



PRAYER ALERT...



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www.prayer-alert.net editor@prayer-alert.net

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BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ Commentators speak out on assisted suicide

Last week's decision by the Law Lords in the Debbie Purdy case has prompted many media commentators to speak out on assisted suicide. The Purdy judgement simply requires the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) to clearly specify the circumstances under which he would bring charges for assisting suicide. But pro-euthanasia campaigners such as Sir Terry Pratchett are demanding a change in the law. The House of Lords last month rejected any liberalisation of the law by a convincing majority. Most media commentators take the same view. Dominic Lawson of The Sunday Times attacked the 'euthanasia lobby' calling them 'masters of media manipulation'. He said his opposition to assisted suicide was 'nothing to do with a fundamentalist view about the inviolable sanctity of life; it is everything to do with the fact that laws are designed (or should be) to protect the community as a whole, rather than the interests of a small number of strong individuals with loud voices'.

Pray: for the DPP as it considers any change to this law and to avoid any manipulation by those with specific agendas. (Dt.4:5-7)

More: <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/20090804/commentators-speak-out-on-assisted-suicide/>

■ Christian Party wins first Council seat

Welsh Christian Party leader Jeff Green has become Britain's first Christian Party 'faith based' elected politician. Cllr Elect Jeff Green stood for the Christian Party 'Proclaiming Christ's Lordship' in the town council by-election held last Thursday in Llandrindod Wells. The election was triggered when two ward councillors, including the Mayor Tony Phillips, resigned two months ago after a row over the town's tourist information centre. Cllr Green commented 'I understand that this is the first Council seat won by the Christian Party in the UK and I believe this is a great way forward for Christians to gain experience in the political arena and at the same time, have influence over their town or city. I believe we have the basis of a system to help people get elected into these positions so they can affect positive change and start turning this nation back into a godly nation.' (See follow on to Baroness Cox item Prayer Alert 3109)

Pray: with thanks for this small step for the Christian Party that it would lead to giant leap forward for the kingdom. (Ps.37:30-31)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/christian.party.wins.first.council.seat/23925.htm>

■ First police teen teetotal party

Police have organised a party to show teenagers it is possible to have fun without taking alcohol and drugs. The first Bluelight event was held at the Phoenix Football ground at Penmaenmawr, Conwy, last Friday, with four others planned

across north Wales. Party-goers will be encouraged to join the Bluelight council with organised events, such as filming a DVD and recording a single. The aim is that 'council' members will keep out of trouble as they grow up. Some people had suggested that what he was doing was 'social work, not police work', but Pc Smith said he believed the police would see the benefit. 'We'll see in three to four years when these teenagers would start hanging around street corners, hopefully Bluelight will prevent them doing that,' he added.

Pray: for this and similar initiatives, many promoted by churches, which encourage youngsters to enjoy themselves in safety. (Ps.34:11)

More: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/north_west/8178124.stm

■ Police warn over rise of teenage 'sexting' trend

Police, parents and children's charities have expressed alarm at a growing trend dubbed 'sexting', where young people send explicit and indecent photos to each other using their mobile phones. What started out as risqué fun among adolescents has spread quickly and with serious consequences. Police have said that paedophiles are increasingly trawling social networking sites to find explicit pictures taken by teenagers of each other. They then contact the young people involved, using the photos to blackmail them into committing indecent acts. In the past year, investigators said that there had been a huge rise in the number of pictures being stored on hard drives by paedophiles that have been taken by teenagers in relationships. Often the photographs are taken by teenagers in relationships who then split up and place them on social networking sites such as Bebo or Facebook. The pictures also get passed around friends at school, leading to bullying.

Pray: for young people who face new social pressures and for the self-confidence to reject such foolish behaviour. (Pr.8:5)

More: http://technology.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/tech_and_web/article6738532.ece

■ Quakers move to treat same-sex partnerships like marriages

The Christian denomination, also known as The Religious Society of Friends, has accepted homosexuality for decades and already blesses civil partnerships. But now members gathered for their Yearly Meeting in York have agreed to allow homosexual couples to marry in exactly the same way as men and women do. They acknowledge the move would be illegal in England, Wales and Scotland, where same-sex couples are only allowed to be legally united in civil partnerships. But they say they will lobby politicians to change the law so that their registrars, who have the authority to perform legally binding marriage ceremonies, can allow homosexual couples to marry. Senior bishops have written that this 'appears to be a fundamental re-definition of the Christian doctrine of marriage and of basic Christian anthropology'.

Pray: for God's guidance for all Christians in this matter and that they will feel strengthened to stand firm in their beliefs in the Bible's teaching on marriage. (Ac.14:22)

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstoppers/religion/5948305/Quakers-move-to-treat-same-sex-partnerships-like-marriages.html>

■ Families losing out as tax system favours break-ups

Married couples living together are suffering under the tax and benefit system which favours parents who have separated. By staying together, couples could lose between £58 and £68 every week. The figures come in a report by CARE (Christian Action, Research and Education) which has released studies on the 'couple penalty' for the last three years. Nola Leach, CARE's chief executive, said: 'It is very disappointing to see that, far from being eroded, the number of families negatively impacted by the couple penalty has actually increased for the third year in a row. 'Rather than using taxpayers' money to create fiscal incentives that make it more likely that children will grow up in a home with only one resident parent, we should at the very least ensure that parents are not disadvantaged by living together under the same roof with their children', she added.

Pray: that the Government will recognise its role in supporting marriage and will act accordingly. (Eph.3:14-15)

More: <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/20090803/families-losing-out-as-tax-system-favours-break-ups/>

■ Welsh women prisoners face neglect in English jails, warns Archbishop

The Archbishop of Wales has warned that Welsh women prisoners face isolation and neglect because they have no choice but to serve out their sentences hundreds of miles away from friends and family in English prisons. Welsh women convicted of crimes are sent to prisons in England because there are currently no prisons in Wales that are able to accommodate women. Dr Barry Morgan said the distance made it difficult and expensive for families to make the short visit times and put the women out of touch with Welsh news. Their biggest worry is that their families and friends won't visit or can't visit, because they are too far away. 'They also feel cut off from Wales because English prisons do not show Welsh television channels or have Welsh newspapers so they have no way of keeping up with things happening in Wales.'

Pray: for appropriate prison provision for all those who are given custodial sentences. (Heb.13:3)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.co.uk/article/welsh.women.prisoners.face.neglect.in.english.jails.warns.archbishop/23919.htm>

EUROPE

■ Turkish Prime Minister holds rare talks with Pro-Kurdish politician

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has met with a leading pro-Kurdish politician after the government expressed interest in granting more rights to minority Kurds. Mr. Erdogan held talks Wednesday with Ahmet Turk, the head of the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party. The meeting is linked to an effort to end the 25-year insurgency by Kurdish rebels. Officials did not give details about topics under discussion. Mr. Erdogan has criticized the pro-Kurdish party for not

denouncing members of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party as terrorists. The PKK is listed as a terrorist group by Ankara and much of the international community. Separatist rebels have been fighting for Kurdish rule in south eastern Turkey for a quarter-century. Tens of thousands of people have died in the conflict.

Pray: that this initiative would lead to a breakthrough and an opportunity for greater acceptance of Kurds within Turkish society. (Col.3:13-14)

More: <http://www.voanews.com/english/2009-08-05-voa13.cfm>

■ Georgia calls for EU help as tensions flare

Georgian president Mikheil Saakashvili has called for EU and US help to prevent a renewal of fighting with Russia three days before the one year anniversary of the war. 'The latest [Russian army] manoeuvres are worrying. They refuse to respond to calls from European observers and unfortunately the media in Moscow are announcing a situation of imminent conflict,' he told French radio station RTL on Tuesday. 'Despite all that, I am confident that Europe and the United States will send a clear message [to Russia].' The remarks come after Russia put its 7,000 or so troops in Georgia's breakaway South Ossetia province on high alert citing Georgian 'provocations.' The number of incidents on the South Ossetia boundary line has multiplied in recent days. (See also Prayer Alert 3208, 3308, 3508, and 3708)

Pray: against any repeat of last year's conflict that God would intervene and stay the hand of violence and bring resolution. (Pr.2:7)

More: <http://euobserver.com/9/28525>

WORLDWIDE

■ Nigeria: Religious divide

Hundreds of people have been killed and hundreds displaced in clashes in four states of northern Nigeria after a series of co-ordinated skirmishing by the Boko Haram group against the security forces and police. Most of the casualties appear to have been in Maiduguri, the north-eastern city known as the birthplace and stronghold of the group. Relief agencies on the ground say at least 1,000 people abandoned their homes - joining 3,000 others already displaced by the violence. There is a huge amount of concern about the humanitarian impact of this fighting. Relief agencies are talking about people not being given access to food and water, and stores running out of basic necessities. Nigeria's President Umaru Yar'Adua has ordered an investigation into last week's Islamist uprising including the death of the sect's leader, Mohammed Yusuf who was shot dead after being captured alive. Boko Haram, which means 'Western education is prohibited' in the local Hausa dialect has called for the enforcement of sharia or Islamic law, across Nigeria, where 140 million people are evenly divided between Christians who dominate the south and the northern based Muslims. Islamic law is practiced in 12 of the northern states. (See Prayer Alert 3109)

Pray: against chaos and a continuation of a state of emergency in some of the northern states of Nigeria. (Ps.77:14)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/8183898.stm>

■ Iran: Ahmadinejad starts new term

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has been sworn in for a second term as Iran's president, hailing his re-election as 'the start of major change in Iran and in the world'. He took the oath of office before the Iranian parliament in Tehran, the capital, on Wednesday. His inauguration came nearly eight weeks after his June 12 landslide election victory that was disputed by opposition candidates. The results sparked mass demonstrations and clashes that led to the deaths of 20 people and arrests of about 2,000 others. Ahmadinejad did not directly address the protests, but said his government would 'resist any violation of law and interference'. 'We will not remain silent, we will not tolerate disrespect, interference and insults,' he said. He criticised Western nations, several of which - including the United States, Britain, Italy, Germany and France - had decided to recognise but not congratulate the new government. (See Prayer Alert 3109)

Pray: that the Holy Spirit would speak into the hearts of the leaders of Iran and give them God's wisdom and revelation. (Ps.139:20)

More: <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2009/08/2009855322883597.html>

■ Kenya: Christians and Muslims at loggerheads over Islamic courts

Christians in Kenya say Islamic courts are not necessary but some unnamed Muslims in the east African country have been quoted as saying if such institutions are not in the constitution, they could break away and form their own state. This week representatives of the two different faiths engaged in a shouting match in the coastal city of Mombasa. They were putting their views to a group of experts at a hearing where a group of Muslims insisted that Islamic courts, known locally as Kadhis, should be included in a new constitution. 'The courts are not necessary since the current constitution gives individuals the right to religious preferences and worship,' Anglican Bishop Julius Kalu of Mombasa said, while presenting views to the Committee of Experts on the Constitution Review. Church leaders have since 1991, when Kenya started a debate on writing a new constitution, protested against including the Islamic courts in the basic law.

Pray: that God would continue to give courage to believers to speak out, and that Kenya would not become a divided nation. (Ps.111:10)

More: <http://www.eni.ch/featured/article.php?id=3231>

■ Burundi: To Integrate the FNL successfully

The Burundi peace process has made much progress in recent months. The last rebel group, the Party for the Liberation of the Hutu People – National Forces of Liberation (Palipehutu-FNL), has renounced the use of arms and been registered as a political party. It has also changed its name, in accordance with the law prohibiting party names with an ethnic connotation,

to the National Forces of Liberation (FNL). Part of it has been integrated into the security forces, and some of its officials have received high public positions. But the FNL has not turned in all weapons and, like the CNDD-FDD, the party in power, seems ready to use even violence to win the 2010 elections. The Partnership for Peace in Burundi, a new international mechanism, should closely monitor the main political actors and be ready to step in to prevent the peace process from going off track.

Pray: that the Partnership for Peace will be given the skills to keep this peace process on track. (Php.1:4-6)

More: <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=6249&l=1>

■ Egypt: Violence again erupts over quest for worship site

The recent eruption of sectarian violence in Egypt's Minya province continued last week as local Christians again faced harsh reprisals from Muslims for trying to convert a building into a worship facility. On July 24 security forces in the village of Hawasliya were able to prevent a crowd of Muslims, which numbered in the hundreds according to some reports, from torching the building. But the mob succeeded in setting fire to four neighbouring stables, killing sheep and cows belonging to Copts. During the melee two Copts, including an elderly woman, were wounded. Both received hospital treatment. 'When Muslims see that Christians are making a church, they get upset about it,' said Teresa Kamal, a local journalist. 'Why are people full of hate like this? Something has happened to radicalize the people.' (See Prayer Alert 2809)

Pray: against this violence and pray that God would protect His people and build His Church. (Is.19:1-3)

More: <http://mychristianblood.blogspot.com/archive/2009/08/02/egypt-violence-again-erupts-over-quest-for-worship-site.html#more>

■ Pakistan: Christians mourn eight killed in violence

Christians across Pakistan closed their schools Monday, August 3, to mourn the killings of at least eight fellow believers by angry Muslims in troubled Punjab province, as the Vatican condemned what was the second incident of violence against Christians in a week. Hundreds of Muslims, allegedly spurred on by radical Islamists, stormed a Christian neighbourhood in the eastern city of Gojra last Saturday, August 1, burning dozens of houses after reports surfaced that some Christians had desecrated a Quran, witnesses said. Local Christians said clerics at local mosques urged followers 'who love Mohammad and Islam to gather with them to defend the Islam because it is in danger' and 'prove to be a true Muslim.' At least six Christians were killed in the flames of burning homes, local Christians said. Additionally at least two were killed by gun shots and dozens injured as police did little to stop the attackers.

Pray: that anti-Christian rumours would cease among Muslims and for an end to such violence across Pakistan. (Ps.140:1-2)

More: <http://www.bosnewslife.com/8477-pakistani-christians-mourn-eight-killed-in-violence>

PRAISE REPORTS

■ Freed journalist expresses gratitude to Clinton

Laura Ling on Wednesday expressed the shock she and Euna Lee felt when former President Clinton showed up in Pyongyang, North Korea, to secure the two journalists' release. 'We feared at any moment that we could be sent to a hard labour camp and then suddenly we were told we were going to a meeting,' a tearful and emotional Ling said at a news conference in California shortly after arriving by plane with Lee and Clinton. She spoke minutes after the two women were reunited with their families at Bob Hope Airport in Burbank outside Los Angeles. They had been detained in North Korea since March. 'We were taken to a location, and when we walked through the doors, we saw standing before us President Bill Clinton,' Ling said. 'We were shocked, but we knew instantly in our hearts that the nightmare of our lives was finally coming to an end.' Clinton helped secure the women's release in a brief trip Tuesday to Pyongyang. (See Prayer Alert 2309 & 2409)

Praise: God that this incident has been resolved without any further problems. (Ps.118:5)

More: <http://edition.cnn.com/2009/US/08/05/nkorea.journalists/index.html>

■ Obama: 'I pray all the time now'

President Obama says he starts his day with a devotional sent to his BlackBerry each day. And though he was in the habit of praying every night before going to bed, Obama says since becoming president, he prays 'all the time now.' 'I've got a lot of stuff on my plate and I need guidance all the time,' he told ABC News' Terry Moran in an interview for 'Nightline.' Prior to winning the presidency, Obama had informed the public that Christ 'is a source of strength and sustenance on a daily basis' for him. 'I know that I don't walk alone, and I know that if I can get myself out of the way, that I can maybe carry out in some small way what He intends,' he said during his appearance last August at Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California.

Praise: Him who speaks to us through prayer and leads us in ways of righteousness. (Ps.27:11)

More: <http://www.christianpost.com/article/20090726/obama-i-pray-all-the-time-now/index.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