

# PRAYER ALERT...

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

### ■ **FRIDAY FOCUS: 24th October - Finding true hope - Matthew 5:14-16; John 8:12**

The search for spirituality in our pluralist society takes many forms.

**Give thanks:** for the thousands of churches taking part in Hope08 sharing the good news of Jesus in their communities.

**Pray:** for our Hindu and Sikh neighbours and communities as they celebrate Diwali - the festival of lights on 28th Oct; that at this time, Jesus the Light of the world will reveal Himself; for those I know who are searching for 'God', that they will find His light.

**Consider:** how can I be a light to them through both word and deed?

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

### ■ **Atheist posters are 'great adverts for Christianity', says think tank**

A think tank set up with the support of the heads of the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales says an atheist bus advert campaign will 'encourage people to think about God'. The British Humanist Association's adverts have made headlines over their provocative slogan, 'There's probably no God. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life.' More than £30,000 has been raised for the four-week campaign, which will see the posters splashed across 30 of London's bendy buses next January. The BHA is also considering extending the campaign to cities including Birmingham, Manchester and Edinburgh. Prominent atheist and author of 'The God Delusion', Professor Richard Dawkins had offered to match donations up to £5,500. The posters are the atheist answer to a number of high profile Christian advertising campaigns on London buses and billboards, notably the Alpha Course, whose posters ask, 'Is this it?' and 'If God did exist, what would you ask him?'

**Pray:** that as this campaign rolls out God will use it to bring people to a realisation that He does exist. (1Jn.4:15)

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/atheist.posters.are.great.adverts.for.christianity.says.think.tank/21705.htm>

### ■ **MPs support embryology proposals but abortion law changes fail**

MPs have backed the controversial Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill after an hour long debate overshadowed by a row about the handling of abortion issues. The bill promises the biggest shake-up of embryology laws for nearly 20 years. After passing its third and final reading in the Commons by a large majority, the bill will now go the Lords. MPs voted Wednesday on issues including the growing of 'hybrid embryos' for stem cells but MPs from all parties complained ministers had blocked debate on changes to abortion laws, describing their actions as 'shabby' and 'disgraceful'. No time was allowed

for votes on other issues, including extending abortion rights to Northern Ireland and a measure which would have cut the number of doctors needed to approve an abortion from two to one. MPs were also unable to discuss the creation of 'saviour siblings' - where an embryo is created to produce cells or organs for an older child suffering from disease.

**Pray:** that the embryology law will be used wisely and not lead to unlawful extensions. Continue praying that any attempt to liberalise the Abortion Act will be thwarted. (Dt.4:39)

**More:** [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk\\_politics/7682722.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/7682722.stm)

#### ■ UK police start 'honour' crime plan

New guidelines have been issued by the UK's Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) in an attempt to better protect potential victims of 'honour' violence and improve conviction rates. The move comes amid mounting concerns that the crimes - carried out to protect or defend the honour of a family or community - are far more widespread than previously thought. ACPO estimates at least one 'honour' killing is carried out each month in the UK, although campaigners estimate the number of deaths is far higher. 'Honour' killings were once almost unheard of in the UK but the issue has become far more prominent in recent years. Steve Allen, commander in the Metropolitan Police Service and ACPO lead on honour-based violence, said: 'To the best of our knowledge, 12 people are murdered every year for transgressing someone else's perverted notions of honour. We do not know how many commit suicide as an alternative or an escape.'

**Pray:** that the authorities will be able to control this form of abuse and that God will speak into the minds of those who believe it is right. (Ps.12:8)

**More:** <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/europe/2008/10/2008102292619942890.html>

#### ■ Lessons on sex to be compulsory

Lessons about personal, social and health matters including sex are to be compulsory in all England's schools for the first time. The government is setting up a review of how best to achieve this. Schools Minister Jim Knight said this would factor in a school's ethos, pupils' needs and parents' values. A BBC poll of more than 1,000 people found two thirds would support sex lessons from the age of 11. A review of the subject of personal, social and health education (PSHE) - including education about sex and drugs - was ordered after ministers said teaching was 'patchy'. They said they were concerned that there were some serious gaps in young people's education, especially when it came to subjects like sex and relationships and drug or alcohol misuse. Until now it has only been compulsory to teach children in science lessons about the biology of reproduction and changing bodies. In Wales, sex and relationship education is already part of the curriculum and it is a legal requirement in Northern Ireland. (See also Prayer Alert 3508 & 2808)

**Pray:** that these proposed changes will lead to sensible teaching on sex and a greater improvement in relationships and health matters. (Ex.18:20)

**More:** <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/7684810.stm>

#### ■ Broken homes leave children miserable

Children from broken homes are almost five times as likely to suffer from emotional disorders as those whose parents stay together, new research shows. The findings from the Office of National Statistics add to the mounting evidence of the damage caused by family breakdown, with experts warning things could get worse. Family breakdown was far more significant than most 'household' factors such as financial circumstances, although having two unemployed parents was also a factor. Children from so-called 'reconstituted' families containing step-parents and step-siblings were also more likely to suffer emotional problems. Patricia Morgan, academic and expert on the subject of family breakdown, said: 'This does not come as a surprise, and things are going to get worse. Broken families and serial fathers produce homes full of conflict and chaos and they are terrible for children.' Another study released earlier this month showed that one in four children of cohabiting parents suffer family breakdown before they start school at the age of five.

**Pray:** for all those who suffer because of broken relationships, especially the children, that God will intervene and bring healing. (Ecc.4:12)

**More:** <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/20081022/broken-homes-leave-children-miserable/>

#### ■ Video: Northern Ireland - Keeping the Faith Debate

Can churches ever keep up with changes in society?

**More:** [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern\\_ireland/7686847.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/7686847.stm)

## EUROPE

#### ■ Turkey: Still no justice for Christians murdered

Three Christians were brutally tortured and killed at a publishing house in Turkey on April 18, 2007. Lawyers and judges in the case are continuing to investigate whether the attack was masterminded by troubled youths or shadowy elements of the Turkish state. (see also Prayer Alerts 1507,1607,1608) Plaintiff attorneys believe the first witness at the hearing last Thursday, a local journalist, incited the suspected ringleader of the attacks to murder by convincing him foreign missionaries were connected to the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK), an outlawed terrorist organization. The suspected ringleader said he was promised state immunity for the planned attacks. In January police started arresting 70 members of Ergenekon, an ultranationalist cabal of retired generals, politicians, journalists and mafia members under investigation for conspiracy in recent murders. Investigations have linked the cabal to high-profile attacks, murders and plans to engineer domestic chaos and ultimately overthrow the government. Evidence in the Christians case indicates there was a bridge between the murder suspects and Ergenekon.

**Pray:** for God to work through Judge Gurtekin to finally bring justice for the families and organisations tainted by these dark connections. The next hearing is scheduled for Nov. 21. (Jas.1:2-4 & Col.1:10-12)

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

#### ■ **Belarus: Protestant bishop deported**

The Ukrainian founder of one of the largest charismatic churches in the Belarusian capital Minsk was deported on 16 October due to his religious activity, he has suggested to Forum 18 News Service. If so, Veniamin Brukh – a bishop in the Full Gospel Church – will be the 22nd foreigner barred from Belarus for religious activity since 2004. Previous cases have involved both Protestants and Catholics. Under the restrictive Religion Law, foreigners require special state permission – on top of a valid entry visa – to perform a leading role in a religious community. Only registered religious umbrella associations have the right to invite foreigners to conduct religious activity. Even if the state's highest religious affairs official decides that religious work by a foreigner is necessary, stringent controls still apply to that person's activities. Asked for the reasons for Bishop Brukh's deportation, a KGB secret police spokesman told Forum 18 that 'The person who is supposed to know knows. I'm not supposed to know.' The KGB closely monitors religious communities' activity.

**Pray:** that the authorities of Belarus would be more open and accepting of visiting religious leaders.

**More:** <http://www.forum18.org/>

## WORLDWIDE

#### ■ **Zimbabwe: Christian Aid releases emergency funds for farming crisis**

Farmers in Zimbabwe's Midlands province are being given a desperately needed help of emergency funds to provide seeds and conservation farming tuition to farmers for a year by Christian Aid. The UN has warned that half of the country's population will soon face starvation and the UN's humanitarian chief, has called for urgent measures to provide seed and fertiliser for next year's harvest to avoid millions more people becoming reliant on aid. The Midlands province is battling a severe food crisis. Farmers unions meanwhile have predicted that food aid will be crucial for the next eighteen months at least, because of the poor harvest projections resulting from lack of seed and fertiliser. The BBC reported on Thursday's Today programme about people already beginning to starve, with many only eating one meal a day that consists of roots and wild berries they have been able to forage out of the rock solid ground.

**Pray:** for God in His mercy to rain down justice in the spirit and much needed water in the natural on the land of Zimbabwe. (Job.5:10-13)

**More:** <http://allafrica.com/stories/200810150038.html>

#### ■ **Congo: Renewed violence**

The Security Council voiced deep concern over recent resurgences of violence in the easternmost provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo warning of its potential to undermine the wider Great Lakes region of Central Africa. The panel said it was especially concerned about the humanitarian effects on the area's civilians and urged Government forces and rebel groups to respect a ceasefire. The Council condemns the continuing recruitment and use of children by armed groups as well as the prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence. It urges all parties to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian, human rights, and refugee laws. Thousands of people have been displaced from their homes in eastern Congo in recent weeks because of fighting between Government forces (known as the FARDC) and the rebel National Congress for People's Defence (CNDP).

**Pray:** for God to break the violent undercurrents and use the peacekeeping missions to bring reconciliation. (Pr.29:16)

**More:** <http://www.religiousintelligence.co.uk/news/?NewsID=3117>

#### ■ **Somali: Pirates hard to defeat**

Nato's anti-piracy patrol off the coast of Somalia is due to start soon but they says it will be difficult to defend ships from pirate attacks. (See Prayer Alert 4008). The time that a pirate is identified to the time that he's onboard ship is very brief, and rules of engagement are still being debated by Nato. More than 30 ships have been seized this year in the Gulf of Aden. Around 20,000 vessels pass by Somalia each year. Many carry UN aid to Somalia where almost half of the population, are in need of food aid. Piracy off the coast of Somalia is estimated to have cost up to \$30m (£17m) in ransoms so far this year while the Somalis are powerless to confront the pirates. Most vessels are freed after their owners pay the hefty sums. Human Rights Watch says Somalia is the most ignored tragedy in the world.

**Pray:** for God to give the peacekeepers strategies to enable safe passage of much needed aid to Somalia and the wider communities suffering wars, drought and hyperinflation. (La.2:19)

**More:** <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/7683678.stm>

#### ■ **Iraq: Money fails to persuade Christians to return to Mosul**

Few Iraqi Christians are returning to the restive city of Mosul despite government pledges of financial support and protection officials said today. Every Christian family that comes back to Mosul would receive 1 million Iraqi dinars (about \$865) on orders of the prime minister. But only a handful of Christians have returned. Nearly 10,000 Christians, roughly half the city's Christian population, have fled this month because of threats and attacks, (see last weeks Prayer Alert). Sunni insurgents are believed to be behind the campaign to drive them out. The recent series of killings, widely blamed on al-Qaida in Iraq, has occurred as the religious minority stepped up lobbying efforts to ensure its representation in upcoming provincial elections in the predominantly Muslim country.

**Pray:** for God's justice, mercy and safety for Christians in Iraq (Mic.6:8)

**More:** <http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/headline/world/6071722.html>

#### ■ **Worldwide: Persecuted Church**

Many brothers and sisters in Christ in more than sixty nations do not have the full freedom to confess Jesus as Lord and Saviour in our world. Just to give you two examples when you read this some two thousand Christians are in prison in Eritrea and thousands have lost their homes in India as a result of anti-Christian attacks. More than 100 million Christians face disinformation, discrimination and persecution only because they want to follow Jesus Christ. And they are your brothers and sisters! They easily feel alone - in the jungle, in a hiding place or in a prison. Sunday November 9th is the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church (IDOP)2008. We are challenged to do whatever we can so that the Church internationally sends a strong signal to our brother and sister saying, 'YOU ARE NOT ALONE!' A link for information and resources can be found by clicking the More button.

**Pray:** for God to work through every situation where the power of God's Holy Spirit faces Satanic opposition. (Is.65:1)

**More:** <http://www.idop.org:80/>

#### ■ **South Africa:Poverty 'emergency'**

One in four South Africans are unemployed, and poverty is rife. A former Anglican archbishop of Cape Town has described poverty in South Africa as being worse than ever. Having met communities affected by poverty across the country, Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane said South Africa was in 'a state of emergency'. 'The anger, the frustration and the feeling of hopelessness especially among young people is a recipe for possible disaster,' he said. Official figures suggest around 25% of South Africans are unemployed. 'Never before in the history of South Africa have such large gatherings of people consistently said 'we have no food,' said the archbishop. Speaking to journalists in Cape Town on Wednesday, he challenged government ministers to go with him, village by village, to tell people what would be done to help them kick-start and maintain agricultural production to feed their families.

**Pray:** into the impact of extreme hunger, widespread unemployment, the prevalence of Aids and tuberculosis, lack of primary health care, inadequate social security, government inactivity on all these. (Is.9:5,6)

**More:** <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/7685253.stm>

## PRAISE REPORTS

#### ■ **China: GOD TV**

For the past four years, global Christian broadcaster GOD TV has been steadily making inroads into the Far East with daily broadcasts in Hong Kong. But now, in an unprecedented development, millions in China can access GOD's mix of Christian programming 24-hours-a- day. The expansion follows the launch of GOD TV's dedicated Greater China service on 16 October 2008, which is broadcast directly from Jerusalem via two new satellites, providing the entire Far East region with Christian programming that is catered specifically to Chinese viewers. The utilisation of these two satellites yields a powerful combination reaching mainland China, Vietnam, Korea, the Philippines and Japan. GOD TV was the first English language Christian broadcaster in Hong Kong with a sizeable Chinese viewership, but now God has opened up Greater China by providing a literally unprecedented opening, which is going to be one of the most significant outreaches in GOD TV history.

**Praise:** God for the way he is using Christian media to deliver His message of salvation in indigenous languages internationally. (Rev.22:17)

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/god.tv.debut.in.china/21694.htm>

#### ■ **America: Abortion survivor's story**

Thirty-one years ago, Gianna Jessen's mom aborted her. After being burned alive for about 18 hours by the saline solution, Gianna was delivered alive in a Los Angeles County abortion clinic. She weighed just 2 pounds at birth, and doctors said she would never crawl or walk. Today, Gianna walks with a slight limp and runs marathons. She's also taking on Sen. Barack Obama on abortion. In a recent interview she said, 'I ran the Boston Marathon and the London Marathon. It's kind of adventurous for a girl with cerebral palsy. Also, I've had the honour of meeting the president and speaking before Congress. And I've just returned from Australia, where I was speaking in the Parliament and House. Every year that I think God must be finished He seems to open up the doors wider. My life is so much bigger than just an issue. I'm not consumed by the abortion issue, which I think is healthy. I have a beautiful life.'

**Praise:** God for the life he gives to us all and pray for His spirit to infuse compassion in hearts and minds for the most vulnerable in our society. (Lk.18:16; Ps.139:13-16)

**More:** [http://www.breakingchristiannews.com/articles/display\\_art.html?ID=5939](http://www.breakingchristiannews.com/articles/display_art.html?ID=5939)

## PRAYER FORUM OF BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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