



# PRAYER ALERT...



An initiative of the Prayer Forum of the British Isles & Ireland  
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## BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

### ■ **FRIDAY FOCUS: 7th December - Children we know - Psalm 127.3; Joel 2:28**

Children are a blessing from God and are to be protected, encouraged and blessed.

**Give thanks:** for children who love and know Jesus.

**Pray:** a BLESSing for children you know that need to discover Jesus; for those who work with children in schools, church groups etc; for young carers looking after family members (estimated at 175,000 young carers in 2001 census); for children under pressure from family, health or other issues.

**Consider:** How can I bless/support a family I know who have children?

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

### ■ **UK 'must celebrate Christianity'**

The UK should 'celebrate' the role of Christianity in the country's heritage and culture, the government has said. Community cohesion minister Parmjit Dhandra told MPs that religion had had a 'significant impact' in securing people's rights and freedoms. He was speaking in a Westminster debate over whether there was widespread 'Christianophobia' in the UK. Conservative MP Mark Pritchard warned the government not to 'surrender' the UK's Christian heritage. Mr Pritchard called the Westminster Hall debate, claiming that the importance of the faith was being undermined by the 'politically correct brigade'. He argued that 'parties of hate' could step in to fill the gap left by 'mainstream' politicians, and 'hijack' Christianity to get their messages across. Speaking earlier in the debate, Mr Pritchard, MP for The Wrekin, in Shropshire, said Christians should get 'full minority rights'. He said Christianity in the UK was being undermined 'mostly by stealth', even though 3.2 million people attended church every Sunday.

**Pray:** that God will continue to use people like Mr Pritchard to encourage others to be bold and speak out on their faith. (2Ti.1:7)

**More:** [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk\\_politics/7128500.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/7128500.stm)

### ■ **Faith schools dominate top positions in league**

The academic superiority of faith schools was underlined today as they dominated top positions in new league tables for 11-year-olds. Two thirds of the 250 primaries in England achieving 'perfect' test results were Church of England, Roman Catholic or Jewish schools. Despite making up just a third of schools nationally, faith schools increased their hold on the top places from 44 per cent two years ago to 66 per cent in 2007. Last night, they hailed the results as a testament to good teaching and discipline. However, critics claim the schools do so well by selecting talented, middle-class pupils, often at the expense of poor children living nearby. Some 600,000 children in more than 13,000 primary schools took Key Stage 2 tests

(known as SATs) this summer. Jan Ainsworth, the C of E's chief education officer, said the results were down to schools' 'Christian character', which 'helps embed strong discipline, a caring attitude, and a sense of purpose'.

**Pray:** that our Christian schools will continue to be a powerful example to the communities they are in. (Pr.22:6)

**More:** [http://www.theway.co.uk/news/shownews.php?news\\_id=4604](http://www.theway.co.uk/news/shownews.php?news_id=4604)

#### ■ Muslim attitudes — the real story

New data from Ipsos MORI shows the views of London's Muslims are similar to the views of Londoners on a variety of issues. Muslims and other Londoners share similar concerns and values on issues ranging from democracy to concern about crime and freedom of speech to pride in the local neighbourhood. For example, around three-quarters of Muslims (74%), and a similar proportion of Londoners (70%), feel proud of their local neighbourhood, and around three quarters of both groups say they identify with London (79% of Muslims and 74% of Londoners). A majority of Londoners embrace diversity in the capital — 69% of Londoners say that multiculturalism makes the capital a better place to live, and 75% consider it important to hold regular events to celebrate the capital's diversity. As would perhaps be expected, London's Muslims embrace this diversity even more openly (84% of Muslims think multiculturalism improves life in the capital, and 87% note the importance of events to celebrate multiculturalism).

**Pray:** that these beliefs will continue to be at the heart of the Muslim community and grow in strength.

**More:** <http://www.ipsos-mori.com/polls/2007/gla.shtml>

#### ■ Computer games face curbs

Violent computer games and films could face new curbs under plans to be put forward by a cross-party group of MPs this week. Legislation would give Parliament and the public a much greater say in the work of the censors, including a power to ban games blamed for causing copycat violence. The new laws are aimed at violent games like Manhunt and the controversial new film Eastern Promise, which depicts child prostitution, throat-slitting and eye-gouging. The plans come amid mounting public concern about the level of violence allowed through by the British Board of Film Classification and its impact on society. Tory MP Julian Brazier said a 'sizeable' number of unsuitable games and films were being allowed through. He added, 'We are facing social breakdown today on a scale which is unparalleled in modern times. We have had the UN declare Britain as the worst place in the world to bring up children'.

**Pray:** that this legislation will have the desired effect and curb violence in computer games. (Pr.10:32)

**More:** <http://www.express.co.uk/posts/view/27015/Computer-games-face-curbs>

#### ■ Secret trials to let GPs do abortions

The Department of Health has admitted it is conducting trials at two secret locations to assess whether GP clinics could be used for medical abortions. An assessment of the scheme is expected to be completed early in 2008. If it is deemed successful it could be expanded to GP clinics across the country. Critics of the scheme say it will increase the already large numbers of abortions carried out each year, currently about 200,000 annually. The move could also threaten the liberty of some staff at GP clinics who may conscientiously object to abortion. There are also concerns that GP clinics do not have the correct emergency facilities to cope if a medical abortion goes wrong. Currently abortions can only be carried out in hospitals or approved independent sector premises, such as private clinics. According to medical magazine Pulse, the Department wants to offer abortion services in 'community-based settings.' Some politicians have criticised the move for pre-empting the anticipated Commons debate on abortion. (See also Prayer Alert 2507)

**Pray:** against this further move towards making abortion available on demand. (Ps.139:13,16&Ps.22:10)

**More:** [http://www.christian.org.uk/issues/2007/abortion/secrettrials\\_05dec07.htm](http://www.christian.org.uk/issues/2007/abortion/secrettrials_05dec07.htm)

#### ■ Christians to pray for God's creation

Christians of all denominations will unite in London this Saturday to pray for political leadership in protecting creation. An ecumenical service will be held at St Matthew's Church in Westminster where Christians will pray that British and world leaders act urgently at the ongoing climate conference in Bali to avert the dangers posed by climate change to the whole of creation. They will then join a national demonstration to demand that Britain's representatives at the Bali conference lead by example by cutting Britain's greenhouse gas emissions further and faster. Following the service, Christians from all walks of life will join other groups and march from Westminster to the American Embassy in Grosvenor Square. They will demand that British and world leaders take the urgent action needed to prevent catastrophic climate change. The National Demonstration in London will be one of many demonstrations on climate change taking place all around the world on the same day, midway through the United Nations climate talks in Bali, where world leaders will be discussing the threat from global warming and co-ordinating responses to the threat.

**Pray:** that those who are gathering in Bali will be given wisdom to make the right decisions to protect our planet.

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/christians.to.pray.for.gods.creation/15302.htm>

## EUROPE

#### ■ Europe's ageing population concerns Church body

The Conference of European Churches (CEC) has stressed that 'every phase of life has its own value' with the release of a new paper on Europe's ageing population. A generation ago, less than three per cent of Europe's population was over 65 but the numbers are growing and by 2050, the number of over - 65s across the continent could be as high as 20 per cent, with only half of the population of working age. The paper, 'Ageing and the Care for the Elderly,' prepared by a CEC's

working group, asks how old age should be regarded, what status the elderly should have in society, and the best way to care for them. As part of its answer, the paper emphasises 'human dignity, based on the belief that all human beings are created in the image of God. We are critical of contemporary trends to value people primarily for their youth, attractiveness, health, economic productivity and independence,' the Church and Society Commission states.

**Pray:** that those who are young will learn to respect and value those who are older (and the converse, too). (1Tim:5:1-2)

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/europes.ageing.population.concerns.church.body/15226.htm>

#### ■ **Belgium - European Parliament resolution to acknowledge crimes against Christians**

In a resolution passed on 15 November the European Parliament voiced its concern about the rapid increase in 'episodes of intolerance and repression directed against Christian communities, particularly in the countries of Africa, Asia and the Middle East.' It condemns all acts of violence against Christian communities and urges the countries' governments to bring to justice the ones who commit the crimes. Praise God for this increasing political awareness of the difficult and often life-threatening situation of Christians in Africa, Asia and the Middle East countries, and that Europe has taken a clear stand against the religiously motivated persecution of Christians.

**Pray:** that this resolution would be noticed by many people and that it would have an impact on foreign governments that it would be the beginning of a real change in the situation of the Persecuted Church.

**More:** [http://www.barnabasfund.org/support/xPFU\\_index.php](http://www.barnabasfund.org/support/xPFU_index.php)

## WORLDWIDE

#### ■ **Aftermath of flooding in Papua New Guinea**

It has been brought to the attention of Prayer Alert office that prayer is still needed for Orto Province in PNG as the chaos continues after the recent flooding. There are many dead. Transport and communication is nearly impossible due to impassable bridges, planes grounded and phones only working intermittently. Aid workers and those giving pastoral support are struggling to reach the areas of most need.

**Pray:** for God to go with those who are endeavouring to bring much needed Aid. (Job5:11-13)

#### ■ **British missionary believed kidnapped in Philippines**

Pastor David Brass a British missionary has been missing since November 22 in the southern Philippines. He is believed to have been kidnapped by an as yet unidentified person or group. The southern Philippines is known to host several Muslim separatist groups as well as Abu Sayyaf, an al-Qaeda linked group which carries out kidnappings of both locals and foreigners for ransom money. Pastor Brass is a missionary with a Baptist church and was last seen on his way to a friend's house in Bukidnon.

**Pray:** for the kidnappers to act with compassion towards their captive and for God to bring about an early release. (Acts12:5)

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/british.missionary.believed.kidnapped.in.philippines/15241.htm>

#### ■ **Indonesian Christian leaders jailed for praying**

Forty-one Christian leaders in Indonesia have been sentenced to five years in jail for praying that Muslim leaders would 'come to Christ'. The leaders, who are linked to Campus Crusade for Christ, were found guilty of blasphemy after a prayer meeting they attended was videoed, and a copy of the video leaked to a Muslim organisation. The specific charge levelled against the Christians was 'abusing the Koran' because the group were filmed praying over a copy of Islam's holy book. The law under which they have been charged mandates a prison term for anyone 'expressing hatred or opposition, or insults an individual or groups of Indonesian citizens in public'. The convicted Christians include parents of young children. Their lawyers say the group is planning to appeal at the East Java High Court in Surabaya. An official from the highest Muslim authority in Indonesia, the hardline MUI, said that a total of 60 Christians were being sought in connection with the video.

**Pray:** for a successful appeal and the charges to be dropped and for the Indonesian Church to stand firm despite Islamic pressure. (Ps.116:3-6;Ps.37:40)

**More:** [http://ausprayernet.org.au/newsletter/DisplayNewsletter.php?e\\_id=00000001388#st4](http://ausprayernet.org.au/newsletter/DisplayNewsletter.php?e_id=00000001388#st4)

#### ■ **EU talks must focus on Zimbabwe says aid agency**

As President Mugabe, flies into Lisbon for the AU/ EU Summit (7-9 Dec.) UK relief and development agency Tearfund is urging for talks to focus on the devastating humanitarian situation in Zimbabwe. They said, 'We fully support Prime Minister Gordon Brown's boycotting of the talks due to Mugabe's attendance at the summit. We are disappointed that the EU has allowed President Mugabe to attend the summit. However, since he is attending, we would call on the leaders present at the summit to challenge Mugabe on the failure of his government to address the crisis in his country.' Tearfund is calling for the critical humanitarian situation in Zimbabwe to be urgently addressed. Four million Zimbabweans are in desperate need of food relief with the highest number of orphans per capita in the world. Tearfund has launched an emergency appeal to support Zimbabwe churches bringing help to the poorest families affected by Zimbabwe's spiralling crisis.

**Pray:** that Tearfund's public statements will not be just talked about but will be acted upon by delegates at the Lisbon conference. (Jas.2:24)

**More:** <http://www.eklesia.co.uk/node/6430>

### ■ European force blocked in Chad

A European force meant to protect aid workers, 500,000 refugees and displaced people in eastern Chad is on hold. The 4,500-strong European force was expected to start arriving in Chad and the Central African Republic in November but is on hold for now. The force known as EUFOR currently consists of 23 military personnel holed up in a hotel in Chad's capital N'djamena because the process of launching them has been blocked. EU countries can't agree on who should provide the equipment needed to get started and they are no longer having discussions on the matter. Things must first be worked out at the highest presidential and ministerial level before they can have another force-generating conference on how to get the military personnel in place.' Meanwhile conditions have deteriorated markedly with an estimated 1,000 combatants dead or wounded. Banditry is also on the increase, including attacks on aid workers. The latest occurred on 3 December on a UN World Food Programme convoy travelling to the refugee camp at Breidjing.

**Pray:** that all in authority work in unity to enforce security, end conflict and provide all necessary aid for the refugees. (2Ch.30:12)

**More:** <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=75700>

### ■ Authorities close Churches in Indonesia and Nigeria

According to this week's Compass Direct News Summaries radical Muslim groups in Indonesia persuaded authorities to close two churches in two weeks. Extremists from the Islamic Defender Forces attacked the home of the Rev. Bedali Hulu, pastor at Jakarta Christian Baptist Church. The church had been meeting in his home. As a result of the violent objections to the church local officials asked him to leave the territory and activities at the church came to a halt. Also in Indonesia about 75 Muslim demonstrators demanded a halt to worship at Damai Kristus (Christ's Peace), a Catholic church in Kampung Duri. In the same week in Nigeria without discussion or compensation, the Kano state government has unilaterally decided to demolish four churches to make way for roads. During a re-election campaign earlier this year, Kano Gov. Malam Ibrahim Shekarau promised the Muslim community of Ginginya area that he would demolish an ECWA church there in order to build a hospital. Also see last weeks Prayer Alert re Indonesian Churches

**Pray:** that God's people wherever they are would not be prevented from worshipping together. (Heb.10:25)

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

## PRAISE REPORTS

### ■ Teacher speaks of Sudan 'ordeal'

A British teacher jailed in Sudan for letting her class name a teddy bear Muhammad has spoken of her 'ordeal', after returning to the UK. Gillian Gibbons, 54, from Liverpool, had spent eight days in custody for insulting Islam before eventually being pardoned by President Omar al-Bashir. Mrs Gibbons said she was in 'total shock' but was 'well treated in prison and everyone was very kind to me'. Mrs Gibbons, a mother-of-two, was arrested on 25 November and later given a 15-day sentence after allowing her pupils to hold a vote and choose the name Muhammad, the same name as the Islamic Prophet, for a teddy bear. She arrived back to London accompanied by British Muslim peers Baroness Warsi and Lord Ahmed, who had mediated for her release. After a meeting with Baroness Warsi and Lord Ahmed, the press office of President al-Bashir announced that Mrs Gibbons had been pardoned and released after 'mediation'. Mrs Gibbons added that she was 'very sorry' to leave Sudan, where she had had a 'fabulous time'. (See Prayer Alert 4807)

**Praise:** God for this answer to prayer. (Ps.146:7)

**More:** <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/7126162.stm>

### ■ Church of England uses Facebook for cards

The Church of England is launching a series of specially-designed virtual Christmas cards through the website Facebook. The cards, designed and blessed by Church leaders, can be downloaded and sent for free by anyone registered on the social networking site, which has about seven million users. Each design shows 'a traditional Christmas image with a modern twist' and the sender can add a personal message. The cards also provide links to a number of websites where the recipient can learn more about the Christian faith or locate their nearest church. A Church spokesman said the cards were a novel method of spreading the true meaning of Christmas, and an environmentally-friendly way to exchange season's greetings. The Rt Rev Pete Broadbent, the Bishop of Willesden, said he thought it was a 'brilliant' idea. 'It's a quick and easy way for people to stay in touch and the Church needs to use websites like this to reach out to as many people as possible'.

**Praise:** May this novel way of spreading His word be mightily blessed in its use this Christmas time. (Pr.30:4-6)

**More:** <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml;jsessionid=3XNP4ZVX4VBPRQFIQMGCFFGAVCBQIUV0?xml=/news/2007/12/03/nxmas403.xml>

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