

Prayer Alert

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Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: rejoice! (Philippians 4:4)

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

Let's be covering national and presidential elections taking place in Japan, Thailand and Portugal (8 Feb), Barbados (11 Feb) and Bangladesh (12 Feb).



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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.

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Invitation - to serve with the PA team!

Would you like to join our Prayer Alert team?

We are a group of volunteers based in different parts of England, India, and USA. 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.

David Fletcher and the Prayer Alert team.

Praise Reports

Imprisoned Chinese pastor's daughter: 'repression cannot extinguish faith'

'I don't think I am a hero': teenager's 'superhuman' swim to save family

British Isles

Are Starmer's days as PM numbered amid fury over Mandelson?

Palestine Action protesters 'not guilty' ahead of potential re-trial

Mahmood defends immigration reforms amid Labour opposition

A turning point for cancer treatment?

CofE national director resigns over same-sex prayers

Archbishop of Canterbury praises King's 'deep Christian faith'

Europe

Ukraine: thousands without electricity as peace talks continue

Norway: crown princess's son on trial for rape

Greece: smugglers blamed for fifteen deaths after speedboat collision

Worldwide

Gaza: humiliation and trauma after Rafah crossing reopens

Sudan: Yvette Cooper accuses the international community of failing vulnerable women

Minneapolis: Trump says DHS might need 'softer touch' as hundreds of agents are withdrawn

Pakistan: more than 175 terrorists killed in Balochistan

Argentina: Patagonia wildfires bring criticisms of Milei's austerity policies

USA: Trump will cut tariffs if India stops buying Russian oil

Praise Reports

Imprisoned Chinese pastor's daughter: 'repression cannot extinguish faith'

At a recent meeting in Washington, Grace Jin Drexel shared the moving story of her father, Pastor Ezra Jin, imprisoned in China for his Christian faith. He was arrested in October alongside 27 other leaders from Zion Church, in what has been described as one of the largest crackdowns on independent churches since the Cultural Revolution. Grace explained that the arrests are part of China's aggressive campaign to bring all religious life under Communist Party control. Churches have been forced to remove crosses, replace worship songs with revolutionary anthems, rewrite sermons to align with socialist ideology, and install surveillance cameras inside sanctuaries. Zion Church was targeted after refusing to install facial recognition cameras. Despite closures and intimidation, the church adapted, developing hybrid online and offline gatherings. During the pandemic, this model led to remarkable growth, expanding to over a hundred meeting spaces in forty cities and reaching thousands daily. Grace also spoke of the severe prison conditions facing detained leaders, her family's separation, and harassment abroad. Yet she testified confidently that God remains faithful, prayers are not in vain, and repression cannot extinguish the Church.

Praise: God that persecution cannot silence the Gospel, strengthening Chinese believers to stand firm, multiply, and trust His unfailing faithfulness. (John 1:5)

More: www.christianpost.com/news/imprisoned-chinese-pastors-daughter-god-will-not-abandon-us.html

'I don't think I am a hero': teenager's 'superhuman' swim to save family

What began as a simple family day at the beach off Western Australia became a terrifying ten-hour ordeal for Joanne Appelbee and her children. Strong winds carried them far beyond the safety of the shore, leaving them clinging to paddleboards as daylight faded. Realising help was needed, Joanne sent her 13-year-old son Austin back to raise the alarm. What followed was extraordinary. After a damaged kayak capsized, Austin was forced to swim four kilometres through rough seas, eventually abandoning his lifejacket and pressing on exhausted and afraid. For hours he prayed, sang Christian songs, and fixed his thoughts on his family, not knowing whether they were still alive. Reaching land at last, he made the call which triggered a rescue operation. Hours later, Joanne and her younger children were found alive, cold and frightened but safe. Though rescuers called his effort 'superhuman', Austin simply described it as doing what had to be done.

Praise: God for Andrew's courage, faith, and endurance in a desperate situation. (Psalm 18:16)
More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cly3ezj3rg3o

British Isles

Are Starmer's days as PM numbered amid fury over Mandelson?

Labour MPs have warned that Keir Starmer's leadership is under serious threat following intense backlash over the appointment of Peter Mandelson as ambassador to the USA. Fury erupted after Starmer admitted he was aware of Mandelson's past friendship with convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein before approving the appointment. A Commons debate nearly ended in government defeat, narrowly avoided through a last-minute amendment forcing the future release of documents relating to Mandelson's vetting and appointment. Several Labour MPs described a collapse of trust, with some openly questioning whether they could support Starmer in a confidence vote. The mood, described as 'dark' and 'terminal', has unsettled even long-standing loyalists. MPs warned that once withheld documents are released - currently delayed by a Metropolitan Police investigation - a leadership challenge could follow. Though Starmer has pledged transparency and announced plans to strip Mandelson of honours, and ministers insist he acted in good faith, many MPs fear lasting damage to the government's credibility and moral authority.

Pray: for truth, accountability, and righteous leadership in government, that integrity would prevail and public trust be restored. (Proverbs 14:34)
More: www.theguardian.com/politics/2026/feb/04/labour-mps-say-starmer-days-as-pm-are-numbered-amid-fury-over-mandelson

Palestine Action protesters 'not guilty' ahead of potential re-trial

Six Palestine Action activists have been cleared of aggravated burglary following a break-in at a UK subsidiary of Israeli defence firm Elbit Systems near Bristol, but several still face the prospect of retrial on other serious charges. The raid took place in August 2024, when a group used a vehicle to breach the site's perimeter and entered the building in protest against what they believe is the company's involvement in supplying weapons to Israel - claims Elbit Systems strongly denies. While three defendants were acquitted of violent disorder, the jury was unable to reach verdicts on remaining charges for others, including grievous bodily harm against one defendant accused of injuring a police officer. Five activists have been released on bail, with one remanded in custody ahead of a further hearing in February. The trial heard conflicting accounts of events, with prosecutors alleging planned violence using sledgehammers, while the defence insisted the group acted defensively and without intent to harm. Outside the court, supporters gathered to celebrate the partial acquittals. The case has raised wider debate about protest, conscience, public order, and the limits of lawful dissent.

Pray: for justice tempered with mercy, wisdom for courts, and peace to prevail amid deep divisions over protest and conflict. (Matthew 5:9)
More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c9wxlv99xrjo

Mahmood defends immigration reforms amid Labour opposition

Home secretary Shabana Mahmood has defended the government's proposed immigration reforms amid growing opposition from Labour MPs concerned about fairness and workforce impact. The plans would double the standard qualifying period for permanent settlement from five to ten years, with some migrants—particularly health and social care workers—potentially waiting up to fifteen years. Mahmood argued that record levels of net migration require a firm response, describing settlement as a privilege rather than a right. Government figures show net migration added 2.6 million people to the UK population between 2021 and 2024, with up to 1.6 million projected to qualify for settlement later this decade. Ministers say the proposals allow flexibility, enabling high earners or those on global talent routes to shorten the qualifying period, while benefit dependency could extend it. A consultation is exploring transitional arrangements, though those already granted settlement would not be affected. Critics warn the reforms risk being retrospective and 'un-British', potentially deterring vital workers and worsening skills shortages, especially in the care sector. The debate highlights ongoing tensions between border control, economic need, and fairness.

Pray: for just and compassionate immigration policies, balancing national responsibility with dignity, fairness, and care for vulnerable workers. (Psalm 82:3)
More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cly1mn8k9e7o

A turning point for cancer treatment?

A new national cancer plan for England has been published, marking a significant moment after years of calls for a long-term, ambitious cancer strategy. The ten-year plan covers prevention, diagnosis, treatment, care, and research, with a central aim for 75% of people diagnosed with cancer to survive at least five years by 2035. Given that cancer outcomes in England have lagged behind comparable nations, this focus on survival has been widely welcomed, though delivering it will be challenging. Positive commitments include a full rollout of lung screening by 2030, stronger emphasis on earlier diagnosis, and meeting cancer waiting time targets by 2029. The plan also highlights innovations such as AI tools and liquid biopsies, and places welcome priority on children's and young people's cancer research. Efforts to reduce risk factors like smoking and UV exposure are noted; however, concerns remain about limited detail on implementation, responsibility, and funding. The plan sets oversight structures and promises progress reviews, but its success will depend on sustained investment, clear accountability, and determined delivery across the NHS and research system. See <https://news.sky.com/story/the-uks-new-cancer-strategy-is-bold-and-ambitious-it-cant-afford-to-be-anything-else-13502922>

Pray: for effective delivery of this plan, bringing earlier diagnosis, equitable treatment, healing, and hope to families. (Jeremiah 17:14)
More: <https://news.cancerresearchuk.org/2026/02/04/breaking-down-the-national-cancer-plan-for-england/>

CofE national director resigns over same-sex prayers

The national director of the CofE Evangelical Council, Revd John Dunnett, has resigned as an honorary canon of Chelmsford Cathedral in response to its decision to use the Prayers of Love and Faith to bless same-sex couples. Appointed to the honorary role in 2020 by the Archbishop of York, Dunnett said he did not take the decision lightly but felt compelled to act on matters of biblical conviction. The Prayers of Love and Faith do not constitute marriage services but allow same-sex couples to receive a formal blessing within church settings. Church leaders describe them as a way of celebrating commitment in God's presence. However, Dunnett stated that their use at the cathedral had deeply alienated those who uphold historic Anglican teaching on marriage and sexuality. He expressed a fundamental objection to endorsing practices which he believes are contrary to Scripture. However, he has said he remains committed to the diocese's wider life and will continue worshipping, giving, and engaging in synodical processes.

Pray: for faithfulness to Scripture, humility among church leaders, and unity grounded in truth and Christlike love. (Psalm 86:11)
More: premierchristian.news/en/news/article/chelmsford-canon-resigns-over-same-sex-prayers

Archbishop of Canterbury praises King's 'deep Christian faith'

Archbishop Sarah Mullally has formally paid homage to the King at Buckingham Palace, marking a significant moment at the start of her ministry as Archbishop of Canterbury. During the ceremony, she took an oath recognising the King as Supreme Governor of the Church of England, a tradition dating back to the reign of Queen Elizabeth I and observed by all diocesan bishops. Archbishop Sarah, recently confirmed as the 106th Archbishop of Canterbury at St Paul's Cathedral, was accompanied by senior figures including the Lord Chancellor and the Clerk of the Closet. Reflecting on the occasion, she described it as a privilege and spoke warmly of the King's deep Christian faith, evident in his lifelong service to the nation and the Commonwealth. She also recalled paying homage to Queen Elizabeth II when she became Bishop of London, expressing gratitude for the continuity of royal support for the Church. As she prepares for her formal installation at Canterbury Cathedral later this month, she begins her leadership at a time of both opportunity and challenge for the Church of England, calling for prayerful support as she steps into this historic role.

Pray: for Archbishop Sarah to lead with humility, courage, and discernment, faithfully serving Christ and his Church. (James 1:5)

More: www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2026/02/04/archbishop-of-canterbury-sarah-mullally-praises-kings-faith/

Europe

Ukraine: thousands without electricity as peace talks continue

Renewed Russian attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure have left millions without power during freezing winter conditions. Volodymyr Zelensky said more than two hundred repair crews are working around the clock in Kyiv, where over 1,100 apartment buildings remain without electricity. Elsewhere, cluster munition strikes in eastern towns such as Druzhkivka killed civilians and injured many more. The attacks, whose effect was exacerbated by temperatures as low as -20C, followed a week's pause requested by Donald Trump. Families have sheltered in metro stations, warming centres and makeshift tents as generators are brought in. Energy officials warn repairs will take time, with some key facilities severely damaged. The governor of a Russian town near the border said work was continuing to restore power and water services following a Ukrainian missile strike there earlier in the week. While US, Ukrainian and Russian representatives meet again in Abu Dhabi to discuss a peace plan, there are few signs of progress. As winter deepens, ordinary Ukrainians face exhaustion, grief, and uncertainty alongside continuing violence.

Pray: for protection of civilians, endurance through winter hardship, and a just, lasting peace. (Isaiah 41:10)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/crley6x0dgzo

Norway: crown princess's son on trial for rape

The trial of Marius Borg Høiby, who is the son of crown princess Mette-Marit, has opened in Oslo, drawing national attention. The court heard emotional testimony from the first woman who alleges she was raped at a party in 2018, describing fragmented memory and distress at being drawn into a long-delayed legal process. Borg Høiby faces 38 charges, including four counts of rape, which he denies, maintaining that all encounters were consensual. The alleged incidents occurred after initial consent, with prosecutors arguing that the women were later incapacitated and unable to resist. Although he is not a member of the royal family, the case has intensified pressure on the palace, particularly regarding past links between the crown princess and Jeffrey Epstein. Strict reporting restrictions are in place as the court weighs evidence, credibility and responsibility, in a case that has stirred debate about power, consent, justice and public trust.

Pray: that the truth will be revealed and justice upheld. (Psalm 34:18)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cdx43rxgyk1o

Greece: smugglers blamed for fifteen deaths after speedboat collision

The deaths of fifteen Afghan and Moroccan migrants after a speedboat collision on 3 February with a coastguard boat have raised troubling questions about accountability at sea. The Greek authorities were quick to blame smugglers, saying the migrant vessel ignored warnings and manoeuvred dangerously. Yet critics urge caution, pointing to past incidents where official explanations later unravelled. In 2023, hundreds of migrants died when the fishing boat Adriana sank, initially described as unavoidable, before survivors alleged coastguard involvement. Years later, senior officers now face prosecution. In the current case, no testimonies from survivors have yet been made public and no independent video evidence has been released, so that there is uncertainty about what truly happened in the darkness. Greece remains a major entry route into Europe, while its government pursues a tough deterrence policy praised by some voters but condemned by human rights groups. The tragedy highlights the ongoing human cost of migration and the need for truth, transparency and compassion.

Pray: for truth, accountability, and mercy for migrants risking everything for safety. (Psalm 82:3)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c4g51n1jv79o

Worldwide

Gaza: humiliation and trauma after Rafah crossing reopens

When the Rafah border crossing was reopened on 2 February, Palestinian women returning to Gaza have described a journey marked by fear, humiliation and deep emotional trauma. Of around fifty people expecting to cross from Egypt on one day, only twelve - three women and nine children - were ultimately allowed through. Several women reported being separated from their children, blindfolded, handcuffed and interrogated for hours by Israeli forces who control entry at the crossing. One woman said she was threatened with detention and pressured psychologically, despite explaining she only wished to return home and see her children. Basic belongings, food and water were confiscated, adding to the exhaustion of an already gruelling journey. Meanwhile, critically ill patients seeking medical treatment abroad were largely denied passage, leaving tens of thousands waiting inside Gaza. There are also reports that Israel is pressurising NGOs working in Gaza: see <https://www.aljazeera.com/video/newsfeed/2026/2/4/how-israel-is-trying-to-hinder-ngos-from-working-in-gaza>

Pray: that Israel will speed up the border crossing procedures and show more compassion and protection for families enduring fear and separation. (Psalm 106:3)

More: <https://www.aljazeera.com/video/newsfeed/2026/2/4/how-israel-is-trying-to-hinder-ngos-from-working-in-gaza>

Sudan: Yvette Cooper accuses the international community of failing vulnerable women

UK foreign secretary Yvette Cooper has warned that the world is 'looking away' from the humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in Sudan, urging global action to protect women and children. Visiting the Sudan-Chad border, she said the international community was failing Sudanese women, many of whom have suffered sexual violence since fighting erupted in 2023 between the army and the RSF. At the overcrowded refugee camp in Adré, most arrivals were women and children who had fled extreme brutality. More than twelve million people have been displaced, with millions crossing borders in search of safety. The UK has pledged new funding to support survivors, alongside partners including War Child, represented on the visit by Carey Mulligan. Calls are growing for stronger international pressure to end violence, halt the flow of arms, and pursue accountability. Meanwhile, the army claims to have broken through a blockade by RSF of the important town of Kadugli: [see <https://www.aljazeera.com/video/newsfeed/2026/2/3/sudans-military-breaks-through-years-long-rsf-blockade-in-kadugli>](https://www.aljazeera.com/video/newsfeed/2026/2/3/sudans-military-breaks-through-years-long-rsf-blockade-in-kadugli)

Pray: for protection, healing, and justice for women and children suffering in Sudan. (Psalm 10:17)

More: uk.news.yahoo.com/foreign-secretary-accuses-international-community-224834493.html

Minneapolis: Trump says DHS might need 'softer touch' as hundreds of agents are withdrawn

Donald Trump has said he personally decided to withdraw hundreds of federal law enforcement agents from Minneapolis, following huge protests after Alex Patti was shot on 24 January ([see \[https://www.prayer-alert.net/index.php?option=com_acymailing&ctrl=url&subid=1&urlid=51147&mailid=856\]\(https://www.prayer-alert.net/index.php?option=com_acymailing&ctrl=url&subid=1&urlid=51147&mailid=856\)](https://www.prayer-alert.net/index.php?option=com_acymailing&ctrl=url&subid=1&urlid=51147&mailid=856)). About 700 agents from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) are set to leave the Twin Cities, with the goal of 'a full drawdown'. Trump said the move was tied to negotiations over the release of detained prisoners and took credit for falling crime rates in Minnesota, even though there have been accusations that federal agents violated constitutional rights through aggressive tactics. Minnesota governor Tim Walz and Minneapolis mayor Jacob Frey have both criticised the operations, while Trump suggested that in future DHS might need to use a 'softer touch' alongside firmness. The episode highlights deep national divisions over immigration, public safety, accountability, and the appropriate use of federal power.

Pray: that wisdom, justice, and restraint guide leaders amid tension and public fear. (Proverbs 21:3)

More: www.foxnews.com/media/trump-says-immigration-crackdown-needs-softer-touch-tough-stance-after-deadly-minneapolis-shootings

Pakistan: more than 175 terrorists killed in Balochistan

A wave of coordinated terrorist attacks struck multiple towns and cities across Balochistan in the early hours of 31 January, targeting security forces and government installations. The assaults, which were carried out by a group which the state has named Fitna-al-Hindustan (to highlight alleged links with India), prompted large-scale security operations across the province. More than 175 militants have been killed, while fifteen security personnel and eighteen civilians lost their lives. Suicide bombers, including women, were among those involved in the attacks. In response to security concerns, mobile internet services were suspended in Quetta and several other districts, disrupting daily life for residents. Balochistan's chief minister Sarfraz Bugti pledged firm action to restore stability, while federal officials said operations were continuing to eliminate remaining threats. The violence has heightened fear and uncertainty for communities already living with long-standing insecurity.

Pray: for peace, protection of civilians, and wisdom for leaders pursuing lasting security. (Psalm 122:7)

More: asianews.network/security-forces-kill-22-more-terrorists-in-pakistans-balochistan-taking-48-hour-total-tally-to-177

Argentina: Patagonia wildfires bring criticisms of Milei's austerity policies

Wildfires are tearing through Argentina's Patagonia region, burning vast areas of native forest and threatening irreplaceable ecosystems. More than 450 square kilometres have already been destroyed, including parts of a national park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site home to ancient alerce trees which can live for thousands of years. Thousands of residents have been evacuated as firefighters battle intense winds, high temperatures and difficult terrain. Fire crews report shortages of trained staff, aircraft and basic equipment, leaving them dangerously overstretched. Environmental groups warn that climate change is worsening fire conditions, making such blazes more frequent and severe. The crisis has intensified criticism of president Javier Milei's aggressive austerity policies. His 'chainsaw' spending cuts this year have slashed the national fire management service's budget by 71 percent. Milei, who has called climate change a 'socialist lie' and is considering withdrawing from the Paris Agreement, faces mounting pressure as the fires have now destroyed an area more than twice the size of Buenos Aires.

Pray: for protection of people, wildlife and forests. Pray for Milei to heed the criticism of his policies, and to act with wisdom. (Psalm 32:8)

More: www.aljazeera.com/gallery/2026/2/3/wildfires-devastate-argentinas-patagonia-threaten-ancient-forests

USA: Trump will cut tariffs if India stops buying Russian oil

Claims of a major shift in global energy politics emerged after Donald Trump announced plans to cut tariffs on Indian exports. Trump said he had agreed a trade deal with Narendra Modi in which India would stop buying Russian oil, a move he argued could help bring an end to the war in Ukraine. India has been one of Russia's largest customers since 2022, benefiting from discounted prices as Western nations reduced purchases. While Modi welcomed the tariff reductions and spoke positively about peace, he did not publicly confirm any pledge to halt Russian oil imports. India remains heavily dependent on overseas energy and has emphasised diversification rather than abrupt change. It has already started to cut back on buying Russian oil, even though Moscow insists supplies remain uninterrupted. For an insight on India's shifting relationship with Russia, see <https://inews.co.uk/opinion/putin-strategic-error-relationship-shows-why-4199810>

Pray: that leaders pursue peace with honesty, wisdom, and concern for the vulnerable. (Micah 6:8)

More: www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/feb/02/trump-tariffs-deal-india-modi-russian-oil

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