

PRAYER ALERT...

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BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ **FRIDAY FOCUS: 12th September - Hope for our racially diverse society - Mark 12:28-34; Matthew 7:12**

'How we live together is one of the big challenges of the twenty-first century: as serious as climate change and more immediate'. **Give thanks:** for the freedom we have in our nations to welcome people from overseas. **Pray:** for wisdom for national and church leaders to discern a way forward in current dialogue, re: immigration and the care for asylum seekers; for guidance for those who work with the Human Rights Commission and the Churches' Commission on Racial Justice; for a situation highlighted in today's local or national news that reflects these issues. **Consider:** What is my attitude to a racially diverse society?

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

■ **Met police facing another racism claim from Muslim woman**

The Metropolitan police are facing another racial discrimination claim from a senior employee amid allegations that a failure of leadership in the force is allowing prejudice to flourish. Yasmin Rehman, a civilian who works with ethnic communities dealing with issues like honour killings and forced marriages, has been off sick for a year after allegedly facing bullying in the workplace. The claim comes after assistant commissioner Tarique Ghaffur, Britain's most senior Asian officer, announced he was taking legal action against the Met and Sir Ian Blair, the commissioner, for racial discrimination and just a day after he was temporarily relieved of his duties by Blair. The Met also recently faced a claim from Commander Shabir Hussain, who claimed he had been sidelined because of his race and turned down for promotion four times. Hussain last week lost his case, but the number of race claims emerging publicly has exposed a growing rift in the Met between black and Asian officers and the force.

Pray: for our police forces in general that this rift between black and Asian officers within the met would be broken. (Mt. 7:12)

More: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2008/sep/10/police.race1>

■ **Call for legal abortion in NI in spite of opposition**

A campaign has been launched to extend Great Britain's abortion law to Northern Ireland, even though the move is opposed by all four of the Province's major political parties. Currently, the Abortion Act 1967 does not apply in Northern Ireland, where abortion remains illegal unless the mother's life would be threatened by continuing the pregnancy. The campaign has the support of a minor party called the Progressive Unionist Party, but all four of the Province's major parties are opposed to the move. However, a number of MPs representing constituencies in Great Britain have tabled an amendment to the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill which would impose legalised abortion in Northern Ireland. The DUP's health spokeswoman, Iris Robinson, said: 'I and my party believe in the rights of the unborn child. We will resist any

and all attempts to introduce a liberalised abortion regime here'. At the time the 1967 Abortion Act was introduced, the pro-abortionists promised us it would be a panacea to solve many of society's social ills.

Pray: for the ability of the NI government to resist the imposition of liberalised abortion laws. (Is.33:22a)

More: <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/20080910/call-for-legal-abortion-in-ni-in-spite-of-opposition/>

■ Christians part of new coalition to challenge UK poverty

Churches and Christian groups are among the organisations coming together to form a new coalition challenging poverty in the UK. The Get Fair coalition, which launched this Thursday, included the Church of England, the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Methodist Church, the United Reformed Church, Church Action on Poverty, Church Urban Fund and Housing Justice. The 50 member organisations also include other faith bodies as well as charities such as Shelter, Oxfam and Help the Aged. Niall Cooper, National Coordinator of Church Action on Poverty, and coordinator of the Get Fair campaign, said: 'In the fifth richest country in human history there is no excuse for allowing the gap between rich and poor to continue to grow.' Cooper said that churches had a crucial role to play in eradicating poverty in the UK. 'Make Poverty History showed the power of the churches to take action to end global poverty. Our task, and our challenge, is now to bring this hope back home.'

Pray: for the Get Fair coalition as it takes up the challenge within the UK. (Pr.29:7)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/christians.part.of.new.coalition.to.challenge.uk.poverty/21383.htm>

■ Christians urged to support CERN experiment

Christians should support experiments such as the controversial CERN particle accelerator, a leading theologian and scientist has claimed. Speaking to ReligiousIntelligence.com, the Rev Dr David Wilkinson, Principal of St John's College with Cranmer Hall, Durham, said that such experiments were a response to a God-given curiosity in human beings. He said the ongoing experiments were perfectly safe but admitted that there was a small possibility that tiny black holes could be created as a result of the particle collisions. Dr Wilkinson was speaking to The Church of England Newspaper two days before CERN's Large Hadron Collider (LHC) on the border of France and Switzerland was switched on. The experiment – which has cost millions of Euros – has been criticised by some scientists who claim that the on-going experiments could create a big-bang. Dr Wilkinson believes that there is not enough energy involved to lead to the creation of a big bang.

Pray: for all those involved in these experiments that they will be granted wisdom in what they are doing and avoid taking steps too far. (Da.2:20-22)

More: <http://www.religiousintelligence.co.uk/news/?NewsID=2729>

■ Unions say Christian should be fired from equality board

The Trades Union Congress (TUC) wants Joel Edwards, the head of the Evangelical Alliance (EA), removed from his position on the Equality and Human Rights Commission. The TUC passed a motion calling for Mr Edwards' removal, proposed by the openly gay head of the National Union of Journalists, James Doherty. The TUC says that Mr Edwards should not be a Commissioner because the EA campaigned for religious liberty protections from new 'gay rights' laws. The new laws were lobbied for by homosexual group Stonewall, whose Chief Executive, Ben Summerskill, is also a Commissioner. Last year, a spokesman for the Commission said: 'Joel Edwards has been appointed by the Secretary of State and we welcome him joining the Commission. He is well qualified as leader of the EA and brings expertise both as a faith leader and a senior figure in the black community. The Equality and Human Rights Commission is supposed to represent a wide range of views and opinions and we welcome lively debate.'

Pray: that the Commission would not succumb to pressure from those who hold narrow views and would continue to keep a balanced representation. (Pr.12:20)

More: <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/20080909/unions-say-christian-should-be-fired-from-equality-board/>

EUROPE

■ WCC delegation finds deep wounds in South Ossetia

The destruction of ethnic Georgian communities in South Ossetia, the deep wounds to local society and war damage to the capital city confronted a delegation from the World Council of Churches on the second half of a 3-7 September pastoral visit to Georgia and Russia. The findings added urgency to concerns raised by government and church officials during a stop in Moscow. Villages - destroyed house by house - were the first sight the delegation saw as it reached South Ossetia by road from North Ossetia. Entire neighbourhoods are razed, mostly by demolition, by fire, or both. The delegates also saw instances of looting and arson, as well as carloads of people who appeared to be vigilantes. The day of the visit was nearly a month after the end of the war. South Ossetian representatives vowed to the delegation that they would never return the ethnically shared enclave to its status before the recent war. (See also Prayer Alert 3508, 3308 & 3208)

Pray: for a just solution to this problem and against any further conflict. (Ps.37:37)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/wcc.delegation.finds.deep.wounds.in.south.ossetia/21393.htm>

■ Russian ambassador warns Ukraine over Nato membership

Yuri Fedotov, the Russian ambassador to Britain, suggested that Nato membership for the Ukraine would damage economic relations between his country and the former Soviet republic. 'The expansion of Nato is seen in Russia as a hostile action,' the ambassador was reported as saying. 'We will never accept this. We cannot block expansion of Nato, but we can take measures to ensure our security.' The Ukraine, which has a population of 46 million, has had extremely close historical, cultural and economic links with Russia. Russia, however, does not want to see Nato expanded along its borders. Mr Fedotov said: 'The borders are virtually open. Should this country become a Nato member it means that we should take some measures to protect ourselves, and this may have an impact on this multitude of relations, ties and connections. It

might not only affect trade and economic relations but also people-to-people contacts. I hope common sense will prevail and that Nato countries think twice.' (See also Prayer Alert 3608)

Pray: for the situation along the borders between Russia and Nato nations that both sides will withdraw from confrontation. (Ps.46:9-10)

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/2796656/Russian-ambassador-Yuri-Fedotov-warns-Ukraine-over-Nato-membership.html>

WORLDWIDE

■ India: Attacks and reconversions continue in Orissa

PA Office is receiving horrendous reports from Orissa. The violent Hindu anti-Christian pogrom that erupted in Kandhamal district, Orissa (See Prayer Alert 3608) has spread to engulf nine districts indicating there is a high degree of VHP (World Hindu Council) co-ordination. According to the national president of the Global Council of Indian Christians, Mr Sajan K George, 'Truckloads of [Hindu] militants from neighbouring states of Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh have entered the area to back up the campaign. Armed with bombs, swords and guns these militants are pouncing on poor, weak and defenceless Christians.' Compass Direct reports that thousands of houses, churches and institutions have been damaged or destroyed in the violence. Some 3000 Christians have been forced to convert to Hinduism over recent days in order to save their lives. The police watch and do not intervene.

Pray: for the peace of God to indwell all those living in fear, for His power to demolish the spiritual oppression over the area and His justice to be established. (Ps.58)

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

■ Pakistan: Christians chose between conversion or death

On September 3 at least nine people of the Christian village of Shantinagar in Punjab province received letters threatening them to convert to Islam, or be killed or evicted from the area. In 1997 the same village was burnt and destroyed by a mob of about 2000 after Christians were allegedly accused of desecrating the Quran. In that attack 20,000 Bibles were also burnt, and although an inquiry was held no one was convicted. In many cases Christian, Hindu and Sikh women have been kidnapped and forcibly married to Muslim men after conversion. Last year Christian residents of Charsadda, Mardan and Peshawar in the conservative North West Frontier Province of Pakistan received similar letters and villagers of Shantinagar received identical messages twice last year, with the addition, 'Don't think we have forgotten you. We are after you and we will teach you a lesson.' Minority rights groups estimate that around 600 people a year are forcibly converted to Islam.

Pray: for God to prevent this situation from spreading and break the long standing oppression of Christians in various areas of Pakistan. (Ps.58:11)

More: <http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/2008/s08090060.htm>

■ Iran: Wave of harassment and violence

We are receiving reports from different sources indicating believers all over Iran are now experiencing a wave of severe harassment and persecution that seems to have started about a month ago. The report below from Assist News illustrates one incident, and we are hearing that believers throughout the country are fasting and praying. Two Christians from Muslim backgrounds were officially charged with apostasy last week at the Public and Revolutionary Court in Shiraz, raising fears for their continued well-being. According to the Bill of Indictment obtained by Farsi Christian News Network the prosecutor requested the death penalty for 53 year old Mahmoud Mohammad Matin-Azad and 40 year old Arash Ahmad-Ali Basirat by evoking the judge's constitutional obligations to refer to Shari'a law, and by citing Imam Khomeini's book, Tahrir-ul-Vasile, which stipulates the death penalty for apostasy. Mr Matin-Azad and Mr Basirat, have been detained since May 15 await a verdict. (info Iranian Church see

<http://www.prayerforiran.org/Sites/English/Prayer%20for%20the%20Church/tabid/112/Default.aspx>)

Pray: for many to unite in prayer with our brothers and sisters in Iran and for CSW's work on behalf of persecuted Christians in Iran to bear fruit. (Is.44:3-5)

More: <http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/2008/s08090054.htm>

■ Iraq: Two more Christians kidnapped then killed

Tariq Qattan a Christian doctor was kidnapped then killed after his family had paid £10,000 in ransom money. Another Christian, Nafi Haddad was kidnapped and murdered at the same time. It is unclear if a ransom was paid for Nafi. Kidnapping Christians for ransom money is common in Iraq. Terrorists are motivated by false notions that Christians have relatives in Western countries that can pay for their release. In fear of extinction the country's Christians in Iraq are urging America to create an autonomous region in northern Iraq called the Nineveh Plains where persecuted minorities can practise their faith, speak their language and work without fear of persecution. The Nineveh Plains is the ancestral homeland of Assyrian Christians – the largest Christian group in Iraq – and is the area where thousands of Christians from the cities have resettled to escape persecution.

Pray: that God will refresh the weary Christians living in war torn Iraq, and strengthen the faint hearted. (Jer.32:42-44)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/two.christians.kidnapped.then.killed.in.iraq/21364.htm>

■ Zimbabwe: Reconciling the past for a stable future

Zimbabwe's stop-start talks, stalled negotiations and the lexicon of logjam and political impasse have all conspired to consign the issue of transitional justice to the back burner. The country's history since independence, as well as its colonial past, makes it ripe for considering transitional justice measures to find a political solution that range from doing absolutely

nothing to the prosecution and punishment of those involved in human rights abuses. The details of negotiations between Mugabe's ruling ZANU-PF party and the opposition Movement for Democratic Change have been shrouded in secrecy since a memorandum of understanding ushering in the talks was signed on 21 July, although history suggests that those who concede power seek certain guarantees. **LATEST:** South African President Thabo Mbeki, who mediated the talks, said an agreement would be signed and made public on Monday.

Pray: that all our prayers for Zimbabwe will soon be answered and for God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. (2Ch.20:15)

More: <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=80277>

■ **Mexico: Suspects detained for 'massacre' of Evangelicals**

Mexican authorities have detained eight men in San Cristobal de las Casas prison for their alleged involvement in killing three native Indian Christians and seriously injuring six children with machetes. Among the suspects is a neighbour of the evangelical family who was upset about their 'many prayers' which he described as 'witchcraft,' prosecutors said. The man, identified by Mexican media as Antonio Gomez, blamed the prayers for the stomach ailment of his 11-year old daughter, according to prosecutors. The murders, described as 'a massacre' by Mexican media, have underscored the difficulties faced by evangelical Christians in several parts of Chiapas. There have been several attacks reported on Protestant communities in the region.

Pray: for the situation to be turned around by God's power of salvation, restoration and authority over evil. (Da.7:14)

More: <http://www.bosnewslife.com/americas/mexico/3777-mexico-detains-suspects-for-massacre-of>

■ **South Korea: Alleged religious bias by President**

South Korean President Lee Myung-bak, a Christian, expressed regret to Buddhists who accused his predominantly Christian Cabinet of discriminating against them. Buddhists accused Lee's administration of pro-Christian bias in personnel appointments and other policies. They noted he filled most of his Cabinet and top presidential posts with Christians. 'It is deeply regrettable that the heart of the Buddhist society has been hurt by words and deeds by some officials that could cause misunderstanding,' Lee said in the televised comments. In a further appeasement gesture, the government revised the code of conduct for public officials to include a clause that they should maintain religious neutrality when carrying out duties. South Korea is a country of religious diversity and no history of disputes between Christians and Buddhists. Buddhism is the oldest major religion in Korea, though Christianity has grown dramatically, especially during the 20th century.

Pray: for the increase of Christian authority over the area to have no end. (Is.9:7)

More: <http://ap.google.com/article/ALeqM5hr5XmoJ6XpUPNtzOA-WYSz80xjswD9330IQG0>

PRAISE REPORTS

■ **World-wide: Growth of Bible distribution**

Bible Society announced this week that there had been a world-wide growth of five percent in Bible and scripture portion distribution in 2007. This maintains a consistent trend from the previous year. Almost 27 million Bibles, vast numbers of Testaments, Portions and selections (the latter designed to convey the essence of the Gospel succinctly or tailored for people in a particular situation). Altogether the number of Scripture items distributed totalled 391 million. (Note: Back to Bible Sunday on Oct.25)

Praise: God for his people who research, translate, distribute and teach His Word. (Heb.4:12;Rev.1:16)

More: <http://au.christiantoday.com/article/27-million-bibles-distributed-during-2007-by-bible-societies-worldwide/4231.htm>

■ **Guatemala: Praise God for indigenous work**

Kekchi (kek) is one of 50+ Mayan languages still spoken in Guatemala today. This people-group numbers approximately 700,000 and are located in northern Guatemala extending into Belize. Many are migrating to California and New York. They are animistic and are greatly influenced by the trend to switch back to the old Mayan religion. However, the Kekchi Bible has had a tremendous impact on the Kekchis resulting in a people's movement in the '80 when thousands turned to the Lord. They continue today with a concern for reaching their own people with the Gospel. The Nazarene, Southern Baptists, Mennonites, and various Pentecostal groups are all using the Kekchi Bible and hold their services in the Kekchi language. They are proud of their Kekchi culture and language, but still burdened to reach others with the true Gospel message. It is an indigenous work that will continue long after all expatriates have left the country.

Praise: God for the anointing that works through His Word healing citizens, communities, countries and continents. (Ps.68)

More: <http://www.biblegateway.com/blog/?p=96>

PRAYER FORUM OF BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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