



PRAYER ALERT...



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Donations

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■ British Isles & Ireland

- [**FRIDAY FOCUS: 17th August - National Health Service - Galatians 6:2-9; Mark 11:24**](#)
- [Older patients' rights 'abused'](#)
- [Christians urged to join 'word and action' campaign in 2008](#)
- [Police chief calls drinks industry to account for yob culture](#)
- [Ex-prisoner Aitken calls for action on failing penal system](#)
- [Increase in top grades at A-level](#)
- [Sentamu urges MPs to slow down over the summer](#)

■ Europe

- [EU eyes its next big challenges](#)

■ Worldwide

- [WCC head meets families of Korean Christian hostages](#)
- [Deadly Peru earthquake](#)
- [Israel, U.S. formally sign new defence agreement](#)
- [Texas gives rights to discuss faith in schools](#)
- [Floods - Bangladesh 500 death toll rising](#)
- [Floods – Asia 28 million homeless](#)
- [American Church leaders arrested in Beijing](#)

■ Praise Reports

- [Former Islamic leader finds Jesus in a dream](#)
- [Millions of Muslims for Christ](#)
- [North Vietnam Church to print 100,000 Bibles to distribute](#)

BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ **FRIDAY FOCUS: 17th August - National Health Service - Galatians 6:2-9; Mark 11:24**

We often only hear negative comments about the NHS but most of their work and expertise is truly amazing. The NHS is one of the largest employers in Europe. **GIVE THANKS:** for the thousands of dedicated people working within the NHS. **PRAY:** that they will have the grace to continue to show love and compassion on those they are serving and strength to carry on through staff shortages and low morale; **BLESSING** on my GP's surgery and local hospital. **CONSIDER:** encouraging staff every time I visit my doctor or hospital.

More: <http://www.worldprayer.org.uk/pagesys.cfm?plD=123>

■ **Older patients' rights 'abused'**

Many hospitals and care homes are failing to protect the human rights of older people in their care, a report by MPs and peers warns. The Select Committee on Human Rights highlighted the fact that 21% of facilities failed to meet even minimum standards on dignity and privacy. It uncovered evidence of neglect and unfair treatment and argued that an 'entire culture change' was needed, because age discrimination persists in hospitals and care homes in more subtle and indirect ways than in the past. 'Betrayal of trust' Committee chairman Andrew Dismore said: 'The Human Rights Act, which came into force seven years ago, has failed to become a catalyst for positive change.' Health Minister Ivan Lewis commented: 'The government is embarking on a major programme of change including the integration of the inspection, regulation and complaints systems for health and social care, the review of adult protection guidance and the development of a national strategy to improve dementia services.' (See also <http://newsbbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/6945648.stm>)

Pray: for Christians to model mercy towards all vulnerable elderly persons and Churches to work with government for speedy remedies in this shameful situation. (Ps.71:18)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/6944699.stm>

■ **Christians urged to join 'word and action' campaign in 2008**

The Evangelical Alliance (EA) - which claims to speak on behalf of a million UK Christians - reports that over 630 communities across the UK have already responded to a rallying call to Christians to 'do more, do it together, do it in word and action' throughout 2008. Hope08 is the name of an interdenominational campaign aiming to empower churches, groups, and individuals across the British Isles 'to serve and transform their localities.' It's the vision of Soul Survivor Chief Mike Pilavachi, Andy Hawthorne of The Message, and Youth For Christ leader Roy Crowne which the Archbishop of Canterbury describes as 'remarkable.' Hope08 proposes to support this on-going work by facilitating intensified, united prayer. Evangelical Alliance's General Director, the Rev Joel Edwards, has voiced enthusiastic support for this grassroots

movement. 'Imagine a year in which hundreds of people come to faith,' he said, 'because the Church becomes known for two million arms outstretched - caring for the poor, giving young people a purpose, and working with the police to reduce crime.'

Pray: for a spirit of prayer to sweep through the nations' Churches and a resulting commitment to action for Hope08

More: <http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/5577>

■ Police chief calls drinks industry to account for job culture

In an unprecedented statement released just hours after three teenagers appeared in court charged with the murder of father of three - Garry Newlove - the Chief Constable of Cheshire said that communities are under siege from a hardcore of antisocial, under-age drinkers while parents, drinks companies and the advertising industry ignore their duty to tackle the problem. Peter Fahy said 'To see the issue of antisocial behaviour by teenagers as a problem only for the police to resolve is naive.' The UK has one of the highest incidences of youth drunkenness in the European Union, according to the Government's review of the anti-alcohol strategy. It also found that nearly half of under-age drinkers say that they get their alcohol from their parents. Alcohol also now costs 54 per cent less in real terms than it did in 1980.

Pray: for British youth to be set free from a growing slavery to alcohol and violent behaviour. (Ro.7:5)

More: <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/article2260654.ece>

■ Ex-prisoner Aitken calls for action on failing penal system

A former Cabinet Minister who has been in jail himself challenged the Keswick Convention, a major UK evangelical rally, to get involved in the campaign to transform the country's failing prison system. Jonathan Aitken, a leading Tory, spoke about the 'terrifying failure rate' in rehabilitating ex-offenders. 'In this country, seven out of every 10 released prisoners are back behind bars within two years. Responsibility for solving this problem is not just for the prison service. Does your church do anything in the way of prison ministry or after-care for prisoners? And if not, why not?' Aitken said that a third of prisoners were completely illiterate and another third could only read and write with difficulty so volunteers from church and civic groups could help with literacy programmes and skills training, post-release mentoring, and drugs rehabilitation. Church groups are already involved in campaigns for penal reform and for movement towards 'restorative justice' as a more humane, Christian and effective approach to crime than punitive incarceration.

Pray: for Christians to remember Christ's words and take seriously this call to remedial work, especially with young offenders. (Mat.25:35-36)

More: <http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/5568>

■ Increase in top grades at A-level

More than one in four UK A-level entries were awarded the top A-grade this year, results show. Figures from the exam boards showed 25.3% of entries were graded A, up from 24.1% last year. The national pass rate rose for the 25th year in a row, with 96.9% of exams being marked A to E. Girls continue to out-perform boys in every major subject except for modern foreign languages and further maths. Statistics published by the Joint Council for Qualifications relate to more than 800,000 A-level entries and more than 1.1 million AS-levels. About 310,000 candidates in England, Wales and Northern Ireland received their individual results, some 50,000 of them online. The top two subjects in terms of popularity were English and maths. Jim Sinclair, director of the joint council paid tribute to students' hard work. The steady improvement in results inevitably revives the debate about standards and whether A-levels test the brightest pupils. However, higher pass rates mean more youngsters are achieving advanced qualifications to help them fulfil their ambitions.

Pray: for students to move into their next career phase knowing their true significance rests in Christ alone. (Col.1:15-18)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/6949084.stm>

■ Sentamu urges MPs to slow down over the summer

Dr John Sentamu, the Archbishop of York, Dr John Sentamu, has announced he's sent every UK MP some summer reflection material including a guide entitled: 'Do Nothing To Change Your Life.' Written by the Bishop of Reading, the Rt Rev Stephen Cottrell, and released earlier in 2007, it urges readers to create pauses in daily life to benefit their own, and society's, health and well being. 'Do Nothing to Change Your Life' is a passionate plea for the nation to ditch endless 'to do' lists; constant streams of emails; and an increasingly '24/7' culture. It was published after an international study showed that the pace of life in UK cities increased by 10 per cent in the last decade. Dr Sentamu's also sent copies of 'The 100 Minute Bible' which gives a synopsis of every book in the Bible and takes less than two hours to read. 'I wanted to encourage our nation's elected representatives to slow down and, in that place of quiet and stillness to enter into the presence of God, and meet Jesus Christ.'

Pray: for spiritual rest for christian leaders and for others in public life to discover, or re-discover, the importance of faith. (Ps.23:1-2& 6)

More: <http://www.ucb.co.uk/index.cfm?itemid=226#1492>

EUROPE

■ EU eyes its next big challenges

As the dust settles from the EU's June summit rows, the mood in Brussels is subdued but largely positive, as many start to eye up the next big challenges. Europe's leaders agreed at the summit the key elements of a new reform treaty, to replace

the unloved constitution, but a detailed final deal has yet to be agreed, and could still cause problems. Meanwhile, policy-makers are also turning to other challenges, including energy and climate change negotiations, the union's troubled enlargement process with Turkey and the Balkans, and the perennial issue of the EU's budget and its expensive Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). What sort of European players the two new leaders of France and the UK, Nicolas Sarkozy and Gordon Brown, will turn out to be is also the subject of much conversation in the coffee bars of the European institutions.

Pray: for the policymakers that they will be given the wisdom to make the right decisions. (Pr.3:13)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/6284348.stm>

WORLDWIDE

■ WCC head meets families of Korean Christian hostages

The Rev Dr Samuel Kobia, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches has visited the families of the Korean hostages in Afghanistan while on a trip to South Korea this week. During the 40-minute meeting near Seoul, he told the families that 'the prayers of millions of Christians around the world' were being offered for the speedy and safe release of the hostages. The visit was pastoral and Kobia did not engage the group in details on the hostage situation. 'Their pain is our pain, their tears are our tears,' he said in a phone interview from South Korea after the meeting where he expressed the hope that 'our world will become the kind of world where human beings can express support of other human beings, without our acts of charity being viewed with suspicion'. Meanwhile the Korean church has had to shut down its website due to aggressive criticism of their work in a dangerous location. See <http://news.independent.co.uk/world/asia/article2833902.ece>

Pray: for a speedy release.(Ps.112)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/wcc.head.meets.families.of.korean.christian.hostages/12347.htm>

■ Deadly Peru earthquake

A massive earthquake hit Peru on Wednesday evening killing more than 500 people with many homes and a church collapsing. Peru's health minister initially said few died in the 7.9-magnitude quake, but the toll later rose to more than 500 the nation's civil defence agency said. Over 1,500 were injured. Emergency workers said the coastal province of Ica south of Lima was the hardest hit region. One fire department official in the area said at least four people were trapped when the main tower of the Senor de Luren church in the city of Ica was toppled. Office workers ran onto the streets in fear as tall buildings in Lima shook in two waves that lasted around 20 seconds each and cut power lines. It was followed by nine aftershocks ranging in magnitude from 6 to the upper 4s.

Pray: for the families of the quake's victims.(Ps.41:17)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/deadly.peru.earthquake.kills.more.than.330/12392.htm>

■ Israel, U.S. formally sign new defence agreement

On Thursday Israel and the United States signed the Memorandum of Understanding on the new American defence package for Israel. Under the new aid agreement, the U.S. will transfer \$30 billion to Israel over 10 years, compared with \$24 billion over the past decade. Israel will receive the first pay out in October 2008, amounting to \$2.550 billion. That sum will grow each year by \$150 million, until it reaches \$3.1 billion in 2011. In addition, the agreement permits Israel to convert into shekels 26.3 percent of the aid money, thereby enabling it to procure defence equipment from Israeli companies. The rest of the aid must be used to purchase equipment from American military industries.

Pray: for a secure and strong Israel as the Middle East becomes more dangerous.(Ps.83:2,4)

More: <http://haaretz.com/hasen/spages/894255.html>

■ Texas gives rights to discuss faith in schools

Student Natasha Gualy was all smiles Tuesday knowing that when she shares her Christian faith at school, she will not be reprimanded or humiliated. Gov. Rick Perry conducted a ceremonial signing of House Bill 3678 aimed at reaffirming students' rights to express religious viewpoints. The bill does not create a new law but provides a model policy that school districts can adopt. Many school districts have been sued by parents after children were prohibited from talking about their faith, saying 'Merry Christmas' or handing out religious Valentine's Day cards. Using case law and U.S. Supreme Court decisions, the bill lays out what is admissible in Texas schools, and ruled that religious discussion in schools is legal. Natasha was one of many students who testified before state lawmakers this spring in support of the bill. Her mother said the law was necessary to keep parents like her from having to file a lawsuit against school districts.

Pray: that more states in America will develop guidelines allowing the expression of religious viewpoints.

More: <http://chron.com/disp/story.mpl/headline/metro/5054636.html>

■ Floods - Bangladesh 500 death toll rising

The death toll is rising to nearly 500 in the low-lying country's worst floods in recent years. Although the flood waters are receding, millions remain homeless and vulnerable to disease. More than 53,000 people have contracted diarrhoea in Bangladesh, mostly caused by eating stale food and drinking impure water. A field hospital has been opened in the capital, Dhaka. The country's interim government said it was doing everything possible to ensure that flood victims get food, clean water and access to healthcare.

Pray: for aid to reach the areas where it is urgently needed. (Ps.121:1,2)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/bangladesh.flood.death.toll.nears.500.thousands.ill/12361.htm>

■ Floods – Asia 28 million homeless

Twenty eight million flood victims are at risk and UN warns of a health catastrophe threatening south east Asia unless aid urgently reaches the estimated 28 million made homeless. Poor sanitation hygiene and stagnant waters left by floods are 'a lethal breeding ground for disease', said UNICEF. Tearfund has been working with partners in India, Bangladesh and Nepal to prevent further loss of life. Emergency food relief packages are being distributed to thousands of families. They have also supported villagers in disaster response, setting up warning networks for communities to evacuate to higher ground. Christian Aid is distributing emergency rations to people in Bihar where 70,000 homes were washed away. Catholic agency CAFOD has also been responding to emergency appeals from its partners in the affected countries.

Pray: for aid to reach the areas where it is urgently needed. (Ps.30:8-10)

More: http://www.prayerinaction.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=763&Itemid=222

■ American Church leaders arrested in Beijing

Despite a visiting high level US religious freedom monitoring delegation in Beijing five American Church leaders were arrested in Luoyang City and Yichuan City, Henan Province by the Public Safety Bureau of Luoyang City on August 15. Four American church leaders including one couple and 27 Chinese House Church pastors were arrested at a location nearby a mall at Luoyang City at 9 am while celebrating Christian fellowship together. Another American and Chinese Pastor Wan Dagan, were arrested at 1 pm by two plain-clothed secret agents while they were out walking in Yichuan City, Henan Province. None of the names of the five Americans who are believed to belong to the same group of visitors are available. Their detention location is unknown. One man, Mr. Zhuo Tao, who used to work in the Chinese army, a nephew of Peter Xu, who is the founder of a Christian house church group known as Born Again Movement, was among those arrested.

Pray: that in the run up to the Olympics such atrocities would be exposed and eradicated. (Ro.9:25)

More: http://www.chinaaid.org/english/press_releases/8_18_05.htm

PRAISE REPORTS

■ Former Islamic leader finds Jesus in a dream

A former Islamic leader in Ethiopia has been describing how he found faith in Christ after Jesus appeared to him in a dream. After Robel's conversion, militants destroyed his house and stabbed his son with a spear. His life is now at risk - but even though he's been offered riches to return to Islam he prefers to follow Jesus. Robel tells his story in the latest edition of World Update on the Persecuted Church, the monthly report by Release International, which is being broadcast on Revelation TV in the UK and the Omega Channel in Africa and Europe. The ten-minute programme is also available for download from www.releaseinternational.org

Praise: God for the way his Holy Spirit speaks into the hearts of non-believers. (Ac.2:17)

More: http://www.theway.co.uk/news/shownews.php?news_id=3983

■ Millions of Muslims for Christ

'What's happening nowadays in the Muslim world has never happened before,' said an Egyptian Coptic priest who is among many from Christian agencies globally who are reporting on Muslims converting to Christianity with supernatural dimensions. Click on the more link below for a 3 minute video of what they are saying.

Praise: and halleluiah (Haggai 2:7)

More: <http://www.cbn.com/CBNnews/212177.aspx>

■ North Vietnam Church to print 100,000 Bibles to distribute

David Hunt, with World Serve USA, reports from northern Vietnam about an amazing door that has opened for God's Word. Recently, a Christian fellowship there was given 'formal permission' to print 100,000 Bibles and distribute them within the country. According to Hunt, it will be the 'largest single printing of God's Word there since the Communist regime gained power in 1975. By the end of this month, the first 10,000 copies will be printed,' Hunt said. 'It is the most historic single printing that we've ever had in Vietnam because this is a Communist nation, and a church that is not recognized is being given the ability to both print and distribute Bibles.'

Praise: God for this wonderful opportunity for His Word to reach the unreached. (Heb.4:12)

More: http://www.breakingchristiannews.com/articles/display_art.html?ID=4313

PRAYER ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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