

Prayer Alert

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

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

Please note that this will be the last Prayer Alert of 2024: the PA team is taking a week's break after Christmas, so our next issue will come out on Friday 3 January 2025.



We invite the Prayer Alert community to join us on the free online Interseed House of Prayer app where we are praying and sharing thoughts on the weekly prayer guide issues and themes.

Interseed is available on the Android and iOS platforms. More info [HERE](#).

Invitation - to serve with the PA team!

How would you like to join our Prayer Alert team? We are a group of volunteers based in different parts of England. If you appreciate what we do and are confident with browsing the internet, discovering relevant articles and basic editing, 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.

May God bless and encourage you this year,

David Fletcher and the Prayer Alert team.

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Praise Reports

'Prophecy fulfilled'

Candace Cameron Bure, well-known for her holiday films, celebrates Christmas as a season of 'prophecy fulfilled'. This year, she stars in two new movies, 'Christmas less travelled' and 'Home sweet Christmas', and her network is hosting an in-person Christmas festival until 22 December. Families can enjoy tree lightings, ice skating, and more. Apart from acting, Bure engages audiences through her podcast, sharing vulnerable theological insights. She highlights how reading the Bible chronologically transformed her faith; she discovered deeper context, understanding God's love and His patience with humanity. Reading Scripture has shown her how Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecies, offering believers a tangible confidence in their faith. For her, Christmas exemplifies God's grace and the fulfilment of His promises. She encourages believers to share the Gospel, especially during this season, emphasising the incredible love of a God who eagerly waits for us with open arms.

Praise: God for His fulfilled promises in Jesus, who brings hope and joy to all believers. (Isaiah 9:6a)

More: www.faithwire.com/2024/12/17/prophecy-fulfilled-candace-cameron-bure-explains-how-nativity-fulfills-biblical-promises/

USA: Senate chaplain says God 'miraculously intervened'

Barry Black, a 76-year-old retired Navy rear admiral and the first black and Seventh-Day Adventist Senate chaplain, recently experienced a life-threatening brain bleed. Swiftly cared for by Capitol physician Brian Monahan, Black is now on a hopeful and steady path to recovery. Black deeply credits God's extraordinary intervention for sparing him from a potentially dire outcome: Monahan's urgent decision to call him and advise immediate medical care was seen as divinely inspired, averting more serious complications. As Christmas approaches, Black is expected to reunite with his family, further showcasing God's compassionate and providential care. Let us pray for his continued healing, and for his family to feel God's comforting presence.

Praise: God for His miraculous interventions, guiding lives and offering divine protection in life's trials. (Psalm 34:4)

More: www.faithwire.com/2024/12/16/pray-us-senate-chaplain-barry-black-says-god-miraculously-intervened-after-brain-bleed/

British Isles

Some parents to lose automatic right to home education

A new bill will aim to bolster child protection by empowering local councils to intervene when home environments are deemed unsafe. This proposed legislation, unveiled by education secretary Bridget Phillipson, will end the automatic right to home-school children. It will introduce mandatory registers for children not in school and unique identifier numbers to ensure no child 'falls through the cracks'. It aims to promote collaboration between schools, police, and children's social care to enhance safeguarding measures. This comes in the wake of Sara Sharif's tragic murder, a high-profile case which exposed systemic failures. Her removal from school and the closure of her case after six days despite clear warnings underscore the need for reform. The bill is seen as a foundation for change, emphasising the importance of improved data-sharing to prevent children from becoming invisible in the system.

Pray: for our government as they seek to prioritise child protection, ensuring safe environments and holistic care for every child. (Psalm 82:3)

More: news.sky.com/story/parents-of-most-vulnerable-children-to-lose-automatic-right-to-home-education-13275115

Government criticises Russia's 'gangster threat' against journalists

The Government has condemned former Russian president Dmitry Medvedev's threats against The Times journalists, labeling his rhetoric as desperate and unacceptable. Medvedev, a close ally of Vladimir Putin, described the journalists as 'legitimate military targets' following their coverage of Lieutenant General Igor Kirillov's assassination (see Europe article below, 'Russia: senior general assassinated'), for which Ukraine claimed responsibility. The Times had described the act as 'a legitimate act of defence', prompting Medvedev's hostile comments. Keir Starmer's spokesperson reiterated the UK's commitment to press freedom, a cornerstone of democracy, and emphasised the Government's resolve to protect its citizens and media against threats. David Lammy called Medvedev's statements a 'gangster threat' that underscores Moscow's desperation. Medvedev also extended his threats to NATO figures aiding Ukraine, further highlighting the volatile rhetoric from Russian leadership amid the ongoing conflict.

Pray: for God's protection over journalists and for justice and peace to prevail amidst global conflicts. (Psalm 9:9)

More: www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/dmitry-medvedev-government-david-lammy-russia-vladimir-putin-b2666587.html

Waspi women's fury as Starmer says they knew about pension change

Sir Keir Starmer has sparked outrage among the Women Against State Pension Inequality (Waspi) group after Labour rejected compensating women born in the 1950s for changes to their state pension age. Starmer and Rachel Reeves argued that '90% of those impacted knew about the changes,' despite previously calling the situation an 'injustice' while in opposition. Angela Madden, chair of Waspi, criticised these statements, calling them misleading and an insult to millions of women who were unprepared for the increase in the pension age from 60 to 65. The Ombudsman had recommended compensation of up to £2,950 per woman, citing maladministration in government communication. However, Labour claims the financial burden, estimated at £10.5 billion, is unaffordable. The Waspi women vow to continue their campaign, calling for justice and accountability for all those affected.

Pray: for justice and fairness in government decisions, ensuring the needs of vulnerable groups are addressed and fair reparations are made. (Proverbs 31:8)

More: www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/keir-starmer-waspi-women-betrayal-b2666460.html

EC wants to prevent Elon Musk from making mega-donation to Reform

The Electoral Commission (EC) has asked for a change in electoral law to close a loophole that could enable Elon Musk to make an £80 million donation to Reform, Nigel Farage's party. Current laws prohibit foreign citizens like Musk from directly donating to UK parties, but a loophole allows unlimited donations through UK-based companies. This proposal gained urgency after Musk and Farage discussed potential financial support during a meeting at Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago resort. Reportedly, Musk is considering a significant donation to challenge Labour and the Conservatives. EC chief Vijay Rangarajan emphasised the importance of voter trust in political financing and urged the Government to address this issue. However, Downing Street stated that reforming electoral law is not a priority in the current parliamentary session.

Pray: for integrity and transparency in political funding, ensuring elections remain fair and free from undue influence. (Proverbs 11:3)

More: www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14207743/elections-watchdog-law-change-elon-musk-donation-reform.html

Inflation rate hits highest level for eight months

The UK inflation rate surged to 2.6% in November, its highest level in eight months, driven by rising fuel and clothing costs, as well as higher ticket prices for events. This marks the second consecutive month of rising inflation, dampening hopes for an interest rate cut by the Bank of England. Rachel Reeves acknowledged the ongoing struggles of working families, vowing to alleviate financial pressures. However, critics blamed recent government policies for exacerbating inflationary pressures, which could prolong elevated mortgage rates. Many companies are grappling with rising fuel, utility, and wage costs, while households continue to face increased expenses on food, rent, and essentials. Economists predict the Bank of England will keep interest rates steady at 4.75% to curb inflation. While inflation is expected to fluctuate in the coming months, experts forecast a return to the Bank's 2% target by the end of next year.

Pray: for economic stability, relief for struggling families, and wisdom for business leaders managing inflation challenges. (Psalm 69:33)
More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cvgmndllpz9o

George Carey resigns as priest

George Carey, former Archbishop of Canterbury, has resigned from ministry at the age of 89 amid scrutiny over his handling of historical sexual abuse allegations. He did so after the BBC questioned his decision to allow David Tudor, a priest banned in the 1980s over abuse allegations, to return to ministry under supervision. Tudor was permanently banned from ministry in October after admitting to sexual misconduct. In his resignation letter, Carey expressed gratitude for his years of service and God's faithfulness. This resignation comes soon after Justin Welby stepped down in November for failing to properly investigate abuse allegations related to Christian summer camps. Stephen Cottrell, Archbishop of York, has also faced calls to resign for his delayed action in Tudor's case but has defended his previous decisions, citing a lack of legal grounds for suspension until Tudor's 2017 arrest.

Pray: for healing for victims of abuse, accountability within the Church, and wisdom for its future leaders. (Psalm 147:3)
More: premierchristian.news/en/news/article/former-archbishop-of-canterbury-george-carey-resigns

Europe

Russia: senior general assassinated

On 17 December Lieutenant-general Igor Kirillov and his assistant were killed in Moscow by a Ukrainian agent in a targeted assassination, intensifying a new front in the conflict. Kirillov, the head of Russia's nuclear, chemical, and biological defence forces, died in an explosion outside his home caused by a remotely detonated bomb hidden in a scooter. The Ukrainian security service claimed that Kirillov was 'a legitimate target' due to his alleged war crimes, including the use of banned chemical weapons on Ukrainian troops. Since February 2022, Russia is said to have used chemical weapons over 4,800 times under his leadership. This marks a continuing trend of Ukraine's covert operations to assassinate high-ranking Russian officials and disrupt their military efforts. While Ukrainian intelligence rarely takes credit for such actions, these killings are seen as a psychological tool to weaken Russia's morale and send a message about the cost of war crimes.

Pray: for justice and peace to prevail in the midst of the ongoing conflict. (Psalm 46:9a)
More: theweek.com/world-news/ukraine-assassinations-what-is-kyiv-hoping-to-achieve

France: fifty men found guilty of mass rape in landmark case

In a landmark case in Avignon, 72-year-old Dominique Pelicot and fifty co-defendants have been found guilty of mass rape against his wife Gisele over a decade. Dominique, who admitted to drugging and allowing strangers to abuse his wife while filming the assaults, was sentenced to twenty years in prison, with no parole until two-thirds of the sentence is served. Other defendants received sentences ranging from four to eighteen years. Gisele, who waived her anonymity, demanded the horrifying footage be shown in court, stating, 'I've done nothing wrong. They are the ones who must be ashamed.' Her courage has made her a feminist icon in France, inspiring other survivors to speak out. Supporters cheered as guilty verdicts were announced. The trial, which saw Gisele face her abusers in court, has shaken the nation. Her children stood by her during the proceedings, underscoring the profound impact of her resilience on justice and awareness.

Pray: for healing, justice, and strength for survivors of abuse worldwide. Pray that Gisele Pelicot's stand will encourage others to demand justice. (Psalm 82:3)
More: www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/12/19/at-least-20-men-including-husband-found-guilty-in-pelicot-rape-trial

Germany: early election after no-confidence vote

The chancellor, Olaf Scholz, has lost a vote of no confidence in the German parliament, resulting in an early election which will take place on 23 February. Although he expected the loss, Scholz saw this as an opportunity to rejuvenate his party's fortunes; after the collapse of his three-party coalition government in November, his minority administration has struggled to pass legislation. His Social Democratic Party (SDP) is lagging in the polls, while the conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU) seems poised to return to power. Following the vote, the president has 21 days to dissolve parliament. This early election campaign will focus on key issues such as the economy, immigration, and taxes. The rise of radical parties, like the hard-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) which is currently polling at almost 20%, adds complexity to coalition-building efforts, as the mainstream parties struggle to form a stable government.

Pray: for peace and unity in Germany, as voters seek direction for the nation. (Psalm 22:28)
More: www.gbnews.com/news/world/german-chancellor-olaf-scholz-loses-no-confidence-vote-snap-elections-months-away

Worldwide

Mayotte: aftermath of Cyclone Chido

France has intensified relief efforts in Mayotte, with 120 tonnes of food scheduled for distribution. The Indian Ocean archipelago, France's poorest territory, has been under a curfew due to looting and lawlessness following Cyclone Chido's destructive landfall. Thousands of residents in the capital Mamoudzou are working to repair their homes, while entire communities in the shantytowns have been destroyed. Although the cyclone, the most powerful in ninety years, has led to numerous deaths, with hundreds feared dead, only 22 fatalities have been confirmed due to the inaccessibility of many areas. The situation is further complicated by uncertainty around the population size, with many undocumented migrants from Comoros and Madagascar. Health experts say they are bracing for a surge of disease as dead bodies lie unrecovered and people struggle to access clean drinking water.

Pray: for Mayotte's recovery, peace amidst chaos, and healing for the people. Pray that aid will quickly reach those who need it. (Psalm 86:7)
More: www.reuters.com/world/europe/france-rushes-supplies-mayotte-still-reeling-deadly-cyclone-2024-12-18/

Gaza: closer to a ceasefire deal?

After months of deadlock, there are new signs that Israel and Hamas could be moving closer to a Gaza ceasefire and hostage release deal. The USA, Qatar, and Egypt are reporting greater willingness by both sides to conclude a deal. Talks are reportedly in a decisive stage. Israel's defence minister has indicated that they are close to an agreement, though challenges remain, including far-right Israeli cabinet opposition and Hamas's conditions. A three-phase plan proposes releasing civilian and women hostages, with Israeli troop withdrawals and a mechanism for displaced Gazans to return. Subsequent stages include freeing remaining hostages and a broader troop withdrawal. Of 96 hostages in Gaza, 62 are believed to be still alive; a hundred others have been freed through negotiation or military action. The negotiations have been given a new push by Donald Trump's election; he has warned that a ceasefire deal should be reached before he takes office, because otherwise 'it's not going to be pleasant'.

Pray: for peace, justice, and protection for innocent lives in Gaza and Israel. (1 Peter 3:11)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c80vdy9ex9xo

Nigeria: authorities seek to combat oil theft

In the Niger Delta, rampant oil theft continues to threaten local livelihoods and the national economy. Armed groups siphon crude oil from pipelines in the region, often operating with impunity and even security cover. These activities cause environmental devastation, health crises, and economic losses. In 2022, Nigeria lost \$23 billion to oil theft, so that it lost its position as Africa's top oil exporter. The authorities are committed to fighting this problem by deploying gunboats, engaging vigilantes, and supporting the navy. Increased oil production, now averaging 1.8 million barrels per day, has been attributed to these efforts. However, poverty and unemployment continue to drive pipeline vandalism. Nigeria's inflation rate, worsened by a devalued naira, remains high, but there is official optimism that rising oil output will stabilise the economy.

Pray: for solutions to poverty and environmental restoration in the Niger Delta, and for authorities to know how best to curb oil theft. (Proverbs 28:1)

More: www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/12/19/in-nigerias-crude-capital-a-plan-to-win-the-war-against-oil-theft

Canada: Trudeau's government in turmoil

Justin Trudeau's government is facing turmoil following the abrupt resignation of his finance minister, Chrystia Freeland. This was sparked by disagreements with Trudeau on how to handle the threats made by Donald Trump, who has vowed to impose a levy of 25% on imported Canadian goods unless the shared border is made more secure. Freeland accused Trudeau of prioritising 'costly political gimmicks' over addressing the economic risks posed by Trump's policies. Her departure blindsided the government, bringing Trudeau and his shaky minority Liberals to the brink - exacerbated by losing a by-election in British Columbia. There have been calls from opposition leaders but also members of his own party for Trudeau to resign, and his approval rate is now only 28%. With the next federal election due by October 2025, Canada's political landscape appears increasingly uncertain.

Pray: for guidance and clarity for Mr Trudeau and his government in this time of political uncertainty. (James 1:5)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c5y49ym6em3o

Canada: problems in 'polar bear capital'

In Churchill, Canada, known as the 'polar bear capital of the world', residents live with the constant presence of the planet's largest land predator. Safety is a daily concern, with locals advised to be 'bear aware' and always ready to fight back if attacked. The town's proximity to Hudson Bay is crucial to the bears, as the ice forms here first, providing access to seals, their main food source. However, climate change is extending the ice-free season, forcing polar bears to spend more time on land. This has led to a decline in their numbers by nearly half since the 1980s. Despite the long-term challenges, conservation efforts continue, with new technologies being tested to prevent human-polar bear interactions. A longer season during which the bay thaws could mean more ships coming in and out of Churchill, and the mayor is optimistic, but the future for polar bears remains uncertain as climate change intensifies.

Pray: for the protection of polar bears and the communities that coexist with them. (Psalm 24:1)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c5yg344zz1ro

Myanmar: bloody battle ends army control of western border

The Arakan Army (AA), an ethnic insurgent group, has captured the Myanmar military's border guard base in northern Rakhine State, marking a significant victory in the country's civil war. After months of intense fighting, the base, built on a former Rohingya village destroyed during the 2017 crackdown, fell to the AA, leaving the junta humiliated. The AA now controls the entire 270 km border with Bangladesh and much of Rakhine State. The battle was among the bloodiest in the conflict, with over 450 junta soldiers killed. While the AA is setting up its own administration in the region, challenges persist. The area is devastated, with 80% of housing destroyed, widespread displacement, and looming famine exacerbated by a military blockade. The future of the Rohingya population in Rakhine remains uncertain. Though the AA has pledged inclusivity, there are tensions between the Rohingyas and the ethnic Rakhine majority. The AA's leadership remains quiet on how they will govern amid growing humanitarian concerns.

Pray: for peace and reconciliation in Myanmar, protection for displaced populations, and healing for war-torn communities. (Matthew 5:9)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/ckg324den6po

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