



PRAYER ALERT...

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www.prayer-alert.net editor@prayer-alert.net

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BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ **FRIDAY FOCUS: 28th September - Hope for those in debt - Deuteronomy 15:1-11; Matthew 6:12**

Living 'beyond our means' has become commonplace, resulting in a large increase in debt-related problems, such as stress, depression, eviction, bankruptcy, family pressures, feeling 'trapped'.

Confess: where we've not followed Biblical principles and got into debt.

Pray: for wisdom for leaders, churches and families in managing money; for help and advice for those who are trapped in debt; for God to give me, and those I know, self discipline /self-control to resist consumer pressures to spend.

Consider: How could I help someone in debt?

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

■ **Church mission to get people back to pews**

The Church of England has launched a renewed effort to increase attendance in England and Wales, with clergymen using podcasts and planes to promote the campaign. Around 2,000 churches have signed up for Back to Church Sunday, making it one of the largest ever coordinated mission activities. Congregation members in England and Wales were asked to invite a friend who had stopped going to come back and churches are expecting an extra 20,000 people this Sunday. In anticipation some clergymen and key officers have attended customer service courses, run by department store John Lewis, to learn how to be more welcoming and create an experience worth returning for. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, has backed the initiative, describing it as a chance for people to 'see what they've been missing'. Dr Williams said: 'Millions of people remember and love church, but perhaps they've just drifted away for a while. Back to Church Sunday is a chance to help them reconnect with God.'

Pray: that the Holy Spirit will prompt the prodigals to accept the invitation and return. (Lk.15:20)

More: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/religion/Story/0,,2176638,00.html>

■ **Oxford's Christian colleges 'are not suitable for school-leavers'**

The teaching of theology at the University of Oxford has suffered a serious blow with a damning report that recommends ending the admission of school-leavers to some of its colleges. The review concludes that Oxford's seven Christian private halls risk failing to provide a rounded learning experience in keeping with Oxford's liberal ethos. The report will be seen as an attack on the evangelical wing of the Church of England, which draws intellectual credibility from the association of one of its colleges, Wycliffe Hall, with Oxford. Wycliffe and St Stephen's House, an Anglo-Catholic theological college at Oxford, have been told that they can no longer admit school-leavers to study undergraduate degrees. This will cut the number of students by as much as a quarter. This could have a 'critical' effect on the department, the review admits. Halls could risk

losing their Oxford University licences altogether if they teach a fundamentalist Biblical doctrine on sexual ethics and in other areas of theology.

Pray: for all colleges and schools where they are being attacked for their faith stand and Christian values. (Is.7:9b)

More: http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/education/article2485410.ece

■ Time to end silence on abortion say Christian lawyers

The Lawyers' Christian Fellowship (LCF) is calling on Christians to rally outside the Houses of Parliament on 27 October in a show of opposition to abortion on the 40th anniversary of the Abortion Act. The LCF said that this autumn the church was 'facing one of the most critical moments in the fight against abortion' since the Abortion Act was passed. 'This is a chance for the church to show we are serious about making a difference.' The LCF also appealed to Christians to speak out against the draft Human Tissue and Embryos Bill expected to be introduced in Parliament this autumn. They say that the Bill would 'further attack the dignity and value of the human embryo. One thing is clear; the coming months present a unique opportunity for Christians to speak out for those who cannot speak for themselves,' said the LCF. 'The tide is beginning to turn in the abortion debate in this country, as more and more people are dissatisfied with high abortion rates.'

Pray: that as Christians our prayers will make the difference. (Job33:4)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/time.to.end.silence.on.abortion.christian.lawyers/13403.htm>

■ Government minister urges more faith in action

Political and social activism, rooted in faith, has a vital role to play in shaping modern Britain, says Stephen Timms, the Labour Party's vice-chair with special responsibility for faith communities. 'There is positive impact when people of faith are involved in the lives of their community, because these people bring valuable qualities in their service which are rare elsewhere and they are qualities modern Britain urgently needs,' he said. His comments came during his keynote speech at the national conference of Traidcraft in St Chad's College, Durham. He told the 250 delegates, guests and staff that the history of Traidcraft provided an outstanding example of how effective and influential faith-based organisations can be. 'You have a vision of a world freed from the scandal of poverty, where trade is just and people and communities can flourish. Like all visions, it looks to a world not as it is, but how it could and should be.'

Pray: that our faith and example will result in a positive impact within the communities that we live. (Jn.13:15-17)

More: <http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/5791>

■ Christian agencies take on Climate Change Bill

Christian relief and development agencies Tearfund, Cafod and Christian Aid are among 60 organisations launching an online networking map for local organisations and groups in the UK to work together on climate change issues. The I Count Communities Map, http://www.icount.org.uk/news_stories/292.asp which goes live with 350 groups from 209 organisations, is the latest initiative from I Count, the largest UK campaign on climate change. The map coincides with the UK Government's draft Climate Change Bill which will be debated in Parliament this autumn. If passed, the Bill would make the UK the first country in the world to commit itself to legally binding reductions in carbon dioxide emissions. During the 'crucial' next six months, local groups are being encouraged to connect and work together in an unprecedented way and collectively lobby their MPs on why and how the Government needs to ensure the UK delivers a bold Bill which commits the UK to at least an 80 per cent reduction in carbon dioxide emissions by 2050. (See also Europe article)

Pray: that this united effort to reduce carbon emissions will have the desired effect and be an example to the world.

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/christian.agencies.take.on.climate.change.bill/13373.htm>

■ Ageism 'endemic' in the workplace

Ageism is still "endemic" in the UK workplace despite new laws coming into force last year, a study suggests. Since the new laws came into force, more than 2,000 claims have been lodged with the Employment Tribunal Service, the Employers Forum on Age report said. A poll by the group also found that 16 million people witnessed ageist practices at work last year. The findings came despite figures showing 86% of Britons are aware it is illegal to discriminate on age grounds. The new rules affect recruitment, training, promotion, redundancy, retirement, pay and pension provision. A total of 1,000 people over the age of 16 were quizzed by GfK NOP for the EFA report. Of those polled, 92% believed they should have the right to work for as long as they like if they are able to do their job but, one in five said their employer would force them to retire at 65.

Pray: for the authorities that they will use wisdom in dealing with agism at both ends of the spectrum.

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/7016519.stm>

EUROPE

■ Europe: How many people follow Jesus?

Mission statistics for Europe look quite bleak these days. According to the latest findings, a report by researcher Ruth Robinson of Greater Europe Mission (GEM), only 1.1% of Europeans follows Jesus, which is one out of ninety! But another study published one and half year ago by the European Missions Research Group (emRG), a research partnership in which GEM also participates, states that 4.2% of Europeans follow Jesus and are mission-minded. Operation World, the extensively informed prayer guide compiled by Patrick Johnstone and Jason Mandryk, speaks of about 3.5%. Which raises the obvious question: who is right? 'They are all right in some way,' says emRG research consultant Andreas Wolf from

Germany. 'The variations can be explained by differences in definitions and research methodology. Likely the truth is somewhere in the middle.'

Pray: that God will hear our prayers and we will see a mighty outpouring of His Spirit in revival across Europe. (Ps.85:6)

More: <http://joelnews.squarespace.com/thisweek/europe-how-many-people-follow-jesus.html>

■ EU struggles to walk its talk on climate change

The European Union pressed world leaders this week to follow its lead in fighting climate change, but a battle looms at home over how to share the burden of cutting greenhouse gas emissions. But the details of how the EU will achieve its goals are still being worked out, and the main sticking point will be how to divide up the overall target among the 27 member nations. Circumstances have changed since the first 15 members of the EU agreed collectively to cut emissions by eight percent by 2012 under the Kyoto Protocol. Now there are 27 member states, and many of the newcomers are former communist countries whose economic catch-up ambitions trump their environmental aspirations. 'It's not going to be easy,' European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso told Reuters. 'I expect, of course, difficult debates but I hope that as always, in the end we will come to a good compromise.' (See also British Isles article above)

Pray: that the challenges of these changes will be accepted by governments across the EU.

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/eu.struggles.to.walk.its.talk.on.climate.change/13428.htm>

WORLDWIDE

■ Al-Qaida plotting attacks on West from tribal sanctuary, officials fear

Al-Qaida is taking advantage of Pakistan's political turmoil to ramp up operations in the tribal belt and possibly plot fresh terrorist attacks abroad, western and Pakistani officials warn. As President Pervez Musharraf battles to retain power, violence is surging in Waziristan, where Osama bin Laden's senior henchmen have taken shelter behind a corps of Taliban fighters. 'They have humiliated the army and made things very difficult for a president who is already in trouble. It's a very clever strategy,' said a western military official. The UK and US fear that a 'catastrophic' terrorist attack could be launched from Waziristan, he added. Waziristan's place as a hub of al-Qaida operations was highlighted recently when police in Germany arrested three men - two Germans and a Turk - accused of plotting to attack a US military base in the country. German officials said they had travelled to Waziristan for explosives training. The July 7 London transport bomber Muhammad Siddique Khan is also believed to have trained in Waziristan.

Pray: against these threatened attacks and for the Lord to frustrate the enemies of peace. (Ps.25:1)

More: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/pakistan/Story/0,,2177800,00.html>

■ Christian leaders praise monks and offer prayers for Myanmar

The leader of the Anglican church in Myanmar (Burma) has said he is praying for the nation as thousands of Buddhist monks are taking to the streets of the capital in non-violent protests. 'We pray for peace and the future of the country,' said Anglican Archbishop Samuel San Si Htay. Meanwhile, the general secretary of the Thailand-based Christian Conference of Asia, Prawate Khid-arn, praised the positive role of the monks in helping people 'to overcome the inhumane conditions to which they have been subjected for a long period.' Buddhists account for 89 per cent of Myanmar's 47.7 million people. Christians make up 4 percent of the population. CCA general secretary Prawate said, 'A message of support to the Myanmar church came also from the general secretary of the Council of Churches in Malaysia.'

Pray: for God to herald in a new era of democracy and peace in Myanmar.(Zech.9:14-17)

More: <http://www.eni.ch/featured/article.php?id=1239>

■ False charges plague Christian workers in India

'A pastor and his sister cleared of rape and abortion accusations' is a case typical of false accusations that Hindu extremists file against Christian workers. The Evangelical Fellowship of India announced that the pastor, a convert from Hinduism, and his sister were acquitted as the court reportedly found discrepancies in the statement of the complainant and a lack of evidence against the accused. Christian rights activists say facing false police complaints is common for Christian workers in several parts of the country. Most reported incidents of violence against Christians involve false police complaints. Dr. Sajan K. George, national president of the Global Council of Indian Christians said, 'It is an unfortunate trend that Christians are first beaten up, and then taken forcibly to the police station, where a false complaint is lodged against them.'

Pray for truth to replace lies and wisdom to bring healing.(Prov.12:17-18)

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More: <http://www.compassdirect.org/en/display.php?page=lead&lang=en&length=long&idelement=&backpage=&critere=&countryname=&rowcur=>

■ Over one million North Koreans in concentration camps

At least one million North Koreans, many of them Christians, are believed to be held in North Korea's concentration camps. Investigations by Open Doors International reports the concentration camps include eight punishment camps for political prisoners and 30 forced labour camps. Many camps are so huge that they can't be spotted on satellite images they are complete villages. Open Doors could not say how the investigation had been conducted in the isolated nation, citing concerns about the safety of those involved in the research. Many of the victims are believed to be Christians as North Korea's Stalinist system of Communism is based on 'total devotion' of the individual to an ideology. Christianity is seen as a threat. It is believed at least 200,000 North Koreans are Christians even though it is strictly forbidden.

Pray: for the prisoners for Christ.(Eph.3:16-19)

More: <http://www.bosnewslife.com/asia-pacific/korea-north/3187-news-alert-one-million-north-koreans-in>

■ **More displaced in Congo as fighting resumes**

Military dissidents loyal to army general Laurent Nkunda have resumed fighting in the Democratic Republic of Congo, two weeks after a ceasefire was negotiated by the UN Mission in the Congo. 'There were clashes in Ngungu and in Mweso, but it is not known if the fighting continues,a military spokesperson, said. An increasing number of people arriving in displacement camps is raising concerns among humanitarian workers. The refugees fleeing the violent forces of Nkunda has passed 300,000 this year. Authorities are engaged in distributing plastic sheets, kitchen sets, blankets, buckets and soap, as well as rice, oil, maize flour and salt. This aid has so far benefited 7,860 people

Pray: that the ceasefire will not be broken and aid will continue to be distributed where it is most needed.

More: <http://allafrica.com/stories/200709250679.html>

■ **Kenyan faith leaders launch campaign for violence-free elections**

Christian, Muslim and Hindu groups in Kenya are mounting a campaign to urge political leaders to sign a peace charter and pledge to avoid violence ahead of presidential and parliamentary elections scheduled for December. The charter, which political leaders are being asked to sign, states: 'In order to promote peaceful, secure, free and fair elections in my constituency and/or ward and in the country as a whole, I shall not engage in incitement, and renounce violence as a means for political mobilisation. I will not engage, support or associate with activities of any militia. Where I know of the existence of such militia, I will immediately notify the police.'

Pray: for a peaceful period prior to and during the December elections.(Is.32:16-18)

More: <http://www.eni.ch/featured/article.php?id=1230>

PRAISE REPORTS

■ **Episcopal Church agrees to halt pro-gay agenda**

The Episcopal Church in the United States has agreed to halt the selection of gay priests as bishops in efforts to prevent a schism in the worldwide Anglican Communion. They have also said that the Church will no longer approve prayers to bless same-sex couples. (See also Prayer Alert 3807)

Praise: God for holding the Anglican Community together in unity.(Luke13:24)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/episcopal.church.agrees.to.halt.progay.agenda/13399.htm>

■ **A miracle of hearing and speech restored in Thailand**

During a recent mission trip to Thailand, a group of Christian workers from Global Gateway Network experienced a wonderful healing by the hand of the Lord. God ministered through the Christian workers and healed a 20 year old who had been a deaf mute since birth as 8 Buddhist monks sat on a bench nearby and watched. After the healing the monks joined the queue of people to receive prayer from the Christians.

Praise: God for invading earth with demonstrations of His power and love.(1Cor.2:3-5)

More: http://www.breakingchristiannews.com/articles/display_art.html?ID=4475

■ **Christians see 'hand of God' at work in Libya**

A new wave of religious freedom is sweeping across Libya, say Christians in the north African country. Following three decades during which the tiny Christian community faced restrictions due to the Muslim nation's hostile stance towards the West, there are now Greek Orthodox, Coptic Orthodox, and Anglican communities, says Bishop Martinelli, a Franciscan monk. Most worshippers are Africans, mainly illegal migrants, and Asians. Christians now celebrates three services in different languages every Friday, whilst the Muslims go to their mosques. There are Christian services in Korean, English, and Pilipino for the Philippine community, and on Sunday the Mass is in Arabic. Recently the bishop allowed a Catholic church, which the secular authorities had closed and taken over after the revolution, to be given to the Anglican community in Libya. Simon Martin, an Anglican evangelist, said, 'We see this as hand of God.'

Praise: God for all the saints.(Eph.6:18)

More: <http://eni.ch/featured/article.php?id=1223>

PRAYER ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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C/O World Prayer Centre, Cornerstone House, 5 Ethel Street, Birmingham, B2 4BG, England