



PRAYER ALERT...



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BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ Stewardess banned from carrying Bible

A second airline is embroiled in a religious row after a stewardess decided to take bmi to an employment tribunal because it refused to allow her to carry a Bible on flights to Saudi Arabia. The stewardess, who has not been named, claims that she has been subject to discrimination because of her faith. She is understood to have deep religious convictions and carries a Bible with her at all times. A spokesman for bmi said the airline was complying with Saudi law and added that the stewardess had been offered the opportunity to switch to working on its short-haul routes. It could not, however, alter its long-haul rosters to accommodate her. A spokesman for Christian Solidarity Worldwide said: 'It is worrying that a British company should be instructing its staff to conform to practices which are in violation of international standards on religious freedom'.

Pray: for all Christians as they stand up for their faith in difficult situations. (2 Ch.20:17)

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml;jsessionid=KE2GUQ42RAQDPQFIQMFCFFOAVCBQYIV0?xml=/news/2006/12/20/nbible20.xml>

■ Pentecostal Church 'sees growth'

Pentecostal Christians outnumber Methodist churchgoers at services in England and Wales, research suggests. Sunday attendance at Pentecostal churches totalled 288,500 this year, compared with 278,700 at Methodist churches, it was estimated. Manchester University's Dr David Voas, who studied English Church Census data, said Pentecostals were 'the fastest growing group within Christianity'. He predicted they were third largest, behind Catholics and Anglicans. Dr Voas said: 'Methodism is dying in Britain. By contrast, immigration from Africa and elsewhere has led to growth in Pentecostal churches, where the worship style is more flamboyant.' The forecasts were based on figures from the English Church Census, conducted by the independent charity Christian Research and sponsored by the Economic and Social Research Council. Jonathan Kerry, co-ordinating secretary for worship and learning for the Methodist Church in Great Britain, said, 'like many historic denominations, the Methodist Church now struggles to respond to new movements of God's Spirit without feeling that it is betraying the past.'

Pray: for the Church in all its diversity that the Lord will build us up to His glory. (Ps.127:1)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/6192785.stm>

■ Young 'forget Jesus at Christmas'

Fewer than half of children aged seven to 11 think Christmas is about the birth of Jesus, a survey suggests. Some 44% thought it was about Jesus, while 29% said it was about thinking of other people, and 24% said it was about giving rather

than receiving gifts. The survey of 1,063 children for BBC's Newsround programme found 89% felt excited about Christmas and 79% happy. But one in six of the youngsters surveyed said they felt sad, nervous or left out during the festive season. The survey found almost two-thirds of children saved their pocket money to buy presents for other people, and they tended to spend more on their mothers than their fathers. But Christmas was not enjoyable for all young people, it found; with some saying they felt 'cold', 'tired' or 'worried', at this time of year. Newsround presenter Ellie Crisell said: 'Christmas is one of the most exciting times of year for children. But it can also be stressful.'

Pray: for our children that they will not be deprived of their birthright and the truth about Christmas. (Jn.1:1-18)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/6193235.stm>

■ African children 'at risk of ritual abuse'

A cursory glance at the classified section of the ethnic press reveals a myriad of spiritual healers making some remarkable claims. One such spiritualist says he can cast away 'evil influences and bad luck', another will break voodoo and black magic curses and several others offer exorcisms. Concern has been growing about the impact on children of such ritual practices. The issue hit the headlines with the grim discovery of a torso of a young boy in the Thames in September 2001. Police believe the child, later named Adam, had been the victim of a west African-style ritual sacrifice. Africans Unite Against Child Abuse (Afruca), a UK charity, is calling for tighter regulation of minority churches and faith organisations. 'We are concerned with some pastors who are not accountable to anybody and who have the means to manipulate their followers into believing their children are possessed,' said Afruca spokesman Million Joseph.

Pray: against these evil influences that deceive the believers and harm the children. Pray that God will open their eyes to the truth and expose Satan's lies. (Jas.1:16-18)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/london/6177001.stm>

■ Law-making 'oppressive' say NI bishops

Church of Ireland bishops have called the British government's way of making laws for Northern Ireland 'oppressive'. They have hit out at what they call the 'deplorable fast tracking of controversial legislation'. They said it has been used as a lever to force Northern Ireland politicians back into devolved government. The Bishop of Connor, Alan Harper, said three major pieces of legislation were announced in July with consultation periods lasting only three months. 'We've got real, in fact increasing, concerns about the torrent of major pieces of legislation and the adequacy of the consultation process,' the bishop said. 'What we're offering here is a wake-up call to local politicians to say first of all 'get your act together and do a proper job in terms of getting yourselves involved in the consultation process'. The bishops also said there was little scrutiny of proposed new laws and they may be passed even though a majority of elected representatives in Northern Ireland oppose them.

Pray: Keep praying for the government that it will not push through regulations without full consultation.

More: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/6199317.stm

■ Anglican evangelicals form alternative networks

A coalition of Evangelical and charismatic Anglican groups have covenanted to train and appoint ministers, support 'mission-shaped expressions of church' and offer 'alternative biblically orthodox oversight' where bishops fail to offer it, the Church Times reports. The coalition includes Anglican Mainstream, Reform, the Church of England Evangelical Council, New Wine and Crosslinks. Canon Chris Sugden of Anglican Mainstream said the coalition represents some 2,000 congregations. A meeting to discuss proposals and solutions is planned with the Archbishop of Canterbury in the new year.

Pray: for the Anglican Church as it looks at different ways of oversight that they will remember who the chief cornerstone is. (Eph.2:19-22)

More: <http://www.churchtimes.co.uk/content.asp?id=30650>

■ IPSWICH UPDATE – Please continue in prayer

We want to thank everyone who has been standing with us in prayer. There is an awful lot going on both seen and unseen (2 Cor 4:18) Please would you continue to pray over this Christmas period, as we do not yet know whether the police have arrested the right person(s). Please pray that: We would stay alert and that complacency would not slip in, either in spiritual terms or in terms of safety on the streets - we keep lifting up our eyes; For resources as the holiday period approaches, and police will be wanting time off with their families; For the Town Pastors, who are covering nightly shifts at the moment and becoming a bit weary! For people to be saved - there are a significant number of people coming into our churches at the moment, (including the girls from the streets) 'The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned'. Liz Beaton, Ipswich in Prayer

EUROPE

■ Bishops want God in EU birthday declaration

European bishops are urging for the inclusion of a reference to Christianity in the EU's 50 year anniversary declaration next year, after they failed to get 'God' included in the shelved EU constitution. In a document released last week, the Commission of the Bishops Conferences of the European Community (COMECE) promotes its views on the content of the so-called Berlin Declaration - to be signed by EU leaders in March next year - marking the 50th birthday of the 1957 Treaty of Rome which laid the basis for the current European Union. The bishops' text states that 'for a majority of EU citizens their Christian faith is the living source for their support of our common values and ambitions. The Berlin Declaration, therefore,

should be inclusive enough not only to list the values and ambitions of the European Union but to reflect the religious and humanistic motivation of EU citizenship.'

Pray: that the bishops' request to put God into the centre of the European Union Declaration will be accepted. (Ps.148:5)

More: <http://euobserver.com/9/23143>

WORLDWIDE

■ Virginia churches split from US Anglicans

Two of the largest and oldest parishes in the United States have voted to break away from the Episcopal Church, the American branch of Anglicanism, in protest at its liberal stance on homosexuality. The dramatic move on Sunday by congregations at Truro and Falls Church, both of which date from the 1700s, will hasten the disintegration of the worldwide Anglican Church. Six other conservative parishes in Virginia also voted to secede from the Episcopal Church, representing ten per cent of the diocese. They will join a number of other parishes that have already split, including another of the Episcopal Church's largest, Plano in Texas. Meanwhile, seven conservative dioceses are appealing to the Archbishop of Canterbury for alternative leadership, and an eighth, in California, is on the verge of breaking away. Dr Rowan Williams declined to comment on the developments today, but it will be a further blow to his hopes of maintaining even a semblance of unity across the 70-million strong worldwide Communion.

Pray: for the Anglican Church as it looks at different ways of oversight that they will remember who the chief cornerstone is. (Eph.2:19-22)

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2006/12/18/uchurch118.xml>

■ Catholic Archbishop, Priests and a Pentecostal Church attacked in India

An Indian Christian group has condemned attacks made upon a Catholic Archbishop, three Priests and a Pentecostal church, according to SVM (Salem Voice Ministries) News Service. The Roman Catholic Arch Bishop of Bangalore was attacked along with the Diocese Secretary in front of the police on December 18 by the Hindu radicals of Sangh Parivar. The SVM report states that the Archbishop and the Diocesan Secretary came to St.Claret School on December 18 to look into the late night attack on the Church, the school and the Priests. As soon as the Bishop arrived near the school gate, the agitated members of the Sangh Parivar pulled the Bishop out of the car and attacked the Priests travelling with him. ANS has learned the Global Council of Indian Christians (GCIC) and the Christian Ministers of the Churches in India (CMCI) condemned the attacks on Bishop Bernard Moras and the Priests.

Pray: that God will protect His people and give them strength to persevere under such persecution. (Ps.140:1-2)

More: <http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/s06120100.htm>

■ Christians in Nepal expect long wait for peace

Christians in Nepal are sceptical that peace will come quickly to the whole country despite a peace agreement between Maoist rebels and the Seven Party Alliance (SPA). The peace agreement has been threatened by accusations of breaches on both sides and Nepal's Christians think there is a long way to go before Nepal's wave of peace will benefit the majority of the population, a report by BMS World Mission said. The peace agreement was signed by the Maoists and the SPA on the 21 November, ending the country's 11-year conflict. One positive outcome of the peace agreement for Christians in Nepal is that it brought an end to the Hindu-ruled government and the introduction of the new secular, parliamentary SPA. BMS World Mission said the change is good news for Christians and other religious groups in Nepal who are now, under the temporary constitution, officially recognised by the government. 'Christians here are praying that progress, or at least stability, is maintained,' says Butterworth.

Pray: that the peace agreement will hold and that progress will be made to true democracy. (Ps.29;11)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/christians.in.nepal.expect.long.wait.for.peace/8787.htm>

■ Heavy fighting erupts in Somalia

Heavy fighting has broken out close to the base of the weak Somali interim government in Baidoa. A deadline from Islamists, for Ethiopia to withdraw troops from Somalia or face 'major attacks', expired on Tuesday. Residents say pro-government forces and the Islamic militia exchanged mortar shells at Daynunay, 20km from Baidoa. A European Union envoy was in Baidoa to meet officials. There are fears an all-out war would plunge the entire Horn of Africa region into crisis. On a mission to get peace talks to resume, the EU's development commissioner, Louis Michel, has now travelled on to the capital, Mogadishu, and met Union of Islamic Court (UIC) leaders. 'I can confirm to you that heavy fighting has already started around several front line areas,' Islamic commander Sheikh Mohamed Ibrahim Bilal told AFP news agency. Government commander Ibrahim Batari accused the Islamists of mounting the attack. 'There is shelling everywhere, our forces are facing Islamists, hell is going on,' he said.

Pray: Seek the Lord on your knees for peace to breakout in this troubled area.

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/6195863.stm>

■ Iran arrests eight leaders of indigenous House Church Movement

Leaders of the Islamic republic's indigenous 'Jesus Only' movement were raided and arrested by Iranian secret police last Sunday (December 10), according to Compass Direct News. Police began arriving unannounced in the early morning hours to search their homes in Tehran, Karaj, Rasht and Bandar-i Anzali. Compass Direct News, says that according to one

source, those arrested have been told they face 10 accusations, including evangelization activities and actions against the national security of Iran. The news service reports that Police authorities reportedly confiscated computers, CDs, tapes, Bibles and printed evangelistic literature found in the homes they searched, quoting a report on the Farsi Christian News Network website. Over the past five days several members of the house church movement have been called in for a day or more of interrogations and then released. But eight remain under arrest, including one woman. Police authorities have apparently warned members of the religious community of 600 or more not to send any news about the arrests outside of Iran, the news service said.

Pray: for Christians in Iran that God will strengthen their faith to speak your word with boldness. (Ps.138:3)

More: <http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/s06120111.htm>

■ Turkmenistan's 'iron ruler' dies

Turkmenistan's authoritarian president Saparmurat Niyazov, who ruled the Central Asian country for 21 years, has died aged 66, state TV has reported. Mr Niyazov, who named cities and airports after himself in a personality cult, left no designated successor. Turkmenistan, which has large gas reserves, now faces an uncertain future with rival groups and outside powers scrambling for influence, analysts say. Mr Niyazov died at 0110 local time (2010 GMT Wednesday) of a heart attack. Last month, the president publicly acknowledged he had heart disease. His funeral is set to take place on 24 December in the capital, Ashgabat. BBC correspondents quote witnesses as saying the capital has been quiet since the news broke, with many people staying at home, shocked and unsure of what may happen next. Deputy Prime Minister Kurbanguly Berdimukhamedov has been named head of the commission handling the funeral, state television said.

Pray: for the people of Turkmenistan as they seek a successor that God will raise up a new leader who will bring stability and justice.

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/6198983.stm>

PRAISE REPORTS

■ Don't lose sight of Christ, say Britons

The vast majority of Britons oppose moves to turn Christmas into a secular festival, according to research published yesterday. The survey found that 80 per cent of the population believes celebrating the birth of Christ remains an important part of the occasion. The poll follows growing alarm among church leaders that secularists are attempting to purge Christ from Christmas and rebrand it as a 'winter' celebration. Over recent weeks, however, both Muslim and Hindu leaders have made it clear they are not offended by the celebration of Christmas. Recent incidences include a school that tried to replace turkey with halal chicken on its Christmas menu, and politicians who replaced 'Happy Christmas' on their cards with 'Season's Greetings'. The survey, carried out for religious think-tank Theos between Dec 8 and 10, found that for 62 per cent Christmas made them think of spiritual matters, while for 77 per cent it made them think about what is 'important'.

Praise: God that the majority still acknowledge that Christmas is about Christ. Pray that many more will receive His full revelation this Christmas time.

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2006/12/18/nxmas518.xml>

■ Unique Bible podcast receives 2.5 million downloads

A unique bible podcast has received over 2.5 million downloads since its launch in January 2006. Since June, Daily Audio Bible has consistently been in the iTunes' Top 15 Religious Podcasts, spending the majority of it's time in the Top 10 and going as high as #2. Additionally, the Daily Audio Bible (DAB) can be found in the Top 50 Podcasts of all genres world-wide on Podcast Alley and is usually in the Top 25. DAB listeners are invited to join in the 'adventure of a lifetime' and are encouraged to become a part of the online community to share views, ask questions, pray for each other and grow together throughout the year. For nearly 20 years, Brian Hardin (who hosts DAB) has been producing major label and high profile independent records. With a discography of over 100 records, his career has been prolific and diverse. For more information about the Daily Audio Bible, please visit the website.

Praise: God that His word is living and active and sharper than a double-edged sword. (Heb.4:12)

More: <http://www.dailyaudiobible.com/wordpress/>

PRAYER ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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