

# Prayer Alert

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[www.prayer-alert.net](http://www.prayer-alert.net) | [editor@prayer-alert.net](mailto:editor@prayer-alert.net)

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An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.' (Matthew 1:20-21)

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

This is the final edition of Prayer Alert for 2021. During the break, you may like to explore our online [Prayer Alert Prayer Wall](#) where we can add our own prayers and praise, interactively. Meanwhile, we will be back on Friday January 7th 2022!

We wish all our prayer partners a happy, blessed and healthy Christmas.

David Fletcher and the Prayer Alert Team

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## Praise Reports

### 'Miraculous' missionary escape in Haiti

In October we asked you to pray for the release and safe return of missionaries held hostage in Haiti. On 16 December the twelve Canadian and American missionaries made a daring night-time escape walking on rough moonlit terrain following the sheer guidance of the stars. After a number of hours of walking, day began to dawn, and they eventually found someone who helped them make a phone call for help. They were finally free. They had faced difficult and intense circumstances in captivity, including sweltering heat, mosquito bites and limited access to food.

Praise: God for their miraculous escape. Pray for their recovery from the ordeal. (Isaiah 25:1)

More: [www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/12/20/us-aid-group-details-miraculous-missionary-escape-haiti](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/12/20/us-aid-group-details-miraculous-missionary-escape-haiti)

### Bangladesh: feeding thousands

Everyone in Pastor Martin's community on the coast of Bangladesh is painfully aware of climate change as they suffer an increasing number of extreme storms, losing possessions and evacuating to temporary shelters. The vulnerable, the elderly and children suffer the most. People also lose their crops so they no longer have food to put on the table, but Pastor Martin is helping them take steps towards a better future. World Concern Bangladesh showed him how to prepare for disasters and lead disaster response efforts. He set up a community group to prepare for and respond to disasters. During recent floods, Pastor Martin's community group pooled resources to deliver food and essential supplies locally and far beyond to eight local villages and 10,000 people. His church has now been renovated to be used as a shelter during cyclones and a relief hub.

Praise: God for Pastor Martin. Ask for him to be strengthened and encouraged. (Psalm 22:26)

More: [www.tearfund.org/stories/2021/12/feeding-the-thousands-the-pastor-who-became-a-lifeline-to-his-storm-battered-community](http://www.tearfund.org/stories/2021/12/feeding-the-thousands-the-pastor-who-became-a-lifeline-to-his-storm-battered-community)

## British Isles

### Autistic man 'loneliest in the hospital'

A BBC investigation found that 100 people with learning disabilities have been held in specialist hospitals for twenty years or more, including Tony Hickmott whose parents are fighting to get him rehoused in the community. A support worker at the hospital said he was the loneliest man there. He was sectioned under the Mental Health Act in 2001 and expected to be treated for nine months and then return home. He was declared fit for discharge by psychiatrists in 2013 but at the age of 44 Tony is still waiting for a home to be found with the level of care for his special needs. In 2015, the Government promised 'homes not hospitals' in its Transforming Care programme but repeatedly misses targets to close hospitals with excessive restraint, overuse of medication, lack of qualified, competent staff and violence on many wards. Pray for people to be moved close to home, back in their community with the right care and independence.

Pray: for the funds and specialist training to be released into this branch of the NHS so that the needs of complex patients are met. (Proverbs 12:25)

More: [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-59733934](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-59733934)

### Anti-vaxxers book Covid jab appointments, don't show up

Covid jab appointments at mass vaccination centres are being block-booked by people who have no intention of getting inoculated. Wembley Stadium, which is being used to roll out thousands of shots before Christmas, is one of the sites where they have been employing this tactic. On 19 December staff said that patients had not arrived for their bookings and the centre was 'really quiet'. The site had hoped to inoculate 10,000 people, but only 2,500 had been administered by mid-afternoon. Anti-vaxxers have employed similar tactics at other sites around the country. However, a spokesman said, 'Any suspected disruption has been offset by the number of walk-ins, including thousands of local residents, many of whom have made a big step in coming forwards to start their vaccination journey, as well as very high numbers of boosters.'

Pray: for the NHS to be able to give enough boosters to fight back against the spread of the Omicron variant. (Jeremiah 30:17a)

More: [www.rt.com/uk/543764-anti-vaccine-britain-covid19-omicron/](http://www.rt.com/uk/543764-anti-vaccine-britain-covid19-omicron/)

### Two epidemics at once

Omicron is spreading rapidly, but Delta is not disappearing. The two variants are circulating together. Previously Alpha wiped out the original variant and was then displaced by Delta. It is believed Omicron can get past some of the body's defences built up by vaccination and previous infection. The two variants are not competing for the same people. Delta cases since summer have been stable, but Omicron infections are rapidly driving the numbers up. As cases go up there is pressure to introduce more restrictions or a full lockdown. However, restrictions don't stop the epidemic - they prolong it. Pray for God to reinforce research capabilities for medical scientists and clarity of thought to all in the front line fighting the pandemic. Pray for God to give courage to our leaders as they make difficult decisions. May they be surrounded by wise counsel that hears Your voice. See also next article: Covid circuit breaker request.

Pray: for God to close doors of infection and open doors of health and healing. (Jeremiah 29:11)

More: [www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-59676569](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-59676569)

### Covid circuit breaker request

A group of scientists are urgently calling upon the Government to utilise a ten-day circuit breaker lockdown to get Covid numbers under control as the UK breaks its record for daily new cases since the beginning of the pandemic. Independent Sage (not affiliated to the Government's own Sage) issued the emergency statement calling for circuit-breaker measures to be implemented immediately if the spread of Omicron is to be halted. We pray for God's timing over every decision made regarding the pandemic. Father God, we ask you to give Boris Johnson's spirit the discernment needed to hear your voice and the strength to do your will. May all our politicians be deaf to flawed agendas of man or harmful distractions of the enemy. May they carry the authority You gave them with grace and unity. We pray for politicians to have a double portion of wisdom.

Pray: for the Government as it re-evaluates what needs to happen after Christmas. (Proverbs 1:5)

More: [www.mylondon.news/news/uk-world-news/scientists-call-10-day-circuit-22480069](http://www.mylondon.news/news/uk-world-news/scientists-call-10-day-circuit-22480069)

### Lack of access to mental health care for the vulnerable

Every seven seconds a person was referred for NHS mental health support in September. That comes as no surprise to Pastor Mick, a drug-dealer-turned-lifesaver during Covid, who each day meets people struggling to survive. In his 20s, Mick was a drug dealer consumed by cocaine and violence. He has now found faith and feeds the poor. His church in Burnley is expanding quickly - it has its own food and clothes banks. Mick also liaises with the police, housing organisations, the local council and drug rehabilitation services. He is particularly concerned about the lack of access to mental health care for the most vulnerable - people who find it difficult to see their GPs, let alone get access to a bed in a support facility. Mick blames the Covid lockdowns and the many months of restrictions. He hears stories of people who have spiralled down, turning to drugs and alcohol.

Pray: for God to bless and support Pastor Mick and all the other voluntary organisations reaching out to support the most vulnerable in our communities. (Luke 1:37)

More: [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-59651954](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-59651954)

### Some who shielded need support now

Twenty charities are calling for more support for patients with severely weakened immune systems who risk severe Covid illness if they catch the virus. Many have had three jabs, but still need a fourth for better protection. For example, Hal Cohen had a kidney transplant two years ago and takes immunosuppressants to stop his body rejecting the organ. He had his third vaccine in July but was told despite this that his body is not making enough antibodies to fight off the virus. The charities said, 'Those who are immunosuppressed due to a health condition or treatment are advised to have a fourth Covid jab three months after their third dose.' They are calling a smooth rollout of booster jabs for these people, which should provide much needed extra protection.

Pray: for those who are immunosuppressed to have NHS care plans that give extra protection. (Isaiah 40:29)

More: [www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-59682959](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-59682959)

### Proof in the pudding, say climate campaigners

Christian climate activists dressed as Christmas puddings marched on Westminster calling on the Government to deliver on climate change commitments made at November's COP26 summit. The pudding protesters are part of a movement demanding justice for the world's most climate-vulnerable communities. The campaign is backed by 50,000+ people from churches across the UK and from all walks of life who signed a giant three-metre Christmas card for Boris Johnson. They want countries to deliver stronger national plans to keep 1.5°C alive and secure more ambitious climate finance commitments. They also want the Government to press for finance for climate-related loss and damage and move from fossil fuels to renewable energy. They said, 'Christmas is a time of hope. We call on the Prime Minister to heed these messages from the British public, and by meeting the Government's promises give hope to those hit hardest by climate change.'

Pray: for those living on the climate crisis frontline to see pledges turned into real action. (Galatians 6:7)

More: [premierchristian.news/en/news/article/proof-is-in-the-pudding-says-christian-climate-campaigners](http://premierchristian.news/en/news/article/proof-is-in-the-pudding-says-christian-climate-campaigners)

## Europe

### Germany: cross-dressing EU ambassador

The EU's LGBTQ+ goodwill ambassador cross-dressed as a bearded Virgin Mary for a same-sex rendition of the Holy Family draped in the colors of the transgender flag. Riccardo Simonetti appeared on the cover of a queer community magazine boasting thick facial hair in a white robe, blue head veil and holding a baby doll representing Jesus. He posted the photos to his Instagram feed with the caption, 'If we ignore the fact that Jesus wasn't white, we could believe the Virgin Mary had a beard, why not?' Another photo depicts Simonetti, still dressed as Mary, with a man in a pink robe embracing him from behind. 'Very proud and honoured to be on the cover of December's issue of a queer institutions magazine. Special thanks to my friend @akwantu for playing Joseph in our newly-interpreted holy family photo using the trans flag as inspiration.' The photo shoot drew backlash from Christians online, but he accused them of homophobia.

Pray: for Europe to be a place that respects the Christian faith and culture and is stopped from mocking the Christian faith and humiliating their sacred symbols. (1 Corinthians 6:9)

More: [www.foxnews.com/world/lgbtq-ambassador-cross-dress-bearded-virgin-mary](http://www.foxnews.com/world/lgbtq-ambassador-cross-dress-bearded-virgin-mary)

### Europe: Omicron is spreading at lightning speed

Omicron will become the dominant Covid variant in France by January. Germany, the Republic of Ireland, the Netherlands, and France have announced additional restrictions to stem the tide. Germany's health minister said they must prepare for a challenge never seen before. He has designated France, Norway and Denmark as 'high risk' and added tougher rules on UK arrivals. A third of Ireland's new cases have been Omicron. They are expecting infections at a rate that far exceeds anything they have seen to date. Italy, Greece and Portugal announced that visitors from the EU, even those who have been vaccinated, must present a negative test result on arrival, to stem the tide of infections. The UK is hardest hit, but English people with Covid can end quarantine after seven days instead of ten if they test negative on days six and seven. England has new restrictions before Christmas, while Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have [curbed social mixing](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-59747689) (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-59747689>).

Pray: for healthcare systems across Europe as they deal with the influx of Covid patients, routine care and urgent operations. (Jeremiah 33:6)

More: [www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-59705709](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-59705709)

## Worldwide

### Israel / Palestine - child of Bethlehem

Born and raised in Bethlehem, Grace teaches at Bethlehem Bible College and serves her local church. The Holy Land's Christian population is just 1%. Grace said, 'Today in Bethlehem, as Christianity continues to dwindle, we trust that the Lord will not leave Himself without a witness in this land. This year, my niece will be Mary in our church's nativity play. As we watch the children join her as shepherds, wise men and angels, our hearts will be strengthened to know that Christianity still remains the heartbeat of this region, despite its decreasing percentage.'

Pray: for all nativity plays to help us understand the depth and width of God's love for humanity in sending Jesus, God in flesh, to dwell on earth. Pray also for peace in Bethlehem. (Micah 5:2)

More: [www.sat7uk.org/pages/watch-and-wait/](http://www.sat7uk.org/pages/watch-and-wait/)

### Palestine: school of terrorism

The Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education (IMPACT-se) says, 'Schoolchildren are brainwashed by Palestinian leaders and "scholars" teaching hate against Jews on a daily basis. They are assured that anyone who dies while carrying out an attack against Jews is a "martyr" whose place in heaven is guaranteed.' IMPACT-se discovered that Palestinian leaders failed to fulfill their promise to Western donors to change the textbooks. The newly published schoolbooks, more radical than previous ones, have systematic insertions of violence, martyrdom and jihad across all grades and subjects. Extreme nationalism and Islamist ideologies are widespread through the curriculum, including science and maths textbooks. The possibility of peace with Israel is rejected. One Arabic book has a story describing Molotov cocktails igniting an Israeli bus to burn Jewish passengers alive. This is described as a 'barbecue party.'

Pray: for an end to the poison being injected into the hearts and minds of Palestinian children through the education system. Pray for peace in the region. (Isaiah 2:4)

More: [www.gatestoneinstitute.org/18038/palestinian-schools](http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/18038/palestinian-schools)

### India: Christmas services banned after attacks and threats

Archbishop Joseph D'Souza said, 'In Belgaum police are not allowing Christian groups to meet in local churches, house groups and halls. This situation will mean the inability to have Christmas services. There have been increasing numbers of attacks against Christians in Karnataka, where Hindu radicals have been disrupting Christian meetings. In many areas, Christians are now afraid because of the way the extremists are taking the law into their hands. There is no place in India's democracy for incessant campaigns of hatred aimed squarely at the Christian community, its churches, NGOs and schools. We expect protection from the prime minister as the Christmas season approaches.' Extremists are 'walking into Christian worship to disrupt it by conducting their own services with Hindu chanting. We have not seen anything like this before and these extremists are not being arrested.' He is calling on prime minister Modi to engage in the struggle of India's Christians.

Pray: for believers in India who are facing the risk of attacks this Christmas to have security. (Psalm 122:7)

More: [releaseinternational.org/india-police-ban-christmas-services-over-attack-threat/](http://releaseinternational.org/india-police-ban-christmas-services-over-attack-threat/)

## Global: this year's Dis-Honorees Awards

The Persecutor of the Year Awards shone a light on the world's most oppressive countries, entities, and individuals. Due to the nation's various terrorist groups and the lack of government response, Nigeria earned the title as the Top Country Persecutor. As we witnessed the Taliban's rise to power in August which forced Afghanistan's Christians even deeper into hiding, the Taliban received the title of Top Entity Persecutor. Lastly, in North Korea, the ongoing brutal reign of the Kim regime and the deplorable conditions that the nation's citizens face earned Kim Jong-un the title of Top Individual Persecutor. Pray for God to give those facing persecution for their faith in these, and other, nations the peace and joy that Christ brings.

Pray: for God to bring the persecutors of Christians into His kingdom with visions and dreams of Christ. (Joel 2:28)

More: [www.persecution.org/initiatives/poy/](http://www.persecution.org/initiatives/poy/)

## Philippines: typhoon devastation

The Philippines has an average of twenty storms and typhoons annually, wiping out harvests, homes and infrastructure. The strongest this year, Typhoon Rai, killed 375 people and more deaths are expected as rescue operations continue. Pray for God to comfort all who mourn. Pray for adequate relief housing for the 300,000 who fled their homes and beachfront resorts. Pray for clear organisation and speedy delivery of water, food and medicines by the Red Cross and other relief groups. Pray for families living with no electricity or means of communication to be found and helped. Pray for God to give wisdom and endurance to the thousands of military, police, coast guards and fire personnel assisting in search and rescue efforts. They are describing scenes of 'complete carnage'. Establishing the scale of the loss of life is difficult in areas where landslides and flooding may have claimed more lives. See also <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/12/21/asia/typhoon-rai-philippines-deaths-intl-hnk/index.html>

Pray: for the humanitarian and health agencies to prevent water-borne diseases from erupting in cramped evacuation centers and areas where survivors are without clean water or sanitation. (Psalm 30:2)

More: [newsinfo.inquirer.net/1529471/75-reported-dead-after-typhoon-odette-batters-visayas-mindanao-officials](http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1529471/75-reported-dead-after-typhoon-odette-batters-visayas-mindanao-officials)

## Mozambique: jihadists decapitate pastor, force wife to carry his head

According to military sources, suspected IS-linked extremists decapitated a pastor in Cabo Delgado on 15 December and forced his wife to carry his head to the police station. The monstrous act took place amidst a four-year long insurgency ravaging the country, leaving over 3,000 people dead and almost 100,000 displaced. Pray for the Lord to provide comfort to the wife of this slain pastor, and that He would heal her of the trauma she has had to endure. In a statement after the attack, IS boasted that its affiliate, Al-Shabab (not linked to Somali terror group), had killed dozens of security personnel and Christians, including westerners from what the statement termed 'Crusader nations.'

Pray: for peace in Mozambique, as well as for the hearts of those who persecute the church, that the love of Jesus would bring them from darkness to light. (John 1:5)

More: [www.persecution.org/2021/12/17/jihadists-decapitate-pastor-force-wife-carry-severed-head/](http://www.persecution.org/2021/12/17/jihadists-decapitate-pastor-force-wife-carry-severed-head/)

## Nigeria: one million expired doses of vaccine destroyed

The national primary health care agency (NPHCDA) destroyed 1,066,214 expired doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine that were donated to them in October but had to be used by November. The decision to destroy the vaccinations followed several testing processes showing it was necessary to destroy them to protect Nigerians from being harmed. NPHCDA's director said they had an option to try and use these vaccines beyond the labelled expiry date, but decided to destroy them at the point they expired. The vaccines came with a short life span, some as short as two weeks. NPHCDA said while Nigeria appreciated the gesture of the donors, it was not in the interest of Nigeria that vaccines with a short lifespan were sent there. Only ten million Nigerians have been vaccinated to date: Nigeria's target is 110 million people.

Pray: for improved coordination and distribution of AstraZeneca vaccinations donated from abroad to Nigeria. (Ephesians 5:15)

More: [saharareporters.com/2021/12/22/nigerian-government-destroys-one-million-expired-doses-covid-19-astrazeneca-vaccine](http://saharareporters.com/2021/12/22/nigerian-government-destroys-one-million-expired-doses-covid-19-astrazeneca-vaccine)

## China: couple lose appeal against prison sentence

A court in China has upheld the sentences against booksellers Chang Yuchun, 53, and his wife, Li Chenhui, 44, for 'inciting subversion of state power'. They each face a seven-year jail term and must both pay fines of 250,000 yuan (approximately £29,700). A local source said this is not the first case of religious booksellers being given a jail sentence, but seven years plus a hefty fine is rare. In recent months, authorities have clamped down further on the distribution of Christian resources including audio Bible players and a Bible app.

Pray: for Christians in China facing persecution to know God's protection, and for Chang and Li to experience God's presence continually. (Deuteronomy 31:6)

More: [premierchristian.news/en/news/article/chinese-couple-lose-their-appeal-against-seven-year-prison-sentence-for-selling-christian-literature](http://premierchristian.news/en/news/article/chinese-couple-lose-their-appeal-against-seven-year-prison-sentence-for-selling-christian-literature)

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