



PRAYER ALERT...



An initiative of the Prayer Forum of the British Isles & Ireland
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Issue 4707

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Friday 23 November 2007

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BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ **FRIDAY FOCUS: 23rd November - Sikh community - Mark 11:17; Philippians 2:5-11**

Sikhs have a strong sense of family and serving one another. Sewa (service) to humanity is the duty of every Sikh alongside prayer. **Give thanks:** for their openness to explore Christianity and live at peace with their neighbours. **Pray:** for Sikh background believers in Christ to have opportunities to share their story; that the Church may express the servant heart of God and become a house (temple) of prayer for all Nations. **Consider:** Learning more about the Sikh faith, and from their example of servant-hood in the community.

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

■ **Churches make hidden contribution**

Glasgow churches make a 'hidden contribution' to the city, according to a year long report by Glasgow Churches Action which said local communities benefited from 1,899 projects run by 315 churches. Lord Provost Bob Winter said: 'the result is staggering, in terms of the amount of work and the range of people who benefit.' More than one fifth of all activities within churches were targeted at people in need and facing challenges such as homelessness, addiction, mental health issues and disability. Church-run local services range from computer classes and lunch clubs to badminton, mother and toddler groups and belly dancing. There were more than two-and-a-half million visits to the range of these services. The report commended the fact that churches are embedded in communities in ways that few - if any - other organisations are, and called for this potential to be nurtured. It also highlighted what it called the strain on churches in providing services.

Pray: giving thanks for the love of Christ shown in Glasgow and asking for strength and resources for the churches that this work in the communities might grow. (Jn15:12)

More: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/glasgow_and_west/7104055.stm

■ **'We must do more to help prisoners,' Christians told**

'The UK church should do more to help prisoners,' ex-prisoner Barry Woodward said at the start of Prisons Week. Woodward was a heroin addict before he found faith in Jesus Christ. He continued: 'It would be easy to give up on the 80,000 people in UK prisons, most of whom are there for drug-related offences. But God doesn't give up.' Woodward has so far managed to send nearly six thousand copies of his book 'Once an addict' to Britain's jails and intends every prisoner in the country to have a copy. On Sunday, churches across the UK started Prisoners Week with a day of special services and prayers. Prisoners' Week was started in 1975 by prison chaplains and other Christians working with prisoners and their families to encourage churches to pray for their needs. Since that time, it has grown in ecumenical recognition and enjoys the patronage of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Archbishop of Westminster and the Moderator of the Free Churches Group.

Pray: for a new wave of the Holy Spirit throughout all UK prisons leading many to salvation and to freedom from addiction. (Ps.142:7)

More: <http://www.ucb.co.uk/index.cfm?itemid=226#1601>

■ Islamic group praised for prompt action on YouTube death threat video

Cllr Alan Craig, leader of the Christian Peoples Alliance group on Newham Council, said today that the Tablighi Jamaat should be praised for its prompt action over a YouTube video which issued a death threat to the councillor and his family. The obituary-style video posting, has been removed and its author arrested following widespread publicity. The video had been put on YouTube by mega-mosque supporter and associate 'Muhammad' (aka 'Abdullah 1425') from Stevenage. Observers said it should be seen as a serious death threat to Allan Craig and his family resulting from his opposition to the mega-mosque. Representatives of Tablighi Jamaat, the Islamic group promoting the planned mega-mosque close to the 2012 Olympic stadium, immediately contacted YouTube for the video's removal and also terminated the weblink they'd created between their mega-mosque website and Muhammad's offensive YouTube video which they condemned as 'totally inappropriate.' Cllr Craig said: 'I oppose Tablighi Jamaat's mega-mosque but am grateful for their prompt action.' (See Prayer Alert: 4507)

Pray: thanking God for these moves, but continuing to intercede for Cllr Craig and the rejection of the mega-mosque. (1Thes.5:17)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.co.uk/article/islamic.group.praised.for.prompt.action.on.you.tube.death.threat.video/14660.htm>

■ People of all faiths and none back Church schools

A major survey has found six out of ten non-Christians believe that church schools differ from other state schools but nevertheless give places to children of all backgrounds and provide a balanced education. The survey of more than 1,000 UK adults shows church schools are positively regarded by people of all faiths and none for the ethos they promote within the learning environment. Eight in ten agree that church schools help young people develop a sense of right and wrong. 78 per cent agree they have a caring approach to students. Respondents see a key part of church schools' distinctive nature as their close relationship with their local church. Significantly, almost two-thirds of those who agree that church schools are different believe students benefit from attending Christian worship in church schools – and four in ten non-Christians agree. However, the survey also challenges Church schools to explain their approach to teaching religious studies, with 35 % of respondents concerned that church schools promote 'narrow religious teaching'. (See Prayer Alert: 3207&3707)

Pray: that faith based schools will be recognized throughout the UK for their distinctive contributions and that their freedom to teach the Christian faith will be upheld. (Pr.22:6)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.co.uk/article/people.of.all.faiths.and.none.back.church.schools/14699.htm>

■ They've got your number: State's hunger for personal data raises security fears

Since Government admitted the HM Revenue and Customs data security blunder, Richard Jeavons, director of IT implementation for the NHS which plans to put 50 million patients' details on the database, pronounced that when it came to protecting information, 'you cannot stop the wicked doing wicked things'. The UK's DNA database - the biggest in the world - includes records for 900,000 children, 108(?)thousand) of whom are under 10, raising concerns about their safety. Nevertheless ministers are planning another database listing the personal details of all children in England, including their age and address. ContactPoint, or the 'information sharing index', is designed for social workers, but children fear the information could attract paedophiles. Furthermore, Helen Lord, compliance director at the credit reference agency Experian, said yesterday: 'Children whose details are lost will also be at risk, especially those currently between ages 15 and 17. Fraudsters will wait until they turn 18 and start applying in their own names for credit cards, mobile phone contracts etc.' (See Prayer Alert: 3607)

Pray: especially for the protection of children and young people at risk because of current and potential future security lapses and for an honest and humble government review of this whole subject. (Ecc.1:18)

More: <http://news.independent.co.uk/uk/politics/article3182301.ece>

EUROPE

■ Spanish Church calls for pardon of Civil War sins

The head of the Catholic Church in Spain has said it should recognise past sins, in a speech interpreted by media commentators as a plea for forgiveness for Church support for the dictatorship of General Francisco Franco. 'The Church says sorry,' was one typical newspaper headline on Tuesday, after the speech late on Monday by the outgoing head of the Spanish bishops' conference, Bilbao Bishop Ricardo Blazquez, but some church watchers hinted the media had jumped to conclusions. 'Without raising ourselves up proudly as judges of others, we have to seek forgiveness and reorient ourselves,' said Blazquez, after speaking at length about the need to come to terms with the conflict, whose legacy divides Spain to this day. Forgiveness over the Civil War has been a scarce commodity in Spain, whose transformation into a prosperous democracy has not been matched by any cooling of passions over events seven decades ago.

Pray: that this step by Bishop Blazquez will be another step towards healing and forgiveness. (Mt.6:14-15)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/spanish.church.calls.for.pardon.of.civil.war.sins/14753.htm>

■ Bosnia: The looming storm

Bosnia is supposed to be enacting constitutional reforms aimed at transitioning the state to European Union (EU) membership from the stabilisation brought by the Dayton Accords. The Dayton Accords, which ended the 1992-1995

Bosnian conflict, upheld the territorial sovereignty of the independent state of Bosnia while dividing it into two largely-autonomous entities: the Muslim-Croat Federation and the Republika Srpska (Serb Republic). Inherent in Bosnia's transition to the EU is the EU (and American) requirement that Bosnia strengthen its state institutions at the expense of its entities. The constitutional reforms are contentious however because Bosnian Islamists are not interested in seeing Republika Srpska's institutions scaled down they want it abolished. The Islamists want to extend Muslim rule across all of Bosnia. Because Bosnia is a Muslim-majority state and Bosnian Serbs have no wish to be dominated by Muslims, they want to retain the autonomy that safeguards their religious liberty, security and culture. The traditionally Catholic Croats are petitioning for a separate Croat-majority entity where they can enjoy their constitutional rights.

Pray: for Bosnia as they try to work out their differences that God will work a miracle bringing unity. (Ps.133)

More: <http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/2007/s07110132.htm>

WORLDWIDE

■ The Annapolis Summit

The Summit's date November 25-27 is planned to coincide with the 60th anniversary of the UN vote to partition Palestine on November 27, 1947. The main purpose of the summit is to restart the process of establishing the final status of an Arab Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza strip. Of concern in restarting the process will be the future of East Jerusalem, the right of return for Palestinian refugees, recognition of the state of Israel by Palestinians, and the future of Jewish settlers in the West Bank. The US and Egypt are committed to seeing a serious peace process, but Israel and the Palestinians have yet to agree a blueprint for the summit talks. Without this, there is little chance of the summit being a success.

Pray: for each party to put themselves in the other's shoes, and reach agreement on how to proceed justly (Is. 2:4, Mic. 6:8)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/egypt.offers.broad.support.for.annapolis.talks/14733.htm>

■ Iran nuclear agenda to be discussed

The UN nuclear watchdog chief is set to urge full backing on Thursday for steps to clarify Iran's atomic work after Western powers said Tehran must do more to allay suspicions about its agenda. Mohamed El Baradei will address the International Atomic Energy Agency's Board of Governors in a debate on whether Iran's compliance so far with plans to resolve questions about Iran's nuclear development is cause for new hope, or further scepticism. It will be a matter of interpretation. Also mission agencies' reports have been brought to the attention of Prayer Alert that it is becoming progressively more difficult to engage in any form of Christian-related activity inside the country.

Pray: for God to bring about His purposes for the Iranian government, Church, and international relationships. (Prov.8:14-16)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/elbaradei.set.to.defend.iran.progress.at.iaea.meet/14775.htm>

■ Bangladesh Churches rush aid to cyclone victims

Churches in Bangladesh have launched a massive relief effort for victims of the devastating cyclone that has claimed thousands of lives along the country's south-western coast. 'The casualty figures do not reflect the extent of the catastrophe that has struck the country,' Elgin Saha, the president of the National Council of Churches of Bangladesh, told Ecumenical News International on 20 November. More than 4000 people had been killed, and more than 2000 were missing because of the cyclone which brought death and devastation to the Bay of Bengal by flattening and flooding thousands of houses. The church council's president said loss of life had been minimised due to an advance cyclone warning enabling church workers and NGOs to evacuate people from the coast areas before the cyclone struck with wind speeds of up to 250 kilometres an hour. More than 25 million people had been affected by the cyclone.

Pray: for God to anoint and unite the work of the diverse agencies as they implement aid plans for Bangladesh. (Ps.40:17)

More: <http://www.ekkleisia.co.uk/node/6320>

■ Full-blown schism in Canadian Church

The Anglican Bishop of New Westminster says the division over homosexuality in the Canadian church is now 'a full-blown schism' and a conservative Anglican faction has hinted at an announcement this week on the formation of a breakaway body.

Pray: for the Canadian Church leaders to allow God's Holy Spirit to direct their vision for the North American Christian Communion. (Jn.16:13-15)

More: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20071121.wschism21/BNStory/National/home>

■ Divided Lebanon braced for violence

Lebanon is braced for the possibility of violent clashes after the president's term ended Friday with little prospect of finding a compromise candidate acceptable to the bitterly divided parties. Tensions between the feuding camps are high, between the US-backed government and the opposition, spearheaded by Hezbollah which is supported by Syria and Iran, trading accusations of treachery. After two years of fierce political squabbling inflamed by Israel's war against Hezbollah last summer the two sides stand more divided than ever and many Lebanese fear more violence. Many schools have closed and families are keeping their children at home. In recent nights Beirut has witnessed a surge in scuffles between supporters of the rival factions. Security has been stepped up around Beirut's government buildings. Many Lebanese fear

the two camps will fail to elect a president and that the opposition will make good on threats to occupy government buildings and form a parallel government.

Pray: that division and resistance to concord will end in Lebanon. (Ps.29:6)

More: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/syria/story/0,,2214999,00.html>

■ Call to lighten the darkness in Zimbabwe on World Aids Day

ACET, the Christian HIV and Aids charity, is calling on the church to remember Zimbabwe's children on World Aids Day on 1 December. The charity is an international group of independent organisations working to reduce the rates of new HIV infection and care for those affected by HIV and Aids, including Aids orphans in 23 countries. In a country where an estimated 21 per cent of the population is infected with HIV, ACET is hoping that its new Lighten the darkness appeal will go some way to halting the spread of infection and bring much needed support to sufferers, children in particular.

Pray: for light in all the dark areas of Zimbabwe, and following the death of Ian Smith the prophecies of 'unsuccessful black rule in Rhodesia' will die also enabling the self destruction of Zimbabwe to end.

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/call.to.lighten.the.darkness.in.zimbabwe.on.world.aids.day/14751.htm>

■ Venezuela: Chavez-Church clash over liberation theology

President Hugo Chavez plans to amend the constitution and push Venezuela further along a socialist path have put him at odds with church leaders. Their opposition may reflect a weakening of the hold that 'liberation theology' has had on the region. Catholic bishops have been among the most outspoken critics of the amendments with Protestant evangelicals also concerned about the changes. The 'reforms' have split the country and led to peaceful street protests, some of them violently disrupted. A national referendum on the proposed constitutional changes is scheduled for December 2. The president who is himself a Catholic used classic liberation theology language to describe Jesus Christ as a revolutionary and a socialist. Venezuela's Catholic bishops, in a recent statement, voiced concern about the potential for further violence and appealed for calm. Archbishop Roberto Luckert, vice president of the Venezuelan Bishops' Conference, has accused Chavez of 'picking a fight with everyone.'

Pray: that these demonstrations do not escalate and for God to be head of the Venezuelan Church. (Ps.18:30)

More: <http://www.cnsnews.com/ViewCulture.asp?Page=/Culture/archive/200711/CUL20071121b.html>

■ **BREAKING NEWS:** Philippines evacuates thousands as typhoon nears

The Philippines began evacuating tens of thousands of people from coastal areas in the central Bicol region as typhoon Mitag gathered strength, officials said on Thursday. The Philippines is trying to avoid a repeat of last year's devastating typhoon Durian, which killed 1,200 people and left 120,000 homeless when it crashed through Bicol, the country's typhoon alley. Glenn Rabonza, the head of the civil defence office, said 'about 10,000 people living on the slopes of Mayon volcano in Bicol had already been evacuated and the number was expected to rise to 50,000 in the next 24 hours. Coastal villages could be slammed by big waves as high as 3 to 10 metres whipped up by strong winds brought by the typhoon.' Mitag, currently a category 1 typhoon with winds of 120 kph (75 mph) and gusts of up to 150 kph (95 miles), is expected to make landfall either late Saturday or early Sunday.

Pray: that the Lord will calm the storm and rebuke the waves. (Lk.8:25)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/philippines.evacuates.thousands.as.typhoon.nears/14791.htm>

PRAISE REPORTS

■ Exciting new developments for the Back to Jerusalem vision

Many inside China continue to receive training in preparation for service outside the country, thousands of house church believers are learning about the call to missionary service for the first time through the use of seminars, DVDs and videos, and in a short space of time opportunities for Chinese Christians have opened up in eight different countries throughout the 10/40 window. People helping establish places and positions for workers to go have been travelling extensively throughout this year, building relationships with the Body of Christ in various nations and, through prayer and sharing, seeing bridges built which are facilitating the Chinese Church in their quest to send believers to the neediest places with the message of salvation.

Praise: God for this developing Back to Jerusalem movement of Chinese believers. (Mt.9:36-38)

More: <http://www.churchinchina.com/>

PRAYER FORUM OF BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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Prayer Alert is a partnership project of the Prayer Forum of the British Isles and Ireland
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