



PRAYER ALERT...



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BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ Gordon Brown insists Britain is still Christian country

The Prime Minister claimed the country's values are still based on traditional religious teachings, and said it would be wrong if the devout were forced to keep their beliefs private. His comments, made in an interview with a Christian radio station, come amid growing concern that public sector employees are being punished for acting according to their faith. But Mr Brown, whose father was a Church of Scotland minister, told Premier Christian Radio: 'I think the role of religion and faith in what people sometimes call the public square is incredibly important. I think it's important that we have the views of all religions and all faiths, and it's important particularly that we're clear about what kind of society we want to be. 'So I think the idea that you can say: What I do in my own life is privatised and I'm not going to try to suggest that these are values that can bind your society together, would be wrong.'

Pray: for a nation that accepts and respects the role of faith groups in all areas of public life. (Pr.1:20)

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopics/politics/gordon-brown/5988706/Gordon-Brown-insists-Britain-is-still-Christian-country.html>

■ Archbishop warns against prayer opt-out in schools

The Archbishop of Wales has warned that allowing 16-year-olds to opt out of prayer in assembly could lead to the marginalisation of religion in schools. Writing in the Times Educational Supplement, Dr Barry Morgan said letting sixth-formers withdraw from collective worship could leave them 'narrowly focused on personal attainment'. 'Collective worship has been branded as something that young people grow out of by the age of 16, at precisely the time when it might be the best way of feeding both their minds and their hearts as they start to explore the responsibilities and consequences of adult life,' he said. 'I am concerned that this is the thin end of the wedge and could be just the start of a process that devalues and ultimately marginalises the provision of collective worship in schools.' The Archbishop warned of schools turning into a 'bland secular wasteland'.

Pray: for Christians in schools who can lead prayer in a way that will be seen as relevant to the lives of the pupils. (Php.4:6)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.co.uk/article/archbishop.warns.against.prayer.optout.in.schools/23955.htm>

■ Religious leaders to meet RBS on lending rates cap

Religious leaders are uniting to pressure the Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) to cap its lending rates and offer credit to all. London Citizens, a community organization including priests, imams and trade unionists, are calling for a return of usury laws, as they see the exploitative debt culture in Britain and the US as being responsible for the international financial crisis. Britain is the only country in Europe that has no cap on interest! There are 2.1 million people without a bank account in this country and one of the problems is that they have to turn to loan sharks for credit. In France banks have to work with anybody, by law. London Citizens welcomed senior RBS executives yesterday, to discuss their high-interest rate credit

cards. RBS has a card called Black Card and charges as much as 50 per cent interest if you default. A lot of banks do this but they are targeting RBS as they are 70 per cent public owned.

Pray: against the exploitation by the banking system of those whose financial resources are limited. (Pr.22:22)

More: <http://www.religiousintelligence.co.uk/news/?NewsID=4868>

■ 'Too many' young offenders jailed

Children as young as 12 are being wrongly imprisoned in England and Wales, breaking government guidelines, says the charity Barnardo's. Its report says that confusion over the criteria for youth courts led to more than 160 under-15s being wrongly given custodial sentences in 2007. Barnardo's said locking up so many children was a 'tragedy'. The Ministry of Justice said detention should be the last resort - but judges should have the final say. The law specifically states that children aged 14 and under should not be locked up unless they have committed a grave offence and are deemed to be a persistent offender. But the Barnardo's report found more than a third of 12 to 14-year-olds locked up did not meet the conditions. Barnardo's chief executive Martin Narey said that until 1998 it would have been illegal to imprison these young people unless they had committed one of the so-called 'grave offences'.

Pray: that the authorities would be granted wisdom in dealing with these young offenders and not choose an easy but ineffective solution. (Pr.1:1-3)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/8198496.stm>

■ Chaplaincy team at RAF Lyneham

RAF Lyneham is the Air Force station that receives the servicemen killed in action in Afghanistan, as well as the two hostages recently murdered in Iraq. It is currently a difficult time for all the staff at the base and in recent weeks it has been particularly busy. The chaplaincy team of three find themselves under considerable pressure and stress as they support all the staff involved in the repatriations as well as conducting the repatriation services themselves. The Chaplains also offer support to the grieving families who come to RAF Lyneham to witness the repatriation of their fallen loved ones. One of the difficulties of ministry in the RAF is that the Chaplains do not have the support of the faithful parishioners praying for them daily, as they would have in a parish ministry.

Pray: that God would comfort and support the Chaplains and staff at RAF Lyneham as they continue to offer Christian compassion to grieving families. Pray that the Chaplains may continue to witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. (2Cor.1:4)

More: <http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/DefenceNews/MilitaryOperations/EightBritishSoldiersRepatriatedToUk.htm>

■ Vicar fights Swansea lap dancing club application

A vicar in Swansea is fighting plans for a new lap dancing club and has called for the council to refuse the club's application. Fantasy Lounge submitted its plans to the council last month hoping to convert a derelict warehouse into an adult club. The vicar of St Mary's in Swansea, Andrew Vessey, believes that the club would be an 'inappropriate' use of space, and has told the council it has the chance to show it has standards. He said: 'What people do with their own money and time is up to them, but when it's clearly open to the public in a city centre that has already got quite enough venues, there is a concern by those of us who have standards and ideals that this is inappropriate'. According to ThisIsSouthWales.co.uk he said the club would be degrading and was purely about making money.

Pray: that the Council will listen to these objections and refuse planning permission for such a venture. (1Th.4:7)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/vicar.fights.swansea.lap.dancing.club.application/23971.htm>

■ Magazine targets Christian teens

A lifestyle magazine aimed at Christian teenagers has been launched in the UK. The publishers of Streetbrand hope that its mix of music, fashion and faith articles will appeal to 'spiritually-minded' teenagers. The magazine, which will be available three times a year, will steer clear of articles on sex. The company says it aims to provide something different in a market already full of publications aimed at the youth market. Most magazines for teenagers focus on a blend of relationship articles, celebrity gossip and have been criticised for publishing articles on sex or body issues, which parents often regard as inappropriate for young people. Streetbrand aims to be different, pitching itself at what it calls a generation of media savvy, spiritually-minded teenagers, who want to connect with other Christians. Articles on music, books and gadgets will sit alongside interviews with inspiring young people - not always Christians - and celebrities talking about their faith.

Pray: for this and other initiatives aimed at supporting youngsters in a Christian way. (Pr.11:3a)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/8193060.stm>

EUROPE

■ Catholics alarmed by EU equal rights law

Atheists could attack galleries for showing religious art and witches could claim the right to use church halls under a draft EU equal rights law, the Roman Catholic Church has warned. The EU bill aims to curtail discrimination on grounds of religion, disability, age or sexual preference in social situations not covered by existing labour law, such as renting properties. The directive could enter into force in 2011 if member states give unanimous approval in discussions planned for November by the Swedish EU presidency. The criticism was put forward in recent days by the Roman Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales as part of a British government consultation procedure. The bishops' group 'commends' the EU effort to protect 'the innate dignity of every person.' But it calls for the legal text to soften a clause against creating an 'offensive environment' and to add an exemption to let religious organisations 'function in accordance with their ethos.'

Pray: for the EU as it considers the equal rights law that they would be granted Godly wisdom in their deliberations. (Pr.10:13)

More: <http://euobserver.com/9/28522>

■ **Aid workers found shot dead in Chechnya**

The head of a humanitarian agency in Chechnya and her husband were found dead early Tuesday, their bodies stuffed in the trunk of their car, a prosecutor's spokeswoman said. Zarema Sadulayeva, leader of Chechnya's Save the Generation and her husband, Ali Dzhabrailov - also a member of the non-governmental organization - had worked for many years helping children physically disabled by the two bloody wars in the volatile Russian province, a colleague told CNN. The couple, in their mid-30s, were apparently abducted Monday afternoon outside the non-governmental organization's office in downtown Grozny, according to Maryan Nalayeva, spokeswoman for the Investigation Committee of the Chechen Prosecutor's Office. Witnesses said five men arrived at the office in a vehicle at about 2 p.m. on Monday, and told the couple to follow them in their car to an undisclosed location, Nalayeva said. The Save the Generation organization was involved in purely humanitarian issues and was not involved with any politics, according to Nalayeva.

Pray: for God's protection for humanitarian workers as they face the challenges of their chosen tasks in difficult areas. (Ps.5:11)

More: <http://edition.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/europe/08/11/chechnya.deaths/index.html>

WORLDWIDE

■ **Sudan: Christian woman barred from leaving Sudan**

Lubna Hussein, a Christian Sudanese press officer charged with violating indecency law by wearing trousers in public and facing 40 lashes, is barred from leaving Sudan. Ten of the 12 women who were arrested with her and charged with the same offence have all been whipped following conviction. Miss Hussein is challenging the charges against her arguing that she was respectfully dressed and did not break the law. Her hearing has been adjourned until September 7. She has gained international publicity since being charged with violating decency laws and intended to fly to Lebanon for a TV interview to further highlight her crusade, but authorities told the Christian she could not leave the country. 'It emerged when I tried to get an exit visa that my name was on a blacklist,' she explained. Miss Hussein is spearheading a women's rights campaign. Her defence lawyer said she should be free to travel. To bar her from going aboard should only happen to prevent her from fleeing justice when there is a serious crime. The law on indecent dress is so wide that it contravened Hussein's right to a fair trial.

Pray: that God would strengthen Lubna in this struggle and use her to initiate change in archaic laws. (Ps.59:3-4)

More: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/worldnews/article-1205808/UN-Christian-woman-facing-40-lashes-wearing-trousers-barred-leaving-Sudan.html#ixzz0NzeD3wOW>

■ **Afghanistan: President Karzai's supporters 'buy' votes**

Supporters of President Karzai are preparing to rig voting in next week's presidential elections in unstable parts of Afghanistan's south as Taliban violence threatens to intimidate voters. Several witnesses reports bolster suspicions within the international community that there will be electoral fraud across the south some of it allegedly orchestrated by Mr Karzai's half-brother, Ahmed Wali Karzai. Such irregularities could threaten the credibility of the election process and lead to threats of violent demonstrations in the north if Mr Karzai is thought to have stolen the vote. President Hamid Karzai says he will double Afghanistan's security forces and push plans for peace talks with the Taliban if elected for a second term in the August 20th presidential election. Several tribal leaders and local people in Helmand described a systematic attempt by supporters of Mr Karzai to collect or buy voter registration cards from local people. The Taliban has vowed to disrupt this month's election, and few people in outlying districts of the province will be able to vote.

Pray: for integrity and openness to underpin all procedures leading up to and during the election, and for all devious schemes to be removed. (Ps.68:28)

More: <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article6792729.ece>

■ **America: Healthcare system**

Barack Obama wants to reform America's inefficient and vastly expensive healthcare system that allows the poor and uninsured sick to be ignored. On the face of it he has the mandate and the Congressional votes to 'get it done now'. Religious groups in favour of health care reform have launched a national campaign to offset the loud opposition to his plans. 'This is as much a crisis of faith as it is a crisis of health care,' said the Rev. John Hay Jr., an evangelical leader. 'As a pastor I believe access to health care is a profoundly moral issue,' said the Rev. Stevie Wakes. The campaign called '40 days for Health Reform' includes a national television advertisement, a sermon weekend, prayer meetings and a nationwide call-in with Obama on August 19. Prayer meetings emphasizing health care as a moral issue are taking place Tuesday in 45 cities across 18 states organizers expected about 4,000 people to participate.

Pray: for healing, health and Godly moral issues to be addressed through the healthcare reforms. (Ps.40:17)

More: <http://edition.cnn.com/2009/POLITICS/08/11/health.care.religious.groups/index.html>

■ **Iran: New wave of arrests of journalists**

Reporters Without Borders works tirelessly to highlight the plight of journalists across the world who are persecuted, jailed and tortured by governments because they report from closed countries on hidden issues to the outside world. They condemn the arrest of Amir Asslani, a student and CEO of an information technology company, and the raids carried out at his home and his company's headquarters the same day. Asslani was arrested for 'sending emails'. They are urging the international community and all human rights activists to react to this arrest and to condemn the Iranian government's

persecution of Internet users and cyber-dissidents. His arrest is the latest in a series of measures designed to intimidate and corner the regime's opponents. Ninety one journalists are listed on RWB website as being arrested in Iran since 20th June 09, and 43 journalists and bloggers currently in prison.

Pray: for and end to repression of truth in Iran and across the world. (Is.14:3-4)

More: <http://www.rsf.org/Owner-of-information-technology.html>

■ Taiwan: Flash floods, fog, collapsed roads

Typhoon Morakot has raged over Taiwan since Saturday and is now moving to mainland China where so far six are reported dead and 1.4 million displaced. Torrential downpours, dense fog, rugged terrain and raging rivers have made rescue efforts in Taiwan increasingly difficult and dangerous. The government has appealed for international assistance to help rescue more than 2,000 people stranded by major mudslides. They need giant cargo aircraft that only Russia and the US have so that large earth diggers and other machinery can be dropped into remote mountain areas to re-open roads. Relatives of those stranded and of the hundreds feared dead have been waiting for days for news and urge the government to speed up rescue efforts. The government also needs helicopters, gravel trucks, disinfectants and chlorine tablets.

Pray: that the relief workers are protected, and for those still alive to be found. Pray also for God to reveal his compassion and comfort to the survivors. (Heb.4:16)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/8198817.stm>

■ Burma: UN deploring Myanmar verdict

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon deplored the decision by a Myanmar court to sentence pro-democracy leader and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi to an additional 18 months of house arrest, and urged that she be released immediately. Ms. Suu Kyi leads the National League for Democracy and was convicted of violating state security laws after an uninvited United States citizen gained access to her home. She has already spent over 12 years under house arrest. Mr. Ban said 'Unless she and all other political prisoners in Myanmar are released and allowed to participate in free and fair elections, the credibility of the political process will remain in doubt.' A lawyer from the defence team had his license revoked and Ms. Suu Kyi consulted with defence lawyers only sporadically with only two of the five witnesses called by the defence permitted to testify.

Pray: for international outrage and action to cause a change in the Myanmar management of this situation. (Jas.3:16-18)

More: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=31735&Cr=Myanmar&Cr1=>

■ INSIGHT ARTICLE: Zimbabwe: 'Green Shoots' of media reform

In the last few weeks the BBC and CNN have been allowed to report from Zimbabwe, but more prayer is needed to move this breakthrough into a victory for truth and righteous reporting. For more information click on the insights button.

Info: <http://www.prayer-alert.net/info/3309Zimbabwe.pdf>

PRAISE REPORTS

■ England: Motorist hears God

Colin White, the 61 year old pastor of Bridgwater Community Church, is thanking God for saving him from a fatal car accident shortly after his Volkswagen Passat broke down forcing him onto the side of the road. He suddenly felt an 'urge' to get out of his car. Moments later a 4x4 crashed into the back of his Passat. 'It was like there was a small voice telling me to get out' he said. 'Shock waves went through my body and I was thankful that I had got out of the car, I think I would have been killed because I had taken my seat belt off. God has different ways of flagging things up, he added; 'I was thinking about those crashes on the motorway you hear about, so I got out. I am a Christian—I do believe in divine intervention—and I am grateful to God that it took place.'

Praise: and thanks for Colin's secure walk with God and his obedience to the Spirit's urge. (Ps.29:11)

More: http://www.thisisthewestcountry.co.uk/news/somerset_news/4540459.Miracle_escape_for_Burnham_driver/

■ Somalia: Six foreign captives released

Somali kidnappers have released six foreign hostages. The four European aid workers and their two Kenyan pilots were released Tuesday after eight months of captivity. The hostages had been held since November 2008. The four Europeans were in Somalia with aid group Action Against Hunger. Two of the hostages were French, one Bulgarian, and the other Belgian. The two Kenyan pilots had been hired to help the four workers flee the area. The aid group would not discuss the specific details of the hostages' release, but it was reported no ransom was paid. Action Against Hunger is one of a few aid groups that have continued working in the country. Somalia is one of the most dangerous places in the world for Westerners. (See also Prayer Alert 1809)

Praise: God with thanks for the release of these hostages and pray that those still being held will be released soon. (Ps.136:1 & 23-26)

More: <http://www.voanews.com/english/2009-08-12-voa25.cfm>

PRAYER FORUM OF THE BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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