

Prayer Alert

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Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. (Philippians 4:6)

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

You may like to explore our new online [Prayer Alert Prayer Wall](#) where we can add our own prayers and praise, interactively. We trust that you will find this helpful and encouraging, as we pray from our homes during lockdown.

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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

[Hymn 'As the deer' at American music awards](#)

Katy Perry went back to her Christian roots for her performance at the American Music Awards. The pop star was joined by country music star Darius Rucker to sing their duet 'Only love', but she began the performance with a short version of the hymn 'As the deer' that is based on Psalm 42:1: 'As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God.' Perry's parents are pastors and started their daughter's career as Christian artists. She got her big break in 2008 with a secular song. Then in 2018 she said, 'My mum has prayed for me my entire life, hoping I'd come back to God. I never left him, I was just a little bit secular, I was more materialistic and more career-driven. But now it's more about spirituality and heart wholeness.'

Praise: God that such a beautiful hymn was shared on the massive Music Awards platform. (Psalm 7:17)

More: premierchristian.news/en/news/article/katy-perry-sings-hymn-as-the-deer-at-american-music-awards

[Archbishop: go to church on Christmas Day](#)

The Archbishop of Canterbury has urged people to return to church on Christmas Day, as social distancing rules are relaxed over the festive period. Justin Welby said that people should not be put off physically attending worship on 25 December. He told BBC's Newsnight, 'Yes, of course they should go to church. Go to church online. Go to church physically. You'll find that far fewer people will be there, because we're keeping people two metres apart. Go to church, pray. Remember at the heart of Christmas is the gift of Jesus Christ, by God, to give us hope and life and a future. And it's that hope that's at the centre of Christmas.' The archbishop added, 'I will certainly be in church. That's one of the safest places going at the moment, and it will be permitted from the end of lockdown. But there will be very few people there.'

Praise: God for the opportunity to worship, celebrate and care for each other at Christmas. (Exodus 10:9)

More: premierchristian.news/en/news/article/archbishop-urges-people-to-return-to-church-on-christmas-day

British Isles

[UK scientists warn over Christmas mingling](#)

People across the UK are being urged to think carefully before they take advantage of the relaxation of restrictions over Christmas. Government adviser Prof Andrew Hayward says family gatherings are a 'recipe for regret' for people. The devolved administrations have agreed UK-wide rules to allow families to meet between 23-27 December and three households will be allowed to be in each other's

homes. The plans have been criticised by pub owners as meet-ups in hospitality venues are banned. The head of the European Commission has said countries could face a third wave if they ease restrictions too early. Nearly 60 million cases have been confirmed globally with around 1.4 million deaths, according to Johns Hopkins University.

Pray: for families to consider compassionately their vulnerable members and act sensibly this Christmas. (Luke 1:14)

More: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/live/uk-55069308>

Red Wednesday - 25 November

25 November was dedicated to drawing attention to persecuted Christians. A Twitter account advertised the date and invited comments. Archbishop Eamon tweeted on behalf of Catholic News Ireland, 'Covid-19 restrictions remind us to pray for those who are never free to worship and who are imprisoned for their faith' Fr Michael J Kane tweeted, 'Our Church lit up in red to mark Red Wednesday, showing support & solidarity with our persecuted Christian brothers and sisters around the world.' Dominic Raab tweeted, 'The UK stands in solidarity with those who suffer for their faith or belief, as we continue to strive for freedom of religion or belief for all. We join churches & landmarks around the world, turning red in support of persecuted Christians everywhere.' The Carmelite Nuns GB tweeted, 'Today is #RedWednesday. We pray especially for persecuted Christians throughout the world and for the important work of Aid to the Church in Need.'

Pray: for the attention drawn to persecuted Christians to grow, and for the many who tweeted their support to continue successfully to sound the alarm for religious freedom. (Matthew 5:10)

More: twitter.com/DominicRaab/status/133171854656554176?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Etweet

Covid-19 vaccines

British / Swedish drugmaker AstraZeneca has announced promising results in developing a vaccine. An early analysis of some of its late-stage clinical trials, conducted in the UK and Brazil, showed that its coronavirus vaccine was 70.4 percent effective in preventing Covid-19, suggesting that the world could eventually have at least three working vaccines - and greater supply - to help curb the pandemic. However, doubts are being expressed about the results of the trials, mainly because they are based on a very small sample of people. British scientists are defending the validity of the findings, and look forward to further evidence becoming available in December. See <https://uk.news.yahoo.com/british-scientists-defend-astrazeneca-oxford-173125779.html>

Pray: for God's anointing of wisdom and perception to be poured over the scientists, NHS, researchers, and all fighting the Covid battle with research and development. (Isaiah 11:2)

More: www.nytimes.com/live/2020/11/23/world/covid-19-coronavirus

Assisted dying challenge

Paul Lamb is paralysed below his neck apart from limited movement in his right arm after a car crash in 1990. He said he was 'devastated' after a Court of Appeal refused him permission to bring a legal challenge over assisted dying. He argued the current law, banning assisted suicide, is discriminatory and breaches his human rights. He said he felt 'powerless' and urged the government to launch an inquiry. The Ministry of Justice said any change in the law would have to be considered by MPs. In an open letter to justice secretary Robert Buckland, Mr Lamb said he was writing 'to urge you to take notice of this decision and launch an inquiry into assisted dying, and ask if you might meet with me to discuss this important matter'. Humanists UK are supporting Mr Lamb in his case.

Pray: for Mr Lamb to come to terms with the law of the land and not prepare to starve to death as he has threatened. May he have peace of mind as his physical needs are met. (Ecclesiastes 7:17)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-leeds-55076452

Spending review 2020

At his spending review on 25 November, the Chancellor of the Exchequer set out the Government's plans for public spending. It is an important fiscal event, with decisions made over hundreds of billions of pounds of public money. It is also an important political event, as the government sets out relative priorities and allocates funding towards achieving its policy objectives. The initial reaction from the Institute for Fiscal Studies was this: 'Rishi Sunak has been spending truly astonishing amounts of money this year and plans to continue to do so next year in response to Covid. Yet this was a spending review in which he reduced planned spending into the future, cutting over £10 billion from departmental spending plans next year and for subsequent years.' (See also the next article.) Pray for the 1.3 million public sector workers who will see their pay frozen in 2021-2 and for the projected 2.6 million unemployed by spring. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-55072003>

Pray: for the chancellor to find creative ways to ease the damage made by recent emergency spending. (Malachi 3:10)

More: www.ifs.org.uk/spending-review-2020

Reactions to the cut in aid budget

The Government has been criticised after announcing it will reduce its foreign aid budget from 0.7% to 0.5%. Rishi Sunak intends to return to 0.7% 'when the fiscal situation allows'. Church leaders, politicians, and other public figures say the reduction was unnecessary and have taken to Twitter to express their opinions. The Archbishop of Canterbury tweeted, 'The cut in the aid budget - made worse by no set date for restoration - is shameful and wrong. It's contrary to numerous government promises and its manifesto. I join others in urging MPs to reject it for the good of the poorest, and the UK's own reputation and interest.' Baroness Liz Sugg has resigned as the minister for overseas territories because of the decision. The reduced aid budget will require a Commons vote: here is no assurance the Government will win. See also the article above, 'Spending Review 2020'.

Pray: for the Government to have God's wisdom and guidance to make the right decisions. Pray also for all who will be affected by the decisions to know God's provision and comfort. (Psalm 34:17)

More: premierchristian.news/en/news/article/how-the-church-has-reacted-to-government-cutting-aid-budget

Christian girl forced to wed Muslim abductor

A Christian charity has called on Boris Johnson to grant asylum to a 14-year-old Christian girl, Maira Shahbaz, who was abducted at gunpoint in April and forcibly married and converted to Islam by a married Muslim man. Aid to Church in Need, which supports persecuted Christians around the world, is urging concerned Christians to add their names to an online petition to the PM on Maira's behalf. In August she fled the home of her alleged husband. The Lahore High Court ordered her to return to her abductor and ruled that she was legally married to him. Regardless of court decisions, her life will for ever be in danger from an honour killing by extremists considering her an apostate. See her [video statement](https://premierchristian.news/en/news/article/we-are-constantly-receiving-death-threats-14-year-old-pakistani-christian-seeking-asylum-in-the-uk-speaks-in-a-video-statement) (<https://premierchristian.news/en/news/article/we-are-constantly-receiving-death-threats-14-year-old-pakistani-christian-seeking-asylum-in-the-uk-speaks-in-a-video-statement>)

Pray: for Britain to show its commitment to this Christian's welfare and establish Maria's release from, a sham marriage. (Psalm 82: 3,4)
More: <https://www.christianpost.com/news/christians-urge-britain-asylum-pakistani-girl-muslim-abductor.html>

Europe

Berlin: car crashes into Merkel's gate

A car with an anti-globalisation slogan on its side crashed into the gate of the office of German chancellor Angela Merkel in Berlin on 25 November. The driver is in custody, and Berlin police wrote on Twitter they are investigating if he hit the gate intentionally. Photographs from the scene of the incident showed a vehicle with the words 'Stop globalisation politics' written in white on the Volkswagen sedan's right side and 'You damn killers of children and old people' scrawled on the other. The police have said they do not suspect an extremist attack. The chancellor was due to host a video call with federal state leaders on the day of the crash, during which a lockdown extension and additional restrictions to deal with the coronavirus pandemic over the holidays were expected to be discussed.

Pray: for this to be a one-off incident which no 'extremists' or 'radicals' copy. (Psalm 34:14)
More: www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/angela-merkel-car-crash-office-gate-berlin-b1761538.html

EU willing to be 'creative' to seal Brexit deal

Ursula von der Leyen said the EU is willing to be 'creative' to get a deal with the UK and that European interests will best be served by leaders backing any compromise that emerges. There is concern among member states that the UK might successfully push the commission into making concessions which will give British businesses an advantage in the marketplace over the decades to come. Ms von der Leyen said she trusted Michel Barnier's 'skilful steer'. The EU's chief negotiator is expected to go to London on 27 November in a last-ditch push for an agreement. 'These are decisive days for negotiations with the United Kingdom', von der Leyen said; 'I cannot tell you today if in the end, there will be a deal.' She said the commission's negotiating team was open-minded as to how to bridge the gaps between the two sides, but that they were holding firm on key principles.

Pray: for negotiations around fishing access and state aid and tax transparency to be directed by God's plans for the future of the nations. (Proverbs 16:9)
More: www.theguardian.com/politics/2020/nov/25/von-der-leyen-eu-willing-to-be-creative-to-seal-brexit-deal

Worldwide

Peru: seven days of upheaval

A lot can happen in seven days. A president was ousted. An interim president resigned. A new president was sworn in. The nation is in political upheaval, with Peruvians in protests marked by accusations of police brutality and a devastating economic decline. They also have the third highest per capita Covid mortality rate. Beneath these pressing issues lies an even more critical spiritual reality. Though 94% claim to be Christian, the majority have yet to know the life-changing love, freedom, and forgiveness of Jesus. Most adhere to traditional Catholicism, often mixed with indigenous beliefs. Fifteen people groups remain tragically unreached by the Gospel. [See https://prayercast.com/peru.html](https://prayercast.com/peru.html)

Pray: for a return to peace and stability after decades of corruption, dictatorships, and terror; for humble pastors trained in biblical theology who reflect Jesus to a watching culture. (Matthew 5:9)
More: edition.cnn.com/videos/world/2020/11/20/peru-protests-congress-impeachment-martin-vizcarra-francisco-sagasti-romo-pkg-intl-ldn-vpx.cnn

USA: Biden's transition begins

On 24 November, Emily Murphy, the administrator of the General Services Administration, formally designated Joe Biden as the apparent winner of America's presidential election, providing federal funds and resources to begin an official transition from Trump to Biden. The new president must now fill 4,000 political positions ([see https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/election-us-2020-55045075](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/election-us-2020-55045075)). President Trump has spent over two weeks claiming that he had won the election and pushing conspiracy theories about fraudulent voting. He tweeted, 'Our case STRONGLY continues; we will keep up the good fight, and I believe we will prevail! Nevertheless, in the best interest of our country, I am recommending that Emily and her team do what needs to be done with regard to initial protocols, and have told my team to do the same.' Pray for swift, smooth and unhindered organising of the president-elect's packed schedule, particularly the daily security briefing.

Pray: for the president-elect's nominations for the next government to be God's provision for rebuilding and unifying the divided states of America. (Proverbs 15:22)
More: www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-election-2020/trump-news-live-biden-cabinet-transition-election-b1760800.html

North Korea: Christian gives chilling testimony

A rare insight into the persecution endured by Christians living under the totalitarian North Korean regime has been given by Sookyung Kang, a Christian who fled her homeland to be able to worship freely without risking her life. She said, 'The regime tries to control people

by idolising and divinising the leaders. I believe the Gospel gives freedom to everyone. But the regime takes away freedom and won't allow people to think freely.' North Korea has set up 'quarantine camps' for Covid-19 patients, where they are deprived of food and medicine, causing many to die of starvation. Some believers have been executed simply for owning a Bible. Tens of thousands of Christians - sometimes entire families - have been incarcerated in labour camps where they are abused, tortured and worked to death.

Pray: for God to put a supernatural security net around His people living, working and worshiping under continual religious persecution. (John 17:15)

More: news.barnabasfund.org/North-Korean-Christian-who-fled-the-closed-state-gives-chilling-testimony/

India: court orders protection for displaced Christians

A high court in Chhattisgarh state has ordered the district administration of Kondagaon to facilitate the safe return of Christians displaced from three villages after twelve people filed a Public Interest Litigation demanding that security be provided for them. In September the Christians were called to meetings where they were told to recant their Christian faith. When they refused, they were attacked by radical Hindu nationalists and their homes were destroyed. Since the attack, these Christians have remained displaced. 'We ran for our lives', said a survivor. 'The death threats they hurled against us were very frightening. There was no other way than to flee from the village. Our lives are in danger. The villagers have vowed to kill us if we return. Our lives are being badly affected by the dangerous atmosphere created by the villagers.'

Pray: for the authorities to be able to keep their promise to provide protection if the Christians return to their homes. May they have the freedom to worship in a safe atmosphere. (2 Thessalonians 3:3)

More: www.assistnews.net/central-indian-court-orders-authorities-to-protect-displaced-christians/

Global: day labourers face pandemic uncertainty

FARMS International has helped Christians grow small businesses into sustainable sources of income through microcredit loans. In turn these businesses support their communities and the local church. But many small businesses have faced challenges with the pandemic. Programmes that depend on face-to-face consumers are struggling, and have been for months. Even as restrictions lift in some places, there's still fear of hiring the person who's going to bring Covid to the family. Because of that fear it's really difficult for day labourers. Workers in cities are especially challenged to keep their businesses afloat. Fewer people are travelling or willing to be in close contact with someone else. The same holds for carpenters or people who do housework. These people are on the fringes, without a secure source of income and the things that follow, like food and education. See also <https://www.farmsinternational.com/>

Pray: for God to bless current loan recipients in difficult situations, and give leaders wisdom as they invest in new programmes to give workers sustainable ways out of poverty. (Proverbs 31:16)

More: www.mnnonline.org/news/farms-day-laborers-face-pandemic-uncertainty/

Iraq: humanitarian needs continue

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) responds to the world's worst humanitarian crises and helps people whose lives and livelihoods are shattered by conflict and disaster to survive, recover, and gain control of their future. Early childhood education is critical for all children, particularly during a crisis like the Covid pandemic. For children who have experienced war and displacement - many of whom have lived their whole lives as refugees - it can be a lifeline, healing emotional and developmental wounds caused by years of trauma. The pandemic has hit displaced and vulnerable families the hardest, as in-person programmes have been put on hold for safety concerns. Now the IRC has adapted and uses digital tools to reach children and their families directly in their homes. It equips parents to create a nurturing and predictable home learning environment that fosters children's resilience during times of crisis and provides caregivers with ways to manage their own stress.

Pray: for these and other NGOs silently working in the background with 1.7 million Iraqis and 250,000 Syrian refugees families traumatised and displaced by war. (Psalm 27:5)

More: www.rescue-uk.org/article/how-irc-and-sesame-workshop-continue-reach-refugee-children-during-covid-19

Iran: one foreign national released

Iran has detained a number of foreign nationals and Iranian dual citizens in recent years, many of them on spying charges. Human rights groups have accused Tehran of using the cases as leverage to try to gain concessions from other countries. On 25 November Kylie Moore-Gilbert, a British-Australian academic serving a 10-year sentence for espionage, was freed in a swap for three jailed Iranians. She has strongly denied all charges against her, as has British-Iranian charity worker Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe who since 2016 has been in prison, also on spying charges. Her husband Richard said, 'Nazanin and I are really happy for Kylie and her family. It is an early Christmas present for us all that one more of us is out and on their way home; one more family can begin to heal.' Amnesty International said, 'There may now be renewed grounds for hoping that UK-Iranian dual-nationals like Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe and Anoosheh Ashoori will also be released in the coming days or week.'

Pray: for those campaigning for the freedom of Nazanin and Anoosheh to achieve their release also. (James 2:13)

More: news.sky.com/story/kylie-moore-gilbert-iran-releases-british-australian-academic-in-exchange-for-three-iranians-12142445

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