

Prayer Alert

ISSUE 49-2021 | Friday 10 December 2021
www.prayer-alert.net | editor@prayer-alert.net

The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him. (John 1:9-10)

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.

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

[Christmas jumper becomes new clergy 'uniform'](#)
[Portugal thwarts moves to legalise euthanasia](#)
[IJM success](#)

British Isles

[Rough sleeping](#)
[England: plan B - new Covid rules](#)
[Disabled churchgoers](#)
[Was No 10 breaking lockdown rules?](#)
[Conversion therapy fears](#)
[British broadcasting](#)
[NHS electrician loses job for Christian beliefs](#)

Europe

[Greece: Pope condemns treatment of migrants](#)
[Russia: Ukraine conflict](#)

Worldwide

[Indonesia: volcano eruption on Mount Semeru](#)
[Pandemic: Omicron reinfection](#)
[Pandemic: insights on global response to Omicron](#)
[Horn of Africa: hunger](#)
[Nigeria removed from US 'Countries of Particular Concern' list](#)
[Afghanistan: vulnerable Christian minorities](#)
[China: WTA suspends tournaments in China](#)

Praise Reports

[Christmas jumper becomes new clergy 'uniform'](#)

A Marks and Spencer Christmas jumper has become a hit among female clergy, with some calling it the 'Christmas clergy uniform' of 2021. The £19.50 jumper is in M&S's Christmas clothing range. It is black and has the word 'Believe' written in bold colourful text on the front. Using the hashtag #TeamBelieve, female vicars and lay people have taken to social media sharing their pictures wearing the jumper on top of their clerical collar. 'Christmas jumper' was last week's top search on M&S.com.

Praise: God for this Christian statement on secular clothing. May many see it and stop and consider the miracle of Christmas. (John 3:16)

More: premierchristian.news/en/news/article/m-s-christmas-jumper-becomes-new-uniform-for-female-clergy-across-uk2

[Portugal thwarts moves to legalise euthanasia](#)

For the second time in less than a year, President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa has blocked an attempt to make it legal for Portuguese doctors to kill their patients. The latest version of the Bill, approved by members of the National Assembly was judged to be too radical by the Roman Catholic president and returned to them unsigned. De Sousa said, If 'fatal disease' was no longer a prerequisite for 'medically assisted death', he considered the bill to be out of step with 'the values of life and self-determination, in the context of Portuguese society'.

Praise: God for the rejection of medically assisted death in Portugal. (Ecclesiastes 7:17)

More: www.christian.org.uk/news/portugals-president-thwarts-moves-to-legalise-euthanasia/

IJM success

Praise God for a recent conviction in a South Asia sex trafficking case from 2015. The International Justice Mission supported local authorities after they rescued a minor girl and arrested a trafficker. The police, judge and prosecutors were all sensitive to the victim throughout the trial and remained focused on securing justice - leading to a strong ten-year sentence. IJM said, 'We are so grateful for compassionate authorities helping protect thousands of girls from being abused'.

Praise: God for the work of IJM as it continues to rescue victims and support survivors of abuse and trafficking. (Psalm 30:11-12)

More: www.ijmuk.org/

British Isles

Rough sleeping

Many homeless people sleep outside in doorways, parks, bus shelters, or other unsuitable places. They often have complex physical and mental health needs with root causes that are complex - relationship breakdown, mental health issues, addiction or childhood trauma. These are not issues that can be tackled quickly; people will often need help and support for many years to ensure they never end up back on the streets. The Salvation Army warns that people risk dying on the streets this winter as the cold weather continues to bite, even though new government figures for England and Wales show a slight decrease in deaths of homeless people. When it is very cold, the Salvation Army works with local councils to keep people as safe as possible, putting the homeless up in communal spaces in Lifehouses and operating a number of night shelters run in partnership with local churches.

Pray: for the work of the Salvation Army and others who are trying to reach as many vulnerable street sleepers as possible with hot food, pop-up accommodation and drop in centres. (Luke 14:13-14)

More: www.salvationarmy.org.uk/homelessness/rough-sleeping

England: plan B - new Covid rules

There are fears that the new Covid variant, Omicron, 'could be' more infectious and less responsive to vaccines. Therefore, from 10 December, face coverings are mandatory for most indoor venues including places of worship, theatres and cinemas - as well as on public transport and in shops and hairdressers. Masks won't be needed in pubs, restaurants, or gyms where it's 'not practical to wear them'. From 13 December, people should work from home 'if possible'. From 15 December (subject to parliamentary approval), people will need to show an NHS Covid vaccination status or a recent negative lateral flow test to enter nightclubs, indoor unseated venues with over 500 people, unseated outdoor venues with over 4,000 people and any venue with over 10,000 people. They must also do lateral flow tests (LFT) before entering high-risk settings like crowded places involving people you wouldn't normally come into contact with, or when visiting a vulnerable person.

Pray: for peace of mind to replace the fear being generated by new variants and health and safety rules. May we sensibly obey new rules and continue to pray for scientists, the NHS, and our leaders. (Philippians 4:6-7)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/explainers-52530518

Disabled churchgoers

Over two millennia have passed since Jesus said 'Go out and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame' (Luke 14:2b). 39 million of the world's people are blind, 70 million are deaf. See (<https://lausanne.org/pray>) In Victorian times some churchgoers gave to institutions that housed the disabled. Do we still see a disabled person as someone we do 'good things to' rather than teach, disciple and even allow to lead? When we see a disabled person in Christian ministry, do we see them as 'an inspiration' just because of their disability, or do we recognise them as a person gifted by God to minister? How welcoming are our churches to disabled people? Ask God to help us to include and disciple more people with disabilities just as much as anyone else. Pray for more churches to encourage and train disabled people into leadership roles.

Pray: for the Church to lead the way for communities to see the person God created first and then the disability. (Exodus 4:11)

More: www.christiantoday.com/article/the.church.still.sees.disability.as.a.tragedy.needng.to.be.fixed/137823.htm

Was No 10 breaking lockdown rules?

BBC Radio 5 has been broadcasting listeners' opinions on a video showing Downing Street staff joking about a Christmas party last year when everyone was on lockdown. Boris Johnson said he is 'sickened' by the video while maintaining there was no party and no Covid rules were broken. However the BBC was told that dozens of people partied at Downing Street during lockdown. Labour leader Keir Starmer said Boris is 'taking the public for fools', and the SNP called for his resignation. One backbench Tory MP said, 'The buck stops at the top.' Now there is to be an official investigation into Covid rule breaches at government staff parties last year. Any potential criminality uncovered would be reported to the police.

Pray: for honest answers to questions around why or how Boris Johnson didn't know about parties taking place under his roof. (Proverbs 12:22)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-59591610

Conversion therapy fears

The government wants a ban on 'conversion therapy' - a broad term covering encouragement to change or control sexual feelings or gender identity. Genuinely harmful therapies or practices are already illegal and / or not practised in the UK. A ban on legitimate talking therapies, pastoral support and prayer is what anti-'conversion therapy' campaigners want. The Christian Institute (CI) warned a House of Commons committee that any conversion therapy ban must be clearly defined, as activists want a broad ban encompassing Christian parenting, prayer, preaching and pastoral care. CI believe campaigners are attacking Christian beliefs and doctrine. It contends that if a church friend asks another to pray with them, or if a pastor teaches Christian sexual ethics from the Bible, or parents encourage children to follow them in their faith, it is not conversion therapy. Some want a ban which encapsulates those things. The consultation period ends on 10 December. All comments and suggestions will then be analysed for a spring 2022 draft bill. See <https://www.christian.org.uk/news/ci-outlines-conversion-therapy-fears-to-commons-committee/>

Pray: for God to oversee all examining and evaluating of this draft bill in the coming months so that Christian beliefs, values and doctrine are not misinterpreted. (Colossians 2:8)

More: us2.campaign-archive.com/?u=bed173cc9adfcad1e0e442a35&id=b0a6f88433&e=354f1ab5aa

British broadcasting

'We are living in a Christian land', declared one of the BBC's founding figures at its launch. Broadcasting House, in London, was opened in 1932. Above the central archway in the entrance lobby was a large Latin inscription of their value statement: 'This Temple of the Arts and Muses is dedicated to Almighty God by the first Governors of Broadcasting. It is their prayer that good seed sown may bring forth a good harvest, that all things hostile to peace or purity may be banished from this house, and that the people, inclining their ear to whatsoever things are beautiful and honest and of good report, may tread the path of wisdom and uprightness.' This inscription remains in the same place today, and the mission statement is as necessary and relevant as ever. May the BBC and all media outlets be reliable and honest sources of information. May truth be uppermost on all reporting, without speculation or opinions. Pray also for religious broadcasting and light entertainment.

Pray: for storylines, subplots, and themes to have virtuous values, with voices that appeal and give no offence. (2 Peter 1:5)

More: www.bbc.com/historyofthebbc/100-voices/people-nation-empire/faith/

NHS electrician loses job for Christian beliefs

Christian Concern have been in court with NHS electrician Brian Walker, who has launched legal action against North Bristol NHS Trust after being forced out of his job for his beliefs on multi-culturalism, Islam and same-sex 'marriage'. Following many months of investigations, reports and hearings within the Trust, Brian was given a final written warning, and told he had to attend 'equality training'. However, lawyers for the NHS Trust have argued that Brian's Christian beliefs are 'incompatible with human dignity' and 'not worthy of respect in a democratic society', which means that his perfectly reasonable, orthodox Christian beliefs would be labelled as on a par with Nazism. Pray for the ruling, that Brian's beliefs would be protected and the case would not be struck out.

Pray: for Christians to be free to share their views in the workplace. (Micah 6:8)

More: www.christiantoday.com/article/christian.electrician.launches.legal.action.against.nhs.trust/137812.htm

Europe

Greece: Pope condemns treatment of migrants

Speaking on the Greek island of Lesbos, Pope Francis said the migrants there were being used for political propaganda. He urged people to focus on the causes of migration, such as 'forgotten wars', instead of punishing those suffering from their effects. He criticised building walls to keep people out. Saying that there are people persisting in treating the problem as something that doesn't concern them, history teaches us 'narrow self-interest and nationalism lead to disastrous consequences.' The pandemic showed that major challenges must be confronted together and there were some signs of this in climate change, but little sign of such an approach to migration. He spoke in front of refugees but aimed all comments at European political leaders. His words betrayed frustration at 'the failure of politicians to adequately address the migrant issue'.

Pray: for the Pope's forthright message to be acted on by Europe's leaders with compassion. (Galatians 6:2)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-59538413

Russia: Ukraine conflict

Ukraine reported over 90,000 Russian troops and tanks being moved to the border, inside Ukraine's territory, causing western powers concerns. On 7 December Vladimir Putin spoke via a video link with Joe Biden, who called for a de-escalation of tensions. Hours before the video talks, Washington was not planning to make a military response, but to use tough economic sanctions. However, by 8 December it said it was preparing strong economic and 'other measures' over fears of a Russian invasion. Mr. Biden and leaders of the UK, France, Germany and Italy agreed to use 'all the tools at their disposal'. National security adviser Jake Sullivan said the Biden administration was preparing specific robust responses in the weeks ahead 'if they were required'. Moscow denies it has plans to attack. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-59558099>

Pray: for tensions between Russia and Ukraine to ease, and for peaceful negotiations over Ukraine's territorial rights and integrity over areas captured by Russian-backed separatists in 2014. (James 3:13)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-59567377

Worldwide

Indonesia: volcano eruption on Mount Semeru

The tallest mountain on Java erupted on 4 December, shooting columns of ash into the sky, blanketing surrounding villages. Pray for the rescue workers who are still digging through thick layers of hot ash and debris even as the volcano continues to erupt ash. Dozens of bodies have been found so far and thousands of people have been evacuated across 19 makeshift centres. Pray for the families who lived in the 3,000 damaged houses. Pray for the farmers who have lost livestock and livelihoods in areas buried in ash. Pray for the hundreds of homeless villagers who lived near a dam that burst due to cold lava and heavy rain, leaving everything submerged under sludge and ashy dust. Pray for those with burns and injuries from the initial eruption. Pray for vulnerable groups coping with highly polluted air, and pray for public kitchens and health facilities serving the displaced people (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/dec/06/semeru-volcano-eruption-stormy-weather-halts-search-and-rescue-efforts-in-indonesia>).

Pray: for the trauma healing team working with children affected by the eruption. Pray for the coordination and distribution of food packages, blankets, clothes, and basic necessities. (Nahum 1:7)

More: edition.cnn.com/2021/12/06/asia/indonesia-volcano-rescue-intl-hnk/index.html

Pandemic: Omicron reinfection

WHO chief scientist Dr Swaminathan said reinfections with the Omicron variant 90 days after the virus first strikes are three times more common. While data on the virulence and transmissibility will take time, scientists know that Omicron is a dominant strain in South Africa. They have said there was no surge of re-infection during either the Beta or Delta waves, despite laboratory studies suggesting those variants had the potential to evade some immunity. But they are now detecting a spike in re-infections and the timing suggests the Omicron variant is the driving force. Prof Juliet Pulliam, from Stellenbosch University, said, 'These findings suggest that Omicron's selection advantage is at least partially driven by an increased ability to infect previously infected individuals.' However, it is still only one piece of the puzzle. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-59520945>

Pray: for more data to come so that it becomes easier to interpret the findings for South Africa and the rest of the world. (Proverbs 12:15)

More: www.news18.com/news/india/omicron-fuels-reinfection-3-times-more-than-delta-variant-who-chief-scientist-says-kids-unvaccinated-at-risk-4526159.html

Pandemic: insights on global response to Omicron

Across the nations governments are planning how to respond to the new Omicron mutation. Pray according to 1 Timothy 2:1 for all who are in authority, so that we lead safe and peaceful lives. May our leaders' decisions and actions be in God's will - not man's opinions. May the media be prevented from exaggerating facts or promoting half-true opinions to gain attention. Father, let all that You desire for our governments and scientists to accomplish be done. Anoint every discussion on how to respond to Omicron with immunisations and health and safety bylaws with your wisdom and not out of panic. Do not allow politics to influence the governments' coronavirus guidelines. Guide all research that is being done to both develop vaccines and medicines to treat those who are infected - and guard it from any big pharmacy companies' maneuverings or financial greed. We ask you for scientific breakthroughs that will bless the nations of the world.

Pray: for God's will to be done in every nation battling this pandemic season. (Matthew 6:10)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-59563939.amp

Horn of Africa: hunger

The Horn of Africa has experienced prolonged drought, rapidly increasing food prices, and escalating armed conflict. A nutrition crisis is exacerbated by climate change and Covid-19. Families are fleeing their homes in search of safety and arable land. In 2011 they experienced the worst drought in sixty years, and are still reeling from the effects. Somalia is experiencing full-on famine. Drought conditions in northern Kenya, much of Somalia, and southern Ethiopia are predicted to persist until at least mid-2022, putting lives at risk. The situation is already so bad that wild animals are dying in their hundreds and herders are reporting losses of up to 70% of their livestock (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/world-africa-59513118>). Kenya is home to vulnerable and endangered species which include lions, giraffes and the world's only two surviving northern white rhinos. The coast is also a transit route for migratory whales, dolphins and endangered turtles. The biggest-ever animal census was recently carried out from the marine parks and forest reserves of coastal Kenya (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/world-africa-58281212>).

Pray: for those administering prevention and treatment of acute malnutrition, access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene, plus provision of livelihood opportunities that include food security. (Matthew 25:35)

More: www.unicefusa.org/mission/emergencies/food-crises/horn-africa-famine

Nigeria removed from US 'Countries of Particular Concern' list

Nigeria regularly sees ongoing massacres of indigenous Christians, and security forces imprison free thinkers for the 'crime' of blasphemy. Nevertheless, the USA removed Nigeria from its Countries of Particular Concern (CPC) list. On 2 December Rev John Hayab wrote an article in Nigerian Voice stating, 'The US's delisting Nigeria from its CPC list is appalling, as the persecution of Christians is still at its peak. Because Nigeria still has grave problems with religious persecution, this action is like a doctor discharging a patient from hospital even though they are still critically ill. What that signifies is telling the patient to go home and die. The USA was either ill-advised or does not care what happens in Nigeria. It does not comprehend that the current regime wants to impoverish and weaken the Christian community without letting the international community notice it. The Nigerian government employed highly professional lobbyists to convince the US state department to reach its decision.'

Pray: for the USA to recognise that its action is violating religious freedom and provide protection. (Psalm 34:7)

More: decisionmagazine.com/nigerian-pastor-disappointed-at-us-removal-of-nigeria-from-its-countries-of-particular-concern-list/

Afghanistan: vulnerable Christian minorities

As the Taliban quickly took over Afghanistan during the late summer of 2021, the world witnessed chaos, panic, and extreme violence. The Afghan Church was in the middle of the storm, facing ever-increasing danger as brutal tyrants took over their country. Persecution.org has raised its voice to urge the United States to safeguard Afghan Christians, who are predominantly composed of Muslim converts. This puts them at risk of death as the Taliban's interpretation of Sharia law considers converts to be traitors to Islam. It is very possible that the Taliban will return to the violence and brutality that marked their earlier reign over Afghanistan. Already it seems that this could include punishments such as cutting off limbs and severe oppression of women's rights, access to education and religious freedom. Persecution.org is inviting people to sign a petition to Joe Biden asking Congress to create ways for these at-risk people to emigrate to America.

Pray: for many thousands of Americans to sign the petition so that the US does more to safeguard Afghan's Christians. (Psalm 32:7)

More: www.persecution.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/2021-10-IDOP-Afghanistan-Petition.pdf

China: WTA suspends tournaments in China

Chinese tennis player Peng Shuai has not been seen in public for over a month after accusing former Vice-Premier Zhang Gaoli of sexual assault resulting in the Women's Tennis Association suspending all tournaments in China amid concern for her. WTA chief Steve Simon had 'serious doubts' that Peng was free, safe and not subject to intimidation. He said, 'In good conscience, I don't see how I can ask our athletes to compete there. Equality was the founding pillar of the WTA 48 years ago. What was all that hard work for, if serious sexual assault allegations are allowed to be swept under the carpet? If powerful people can suppress the voices of women, then the basis on which the WTA was founded - equality for women - would suffer an immense setback. I will not and cannot let that happen to the WTA and its players.' The suspension also includes tournaments in Hong Kong. The 2022 Winter Olympics and Paralympics are set to be held in Beijing in February and March.

Pray: for Chinese authorities to do what is appropriate, and for an end to sexual, psychological and physical abuse in all sports. (Zephaniah 1:9)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/sport/tennis/59498779

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.