



PRAYER ALERT...



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BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ Hundreds of Churches to take part in 'Back to Church Sunday'

Hundreds of churches across Church of England dioceses are hoping to bring thousands of congregants to worship as part of 'Back to Church Sunday' this weekend. Churches are preparing for a swell of attendants during Sunday Services on 24th September across the Dioceses of Derby, Ripon and Leeds, Manchester, Wakefield, Oxford, Guildford, Hereford and individual churches around the country, as part of the drive for new devotees. The Back to Church Sunday organisers have created a number of resources to accompany the event. Researchers at the University of Staffordshire will measure the responses from people returning to churches and build up a picture of how and why people reconnect with church after a time away. The Bishop of Ripon and Leeds, the Rt Rev John Packer said: 'People lose touch with church for all sorts of reasons. But we know some are looking for a way back to church and a personal invitation can make all the difference.'

Pray: that many will find their way back to the fold and returning to the Church put aside the reasons that took them away. (Acts 2: 46 – 47)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/hundreds.of.churches.to.take.part.in.back.to.church.sunday/7668.htm>

■ Carey backs Pope and issues warning on 'violent' Islam

The former Archbishop of Canterbury Lord Carey of Clifton has issued his own challenge to 'violent' Islam in a lecture in which he defends the Pope's 'extraordinarily effective and lucid' speech. Lord Carey said that Muslims must address 'with great urgency' their religion's association with violence. He made it clear that he believed the 'clash of civilisations' endangering the world was not between Islamist extremists and the West, but with Islam as a whole. 'We are living in dangerous and potentially cataclysmic times,' he said. 'There will be no significant material and economic progress [in Muslim communities] until the Muslim mind is allowed to challenge the status quo of Muslim conventions and even their most cherished shibboleths.' Since the Pope quoted a Byzantine emperor as saying that the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad were 'evil and inhuman', a nun has been shot dead, a terrorist group linked to Al-Qaeda has vowed to kill the Pope, churches in Palestinian areas have been attacked and security at churches and mosques in London and elsewhere has been stepped up.

Pray: for Christian communities round the world who risk facing the anger of Muslims who feel that the Pope has insulted their prophet. Pray that Muslim rage will not turn into violence.

More: <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/newspaper/0,,172-2366419,00.html>

■ Reid heckled during Muslim speech

Home Secretary John Reid has been heckled during a speech about targeting potential Muslim extremists. He was interrupted by activist Abu Izzadeen, who said he was 'furious' about 'state terrorism by British police'. In his speech, Mr

Reid asked Muslim parents to keep a close eye on their children and act if they suspected they were being radicalised by extremists. He accused the minister of being an 'enemy' of Islam before he was led from the building by police and stewards. A Home Office spokesman said that, 'while Mr Izzadeen was not invited to the meeting, it was in the nature of an open community meeting and that some people who were not invited ended up attending. A second heckler, who also interrupted Mr Reid's speech, was ejected a few minutes after Mr Izzadeen. During his time in Leytonstone, East London, which also involved a visit to a mosque, Mr Reid said community and religious leaders could play a key role in the fight against terrorism.

Pray: for wisdom for all those who are addressing the problem of militancy in the Muslim community - their leaders, parents, the police and politicians. Pray against the radical element that try to stir hatred. (1 Cor 16: 13)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/5362052.stm?ls>

■ Care system 'fails young people'

Most young people in local authority care are destined to end up in prison, homeless or working as prostitutes, a report by a think-tank claims. Of the 6,000 who leave care each year, 4,500 will have no qualifications and a fifth will be homeless, says the study by the Centre for Policy Studies. Report author Harriet Sergeant said the system was failing young people and society and perpetuating an underclass. The government admitted that more needs to be done despite recent improvements. The report - entitled Handle with Care: an investigation into the care system - showed most were in care due to abuse or neglect (62%), family dysfunction (10%), absent parents (8%), and socially unacceptable behaviour (3%). Within two years of leaving care 3,000 of 6,000 young people will be unemployed; 2,100 will be mothers or pregnant; 1,200 will be homeless and nearly half of all young people normally leave care at 16 or 17.

Pray: for all those who are in the caring profession that they will not neglect their role in supporting those in care who rely on their help.

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/5363432.stm>

■ Depressed 'could get help to die'

Assisted suicide could be offered to Britons who are chronically depressed rather than terminally ill, says the head of a controversial Swiss group. Ludwig Minelli says his organisation, Dignitas, is asking the Swiss Supreme Court to allow a change in the law. Existing laws have already allowed Dignitas to help 54 Britons to die and Mr Minelli said another British man was due to follow next week. Speaking at the Lib Dem conference, he urged the UK to drop its suicide laws. His appeal comes after an attempt to relax the current ban on assisted dying, was blocked by the House of Lords in May, although it is expected to be reintroduced. Mr Minelli said: 'The question for politicians in Britain today is why do you force your citizens, people in the most terrible circumstances who are determined to end their suffering in a way of their own choosing, to leave their country and travel to Switzerland to exercise their free will.'

Pray: that the Swiss Supreme Court will not grant this change. Continue to pray for our government that it will not relax its current ban. Pray especially for all who are so troubled that they are trying to choose ways of ending their life. Pray for God's healing.

More: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/5364400.stm

■ Suicide bid girl 'bullied online'

A teenager who was bullied in school and says jokes appeared about her on a social networking website is warning other pupils to be more careful. Kirsty Perkins, 14, made a suicide attempt after bullying at school in Pwllheli, and then discovered material on Bebo.com - which displays user safety advice, has removed the comments. Kirsty said her ordeal began in March when some pupils at Ysgol Glan y Môr started calling her names, and the situation became so bad that she tried to kill herself with an overdose. With the help of friends she is now better, but then last week she was told someone had made fun of her suicide attempt on the website. Kirsty said: 'It's easier for people to say things about you on the internet. People are scared to say things to your face. It hasn't been too good at school, people are still being unkind but I have close friends who are helping me, and I'm still glad I spoke out.'

Pray: for Kirsty and ask the Lord to protect her from further bullying. Pray that He would strengthen her and that her witness will be a help to others.

More: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/north_west/5356078.stm

EUROPE

■ MEPs clash over support for Hungarian PM

Hungary's riots over pre-election lies by the country's prime minister have entered Brussels politics, with centre-right MEPs attacking EU socialists for supporting the Hungarian leader. According to media reports, the third night of protests on Wednesday (20 September) in Budapest was more peaceful than the previous two nights of demonstrations. But protesters and the centre-right opposition are keeping up pressure for socialist prime minister Ferenc Gyurcsany to step down as a result of Sunday's leak that his party lied about the real state of the economy before May elections. The European Commission has urged calm and made clear the riots would not influence its forthcoming report on Hungary's public finances, while the Finnish prime minister Matti Vanhanen said the EU would not intervene 'in any way.' Mr Gyurcsany remains defiant and warns that he will not tolerate violence.

Pray: that the situation in Hungary will be calmed and justice will prevail.

More: <http://euobserver.com/9/22467>

■ **Bosnia and Herzegovina: Religious tensions rising.**

Elizabeth Kendal of the World Evangelical Alliance Religious Liberty Commission (WEA RLC) submitted a report recently on the rising ethnic-religious tensions in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Consisting of two parts: an examination of the present situation, and an overview of the history that has created its context, this report gives a comprehensive analysis of the current situation. While the recent religious incidents that triggered this posting might seem to be fairly insignificant, the issues and their potential to inflame conflict are not. In fact the issues emerging in Bosnia and Herzegovina today are reminiscent of those that led to war in 1992. When sparks appear in the midst of an incendiary environment, then regardless of how small they appear, they must be taken seriously and investigated thoroughly with the goal of preventing an explosion. This posting submits that Bosnia and Herzegovina warrants the immediate, diligent attention of religious liberty monitors, advocates and intercessors, as well as peace-makers who can recognise romanticism, embrace realism, and care more about protecting flesh-and-blood than illusory political ideals.

Pray: for the peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina that they will not slip back into those historical conflicts.

More: <http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/s06090093.htm>

WORLDWIDE

■ **BREAKING NEWS - Executions spark Indonesian riots**

Thousands of protesters took to the streets of eastern Indonesia after three Christian militants were executed in religiously divided Sulawesi. Protesters torched cars, looted shops and set prisoners free from a jail. But Palu, where the executions took place, remained calm. Mourners attended church services to pray for the men.

Pray: with our Christian brothers and sisters in prayer for the families and loved ones over their loss. Pray that the violence and anger will cease and Gods love and peace would prevail.

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/5368922.stm>

■ **Thailand calm but uncertain after coup reports church worker**

The situation on the ground in Thailand appears to be calm but uncertain during the first hours of the coup according to a church worker from International Ministries commenting back to the American Baptist Churches USA. Stanley Murray and the IM crisis management team say that they will be in close communication with partner church leaders as the situation develops. IM has a long relationship with the people of Thailand. IM's work in the country, then known as Siam, began in 1833, when pioneer workers John and Sarah Taylor Jones first arrived in Bangkok. Some 94% of Thailand's population is Theravada Buddhist. As of 2003 there were 278,000 Catholics (0.4% of the total population) and 262,000 Protestants of various traditions

Pray: that in this time of transition, God will install leaders whom He will use to turn this country round. (Ps.2:6)

More: http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/content/news_syndication/article_060920thai.shtml

■ **Christians call for an International 30-Day Muslim Prayer Focus**

For the 15th year in a row, Youth with a Mission (or YWAM) and WorldChristian.com is helping Christians focus prayer on the Muslim world by participating in a prayer movement called The 30 Days Muslim Prayer Focus which coincides with Islam's holy month of prayer and fasting known as Ramadan. This year's Prayer Focus begins September 24 and continues through October 23. During that time, Christians are called upon to make a concerted but respectful effort to learn about, pray for and reach out to Muslim neighbours across the street and around the world. Patrick Johnstone, the author of Operation World, says, 'This 30-day prayer emphasis has been a remarkable global effort to focus Christians on prayer for the spiritual needs of Muslims. During the last 15 years there has been a corresponding rise in the number of Muslims turning to Christ'.

Pray: that God would call many more as intercessors-priests to change our world and extend His kingdom. (Genesis 15: 4,5 and 16:11,12)

More: http://www.breakingchristiannews.com/articles/display_art_pf.html?ID=2946

■ **Buyers line up for China's arms**

Some of the poorest and most unsavoury regimes on earth, which cannot afford or are not allowed to buy sophisticated Western arms, are turning to the world's newest superpower to buy guns, leg-irons, anti-riot equipment and armoured vehicles. Military specialists have confirmed the main findings of a report issued by Amnesty International, which said Chinese arms sales were fuelling conflicts and human rights abuses in Sudan. China is perhaps the largest, supplier of weapons to Sudan, where sales include fighter aircraft and helicopters. The key question in Sudan, is to what extent alleged war crimes in Darfur are dependent on these supplies. China has used the threat of its Security Council veto to stall or dilute UN resolutions on Darfur, saying the situation in Sudan is an internal affair. While the US maintains partial sanctions against Sudan, China has become the country's biggest trading partner, taking most of its oil exports.

Pray: that God would use the global media to disgrace corrupt government practices that promote war. (Isaiah 40:23)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/low/world/asia-pacific/5086416.stm>

■ **CSW welcomes UN Security Council debate on Burma**

Christian Solidarity Worldwide welcomes the United Nations Security Council move to formally add Burma to its agenda; pronouncing the country's military regime a threat to international peace and security. The decision to put the situation in Burma on the Security Council agenda was supported by ten nations, including the United Kingdom and the United States. Human rights violations include widespread recruitment of child soldiers, rape, forced relocation of ethnic villages, forced

labour, and human minesweepers. A recent CSW fact-finding visit to Kachin State, Northern Burma, uncovered fresh evidence of these abuses. One former Burma Army Major told CSW that some child soldiers are so young 'they still pee in the night'. A recent report, claimed that infant mortality rates and deaths from treatable diseases in Burma are among the worst in the world. The World Health Organisation ranks Burma's health care 190th out of 191 states. Burma is also rated one of the worst violators of religious freedom.

Pray: for global powers to be used by God to instil justice and mercy throughout Burma. (Ps.72:4)

More: <http://www.csw.org.uk/latestnews/article.php?id=548>

■ Tense time for Christians in Iraq

Christians in Iraq are fearful that comments by the Pope on Islam may spark violent retaliation. The minority faith group in Iraq has withstood not only the turmoil of more recent months but also the pressures of the last few centuries, by keeping a low profile. Now they are fearful that anger among both Shi'ite and Sunni Muslims could turn into violent confrontation with churches and their followers in Iraq. 'We're not afraid of our neighbourhoods turning against us, because we've lived with them for generations,' said a 35-year-old Christian grocery shop owner Iskandar in Baghdad. 'But our fear is that the Al-Qaeda types will start targeting churches again, like they have with Shi'ite mosques.' Christians in Iraq remain anxious that the Pope's comments on Islam have made their lives less safe, and some have even joined with their Muslim neighbours in calling the remarks offensive.

Pray: for God to pour out His strength on Iraqi Christians, and encourage them not to compromise their faith. Pray for them to find their refuge in Him, and for calm to replace anger, love to replace hatred. (Joel 3:16)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/>

■ Colombian refugees find new routes to protection in Brazil

UNHCR (UN Refugee Agency) representative in Brazil, said the conflict in Colombia between government troops and irregular armed groups was forcing people to go south and cross countries like Peru and Bolivia before entering Brazil at Corumba. Federal police and local religious organisations said a growing number of Colombians have been arriving in Corumba and asking for asylum in the past five months. The government and UNHCR, working with independent aid groups, are providing some facilities and services to these asylum seekers. A spokesman from an asylum seeker shelter said the Colombians had left their country because of persecution, death threats and violence, while most people from other South American countries, largely Peru and Bolivia, said they had come to Brazil to escape poverty. UNHCR believes that the number of Colombian citizens who have fled to western areas of Brazil but not applied for asylum, could be significant.

Pray: for God to have mercy on this population of invisible refugees and use appropriate agencies to bring about His future and hope for them. (Prov.12:19-21)

More: <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/news/opendoc.htm?tbl=NEWS&id=451176b84>

PRAISE REPORTS

■ Fox launches Christian film wing

Christians in America are the target of FoxFaith, a home video label devoted to the country's church-going audience. Encouraged by the box-office success of Mel Gibson's The Passion of the Christ, the 20th Century Fox unit will acquire Christian-themed films for DVD release. It will also market the cinema release of up to 12 films a year. The initiative will begin on 6 October with the release of Love's Abiding Joy - a western directed by Michael Landon Jr, son of the Little House on the Prairie star - in 250 cinemas. It is one of several films with religious themes. They include Facing the Giants, a sports film about a struggling high school football team, and The Nativity Story, scheduled for US release in December. A big-budget film version of Milton's epic poem Paradise Lost is also in the pipeline.

Pray: God for this new initiative and pray that these films will reach a wide audience across the world.

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/5363198.stm>

■ Lydia Prayer Fellowship to be reborned in Australia

Lydia Prayer Fellowship has restarted in Australia after a lapse of more than 20 years. It seeks to encourage small groups of women all over Australia to pray with fasting on a regular basis for Church, Community and Nation and also for the nations of the World, as God leads. It is an exciting prayer ministry. Anyone interested or wanting more information or literature on this network can contact Jean Kelly, Australian representative on email kellyje@bigpond.com.

Pray: God for this expansion of the Lydia network. May the Lord bless the ladies in the call to stand in the gap. (Ez 22:30)

More: <http://ausprayernet.org.au/newsletter/DisplayNewsletter.php>

PRAYER ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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