



PRAYER ALERT...



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BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ FRIDAY FOCUS: 31st August - Hope in Education Colossians 3:23-24; Galatians 5:22-25

Many statements have been made about education in recent years. Give thanks: for the dedication of teachers, assistants, professors, lecturers and administrative staff in our schools, academies, colleges and universities.

Pray: for wisdom for those entrusted with making national educational policy; for encouragement for Christian staff, particularly in struggling schools, as a new academic year begins, for Christian prayer groups in every school; for guidance for students making career/future education decisions.

Consider: pray BLESSing for a teacher I know.

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

■ Pupils exam choices show a continuing interest in Religious Education

Religious Education (RE) continues to hold its position at the top of the chart of increases in GCSE entries. It's also the number one short course option, with 56 per cent of those students taking short courses opting to take RE. 7.8 per cent more students took the GCSE short course in RE this year than last. The full GCSE course, studied over two years, was taken by an extra 11,442 students in 2007. The 1944 Education Act requires that in state schools the subject be mainly Christian in character. Nick McKemey, Head of School Improvement for the Church of England, commented: 'This demonstrates that young people are increasingly fascinated by religious belief and its effect on daily living.' Ofsted reported that RE contributes significantly to both academic achievement and personal development. Mr McKemey argues that RE's popularity adds weight to calls for it to be fully integrated into the National Curriculum up to the age of 14.

Pray: thanking God for this encouraging trend among students and pray their studies will lead many to understand and surrender to the unique claims of Christ (Jn.14:6)

More: <http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/5607>

■ 'Education key' to tackling gangs

11-year-old Rhys Jones' murder in Liverpool by a youth possibly only 13 years old has highlighted the issue of guns and gangs. A quick search of YouTube reveals gangs of youths in the Crompton area with faces covered, showing off their weapons. Liverpool City Council leader Warren Bradley believes a tough approach is the answer. However, the Reverend Dr David Leslie, of St Cuthbert's Church Crompton, argues modern culture is partly to blame, with education failing to help youngsters learn how to communicate. Community leaders agree that education is an important tool in steering young men away from gang violence. Youth worker Practical Wisdom, part of the Gunz Down group, which tours schools in cities

addressing the issues facing boys aged between 11 and 14 said: 'You hold a gun - you feel powerful. We need to find positive alternatives for empowering young people, reaching them in school and getting them to think about their actions.'

Pray: for rapid action in schools, churches and communities to help young teenagers caught up in murderous gang culture.(Pr.22:6)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/merseyside/6961663.stm>

■ Child trafficking advice issued

Professionals working with children in Wales will be issued with guidance on how to pick up on child trafficking. Figures suggest more than 300 children have been trafficked into the UK since 2004. The Welsh Assembly Government says such children are increasingly being brought into Wales by ferry from Ireland, and trafficked for financial gain for purposes that range across - illegal adoption; begging; prostitution; forced labour; or to be drug mules or even for the removal of their organs. The guidance is intended for professionals in children's social services, education, immigration, health, and law enforcement. Deputy Health Minister Gwenda Thomas said: 'Child trafficking is clearly increasing because of poverty; lack of education; (sexual) grooming and family dysfunctionality. There's also evidence that it's happening within the United Kingdom as well as with children being trafficked into the country.' NSPCC Wales said they were encouraged by the Assembly Government's initiative to address the special needs of child victims of trafficking.

Pray: for the guidelines of the Welsh Assembly government to be rigorously implemented and iniquitous trafficking to be eradicated.(Lk.17:1-2)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/6965945.stm>

■ Prison officers ordered back to work after strike chaos

Prison officers returned to work after their 24 hour walkout over pay brought chaos to every state-run jail throughout England and Wales. The action, called in protest at the Government's decision to pay a 2.5 per cent salary increase in two stages, took ministers by surprise, although the dispute has been brewing for months. Union leaders said the decision effectively cut the rise to 1.9 per cent. Jack Straw, Secretary of State for Justice, condemned the strike. The union could face a heavy fine over the first walkout in its 68-year history, which broke the binding no-strike agreement made in 2005 between the Prison officers Association (POA) and the Government. Brian Caton, POA General-Secretary said: 'Government has repeatedly reneged on its promises. Prison officers work with people society can no longer handle, and in increasingly dangerous environments. Assaults on staff average eight per day. Yet the Government continues to demand savings.' Jails remain close to capacity with 80,802 inmates, despite an early release scheme announced this summer.

Pray: for appropriate resources in our beleaguered prison system - especially for prisoner officers exercising duty of care in what has been described as 'the forgotten service.' (Mic.6:8)

More: <http://news.independent.co.uk/uk/legal/article2906315.ece>

■ Worst injured soldier ever to survive is awarded less than RAF typist with a sore thumb

23 year old paratrooper Ben Parkinson suffered a total of 37 terrible injuries when he was blown up by a landmine in Afghanistan in 2006. In a coma for months, Ben lost both legs, and, according to his doctors he's the most badly-injured soldier ever to survive. His mother wants to buy a bungalow in which she can care for him, but Ben's compensation of £152,150 is inadequate. It's little more than half the maximum award for maimed military personnel and less than a third of the £484,000 awarded an RAF typist who claimed she'd suffered repetitive strain injury to her thumb. Ben's mother, Diane Dornie, is therefore planning the first ever High Court challenge against the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme. Because Ben's case doesn't qualify for legal aid, she's appealing for help to raise £50,000 legal costs. A successful judicial review would ensure several other soldiers maimed in Iraq and Afghanistan will receive financial security. Ben's case exemplifies mounting concern about the Government's treatment of the Armed Forces.

Pray: for justice for Ben Parkinson and others who've endured colossal suffering in the service of their country.(Deut.32:4)

More: http://www.dailymail.co.uk/pages/live/articles/news/news.html?in_article_id=478178&in_page_id=1770&ct=5

EUROPE

■ EU officials conducting secret meetings with Hamas

Palestinian Authority officials said that EU security officials have been conducting secret talks with Hamas leaders in the Gaza Strip over the past few weeks. The EU representatives were reportedly from three intelligence agencies. Unidentified sources said that the Hamas leaders called on their visitors from the EU to work towards an end to the boycott against the Hamas government in Gaza and to pressure Israel to reopen the Rafah border crossing between Gaza and Egypt. 'We hope these talks will be the first step toward ending the boycott of Hamas, which came to power in a free and democratic election,' the source said. 'There is growing awareness among the Europeans of the fact that Hamas can't be ignored as a major player in the Palestinian arena.' Leaders of several EU countries have advocated for the renewal of relations with Hamas, despite the EU's official stance designating Hamas as a terrorist organization. This is the first time Hamas has confirmed that its representatives have held secret talks with EU security officials.

Pray: for God to rescue the area and protect the people from violence or any evil plans.(Ps.140:2)

More: <http://web.israelinsider.com/Articles/Diplomacy/11958.htm>

■ Turkish leader approves cabinet

New Turkish President Abdullah Gul has approved a cabinet uniting secular and Islamic politicians submitted by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of the Islamist-rooted AK Party. Mr Gul, a former Islamist, was elected president amid warnings from the powerful military of a threat to Turkey's deeply secular constitution. The presidency - like the military - has traditionally been a bastion of secularism in Turkey. Mr Gul is the first politician with an Islamist background to become president since Mustafa Kemal Atatürk founded modern Turkey as a secular, Western-oriented state in 1923, but he's pledged to respect Turkey's secular institutions. However, Mr Gul's wife wears the Muslim headscarf which is currently banned from Turkish public institutions, although the president says wearing it is a matter of personal choice. Turkey's military and secular establishment suspect he might harbour a secret Islamist agenda. The army, which sees itself as the guardian of Turkey's secularism, has ousted four governments in the past 60 years.

Pray: for stability and peace in Turkey and protection for its minority Christian communities. (Eph.2:14)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/6968377.stm>

■ Greek fires affecting political landscape

The fires that tore through Greece may now also be changing Greece's political landscape: The government of Greek Prime Minister Kostas Karamanlis, facing national elections next month, came under increasing criticism on Tuesday, not only over its handling of the fires but also over whether it stoked Greeks' fears about who might be to blame. Vyron Polydoras the public order minister said Greece faced an 'asymmetrical threat' a term that usually refers to small terrorist groups attacking a far larger target. In a political culture full of conspiracy, some speculated that it might be the work of Greece's age-old nemesis Turkey or a home-grown, or possibly even foreign, terrorist group. Hundreds of people who lost homes, property, farms and livestock crowded into banks in southern Greece to receive up to 13,000 euros (US\$18,000) in aid promised immediately by the government. The fire department said at least two fires were burning out of control near the northern border with Albania.

Pray: for a change in weather conditions so that the fire department can extinguish the conflagration, (Mat.8:26) and for God's wisdom for the government in the aftermath of this disaster. (Prov.11:3)

More: <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/world/archives/2007/08/30/2003376469>

WORLDWIDE

■ Deadly cholera outbreak in Iraq

An outbreak of 47 confirmed cases of cholera were confirmed in two northern Iraqi provinces. It has killed eight people and infected 80 others. Local health authorities are also treating 4,250 suspected cases of the disease in Sulaimaniya and Tamim. 2,350 people were also suffering from diarrhoea in Sulaimaniya and a further 2,000 in Tamim. Specialist teams and emergency aid have been sent to the affected regions. Serious problems with water quality and sewage treatment have worsened due to crumbling local infrastructure. 70% of Iraq's population did not have adequate water supplies and only 20% had access to effective sanitation. Other areas could become affected, including the capital Baghdad and the central province of Salahuddin, where there have been some cases of the disease.

Pray: for immediate and appropriate response to this potential humanitarian crisis. (Ps.68:28)

More: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/6970130.stm

■ Pastors detained, fined for attending prayer meeting

On 21 August an independent Zimbabwean station reported the arrest of 15 church leaders from their homes for allegedly attending a prayer meeting in Chitungwiza, Zimbabwe without police approval. A statement from the Mutambara Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), the main labour-based opposition to the Mugabe regime, said, 'The pastors were initially picked up on Saturday 18 August at the venue of the service for allegedly attending an unsanctioned meeting and were released after paying fines of Z\$40,000 (£80) each. Amid the political unrest and uncertainty in Zimbabwe the church has continued to function openly and unhindered and until recently the church has distanced itself from the political arena. However as pressure on churches to take a stand increases so have the challenges. Reports of clerics and church members being harassed are now widespread.

Pray: for the church in Zimbabwe as they take a peaceful stand for human rights and Godly social equality. (Ps.30:1-3)

More: http://www.opendoorsuk.org.uk/news/news_archives/001963.php

■ Egyptian government extends jail time for Christian workers

Egypt renewed the detention of two Christian rights workers held without charge since their arrest on August 8. Police detained Adel Fawzy Faltas and Peter Ezzat after their organization was involved in several controversial human rights cases, including that of Mohammed Hegazy, who made an unprecedented bid to have his conversion to Christianity legally recognized. Though leaving Islam is not illegal, doing so can prompt harassment and torture at the hands of family members and police. Most converts lead double lives unable to openly attend church marry a Christian or withdraw their children from Islamic education classes. Muslim scholars demand his death in London based Arabic language daily Al-Auds al-Arabi. A state prosecutor at New Cairo's State Security Investigation (SSI) renewed Faltas and Ezzat's detention refusing to give a reason for his decision to hold the two Christians until September 4.

Pray: for God to strengthen these two men in their brave stand against injustice. (Ps.69:13,14)

More: <http://www.compassdirect.org/en/display.php?page=news&lang=en&length=long&idelement=4999&backpage=summaries>

■ **Activists drop like flies in Russia**

Ilya Borodenko travelled to Siberia to protest against plans to process nuclear waste in the town of Angarsk situated close to the largest freshwater lake in the world. The protestors camp came under attack by people wielding bats knives and iron bars. Protestors were beaten in their sleeping bags, others escaped and ran to police who were very slow to arrive. Borodenko, who was standing guard and received the first blows never regained consciousness. Meanwhile, 50 women calling themselves the Mothers of Dagestan occupied the central square in Makhachkala, declaring a hunger strike and vowing not to leave until the government tells them what has happened to their children. This year alone, 76 people have disappeared in Dagestan. Also, 141 youth groups with membership of half a million have been classified as extremist organizations. For more about new terrorism laws in Russia See:

<http://spadams.typepad.com/bigorange/2007/08/kazakhstan-just.html>

Pray: for God to raise up His advisers in President Putin's government. (Esther 1:13)

More: <http://spadams.typepad.com/bigorange/2007/08/russia-activist.html>

■ **Life advocates fight stealth Illinois abortion clinic**

Planned Parenthood tried to sneak its largest clinic in the country into Aurora but residents are having none of it. Last month neighbours of the 'Gemini Health Clinic' were shocked to learn the \$7.5 million facility will actually be used for abortions. On Saturday more than 1,200 pro-lifers gathered near the building to express their outrage. Some marched with signs, while others prayed or handed out leaflets in the surrounding neighbourhoods. A 24-hour, 40-day prayer vigil began August 9th and it will continue until the scheduled opening on September 18th. Pro-Life Action League say court is next. On Tuesday life advocates plan to pack the Aurora City Council meeting, calling for action. 'We're not sure what the city can do,' a spokesperson said but added they would seek hearings on the way Planned Parenthood got its building permits as the purpose of the building was kept secret until recently.

Pray: for God in His mercy to hear and answer their prayers. (Ps.139:13-17)

More: <http://www.citizenlink.org/CLtopstories/A000005351.cfm>

PRAISE REPORTS

■ **A tribal Bible project nears goal in Brazil**

It has taken 12 years, but there's good news for translation of the Bible into a tribal language in Brazil. They will actually be taking the Gospel of Luke to the Tembe people this month. This means the Gospel in printed form will reach the Tembe people for the first time ever. They're excited with that news because by the end of the year, they're on track to actually send to the printer the entire New Testament. To read a Wycliffe translation go to

http://www.wycliffe.org.uk/news_07_Psalm_23_Tampulma.html

Praise: God for the technology that is enabling agencies to release God's word globally at a speed never before seen or imagined. (Mat.28:19,20)

More: <http://www.mnnonline.org/article/10289>

■ **Mandela statue is 'beacon of hope'**

A gospel choir in Parliament Square stirred a crowd of thousands who gave the former South African president a rapturous welcome - testament to Mandela's enduring global appeal. Mayor Ken Livingstone said: 'you will be remembered for having taught the world one amazing truth - that you can achieve justice without vengeance.' Prime Minister Gordon Brown said 'Mandela is the most inspiring and greatest leader of our generation. This statue is a beacon of hope.' The bronze nine-foot statue of Mandela, wearing his trademark floral shirt and gesturing as though addressing a crowd, stands closer to the ground than any of the other residents of Parliament Square, symbolising Mandela's status as a man of the people. Mandela recalled a visit to London 45 years ago with fellow activist Oliver Tambo: 'We jokingly hoped that one day a statue of a black person would be erected here alongside that of General Smuts.' He continued: 'Though this statue is of one man, it should in actual fact symbolise all those who have resisted oppression, especially in my country. All of them deserve to be remembered.'

Praise: God for the message of forgiveness, endurance and hope that Nelson Mandela epitomises to the world. (Rom.5:2b-5)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/6969091.stm>

PRAYER ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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