



PRAYER ALERT...

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Contact Us

Donations

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■ British Isles & Ireland

- [**FRIDAY FOCUS** : 21st September - Workers for the harvest - Luke 10:2; Matthew 28:18-20](#)
- [Christian converts risk Muslim attack](#)
- [Racial divide 'deeper than ever'](#)
- [Report to pressure Gordon Brown on casinos](#)
- [Youth courts appeal for cannabis rethink](#)
- [Brown threatening Mugabe boycott](#)
- [Archbishop of York calls for full sanctions against Mugabe regime](#)

■ Europe

- [Prepare for war with Iran, says French minister](#)

■ Worldwide

- [**SPECIAL FEATURE** - Iraq City Profile - Kirkuk](#)
- [Lebanon mourns Beirut blast victims](#)
- [Former Archbishop set to run for Zimbabwean presidency](#)
- [Who will defend Biblical truth in USA?](#)
- [Human rights violations continue in Eritrea](#)
- [Key meeting in New Orleans for divided Anglicans](#)

■ Praise Reports

- [Christian in Pakistan unexpectedly acquitted of blasphemy charges](#)
- [Missionary says he's welcomed by Iran, Hamas and Taliban](#)

BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ **FRIDAY FOCUS** : 21st September - Workers for the harvest - Luke 10:2; Matthew 28:18-20

'God has poured enough resources into His church to reach this nation many times over' (Andy Hawthorne).

Confess: when I have been reluctant to share about my faith in Jesus.

Pray: for more workers in the harvest field; for courage to be given to every Christian to be a witness; that many people would meet Jesus in the Alpha, Christianity Explored and Back to Church Sunday initiatives ; for guidance on how to 'be Jesus' where I live, study or work.

Consider: who can I share my story with this week?

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

■ **Christian converts risk Muslim attack**

One of Britain's most senior bishops has warned that a sustained campaign by Muslim extremists to intimidate and attack converts to Christianity risks ending in a murder. Michael Nazir-Ali, the Bishop of Rochester, says that the persecution of Christian converts from Islam is so widespread that it may be only a matter of time before there is an 'honour killing' of a convert by family or relatives. He spoke out as the Barnabas Fund, a charity that looks after persecuted Christians around the world, estimated that there are more than a thousand attacks each year against former Muslims across Britain. Nazir-Ali, speaking on the Channel 4 Dispatches programme, said: 'We have seen honour killings have happened and there is no reason why this kind of thing cannot happen.' Asked if somebody would be killed soon, he said: 'I think it is entirely possible.' He blamed Muslim leaders for not teaching their followers about the importance of freedom of religion in Britain.

Pray: for all those that have given their lives to the Lord that He will protect them and their witness would bring others into His kingdom. (Mt.5:10)

More: http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/the_tls/tls_selections/religion/article2461314.ece

■ **Racial divide 'deeper than ever'**

Divisions between Britain's ethnic groups are deeper than ever - and are fuelling religious and political extremism, a report has claimed. The Commission for Racial Equality report also said that 15 government departments are not meeting their own obligations on tackling discrimination. It suggests action may be taken against the departments, which include health, education, home and foreign offices. The government promised 'positive and robust action' to address the concerns. In a final assessment of race relations in Britain before it becomes part of the new Commission for Equality and Human Rights next month, the CRE warned Britain remained a place of 'inequality, exclusion and isolation'. Its three-year assessment of

standards in Whitehall concluded many government departments - as well as the Olympic Delivery Authority - were failing. The CRE has the power to take legal action against racially discriminatory organisations under the Race Relations Act 1976 and it can oblige organisations to change the way they operate.

Pray: against racial extremism and discrimination of all kinds. (Ecc.7:18)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/7001371.stm>

■ Report to pressure Gordon Brown on casinos

Gordon Brown is coming under pressure to rule out any chance of a super-casino being built. A Government-commissioned British Gambling Prevalence Study shows that almost a million gamblers have a severe addiction. This compares with the last study which found that about 300,000 gamblers had a 'problem'. The survey also found that 33 million adults, or 72 per cent of the population, gambled in some form. Since that first study in 1999, there has been no material increase in the number of casinos, and a small decline in the number of bingo halls. Yet the opportunities to gamble have increased tenfold, particularly with the introduction of online betting, and a sharp rise in the number of touch-screen roulette games, in which punters can bet up to £300 a minute. Mr Brown let it be known that he disapproves of gambling when he levied a surprise £100 million tax on casinos in his last Budget. Soon afterwards, plans for 17 casinos were thrown out by Parliament.

Pray: for all those who have been caught by the vice of gambling especially with the increase due to online betting. (Ecc.5:10)

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml;jsessionid=CLTXIBZ20QAG1QFIQMGSFFWAVCBQWIV0?xml=/news/2007/09/17/>

■ Youth courts appeal for cannabis rethink

Judges and magistrates are so worried about the dangers of burgeoning cannabis use among young criminals that nearly every youth court in the country has urged the Government to reclassify it. Fifty out of the 51 youth courts in England and Wales have written to Jacqui Smith, the Home Secretary, asking her to tighten the laws regarding the drug. Cannabis had been downgraded to a class C drug in 2004 by the then home secretary, David Blunkett, meaning dealing the drug or possessing it carried less severe penalties. However, since then youth offending teams (YOTs) claim they have seen cannabis use soar among young offenders. Cannabis is the most popular drug in Britain, with 11 per cent of those aged 16 to 59 claiming to have used it in the past year. Up to one in five young people now reports smoking it at least once a week.

Pray: for the government to reconsider the downgrading of cannabis in the light of these statistics. (Ps.119:9)

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml;jsessionid=CLTXIBZ20QAG1QFIQMGSFFWAVCBQWIV0?xml=/news/2007/09/17/>

■ Brown threatening Mugabe boycott

Prime Minister Gordon Brown has said he will boycott a summit of European and African leaders if Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe attends the event. Mr Brown says Mr Mugabe's presence at the conference in Portugal will 'divert attention' from important issues such as poverty, climate change and health. He told the Independent newspaper that Mr Mugabe has an EU travel ban for a reason - 'the abuse of his own people'. The European Union-African Union summit will take place in Lisbon in December. Mr Brown described the summit as a 'serious opportunity' to forge stronger partnerships between Africa and the EU. 'I believe President Mugabe's presence would undermine the summit and divert attention from the important issues that need to be resolved,' he said. 'In those circumstances, my attendance would not be appropriate.' He added that Britain had a responsibility to the people of Zimbabwe, who find themselves in an 'appalling and tragic' situation.

Pray: for Gordon Brown as he takes this stand that his voice will be heard and listened to. (Pr.12:5)

More: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/7003955.stm

■ Archbishop of York calls for full sanctions against Mugabe regime

The Ugandan-born Anglican Archbishop of York, John Sentamu, has called on Gordon Brown to revise the country's policy on Zimbabwe and lead a campaign of foreign intervention, according to a story posted on the website <http://allafrica.com>. Sentamu suggested that it was time because it seems the African solution that former premier Tony Blair had advocated, was not forthcoming. The Archbishop said: 'The time has come for Mr. Brown, who has already shown himself to be an African interventionist through his work at the UN in favour of the people of Darfur, finally to slay the ghosts of Britain's colonialist past by thoroughly revising foreign policy towards Zimbabwe and to lead the way in co-ordinating an international response. The time for 'African solutions' alone is now over.' The website story said 'Sentamu is from Uganda, and his voice adds weight to a crisis that Mugabe tries to blame on European powers. The Catholic Bishops in Zimbabwe have been quite vocal about the deteriorating human rights situation in Zimbabwe, while the Anglican Church has been criticized for being silent.'

Pray: that the message that Archbishop John Sentamu and others are giving will lead to a real solution. (Pr.12:6)

More: <http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/2007/s07090138.htm>

EUROPE

■ Prepare for war with Iran, says French minister

French foreign minister Bernard Kouchner has said 'We have to prepare for the worst and the worst is war,' he said. In an interview broadcast on national television and radio on Sunday (16 September), according to French daily Le Figaro, Mr Kouchner stressed that the world must negotiate to the end with Iran, but pointed out that if Teheran has nuclear weapons it will pose 'a real danger for the entire world.' He said he would like to see more sanctions by the European Union on Iran, adding that he had already urged some French companies to avoid undertaking new work or contracts in Iran. The five

permanent members in the UN Security Council - China, France, Russia, the UK and the United States – are, together with Germany, set to discuss a new draft UN resolution on sanctions against Iran when they meet in Washington today. Last month, French president Nicolas Sarkozy said that a diplomatic push by the world powers was the only alternative.

Pray: for the response from governments to Iran to be measured with restraint but firmness. (Mt.24:6)

More: <http://euobserver.com/9/24772>

WORLDWIDE

■ **SPECIAL FEATURE - Iraq City Profile - Kirkuk**

Kirkuk is an ethnically mixed city of mostly Kurds, Turkomen and Arabs. This mix has changed significantly with massive expulsions and then return, such that the city may be twice the size it was only a decade ago. The claims to the city due to history and to oil make Kirkuk a prized city, and hence an extremely violent one. If Kirkuk can find peace, then maybe Iraq can as well. www.iraqprayer.org

Pray: for an end to the violence in Kirkuk and that it becomes a 'city of peace' for all its peoples.

More: www.iraqprayer.org

■ **Lebanon mourns Beirut blast victims**

Lebanon's government has called for a period of mourning after a car bomb in Beirut killed at least five people including Antoine Ghanem an anti-Syrian Christian MP. His assassination came as Lebanon is beginning preparations to elect a successor to Emile Lahoud, Lebanon's president and a pro-Syrian figure. Ghanem was a Christian MP from the Phalange party, and is the eighth anti-Syria figure and fourth governing coalition lawmaker to be assassinated in less than three years. The latest attack has been blamed on neighbouring Syria, but Damascus has denied involvement. Relations between parties within Lebanon and Syria have remained poor since Damascus pulled its troops and security forces out of Lebanon in April 2005. The evacuation of Syrian forces came two months after the assassination of Rafiq al-Hariri, a former prime minister and critic of Syrian influence in Lebanon. 'This is an attack aimed at sabotaging all efforts to reach a solution to the current political crisis,' Butros Harb, an MP and presidential candidate, said.

Pray: for God to spread His protection over Lebanon so that those who love His name may rejoice. (Ps.5:11)

More: <http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/5538DDC0-1534-4A07-A9A7-BBE5D1BBB98E.htm>

■ **Former Archbishop set to run for Zimbabwean presidency**

The former Zimbabwean Archbishop of Bulawayo, Pius Ncube, who recently resigned amid allegations of adultery, (see Prayer-Alert 3707) is preparing to run for presidency to overthrow President Robert Mugabe. Ncube is set to head up a sensational new political movement in Zimbabwe, and is likely to be a popular candidate in the elections next spring. Sources close to Ncube say his plans are already far advanced. Meetings have been held with the Zimbabwe African People's Union Federal party and the Patriotic Union of Matabeleland. Other factions of the opposition are expected to back his move. More than 60 community-based civic organisations throughout the Matabeleland and Midlands provinces are also supporting what has been dubbed the 'Pius Ncube Solidarity Coalition'. The region's First Post publication says: 'Pius is determined to fight Mugabe on the political front he is taking the bull by the horns.'

Pray: for God to arise in Zimbabwe. (Ps.68:1)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/former.archbishop.set.to.run.for.zimbabwean.presidency/13262.htm>

■ **Who will defend Biblical truth in USA?**

The loss of another leading Christian in the conservative movement poses concerns for the older generation of evangelicals, at least for one who sees the US tipping at any moment either to the right or to the left. 'We're in a very critical time in our nation where the pendulum could swing in one of two directions,' said Dr James Dobson, founder of Focus on the Family and one of the most influential conservative evangelicals, 'And so many of the things that we believe and have fought to defend are in question today.' Dobson made his comments last Thursday at the public funeral service honouring the life of Dr D James Kennedy, founder of Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church and Coral Ridge Ministries, who died last week age 76. Kennedy's death follows that of many prominent, older evangelicals that have stood out as leaders defending biblical values and resonating the Word of God as absolute and inerrant.

Pray: for the next generation of Christian leaders to be willing to speak out for Christian values. (Ps.25:21)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/us.evangelical.giants.passing.who.will.defend.biblical.truth/13249.htm>

■ **Human rights violations continue in Eritrea**

A year after Amnesty International called on President Issayas Afewerki to explain the fate of prisoners of conscience, hundreds of former government leaders, journalists and civil servants are still held in life threatening conditions. Detainees have died in prison due to ill treatment and denial of medical treatment. With no political parties except the Ruling Peoples Front for Democracy and Justice, no independent civil society associations or human rights NGO'S, and no independent media there is no freedom of expression and all kinds of dissent are vigorously suppressed. Military conscription starts at age 18 and continues almost indefinitely. Those who seek to evade it or are caught fleeing the country are tortured and bear indefinite detention. Over 2,000 people of evangelical and minority churches are currently held in prisons throughout the country. Amnesty International appeals for immediate release of all prisoners of conscience, for public declaration against torture, and an opening of access for human rights bodies.

Pray: for the voice of Amnesty International to be heard and acted upon. (Ps.12:5)

More: <http://www.amnestyusa.org/document.php?lang=e&id=ENGAFR640092007>

■ **Key meeting in New Orleans for divided Anglicans**

Some Anglicans strongly feel that they need to repent and change course while others believe they need to maintain and stay the course that has divided the worldwide Anglican Communion to a near schism. Responses from around a third of the Episcopal Church's dioceses have been sent to the House of Bishops to help them as they meet this week amid forecasts of rupture in the third largest Christian denomination in the world. The Most Rev Dr Rowan Williams is meeting with the Episcopal House of Bishops for the first time since the 2003 consecration of an openly gay bishop. The meeting is taking place in New Orleans from Thursday 20th to Tuesday 25th September. Top of the agenda is a September 30 deadline to respond to requests by leaders in the Anglican Communion to make an unequivocal pledge not to consecrate another openly gay bishop or authorise blessings for same-sex unions.

Pray: that Dr Williams can hold together the increasingly divided Communion. (Jer.16:6)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/key.meeting.expected.to.set.future.course.for.divided.anglicans/13256.htm>

PRAISE REPORTS

■ **Christian in Pakistan unexpectedly acquitted of blasphemy charges**

A Pakistani judge unexpectedly cleared a Christian teenager of charges that he had ripped up pages containing verses from the Quran when the witnesses changed their evidence and claimed that he was innocent. The Christian's lawyer said. The 18 year old was acquitted at a lower court hearing in Faisalabad after prosecution witnesses under oath changed their original testimonies. Often pressured by extremist religious groups, lower courts in Pakistan rarely acquit 'blasphemy' suspects. 'There were about 100 fanatics inside and outside the courtroom who were astonished when their own witnesses claimed that the accused were innocent,' defence lawyer said. 'They were very, very angry.' He could have faced a life-imprisonment if found guilty of 'blasphemy.' The Judge and the witnesses practically fled the court after the verdict was announced. At least 23 people involved in 'blasphemy' cases have been murdered in Pakistan since the notorious laws were instituted in 1986. The defence lawyer said, 'It's not less than a miracle that a lower court acquitted somebody of blasphemy.'

Praise: God for sovereignly answering the prayers of faithful intercessors. (Ps.37:28)

More: http://www.openheaven.com/forums/forum_posts.asp?TID=18139&PN=1&TPN=1

■ **Missionary says he's welcomed by Iran, Hamas and Taliban**

The founder of the missionary organization Open Doors with Brother Andrew says he has preached the love of Jesus to Hamas, to the Taliban and to Muslim clerics in Iran. Brother Andrew says he recently was invited to appear on national television in Iran, and has visited Pakistan and Afghanistan, where a Taliban leader told him he's welcome back at any time. The elderly missionary says he personally has baptized scores of Muslim radicals, and he challenges other Christians to follow in his footsteps. In his words, 'The doors are open, their hearts are open, but are we open?' Brother Andrew says South Korea has no right to stop missionaries from going to Afghanistan where two captives were killed as their church group was held hostage by the Taliban. He says, 'If God calls you, if the church sends you, you go, but a little more wisdom would be helpful.'

Praise: you Lord for this season of opportunities to preach your love to the lost. (Rev.3:8)

More: <http://www.cbn.com/CBNnews/234385.aspx>

PRAYER ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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