

PRAYER ALERT...

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

■ **FRIDAY FOCUS: 8th August - Hope for our friends - Romans 8:26-27; 2 Corinthians 4:4**

Take a moment to think about the friends God has given you. What do you most value about them?

Confess: the times when I have not made time for conversations about spiritual issues.

Pray: for opportunities this week to be an encouragement to a friend; for time to catch up with friends who are not Christians; for perseverance to continue praying for loved ones and friends who are currently far from Jesus.

Consider: praying at the end of a phone call or send a card or a prayer text to a friend today.

More: <http://www.worldprayer.org.uk/pagesys.cfm?pid=144>

■ **Lambeth Conference branded 'exercise in futility'**

In his final address, the Archbishop of Canterbury urged the 670 Anglican bishops to put an end to their divisive actions that have driven the Anglican Communion to the brink of schism. In a tacit admission that the problems may never be solved, Dr Rowan Williams pleaded with the American church to halt its liberal agenda of electing gay clergy and blessing same-sex unions, and told conservatives to stop 'poaching' bishops from other provinces. The head of the Anglican province that covers much of South America, The Most Rev Gregory Venables, also pledged to carry on taking conservative North American parishes into his church. One bishop branded the 20-day meeting, which cost £5 million to stage and which is facing a £2 million shortfall, as a waste of time and money. The Rt Rev Richard Ellena, Bishop of Nelson, New Zealand, said: 'I believe that this has been the most expensive exercise in futility I have ever been to.'

Pray: for the Anglican Bishops as they return home that what they gained would lead to unity and not division. (Jn.17:23)

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/2494592/Lambeth-Conference-branded-exercise-in-futility.html>

■ **Blears 'to give Muslims a voice'**

Hazel Blears has said there will be 'far more' work with Muslim communities to tackle radicalism, but ruled out talking to the most extreme groups. Ten years after US embassy bombings in Africa, the communities secretary said she wanted to help angry young people channel anger through democratic means. But it was not right for ministers to engage with those who justified suicide bombing or the destruction of Israel. Speaking to BBC Radio 4's Today programme, Ms Blears said she was pleased it appeared the 'theological base' for al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan was 'beginning to fragment'. 'Getting to the theological base, as well as doing the political work with young people, is the way forward for us,' she said. Ms Blears said she wanted to engage with groups which condemned violent extremism - even if they 'wouldn't necessarily hold views on foreign policy that are identical to the government'.

Pray: that the work tackling radicalism would succeed in marginalising and disbanding extreme groups. (Ecc.7:18b)

More: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/7546647.stm

■ Hospitals 'infested with vermin'

The cleanliness of most NHS hospitals in England is threatened by frequent invasions of rats, fleas, bedbugs, flies and cockroaches, a report claims. Figures released by the Conservatives show that 70% of NHS Trusts brought in pest controllers at least 50 times between January 2006 and March 2008. Vermin were found in wards, clinics and even operating theatres. A patients' group said the situation was revolting. The figures were obtained by the Conservatives under the Freedom of Information Act, with every hospital asked to reveal how often pest controllers had visited over the two-year period in question. If these hospitals were restaurants they would be closed down and out of business. While most infestations involved non-clinical areas, some trusts reported problems nearer to patients. One had wasps in a neo-natal unit, and flying ants on the main wards, while another reported rats in their maternity unit, and wasps in operating theatres. A children's A&E was infested with flies.

Pray: that the hospital authorities would succeed in dealing with these health issues.

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/7542718.stm>

■ Non-believers take on challenge in 'Make Me a Christian'

An atheist, lesbian and playboy are just some of the non-Christians who agreed to participate in Bible studies and Christian mentoring as part of a new television series that will be broadcast on Channel Four over the next three Sundays. 'Make Me a Christian' follows the three-week journey of 13 non-Christians who also include a witch, a Christian-turned-Muslim, an unmarried couple with a child on the way, and a family of six, who volunteered to give up their normal lives and attempt to live like Christians. Throughout the programme, they will get to grips with Christianity through a number of Bible studies and mentoring from an ecumenical team of church leaders. The Rev. George Hargreaves, leader of the Christian Party, and his team of mentors think Britain is in a state of moral decline and aim to show that a return to a more Christian way of life would stop the rot, according to Channel Four.

Pray: for those participating to be blessed and for the Christian message to be clearly revealed and understood. (Mt.28:18-20)

More: <http://christianpost.com/article/20080805/non-believers-take-on-challenge-in-make-me-a-christian.htm>

■ Lads' mags to blame for bad dads, claims Gove

Britain's best-known lads' magazines were being unnaturally coy after being accused by the Conservative schools spokesman Michael Gove of promoting a 'selfish irresponsibility' among young men which had left scores of children fatherless. Mr Gove, in a keynote speech to the Institute for Public Policy Research, said the Conservatives would ask 'tough questions' of proprietors of magazines such as Nuts and Zoo as to 'what they think they're doing'. He accused the titles of 'painting a picture of women as permanently, lasciviously, uncomplicatedly available', adding: 'The images they use and project reinforce a very narrow conception of beauty and a shallow approach towards women. They celebrate thrill-seeking and instant gratification without ever allowing any thought of responsibility towards others, or commitment, to intrude.' Publishers of both the magazines refused to respond to Mr Gove's remarks. Jonathan Shephard, chief executive of the Periodical Publishers Association, said: 'To try to create an unsubstantiated causal link between these issues and men's magazines is unrealistic.'

Pray: for Michael Gove's challenge to the publishers over their role in influencing young men. Pray also for the publishers of girls magazines. (Pr.7:2-5)

More: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/media/lads-mags-to-blame-for-bad-dads-claims-gove-885201.html>

■ Lack of role models' fuels gangs

A lack of parent and adult role models is driving young people into gangs, according to the Prince's Trust. A survey published by the charity found that one in three young people in the UK say they do not think of their own parents as people they respect. More than half of those asked said that finding a sense of identity is the key reason for joining a gang - with 9% having spent time in one. Nearly 2,000 14 to 25 year olds took part in the survey. More than half of the teenagers (55%) cited friends and peers as role models and almost a quarter (22%) said young people are looking for role models in gangs. Martina Milburn, chief executive of The Prince's Trust, says the research suggests that young people are creating their own "youth communities" and gangs, in search of the influences that could once have been found in traditional communities.

Pray: for parents to take their responsibilities seriously and break this current trend and as Christians pray that we will take a lead in being Godly role models. (Pr.22:6)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/7547630.stm>

EUROPE

■ Several hurt in new Georgia clash

Georgian and separatist South Ossetian forces have exchanged fire again near the town of Tskhinvali, wounding several people, officials say. Georgian television said there were wounded on both sides. A South Ossetian report spoke of 18 wounded. Russia has close ties to the separatist administration in Tskhinvali. Russian and Georgian officials are due to hold talks shortly aimed at defusing the tensions in South Ossetia, which broke away from Georgia in the 1990s. At least six people have been killed in clashes in the region in recent days. Russia's special envoy to the region, Yuri Popov, has gone to the Georgian capital Tbilisi for the talks, but South Ossetia has refused to take part, saying it will only agree to a meeting at which the Russian region of North Ossetia is also represented. Georgian-Russian relations have been tense for months, with Georgia accusing Russia of actively supporting the separatists in South Ossetia and another breakaway region, Abkhazia. **STOP PRESS: Fighting intensifies in S Ossetia.** Georgian tanks have launched an attack on Tskhinvali, the

capital of the breakaway province of South Ossetia, according to Russia's Interfax news agency. Simultaneously, Georgian fighter jets attacked separatist positions in South Ossetia on this morning. Interfax news agency quoted the head of Russian forces in the region as saying that five Su-25 jets took part in the strike on the village of Tkverneti.
<http://english.aljazeera.net/news/europe/2008/08/20088855848339921.html>

Pray: for the situation in Georgia that peace and reconciliation would prevail and past problems be put aside. (Pr.17:13-14)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/7546639.stm>

■ EU: further nuclear talks with Iran

Diplomats asked Iran to reply (by 2nd August) to a package of incentives offered by the EU's three biggest states - Germany, France and Britain - along with the US, China and Russia in return for the country ceasing to expand its uranium enrichment activities. Iran has missed the deadline and the EU's negotiators are planning to get in touch with Tehran in the coming days. President Ahmadinejad said in a statement, 'In whichever negotiation we take part it is unequivocally with the view to the realization of Iran's nuclear right and the Iranian nation would not retreat one iota from its rights.' But according to press reports he later said, 'We are serious in continuation of fair talks that can produce practical and fruitful results,' A spokesperson for the EU's foreign policy chief, said they would 'soon' get in phone contact with Iranian's negotiator.

Pray: that Javier Solana the EU's foreign policy chief and Saeed Jalili Iranian's chief negotiator would both be inspired by God in all they think, do, and say. (Job.12:23)

More: <http://euobserver.com/9/26575>

WORLDWIDE

■ Philippines: Missionary daughter murdered

Prayer Alert have been asked to publish the following request; all the individuals involved agree to have their names published in this appeal: 'On Sunday August 3 Cathy aged 14 on her way to collect her cousin to go to church was attacked and horrifically murdered in view of small children. Pray for the village of Pugo and all those ministering to the traumatised community who are 'focusing on heaven'. Peter and Lesley Gomez established LAMA House (Life And More Abundantly) in Pugo as a long term foster home for street boys, most of whom know Jesus and they knew Cathy. Steve and Joy Pegg live in Pugo and have a house of prayer 10 Kilometres away. Pray especially for Peter, Lesley, Steve and Joy and all the children.'

Pray: for Christ's complete victory and for the spirit of God to devour all principalities and powers at work in this situation, bringing complete relief to all touched by the incident. (Dt.9:3)

■ China: Month of prayer

With the Olympics starting, persecution watchdog Release International is inviting Christians the world over to join in a month-long strategic prayer campaign to protect the unregistered church in China as it faces the prospect of even greater persecution during the Games. Release warned that the Chinese Government is pursuing a tough crackdown on 'illegal religious activities' under the guise of preventing disruptions to the Games. The group has put together a prayer guide to cover the month of the Olympics, highlighting the Chinese Government's persecution of underground Christians trying to help in the aftermath of the Sichuan earthquake, the persecution in particular of the Uyghur ethnic minority Christians in Xinjiang province, and the arrest and detention of numerous house church leaders and Christian rights campaigners. Release is suggesting a prayer a day for 31 days. Simply choose when to begin your own prayer campaign.

Pray: that many would catch the vision and daily intercede for freedom of worship and Christian revival in China. (Ezr.8:23)

More: <http://www.releaseinternational.org/pages/posts/call-for-31-days-of-prayer-for-china410.php>

■ China: Pastor banished from Beijing prior to games

Chinese authorities have banished house church pastor Zhang Mingxuan from Beijing city for the duration of the Games. Zhang is a Christian itinerant evangelist who travelled throughout China before moving to Beijing in 1998. He is co-founder and president of the China House Church Alliance, established in April 2005 to defend the rights of house church Christians. Plainclothes police forcibly removed Zhang and his wife Xie Fenglan from a guesthouse in Beijing on July 18 and took them to Yanjiao, Hebei province, to prevent them from meeting foreign officials visiting Beijing for the Games. The couple had moved from one guesthouse to another at least six times prior to the raid to escape police harassment. They have since moved from Yanjiao to another remote town in Hebei to await the completion of the Games. Constant police crackdowns have reduced the number of house churches he has established over the past decade from more than 10 to just three.

Pray: for the thousands of Christians throughout China belonging to similar house churches who refused to register with official government agencies. (2Cor.8:5)

More: <http://www.compassdirect.org/en/display.php?page=news&lang=en&length=short&idelement=5507&backpage=su-mmaries>

■ Mauritania: Military stages coup

The sacked commander of Mauritania's presidential guards has taken control of the presidential palace in Nouakchott the capital and seized the president, the country's interior minister, and prime minister in what appears to be a bloodless coup. 'What is going on in Mauritania is a coup d'etat organised by rebels who were sacked by the president on Wednesday morning,' Abdullah Mamadouba, the official spokesman for the Mauritanian presidency, told Al Jazeera. Both Mauritanian television and radio went off air, with army units surrounding their main buildings. US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice

called for the release of the African country's leaders saying, 'The United States condemns the Mauritanian military's overthrow of the democratically elected Government of Mauritania and welcomes the statements by the African Union and the European Union condemning the coup, and calling for the restoration of constitutional legality.' Mauritians have a newborn democracy after elections last year, which saw the country's military rulers removed.

Pray: for stability and Godly laws to rule Mauritania and the Arab world. (Tit.3:1-2)

More: <http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5hfYVWDohy3sDNWqAv7OIriiNE9lg>

■ Iran: Christian couple killed by police

An Iranian Christian couple in their 60s died last week from injuries sustained when secret police raided a house church service hosted at their house and severely beat them, (see last issue P.A.3108) Less than a week after Abbas Amiri's funeral, his wife died from similar injuries and stress from her husband's death, according to Farsi Christian News Network (FCNN). The police also beat and arrested everyone in the church. All those arrested at the house meeting are reportedly still in custody including Amiri's daughter and the two minors.

Pray: against the controlling spirits of manipulation, intimidation and domination in this situation. (Eph.3:10)

More: <http://www.compassdirect.org/en/display.php?page=news&lang=en&length=short&idelement=5508&backpage=summaries>

■ Bangladesh: Christians flee after attack on House Church

Muslim militants raided and destroyed a 'house church' in Bangladesh as part of an operation to expel Christians from the region. The pastor of the house church, identified only as Majid, in the village of Buglegari was 'beaten up' during the August 1 raid. He was also forced to mention names of co-workers. Majid a former Muslim has fled to a safe area amid reports that he and other believers are under mounting pressure to 'reconvert' to Islam in the face of a witch hunt against missionaries and other Christians in the region. Those not running away are frightened to leave their homes amid fear they will be killed. 'Muslim villagers have asked local authorities to ban Christian activities, stating if their demands are not fulfilled within 20 days they threaten to take action themselves. The house church was opened last month for some seventy ex-Muslims and their families,' However the church members encountered fierce opposition from the very beginning.'

Pray: for the House Church movement in Bangladesh to be bold and fearless; to prosper and bless the communities that God has placed them in. (Mt.10:28)

More: <http://www.worthynews.com/christian/bangladesh-christians-flee-after-attack-on-house-church/>

PRAISE REPORTS

■ Korean missionaries harness energies for worldwide evangelisation

A Korean mission conference that drew 5,000 people from over 80 countries came to a close Friday with hope for future global mission and fulfilling the unfinished tasks of evangelising the whole world. The 6th Korean World Mission Conference consisted of daily services, mission forums and special lectures which provided missionaries with mission strategies from various mission specialists and scholars. These included the Rev Lorean Cunningham of Youth With A Mission, the Rev Reinhard Bonnke from Christ for All Nations, and Dr Ralph Winter of the US Centre for World Mission. At the closing service, the Rev Joon Won Kang, the chairman of KWMC, urged the missionaries in his message to keep going after the unreached. 'There are a lot of people running in this world but where are they running toward?' he asked. 'Run towards God and remember to direct others to running towards God', he added. The conference concluded with a new goal to send out 100,000 missionaries by 2030.

Praise: God for this gathering of His missionaries and their expanding vision. (Mt.28:19-20)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/korean.missionaries.harness.energies.for.worldwide.evangelisation/21152.htm>

■ Top Hamas leader's son converts to Christianity

The son of a top Hamas leader has converted to Christianity and prays some day his family will also accept Jesus Christ as their saviour, according to an Israeli newspaper. Masab Yousef, son of West Bank Hamas leader Sheik Hassan Yousef, revealed for the first time in an exclusive interview with Haaretz newspaper that he has left Islam and is now a Christian. Prior to the interview's publication last week, Yousef's family did not know of his faith conversion even though he is in regular contact with them. 'This interview will open many people's eyes, it will shake Islam from the roots, and I'm not exaggerating,' said Yousef, who now resides in the United States. 'What other case do you know where a son of a Hamas leader, who was raised on the tenets of extremist Islam, comes out against it?' Yousef was first exposed to Christianity eight years ago, where out of curiosity he accepted an invitation to hear about Christianity.

Praise: God for the Holy Spirit's redeeming work and pray for God's ongoing blessing for Yousef and others like him. (Ps.32:7-8)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/top.hamas.leaders.son.converts.to.christianity/21157.htm>

PRAYER FORUM OF BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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