f

British Isles

[Captain Tom encourages fundraising for lonely](#)

Captain Sir Tom Moore raised £33m for the NHS by walking 100 laps of his Bedfordshire garden before his 100th birthday. Now in the second lockdown, he has launched a new campaign to get people walking to help support those who feel 'lonely and frightened' during the lockdown. His daughter Hannah Ingram-Moore said the family had been 'given an incredible gift of a voice and platform to do powerfully positive things'. Sir Tom said, 'We are in a difficult situation, but we'll get through it if we all join together.' The challenge encourages people to log their walking on social media using the hashtag #WalkWithTom over the next week. He hopes to raise money for his foundation, which aims to combat loneliness and support those facing bereavement. Pray that this initiative will raise not only money but also public awareness of lockdown loneliness that leads to ill health. See also the next article, on mental health challenges.

Pray: for the work of the Captain Tom Foundation as it works with Mind, The Royal British Legion, Helen and Douglas House.

(Philippians 4:6-7)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-beds-bucks-herts-54813455

Lockdown will worsen mental health challenges

42 mental health experts have warned that lockdown will trigger a spike in suicide, self-harm, alcoholism and domestic abuse. In an open letter to the Government, they said the longer the lockdown lasts, the worse this 'collateral damage' will be. Consultant psychologist Dr Keri Nixon, an expert in trauma and domestic abuse, said, 'The lockdown is supposed to prevent deaths from Covid. But it's also certain to cause further deaths, not only from other physical diseases like cancer but from poor mental health which has been worsening this year. It will also lead to intense loneliness and depression in older people: these are killer conditions, closely linked to poor physical health. Ironically, this will make them all the more vulnerable to Covid.' The letter calls for replacing lockdowns with 'focused protection' of the vulnerable. Each of the letter's claims are backed by peer-reviewed academic studies.

Pray: for churches and community groups to be aware of the signs of poor mental health and positively step in to avert further damage. (Isaiah 41:10)

More: www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8903355/Now-42-mental-health-experts-warn-lockdown-trigger-spike-suicide-self-harm-alcoholism.html

Security alert upgraded

The UK terrorism threat has been upgraded to 'severe' after terror attacks in Vienna and France. This is its second-highest level, meaning that an attack is 'highly likely'. Previously it was simply deemed 'likely'. Home secretary Priti Patel said people should be alert but not alarmed, as it is a precautionary measure following the horrific events in Europe recently. The tipping point was the attack in Austria's capital, where five people died in a country not known for being targeted by Islamists. It is well established that terror attacks in one country encourage copycats elsewhere. Pray for people to remain vigilant but not under any cloud of fear, and to report suspicious activity to the police without any fearful thoughts of crying 'wolf'. Pray for MI5 and all security services monitoring suspected Islamist extremists.

Pray: for God to protect our streets, businesses, places of worship, and other vulnerable areas and prominent people. (Deuteronomy 31:6)

More: www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/nov/03/uk-terror-threat-upgraded-to-severe-after-france-and-austria-attacks

Cocaine supplied from CofE-owned house

Four men have pleaded guilty to drug offences after selling cocaine from a property owned by the Diocese of Exeter. In May the group was arrested in Ide, near Exeter, after police discovered 2kg of the Class A drug in nearby woods. The street value of the drugs stash was estimated to be around £200,000. Police also recovered approximately £30,000 in cash. Three of the men admitted conspiracy to supply cocaine at Exeter Crown Court last week, and the fourth admitted to a charge of conspiracy to transfer criminal property, which relates to cash seized from his car. The sentencing will be given on 27 November.

Pray: for the congregation caught up in the scandal to be at peace and not persecuted in any way by the media or community, and for the Church to be untarnished by the incident. (Romans 12:18)

More: premierchristian.news/en/news/article/devon-cocaine-dealers-operating-from-house-owned-by-church-of-england

Pray for spiritual growth in lockdown

Based on a post by Passion for the Nation: 'Ecclesiastes speaks of a time and season for everything under heaven. We can pray that during the four lockdown weeks, God's people will take hold of the opportunity to allow Him to heal any hurts we hold in our hearts, cleanse us of wrong attitudes and motivations, and restore our first love for Him. In the days ahead may the power of the Gospel and the message of the Kingdom be released in greater measure throughout our land. Pray for God's people to stand in the full assurance that His love, His word and His covenant with us will never fail; and for a fresh urgency to use the gifts God has given us with boldness and great courage in Jesus' name. "For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a future and a hope." (Jeremiah 29:11)'

Pray: for a new, fresh, powerful 'spiritual watch' to be established as the Church steps up to a higher level of watching and praying through the lockdown. (Proverbs 4:25-27)

More: us12.campaign-archive.com/?e=be117c6125&u=307c3ce43ea66a282cde62b61&id=2643f8569a

Lockdown worship rules may change

Last week faith leaders from across the UK wrote to the Government, urging it to re-evaluate the closure of worship places. On 4 November health secretary Matt Hancock, speaking to the House of Commons, said, 'Ministers are talking to faith leaders to do everything we can to reach an agreement as soon as possible on the closure of places of worship during lockdown.' He acknowledged the backlash from faith leaders on banning worship services during the second lockdown, and said he understood 'the impact of this infringement on liberties'. Richard Graham, MP for Gloucester, and Sir Edward Leigh both argued that places of worship should open again as soon as possible, as the buildings have enforced Covid-19 safety measures. Theresa May said that banning worship meetings could set a 'dangerous' precedent.

Pray: for God to be in the midst of government conversations and debates around freedom to worship safely in church buildings and wherever a worship service is being held. (Hebrews 10:25)

More: premierchristian.news/en/news/article/matt-hancock-hints-worship-rules-during-lockdown-may-change

Locked-down churches keeping in touch with children

How can we worship and share our lives, when the two ways of being together - in person and online - are often really difficult for families? Making online church work for children means including them. Six-year-old J says, 'I like talking to everyone on Zoom after the service.' A mother said, 'It's good when someone asks them questions, and listens. They don't like listening to adult conversations.' A three-year-old now celebrates the eucharist with the Vicar with his own cup, plate, and bread. Rev'd Mo Baldwin makes Zoom

interactive. Children have treasure hunts, breakout-room challenges like artwork, or designing something. The families also record elements of the service. Beth's 12-year-old daughter coordinates Kids Church Online, including creating worship herself and encouraging other families to make things and send them in. Rev'd Stephen Gardner reads a bedtime story online every night. A mum said, 'We all cuddle up together to watch.'

Pray: for our churches to grow spiritually as they embrace creatively spreading the Gospel message to every age group, and for God to comfort all who feel a loss of contact with their friends. (1 Corinthians 14:26)

More: www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2020/30-october/features/features/not-the-time-to-lose-touch

Europe

Aegean Sea earthquake

An earthquake in the Aegean Sea on 30 October (<https://edition.cnn.com/2020/11/01/europe/turkey-greece-aegean-earthquake-scli-intl/index.html>) has so far killed 107 people in Turkey and Samos. It is not yet clear on how many people are still under the rubble of 20 Turkish buildings; 144 survivors are still in hospital and over 1,000 people were injured in Turkey. A 'mini tsunami' flooded streets in Turkey and Samos. Four days after being buried alive a young girl called Ayda was pulled from the rubble. As she was being taken to an ambulance, wrapped in a thermal blanket, everyone clapped and chanted 'God is great'. Her rescue came a day after a three-year-old girl and a 14-year-old girl were also pulled out alive from collapsed buildings. Pray for those still waiting for news of lost relatives - and for any more still alive to be found.

Pray: for aid agencies such as the Red Cross and Red Crescent and all the rescue workers to be restored emotionally and physically. (Psalm 51:12)

More: www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8908569/Turkey-earthquake-Girl-pulled-alive-rubble-FOUR-DAYS-quake-destroyed-home.html

Austria: terror attack in Vienna

A 20-year-old gunman, Kujtim Fejzulaj, previously convicted of trying to travel to Syria to join IS, was killed by police after he had gone on a shooting spree, killing four different people at different locations in Vienna. 23 people including a policeman were wounded; three of them are still in a critical condition. The victims were in an area near the central synagogue, full of people in bars and restaurants. Several arrests were made during searches. The IS group claimed responsibility, but there is no evidence of any accomplice. Fejzulaj had been freed from prison in December 2019 after completing a de-radicalisation programme.

Pray: for God to comfort all who are in mourning, shock, and fear, and for this incident not to inspire copycat attacks. (Psalm 23:4)

More: www.france24.com/en/europe/20201103-islamic-state-group-claims-responsibility-for-vienna-terrorist-attack-without-providing-evidence

France: secularism causing divisions

The text of the 1905 French law that lays down the separation of church and state in the country doesn't specifically mention secularism. Nevertheless, the principle is a key part of the country's political fabric. But tensions between some sections of Islam and an interpretation of secular values have now become more pronounced, particularly in recent weeks. Protests have erupted in recent days in many Muslim countries against France, its president, Emmanuel Macron, and its perceived animosity towards their faith. France claims it is officially neutral, supporting neither religion nor the absence of it.

Pray: that the growing divisions will be healed. May the absence of a state religion will cause many to turn to Christ. (1 John 1:6)

More: www.euronews.com/2020/11/02/what-is-secularism-and-why-is-it-causing-such-divisions-in-france

Worldwide

USA: election disorder

Donald Trump had previously said if the presidential election were close, he would accuse his opponents of voter fraud and trying to steal victory. Before all votes are counted he has done just that, claiming to have won, and launched a supreme court challenge, baselessly alleging fraud. At the time of writing, Biden is in the lead, but by the slenderest of margins. On 5 November, Trump tweeted, 'I hereby claim victory' - despite trailing at the time by 214 votes to 253. Pray for acceptance to replace the anger in people wanting to win more than they want to be right. With the nation on edge, the final result may not be known for days. Pray for peace on the streets.

Pray: for the USA to address the deep relational rifts created and / or exposed by this election, and for truth, humility and justice to win this election for God's chosen leading team. (Proverbs 22:4)

More: www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-election-2020/us-election-results-biden-trump-live-b1611626.html

Armenia: genocide

The Azeri-Turkey offensive is worsening, with cluster bombs falling on innocent civilians even as they sheltered in churches. There is justifiable concern among Armenian Christians of a rising threat of ethnic cleansing from their historic Christian land. On 1 November the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights warned that the indiscriminate attacks on densely populated areas with associated loss of civilian life and destruction of infrastructure 'contravenes international humanitarian law' and 'could be a war crime'. Recent reports indicate that large supplies of Israeli-built weapons, including devastating 'kamikaze drones' and unmanned aerial vehicles have been supplied to Azerbaijan and deployed against Christian civilians. Since September 90,000 Armenians, over half the region's population of 144,000, have fled the conflict to take refuge in Armenia. Pray that the supply of military weapons to Azerbaijan will cease immediately and for guarantees that Israeli technology, including lethal drone strikes, will not be used in the conflict.

Pray: for efforts to bring an end to hostilities, and for the implementation of a ceasefire. (2 Thess. 3:3)

More: news.barnabasfund.org/An-urgent-call-to-prayerful-action-as-military-strikes-on-Christians-in-Nagorno-Karabakh-raise-spectre-of-another-Armenian-genocide/

Philippines: Typhoon Goni

The Philippines is used to powerful storms, but this year preparations are being complicated by Covid-19 which has killed 7,221 people so far. On 1 November, in preparation for Typhoon Goni, 361,000 people were evacuated to tents inside school gymnasiums and government-run evacuation centres. Coronavirus patients are treated in isolation tents. Goni damaged 90% of the buildings in Virac, the first town it struck. Pray for the 70,000 residents who have lost so much, including lives. Pray for those in several other towns still inaccessible on 5 November. Pray for successful relief efforts being complicated by the pandemic. Pray for the 370,000 displaced people not knowing what they will find when they return home. Tens of thousands of homes are completely destroyed. Goni is the worst typhoon to hit the Philippines in seven years. With communication not yet completely restored it is difficult to obtain information. Pray for speedy repairs to electricity, water, and cellular networks.

Pray: for the UN humanitarian teams, Red Cross, and all who are supporting / rescuing victims and assessing the damage. (Psalm 107:28)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-54775430

Climate change data highlight priorities

About nine million species of animals and plants are exposed to changes in the global climate. Monitoring how climate change affects wildlife and ecosystems has become critical for directing conservation measures where life is most at risk. Today the world's biggest iceberg is bearing down on South Georgia. The Antarctic ice giant, similar in size to the island or to the county of Somerset, is expected to anchor itself offshore of the wildlife haven; posing a grave threat to local penguins and seals. Their normal foraging routes could be blocked, preventing them from feeding their young properly. All creatures living on the seafloor would be crushed [where it touches ground](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-54798031) (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-54798031>). David Attenborough said the world is a unique and spectacular landscape, if we act now we can put it right and save and protect the animals and plants we have endangered throughout centuries of changing the natural world.

Pray: for the scientists, labs, and governments working to untangle how they might prevent the extinction of one million animal and plant species. (Leviticus 25:23-24)

More: www.euronews.com/2020/11/02/tackling-the-biodiversity-crisis-climate-change-data-highlight-priorities

Iran: Christian flogged for sharing communion wine

Harsh sentences reflect dark times for both recognised and underground churches in Iran. The flogging of an underground Christian, and the harsh prison sentence upheld for the pastor of a legally-recognised church, reflect the growing dangers for Christians. Mohammad Reza Omid received 80 lashes for drinking communion wine. Alcohol is forbidden only for Muslims, but since Iranian law does not recognise his conversion from Islam to Christianity, he was sentenced to the lashes in September 2016. The sentence was not carried out until recently. Two of his fellow house-church members, Mohammad Ali (Yasser) Mossayebzadeh and Zaman (Saheb) Fadaee, have also been sentenced to flogging. Omid received 80 lashes in 2013 for the same offence. Advocacy director Mansour Borji said the lashes were 'inhumane and humiliating'.

Pray: for God to surround His Church with peace, protection and perception in all their plans and movements. (John 17:15)

More: morningstarnews.org/2020/10/christian-flogged-in-iran-pastor-and-wife-forced-to-flee/

Saudi Arabia: UN worried about activist's health

A Saudi women's rights activist, Loujain al-Hathloul (31), was arrested along with about a dozen other female activists in May 2018. She has been on hunger strike for a week, and on 5 November her health was said to be rapidly worsening. UN experts are calling for her immediate release. She was arrested just weeks before Saudi Arabia lifted a decades-old ban on female drivers, yet she is still in prison. Her deteriorating health was 'deeply alarming', said the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The committee, made up of 23 independent experts, also voiced serious concern 'by recent information concerning the conditions of Ms al-Hathloul's prolonged detention, including reports that she is not allowed regular contact with her family'. Some activists arrested with her were provisionally released. Others remain in detention, subjected to waterboarding, sexual harassment, and court trials for contacting media, diplomats and human rights groups.

Pray: for the Saudis to obey the UN experts and legal system and agree to release the unproven 'traitors'. (Romans 13:1a)

More: www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/11/5/health-of-saudi-women-activist-on-hunger-strike-worsening-un

India: Covid vaccine by February?

An Indian government-backed Covid-19 vaccine could be launched as soon as February, months earlier than expected. Final trials begin this month and studies have so far shown it is safe and effective, said a senior government scientist. Bharat Biotech is the private company developing Covaxin. 'The vaccine has shown good efficiency', said senior ICMR scientist Rajni Kant, who is also a member of the Covid-19 task-force.

Pray: for this research body and the many others working to save lives with a Covid vaccination and cure. (3 John 2)

More: timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/india-made-covid-19-vaccine-could-be-launched-as-early-as-feb-govt-scientist/articleshow/79058766.cms

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