

# Prayer Alert

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**I will give thanks to the LORD because of his righteousness; I will sing the praises of the name of the LORD Most High. (Psalm 7:17)**

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!

## Join the Team!

Prayer Alert is produced by a voluntary online team spread across England. If you appreciate what we do and are computer confident, with researching news, writing, editing and / or proofing skills, we would love to hear from you! Please hit reply, introduce yourself, and we will be in touch.

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

### Tennis players showing their faith

After 19-year-old Coco Gauff won her first Grand Slam title at the women's tennis championship in the US Open on 9 September, she dropped to her knees, put her elbows on the bench, clasped her hands and brought them to her forehead with her eyes closed in prayer. Gauff said in an interview with NBC: 'I was just saying thank you and I understood that all the tough times were just to make that moment even sweeter. I think if it came easy, I wouldn't feel as appreciative as I did at that moment.' Gauff has always been open about her Christian faith. Following her win in the Cincinnati Masters in August, she thanked her 'Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ' at the trophy ceremony. The men's singles champion in the US Open, Serbian Novak Djokovic, is an Orthodox Christian who often wears a wooden cross around his neck and has been seen blessing himself during matches.

Praise: God for the testimony of successful sportsmen and women and their acknowledgement of their gifts given from God. (Philippians 4:13)

More: [www.catholicregister.org/home/international/item/35895-tennis-champ-praying-not-taking-it-all-in](http://www.catholicregister.org/home/international/item/35895-tennis-champ-praying-not-taking-it-all-in)

### India: herb garden helps survivors of bonded labour

In an effort to protect survivors of bonded labour from further exploitation, the government in Tamil Nadu, India, has established an herb garden for families of the Irula tribal community. The garden provides ten survivor families and thirty other families with the opportunity to cultivate and sell a diverse range of herbs, medicinal plants and fruit-bearing trees. Having secure job opportunities will prevent them from obtaining loans from unscrupulous lenders who prey on their vulnerability. The herb garden is the result of a proposal which the Released Bonded Labourers Association (RBLA) had submitted with the help of IJM. It is part of many others that the government has been regularly creating, from helping survivors and other vulnerable families earn a stable income to establishing a first-of-its-kind, holistic community for survivors. The herb garden is significant as it preserves the knowledge of traditional medicinal herbs. Following the launch, an RBLA leader gave a tour of the herb garden and said, 'I hope this will inspire other survivors to come forward and access government welfare measures'.

Praise: God for the success of this innovative project. (Genesis 2:8)

More: [www.ijm.org/news/herb-garden-initiative-is-empowering-survivors-bonded-labor](http://www.ijm.org/news/herb-garden-initiative-is-empowering-survivors-bonded-labor)

## British Isles

### PM changes stance on climate change

Prime minister Rishi Sunak has defended the country's commitment to its net-zero targets despite criticism from the government's Climate Change Committee (CCC). In response to concerns about the UK's approach to climate change, Sunak emphasised his confidence in achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. However, the recent overhaul of green policies, including a five-year delay in the ban on new petrol and diesel cars, has faced backlash, with the CCC stating that it sets the country back. Sunak framed these policy changes as pragmatic, emphasising the costs of low-carbon technology. The debate highlights the tension between political priorities and climate objectives. Critics

argue that these alterations could hinder the UK's ability to meet legally binding climate goals. The controversy comes amid the backdrop of preparations for an expected general election, with the Conservative Party, under Sunak's leadership, seeking to create distinctions between itself and opposition parties.

Pray: for our leaders to make wise choices for our planet. May they prioritise climate action and protect our future. (Genesis 2:15)

More: [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-66875867](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-66875867)

### Concern over app used in Bristol schools

Over 100 schools in Bristol have faced criticism for using the Think Family Education (TFE) app, which provides safeguarding leads with easy access to pupils' and their families' interactions with police, child protection, and welfare services. Staff using the app have reportedly kept it secret from parents and carers. The city council and Avon and Somerset police, who collaborated on the system, maintain that the app is meant to protect children and is not secretive, with information about its existence publicly available. Critics argue that most parents are unaware of the app's existence, and that it should be shut down to prevent the profiling and criminalisation of children. The app draws data from the Think Family database, which contains information from around 50,000 families in Bristol, collected from various agencies. It uses 'targeted analytics' to identify children at risk of exploitation, though critics argue it may disproportionately affect children from minority ethnic or disadvantaged backgrounds.

Pray: for wisdom for those leading safeguarding in our schools and communities. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

More: [www.theguardian.com/education/2023/sep/21/calls-to-shut-down-bristol-schools-use-of-think-family-education-app-pupils-and-families](http://www.theguardian.com/education/2023/sep/21/calls-to-shut-down-bristol-schools-use-of-think-family-education-app-pupils-and-families)

### Chancellor urged to spend on public services

In August, high inflation led to increased government finances, creating pressure on Chancellor Jeremy Hunt to boost support for state services, according to the Resolution Foundation. Government borrowing for August was £11.6 billion and nearly £70 billion for the first five months of the current fiscal year. This left the Chancellor £11.4 billion better off for 2023-24 than March's official forecasts had predicted. The Resolution Foundation noted that while higher inflation had led to increased tax payments, it had strained public services with pre-inflation budget allocations, making future public service cuts less tenable. Conservative backbenchers have opposed increasing department budgets in favour of tax cuts, while former prime minister Liz Truss has advocated tax cuts to stimulate economic growth. The borrowing figures highlight the need to manage inflation and government finances.

Pray: that God will guide our leaders in managing our nation's finances amidst economic challenges. (Psalm 46:1)

More: [www.resolutionfoundation.org/press-releases/inflation-shock-is-bolstering-tax-revenues-but-putting-public-services-under-further-strain/](http://www.resolutionfoundation.org/press-releases/inflation-shock-is-bolstering-tax-revenues-but-putting-public-services-under-further-strain/)

### Police officer charged with murder of Chris Kaba

An armed Metropolitan Police officer, identified as NX121, has been charged with the murder of black rapper Chris Kaba in south London. Kaba, a 24-year-old expectant father, was fatally shot by a police marksman during a vehicle stop on 5 September 2022. Armed officers had been covertly following the vehicle, flagged by Automatic Number Plate Recognition as connected to a firearms incident. After the shooting, no firearms were found in the vehicle. The officer was initially placed on restricted duties but later suspended. The decision to charge the officer followed a six-month investigation by the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC). NX121 is set to appear in Westminster magistrates' court. Kaba's family welcomed the charging decision, expressing hope that justice would be served. The police federation expressed concern about future implications for officers involved in dangerous roles. This case echoes past instances where armed Met officers faced murder charges over fatal shootings while on duty.

Pray: for the family of Chris Kaba in their loss, for a just and fair trial, and for the well-being of police officers within London. (Exodus 20:13)

More: [news.sky.com/story/police-officer-charged-with-chris-kabas-murder-appears-in-court-12966303](https://news.sky.com/story/police-officer-charged-with-chris-kabas-murder-appears-in-court-12966303)

### Change in attitudes towards school attendance

A recent report conducted by consultancy Public First highlights a 'seismic shift' in parental views on daily school attendance since the Covid pandemic. The factors contributing to this shift include the cost of living crisis, increased mental health concerns among students, and a more holistic approach to daily life. The research reveals that before the pandemic daily school attendance was seen as a fundamental aspect of good parenting. However, post-Covid, parents no longer view it in the same light, considering school attendance as one of several competing options or demands on their child. This shift is exemplified by a significant number of parents taking their children on holiday during term time, which is now considered socially acceptable. The report recommends the abolition of fines for school absences, citing their ineffectiveness in changing parental behaviour and their detrimental impact on school-parent relationships. It also advocates for increased investment in Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to improve attendance.

Pray: for parents to have wisdom as they nurture and lead their children to adulthood. (Proverbs 22:6)

More: [news.sky.com/story/parents-dont-believe-children-must-be-in-school-every-day-anymore-report-12965683](https://news.sky.com/story/parents-dont-believe-children-must-be-in-school-every-day-anymore-report-12965683)

### More NHS strikes

The CEO of a large NHS trust has expressed his concerns about the ongoing industrial action by NHS consultants and junior doctors, comparing the situation to going into a battle with one arm tied behind their backs. The joint action by consultants and junior doctors has led to the cancellation of over 10,000 outpatient appointments, more than 1,000 non-urgent surgeries, and some urgent surgeries. Hospitals have even stopped booking appointments for strike days, exacerbating the disruption to elective care. The industrial action, now in its tenth month, is causing significant challenges for patients and healthcare staff. Trainer highlighted two main issues: patients not receiving the care they need and healthcare staff working in increasingly difficult circumstances, especially in emergency departments. The situation poses significant challenges as the NHS prepares for the winter season.

Pray: for wisdom for those leaders in a position to resolve these strikes, and for all those whose suffering is being extended due to cancelled appointments and treatments. (James 5:14-15)

More: [news.sky.com/story/nhs-strikes-hospital-boss-says-preparing-for-winter-amid-walkouts-like-going-into-battle-with-one-hand-behind-your-back-12965912](https://news.sky.com/story/nhs-strikes-hospital-boss-says-preparing-for-winter-amid-walkouts-like-going-into-battle-with-one-hand-behind-your-back-12965912)

## Europe

### Germany: shortage of teachers

As the new school year begins in Germany, the biggest problem is still the nationwide shortage of teachers. This could be remedied, for example by employing career changers, having larger classes, and using more hybrid lessons (partly online). But this increases the risk that the existing teachers may suffer illness or even resign and makes the general atmosphere and conditions for the students to learn well in lessons more challenging. In addition, due to measures introduced during the Covid crisis, learning deficiencies and mental illnesses have increased significantly among children and young people. The fear of being infected by Covid has now been replaced by fears about climate change and the apocalypse (the world coming to an end). These take away motivation and willingness to learn. The building of a world for tomorrow requires not only discipline, but above all a vision.

Pray: for schools to become places of revival where both teachers and students can find help and hope. (Psalm 78:4)

More: [www.waechterruf.de/uploads/media/2023-09\\_call-of-the-watchmen.pdf](http://www.waechterruf.de/uploads/media/2023-09_call-of-the-watchmen.pdf)

### King Charles' visit to France

On 21 September, King Charles III followed in his mother's footsteps by addressing lawmakers in the French upper chamber, the Senate. He focused on a message of unity between France and the UK, ending with a personal pledge to strengthen what he described as the 'indispensable' relationship between the two countries during his time as monarch. He also suggested that France and Britain should team up to jointly tackle the climate and biodiversity emergencies with a new version of the 1904 Entente Cordiale pact that sealed the friendship between Paris and London. The king's speech, which he delivered in English and French, received a standing ovation as it came to a close.

Pray: for the king's suggestions to be studied and taken up. Pray for more international cooperation to combat climate, not just between the UK and France but more widely. (1 Corinthians 1:10)

More: [www.france24.com/en/europe/20230921-%F0%9F%94%B4-live-king-charles-iii-gives-speech-to-lawmakers-at-french-senate](http://www.france24.com/en/europe/20230921-%F0%9F%94%B4-live-king-charles-iii-gives-speech-to-lawmakers-at-french-senate)

### Poland / Ukraine: dispute over grain escalates

One of Ukraine's staunchest allies, Poland, has said it will no longer supply weapons to its neighbour, as a diplomatic dispute over grain escalates. The dispute began after the Russian invasion forced Ukraine to find alternative overland routes, which led to large quantities of grain ending up in central Europe. Consequently, the EU temporarily banned imports of grain into five countries to protect local farmers, who feared Ukrainian grain was driving down prices. The ban ended on 15 September, but Hungary, Slovakia and Poland decided to keep on implementing it. Remarks by President Zelenskiy at the UN, that it was alarming how some of Ukraine's friends were 'making a thriller from grain', have been denounced by Warsaw as unjustified. Prime minister Mateus Morawiecki was adamant Poland was helping Ukraine defeat the 'Russian barbarian' by maintaining a military hub, but he said he would not agree to Poland's markets being destabilised by grain imports. Ukraine has filed lawsuits with the World Trade Organisation against the three countries over the bans, which it says are a violation of international obligations.

Pray: for this dispute to be resolved speedily and amicably. (Proverbs 12:18)

More: [www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-66873495](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-66873495)

## Worldwide

### India / Canada: spiralling tensions

Canada's high commission in India has said that it has decided to 'adjust' staff presence in the country temporarily after some diplomats received threats on social media platforms, adding to spiralling tensions between the two countries. The statement from the high commission came soon after an Indian company published a notice that it was suspending visa services for Canadian citizens. Tensions between the two countries escalated earlier this week when Canada said that it was 'actively pursuing credible allegations' linking Indian government agents to the murder of a Sikh separatist leader in British Columbia in June (<https://www.reuters.com/world/india/indias-opposition-congress-dismisses-canadas-suspicions-sikh-leaders-murder-2023-09-20/>). Prime minister Narendra Modi's government has categorically rejected the claims. With both nations expelling a diplomat each, and India urging its nationals in Canada to 'exercise caution', relations between the two countries have touched the lowest point.

Pray: for the tensions to be eased, and for the truth about the murder to be uncovered and agreed. (Luke 12:2-3)

More: [www.reuters.com/world/india/india-suspends-visa-services-canadian-citizens-bls-international-website-2023-09-21/](http://www.reuters.com/world/india/india-suspends-visa-services-canadian-citizens-bls-international-website-2023-09-21/)

### USA: Biden criticised for sidelining human rights

From business and strategic perspectives, Joe Biden's recent visits to Vietnam and India will likely be seen as bolstering ties with countries that can help Washington to counter China's growing might. But for rights advocates, Biden's travels are a huge disappointment, given his administration's vow to prioritise human rights when taking office in 2021. Human Rights Watch (HRW) says the government's Hindu majoritarian ideology is reflected in bias in the justice system, and authorities have intensified efforts to silence activists and journalists through politically motivated charges. Meanwhile, Vietnam is holding at least 159 political prisoners - people imprisoned for peacefully exercising basic civil and political rights - and at least 22 others were in detention pending eventual trial before a court controlled by the ruling Communist Party. In the first eight months of 2023 alone, HRW said, courts have sentenced at least fifteen people to long prison terms in violation of their rights to a fair trial. Reporters asked Biden in Vietnam if he was putting US strategic interests above rights and replied: 'I've raised it (human rights) with every person I met with'.

But HRW said talking in private was not enough.

Pray: that President Biden will rediscover his commitment to human rights issues. Pray for pressure to be put on both India and Vietnam to act justly. (Micah 6:8)

More: [www.reuters.com/world/biden-accused-sidelining-vietnam-india-rights-over-strategic-interests-2023-09-12/](http://www.reuters.com/world/biden-accused-sidelining-vietnam-india-rights-over-strategic-interests-2023-09-12/)

### Iran: Christians pressurised to boycott protests

As thousands of protesters around the world took to the streets in a show of solidarity, a year after the killing of hijab protester Mahsa Zhina Amini, there are reports that Christians are coming under pressure from the authorities to boycott the protests. Those who participate have been arrested and face sexual assault in prison, according to a new report from the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). Since the freedom protests began in Iran, the country has detained some 20,000 protesters and killed at least 530, by conservative estimates. It is claimed that seven protesters have been executed after 'sham trials' and dozens more have been sentenced to death. The women's rights protests in Iran have turned into a movement pressing for greater freedom of religion or belief. For more information about the pressure on Christians in Iran, including many being jailed for their involvement with house churches, see 'More'.

Pray: for the protests to continue and pressurise the government into making changes. Pray for the release of Christians who have been imprisoned unjustly. (Hebrews 13:3)

More: [releaseinternational.org/iran-protests-christians-warned-to-keep-clear-or-face-arrest/](https://releaseinternational.org/iran-protests-christians-warned-to-keep-clear-or-face-arrest/)

### Gabon: hopes for a better future after coup

Selling mobile phone accessories in a small shop in Gabon's capital Libreville, Doles Gabriel sees coup leader General Brice Oligui Ngeuma as someone who has unshackled the nation from the chains of his former boss - President Ali Bongo. 'Moses was educated in the house of Pharaoh, but God appointed him to liberate the people of Egypt from slavery. This is what is happening in the house of Bongo', the 23-year-old said. Her comments reflect the joy - and hopes - of many people who had lived under the Bongo dynasty. With an iron fist, the family have ruled oil-rich Gabon since 1967, when Omar Bongo became president in 1967. When he died in 2009 his son Ali succeeded him. He appointed the general head of the elite Republican Guard, in charge of his own security. But on 30 August, shortly after Mr Bongo was announced as the winner of disputed elections, the general seized power from the man he was supposed to protect. In a new development, on 20 September Gabon was partially suspended from the Commonwealth, as its foreign ministers said that they 'strongly condemned the unconstitutional removal of the elected government from office'. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-66861734>

Pray: that the new government will quickly hold democratic elections, and have the best interests of the country at heart. (2 Samuel 5:2)

More: [www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-66745738](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-66745738)

### Antarctic sea-ice

Satellite data has shown that the sea-ice surrounding Antarctica is well below any previous recorded winter level, a worrying new benchmark for a region that once seemed resistant to global warming. An unstable Antarctica could have far-reaching consequences, polar experts warn: its huge ice expanse regulates the planet's temperature, as the white surface reflects the sun's energy back into the atmosphere and also cools the water beneath and near it. Without its ice cooling the planet, Antarctica could transform from Earth's refrigerator to a radiator. The ice that floats on the Antarctic Ocean's surface now measures less than 17 million sq km - that is 1.5 million sq km of sea-ice less than the September average, and well below previous winter record lows. That is an area of missing ice about five times the size of the British Isles. Since the 1990s, the loss of land ice from Antarctica has contributed 7.2mm to sea-level rise: even modest increases in sea levels can result in dangerously high storm surges that could wipe out coastal communities.

Pray: for urgent action to be taken which will reverse this worrying trend. (Psalm 24:1-2)

More: [www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-66724246](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-66724246)

### Venezuela: government regains control of prison

The Venezuelan government has announced that it has regained control of a notorious jail, which had been controlled by the powerful Tren de Aragua criminal gang. Some 11,000 security personnel stormed the Tocarón prison, which had been run by inmates for years and had hotel-like facilities including a pool, nightclub and a mini zoo. It doubled up as the gang's headquarters. From it, Tren de Aragua ruled a criminal enterprise spanning several Latin American countries and reaching as far as Chile. Its members engage in human trafficking, run prostitution rings, and extort migrants. One commentator said that the clearing of the prison did not automatically constitute the end of the gang. 'Their centre of operations has been closed down, but the leaders of this organisation and its cells abroad can continue functioning', she said.

Pray: for this action to lead to other successes in curbing the power of criminal gangs in the country. (Psalm 37:17)

More: [www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-66873494](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-66873494)

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