

Prayer Alert

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Hear my prayer, Lord God Almighty; listen to me, God of Jacob. Better is one day in Your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked. (Psalm 84:8,10)

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

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Praise Reports

Walk and Pray in lockdown

The Walk and Pray resource which the Evangelical Alliance released during lockdown has proved to be one of their most popular downloads to date, showing that many people have indeed been 'looking up' to the Lord for help during this time. Consequently, they have released a sequel, Walk, Pray, Talk, a five-part resource that will help people to explore prayer through the themes of being people of God, present to God and people, participation, and caring for a place.

Praise: God that when we look to the hills we discover where our help comes from. (Psalm 121:1,2)

More: www.eauk.org/resources/what-we-offer/reports/walk-pray-talk

Lebanon: Christian broadcaster offers solace

The only Arabic Christian television broadcaster in Lebanon is airing special live programming, reassuring shell-shocked viewers after the huge Beirut explosion on 4 August. The next day, SAT-7 broadcast a special Arabic-language programme - the Pain and Hope. Local Christian leaders Rev Dr Hikmat Kashouh and Dr Nabil Costa offered reassurance to viewers, and prayed live on air for the families of those killed in the explosion, for those who are missing, and for the injured. Christian TV programmes will continue to provide a platform for grieving and traumatised viewers in Lebanon to find comfort and seek prayer in the disaster aftermath, while continuing to minister to a country beset by political strife, economic collapse, hunger, and social unrest. Lebanese people are looking for others to stand with them grief and in prayer in the wake of this catastrophe. Christian broadcasting offers genuine hope.

Praise: God for Christian media broadcasting. (Psalm 71:24a)

More: godreports.com/2020/08/christian-broadcaster-in-beirut-offers-solace-after-blast/

British Isles

Migrant arrivals hitting crisis levels

Last month you prayed for compassionate provisions for refugees (see <https://www.prayer-alert.net/pa-pray/regions/british-isles/item/13168-crackdown-on-channel-dinghy-crossings>). Now Tony Smith, the former head of UK Border Force, said that if the UK and France fail to agree joint Channel patrols, arrivals will reach crisis levels. He said, 'They need to agree a treaty with a joint patrol where migrants picked up in the Channel can be returned to France to have asylum claims considered there. What I'm advocating is we try as best we can to replicate the juxtaposed controls for legitimate applicants in the same way as for illegitimate applicants. Over 200 migrants managed to cross to Britain in twenty boats in one day. If they want to come to the UK they need to make their case on the French side, and if they are found in the waterways or even make it as far as Dover we say, "I'm sorry but you go back there and that's where you will be interviewed and processed, on the French side".'

Pray: for the safety and future of the thousands of homeless currently being debated by France and the UK. (Psalm 40:17)

More: www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8585079/Call-UK-treaty-France-migrant-crossings-avoid-crisis-numbers.html

Church used as a cannabis farm

A URC church in Staffordshire, a Grade 2 listed building from 1820 next door to a primary school, had not been used as a place of worship for over twenty years. Then 400 cannabis plants were found growing inside. A police raid at the end of July uncovered the drugs, and a man has appeared in court. This is the second recent finding of a cannabis farm in an unused church as local communities are being overrun by illegal drugs. Fears of gang violence and muggings keep frightened residents at home. Open dealing on the street stirs parents' fears for their children. Pray for God to help citizens and community groups to recognise the roles they can play helping authorities eradicate the problem. Pray also for addicts to receive support and help to find a path away from substance abuse.

Pray: for God to give further wisdom and discernment to police drug control teams so that all manufacturing and dealing schemes end. (Ecclesiastes 8:11)

More: premierchristian.news/en/news/article/another-old-church-converted-into-a-cannabis-farm

Private renting parents fear 'Covid-homelessness'

Nearly one in five private renting parents are now more concerned their family will become homeless as a result of the Covid crisis, new research from Shelter shows ([see https://england.shelter.org.uk/](https://england.shelter.org.uk/)). As the country moves out of lockdown, the chronic lack of social housing has left struggling families with few options to escape the insecurity of private renting. A third of parents who rent from private landlords are more negative about their long-term housing situation. Shelter reported that 49,000 have resorted to using foodbanks since lockdown and cut back on food to help pay rent; 550,000 took on debt (overdrafts, credit cards, payday loans, borrowing from bank/family/friends) to help pay rent since lockdown. Pray for people in poverty to have a home they can afford. See also the next article, 'Outdated Planning System'.

Pray: for the Government to give hard-pressed families a way out of private renting, and for councils to plan ahead for land purchases for affordable homes. (Isaiah 32:18)

More: www.ekkleisia.co.uk/node/29836

England's 'outdated' planning system

Sweeping changes to the 'outdated' planning system in England will make it easier to build much-needed new homes, said Robert Jenrick, the housing secretary. But critics say they could lead to bad-quality housing and loss of local control over development. The Government wants to reduce the number of planning cases overturned at appeal by creating a clearer, rules-based system. He said we have a major housing challenge and a major economic challenge with a lot of people's jobs depending on this industry. The new system will still be democratic with local engagement, but will be faster and help meet the needs of the next generation. A national charge for developers will be introduced, replacing the existing agreements, and used to fund schools, roads and GP surgeries; and there will have to be a fixed proportion of affordable homes in a development. Pray for the success of homes and hospitals being built on land earmarked for development.

Pray: for developers and councils to put people before profits while successfully providing affordable, well-designed sustainable homes. (Proverbs 20:23)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-53669432

Hope for the countryside

August is a time when agricultural crops, vegetables and fruit soak up the warmth of the sun and ripen ready for harvest. This year more people will experience its richness as they stay at home for their holidays and appreciate afresh the beauty of our islands. May we never cease to enjoy and to praise God for the beauty of His creation, our green and pleasant land, and for the rhythm of the seasons (Psalm 8:1). As the new Agriculture Bill continues through Parliament, there is still uncertainty and concern over new trading agreements and their effect on home produce. A government commission to advise on seizing export opportunities for UK farmers and maintaining current welfare and environmental standards was launched on 28 July and will report at the end of the year. Pray for policies to emerge from this that will secure justice for farmers, farm animals, consumers and the land (Psalm 33:5).

Pray: for the weather to enable farmers to bring in the harvest, and that both producers and consumers will acknowledge the One from whom all good things come. (James 1:17)

More: www.worldprayer.org.uk/hope-for-the-countryside

Scotland: charity's plea for school uniform grant

Scotland's schools have been given the go-ahead to reopen from 11 August. The Child Poverty Action Group, which supports low-income families, has called for more financial help for parents and carers in Scotland struggling to pay for school uniforms. Eligible pupils currently receive a £100 school clothing grant, with some primary school starters eligible for a further £250. The group said some parents faced 'extraordinary financial pressure', and the grants were a good way of getting additional support directly to families. It is urging local authorities and the government to work together to increase the value of the school clothing grants or provide additional grants this year, in recognition of the unexpected extra financial pressures that families face.

Pray: for every child in Scotland to be able to attend school feeling comfortable, confident and ready to learn with parents being provided with the level of financial support needed. (Psalm 18:36)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-53594039

Far-right group training centre in London

Paul Golding, the leader of the far-right group Britain First, is setting up a 'training centre' in London where recruits will be 'drilled' and taught 'self-defence techniques'. Mr Golding has a string of public order convictions and offences under the Terrorism Act by representing the very far right wing of UK politics, bordering on fascistic tendencies. A lawyer specialising in terrorism cases said it is worrying that somebody with a history of public order issues and causing alarm to a particular community is setting up an organised training facility. Mr Golding said that because of their political opponents and extremist jihadi Islamist movements, they need their security department to be highly trained and professional. 'Trained to do their job. Just like a firefighter.'

Pray: for the Britain First attention-seeking hatred to be halted before it propagates. (Psalm 59:12)

More: www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/far-right-group-britain-first-is-setting-up-a-training-centre-in-london_uk_5f293fbfc5b656e9b0a04429

Europe

Germany: attack on anti-Semitism commissioner

The government-appointed commissioner to combat anti-Semitism, Felix Klein, was criticised in an open letter to Angela Merkel from sixty academics, authors and artists in Germany and Israel. They warned the Chancellor concerning 'provocative, factually and legally unsustainable use of the term "anti-Semitism"', saying that freedom of speech is endangered by criticism of Israel's policies. However many believe Mr Klein has taken his responsibilities seriously with courage and commitment, tirelessly bringing problems to light and demanding concrete action (anti-Semitism in schools and on the Internet, preventing the growth of extremism, and much more). He is the contact person for Jewish groups and social organisations in the fight against anti-Semitism nationally, at federal state level, and in civil society in general, plus promoting awareness of the latest forms of anti-Semitism. He has received support from many different Jewish organisations.

Pray: for God's protection over Mr Klein: may he completely fulfil his calling to bring all forms of anti-Semitism along with its roots into the light so that it is addressed. (Psalm 25:2,3)

More: www.waechterruf.de/

UK citizens relocate after Brexit vote

Research has found that the number of British nationals emigrating to other EU countries has risen by 30% since the Brexit referendum, with half making their decision to leave in the first three months after the vote. Approximately 380,000 British nationals already live in Spain, where the biggest jump in migration occurred. Germany has seen 31,600 Britons naturalising there since the referendum. These increases in numbers are of a magnitude that you would expect when a country is hit by a major economic or political crisis. Half chose to leave the UK quickly, possibly indicating an increased level of impulsiveness, spontaneity, and corresponding risk-taking.

Pray: for the Brexit fear to fade, and for the nations to have hope for their future. (Proverbs 23:18)

More: www.theguardian.com/politics/2020/aug/04/number-of-uk-citizens-emigrating-to-eu-has-risen-by-30-since-brexit-vote

Worldwide

Lebanon: pray for Beirut

Beirut rescue operations continue following a massive explosion on 4 August, causing indescribable damage in a mostly Christian part of the city. The death toll is currently 137 with 5,000 injured. Totals are expected to rise. Ask God to disperse the trauma covering the area and for a spirit of healing to be released. Beirut is in a two-week state of emergency. Pray for God's enabling strength for rescuers searching for hundreds of people still missing. May they find survivors, not bodies. Pray for comfort for those mourning the dead and for those still waiting for news of the missing. Pray for the 300,000 homeless people currently in shock with no shelter. May there be a united effort by the international community to organise medical supplies, food, shelter, beds, clothes, manpower and financial aid for structure repairs. Amnesty International called for international investigations into the blast that are 'free from domestic political interference', to ensure 'truth, justice, and reparations for victims.'

Pray: for God in His mercy to stretch His hand over Lebanon's pain, pandemic and poverty. (Isaiah 58:7,8a)

More: www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/08/lebanon-orders-house-arrest-officials-beirut-blast-live-200805230752876.html

Lebanon: Aid to the Church in Need

Following the huge explosion in Beirut on 4 August, Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) is sending an emergency food package worth £226,000 from the UK. The Christian quarter of the city was the worst affected by deaths and damage, so the bishops, the clergy, and the lay faithful asked ACN for assistance. Christian communities, churches and other buildings are going to need a lot of repair. At least ten churches and immeasurable livelihoods were destroyed by the blast. In one second, more damage was done to this area of Beirut than throughout the long years of the civil war. It will have to be built again from the ground up. John Pontifex from ACN said, 'We call on Jesus to bring healing and to bring a sense of reconciliation because in so many ways this particular explosion has drawn attention to the problems of government and accusations of neglect at the very least. There's a whole sense of healing needed at every level and a chance to rebuild. So literally, the call should be, Lord, help us rebuild, help us recover, help us find a new way to get through this terrible, terrible time.'

Pray: for God in His mercy to hear the cries of His people. (Psalm 22:19)

More: premierchristian.news/en/news/article/healing-needed-at-every-level-christian-charity-rushing-aid-to-lebanon-in-explosion-aftermath

Australia: chemical stockpile much larger than Beirut

The explosion in Lebanon has reignited fears among Sydney residents where a huge chemical plant sits within three kilometres of the Sydney central business district (CBD). Residents have been demanding for years that the stockpile, four times larger than Beirut's, should be moved away from the CBD and surrounding suburbs. Explosives expert Tony Richards said it is worth noting that plants used to produce and store ammonium nitrate and other explosive chemicals are not uncommon. There are thousands of facilities just like Beirut's in Texas, Paris, and other places.

Pray: for mining, explosive and chemical manufacturers and consumers to reassess safeguarding procedures for dangerous stockpiles to avoid more tragedies. (Psalm 101:2b)

More: www.vice.com/en_uk/article/pkyxmv/beirut-explosion-australia-ammonium-nitrate-stockpile

Turkey: deporting foreign Christians

Dozens of foreign Christians in Turkey have been forced to leave the country or been banned from returning, in what appears to be government targeting of the Protestant Christian community. Many, like Carlos Madrigal of Spain, had been serving in Christian leadership roles in Turkey for decades, forming families and buying property. At the airport in November 2019, Carlos was given a stamp in his passport that would keep him from returning to Turkey, so he cancelled his trip and appealed the decision. He was told, 'We must inform you that since 2019, it has been made increasingly difficult for foreign Protestant clergy serving in Turkey to be resident in our country'. An estimated 35 Christian workers received similar bans in 2019 and 16 more since the end of June. 10,000 Turkish Protestants attend 170 churches, many of them house churches. Turkey 'officially' allows freedom of religion, including conversion from Islam.

Pray: for foreign embassies in Turkey to unite to end the use of 'special re-entry code' against citizens who have not broken the law. (Proverbs 22:21)

More: morningstarnews.org/2020/08/turkey-deporting-foreign-christians-or-banning-their-return-sources-say/

Kazakhstan: church buildings confiscated

The authorities in Kazakhstan's capital Nur-Sultan ordered the confiscation of the buildings of both Grace Presbyterian Church and Agape Pentecostal Church, which is building a place of worship on the same site. City authorities claim the land is needed for a new kindergarten. But officials refuse to explain why they cannot find another site for this, despite two possibly suitable other buildings being in the same Baikonur District of the capital. The move to confiscate both churches' property was initiated by the Construction and Residential Policy Department. It is unclear if corruption is a factor in the confiscation decision. Local media reported on 17 July that an unnamed former head of the Department is being investigated over the alleged embezzlement of 200 million Tenge (£363,733.80).

Pray: for both churches to have the decrees annulled so that they can continue serving God on these sites. (Job 36:3)

More: www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2587

Mozambique: churches burned, beheadings and coronavirus

On 23 July the Catholic bishop of Pemba spoke out deploring the world's indifference to escalating extremist violence in northern Mozambique, where multiple churches have been burnt, people beheaded, young girls kidnapped, and over 200,000 people displaced by the violent insurgency. Parliamentarian Paulo Rangel said. There are reports of insurgents beheading fifteen people in a week. Pray for the Church as it works with families who have suffered attacks and have lost everything. Also there is coronavirus in nine out of Mozambique's ten provinces. Pray for organisations focusing on preventing contagion by disseminating information and raising awareness. Pray for those distributing essential aid to meet families' immediate needs, including food, seeds, and hygiene kits. See <https://www.actionaid.org.uk/about-us/where-we-work/mozambique>

Pray: for the people of Mozambique to know God's provision, protection, and peace. (Psalm 10:12)

More: www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/churches-burned-people-beheaded-in-mozambiques-escalating-extremist-violence-51620

China: typhoon follows floods

On 4 August, Typhoon Hagupit struck while the Yangtze flood levels were still high (see <https://www.prayer-alert.net/pa-pray/regions/worldwide/item/13197-asia-usa-floods>). Two months of heavy continuous rain had caused 433 river levels to rise above flood control lines, devastating 27 of the country's 31 provinces. Thirty-three rivers reached record highs. Economic losses are about 86 billion yuan (£9,404 million) to date. Pray for God to release ongoing support and humanitarian aid to all of the affected areas. Pray for the millions of displaced people to be safe in their shelters, and for a stable future for countless families whose homes and livelihoods are affected.

Pray: for heavy seasonal rains to stop and for the waters to subside. (Psalm 147:15)

More: www.youtube.com/watch?v=dqGGjc1EAil

USA: Portland police and press in riots

On 1 August, demonstrators in Portland damaged property and set fire to American flags and Bibles. Again, little law enforcement presence was visible, and no arrests were made. After weeks of similar violent rioting and nightly attacks, on 4 August federal officers saw their first night of state and local law enforcement support and experienced relative peace with crowds 'subdued.' Activity around the courthouse continues, but violence is diminishing after an increased state and federal law presence on the ground. It will remain until the authorities determine that the courthouse and other federal properties are safe. Although crowd sizes have dwindled from the thousands in July, observers on 6 August reported many people, including some with 'press' written on their outer garments (indicating journalists), continuing to throw glass and plastic bottles at police officers.

Pray: for God's hand to guide leaders to make wise decisions and have discernment in defeating the evil and social injustice behind these events. (Isaiah 1:26a)

More: ifapray.org/blog/press-joins-rioters-in-assaulting-police-in-portland/

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