



# PRAYER ALERT...



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

### ■ Pupils suffer 'shocking' poverty

Many children in the UK are living in poverty akin to the times of Charles Dickens, a teachers' leader claims. And some come to school without being toilet-trained; unable to get dressed or use a knife and fork, says Lesley Ward, new president of the ATL union. Speaking at a reception in London, Mrs Ward said that six in ten children who were classed as poor lived in families where someone worked. She said it was often 'incredibly hard' for schools to counteract the effects of poverty in the home. 'There are perfectly healthy children who enter school not yet toilet-trained, children who cannot dress themselves, children who only know how to eat with a spoon and have never sat around a table to enjoy a home-cooked family meal, children who don't know who will be at home when they get home - if anyone, children who don't know who the father figure is in the home from month to month,' she said.

**Pray:** [that ways will be found to meet the needs and raise the expectations of all those living in poverty. \(Pr.10:15\)](#)

**More:** <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/8246671.stm>

### ■ Kids' author says Jesus is not God

An atheist children's author is to use his latest book to say that Jesus was not God, instead claiming the Apostle Paul imagined the idea. In a new book entitled *The Good Man Jesus and the Scoundrel Christ*, Philip Pullman says the idea of Jesus being God came from the 'fervid imagination' of Paul. Mr Pullman is a strident atheist who has said his books aim at 'killing God'. Critics have described his work as 'proselytising'. The Association of Christian Teachers' Chief Executive, Rupert Kaye said of the trilogy: 'My key concern is that many young people (and adults) who read Philip Pullman's trilogy will be left with an extremely distorted understanding of what Christians actually believe and what the Bible really says about the person of God.' Columnist Melanie McDonagh warned about *His Dark Materials*, a trilogy written by Pullman, saying it was 'actually setting up a parody of Christianity as a thing itself.'

**Pray:** [for those reading this book that they will not be misled but will gain a desire to discover the true Gospel message. \(Ac.20:30\)](#)

**More:** <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/20090908/kid%e2%80%99s-author-says-jesus-is-not-god/>

### ■ British teenage drop-out rate 'among worst in developed world'

Britain has one of the worst teenage drop-out rates of any developed country, with more than one in ten of those aged 15 to 19 not in school, work or training. Only Turkey, Israel, Spain and Brazil have more in this age group who are neither learning nor working, according to the report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Britain also has among the highest number who fail to complete their higher education. Vocational courses have a particularly low graduation rates. The number of those who finish university has also stalled. The figures, from a wide-ranging study of the international education landscape before the recession hit, indicate that the situation for teenagers in

Britain is now even more severe. Jim Knight, the Employment Minister, admitted that there was more to do to help young people to ensure they can still make the most of their talents and skills.'

**Pray:** for those youngsters who 'fall by the wayside' that appropriate help and support will be available. (Pr.23:19)

**More:** [http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life\\_and\\_style/education/article6825679.ece](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/education/article6825679.ece)

#### ■ **We're born to believe in God, say scientists**

A study into the way children's brains develop suggests that beliefs in the supernatural are present from birth. The findings of Bruce Hood, professor of developmental psychology at Bristol University, challenge the claims of atheists such as Richard Dawkins. Professor Dawkins' assertion that religious belief is a result of poor education and 'indoctrination' is well known. Professor Hood said: 'Our research shows children have a natural, intuitive way of reasoning that leads them to all kinds of supernatural beliefs about how the world works.' Speculating as to why their research showed religious belief to be 'hardwired', Prof Hood and his colleagues offered an evolutionary reason. They suggest that in the past, shared religious beliefs brought social benefits as believers cooperated to ensure mutual survival, while atheist societies lacked such beneficial cohesion.

**Pray:** for children as they grow that they will discover Jesus to meet their spiritual needs. (1Cor.2:13)

**More:** <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/were-born-to-believe-in-god-say-scientists/>

#### ■ **Event to address hate crime issue**

Hate crime in Northern Ireland is to be discussed at a conference in Belfast. Community relations delegates are due to discuss the circumstances of the Romanian families who left Belfast during the summer and the migrants who were targeted after the violence at the Northern Ireland versus Poland match in March. Belfast Lord Mayor Naomi Long said the incidents marred the city's reputation. 'It's not just racism that is a problem here in Belfast; the issue of hate crime is much wider and includes sectarianism, discrimination against people with a disability, or discrimination due to religious beliefs or sexual orientation'. Belfast City Council held its first conference on the subject of hate crime last year and due to its success, decided to make it an annual event. Several initiatives to tackle hate crime were borne out of last year's event including 'tension monitoring' by the council and partner agencies, in areas where such attacks have been prevalent.

**Pray:** for Northern Ireland and its people that they will achieve the vision of Belfast without barriers that is welcoming for all,' (Ps.133.1)

**More:** [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern\\_ireland/8245324.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/8245324.stm)

#### ■ **'Faith matters,' says Blair**

'Faith matters. It matters, in fact, whether you are religious or not, or even anti-religious,' said Tony Blair. 'To ignore the role of faith is to be blind to a dimension of the world that plays a part in the thinking and attitudes of billions of people.' Mr Blair was speaking in an address to faith leaders and development agency workers at the launch of a series of seminars aimed at exploring the role of faith in development work. The seminars have been put together by the Tony Blair Faith Foundation in partnership with DFID, Islamic Relief, Oxfam and World Vision, and will be hosted by the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce. 'This is an incredibly important time to be having this discussion,' said Patrick Watt, World Vision's Head of Public Affairs and Campaigns. 'Faith – and the questions that surround it – shapes people's attitudes, behaviours, and world views. It influences where people interact and what that looks like'.

**Pray:** for all those seeking answers that their explorations would lead them to the true God (Heb.11:6)

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.co.uk/article/faith.matters.says.blair/24146.htm>

#### ■ **Leading scientist calls on religious leaders to tackle climate change**

President of the British Science Association, Lord May, says faith groups could lead policing of social behaviour. Religious leaders should play a frontline role in mobilising people to take action against global warming, according to a leading scientist. Lord May, a former chief scientist to the government, said religious groups could use their influence to motivate believers into reducing the environmental impact of their lives. The international reach of faith-based organisations and their authoritarian structures give religious groups an almost unrivalled ability to encourage a large proportion of the world's population to go green, he said. Lord May highlighted the value of religion in uniting communities to tackle environmental challenges ahead of his presidential address to the British Science Association festival at the University of Surrey in Guildford last Monday.

**Pray:** for a clear lead by Christians as we seek to care for God's gift of Creation. (Ps.65:9)

**More:** <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2009/sep/07/global-warming-religion>

## EUROPE

#### ■ **Copenhagen climate deal is 'in the balance'**

Prospects for reaching a new global deal on climate change are 'in the balance', according to UK Foreign Secretary David Miliband. There is a 'real chance' that December's UN summit in Copenhagen will not reach agreement, he said. Mr Miliband was briefing reporters prior to a whirlwind tour of European capitals aimed at stepping up EU diplomacy on the Copenhagen process. Mr Miliband's younger brother Ed - the UK Energy and Climate Secretary - said the Copenhagen process was too important to be a matter for politicians only. On a recent visit to Bangladesh, he related, he had seen how 'two million people living on sandbanks are already living with the effect of climate change, with more flooding than usual'. Whether Copenhagen produced money to help countries such as Bangladesh adapt to climate impacts would, he said, be 'a big determinant of their survival'.

**Pray:** for the government representatives as they gather to seek ways forward to meet the challenges of climate change. (Ph.2:3)

**More:** <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/8244223.stm>

#### ■ Hungarian evangelicals protest poster at gay pride parade

Hungarian evangelical Christians have protested against a poster carried during this weekend's annual Budapest Gay Pride Parade for more rights for homosexuals. The poster says: 'Jesus had two fathers too.' The text was apparently aimed at Hungarian legislation which currently forbids gay couples to adopt children. 'We, living-faith Christians are deeply hurt in our faith by this poster,' said Reverend László Bánfi, the founder of the Hungary-based International Christian Internet Church. Bánfi, who said he was persecuted by authorities for his Christian activities when Hungary was a Soviet satellite, suggested at least some gay-rights activists have misused his country's new-found freedom. 'We pray the Almighty God to give very honest repentance to those who prepared this poster and to those who agree with it,' he told BosNewsLife.

**Pray:** that those who are deceived would discover the one true God and Father of Jesus Christ who is the way to the Father. (1Cor.6:9)

**More:** <http://www.bosnewslife.com/8928-hungarian-evangelicals-protest-poster-at-gay-pride-parade>

## WORLDWIDE

#### ■ New focus should be on 4/14 Window, says mission strategist

Luis Bush, international facilitator of Transform World Connections, coined the term '10/40' two decades ago to refer to regions of the eastern hemisphere located between 10 and 40 degrees north of the equator - home to largest population of non-Christians in the world. While the 10/40 paradigm refers to a geographical area, the 4/14 Window concerns itself with children and youth between the ages of four and 14 who are growing up outside of the church. 'There is a recognition that we are losing the children of the world spiritually,' Bush told The Christian Post on Tuesday, the last day of the Transform World Conference on the 4/14 Window in New York. Statistics show high percentages of teens and young adults ages 15 to 24 are departing from the Christian values they were raised with, he said. 'So this becomes a very critical moment to aim lower at the 4 to 14 [age] as the starting place and come back to there with significant concentration,' contended the mission strategist.

**Pray:** that the Church would make teaching the young a priority and seek God's help to reach this generation. (Dt.4:9)

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/new.focus.should.be.on.414.window.says.mission.strategist/24161.htm>

#### ■ Guatemala: Declares hunger crisis

Guatemalan President Alvaro Colom has declared a 'state of public calamity' to try to mobilise funding to tackle severe food shortages in the country. Officials say 54,000 families living in an area prone to extreme weather are in a critical situation. So far this year, some 25 children are believed to have died of hunger. The UN's World Food Programme announced it would start distributing 20 tonnes of nutritional biscuits to the worst affected areas. President Colom made his announcement on Tuesday, saying the declaration of a state of public calamity would help the government to access the funding and resources needed to tackle the food crisis. 'There is food, what is lacking is the money for the affected people to buy food,' Mr Colom said. 'We are not going to wait until we've reached starvation levels to act.' The move allows the government to make emergency purchases of food.

**Pray:** that Guatemala will be able to solve this crisis and meet the needs of those who are hungry. (Is.58:10)

**More:** <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/8246782.stm>

#### ■ Brazil: Man held after kissing daughter

There is growing controversy in Brazil over the arrest of an Italian tourist held after kissing his eight-year-old daughter in public. Witnesses told police the man allegedly touched the girl in an intimate way. Under a strict new law partly designed to combat child sex abuse in South America's largest country, he faces eight to 15 years in jail if convicted. The unnamed man has been in custody for almost a week. A new attempt to secure his release this weekend failed. His Brazilian wife says the case is all a misunderstanding, while staff at the resort where the incident took place has been reported as saying they saw nothing unusual. He was reported to the police by a Brazilian couple who claimed he had been touching a young girl inappropriately and had kissed her on the mouth while they were both at a swimming pool close to the beach in full view of other tourists.

**Pray:** for wisdom in situations that can be misunderstood and lead to charges by the so called 'political police'. (Rev.20:12)

**More:** <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/8240989.stm>

#### ■ Israel: Jerusalem problems met by growing prayer movement

Millions of Christians from dozens of denominations are preparing to unite this October for the sixth annual Day of Prayer for the Peace of Jerusalem (DPPJ), a prayer effort gaining momentum in recent years - amid the threats, terrorist attacks, and international pressure rising against Jerusalem from many sides. According to a news release this is being driven by more than 1,000 major global church leaders, and the organizers say that the day of prayer, on Sunday, October 4, is happening in local churches all around the world, joined spiritually through simultaneous prayer in more than 175 nations. 'As the Bible declared it would, Jerusalem has become a cup of controversy on the global stage,' said Rev. Robert Stearns,

who co-chairs DPPJ alongside Dr. Jack Hayford, president of the International Foursquare Church. 'We believe that God's peace plan is one of love for all peoples of the Middle East'.

**Pray:** to the God of love and peace for His solution to Jerusalem's needs. (Ps.122:6)

**More:** <http://www.assistnews.net/STORIES/2009/s09090033.htm>

#### ■ Papua New Guinea: Bible translations continue despite violence

Wycliffe Bible Translators is continuing to translate Bibles in Papua New Guinea in spite of ongoing tribal conflict. In the last month, the dedication of three New Testaments was overshadowed by a fresh outbreak of tribal conflict in the valley where the main Bible translation centre is situated. Many of Wycliffe's members live and work in the valley. Heather Patrick has spent the last 30 years living and working in Papua New Guinea and is currently based in the UK. She says the violence is not surprising. 'It's very sad to hear of the violence – sad, but not a surprise,' she said. 'With three New Testament dedications in the past month and progress in many other translation projects, we shouldn't be surprised that the devil wants to make things difficult.' Violence has flared up around the centre of Ukarumpa in recent weeks, the latest disturbance in a long running dispute over access to water.

**Pray:** for the continued work of Wycliffe Bible Translators enabling the Word to increase and spread. (Ac.12:24)

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/papua.new.guinea.bible.translations.continue.despite.violence/24136.htm>

#### ■ Madagascar: Archbishop urges leaders to end political wrangling

Anglican Archbishop Ian Ernest of the Indian Ocean Province, who is based in Mauritius, is calling on political leaders in Madagascar to set aside their political agendas, and put people first. 'I know it is difficult because of the delicate situation, but as a church we are calling on the leaders to see it at the level of God,' Ernest said.

The world's fourth largest island, in the Indian Ocean, is trapped in a political standoff between Andre Rajoelina, the former mayor of Antananarivo, the capital city, and ousted President Marc Ravalomanana, the senior lay leader of the Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar (FJKM). In January 2009, after weeks of protests, Rajoelina seized power, in what the international community described as a 'coup'. 'There is a desperate need for leadership at the moment, because the leadership that has come out, has not received any legitimate recognition from the international community,' said Ernest, noting that the situation in Madagascar had been confusing in the past months.

**Pray:** for a solution to the political problems of Madagascar and that God would raise up His people to rule. (Is.32:1)

**More:** <http://www.eklesia.co.uk/node/10194>

## PRAISE REPORTS

#### ■ Abortion adverts on TV are delayed following public outcry

A decision on whether to allow television adverts for abortion has been put off by watchdogs following a public outcry. A proposal to liberalise the rules prompted comments and petitions from 40,000 people, with the great majority opposed to the idea. Changes to advertising rules usually receive up to 300 submissions. As a result, the bodies responsible for the advertising code have decided they need more time, and have delayed making a decision from this autumn to the beginning of next year. The drive to liberalise the advertising code would also allow manufacturers to promote condoms before the 9pm watershed. Critics fear advertising abortion would encourage it to be seen as an alternative to contraception and lead to greater promiscuity among teenagers. Eric Hester, vice-chairman of the charity the Family Education Trust, said: 'I am glad that there has been such a big public reaction, but not surprised. People hold strong views on abortion. (See Prayer Alert 1409)

**Praise:** God for His continuing answers to our prayers. (Ps 118:21)

**More:** <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1212123/Abortion-adverts-TV-delayed-following-public-outcry.html>

#### ■ Former Body-Shop worker opens prayer stand, sees healings

Hand-painted cardboard signs welcome motorists to Matthew Cordell's roadside stop with this message: 'Prayer Stand, Drive Thru - Open.' People stop by to make a variety of prayer requests, from the healing of ailments to the safety of children going to college for the first time. One woman pulled in on her way to Urgent Care for chest pains. He said the pains subsided with prayer, and she went home instead. In another instance, Cordell said a man with a severe brain injury began improving following his intercession. Cordell, 38, has become a familiar sight in recent weeks to morning commuters on Hunt Highway, San Tan Valley, Arizona. He's there from 6-10 a.m. on most Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays; waiting for customers with his 'assistant,' a friendly 5-year-old Chihuahua named Skye. 'They pull in, I go up to the window, we can pray and they pull out,' Cordell said. 'And people know they can have their needs met.'

**Praise:** God for this initiative, and others such as 'Healing on the Streets', 'Street Pastors' and 'Street Angels', taking His Gospel out there. (Lk.10:1)

**More:** <http://www.azcentral.com/news/articles/2009/09/04/20090904drivethruprayer0907.html>

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