



PRAYER ALERT...

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

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BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ A message from the President of the Christian Peoples' Alliance

This week has seen yet further attacks on the conscience and liberties of Christians in the workplace. Secular intolerances of all kinds are trying to close down the public space in which Christians can act and speak. No political party in Parliament is standing up against this. We can expect the Equalities Bill to make life harder for Christians and churches who wish to stand by biblical values. At the same time, we see public disaffection with the secular parties and a turning to apathy, despair and extremist positions. The Christian way is to witness to another option - of lives changed by the power of the Gospel and communities transformed by faithful Christian service and action. In Britain, Christians have a duty to hold fast to what is good. Overseas - in places such as Pakistan, Nigeria and Egypt - we see the reality of true Christian sacrifice as they face real persecution'. Source: David Campanale, CPA President. David went on to urge Christians to stand for Parliament and local elections. By standing today, we can make a major impact in the politics of tomorrow. Together we can make an impact.

Pray: for the Holy Spirit to descend upon our leaders to guide their intuitions. (Gal.5:22-23)

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

■ Christian counsellor loses out in equal opportunities case

Christians in employment in the UK could face legal action if they act according to their consciences after a landmark Employment Appeal Tribunal case which declared the rights of homosexual couples trump those of people of faith and conscience. Gary McFarlane, a 48-year-old solicitor and part-time relationship counsellor with Relate (Avon) was dismissed by the charity for failing to give an unequivocal commitment to help same-sex couples improve their sex lives. Mr McFarlane claimed unfair dismissal and discrimination contrary to the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003. The counsellor, a former elder of a large multicultural church in Bristol, believes the Bible teaches that same-sex sexual practice is contrary to biblical teaching and therefore that he should do nothing which endorses this activity. Mr McFarlane had no objection to others in Relate counselling couples needing advice on same-sex activity, and said it was an issue of conscience.

Pray: for God to give wisdom and courage to those who face such issues and that Relate will be granted understanding. (1Co.16:13)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.co.uk/article/christian.counsellor.loses.out.in.equal.opportunities.case/24772.htm>

■ Face to face: The Muslim fanatics who attacked Baroness Warsi

With egg yolk dripping through her hair after being attacked by demonstrators, Britain's most prominent Muslim woman politician took refuge in the Memsaab Boutique in Luton. Baroness Warsi could have been forgiven for saying she would never put her foot in the Bedfordshire town again. Minutes earlier the Tory peer had been cornered by a group of finger-

jabbing young Islamists who had pelted her with eggs, accusing her of causing Muslim deaths in Afghanistan. The mob chanted 'Shame on you!' and one protester yelled loudly 'This woman doesn't represent us'. This was the unedifying scene confronting the shadow minister for Community and Social Cohesion who was simply trying to engage in reasoned debate about Afghanistan during a walkabout in Bury Park, Luton's Muslim area. In the end, Baroness Warsi was forced to retreat into the sari shop while police cleared the street of protesters. It was an hour before she could safely leave.

Pray: for God's wisdom to infuse those of other faiths to reject intolerance in our Christian country. (2Ti.2:3)

More: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1232500/Face-face-men-hate-The-Muslim-fanatics-attacked-Baroness-Warsi.html>

■ David Cameron blasts Labour as the 'anti-marriage' party

David Cameron last night accused Labour of 'pathological' opposition to supporting marriage as he vowed to reward every wedded couple under a Tory government. He went on the offensive after Children's Secretary Ed Balls said marriage was not the key to a happy family. A Tory government would 'celebrate' and 'encourage' marriage by changing the tax system in favour of married couples, he signalled. Mr Cameron said 'Ed Balls seems to see marriage as irrelevant. I don't think it is. The Tory leader's comments came after Mr Balls rejected marriage's special status in favour of supporting any 'stable relationship'. Mr Balls is drawing up plans to tackle widespread family breakdown by encouraging couples with children to stay together. But he insists the measures should not promote marriage as that would mean unwed couples and single-parent families being treated as 'second class'.

Pray: for the Holy Spirit to bring together our leaders in support of the institution of marriage. (Ps.133)

More: <http://www.express.co.uk/posts/view/143346/Conservative-leader-David-Cameron-blasts-Labour-as-the-anti-marriages-party>

■ Independent research shows 'faith schools' promote community cohesion and equality

Secondary schools with a religious foundation contribute significantly and substantially more to the promotion of community cohesion and the provision of equality of opportunity for students than other schools, according to the results of an academic study of recent Ofsted inspection data. Analysis of the sample of independent inspection reports suggests that secondary-level 'faith schools' (of all faiths and denominations, taken as a group) received average grades more than 11 per cent higher than 'community schools' for their promotion of community cohesion, and outperformed such schools by almost 9 per cent for their effectiveness in tackling inequality. The research is published alongside a set of case studies of Church of England schools which have pioneered programmes that reach out well beyond the school gates to help foster good relations across their local community.

Pray: for Christian schools that they continue to shine out as beacons in their communities. (Ps.37:6)

More: <http://www.cofe.anglican.org/news/pr11109.html>

■ Church leaders pressing for commitment at climate summit

Leaders of the Baptist, Methodist and United Reformed Churches want the Government to put pressure on the world's richest nations to reach a binding agreement on climate change when they meet in Copenhagen next month. They say that developed countries have a moral responsibility to take the lead in countering global warming since much of their wealth was brought about by activities that produced high levels of carbon emissions. They are pressing for a deal that will help developing countries mitigate the worst effects of climate change on the poor and vulnerable and support economic development. The Rev John Marsh, moderator of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church, said: 'We share the anger and frustration of the world's poorest countries with the intransigent positions adopted by negotiators of some of the richest countries ahead of the Copenhagen summit which has rendered a binding agreement unlikely. The time for talking is over.' Thousands of people are expected to for a giant blue wave in front of the Houses of Parliament on Saturday and also in Glasgow to put pressure on the Government ahead of the summit from December 7 to 18.

Pray: for a solution to the damage we have done to God's world. (Ps.19:1)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/church.leaders.pressing.for.commitment.at.climate.summit/24768.htm>

■ Vicar sends warning over occult

A rural vicar has warned of a rise in 'dark forces' after a sheep's head was found impaled on a pole outside one of his churches. Rev Nick Bromfield says he has spotted several signs of black magic worship in the area and that even seemingly harmless pub psychic nights and crystal readings can cause untold damage. Rev Bromfield decided to speak out after seeing increasing evidence of occult behaviour. 'It might sound medieval to talk about the relationship between good and evil, but there is no middle ground on this. People need to leave well alone. I have been told there are people operating in a darker place, and I have seen signs of satanic activity (locally). Rev Bromfield, Rector of Drybrook, Lydbrook and Ruardean - in the Forest of Dean - is asked to bless around 10 homes a year because of the owners' fear something is amiss. 'I think it's something that clergy in many rural parishes have experienced'.

Pray: for deliverance from evil. (Mt.6:13 The Lord's Prayer)

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstoppers/religion/6662833/Vicar-sends-warning-over-occult.html>

EUROPE

■ Russia: Christian - Muslim tensions feared after train blast

There were fears on Sunday, November 29 of more tensions between Christians and Muslims in Russia after suspected Islamist rebels bombed a train that killed 25 people and a gunman murdered a missionary priest who was critical of Islam. Investigators say they are examining religious hatred as the main motive for the killing of Orthodox Priest Daniil Sysoyev. Friday's attack on a train in Ingushetia suggested however that suspected Islamic militants are expanding their activities

from targeting a church to attacking public locations outside the Caucasus region, where they have fought for independence. (Ingushetia up to recently has been peaceful even though it borders the Caucasus). The head of Russia's Orthodox Church urged authorities to quickly take action against those responsible for the violence. No one has claimed responsibility for the train blast, but security analysts said militant groups from Russia's mainly Muslim North Caucasus were the most likely culprits.

Pray: for the authorities and the church to work together and stem a potential increase of terrorism. (Ezr.8:23)

More: <http://www.worthynews.com/7003-christian-muslim-tensions-feared-in-russia-after-train-blast-and-killing-priest>

■ **Tajikistan: Court bans Baptist church**

Members of a Baptist congregation in the capital Dushanbe have appealed to the City Court against a ban on their activity imposed because they meet for worship in a private home without state registration. But the Judge of the District Court denied that this violated the Baptists' freedom of worship. The Law demands that all non-government organisations register and the court-imposed ban came after a 9 October raid on a church service by officials of the City Administration, Dushanbe city Prosecutor's office, Police and National Security Committee and secret police. Baptists are continuing to meet for worship despite the ban. State control of religious activity has been steadily tightening in 2009 through a new Religion Law. The chair of the Culture Ministry's Head Department for Religious Affairs said that he does not know what further action the authorities would take against the Baptists. His colleague said the Baptists do not want to have official status or become a religious organisation.

Pray: for wisdom and protection for these Baptists as they meet in homes in Tajikistan. (Mt.16:18)

More: http://www.forum18.org/Archive.php?article_id=1381

WORLDWIDE

■ **Thailand: Christmas Lights**

When we see bright Christmas lights our reaction is one of joyous anticipation of Christmas. However strings of twinkling lights for the Phaun people in Laos have no connection to Christmas. Most have never heard of Christmas. The lights here have a sad and unsavoury meaning of brothels who put up strings of lights to draw the attention of potential customers driving or walking past. In Laos you rarely see prostitutes out except to pick up snacks or phone cards for their cell phones. Women travel outside their home village to work, often moving from town to town to keep men from getting bored with them. Many entered the profession as children and we are asked by an intercessor in the country to pray for a vibrant, multiplying group of believers within walking distance of every Phuan person. The link below relates to the vulnerability of the children being drawn into prostitution and trafficking.

Pray: for the gospel of Christ to permeate through to these people in Thailand and for many captives to be released. (Lk.8:15)

More: <http://ipsnews.net/alert/countries/thai1.html>

■ **Arabian Peninsula: Praying for children and youth**

Creative Christian ministries are needed to meet the emotional, physical and spiritual needs of children and youth in the Arabian Peninsula. Reaching Muslim children with God's love in Christ is difficult, but access is possible through Christian nannies, hospital workers and educators. Another opportunity arises this Christmas as local expatriate Christian youth and youth workers touch the lives of the local youth. Muslim youth can be divided into two groups - the wealthy driving stylish cars making secret boy-to-girl friendships, playing sports, watching movies and using the Internet. Youth from poorer backgrounds are reserved, passionate about neighbourhood soccer games, friendly and less mobile. Many are exposed to other cultures and faiths through travel, television, movies and/or the Internet; yet they are raised to stand boldly against any belief besides Islam even though most of them are not religious. Muslim children need opportunities to hear about the love of Jesus Christ for them.

Pray: for more Bible-based resources for Muslim children and youth with more opportunities for Christians to share the love of Jesus Christ. (Lk.2:30-32)

More: http://www.pray-ap.info/?page_id=278#Dec

■ **Canada: Bishops warn against human trafficking at Winter Olympics**

Anglican and Roman Catholic bishops in Vancouver have expressed concerns that human trafficking may cast a shadow over the winter Olympics taking place in the city and in the Canadian ski resort Whistler next February. The bishops described the 2010 Games as a 'celebration of human development through sport' but also expressed their intention to stand together in opposing the 'social ill of human trafficking'. 'Our churches rejoice in the unity and respect that the Olympics signifies to the world' said the bishops, however they also called upon the faithful of our churches and all people of good will to uphold and defend the dignity of every human person.

Pray: that the solidarity and success of the Olympic Games will give a new respect for human life around the world. (Dt.1:13)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/canadian.bishops.warn.against.human.trafficking.at.winter.olympics/24780.htm>

■ **Sudan: Peace process has reached critical point**

With less than five months before national elections the peace process in Sudan has reached a critical point. Leaders of the Episcopal Church of the Sudan said the Sudanese Comprehensive Peace Agreement was on the brink of collapse due to contentions over the referendum law, the demarcation of the 1956 borders, and violence recently perpetrated by other armed groups. Southern Sudan is threatened with famine due to the failure of rains. The Episcopal Church of Sudan Provincial Standing Committee said, 'We appeal to our partners to assist us in providing for the physical and spiritual needs

of our people facing hunger this Advent and Christmas season.' Southern Sudan is grappling with the legacy of a two-decade civil war between ethnic African southerners (mainly Christian) and Sudan's Arab-dominated government in the northern capital Khartoum. An estimated two million people have been killed and tens of thousands displaced and wounded.

Pray: that the church would be effective in bringing peace and reconciliation to their people as they work with the government for unity and love. (Ps.119:28)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/sudanese.church.leaders.peace.process.has.reached.critical.point/24776.htm>

■ China: More church leaders arrested

The Chinese government sentenced five church leaders to three to seven years criminal detention for 'gathering people to disturb the public order', referring to their organisation of a one-thousand believer prayer rally held on September 14th (praise God! - though the following day the church was attacked by over 400 military police!) On Wednesday, ChinaAid also learned that five more church leaders from Linfen Church, Shanxi, were each sentenced to two years in re-education through labour camps. ChinaAid said this was an arbitrary administrative sentence by the Public Security Bureau enacted so the leaders would not be 'required' to go through the court and prosecution system. The sentence was said to be effective from November 11, at which time they were already detained.

Pray: that public outcry and international pressure will bring about the freedom of prisoners of faith in China. (Pr.29:26)

More: <http://www.religiousintelligence.co.uk/news/?NewsID=5329>

■ Nigeria: Rise up in prayer against militant Islamists

Nigeria's population is almost evenly divided between Christians, who live mainly in the south and Muslims, who make up the largest segment in the north. (Note: The population in Northern Nigeria is roughly numerically equal between Christians and Muslims - but the Christians are constantly persecuted by the attempted imposition of Sharia law). Over 1,000 people died and countless more were injured recently as militant Islamist group, the Boko Haram, launched violent attacks to 'cleanse' Nigeria of Western influence. The group aligns itself with Al Qaeda and threatens to Islamise the nation by war. Boko Haram has been sending young men to undergo bomb-making training in Afghanistan. A Boko Haram document contains a declaration of jihad on the whole of Nigeria. Southern Nigerian cities such as Lagos and Enugu are threatened with bomb attacks, with the ultimate aim of Islamising Nigeria and 'cleansing' it of Western influence. CSW said, 'It's important not to be discouraged; we can take encouragement from knowing that there are Christians all over the world who are 'standing in the gap', interceding in prayer for the victims of the violence.'

Pray: against horrific violence directed towards Christians and for more of God's family to stand in the gap. (2Ch.6:35)

More: <http://www.csw.org.uk/urgentactionnigeriaabauchistate.htm>

PRAISE REPORTS

■ Vietnam: Christian denomination awarded official recognition

The Vietnamese government has awarded official recognition to the Assemblies of God, which, for the past 20 years, was an illegal Christian denomination. The director of Ho Chi Minh City's Committee for Religious and Ethnic Affairs said, 'Before the recognition it was an illegal religious organisation and we had warned them for their violations.' However, the church had never been punished because Vietnamese laws were unclear on how they should be treated. It is expected that it could take up to a year before the organisation's status becomes fully legal. The Vietnam Law on Religion, which was passed in 2007, required all denominations to apply to the Committee on Religious Affairs to obtain legal recognition. The Assemblies of God has been active in Vietnam since 1989 and has over 40,000 members. Without recognition under the 2007 law, Christian groups would have difficulty building churches or organising religious gatherings.

Praise: the Lord for this piece of good news in Vietnam. Pray that the authorities will be prompt in progressing the paperwork to make the church fully legal. (1Tim.3:12-13)

More: <http://www.barnabasfund.org/UK/News/Prayer-Focus-Update/Prayer-Focus-1209.html#VIETNAM-CHRISTIANDENOMINA>

■ Christian men's magazine 'Sorted' hits newsagents across the UK

The UK's only Christian magazine for men has reached a significant breakthrough, as 'Sorted' is set to be distributed in 1500 magazine outlet stores up and down the country. 'This is a real answer to prayer,' said 'Sorted' editor and well-known national evangelist Steve Legg. He added 'I was approached by a secular magazine distributor to place 4,000 copies of each edition of the magazine in the men's lifestyle section of newsagents throughout the UK. For them to say they're going to place it between Nuts and Loaded I almost fell off my seat'. Earlier this year overwhelming demand meant the magazine completely sold out, as 10,000 copies were ordered for Father's day so an additional 3,000 were printed. Steve says 'as a result of this they're also planning to sell copies for Father's Day next year in one of Britain's largest retailers, WH Smith'.

Praise: God for this opportunity to get Christian values amongst men's magazines in newsagents across the country. (Is.52:7)

More: <http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/2009/s09110165.htm>

PRAYER FORUM OF BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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