

PRAYER ALERT...

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BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ Britain leads the world in under-age drinking

The comprehensive study of children's well-being in 30 industrialised nations found that drunkenness among under-16s is twice as common in the UK as in America or France. In addition, Britain has among the highest proportions of teenage mothers, youths who are not in jobs or education, and single-parent families. The new report published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, a leading economic think tank, brings together data from 30 countries around the world about the welfare of the young. It found that public spending on children in the UK, at more than £90,000 per child from birth to 18, is above average, while family income is the eighth highest. But Britain ranks among the worst countries in the industrialised world in a comparison of educational standards, health and lifestyles. In 'risky behaviours' – drinking, smoking and teenage pregnancy – the UK's performance is worse than all countries but Mexico and Turkey.

Pray: for the authorities that they will be able to get to grips with these problems and reverse this trend. (2Tim.2:22)

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/healthnews/6121619/Britain-leads-the-world-in-under-age-drinking-OECD-study-shows.html>

■ Bishop of Rochester to aid persecuted Christians in Islamic world

Dr Michael Nazir-Ali, who is about to retire as the Bishop of Rochester, is to set up a charity to work with persecuted Christians in the Islamic world. Dr Nazir-Ali, who will leave next week a few days after his 60th birthday, says that he has paid a heavy price for standing up for Christian values and has been stung by criticism of some of his controversial statements - but that he has no regrets. The mission and reputation of the Anglican Church in the Islamic world had been seriously damaged by rows over the ordination of gay priests and bishops and the blessing of same-sex partnerships, he said in an interview with The Times. 'Every time you say something that the Bible teaches or you think is God's purpose for people, you have to take what comes by way of reaction,' he said. 'As I say, it is not easy being a Christian in the world. You have to be prepared for that.' (See Prayer Alert 1409)

Pray: for Michael as he takes on this new calling that he will be under God's protection and guidance. (2Th.1:11)

More: <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/faith/article6814346.ece>

■ Church says it will work to keep bishops in the Lords

The Church of England has roundly rejected suggestions that it would readily give up its seats in the House of Lords. The rebuttal came in response to recent comments from Justice Secretary Jack Straw, who is overseeing plans to overhaul the current system. He suggested that over the coming decade 'the Church of England may come to a view that it is not appropriate for bishops to be in the legislative chamber'. But a spokesman for the Church said: 'This is a guess which has no basis in what the Church of England has said thus far.' He added: 'Bishops in the Lords help connect the second chamber with the people, parishes and regions of England, not just their own worshippers. There are fears that the removal of bishops from the House of Lords could be used by secularists who want a church and state split.'

Pray: for the important role of the church in all aspects of life in this country. (Ro.13:1)

More: <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/20090901/church-says-it-will-work-to-keep-bishops-in-the-lords/>

■ Nurse sacked and accused of abuse for smacking her son at home

A Christian nurse sacked from a leading public school after smacking her son in her home has lost her appeal for unfair dismissal. Susan Pope furiously condemned the political correctness which she blamed for the decision. The mother of three said it was 'nobody else's business' how decent parents choose to chastise their children at home. Her ordeal began when her 15-year-old son reported her to the police for smacking his 11-year-old brother after he swore at her. Mrs Pope was arrested, questioned and spent a night in the cells but no charges were brought. Social services were also called in and began an inquiry into the incident, while the boys were placed on the Child Protection Register. The abuse accusations were later withdrawn, however, and both were taken off the social services list. But Denis Smith, bursar of the prestigious Malvern St James School in Worcestershire, had suspended Mrs Pope nonetheless.

Pray: against the over zealous and politically correct regulations that are dominating our lives. (Gal.4:17-18b)

More: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1207468/Sacked-accused-abuse--I-smacked-son-home-Nurse-lost-appeal-unfair-dismissal.html>

■ Scottish pastor heads to European Court over 'unfair' dismissal

The Rev Mahboob Masih, a minister in the Church of Scotland, says he was dismissed from his position as a volunteer on Awaz FM after a 'lively' debate about differences between Christianity and Islam. He took the case to an employment tribunal, arguing that he was unfairly dismissed and discriminated against on the grounds of his religion. The Asian community station in Glasgow, which receives public money, denied discrimination and claimed the tribunal could not hear the case as Mr Masih was not a paid employee. Now the case has been passed to the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg for judges to make an important ruling on whether volunteers are protected by anti-discrimination legislation. Andrea Minichiello Williams, a barrister and founder of the Christian Legal Centre, which backs alleged victims of religion discrimination, said: 'Rev Masih looks forward greatly to the European Court case as this will give Christians throughout Europe a unique opportunity to have their rights confirmed in law.' (See Prayer Alert 0609)

Pray: for Rev Masih during the forthcoming court case and for wisdom from God for those hearing and judging the case. (Pr.2:2)

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstoppers/religion/6122889/Case-of-Christian-minister-dismissed-from-radio-station-over-alleged-Muslim-insults-to-go-to-European-Court-of-Justice.html>

■ New International Version of Bible to be revised

The New International Version of the Bible will undergo its first revision in 25 years, threatening to start a political correctness row. The edition is being revised to reflect changes in language usage and advances in Biblical scholarship, according to its publishers. However, changes to gender terms, which some modern scholars claim were wrongly inserted by earlier translators is likely to arouse controversy. Previous attempts to change phrases such as 'sons of God' to 'children of God' provoked uproar among many of the conservative evangelicals who make the New International Version their Bible of choice. 'We want to reach English speakers across the globe with a Bible that is accurate, accessible and that speaks to its readers in a language they can understand,' said Keith Danby, global president and CEO of Biblica, a Christian ministry that holds the copyright to the New International Version. The revision is scheduled to be completed late next year and published in 2011.

Pray: for all those working on the new revision of the NIV Bible. (Pr.4:5)

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstoppers/religion/6124605/New-International-Version-of-Bible-to-be-revised.html>

■ NSPCC and TV on collision path

The TV industry is on a collision course with the NSPCC, psychologists and local authorities as the debate around duty of care toward children on TV heats up. The children's charity is lobbying for legislation to be tightened and policy adviser Vijay Patel told Broadcast it was not convinced producers always had children's best interests at heart. Trade body Pact believes the upcoming review of kids on TV, conducted by the Department for Children, Schools and Families could pose very serious challenges for producers. It is preparing to rally the sector in a defence of TV working practices. The NSPCC's Patel said: 'When they agree to be in a programme, children don't necessarily understand how they are going to be portrayed, or that they may be edited. The changes that we will be proposing are about making sure children are respected, and that programmes show the whole story, not just the parts that make for good TV'.

Pray: that there will be a meeting of minds and all decision would respect and honour children. (Jn.17:15)

More: <http://www.broadcastnow.co.uk/news/broadcasters/nspcc-and-tv-on-collision-path/5005137.article>

EUROPE

■ Call for EU and G20 to get tough on bank bonuses

France's Nicolas Sarkozy and Germany's Angela Merkel have jointly urged the world to limit bonuses paid to bankers following a mini-pow-wow between the two in Berlin on Monday (31 August) and have warned that despite the wreckage wrought by the crisis, some banks are already back up to the same old tricks. The president of France and the German chancellor also backed limiting the size of financial institutions and raising capital requirements for banks. The two leaders also urged the European Union to achieve a united position that could be taken to the upcoming G20 meeting in Pittsburgh, in the US at the end of September. Mr Sarkozy has made bank bonuses a key plank of his counter-crisis strategy, last week twisting the arm of domestic banks into reducing the monies paid out over a three-year period and turning a third of the pay-

outs into shares in the institutions. Ms Merkel equally staggered by the scale of the crisis backs her French counterpart's prescription of restraint for bankers. (See Prayer Alert 3309)

Pray: that pressure of this kind will lead to the banks reconsidering their high pay and bonus culture that leads to greed. (Lk.12:15)

More: <http://euobserver.com/9/28603>

■ Church leaders gear up for Copenhagen climate summit

British church leaders have expressed support for a Climate Change Day of Prayer in October in preparation for the next United Nations climate change summit due to take place at the end of the year. 'I shall be joining Christians from many different churches on 4 October in praying that God's will be done during the decisive Copenhagen conference this December,' said the Anglican Bishop of London, the Rt Rev Richard Chartres. He added: 'Prayer is powerful in dispelling the illusion that we are gods; an illusion which has wreaked such havoc on the earth.' Resources are now available on the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland website to help Christians organise local events on 4 October, or another nearby date that might be more suitable. The Climate Change Day of Prayer will be the culmination of a 'Time for Creation' month of study by British and Irish churches on the theme of 'Creation in Crisis - a time for prayer and action'.

Pray: that the Lord would answer the prayers of His Church and bless the leaders as they prepare for and gather in Copenhagen. (Mt.6:9-10)

More: <http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/10111>

WORLDWIDE

■ Pakistan: Blasphemy law misused

The World Council of Churches central committee called on the government of Pakistan to 'guarantee the rights of all religious minorities in the country.' In a public statement on 'The misuse of the Blasphemy Law and the security of religious minorities in Pakistan', the committee considered that the law has become 'a major source of victimization and persecution' of religious minorities who are living in a state of fear and terror. Since the penal code of the country was amended in 1986 'Christians in particular have become targets of harassments and persecutions,' says the statement approved by the WCC central committee during its meeting from August 26 to September 2 in Geneva. The Blasphemy Law, where the concept 'blasphemy' is vaguely defined, 'establishes that any person accused is immediately placed in detention and can be sentenced to death.' From 1988 to 2005 six hundred and forty seven people have been accused of violating this law, but cases have increased in the last years. (See item 2 below)

Pray: for freedom of religion and a healthy and just society for all in Pakistan. (Is.55:13)

More: <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/central-committee/geneva-2009/reports-and-documents/report-on-public-issues/statement-on-the-misuse-of-the-blasphemy-law-in-pakistan.html>

■ Pakistan: Christians arrested for eating during Ramadan

Pakistan police arrested two Christians for eating during Ramadan in the city of Silanwali on Aug. 25. International Christian Concern (ICC) www.persecution.org, reports they were travelling to Lahore when their bus stopped at a hotel. After the waiter served them tea and a snack policemen questioned why they were desecrating Ramadan. The two Christians told the police that since they are Christians, they are not supposed to fast during Ramadan. The police then threw them in a van and took them to the Silanwali police station registering a case against them that the Christians desecrated the Islamic fasting month. Later the police transferred the Christians to the district jail in Sargodha. Now their case is pending before a court. Also in July we requested prayer for kidnap victims in the Yemen. Assuming they are alive they will be obliged to observe the fast as will all other Christian prisoners globally who are held under Islamic power.

Pray: that the arm of the Lord will comfort and bring His release for these two ladies and other prisoners of conscience. (Mal.4:2)

More: <http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/2009/s09090004.htm>

■ India: Government appeals for Church's help by Anne Thomas

The government of Jharkhand India has asked the Catholic Church to help distribute food aid to those affected by the drought in the eastern Indian state. At the beginning of August the government declared the entire state as a drought zone, with many farmers sowing only 20 per cent of their rice paddy this year due to lack of water. The government has set up grain storage centres to assist those living below the poverty line and the administration wishes to use the Church's diverse infrastructure across the state to optimise distribution. Cardinal Toppo said, 'We are fully devoted in serving the poor and are only too willing to extend our fullest cooperation to the state, the entire state is reeling under drought conditions and we would collaborate with the government to ensure proper distribution of food grains.' Also last week The Times of India reported price rises across India in commodities and the need to import food due to shortages caused by a poor monsoon. See: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/4930597.cms>

Pray: for the Lord to use the present climate to bring about His purposes for the thirsty land and people. (Is.55:10-11)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/faminehit.indian.state.appeals.for.churchs.help.in.aid.assistance/24105.htm>

■ Japan: Seasons of change coming

Japan's opposition swept to a historic victory in elections Sunday, following the theme of 'change.' The new Democratic Party of Japan promised to rebuild the economy and breathe new life into the country. As a result, the opposition swept 300 of the 480 seats in the lower house of parliament, ousting the Liberal Democrats. 54-years under the same rule has come to an end but in that time the government has acknowledged things have gone astray. According to Asian Access, leaders in Japan have characterized their own nation as 'a super power without a moral compass.' This is a relatively new

phenomenon in a country that was guided for centuries by a moral and religious ethic that came out of Shintoism and Confucianism. Disillusionment is running high in a country known for its traditional ways and could mean many open doors for the Gospel. Asian Access missionaries along with Christians throughout the country are hoping that this change will really bring about a change spiritually.

Pray: that God would break open the heavens above Japan and release a new spirit that has never been seen there before as people discover hope and salvation in Jesus Christ. (Is.55:1-2)

More: <http://www.mnnonline.org/article/13169>

■ **Somalia: Christian convert killed**

Muslim extremists seeking evidence that a Somali man had converted from Islam to Christianity shot him dead near the Somali border with Kenya, according to underground Christians in the war-torn nation. Al Shabaab rebels killed 41-year-old Ahmed Matan according to a former leader of a secret Christian fellowship in Somalia to which Matan belonged since 2001. Islamist groups led by al Shabaab are hunting down converts to Christianity as they seek to establish sharia law throughout Somalia. Matan leaves his widow, Fatuma and 3 children ages 7 years, 4 years and 3 months.

Pray: for God's comfort, strength and protection for this community of secret believers and the other hidden communities of Christians in Somalia. (Mal.4:2)

More: <http://www.compassdirect.org/english/country/somalia/4893/>

■ **China: Government crackdown on House Churches**

China's government has issued a secret directive to dismantle at least six major house churches in and outside the capital Beijing ahead of the upcoming 60th anniversary of Communist rule in the country, according to Christian right investigators. In a statement, seen by BosNewsLife advocacy group China Aid Association said among those targeted was the Beijing Shouwang house church, one of the largest house churches in the area, who received an order from the Public Security Bureau to terminate its rental contract with the church. Chinese officials were not immediately available for comment, but BosNewsLife has monitored similar directives in the past. Other house churches in Beijing are under similar pressure to stop gathering. In mid-August, three government officials disrupted a baptism service held at a river in the Beijing suburbs by one house church from Haidian district. A church in Zhejiang was raided and over two tons of Sunday school materials were confiscated; a house church training school was recently raided and banned by authorities.

Pray: that the sixty year anniversary would usher in the end of communist rule and for the persecuted Christians to become even stronger warriors for Christ at home and abroad. (Da.2:21)

More: <http://www.bosnewslife.com/8848-chinas-government-orders-crackdown-on-house-churches>

PRAISE REPORTS

■ **Liverpool children that are making a difference**

There is a sound rising up from Liverpool against the gun and knife crime culture that is coming from the children who are saying they are not prepared to live with this violence any longer on the streets. On September 18th 2009 a choir of 350 children and young people from the Norris Green and Croxteth areas of Liverpool will be releasing an anti-gun and knife crime song entitled 'You're The Voice' as a statement of intent and a proclamation to say: Enough is enough! We are not going to sit in silence; we are not going to live in fear. Every single sale will make a difference to the lives of children across Merseyside and the rest of the country. They want to prove to the rest of the country that Merseyside can spread a message of hope. That way we can send a clear message to the minority who seek to destroy our communities that we will no longer tolerate their behaviour. Hear the song and see the video on the 'More' link.

Praise: God and pray that this event is a huge success, but most of all that this sound is heard on the earth and in the heavenlies. (Ps.96:1)

More: <http://www.yourethevoice.org.uk>

■ **USA: Pastor's baptism invitation nets a surprise response**

During a sermon on the meaning of baptism, on August 23, Pastor John Hampton of First Christian Church in Canton, Ohio, said he felt led by God to invite people to be baptized. He didn't expect what happened next: ninety-one came 'forward and went under. 'I've never seen anything like it in my 29 years of ministry,' he said. 'I told people I was going to take off my watch, belt and shoes and walk over to the baptistry. I told them, 'I want to give you an opportunity to respond, in the clothes you're wearing. The response was amazing. It felt like the Day of Pentecost. There were women in designer clothes and \$100 haircuts, men taking out cell phones, and kids in T-shirts.' Because people weren't prepared for the baptism call, they got out of the service soaking wet, and drove home in their wet clothes. An inspiring video with highlights from this service is available here: <http://vimeo.com/6359856>

Praise: God for this fantastic testimony of His wonderful grace – our God reigns!

More: <http://joelnews.squarespace.com/>

PRAYER FORUM OF THE BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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