

# Prayer Alert . . .

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## BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

### Faith in God declining faster in the UK than Church attendance

Contrary to popular opinion, the belief in God in the United Kingdom is declining even faster than attendance in church, a new study claims. According to a story written by Maria Mackay and posted on the [www.christiantoday.com](http://www.christiantoday.com) website. This theory held that religious belief was fairly well-grounded despite shrinking congregations. The research was carried out by the University of Manchester, who also found that between 1991 and 1999 actual belief in God has decreased even more than affiliation to a particular religion and attendance in services. The study also showed that the religious behaviour of parents has a highly significant impact on children. The academics found that institutional religion has a "half-life" of one generation meaning that two religious parents have a 50-50 chance of passing on their beliefs. Likewise children are more likely to grow up with no faith at all if both parents are non-religious, while 'one religious parent's do half as well as two religious parents. [www.assistnews.net](http://www.assistnews.net) *Let us pray that as the Church we can take up the challenge to impact and reverse this trend.*

### Child welfare must not be ignored in fertility act review, says CARE

Christian social concern charity CARE has expressed alarm that the familial needs of children will not be considered under a review of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act. Roger Smith, Head of Policy for CARE, said policy makers should pursue the review with caution. "The HFE Act has been outdated from the day of its inception and is in urgent need of review. The rapid advances in reproductive technologies have left the public debate about their use far behind - we need to look at their application in a clear ethical and social context. "However, one of the most forward-thinking aspects of the legislation was the consideration of the child's welfare, and this is as relevant now as it was when the Act was passed in 1990. To give it up in the name of a cheap-and-cheerful 'equality' would be a mistake – children benefit from having a father." [www.care.org.uk](http://www.care.org.uk) *Pray that the Government and executive agencies would come to respect the value of human life.*

### Methodist Church: UK must reach broad consensus in new terrorism laws

The Methodist Church has called on the British government to reach out towards a broad consensus as it seeks to implement new anti-terrorism proposals following the London bomb attacks last month. The announcement by the Methodist Church has indicated that the Church respects that police will need to be given necessary powers to effectively combat the threat, it remains highly concerned that fundamental rights may be impeded. In particular, some of the proposals have alarmed Methodist Church leaders who are anxious that various traditions of hospitality and refuge, intrinsically linked to British Christian society and human rights are being threatened by some of the suggestions. The Methodist Church Secretary for International Affairs, Steve Hucklesby said, "Our society currently faces the difficult challenge of ensuring the security of all whilst not eroding the fundamental human rights of which we are rightly proud. To meet this challenge it is necessary to

encourage a climate of debate that is inclusive of a range of views in our multi- religious and multi-ethnic society." [www.christiantoday.com](http://www.christiantoday.com) *Let us continue to pray for the authorities and those effected by this current terrorist situation.*

### **Nun protests at Da Vinci Code movie filming at Lincoln cathedral**

Catholic nun Sister Mary Michael led a group of protesters to greet actor Tom Hanks as he arrived at Lincoln cathedral for the filming of "The Da Vinci Code." She firmly believes that the book is heretical and intends to let the world know. Speaking to the UK Press Association about her protest, she said: "It matters to me what God thinks, not what the film crew thinks. When I face Almighty God, at my final judgment, as we all will, I can say, I did try my best, I did try my best to protest." According to the CNN report, Sister Mary said a storyline that Jesus married Mary Magdalene and that she bore him a child was based on a heresy that she first became aware of 50 years ago. As for the cathedral in Lincoln that has agreed to hire out its premises for the filming of the movie, the nun asserts, "The church should not be accepting money for something that is not a true story," she said. "They should be praying more, and then the money would come in. To a believer, any believer, what is happening is blasphemous." [www.breakingchristiannews.com](http://www.breakingchristiannews.com) *Let us remember that Gods house is a house of prayer and it does matter what He thinks.*

### **Christian Institute runs meetings about Incitement to Religious Hatred**

At short notice, The Christian Institute has organised a series of meetings on the Government's Religious Hatred Bill featuring Pastor Daniel Scot from Australia. Pastor Scot faces prison under a similar act in Australia. Daniel Scot faces a possible prison sentence in Australia because he criticised fundamentalist Islam in a church seminar. He was found 'guilty' under a religious vilification law in the state of Victoria. The law is very similar to the 'incitement to religious hatred' offence being proposed by the UK government. Parliament is currently considering the planned law in the Racial and Religious Hatred Bill. They have organised a series of meetings in London, Newcastle/Gateshead, Liverpool and Cardiff at which Daniel will tell his story and show why Christians must actively oppose this 'religious hatred' law. More details of the venues can be viewed at: <http://www.christian.org.uk> The Bill has completed its stages in the House of Commons, and will be debated in the House of Lords on 11 October. The Lords are likely to make alterations to the Bill which must in turn be agreed by the Commons. *Let us continue to pray for our government as this bill progresses. And that the ongoing debate will be heard and appraised.*

### **Surge in alcohol-related deaths**

The number of alcohol-related deaths has increased by nearly a fifth in four years, figures show. The Office for National Statistics data revealed deaths in England and Wales rose by from 5,525 in 2000 to 6,544 in 2004 - an 18.4% increase. The highest increase was in Yorkshire and the Humber which saw a 46.5% hike. The Liberal Democrats, which obtained the data, said people were "literally drinking themselves to death", but the government said it was taking action. The revelations come as the government is in the process of relaxing the drinking laws. From November, pubs and other licensed premises, which have been given council permission, will be allowed to open for longer than the existing laws allow. Liberal Democrat MP Lynne Featherstone said: "These figures are deeply worrying. I am worried that the proposed change to licensing laws will add to this startling increase in drink-related deaths [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk) (See Prayer Alert 35) *Continue to pray as our nation moves to a relaxation of the current drinking laws.*

## **EUROPE**

### **Youth Congress urges youth to go into the world in the power of the Holy Spirit**

Christianity Today, reports that over 800 young delegates from 26 different countries attended The Salvation Army's European Youth Congress last week in Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic, under the theme of "Powered." Congress Coordinator Major Kelly Pontsler of the Salvation Army International Headquarters said, "It's a great experience to be together. We are here and God is here. Get empowered and get ready to show Jesus to the world." The report noted that the event was also attended by International Salvation Army leaders General John Larsson and Commissioner Freda Larsson, who praised the enthusiasm of the young delegates at the event. "It's marvellous how spontaneously the young people responded during the worship times," said Larsson. "They longed to be renewed by the power of the Spirit. We had high expectations for this event - but what we have experienced exceeds our greatest expectation." [www.breakingchristiannews.com](http://www.breakingchristiannews.com) *Pray that the young people will have been enthused and anointed by God for the task ahead.*

### **Catholics and Protestants mourn founder of Taizé community**

Catholics and Protestants are mourning the death of the founder and leader of the ecumenical Taizé community, Roger Schutz. The 90-year-old Swiss born Protestant was stabbed to death by a mentally disturbed woman during evening prayers at the community in Burgundy, France, on 16<sup>th</sup> August. Brother Roger died as he lived, praying at the centre of his community," said the World Council of Churches acting general secretary Genevieve Jacques in a message of condolence. She praised his „unceasing search for authentic ecumenical dialogue“. Schutz founded the community 65 years ago. He hid Jews from the Nazis, protected refugees and cared for German prisoners of war after World War II. In 1949 the first seven brethren were sworn in. Today the community has approximately 100 brethren who also serve the poor in Asia, Africa and Latin America. [www.assistnews.net](http://www.assistnews.net) *Praise God for the life of Roger Schutz and pray that his legacy will continue to bless many.*

## **WORLDWIDE**

### **Israeli troops storm synagogues**

Israeli forces have raided two synagogues in the Gaza Strip to remove hundreds of activists protesting against the removal of settlers. The troops began dragging hardliners from the synagogue in Neve Dekalim, the largest settlement in Gaza, on the second day of evictions. Later on Thursday, soldiers armed with water cannons moved against activists barricaded at Kfar Darom synagogue. Israel is pulling its settlers out of Gaza, which it has held since 1967. The BBC's Richard Miron, inside the

synagogue at Neve Dekalim in southern Gaza, said there was a great deal of shouting and singing by the demonstrators as unarmed soldiers entered the building. Israeli officials say the mission is going faster than expected and may be over within days, instead of the scheduled six weeks. The army says about 70% of settlers have left or been removed. More than half of the 21 Gaza settlements were cleared on Wednesday, the first day of the operation. [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk) *Continue to pray for the situation in Gaza and for those who are having to move. That this initiative will lead to the desired peace in the area.*

#### **Help still needed for victims of Beslan school hostage crises**

It is almost a year since the Beslan hostage tragedy when armed Muslim terrorists took hundreds of schoolchildren and adults hostage on 1st Sept 2004 at predominantly Christian School Number One in the Russian town of Beslan. According to official data, 344 civilians were killed, at least 172 of them children, and hundreds more wounded. In an e-mail from, Rev Nikitin, the President of the Union of Christians Association of Christian Churches in Russia (ACCR), wrote, "Children who went through that terrible tragedy still sleep with the lights turned on, water always beside their beds - afraid that it could occur again. All that horror is still in their souls. It is (also) impossible to imagine what the parents who lost their kids went through." Nikitin said. "While a lot of help has been given, there is still so much more to do. Christians can do a lot to help the healing process continue. During the past year the ACCR worked to open a Centre of Comfort and Reconciliation in Beslan. The hard work paid off, he said, and the Centre has now been open for three months although finance is needed to complete the building work. [www.assistnews.net](http://www.assistnews.net) *Pray for the people of Beslan that the Centre of Comfort will bring healing and new life. Ask the Lord to provide the necessary finance and support.*

#### **Sombre warnings of the impact of pornography**

A debate is growing in Australia over the impact of pornography and prostitution on the nation reports [Australianit](http://www.australianit.com). Sex abuse expert Mary Anne Layden told a NSW parliamentary forum earlier this month how Australia's increasing appetite for prostitution has led to more women being trafficked into the country than ever before. "Internet pornography and the legalisation of prostitution have driven up demand through a set of beliefs that imply that this behaviour is normal, acceptable, common and doesn't hurt anyone so the person has permission to continue to behave in that way." Her clinical experience and research has found that 70 per cent of pornographic hits on internet sex sites occur during the day on business computers. In addition, 40 per cent of sex addicts will lose their spouse, 58 per cent will suffer severe financial loss, and up to 40 per cent will lose their job. [www.2-in-2-1.co.uk](http://www.2-in-2-1.co.uk) *Let us pray for this serious problem that not only affects Australia but is international.*

#### **Japan apologizing for war inspires rare joint North and South Korea joint commemoration**

The AP reports that Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi on Monday apologized for his country's role in World War II on the 60th anniversary of the war's end, and vowed Japan would never again take "the path to war." In a statement issued by his office, Koizumi acknowledged the "enormous damage" inflicted by Japan's military "by colonization and invasion" during the conflict. The occasion also inspired a rare joint commemoration by North Korea and South Korea, says the report, noting that South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun urged Koreans to come together to help overcome common problems. "It's time for us to put an end to a history of dissension, and open an era of national integration," the AP reports Roh saying. [www.breakingchristiannews.com](http://www.breakingchristiannews.com) *As Japan apologizes pray that it will bring healing. Let us pray that the Koreans can put an end to dissension and move to an era of national integration.*

#### **Myanmar cracks down on churches**

Myanmar's repressive government has cracked down on Christian churches in recent weeks, closing 28 houses of worship after residents had converted from Buddhism in large numbers. According to [Voice of the Martyrs](http://www.voiceofthemartyrs.com) sources working in the Asian nation formerly known as Burma, the action is taking place in the Mandalay area. The closed fellowships were "unofficial" evangelical churches that did not belong to mainline denominations. Sources said military officials forced pastors to sign documents saying they would stop holding Christian meetings. According to the report, the pastors have begun a 40-day fast during which they will consume only juice and water while they pray for God's intervention. In Yangon, the capital city, 17 churches reportedly have been closed, a Bible school has been closed and one pastor has been arrested. The crackdown there appears to relate to a group of Korean Christians that had been on a "prayer walk" in the city. [www.worldnetdaily.com](http://www.worldnetdaily.com) *Let us pray for all Christians in Myanmar (Burma) that the Lord will strengthen and protect them.*

#### **Believers move to pray the doors of Bhutan open.**

Known as the 'land of the thunder dragon,' Bhutan is a small kingdom in the Eastern Himalayan Mountains. It's been a haven of retreat for many spiritually minded people. At the same time, it was a closed country to evangelical missionaries for many years. [Bibles For The World's](http://www.biblesfortheworld.org) Rochunga Pudaite had a vision to see those doors pried open, back in 1958. Today, nearly five decades later, Pudaite says they're seeing that dream become reality. "God has brought over two thousand converts to worship Him. These new converts have a burden to give the Gospel to the people of Bhutan. They have translated the New Testament in Dzongkha, the national language of Bhutan." Not only has the church been growing, Pudaite says, believers have taken ownership over their own evangelism. "The Christians also quietly organized a plan to deliver a copy of the New Testament to every home in Bhutan." [www.mnnonline.org](http://www.mnnonline.org) *Let us join our brothers and sisters in Christ in prayer for doors to be opened to the Gospel.*

#### **Eight Churches in West Java closed during worship services**

The Christian human rights group, Jubilee Campaign, has stated that sources in Indonesia have informed them that the campaign by a radical Islamic group to close down Christian churches in the province of West Java has escalated in recent days. A spokesperson for the group said, "Members of the Indonesian Council of Ulama (MUI), an organization of Muslim clerics that receives 5 billion Rupees (nearly US\$600,000) in support from the government of Indonesia, entered eight churches during worship services on Sunday, August 14, and ordered the churches closed. Sunday's incident brings to 35 the number of West Java churches shut down since the MUI issued a series of eleven fatwa's, or religious rulings, at the end of July. The spokesperson went on to say, "It is also noteworthy that both the announcement of the fatwa's and the escalation in the church-closing campaign have taken place since the beginning of the trial of three Indonesian women on charges of

enticing Muslim children to convert to Christianity. [www.assistnews.net](http://www.assistnews.net) *Let us pray that the Church in Java will have their faith strengthened and enabled to stand firm under this persecution.*

#### **Urgent prayer request for Indian believers beaten in Rajasthan**

Dr. Joseph Chavady, of the Canadian based One to One International Ministries has issued an urgent prayer request for a group of believers in India. In a message to ANS, he said, "On Tuesday, 16th of August at 7:30 pm, I received a very emotional call from Rajasthan, India. He reported that last night there was a meeting of about forty new believers in the house of church elder, Br. Bather, in a town nearby. They had gathered to thank God for deliverance from bondage and for the blessings of new life in Christ. "At a certain point, about twenty suspected Hindu extremists walked into the house and closed the door. They announced that, 'now, we are going to thank OUR god.' Armed with stones and heavy sticks, even an axe, they started beating up the gathered people. About twenty people were severely beaten that evening. "Our pastor has filed a complaint with the local police, and the matter is now being investigated. He himself was badly shaken by this event, and he asked us to pray for this situation, especially for those who are wounded, and for courage for the new believers."

[www.assistnews.net](http://www.assistnews.net) *Pray for the believers in India that God will help them to stand firm under persecution by other faiths.*

## **PRAISE REPORTS**

#### **Training towards multiplication pays off in India**

Recent research reveals that new churches have been planted in almost 50% of the villages in Punjab, in northern India. That is an almost unbelievable development. An ever-increasing number of Christian leaders are joining 'Reach Punjab 2007', which aims to plant a new Christian church in every Punjabi village. Besides such reports, we regularly hear news from India such as this: - In the past three months alone, 1,500 people in Uttar Pradesh have been saved, and almost 300 new house churches planted. - 3,758 people have been trained as leaders in Uttar Pradesh. - 2,765 Muslims who now follow Jesus have been trained as leaders. - In 2004, 1,997 people were trained for the harvest work in north-western India, making a total of 6,697. The people being trained each year grew by 43%. - In central India, 8,748 men and 1,978 women were trained last year, making a total of 27,186. - There is a church-planting initiative in around 50 of New Delhi's Colonies (neighbourhoods). One network of 48 newly-planted churches totalling 600 baptised believers is led by 20 people, who are training another 30 new leaders. [www.joelnews.org](http://www.joelnews.org) *Praise God for this tremendous growth, often under persecution. (See above)*

#### **President Yudhoyono backs Aceh peace deal**

Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono has promised to honour a peace deal with separatist rebels from the tsunami-hit province of Aceh. The government and the Free Aceh Movement (Gam) signed the agreement on Monday after six months of talks. Mr Yudhoyono also spoke of finding a solution to another ongoing separatist conflict, in the province of Papua. He made the remarks in an annual speech to parliament, a day before Indonesia marks 60 years of independence. Mr Yudhoyono told parliament on Tuesday that everything agreed in the Aceh peace deal would be implemented on the ground. Representatives from both the government and Gam signed the official peace accord in Helsinki on Monday. In a commentary article for the International Herald Tribune on Tuesday, Mr Yudhoyono described the peace agreement as "a victory for the Acehnese, who have suffered for so long." "We now have a golden opportunity to change Aceh for good. We cannot afford to squander it, because a chance for permanent peace does not come often in history," he wrote. [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk) *Pray that this peace initiative will now lead to peace and reconciliation for the people of Aceh.*

## **LOOKING AHEAD**

**4th–21st August:** *Merseyfest* Britain's largest urban mission for 2005. Please pray for: Team - wisdom and continued favour with those in authority; Church to arise to the challenge; church across the nation to help us through prayer. Details [www.merseyfest.com](http://www.merseyfest.com)

**26<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> August:** Connect Europe will gather emerging (younger) visionary leaders from across Europe in Prague for three days of friendship and strategy around God's purposes for Europe and the generation. Pray for an outpouring of prayer and release of a new generation into the fullness of the future. [www.connecteurope.org](http://www.connecteurope.org)

**9th – 11th September:** *The Lawyers Christian Fellowship National Conference:* this year we will meet at Hothorpe Hall in Leicestershire. Teresa Conradie will be giving the keynote speech (Teresa is chairman of the South African Christian Lawyers' Association) and Rev. Simon Robinson addressing the theme: "The truth will set you free." [www.lawcf.org](http://www.lawcf.org)

**21st September:** Churches representing over 560 million Christians world-wide are being invited to mark the *United Nations International Day of Peace*, as an *International Day of Prayer for Peace* – for a second year running. The initiative calls on Christian churches all over the world to arrange for services or vigils on 21 September, as well as to include prayers for peace in their services on the Sunday before or after that day [www.ekkleisia.co.uk](http://www.ekkleisia.co.uk)

**5<sup>th</sup> October – 3<sup>rd</sup> November:** *30-Days of Prayer for the Muslim World.* For the latest "30-Days" news and for prayer materials during Ramadan 2005 [www.30-days.net](http://www.30-days.net)

**29th October:** *Trumpet Call III* - Back to the NEC Arena for a third National Trumpet Call Day of Prayer. Make sure the date is in your diary [www.worldprayer.org.uk](http://www.worldprayer.org.uk)