



PRAYER ALERT...



An initiative of the Prayer Association of the British Isles & Ireland

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Issue 3306

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Friday 1 September 2006

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BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ Mother wins ban on violent porn

A mother whose daughter died at the hands of a man obsessed with violent internet porn has won her fight for a ban on possessing such images. The government has announced plans to make the possession of violent porn punishable by three years in jail. It follows a campaign by Berkshire woman Liz Longhurst whose daughter Jane, a Brighton schoolteacher, was allegedly strangled by Graham Coutts. Mrs Longhurst's campaign was backed by MPs and a 50,000-signature petition. In November last year the petition won cross-party support when it was presented to the House of Commons and was backed publicly by the solicitor general, Harriet Harman MP. Since her daughter's death Mrs Longhurst, 74, from Reading, has fought a long campaign to ban the possession of images of sexual violence. Mrs Longhurst said: 'After 30 months of intensive campaigning we have persuaded the government to take action against these horrific internet sites, which can have such a corrupting influence and glorify extreme sexual violence.'

Pray: for protection for the individuals who make a stand against the evil of this world and that they will be able to continue to stand in the face of adversity. (Eph 6: 13)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/berkshire/5297600.stm>

■ Stabbed schoolgirl tells of 'gang mentality'

A teenager who was stabbed in the eye during her school lunch break told a court today of a 'gang mentality' that singled out pupils for their music and fashion tastes. The 15-year-old, who cannot be named for legal reasons, narrowly escaped losing her sight in the attack last November. She had been the victim of a string of attacks and threats and had even received prank calls at home because she is what is known as 'a metallor', Guildford crown court heard today. She told how she was scared to return to the school in case friends of the girl who attacked her 'try to finish the job'. But she said: 'I mean it's this gang mentality that my generation seems to insist upon and I want to stop it'. Watching the girl give evidence via video link, the jury heard how name-calling in the school canteen had escalated into an attack on the school playing fields.

Pray: against this 'gang mentality' amongst the young and the use of knives, threats and even name calling.

More: <http://education.guardian.co.uk/pupilbehaviour/story/0,,1861367,00.html>

■ Scots suicide rate highest in UK

Scotland has the highest suicide rate in the UK, according to figures from the Office for National Statistics. From 1991 to 2004 the suicide rate among men was 50% higher in Scotland than other UK countries, while the rate for women was double that of elsewhere. During 2002/04 the suicide rate among Scottish men was 30 per 100,000 compared with 22.4 in Wales, 18.3 in Northern Ireland and 16.7 in England. For Scots women the rate was 10 per 100,000 compared with 5.4 in England. In Wales it was 6 per 100,000 and 5.6 in Northern Ireland. The report said Scotland's highest rate of male suicide was found in Shetland, Blackpool for England, North Belfast in Northern Ireland and Denbighshire in Wales. For women the

highest suicide rate in Scotland was found in Glasgow, Camden in England, Conwy in Wales and west Belfast in Northern Ireland. The report said the overall UK suicide rate peaked in 1998 and has since fallen, while the suicide rate for women remained stable between 1991 and 2004.

Pray: for God's mercy to remove the spirit of death and for life and hope to be poured over this land. (Is.25:7- 8)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/5297916.stm>

■ Kelly joins row over Celtic goalkeeper's sign of Cross

Communities Secretary Ruth Kelly has stepped into the row over the decision by Scottish prosecutors to caution Celtic goalkeeper Artur Boruc after he crossed himself during an Old Firm match. The Catholic Church in Scotland has already condemned the decision to caution the Pole for a breach of the peace after he crossed himself in a February match against Rangers at Ibrox. Kelly, a practising Catholic and a member of the Catholic Opus Dei organisation, said she was 'surprised' at the decision by Scottish prosecutors. 'I must say I am surprised because this has traditionally been a country which has valued religious diversity - and cultural and racial diversity as well - and where there has been freedom of expression, both to express religious symbols but also other cultural symbols as well,' she told the BBC News 24 Sunday programme.

Pray: Many will perhaps also be surprised by this decision. Pray that wisdom will be used by the decision makers and that they will not take the 'politically correct' ways too literally.

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/news/society/kelly.joins.row.over.celtic.goalkeepers.sign.of.cross/1040.htm>

■ Archbishop seeks to break US Anglican impasse

The Archbishop of Canterbury has invited both wings of the fragmenting American Episcopal Church to a summit to work through their conflicts. Dr Williams has asked senior liberal and conservative figures in the US church to gather for two days in New York in efforts to avert disintegration of the church over homosexuality. Bishop Jack Iker of the conservative Fort Worth diocese said, 'If things go well at this initial meeting, additional dates have been set aside to continue our deliberations'. Earlier this week a Dutch newspaper published an interview with the Archbishop in which he voiced his 'nightmare'. Dr Williams said his worst fears were a situation in which different wings of the Anglican Communion went to court over the ownership of church property, while ignoring its calling to the world at large.

Pray: Continue to pray for the Anglican Church as they seek a way forward over this contentious situation and to remember its calling.

More: http://www.churchnewspaper.com/news.php?read=on&number_key=5834&title=New%20York%20summit%20to%20bridge%20American%20divide

■ Divorce rates fall by 8% in 2005

More people are choosing to stay married, the figures show. The divorce rate in England and Wales fell by 8% last year, according to the Office for National Statistics. Figures released by the statisticians show that there were 13 divorcing couples per 1,000 married in 2005. The steepest falls have been for men and women under 40, with divorces in that age group dropping by 13% and 12% respectively last year. A fifth of people divorcing in 2005 had already had a previous marriage which ended in divorce.

Pray: Praise God for this trend although we must remember that there are fewer marriages. Keep praying for marriage to be recognised as the God given way forward for men and women to live together.

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/5301270.stm>

EUROPE

■ German Chancellor determined to include Christian values in new EU Constitution

German Chancellor Angela Merkel has declared that Europe's Christian values should be enshrined in a new version of the EU constitution. After a meeting with Pope Benedict, Merkel said, 'We spoke about freedom of religion. We spoke about the role of Europe and I emphasized the need for a constitution and that it should refer to our Christian values.' According to a report in The Guardian Unlimited, the chancellor will take charge of efforts to revive the constitution when Germany assumes the EU's rotating presidency next January. The daughter of a Protestant pastor, Merkel is determined to reopen the debate when she tries to revive the constitution, reportedly a controversial move in itself because many EU leaders want a slimmed down document after last year's no votes. Reporter Nicholas Watt also noted that Mrs. Merkel 'is leader of the strongly Catholic CDU party whose most senior figure in Brussels is determined to include a reference to God in the new constitution.'

Pray: Let us pray that Angela Merkel will find the necessary support to make Christian values central within the EU.

More: http://www.breakingchristiannews.com/articles/display_art_pf.html?ID=2961

■ Europe warned over child trafficking

Not enough is being done to prevent the trafficking of young people in south-eastern Europe, a report by two children's charities says. Existing regional programmes fail to tackle the root causes of the problem, the report by the UN children's agency (Unicef) and Terre des Hommes says. It says thousands of youngsters are smuggled each year to Western Europe to be used in the sex trade or slavery. It also says the British government is not doing enough to prevent the trafficking. The UN estimates that some 1.2m children are trafficked across the world each year - with about 246m youngsters also thought to be involved in child labour. In the UK alone, between 1999 and 2003, some 250 children were rescued from trafficking. The new report - Action to Prevent Child Trafficking in South-Eastern Europe - says prevention efforts by governments in the region, and international and non-governmental organisations, fail to address the root causes of the trafficking.

Pray: that our governments will seek ways of tackling the root causes of this problem. Pray for the youngsters who have been involved that they will be set free and receive God's healing.

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/5297944.stm>

WORLDWIDE

■ Christian community under attack in Iraq

The Christian community in Iraq is finding itself caught in the crossfire of sectarian violence, forcing Christians to move north to find safety in the Kurdish-controlled region of the country. Although the world tends to focus mainly on the conflict between Shi'ites and Sunni Muslims in Iraq, reports have revealed that various ethnic and religious groups are under attack. Brian Padden of Voice of America reports, 'Christians attend mass at St. Joseph's Church in Irbil, in the northern Kurdish region of Iraq, as they have done for thousands of years. But today the number of Christians living here is growing, as more seek refuge from the sectarian violence devastating much of the country.' Basam Hannah, his wife, and child fled Baghdad after a car bomb exploded in front of their church, nearly killing them. They lost everything they had and now live with three other families in a small house in Irbil.'

Pray: for Gods protection for the many persecuted Christians who are caught in the crossfire of this war. (Psalm 17)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/news/middle-east/christian.community.under.attack.in.iraq/490.htm>

■ Zimbabwe defends lack of housing

Following thousands of dwellings that were destroyed last year a Zimbabwe government minister says there is no truth in a report by Church leaders that heavily criticised the state's housing demolitions last year. Church leaders said in a report that almost nothing had been done to house 700,000 people who lost their homes and livelihoods in the demolitions. Operation Murambatsvina, which the government said was a drive to clean up cities, was also condemned by the UN. Minister Didymus Mutasa said the church report was 'absolutely not true'. Asked how many new houses had been built, Mr Mutasa replied: 'I can't tell you the number immediately, I will have to check. But everyone in the country whether affected by Murambatsvina or not is being considered for decent housing.' He also denied claims made in the report by the church-based Solidarity Peace Trust that most of those people expelled from the cities had since returned.

Pray: that the government will act justly, love mercy and live up to its promises to re-house the 100,000 displaced people in the west of the country. (Micah 6:8)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/5298572.stm>

■ Saudi Arabia - four African Christians deported

Ejection from the country may force Ethiopian church leader to miss his wedding. Saudi Arabia deported four East African Christians last month after they were detained while leading a prayer service in Jeddah. Arrested on June 9, the church leaders were beaten and imprisoned in torturous conditions. Masai Wendewesen, deported to his native Ethiopia on July 16, told that the Christians were never formally notified of the charges against them. But according to his Saudi work sponsor, the four had been jailed for 'preaching to Muslims, planting churches and gathering ladies and gentlemen together for prayer.' The Christians were working in Saudi Arabia as chauffeurs and truck drivers. Proclaiming Christ to Muslims and building churches are forbidden in Saudi Arabia, where 'apostasy' – leaving Islam – is a crime punishable by death. Wendewesen said that after more than a month in jail, the two Ethiopians were told they had 48 hours to leave and were deported without retrieving any of their personal belongings. 'We were going to get married on September 7,' Wendewesen said, referring to his Eritrean fiancée still working in Jeddah. Their wedding chances appear bleak due to political tensions between their two countries that bar her from traveling to Ethiopia.

Pray: for encouragement and strength for the tent making individuals who risk imprisonment, as they attempt to work, marry and serve the Lord in the end time harvest fields. (Zech.10:10)

More: <http://www.compassdirect.org/en/lead.php>

■ Malaysia - Convert receives death threat, goes into hiding

Lina Joy, a Malaysian convert to Christianity, has gone into hiding after extremists issued death threats against her and the lawyers supporting her cause. Escalating furor over the latest stage in Joy's lengthy struggle to change her religious status has led Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi to order a halt to all public debate on the issue. Despite converting to Christianity 16 years ago, in 1990, Joy is still legally identified as a Muslim. Joy, previously known as Azlina binti Jailani, requested a name change from the National Registration Department in 1997. They granted the name change in October 1999 but retained the Muslim status on her new identity card. Malaysian law requires all Muslims to be declared as such on their identity cards; the religion of non-Muslims, however, is not specified. When challenged, the NRD said it could not change Joy's religious status without a declaration from the Islamic law (sharia) court that she had become an 'apostate.'

Pray: that in the secular country of Malaysia the spirit of Islam will not be allowed to overshadow or suppress Christians; and this complex argument will be finally be resolved with justice and freedom.

More: <http://www.compassdirect.org/en/newslongen.php?idelement=4512>

■ U.S. drafting sanctions as Iran ignores deadline

The United States and three European allies are assembling a list of sanctions they would seek in the United Nations Security Council, beginning with restrictions on imports of nuclear-related equipment and material. Eventually, measures might expand to restrict travel by Iran's leaders and limit the country's access to global financial markets. The Bush administration is also seeking to persuade European financial institutions to end new lending to Iran. Some Swiss banks

have quietly agreed to limit their lending, American officials say. As an agreement shapes up among the United States, Britain, France and Germany, the push for sanctions faces a high hurdle in the Council, as Russia and China possess veto power and they are opposed to discussion of serious punishment for Iran. European and Russian companies have sold technology for Iran's budding civilian nuclear program; it is unclear whether the sanctions would force Russia to stop helping Iran complete its nuclear reactor at Bushehr. The Bushehr project is worth hundreds of millions of dollars to Russia, and the government of President Vladimir V. Putin is expected to argue that sanctions should not affect civilian projects that are already under way.

Pray: for Russian defence minister, Chinese officials, and President Putin to put aside personal agendas and programmes, and work towards global solutions. (1 Timothy 2:1-3)

More: http://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/31/world/middleeast/31diplo.html?_r=1&oref=slogin

PRAISE REPORTS

■ How two Islamic terrorists found Jesus

It's rare for an Islamic terrorist to break free from the jihadist lifestyle. It's even rarer for that same terrorist to then speak out against Islamic terrorism, become an active follower of Christ, and stand up for the Jewish state. But this is exactly what happened to Walid Shoebat and Zachariah Anani. As a young man, Shoebat was a member of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) said, 'Our mission at first - we were growing up in the West Bank - was: kill as many Jews as you can.' Anani belonged to several Islamic terrorist groups in Lebanon. By 14, he had already committed his first murder, and he was just getting started. 'Within four years, I had 223 points, which means 223 kills,' Anani recalled. 'And two-thirds of them by daggers. I was trained in what we call body combat.' Growing up in the Middle East, Shoebat and Anani were taught to wage jihad against all non-Muslims, especially Jews.

Praise: God for the truth of His gospel that overcomes all the lies of the enemy.

More: www.joel-news.org

■ Christian Aid Welcomes Uganda Ceasefire

Christian Aid and its partner organisations have welcomed the ceasefire between the Ugandan government and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), while the question remains - will this lead to peace? 'This ceasefire is, of course, good news,' says Angelina Atyam, the chairperson of Christian Aid partner the Concerned Parents Association (CPA). 'You can see the excitement on everyone's face but we are all asking the same question - will this lead to peace?' The ceasefire gives the LRA time to assemble at designated points in southern Sudan where they will be given protection by the regional government. Peace talks are scheduled to begin in three weeks, once this protection is assured.

Praise: God for the trust and hope that could establish a lasting peace. Continue to pray that they will be able to forgive and be forgiven.

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/news/africa/christian.aid.welcomes.uganda.ceasefire./500.htm>

■ Church introduces e-Bible in Filipino, other dialects

Students and researchers, as well as the faithful, can now read the Holy Bible in several Filipino languages on the Internet. The Philippine Christian Churches has created thee-bible or electronic Bible to revive interest in the faith among members of the Catholic Church. It is making the Scriptures easily accessible and understandable to everyone. Describing itself as a non-profit and interconfessional Christian organization, PBS makes it clear that its purpose is "to help Church leaders reach out to and touch people" in a language they can understand. Surfers can read four versions of the Bible and translations are available in seven major Philippine languages, Tagalog, Cebuano, Bicol, Pangasinan, Capampangan, Samarenyo and Hiligaynon. According to the PBS, the software once installed, is a powerful research tool. It has a concordance, a mini-dictionary, a Bible reading plan for the whole year, and a notepad for typing down notes when doing research or preparing a homily.

Praise: God for this initiative and pray that many will now read God's word and find His revelation.

More: http://www.manilatimes.net/national/2006/aug/31/yehey/top_stories/20060831top7.html

PRAYER ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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Prayer Alert is a partnership project of the Prayer Association of the British Isles and Ireland
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