

Prayer Alert

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

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

You may like to explore our new online Prayer [Alert Prayer Wall](#) where we can add our own prayers and praise, interactively. We trust that you will find this helpful and encouraging!

The Focus of the World Prayer Centre's online Prayer Watch this Saturday (9 December) is 'The Glory of God'. Do join us! Full details, meeting link and lots more is available from the WPC news bulletin [here](https://mailchi.mp/d481a33f447e/gloryofgod?e=3a04b43ad1) (<https://mailchi.mp/d481a33f447e/gloryofgod?e=3a04b43ad1>).

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

[Shine your Light this Christmas!](#)

This Christmas, the World Prayer Centre, Birmingham encourages Christians to shine their light in their communities, grappling with a severe mental health crisis marked in part by alarming suicide rates across the UK. Tragic stories of despair, such as a teenager in Nottingham, a girl in Belfast suffering from online abuse, and a former rugby player's suicide, highlight the urgency of bringing hope and light to those in pain. The 'Shine Your Light' campaign urges Christians to step out of their churches and engage with their communities in meaningful ways. On the weekend of 16-17 December, through events in town halls, high streets, and public places, Christians will be encouraged to gather, pray, and ask for Jesus's [light on the nation](https://www.prayer-alert.net/en/pa-pray/praise-reports/item/52540) (<https://www.prayer-alert.net/en/pa-pray/praise-reports/item/52540>). Churches and individuals are invited to sign up and participate, bringing hope and the light of Jesus to their communities. For further details, including the resources available, go to the campaign website below.

Praise: God for this initiative. Lord, guide us to be lights of hope in our communities. (Matthew 5:16)

More: www.shineyourlight.org.uk

[Most Christians happy to share their faith, survey suggests](#)

A new survey for London City Mission (LCM) reveals that most Christians, particularly those interacting with people from similar social backgrounds, feel confident about sharing their faith. It surveyed 1,007 practising Christians who regularly attend church, read the Bible, and pray. 78% are confident in discussing their faith with non-Christians, 89% see it as important, and 76% wish to do so more frequently. Christians most commonly share their faith with friends (42%), family (42%), and colleagues (37%). However, 30% feel less comfortable discussing faith with those from different social backgrounds, and similar numbers struggle with people of different nationalities (29%) or other faiths (29%). Sharing faith with marginalised groups like the homeless or refugees is challenging for 20%. Hesitations stem from concerns about negative reactions, fear of saying the wrong thing, and respecting others' beliefs. LCM's Efreem Buckle highlighted the 'gospel poverty' in London, urging action to bridge gaps with deprived communities. To aid this, LCM has introduced 'Everyday Evangelism', a resource hub and podcast, to encourage and guide Christians in broader evangelism.

Praise: You, Lord, for this encouragement! Empower us to share Your love boldly. (Mark 16:15)

More: www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2023/8-december/news/uk/most-christians-happy-to-share-their-faith-survey-suggests

British Isles

Bereaved families reject Boris Johnson's Covid 'sorry'

During this week's Covid inquiry, former prime minister Boris Johnson faced intense scrutiny over his government's handling of the pandemic. Johnson expressed sorrow for the 'loss and suffering' caused by Covid, but bereaved families dismissed his apology, asserting that 'the dead won't hear your apologies'. Johnson acknowledged the government's mistakes and claimed personal responsibility for decisions made, while admitting they were 'oblivious' to the virus's severity early on. Key moments from the inquiry included Johnson's admission of government errors, his reliance on advisers over SAGE meeting notes, and his contemplation of sacking health secretary Matt Hancock. He also faced allegations of asking why the economy was being damaged for those 'who will die anyway soon' and overseeing a 'toxic' culture in Downing Street that hindered the pandemic response. The inquiry, chaired by Baroness Heather Hallet, was marked by protests and interruptions from Covid victims' representatives. Johnson's two-day testimony is part of a larger investigation into UK decision-making and governance during the pandemic, focusing on the government's delayed reaction and alleged mismanagement.

Pray: for healing and wisdom as the nation reflects and learns from the Covid crisis. (Psalm 34:18)

More: www.itv.com/news/2023-12-05/covid-inquiry-boris-johnson-faces-two-day-interrogation-on-pandemic-decisions

Immigration minister resigns over Rwanda proposals

Robert Jenrick has resigned as the UK's immigration minister due to disagreements about the Government's new proposed Rwanda legislation, which he believes does not offer sufficient protections to end legal challenges that hinder the scheme. He stated that he found the proposal inadequate for successful implementation, describing it as 'a triumph of hope over experience'. Sunak expressed disappointment, emphasising the risk of collapsing the scheme by entirely excluding the courts. The Rwanda option, aimed at deterring Channel crossings by asylum seekers, has faced delays and legal challenges, with no transfers as yet. The new bill seeks to circumvent the UK Supreme Court's ruling against the plan by limiting the applicability of the Human Rights Act (HRA) and other laws. However, it stops short of overriding the entire HRA and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), as some Conservative MPs desired. Labour's Yvette Cooper criticised the chaotic situation, highlighting the government's struggles. The bill's potential success seems uncertain amid legal challenges and political divisions within the Conservative party.

Pray: for our leaders to legislate with wisdom and compassion. (Proverbs 21:15)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-67640833

UK sanctions, Chinese response

The UK has imposed new sanctions on several Chinese firms, accusing them of aiding Russia's military actions in Ukraine. China, strongly opposing these measures, has warned of a 'firm response' to any actions that harm its interests. The British sanctions, part of a broader initiative targeting 46 entities across countries like Belarus, Serbia, Turkey, the UAE, and Uzbekistan, aim to disrupt support for Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Three Chinese companies - Asia Pacific Links, Sinno Electronics, and Xinghua - have been targeted for allegedly supplying restricted goods to Russia. Entities in the UAE involved in the Russian oil trade and a Belarusian defence organisation supporting Russia's military efforts have also been sanctioned. Junior foreign minister Anne-Marie Trevelyan emphasised the sanctions' role in weakening Russia's defence capabilities and curtailing illegal supply chains. This move, in collaboration with G7 and international allies, intensifies pressure on Putin and entities aiding Russia. The total count of UK sanctions now includes over 1,600 individuals and 250 entities.

Pray: for peace in Ukraine. May these sanctions be effective in thwarting support for this illegal invasion. (Psalm 46:9)

More: news.sky.com/story/china-accuses-uk-of-violating-international-law-after-sanctions-over-ukraine-war-13024148

Section 114 fear for 1 in 5 councils

A Local Government Association (LGA) survey reveals that about 20% of council leaders and executives in England anticipate possibly issuing Section 114 notices, reflecting an inability to balance budgets due to funding shortfalls. A projected £4 billion funding deficit over the next two years, necessary to maintain service levels, was not addressed in the recent Autumn Statement. Councils, facing the prospect of increasing council tax by up to 3%, are caught in a dilemma of balancing funding needs against the financial pressures on households. The survey found that half of the leaders doubted their ability to meet legal requirements next year, and almost two-thirds saw no Autumn Statement measures aiding their financial woes. The LGA points out a significant 27% decrease in councils' core spending power since 2010/11, worsened by the pandemic, growing service demands, and escalating costs. Immediate government intervention is needed. See <https://www.prayer-alert.net/en/pa-pray/regions/british-isles/item/52589-nottingham-council-declares-itself-bankrupt>

Pray: for wisdom for our leaders and Government as they steward the limited resources. (Proverbs 3:9)

More: www.local.gov.uk/about/news/section-114-fear-almost-1-5-council-leaders-and-chief-executives-after-cashless-autumn

Met Office's severe weather warnings as further rain expected

The UK faces severe weather challenges as the Met Office issues warnings for continued heavy rain, leading to potential flooding and travel disruptions. Chief forecaster Neil Armstrong anticipates several days of unsettled weather, with up to 80mm of rain in the west and 100mm in eastern Scotland's higher areas. He urges the public to stay informed about weather updates and flood warnings. There are several yellow weather warnings of heavy rainstorms for 6 December. Following recent cold weather, they are likely to increase flooding risks, especially in the west. Persistent rain is predicted until 9 December, with a short respite expected in the southern regions, though the north will continue to see showers. England currently has 22 flood warnings and 111 alerts, with more alerts in Wales and Scotland. Simon Williams from RAC Breakdown has advised drivers to exercise caution against flood risks, suggesting they avoid deep water, slow down, and maintain safe distances to prevent aquaplaning.

Pray: for protection through the storms. Pray for guidance and wisdom for the emergency services. (Psalm 107:29)

More: www.standard.co.uk/news/environment/homes-met-office-neil-armstrong-scotland-atlantic-b1125332.html

Salvation Army urging Christians to reach out as deprivation rises

In the UK, 64% of people have noticed an increase in deprivation in their communities this year. This surge, linked to cost of living concerns and the global situation, is dampening Christmas spirits for many. Major Estelle Blake of the Salvation Army has highlighted the combination of financial stress and loneliness affecting people, with examples of older individuals riding buses all day or spending hours in cafes for minimal social contact. The Salvation Army aims to bring comfort and connection, not just through material aid but through genuine human interaction. This year, it is distributing 76,000 toy parcels and providing 3,000 beds for the homeless. Major Blake urges Christians to reach out to those in need, offering food and companionship, especially during Christmas. She emphasises the importance of long-term engagement beyond the holiday season; the Salvation Army operates residential and emergency pop-up centres in collaboration with other churches. Major Blake herself plans to spend Christmas Day with those in need.

Pray: for the work of the Salvation Army and other agencies this Christmas. May we too be beacons of hope and love. (Hebrews 13:16)

More: premierchristian.news/us/news/article/people-spending-all-day-on-the-bus-just-for-a-hello-salvation-army-urging-christians-to-reach-out-as-deprivation-rises

Europe

Germany: coalition government faces budget crisis

A budget crisis in Germany has struck at the heart of the ambitions of the ruling Green Party within the coalition government led by Chancellor Olaf Scholz. The crisis centres around a significant budget shortfall, partly caused by the Greens' ambitious climate policies and the economic impact of the Covid pandemic. The Greens had planned to invest heavily in green initiatives, but the financial constraints have forced them to reconsider and scale back their plans. The crisis has also highlighted tensions within the coalition, with the Greens pushing for increased borrowing to fund their projects, while others are concerned about the country's fiscal stability. Chancellor Scholz faces the challenge of finding a balance between green policies and economic responsibility.

Pray: for wisdom and unity in Germany's government amidst budget challenges. (Proverbs 11:14)

More: www.politico.eu/article/germany-budget-crisis-strikes-heart-greens-ambitions-coalition-government-olaf-scholz/

Hungary: Orban opposes Ukraine joining EU

Hungary's ruling party, Fidesz, has submitted a resolution opposing Ukraine's accession talks with the European Union (EU). Fidesz, led by Prime Minister Viktor Orban, cited concerns about the treatment of ethnic Hungarians in Ukraine, particularly regarding language rights and education. The resolution calls for a halt to Ukraine's EU accession process until these issues are resolved. Hungary has been critical of Ukraine's policies towards its Hungarian minority for years, and this move adds to the ongoing tensions between the two countries. Ukraine has been seeking closer ties with the EU, but Hungary's opposition could complicate those efforts. On 7 December, Volodymyr Zelensky's chief of staff called for a meeting between Orban and Zelensky, in an attempt to resolve the problem before next week's meeting of EU states.

Pray: for peaceful resolution and understanding between Hungary and Ukraine. (Psalm 133:1)

More: www.reuters.com/world/europe/hungarys-ruling-party-submits-resolution-opposing-ukraines-eu-accession-talks-2023-12-06/

Worldwide

COP28: possible breakthrough on fossil fuels?

The UN climate change conference in Dubai, hosted by the United Arab Emirates, is on the verge of a significant breakthrough in addressing climate change. The UAE negotiating team expresses 'cautious optimism' that COP28 will commit to gradually reducing and possibly eliminating fossil fuels over the coming decades. This is a remarkable shift, as fossil fuels were rarely discussed at previous climate conferences until COP26 in Glasgow in 2021, where the focus was on phasing down coal. While the commitment in Dubai may not set a specific expiry date for fossil fuel use and will probably allow for 'abated' fossil fuels with carbon capture, it represents a historic acknowledgment of the need to address the primary source of climate change. Sultan al-Jaber, COP28 president and head of UAE state oil company Adnoc, has been advocating for a fossil fuel phase-out; this underscores the significance of addressing climate change even in such a major oil-producing country. Interestingly, the number of delegates representing fossil fuel interests has quadrupled compared to COP27: see <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/dec/05/record-number-of-fossil-fuel-lobbyists-get-access-to-cop28-climate-talks>

Pray: for this possibility to become action, as an encouraging step in the right direction. (Psalm 24:1)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-67566443

Gaza: latest developments

On 6 December Israeli troops fought fierce battles with Hamas in an expanding offensive into southern Gaza, forcing tens of thousands of displaced Palestinian civilians to cram into a city close to the Egyptian border to avoid Israeli bombardment. However, many feared they would not be safe in Rafah either, with their options for refuge dwindling, and at least nine people were killed when a house in the city was shelled. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who fled to the south during the two-month-old war between Israel and Hamas are now increasingly cornered in an area deemed safe by Israel's military. UN Secretary General António Guterres has called on Security Council members to [avert a humanitarian catastrophe](https://www.gbnews.com/news/world/un-antonio-guterres-invokes-article-99-new-epidemic-warning) (<https://www.gbnews.com/news/world/un-antonio-guterres-invokes-article-99-new-epidemic-warning>) In other news, harrowing details have been released about the acts of sexual violence committed by Hamas fighters when they attacked Israel on 7 October. See [https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-67629181](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-67629181)

Pray: for all who are suffering, especially the many trapped in southern Gaza, and for all who are seeking to help them. (Revelation 21:4)
More: www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/southern-gaza-israel-mounts-fiercest-attacks-so-far-war-against-hamas-2023-12-06/

USA / Ukraine: Zelensky calls off briefing, impasse on future funding

On 5 December Volodymyr Zelensky called off a high-profile video briefing with US lawmakers amid an impasse over future funding for the country. This came after a top Ukrainian official warned they might lose the war against Russia if more US military aid is not approved. Despite a push by the White House, Congress is still not close to a deal on a compromise spending package that would help fund the war effort. Mike Johnson, the Republican Speaker, said, 'The Administration has failed to substantively address any of my conference's legitimate concerns about the lack of a clear strategy in Ukraine, a path to resolving the conflict, or a plan for adequately ensuring accountability for aid provided by American taxpayers.' This setback comes as fighting on the frontlines appears to have more or less reached a stalemate. Ukraine's much-anticipated counter-offensive in the south appears to have slowed down, and they are struggling to maintain a foothold they had established on the east bank of the Dnipro river.

Pray: for the deadlock on funding to be resolved so that US support for Ukraine can continue. (Proverbs 11:24-25)
More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-67585902

USA: college heads testify on rising antisemitism

The heads of three top US colleges, including Harvard's president Claudine Gay, have testified before the House of Representatives in response to accusations that their institutions were not doing enough to combat antisemitism on campus. Jewish students at these universities had reported facing antisemitic threats and assaults, particularly due to the conflict in Gaza. The college leaders acknowledged the rising tide of antisemitism and Islamophobia on campuses but highlighted the challenge of balancing freedom of speech and protest with protecting students from hate. A recent survey found that nearly 75% of Jewish college students had experienced some form of antisemitism during the school year. Muslim and pro-Palestinian students also faced challenges, with instances of doxxing (public identification of people without their consent) and bias incidents reported. The House committee questioned the colleges' response to these issues.

Pray: Pray for an end to campus antisemitism and discrimination. (Psalm 34:14)
More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-67631859

Madagascar: re-elected president has to ensure electoral reforms

The USA, Japan, and the European Union have expressed their willingness to collaborate with Madagascar's re-elected president Andry Rajoelina, provided he ensures electoral reforms in the country. The country has a history of election crises; the most notable one, in 2009, ended in a coup that installed Rajoelina as president and led to violence between demonstrators and security forces. He has now been re-elected for a third term, with 59% of the vote, but there were numerous claims of irregularities and vote rigging, and ten of the candidates boycotted the election, leading to a low voter turnout. Rajoelina is being urged to implement electoral reforms that will foster transparency, fairness, and inclusivity in the electoral process - reforms which are crucial for restoring international confidence. Madagascar has one of the highest poverty rates in the world, reaching 75% in 2022. Before the elections, there were fears that social difficulties and the economy, battered by climate change and politics, would get worse if the outcome didn't reflect the will of the people.

Pray: that leaders like President Rajoelina may seek righteousness and fairness in electoral reforms. (Proverbs 11:3)
More: www.news24.com/news24/africa/news/us-japan-and-eu-ready-to-work-with-madagascan-president-rajoelina-if-he-guarantees-electoral-reforms-20231206

USA: Biden and Trump trade accusations as they eye 2024 election

On 5 December Joe Biden called Donald Trump an 'existential threat to the country's system of government', in response to Trump's recent comments claiming it is Biden who is really the 'destroyer of American democracy'. This exchange reflects how the issue of protecting democracy and Trump's baseless attacks on the 2020 election could be key in the 2024 presidential election. Biden, who looks increasingly likely to be headers for a rematch against Trump, has sought to define the election in terms of protecting not just democracy but personal liberty. He noted that Trump has said he would give presidential pardons to many of the people charged or convicted in connection with the January 2021 attack on the Capitol. He also attacked Trump for appointing three Supreme Court justices who joined an opinion in 2022 that reversed Roe v Wade, the national guarantee for abortion access, and added, 'He's running again to get rid of the Affordable Care Act' (popularly known as Obamacare). Later that day, Biden said, 'We cannot let him win'.

Pray: for the protection of democracy and unity in the USA. (Proverbs 29:2)
More: abcnews.go.com/Politics/biden-argues-trump-existential-threat-america-trump-point/story?id=105401847

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