

PRAYER ALERT...

An initiative of the Prayer Association of the British Isles & Ireland
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Issue 3707

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Friday 14 September 2007

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BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ **FRIDAY FOCUS - The Muslim Community - Acts 17:24-27; Col.4:5-6**

Christians need to model Christ by peace-making with individual Muslims, without political naiveté. **Give thanks:** for fair-minded Muslim voices, such as the Muslim Educational Centre Oxford (MECO) and all Christian ministries working with Muslims. **Pray:** for God to raise up the appropriate Christians to both reach out to Muslims and participate in the political process; about my own attitudes to the Muslims I meet or see in the media; for opportunities to reach out in friendship. **Consider:** finding out more about Muslim beliefs.

Pray: for these issues with special vigilance as Muslims devote themselves to prayer during Ramadan.

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

■ **Archbishop uses 9/11 to defend religion**

In his lecture to a Cambridge Christian Muslim Forum conference on the eve of the anniversary of the attacks on the twin towers the Archbishop of Canterbury defended religion against claims that it promotes division. Dr Rowan Williams said that although Islam and Christianity had histories scarred with violence, they carried the 'seeds of non-violence and non-possessive witness.' He added that both faiths could offer society an ideal peaceful co-existence response to oppression. Dr Williams called for the place in society of: 'authentic religion that is made visible in its admission of dependence on God - which means both that it does not fight for position and power and that it will not see itself existing just by the licence of human society.' The Archbishop of Birmingham, the Most Rev Vincent Nichols commented that such violence has no part in any true religion and every true believer in God viewed the events of 9/11 with abhorrence.

Pray: for UK Christians to take the lead in demonstrating genuine Godly attitudes in inter-faith relations. (Jas.3:17-18)

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2007/09/11/narch111.xml>

■ **Olympic mega-mosque promoters 'run away from open debate'**

Tablighi Jamaat, the controversial Muslim sect behind the proposed Olympics mega-mosque at West Ham, East London, were accused of running away from democratic public debate following their refusal to appear at a Muslim-organised public meeting at nearby Stratford. Leading local opponent Councillor Alan Craig, leader of the Christian Peoples Alliance group on Newham Council commented: 'We're grateful to Muslim educational group Islamic Circles for organising the key open meeting and for Q-News Muslim journalist Abdul-Rehman Malik for chairing it.' Tablighi Jamaat's design for a national landmark mosque - the biggest in Europe - would provide the hub of an Islamic Quarter during the 2012 Games. It would have a huge impact on the local community. The September 7th meeting was very successful with a robust two hour debate. No vote was taken. Abdul Khaliq Mian, a former project manager of the mega-mosque speaking in a personal capacity led the supporters and Cllr Craig led the opponents [Source Councillor Alan Craig](#). (See Prayer Alert 3607)

Pray: that Christians will persevere in seeking for God's sovereign purposes to be upheld. (1Thes.5:17)

■ Critics concerned about government elevation of faith schools

Secular and teaching groups have protested the announcement by Ed Balls, government children's minister, that barriers would be lifted and finances available to allow the hundreds of private faith-based schools to convert to the public sector. Mr Balls insisted there would be new rules forcing all schools to promote better community cohesion and understanding between ethnic and religious groups. Others argue this could be provided by broader civic education. UK opinion surveys repeatedly show a significant majority are sceptical about faith schools, but the government claims its policy is about diversity. The Independent Newspaper, declared 'there's no single hard evidence that faith schools 'promote community cohesion' only anecdotal examples of faith schools which attempt to redress their own cultural homogeneity with exchange visits, comparative religion studies and outreach programmes.' Around 7,000 of the 21,000 state schools in England are faith-related - the great majority being Church of England or Catholic.' (See Prayer Alert: 3207)

Pray: that faith based schools will enrich the public sector and that youngsters will come to know Jesus because of this initiative. (Is.11:6-9)

More: <http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/5700>

■ Evangelical Alliance urges Christians following review of Sexual Orientation Regulations

The Evangelical Alliance has encouraged Christians to respond in a Christ-like manner to the decision of the judicial review of Northern Ireland's Sexual Orientation Regulations that banning discrimination against gays, lesbians and bisexuals is lawful with one exception. The Alliance welcomes the removal of the harassment clause and the judge's confirmation that regulations do not apply to the core school curriculum. However, Stephen Cave, the Alliance's National Director Northern Ireland, said many Christians are apprehensive that the regulations will clash with their religious liberties. He's disappointed that the government hasn't yet solved the problem faced by church adoption agencies, who in principle feel they cannot adhere to the regulations and may have to cease years of valuable work. Mr Cave stated: 'Any desire to avoid discrimination should include anti-religious discrimination. Nevertheless, this decision brings an important challenge for Christians, to consider their responsibilities to other people created in God's image, and to balance freedom of conscience with diversity and equality.' (See Prayer Alert: 1207. 1407. 1807.2107. 2307. 2907)

Pray: for sensitivity and integrity in the complexities the SORS present for all Christians. (Mic. 6:8))

More: <http://www.eauk.org/media/sor.cfm>

■ Charity warns of financial ruin for millions in credit squeeze

Keith Tondeur, from Christian charity Credit Action, has warned that millions face financial ruin in the aftermath of recent mortgage rate rises. The warning comes as Chancellor Alistair Darling urged Britain's banks to take a more cautious approach to lending, expressing concern over loan consolidation TV ads. Credit Action is also alarmed at the huge increase in numbers of people trying to avoid repaying their debts through perceived 'easier options' such as bankruptcy and Individual Voluntary Arrangements. Mr Tondeur advised: 'At the first sign of trouble people should seek free help from a charity like Consumer Credit Counselling Service or Citizens Advice rather than sinking into unmanageable debt.' The Chancellor said banks bear some of the responsibility for people getting into debt through sometimes giving loans without actually checking if they would repay. He also suggested the City and financial institutions should be more sceptical about new, complex financial instruments which appear to offer spectacular rates of return.

Pray: that families, individuals, businesses and banks would wake up and urgently heed this advice. (Pr.13:18)

More: <http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/5696>

■ British University puts spirituality into sport

York St John University's Centre for the Study of Sport and Spirituality - one of the first in the world - has launched itself internationally by staging an inaugural conference for sports coaches, chaplains and administrators, as well as professional athletes and academics. More than 70 delegates from 11 countries recently met to consider the spiritual and moral issues involved in their work. The university centre has an ecumenical and multi-faith remit, hoping to tackle what ethicist Albert Spencer calls the win-at-all cost mentality that fosters disrespect for competitors and society through egotism and an obsessive focus on money. David Hope, former Archbishop of York, is a founding patron of the Centre whose staff co-supervise education and theology undergraduates and postgraduates at the university. Established in 2004, the Centre is dedicated to improving sport's moral climate by talking with coaches, parents and athletes, and providing lobbying material for those administering events, such as the 2012 London Olympics.

Pray: that many in the world of sport might learn about Christ and Christian values. (2Tim. 2:5 & 1Cor. 9:23-26)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/british.university.puts.spirituality.into.sport/13133.htm>

EUROPE

■ Muslims who renounce their faith band together in European countries

Leaders of 'ex-Muslim' groups from several European countries signed a declaration of 'Principles of Tolerance' on Tuesday, hoping to counter Islamic radicalism and support Muslims too afraid to openly renounce their religion. Groups of secular Muslims have sprung up in the past year in Germany, Britain and the Scandinavian countries; there are plans to launch a group in the United States as well. Tuesday marked the formal launch of the Dutch group although membership is limited to several hundred people, they hope to add a new voice to the debate about - and within - Europe's Muslim communities. Under some interpretations of Islam, changing religion is forbidden, and apostasy is a heresy punishable by death. 'Our intent is to break the taboo' within Islam against renouncing religion, said Maryam Namazie, who in June

founded The British Council of Ex-Muslims. It now has around 70 members. The German group, the first and largest of the European organizations, was founded in January and now has around 400 members.

Pray: for those who choose to seek true enlightenment that the Holy Spirit will guard and guide them. (Jn.12:46)

More: <http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2007/09/11/europe/EU-GEN-Netherlands-Ex-Muslims.php>

■ French President calls for educational 'renaissance' that includes religion

French President Nicholas Sarkozy has written a letter to all the teachers of France calling on them to take part in a 'renaissance' and to reflect on the huge responsibility placed in their hands - the responsibility to 'guide and to protect the spirit and the sensibilities that are not yet completely formed, that have not yet attained maturity, which are searching, which are still fragile and vulnerable.' As reported in LifeSiteNews, Sarkozy explained that such a national rebirth would only be possible through a reform of the French education system. According to the report, Sarkozy also bucked the secularist establishment that has long mandated a total rejection of a religious presence in any French schools or curricula by saying, 'I am convinced that we should not leave the issue of religion at the school door.' LifeSiteNews had reported in 2006 that Sarkozy, then acting as the French interior minister, had called for France to repudiate its anti-religious prejudice and look again at a positive relationship between Church and state.

Pray: for this encouraging stance on religion by the new President that it will lead to many openings for the Gospel. (Dt.4:8-9)

More: http://www.breakingchristiannews.com/articles/display_art.html?ID=4412

WORLDWIDE

■ Christians urged to pray for Muslims during Ramadan

Christians have been urged to pray for Muslims during Ramadan, Islam's holiest month, which in some countries began on Wednesday. Muslims around the world will fast, pray, give to charity, and put more effort into following the teachings of Islam. From dawn to dusk, Muslims are required to abstain from food, drink and sex. According to Brother Andrew, founder of the Christian ministry Open Doors and author of the upcoming book 'Secret Believers: What Happens When Muslims Believe in Christ,' there is a challenge facing Christians today, however, that stems from the 'enemy image' of Muslims that they have created. Brother Andrew has called believers to join a new 'jihad' – one of forgiveness, radical love and unyielding prayer. While Ramadan began Wednesday for some Muslims in countries such as Libya, most of the Middle East will observe the beginning of Ramadan on Thursday including Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. Afghanistan will also declare the start of its holy month on Thursday.

Pray: for Muslims everywhere that the Lord will meet them as they pray and give them enlightenment. (Mt.5:43-45)

More: http://www.christianpost.com/article/20070912/29275_Christians_Urged_to_Pray_for_Muslims_During_Ramadan.htm

■ New Somali alliance threatens war

Somali Islamists and opposition leaders meeting in Eritrea have joined forces in a new alliance to overthrow Somalia's transitional government. More than 300 delegates, including Islamist leader Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys, have approved a constitution and central committee. A spokesman said the new movement will be called The Alliance for the Liberation of Somalia (ALS). It aims to remove the Ethiopian-backed government by negotiation - or war. 'We have two-track options - first is the liberation of Somalia through military struggle, the second is through diplomatic efforts, said Zakariya Mahamud Abdi, spokesman for the Somali Congress. ALS will have a 191-member central committee that will function as a parliament with a 10-person executive committee to be elected shortly. The spokesman had a stark warning for Ethiopian troops, heavily deployed in Somalia since they rescued embattled transitional government forces last year. 'We warn Ethiopia to withdraw immediately. It is now or never and in a few weeks they will not have a route to withdraw,' Abdi said.

Pray: that the aims of this alliance will be thwarted and the ways of peace and negotiation will prevail. (Ps.46:9-10)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/6990928.stm>

■ Mugabe critic quits as archbishop

A prominent critic of Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe has resigned as the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Bulawayo over an alleged adultery scandal. Zimbabwe's state media in July published photographs of what it said was Pius Ncube in bed with a married woman who worked for his parish. His lawyers called the allegations an orchestrated attempt to discredit him. Bishop Ncube, 60, denies the allegation and this year has called for foreign intervention to remove Mr Mugabe. A brief statement from the Vatican said Pope Benedict XVI had accepted Bishop Ncube's resignation under the article of church law that says a bishop should retire if he is ill or if 'some other grave reason' had made him unsuitable for office. The secretary general of one faction of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change told the BBC News website it was a 'sad' day for Zimbabwe. 'He fought the regime and the regime fought back,' said Tendai Biti.

Pray: that the truth will out and any deceit will be exposed. (Pr.14:2;5;14)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/6989101.stm>

■ South Asia flood devastation worsens

The number of people made homeless by flooding in north-east India and Bangladesh has risen to some 1.5 million, officials say. India's Assam state is suffering its third wave of floods this year, caused by heavy rains over the past four days. The army has evacuated 800,000 people as the Brahmaputra River and its tributaries flow at danger levels. Downstream in Bangladesh, officials say half a million people are affected and many have been moved to safer places. In Assam state, thousands of village homes, bridges, electricity poles and telecommunication towers have been washed away.

by the flooded rivers and 13 people have died. The national highway that connects Assam - and all other northeast Indian states - to the rest of the country is under several feet of water in more than 10 places. Thousands of trucks carrying essential supplies and buses carrying passengers are stuck on the highway. 'These are the worst floods this year. The losses are huge,' Assam government spokesman Dinesh Deka said. (See also Prayer Alert 3607 & 3307)

Pray: that the floods will reduce across India, Nepal and Bangladesh and that relief supplies will reach the needy.

More: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/6988590.stm

■ Massive quakes hit Indonesia; Christian agencies ready to respond

Two powerful earthquakes, the first of magnitude 8.4, have struck the west coast of Indonesia Wednesday evening and Thursday morning, triggering numerous tsunami warnings which sent hundreds of people in affected cities fleeing into the streets. Casualties appear to be lower than first feared, but officials warned that bad communications may be hiding the scale of the impact. Hundreds of buildings have been badly damaged across several cities, and phone lines and electricity have gone down in many regions. Tsunami warnings were repeatedly issued and lifted in the hours following the earthquake, as many people ran inland fearing a repeat of the 2004 tsunami. Thursday's magnitude 7.8 quake hit the same area in southern Sumatra as Wednesday's quake. Wednesday's quake led to tsunami warnings being issued across the Indian Ocean, but only a small wave surge of about 1m (3ft) hit Sumatra, causing little damage.

Pray: for all those affected by these quakes that the response to their needs will be rapid. (Ps.102:17)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/massive.quakes.hit.indonesia.christian.agencies.ready.to.respond/13137.htm>

■ Four Church members may face treason charges

Members of a Presbyterian church in Kazakhstan are still being questioned by the country's secret police about their church's religious activities. Grace Presbyterian Church Pastor Vyacheslav Vorobyov told Forum 18 News service that members of his flock are being asked by the secret police (KNB) about 'all possible aspects' of the church's operations. The church is located in the north eastern town of Karaganda. Vorobyov told Forum 18 that 12 church members began a hunger strike on September 7 to protest at the KNB initiated raids and investigations. Four members of Grace Church are being investigated on charges of high treason, as well as the senior pastor of the church in the eastern town of Oskemen, Aleksei Kim. Church members deny that the four have committed treason, but fear that the KNB is preparing criminal cases against them. Article 165 of Kazakhstan's Criminal Code punishes high treason with between ten and 15 years in prison.

Pray: for the Church in Kazakhstan and those being held that they will be have strength to overcome. (Rev.2:26)

More: <http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/2007/s07090102.htm>

PRAISE REPORTS

■ New children's TV series

Called 'Friends and Heroes' it is an animated action-adventure story which introduces stories from the Old and New Testaments to ages 6-10. You can discover more about Friends and Heroes on the Children's website www.friendsandheroes.tv. The first series of 13 episodes is to be broadcast on the BBC2 on Tuesday mornings from September to December! The output is largely targeted at schools so that teachers will be able to use these programmes as part of the National Curriculum for all the countries in the British Isles. They have worked hard to ensure that our programmes are not branded as 'religious', so that they are accessible to the widest possible audience - whatever their faith. If this broadcast is successful, the BBC might be prepared show Series Two and Series Three when they are completed in 2008 and 2009. The first broadcast is next Tuesday.

Praise: God for this exciting initiative and pray for a wonderful openness to His Word. (Ps.119:130)

More: <http://uk.friendsandheroes.com/>

■ Alpha advert debuts Wednesday night

An advert for the world renowned Alpha Course hit our TV screens for the first time on Wednesday evening shown on Channel 4 at 10.10pm, during the TV drama Brothers and Sisters. Millions of people across the nation are expected to also see it on digital television, as it's being broadcasted 58 times on the E4 channels. Over 2,000 cinema screens have been showing it since last Friday, and Alpha Communications Director Mark Elsdon-Dew told Premier who it's aimed at. He said: 'The Alpha course is particularly attractive to people aged 18-35, and it's that age group that is most interested in exploring the meaning of life. So therefore, that's the age group that we're particularly aiming to reach.' Alpha is launching a massive advertising campaign throughout the UK in television, bars, buses and cinemas. The course is now running in 7,000 churches around the country, with 10 million people estimated to have completed it. Churches of all the major denominations run the 15-session introduction to Christianity for non-churchgoers.

Praise: God for Alpha and all those who discover the meaning of life. (Jn.6:40)

More: <http://www.premier.org.uk/engine.cfm?i=13&pwn=1&pnid=3539>

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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