

Prayer Alert

ISSUE 48-2023 | Friday 01 December 2023
www.prayer-alert.net | editor@prayer-alert.net

Who will not fear You, Lord, and bring glory to Your name? For You alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before You. (Revelation 15:4)

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

Praise Reports

[India: workers finally rescued from tunnel](#)

[Teen brings drowned toddler back to life on Thanksgiving Day](#)

British Isles

[Asylum seekers: Home Office says more than 17,000 missing](#)

[Interest rates: why there is more pain still to come](#)

[Nottingham: council declares itself bankrupt](#)

[Parents in England urged to sign up for free childcare in 2024](#)

[New strain of swine flu detected](#)

[Don't bother with a funeral, say most poll respondents](#)

Europe

[Ukraine / Russia war: day 645](#)

[UK / Greece: ongoing row over Elgin Marbles](#)

Worldwide

[Gaza: ceasefire extended](#)

[COP28: Pope unable to attend](#)

[COP28: UAE denies claims of deals on fossil fuels](#)

[Tajikistan: challenges facing the Church](#)

[Sierra Leone: weekend coup attempt foiled](#)

[Australia: apology to thalidomide victims](#)

[Ecuador: new president sworn in](#)

Praise Reports

India: workers finally rescued from tunnel

We asked for your prayers [last week](https://www.prayer-alert.net/en/pa-pray/regions/worldwide/item/52560-india-rescue-operation-for-trapped-tunnel-workers-close-to-success) (<https://www.prayer-alert.net/en/pa-pray/regions/worldwide/item/52560-india-rescue-operation-for-trapped-tunnel-workers-close-to-success>); it took another five days, 17 in all, before 41 construction workers were rescued from from a collapsed tunnel in Uttarakhand state. The tunnel, part of a \$1.5 million pilgrimage project, collapsed on 12 November, trapping low-wage workers from various Indian states in a 4.5km underground space. The rescue faced many challenges, including machine breakdowns and the tunnel's precarious geological location, both matters for considerable criticism. The breakthrough came on 29 November when a team of 'rat miners' managed to reach the trapped men. This method, which involves creating narrow tunnels by hand, has been controversial due to its hazards, and was officially banned in 2014. The rescued workers, who were in good health, were greeted by Uttarakhand's chief minister with traditional marigold garlands, and celebrations ensued with sweets and firecrackers.

Praise: You, Lord, for the skills of the rescue teams and for lives saved. (Psalm 107:28)

More: www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/11/29/how-rat-miners-rescued-workers-from-indian-tunnel-after-17-days

Teen brings drowned toddler back to life on Thanksgiving Day

A 15-year-old high school student, Madison Atkinson, saved her 3-year-old cousin, Maxine, by performing CPR after the toddler drowned in a pool during a Thanksgiving family gathering in California. The incident unfolded when Maxine, unnoticed by adults, wandered outside and fell into the pool. Her uncle, Damien, found her floating and pulled her out, attempting the Heimlich manoeuvre. Madison, realising CPR was needed, took charge and successfully revived Maxine. The family was deeply grateful for her life-saving skills, which she had learned in school. This heroic act highlighted the critical importance and effectiveness of CPR, even in the hands of a teenager, in saving lives. [Watch the video](https://youtu.be/5JGDo5PwhsU) (<https://youtu.be/5JGDo5PwhsU>):

Praise: God for this amazing rescue and Madison's quick thinking. (Psalm 28:7)

More: www.goodnewsnetwork.org/teen-brings-drowned-toddler-back-to-life-on-thanksgiving-while-adults-watch-stunned-watch/

British Isles

Asylum seekers: Home Office says more than 17,000 missing

The UK Home Office has lost track of over 17,000 asylum seekers after their claims were discontinued, a concern raised during a discussion about Rishi Sunak's goal to clear the asylum backlog by year's end. The claims were withdrawn because the individuals failed to respond to interview requests or questionnaires. In 2021, 2,141 applications were refused or withdrawn, a significant decrease from 24,403 in 2004. When an application is withdrawn, the individual becomes illegal in the UK and is subject to removal. The Government, confident about meeting its target, has increased caseworker numbers. However, the significant rise in withdrawn claims raises concerns about conveniently meeting targets. The Home Office is also negotiating a treaty with Rwanda following the Supreme Court's ruling against their plan to send asylum seekers there, citing risks of violation of UK and international human rights laws. There is also uncertainty about the total amount paid to Rwanda, with more details expected in the summer, making it challenging to scrutinise the policy's costs effectively.

Pray: :Lord, grant justice and mercy to all asylum seekers. (Micah 6:8)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-67567401

Interest rates: why there is more pain still to come

The UK has experienced 14 consecutive interest rate rises, affecting both mortgage holders and savers. According to the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR), in 2023 the gains from higher savings returns have surpassed the costs of rising mortgage rates, slightly increasing real household disposable income. However, this improvement is flanked by decreases in disposable income in 2022 and an expected drop in 2024. The impact of these rate hikes has been uneven, with many having minimal savings and large sums in non-interest-bearing accounts. The OBR warns of further financial strain in 2024 as fixed-rate mortgages expire, leading to higher debt interest payments and a decline in disposable income. This forecast remains significant even if the Bank of England does not increase rates beyond the current 5.25%. The situation is also impacting non-homeowners, contributing to rising rents. Overall, the OBR suggests tougher financial times ahead, even without additional rate hikes.

Pray: for provision of financial needs amidst hardship. (Philippians 4:19)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-67518829

Nottingham: council declares itself bankrupt

Nottingham City Council has effectively declared bankruptcy by issuing a Section 114 notice, indicating it cannot cover its expenses within the current financial year. The notice does not affect the council's ability to deliver statutory services such as waste collection and child safeguarding. Despite attempts to bridge a budget gap, which stood at £26 million in July and has since narrowed to around £23 million, the council's struggles persist. These financial woes have been attributed to significant central government funding cuts of more than 40% since 2010. Three Labour MPs representing Nottingham have criticised the Government for these cuts and urged it to provide adequate funding to support local services, especially given the rising demands for social care and homelessness services. They emphasised the need to shield residents from further cuts to local services amidst declining living standards. This news comes two months after Birmingham declared itself bankrupt: [see https://www.prayer-alert.net/en/pa-pray/regions/british-isles/item/16512-pray-for-bankrupt-birmingham](https://www.prayer-alert.net/en/pa-pray/regions/british-isles/item/16512-pray-for-bankrupt-birmingham)

Pray: for guidance for Nottingham's leaders in crisis; Lord, provide wisdom. (Proverbs 3:6)

More: www.nottinghampost.com/news/local-news/nottingham-city-council-updates-authority-8898664

Parents in England urged to sign up for free childcare in 2024

In England, working parents are being encouraged to apply for 15 hours of free childcare per week for their toddlers starting in the new year. This initiative is part of a broader reform by the Department for Education, which also includes a childminder start-up grant. Additionally, a £400 million funding increase for early years providers is planned for 2024-25. Chancellor Jeremy Hunt's budget plans, announced in March, will extend this offer to families of children as young as nine months, providing thirty hours of free childcare every week. Starting in April 2024, this benefit will be available for parents of two-year-olds and will expand to include children over nine months from September next year. However, opposition critics, including the shadow education secretary and Liberal Democrat spokesperson, argue that the policy is not feasible due to a shortage of childcare providers and insufficient government funding. They warn of a potential crisis in childcare services.

Pray: for blessing and provision for families with childcare needs. (Psalm 127:3)

More: www.itv.com/news/2023-11-29/working-parents-of-toddlers-urged-to-register-for-free-childcare-in-the-new-year

New strain of swine flu detected

A new strain of swine flu, influenza A(H1N2)v, has been detected in a human in the UK for the first time. The patient, who had not worked with pigs, visited their GP in North Yorkshire with breathing problems and has since fully recovered. The source of the infection remains unknown. The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) is closely monitoring the situation and enhancing surveillance in GP surgeries and hospitals. Globally, there have been fifty cases of this strain since 2005, but the UK case is genetically distinct. This strain is similar to those found in pigs but differs from recent human cases of H1N2 elsewhere. The incident has prompted a collaborative effort between the UKHSA and veterinary authorities to investigate and protect public health. Although this case does not immediately suggest a pandemic risk, it raises concerns as zoonotic diseases have historically led to pandemics. Authorities are tracing contacts and urging pig keepers to report any signs of swine flu.

Pray: for wisdom for the scientists, and for the right steps to be taken to prevent the swine flu from spreading. (Exodus 15:26)

More: news.sky.com/story/virus-strain-similar-to-swine-flu-detected-in-person-for-first-time-in-uk-13017517

Don't bother with a funeral, say most poll respondents

A poll commissioned by Theos and conducted by YouGov reveals that less than half (47%) of the 2,569 respondents desire a funeral. The report highlights a significant shift in British grieving practices and warns of a potential pastoral gap due to the decline in formal funeral ceremonies. 24% of participants do not want a funeral, while 28% are undecided. Financial concerns are a factor, with 13% citing lack of funds. The main reasons for not wanting a funeral include preferring to spend money differently (67%), not seeing the point (55%), and not wanting a traditional service (43%). The survey also found that frequent worshippers are more likely to want a funeral. It also emphasises the importance of the Church in providing support and rethinking its approach to death and mourning in contemporary society, highlighting the role of church buildings as places of remembrance.

Pray: that the Church will continue to convey compassion and hope to families in mourning. (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)

More: www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2023/1-december/news/uk/don-t-bother-with-a-funeral-for-me-say-majority-of-poll-respondents

Europe

Ukraine / Russia war: day 645

NATO secretary-general Jens Stoltenberg has warned against underestimating Russia's determination to continue the war. The EU has delivered 300,000 of its promised 1 million shells to Ukraine, with calls for closer alignment of Ukrainian and NATO arms production. Ukraine reported killing five high-ranking Russian officials in an air strike, and claimed that Russian casualties have reached 327,580. Ukrainian air defences successfully intercepted 21 Iranian-made Shahed drones heading towards a region where an airbase is located. Meanwhile, Russia escalated attacks in the Donetsk region, intensifying artillery fire, airstrikes, and ground infantry attacks. British intelligence indicated the potential use of 500kg cluster bombs. Russia also claimed control of the village of Khromove, near the city of Bakhmut.

Pray: for peace, protection, and strength for Ukraine and its people. Continue to pray for an end to the war. (Psalm 46:1)

More: www.theguardian.com/world/2023/nov/30/russia-ukraine-war-at-a-glance-what-we-know-on-day-645

UK / Greece: ongoing row over Elgin Marbles

The 'Elgin Marbles' are ancient Greek sculptures taken from the Parthenon in Athens and currently housed in the British Museum. The British government argues that the marbles are a part of world heritage, while Greece has called for their return to their homeland. The argument has flared up with the visit of the Greek prime minister to the UK. When he raised the issue in a TV interview, Rishi Sunak cancelled their scheduled meeting, claiming that he had reneged on his promise not to campaign publicly about their return. The Greek foreign minister, at a NATO meeting, has said their claim is based on 'history' and 'justice'. This issue highlights the broader question of repatriating cultural artefacts taken during colonial times.

Pray: for national leaders to have wisdom and fairness in resolving cultural heritage disputes. (Proverbs 2:6)

More: www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/elgin-marbles-parthenon-greece-uk-rishi-sunak-british-museum-b1123564.html

Worldwide

Gaza: ceasefire extended

On 30 November Israel and Hamas struck a last-minute agreement to extend their ceasefire for a seventh day. Both sides agreed to extend the truce, with Hamas releasing more hostages and Israel receiving a list of those to be freed. So far, 97 hostages have been released by Hamas and 180 prisoners by Israel: however, there are reports that Israel has been arresting more Palestinians. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/11/28/arrests> Washington hoped the truce could be extended further to free more hostages and let more aid reach Gaza. The ceasefire has allowed 220 lorries a day to bring in humanitarian aid to the strip, but two-thirds of its residents are homeless and more than 15,000 have been killed during the Israeli campaign. The USA has urged Israel to specify safe zones for Palestinian civilians if and when its offensive resumes. Meanwhile, soon after the agreement three people have been killed and six injured by Hamas gunmen in Jerusalem: [see https://www.timesofisrael.com/three-killed-6-injured-in-terror-shooting-at-jerusalem-entrance-bus-stop/](https://www.timesofisrael.com/three-killed-6-injured-in-terror-shooting-at-jerusalem-entrance-bus-stop/)

Pray: that the ceasefire will be extended even further and more hostages and prisoners freed. (Isaiah 61:1)

More: www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/talks-intensify-extend-israel-hamas-truce-after-more-hostages-prisoners-freed-2023-11-30/

COP28: Pope unable to attend

Pope Francis has announced that due to health concerns he will be unable to attend the COP28 climate conference in Dubai, which will run from 30 November to 12 December. The Pope has been an advocate for environmental protection and climate action, and his absence from the conference is seen as a setback to efforts to address climate change on a global scale. The Vatican is investigating whether there is any way he could contribute to COP28 remotely. Representatives of 197 nations will be attending the conference, and among notable participants will be King Charles III, Rishi Sunak, and Indian prime minister Narendra Modi.

Pray: for healing for the Pope. Pray that leaders will be guided towards positive decisions for climate action. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

More: aninews.in/news/world/europe/pope-francis-to-miss-cop28-event-in-dubai-due-to-health-concerns20231129112258/#google_vignette

COP28: UAE denies claims of deals on fossil fuels

President Sultan al-Jaber has denied allegations that the UAE plans to use the COP28 climate summit to negotiate oil and gas deals with other nations, as reported by the BBC on 27 November. Leaked briefing documents indicated the UAE's intention to discuss fossil fuel agreements with fifteen countries during the summit. The documents revealed proposed talking points for various countries, including China, Colombia, Germany, and Egypt, regarding fossil fuel collaboration. Mr Jaber, who is also the CEO of UAE's state oil company, Adnoc, and renewables business, Masdar, dismissed the allegations, calling them false and inaccurate. The controversy

raises concerns about the intersection of climate goals and fossil fuel interests. The hope is that COP28 will help limit the long-term global temperature rise to 1.5C, which the UN's climate science body says is crucial to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. But that will require drastic cuts in greenhouse gas emissions - a 43% reduction by 2030 from 2019 levels.

Pray: for transparency and integrity in global climate efforts. (Psalm 15:1,2)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-67567832

Tajikistan: challenges facing the Church

Tajikistan is a beautiful mountainous country; the Tajik language is related to Iranian. After gaining independence in the early 1990s, the country endured a tribal-based civil war that resulted in significant loss of life. Despite having untapped mineral and hydro-electric potential, the economy has never fully recovered from the conflict, poverty is widespread, and it is Central Asia's poorest nation. Islamic influence has grown, with the construction of impressive mosques and changes in clothing styles. The Church experienced growth in the 1990s but has since stalled, and Christians represent only 0.1% of the population. Local leadership is emerging, and church leaders collaborate to address cultural issues and establish guidelines. Sadly, many church members and even some leaders have emigrated for work or in hopes of a better life. Nevertheless, we praise God for each Tajik believer. Previously dominated by Russian culture and language, the church is now taking steps towards establishing its own identity.

Pray: for strength and perseverance for the Tajik church amidst cultural changes and economic challenges. (Psalm 34:18)

More: peopleintl.org.uk/why-and-how-to-pray-for-tajikistan/

Sierra Leone: weekend coup attempt foiled

The information minister has declared that attacks on several locations in the capital, Freetown, were in fact a failed coup attempt led mainly by bodyguards of the previous president, Ernest Koroma. On 26 November they attacked a military barracks and a prison, freeing over 200 prisoners, but by the next day calm had been restored by the security forces, with most of the attackers killed or captured. President Bio remains unharmed. Sierra Leone, which is still recovering from a 1991-2002 civil war in which more than 50,000 were killed, has been tense since Bio was re-elected in June. The result was rejected by the main opposition candidate and questioned by international partners including the USA and the EU.

Pray: for the country to know true peace, with no further violence. (2 Thess. 3:16)

More: www.news24.com/news24/africa/news/sierra-leone-information-minister-says-weekend-attack-was-a-failed-coup-20231128

Australia: apology to thalidomide victims

Prime minister Anthony Albanese has issued a national apology to survivors of the thalidomide scandal and their families, marking the government's first acknowledgment of its role in the tragedy. Thalidomide, initially a sedative but widely used as a morning sickness drug in the 1950s, led to severe birth defects in at least 10,000 babies globally. A report in 2019 revealed that 20% of cases could have been prevented with earlier action. Survivors have long sought acknowledgment and compensation, pointing to the examples set by Canada (in 1991) and the UK (in 2010). 140 survivors have registered for a financial support programme which gives a one-off payment of £260,000 each, with subsequent annual payments of between £2,600 and £30,000. Mr Albanese has now reopened the application process for those who might have missed it previously.

Pray: for comfort, healing, and justice for thalidomide victims and their families. (Psalm 34:18)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-australia-67562532

Ecuador: new president sworn in

In October we prayed for the presidential [election in Ecuador](#). Now millionaire Daniel Noboa has been sworn in as president, marking a significant shift in the country's political landscape. A businessman with no prior political experience, he surprisingly won the snap election which former president Guillermo Lasso called to avoid possible impeachment. He will serve only 18 months, the remainder of Lasso's term. Once considered one of the safest countries in the region, Ecuador has seen violence explode in recent years; there was an unprecedented increase in bloodshed, and drug violence has led to some 3,600 murders so far this year. Noboa has said he will target the violence by tackling unemployment, but also implement a state of emergency, suspend some citizen rights such as freedom of movement, and deploy the military to the streets. There is a considerable sense of uncertainty and anticipation surrounding his presidency.

Pray: that the new president will lead the country wisely. (Proverbs 11:14)

More: www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/11/23/millionaire-daniel-noboa-sworn-in-as-ecuador-president

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, PO Box 17971, Birmingham, B2 2NY, 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.