



# PRAYER ALERT...

An initiative of the Prayer Forum of the British Isles & Ireland  
[www.prayer-alert.net](http://www.prayer-alert.net) editor@prayer-alert.net

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## ■ British Isles & Ireland

- [\*\*FRIDAY FOCUS: Hope Revolution - Colossians 1:9-13; Proverbs 4:1-7\*\*](#)
- [Micah Challenge presses Brown on climate change action](#)
- [One in 10 children suffer abuse, say experts](#)
- [Church gay advert breached codes](#)
- [Parents' fury as advertisement on buses for 18-certificate film is ruled acceptable](#)
- [Anger after BBC1 boss praises 'responsible' Jonathan Ross](#)
- [Fed up with bad language? Then tell the Prime Minister!](#)

## ■ Europe

- [Norway: Treaty signed to ban cluster bombs](#)
- [France: Activists sue African presidents](#)

## ■ Worldwide

- [India-Pakistan: US preparing to strike](#)
- [Brazil: Worst floods in history](#)
- [Nigeria: Religious violence explodes in Jos](#)
- [Zimbabwe: Riots relating to doctors, nurses and striking soldiers](#)
- [Iraq: Resolution needed](#)
- [Canada: PM vows to stop attempt to topple government](#)

## ■ Praise Reports

- [Nativity comic books for multicultural Britain](#)
- [Canadians uplift and upload with 'Amazing Grace'](#)

## BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

### ■ **FRIDAY FOCUS: Hope Revolution - Colossians 1:9-13; Proverbs 4:1-7**

Thousands of young people were invited to join the Hope08 adventure. **Give thanks:** for each young person who responded to the challenge to 'Change Me, Change My Friends and Change My Community'. **Pray:** for every young person who has chosen to follow Jesus that they will grow in faith; for wisdom for those following up all the young people who have made commitments; for resources, for organisations like Soul Survivor, Youth for Christ, The Message as they work with young people. **Consider:** how can I help a young person I know grow in faith?

**More:** [http://www.worldprayer.org.uk/uploads/FF8\\_Quarterly\\_word\\_version.doc](http://www.worldprayer.org.uk/uploads/FF8_Quarterly_word_version.doc)

### ■ **Micah Challenge presses Brown on climate change action**

Campaigners from churches across the UK have signed and sent postcards to Prime Minister Gordon Brown asking him to keep his promises to the poor and secure a global deal that helps poor communities adapt to the effects of climate change. Members of Micah Challenge UK handed in nearly 2,000 postcards to 10 Downing Street yesterday ahead of this month's UN climate change talks in Poland. The postcards were part of the Micah Sunday campaign this year which saw hundreds of UK churches get involved by engaging with the issues that affect the world's poorest people. Micah Challenge UK is a coalition of Christian organisations and churches in Britain united in their concern to fight global poverty. It is part of the international Micah Challenge movement of churches and Christian agencies uniting to hold their governments to account for the promises they made towards the fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger by 2015.

**Pray:** that world leaders will understand the impact of climate change on the world's poorest and vulnerable people and that talks must be inclusive and generous towards these communities. (Gal.2:10)

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.co.uk/article/micah.challenge.presses.brown.on.climate.change.action/22043.htm>

### ■ **One in 10 children suffer abuse, say experts**

The true scale of the maltreatment of children in the UK is revealed by child abuse experts today who say that one in 10 suffers physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect. Unlike Baby P, who died in Haringey, North London, while on the at-risk register after months of abuse and neglect, most maltreated children are not even referred to the authorities. A series of papers published today by the Lancet medical journal in collaboration with the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, paints a grim picture of the unseen sufferings of an estimated 1 million children a year in the UK. Between 4 and 16% of children suffer physical abuse, such as hitting, punching, beating and burning, according to a paper by Ruth Gilbert and colleagues from University College London's Institute of Child Health. The figures come from research in high-income countries, including the UK, which is not thought to differ from the average.

**Pray:** for children facing abuse and that those responsible for the welfare of children, and organisations charged with their care, will be able to meet the needs of vulnerable youngsters. (Mt.19:4)

**More:** <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2008/dec/03/child-abuse-lancet-baby-p>

### ■ Church gay advert breached codes

A newspaper advertisement placed by Sandown Free Presbyterian Church in Belfast breached advertising codes, the Advertising Standards Authority has ruled. The advert was published in the News Letter in August and referred to homosexuality as an 'abomination'. The ASA said the advertisement had caused 'serious offence' to some readers and particular care should be taken in the future. However, it did not uphold a complaint that the advert was likely to provoke violence or anti-social behaviour. The minister of Sandown, Reverend David McIlveen, said they did the right thing. 'We've no apology for the statement that we made and we believe that it was necessary for us as a church to make a statement on what the Bible teaches about sodomy,' he said. 'We cannot apologise for the teaching of the Bible - it is a statement of faith, it was not done to deliberately inflame people but we recognise by the very nature of the Bible's message it does bring offence for certain people.'

**Pray:** for all those within the church who are standing up for Christian biblical principles that God would use them for His purpose. (Da.11:31-32)

**More:** [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern\\_ireland/7761883.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/7761883.stm)

### ■ Parents' fury as advertisement on buses for 18-certificate film is ruled acceptable

An advert featuring a word banned from being broadcast before the television watershed has been criticised after it appeared on city buses. Parents in Edinburgh hit out at adverts for the film Zack and Miri Make a Porno for exposing young children to the word 'porno'. And they were further enraged when their complaint to the local authority was blocked by a firewall – because of the word 'porno'. The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) – which has received 149 complaints over the issue – ruled the posters are acceptable as neither they, nor the film, promote pornography. Andrea Becquemont, an Edinburgh parent, said she was shocked to see the word emblazoned across Lothian buses. She said: 'We were in the car and I was lost for words when my eight-year-old asked me what a porno was. I just said it's a silly word they use for adult movies. I couldn't think of anything else to say.'

**Pray:** for parents everywhere that they will be given the wisdom and ability to protect their children from the evil excesses of the world. (Pr.3:13-14)

**More:** <http://thescotzman.scotsman.com/scotland/39So-what39s-porno-Mummy39-.4750203.jp>

### ■ Anger after BBC1 boss praises 'responsible' Jonathan Ross

It led to weeks of protests, 42,000 complaints from listeners, and a series of resignations and a grovelling apology from the BBC. Yet remarkably, Jonathan Ross's lead role in the 'Sachsgate' affair has been defended by the controller of BBC1. Jay Hunt described the foul-mouthed entertainer as a 'responsible broadcaster' and laid the blame for the situation not on Ross but on the corporation itself. Miss Hunt, who has been in charge of BBC1 for six months, said: 'He is a responsible broadcaster and he can take direction. He's hugely contrite about what happened. He knows that he crossed the line. I genuinely think Jonathan had reason to expect that the BBC compliance processes would detect a point where he had overstepped the mark. On this occasion, for a variety of reasons, the systems broke down and that didn't happen. I don't necessarily think that means that you automatically leap to sacking a key piece of talent like Jonathan.'

**Pray:** for the BBC, its trustees, producers and broadcasters that they will realise their responsibilities. (Jer.8:12-13)

**More:** <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1090586/Anger-BBC1-boss-praises--8216-responsible-8217-Jonathan-Ross.html>

### ■ Fed up with bad language? Then tell the Prime Minister!

A new online petition to the Prime Minister has been launched by mediawatch-uk, the organisation campaigning for good taste and decency on TV since the 1960s, calling for him to intervene with broadcasters and film-makers to remove unnecessary swearing from TV programmes and films. <http://petitions.number10.gov.uk/StopSwearingOnTV/> The petition follows on from the controversy surrounding obscene telephone messages made to Andrew Sachs by Russell Brand and Jonathan Ross. Speaking today (Monday) John Beyer, director of mediawatch-uk said he is delighted the petition is going so well. 'We have known for a very long time that many people are offended by swearing that is presented as entertainment on the main television channels.'

**Pray:** that this campaign will lead to changes to the attitude of our media over the use of offensive language. (Mt.5:34-37)

**More:** [http://www.mediawatchuk.org.uk/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=376&Itemid=92](http://www.mediawatchuk.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=376&Itemid=92)

## EUROPE

### ■ Norway: Treaty signed to ban cluster bombs

A landmark treaty to ban some forms of cluster bomb has been signed by more than 100 nations in Oslo. Norway, which played a key role in hammering out the worldwide ban on using, producing, transferring and stockpiling cluster munitions, was the first country to sign the Convention on Cluster Munitions on Wednesday. Jonas Gahr Støre, the Norwegian foreign minister, said: 'This is a historic day when a majority of states are committing to ban cluster munitions, making a new international norm that will make a considerable difference for thousands and thousands of people all over the world.' Nations at the conference also called on major arms producers such as China, Russia and the United States to join them in signing the treaty. Handicap International, a campaign group, says about 100,000 people have been killed or maimed by cluster bombs worldwide since 1965, with 98 per cent of them civilians. More than a quarter of the victims are children.

**Pray:** that the world's major arms producers will also sign up to this treaty. Pray for all those who have been affected by their use. (Is.2:4)

**More:** <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/europe/2008/12/2008123141741565420.html>

#### ■ **France: Activists sue African presidents**

French anti-corruption campaigners have filed a suit against three African heads of state, accusing them of buying properties in France that could not be financed with their official earnings. Presidents Omar Bongo of Gabon, Denis Sassou Nguesso of the Republic of Congo and Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo of Equatorial Guinea, whose countries export crude oil, have rejected past accusations of corruption from numerous non-governmental groups. The French chapter of Transparency International, a Berlin-based independent watchdog, on Tuesday filed a suit against the three to try to force the French justice system to look into how they were able to buy huge real estate portfolios. 'There is no doubt that these assets could not be bought using only the official salaries and benefits of these heads of state,' it said in a statement.

**Pray:** against corruption and greed amongst the leaders of the nations. (Mt.6:19-21)

**More:** [http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?click\\_id=68&art\\_id=vn20081203051528866C200640&set\\_id=](http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?click_id=68&art_id=vn20081203051528866C200640&set_id=)

## WORLDWIDE

#### ■ **India-Pakistan: US preparing to strike**

The United States has set the stage for punitive internationally-backed strikes by India against terrorist camps in Pakistan, if Islamabad does not act first to dismantle them, by rejecting President Zardari's alibi that non-state actors were responsible for the last week's carnage in Mumbai. Also The Evangelical Alliance reports, 'The Mumbai terror attack could soon be dwarfed by the crisis it has triggered. For political gain, the Hindu-nationalist BJP is exploiting mass anger and fear, accusing the Congress-led UPA government of failing the people, and exhorting the masses to vote BJP if they want security. The Indian government will be committing political suicide if it fails to deliver a strong response. The Pakistani government is presently weak and its army is fractured. The al-Qaeda-Taliban jihadists are snapping at the heels of Peshawar in the north-west with a view to capturing the city and cutting the vital NATO supply-line into Afghanistan. The government of Pakistan cannot fight on two fronts -if the army is forced to deploy to the Indian border, the north-west could fall to al-Qaeda-Taliban forces. Consequences for the region's Church, and for global security, could be far-reaching. Please pray.'

**Pray:** as the Lord leads, into this possibly al-Qaeda engineered crisis hitting the South Asian subcontinent. (Ps.9:7-10)

**More:** [http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/US\\_sets\\_stage\\_for\\_strikes\\_if\\_Pak\\_does\\_not\\_act/articleshow/3789520.cms](http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/US_sets_stage_for_strikes_if_Pak_does_not_act/articleshow/3789520.cms)

#### ■ **Brazil: Worst floods in history**

Flooding and mudslides have killed nearly 100 people in southern Brazil. Christian relief groups are on the ground helping victims of a flood being labelled the 'worst environmental calamity' in the history of Brazil's Santa Catarina state. Some 1.5 million people have been affected and the death toll has reached 116 in the flood-ravaged state. The downpour of rain in the past two months, including 35 inches of rain in November, has left 80,000 people homeless. Officials are investigating reports of an outbreak of a potentially fatal water-borne disease. Santa Catarina governor Luiz Henrique da Silveira called the flooding 'the worst environmental calamity we have ever faced', according to The Associated Press. Amid the calamity, Operation Blessing International, The Salvation Army and a number of local churches have partnered to help the flood victims.

**Pray:** that all the needed relief supplies reach the affected areas despite the destruction of roads and other infrastructure. (Job.37:23)

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/christian.groups.respond.to.deadly.flood.in.brazil/22058.htm>

#### ■ **Nigeria: Religious violence explodes in Jos**

A Muslim programme against Christians erupted in Jos central Nigeria last weekend after reports of Christian-dominated People's Democratic Party winning the council elections, defeating the Muslim, pro-Sharia All Nigeria Peoples Party. Christian death toll is over 100. At least 16 churches have been burnt and four pastors are dead. Up to 400 Muslims died in clashes with police and security forces. Most of the 500 Muslims arrested are outsiders who arrived days in advance, some wearing fake military uniforms. Local Christian leaders believe the violence was pre-planned and that the Muslims had been waiting for an excuse to unleash it. The danger is Muslims will seek revenge for the high Muslim death toll, most media have failed to report that the rioters died fighting the security forces. Southern Nigeria is predominantly Christian whilst northern Nigeria is predominantly Muslim. An ethnic-religious fault-line runs through the centre. For decades Nigeria was ruled by military dictators from the north.

**Pray:** against the rise of Islamic jihad and for the comfort of Christ to enfold those who have lost their churches, pastors or other loved ones. (Is.57:15)

**More:** [http://www.barnabasfund.org/news/archives/article.php?ID\\_news\\_items=433](http://www.barnabasfund.org/news/archives/article.php?ID_news_items=433)

#### ■ **Zimbabwe: Riots relating to doctors, nurses and striking soldiers**

Riot police beat around 200 striking doctors and nurses in Harare who were demanding better pay and equipment. They took cover in wards as reports emerged of dozens more dead in a fast-spreading cholera outbreak. They are forced to work without basic drugs, adequate water and sanitation, safe clothing gear, medical equipment or basic support services. Also soldiers who have not been paid attacked black-market currency dealers and looted shops and on one occasion were fired upon by riot police. The secretary-general of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions was arrested while addressing workers, along with nine other people, the organisation said in a statement, while more than 30 were held around the country. It said 10 of its members were 'heavily assaulted' by police in Harare. The authorities revealed that the incidents had been more widespread than previously thought.

**Pray:** and continue to pray that what we are seeing now will result in Zimbabwe's release from illegitimate rule.(Jer.23:1-4)

**More:** <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/zimbabwe/3545085/Zimbabwean-police-use-batons-against-doctors.html>

#### ■ Iraq: Resolution needed

Mosul is al-Qaida's last major urban stronghold and a flashpoint along the Kurdish-Arab divide. When the police department advertised for college graduates to fill 200 positions as traffic policemen, it was deluged with 2,000 applications. 'Half of the terrorists would be defeated if we defeat unemployment,' says police Gen. Khalid Soltan. As U.S. and Iraqi forces battle insurgents in the streets, Mosul faces enormous economic and political problems. Fixing Mosul is a test of whether the Baghdad government can successfully grapple with potentially explosive forces beneath a still fragile stability achieved elsewhere in Iraq. The solutions are; more jobs, good police and a generous dose of brotherly love. But the devil is in Mosul's wrenchingly complex catalogue of; a dozen Sunni insurgent groups, hostility among the seven major groups and 26 tribes; unemployment at over 60% and electricity for only four hours a day.

**Pray:** for all authorities involved in stabilising Mosul to have the wisdom of Solomon, the patience of Job, and the anointing of David, to bring about all the changes needed. (Pr.2:6-9)

**More:** <http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5gZ1zZo-sl9gABszUO6ptYNeMtlAD94RD0DGO>

#### ■ Canada: PM vows to stop attempt to topple government

Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper has said he will use 'every legal means' to block plans by the opposition to topple his minority government. In a televised address, Mr Harper said that a coalition government backed by 'separatists' would not help Canada in the face of a global economic crisis. On Thursday, he was expected to ask the governor general to suspend parliament to avoid a confidence vote next week. The Liberals and New Democrats agreed on Monday to form an alliance, backed by the Bloc Quebecois, saying the Conservative government was failing to tackle Canada's economic problems. In a televised appeal on Wednesday Mr Harper said the opposition pact was a threat to the country's democracy and economy. The crisis comes just seven weeks after Harper was re-elected with a stronger mandate but still a minority in the country's third election in four years.

**Pray:** that all involved would be wise with God's wisdom, for all action taken to be righteous and all dialogue to be honest. (Is.59:1)

**More:** <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/7764071.stm>

## PRAISE REPORTS

#### ■ Nativity comic books for multicultural Britain

Church leaders have produced Beano-style comic books, featuring Santa and snowmen alongside the traditional Christmas characters, to help primary school children learn the story of the nativity. The comic, called Christmas Crackers, begins the story of the virgin birth in true Dennis the Menace style. The comics, which can be read online or downloaded from the diocese's website, follow growing concerns that in multicultural Britain, many children do not actually know the Christmas story. One survey has suggested that nearly half of children were not aware of the true meaning of Christmas. And it is estimated that only one in five primary schools now put on a nativity play to teach the children about baby Jesus.

**Praise:** that amidst the media clamour for a commercial Christmas, our youngsters can receive and learn about the true message of Christmas proclaiming God's gift of Emmanuel, Christ with us. (Ro.15:20)

**More:** <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/faith/article5263819.ece>

#### ■ Canadians uplift and upload with 'Amazing Grace'

Thousands of voices including choirs, congregations, chaplains and soldiers are to be blended together in one giant online hymn sing to help support the Anglican church's ministry in Canada's remote north. The Amazing Grace project asked Canadian Anglicans to video themselves singing the iconic 18th-century hymn, and to forward the recordings to the church's national office in Toronto. Here the anticipated hundreds of renditions will be edited into one video, which will be available online by Christmas. The initiative was intended as a unity building exercise but also included a fundraising component. Each singer was encouraged to donate 2 Canadian dollars (US\$2) to support youth ministry and clergy training in Canada's northern territories. The majority of clergy in these areas are non-stipendiary, or unpaid; the money raised will allow clergy to travel from their remote communities to receive training.

**Praise:** God, that even though the government appears to be in conflict, the people of God are working towards unity this Christmas. (Is.59:19-21)

**More:** <http://www.earthtimes.org/articles/show/243462,zimbabwe-police-beat-doctors-nurses-cholera-kills-more--summary.html>

## PRAYER FORUM OF BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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C/O World Prayer Centre, Cornerstone House, 5 Ethel Street, Birmingham, B2 4BG, England