



PRAYER ALERT...

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BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ Bah humbug! St Nick prevented from giving gifts to detained children

The inspiration for the modern day Father Christmas, St Nicholas of Myra, was turned away at the gate of the Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre in Bedfordshire when he tried to deliver presents to the children locked up inside for administrative purposes. St Nick brought with him £300 worth of gifts donated by several London churches for the estimated 35 children currently detained, dressed in a red robe, long white beard, and a bishop's mitre and crook and accompanied by the Rev Professor Nicholas Sagovsky, despite the authorities having agreed to accept the gifts, they were met at the gates by a group of unidentified security guards who barred entry and ordered them to leave the area. The police were also called. St Nick said, 'If this is how visitors are treated, I just shudder to imagine what else transpires inside Yarl's Wood.'

Pray: [that some Christmas joy may reach all those detained, especially children. \(Lk.2:10\)](#)

More: <http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/10752>

■ Archbishop: God takes an interest in the Earth

God takes an interest in the material things of the Earth like food and shelter, said the Archbishop of Canterbury this morning. As 15,000 delegates meet in Copenhagen this week for the UN climate summit, Dr Rowan Williams dismissed the notion that religion had nothing to say about the issue. He was speaking on Pause for Thought with Terry Wogan on BBC Radio 2 on Tuesday as he prepares to travel to the Dutch capital this weekend to speak to world leaders on the Church's attitude to climate change. He said: 'We're getting ready for Christmas and it's worth remembering that one of the things we celebrate at Christmas is God taking an interest in the real material stuff of this Earth, the flesh and blood, and all the things that keep flesh and blood secure – food and shelter and so on. It would be pretty peculiar if we took the world less seriously than God does.'

Pray: [for all those attending the conference that they will achieve positive results. \(Is.41:1\)](#)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/archbishop.god.takes.an.interest.in.the.earth/24842.htm>

■ The Archbishop of Canterbury worried by US gay bishop vote

The Archbishop of Canterbury has expressed his concern at the election of the second openly gay bishop in the Anglican Church. Rowan Williams said the move raised 'very serious questions' for both the Episcopal Church in the US and the Anglican Communion as a whole. But he noted that the election of the Reverend Mary Glasspool in the diocese of Los Angeles had yet to be confirmed. Ms Glasspool was elected on Saturday as an assistant bishop in the diocese of Los Angeles. She needs a majority of national Episcopal Church heads to back her consecration. In a statement posted on his website Dr Williams said the election 'raises very serious questions not just for the Episcopal Church and its place in the

Anglican Communion, but for the Communion as a whole'. 'The process of selection however is only part complete,' he said.

Pray: for the Anglican Communion as it continues to face the ramifications of these controversial decisions. (Pr.8:1)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/8398043.stm>

■ Christian charity launches human rights guide for homeless

Housing Justice on Monday handed out dozens of human rights guides to homeless people in London as part of a longer-term campaign to stop local councils moving them on. The Rights Guide for Rough Sleepers clears up legal grey areas like stop and search, arrests, dispersal zones and urinating in public. The pocket-sized booklets are laminated and printed bright yellow so that they do not dissolve in the rain and can be read in dim lighting. The back pages include space for notes so that owners can record details of encounters with the authorities. They are the brainchild of Housing Justice's London Coordinator Sally Leigh. She said local councils were turning to increasingly severe enforcement measures to force rough sleepers off the streets. She said the booklets would help homeless people know their legal position.

Pray: that the real message of Christmas would reach all homeless people through the charities that serve them. (1Jn.1:1-3)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/christian.charity.launches.human.rights.guide.for.homeless/24844.htm>

■ Scots launch campaign to end prostitution demand

A new campaign to stamp out prostitution in Scotland by targeting those who purchase sex was launched on Tuesday. Glasgow City Council is behind the End Prostitution Now campaign which is pushing for a change in the law to ensure there is 'no hiding place for the pimps, punters and brothel keepers who prey upon others'. The campaign features a series of hard hitting posters to raise awareness of the harmful effects of prostitution. And for the first time the focus will be on men who purchase sex rather than the prostitutes themselves. A dedicated website www.endprostitutionnow.org has also gone live asking for public support for changes to the law. Those behind the campaign say they will propose changes to legislation which would affect men who buy or seek to buy sex, those involved in arranging or advertising the sale of sex and those who provide accommodation where the sale of sex takes place.

Pray: that this campaign will have the desired effect and help to end prostitution. (Hos.4:11a)

More: <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/scots-launch-campaign-to-end-prostitution-demand/>

■ Nuclear family is broken warns parents' group

The traditional nuclear family has irretrievably broken down and it will soon become normal for children to be raised by relations other than their parents, the head of a Government-funded parenting group has predicted. Aunts, uncles, grandparents and even siblings will take on increasing childcare responsibilities in a form of 'communal parenting' to cope with the effects of marital breakdown and growing pressures in the workplace, according to the Family and Parenting Institute. Rising divorce rates, fewer marriages and the growth of civil partnerships mean that the traditional family model is no longer 'the norm' and Government efforts to rescue it are futile, according to Dr Katherine Rake, the organisation's new chief executive. She used her first major speech to warn against the 'trap' of attempting to preserve traditional family structures through Government initiatives. She also forecasts a dramatic change in the role of parents in the next decade.

Pray: that this forecast will prove to be too pessimistic and that the nuclear family will remain strong. (Eph.3:14-15)

More: <http://www.anglican-mainstream.net/?p=18996>

■ What about the Christians who don't go to church?

According to an ongoing BBC/Open University survey, 57 per cent would return to church if they could. So what have they to say to us all? If you go to the Open University website www.open2.net/christianity/survey.html you will see that viewers are invited to say what Christianity means to them. The results are instantly available and revealing. The introduction to the survey reminds us that 71.6% of the UK population described themselves as Christian in the 2001 Census, although only 15% of that number belong to, or go to church. Interestingly, the questionnaire is designed to ask people who call themselves Christian why they do not attend. Visit the web link above and see how it is worded. The results probably produce a bias which is less representative of the church going population as a whole, which presumably makes the conclusions all the more encouraging.

Pray: that those who say they would like to return to church would find the opportunity to do so. And that the churches will welcome them! (Ac.2:46)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.co.uk/article/what.about.the.christians.who.dont.go.to.church/24782.htm>

EUROPE

■ Turkey: nearly 40 percent of population has negative view of Christians.

Research into social and political issues reported more than half of the population of Muslim-majority Turkey opposes members of other religions holding meetings or publishing materials to explain their faith. 59% of those surveyed said non-Muslims either 'should not' or 'absolutely should not' be allowed to hold open meetings where they can discuss their ideas. 54% said non-Muslims either 'should not' or 'absolutely should not' be allowed to publish literature that describes their faith. Christians face threats from a self-declared 'secular' state and from members of the public who have become more observant in their Islamic faith and are often seen as enemies of the state, enemies of Islam or traitors to Turkish culture.

Pray: for more protection and anointing over Christians and Christian literature and media material, so that many families will hear, see and follow Jesus Christ. (Mt.13:8-9 & Is.42:7)

More: <http://www.compassdirect.org/english/country/turkey/12322/>

■ EU: Jerusalem should be capital of two states

European Union ministers have called for Jerusalem to serve as the capital of both Israel and a future Palestinian state as part of a negotiated peace. The foreign ministers dropped an earlier reference stating explicitly that East Jerusalem should be the capital of a Palestinian state. Palestinians welcomed the statement. Israel said it contained 'nothing new'. Jerusalem's status is one of the most sensitive and complex issues in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. 'If there is to be a genuine peace, a way must be found through negotiations to resolve the status of Jerusalem as the future capital of two states,' the statement from EU foreign ministers said. 'Israel regrets that the EU has chosen to adopt a text that, although containing nothing new, does not contribute to the renewal of negotiations,' it said.

Pray: for the emergence of coexistence between the two peoples and a future prosperity for those living in difficult situations. (Is.48:6-7)

More: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/8401913.stm

WORLDWIDE

■ Islamic world: Getting ready for Ashura

The most important time of year for Shiite Muslims is Ashura (December 17th-26th) when Shiites globally remember the brutal death of one of their leaders in 680 AD. Every day and night they will meet, and as Christians we can fast crying out to God for Shiites to meet with the One true God. A Christian reports, 'While focusing on Shiites the last eight years I can track the response from Christian workers among Shiites. Five years ago they said there weren't any Shiite believers in their areas (Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Iraq). Three years ago there was a handful of Shiites following Christ, and now there are many, many Shiites following Him! What I see happening is when many Christians pray in agreement with each other and with God during Ashura, God moves powerfully. I'm convinced that the response and openness to the Gospel we see among Shiites today is because thousands of Christ's followers have prayed and fasted together during Ashura in the past.

Pray: that God would stir the Muslims of the world to have a real hunger to know who He really is and a probing in their spirit until they find out. (Ep.1:18)

More: www.cryoutnow.org

■ Philippines: Priest's hunger strike claims initial victory

The government has suspended permission for a mining company to operate in Mindoro Oriental province, pending an independent investigation, after Father Edwin Gariguez and indigenous people there staged a hunger strike outside the environment department's national office. The Father is a member of Alliance against Mining which is contemplating legal action to enforce a 2002 freeze on large scale mining for nickel for the next 25 years. The Norwegian Intex corporation intends to extract 100-120 million tons of nickel in two Mindoro provinces, between 2010 and 2030, causing damage to watersheds, farms and forests. A mining moratorium will stop destruction and pollution of nature.

Pray: that all foreign investment into large scale mining operations in the country will be forbidden. (Ex.23:6)

More: <http://www.ucanews.com/2009/12/09/priests-hunger-strike-claims-initial-victory/>

■ China: Church leader jailed for 15 Years

ChinaAid learned that 36-year-old Uyghur house church leader Alimujiang Yimiti received 15 years criminal detention on October 28th for allegedly 'providing state secrets to overseas organizations.' An appeal has already been filed. Mr. Alimujiang has already been detained for over two years without a verdict. ChinaAid says that the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention ruled the arrest and detention of Mr. Alimujiang to be arbitrary and in violation of international law. He converted from Islam to Christianity and the case is about religious faith issues. The key for this case was flawed. 'This is the harshest sentence against house church believers in nearly a decade and ChinaAid calls upon the UN and people of conscience throughout the world to strongly protest to the Chinese government for this severe case of religious persecution.

Pray: for God to save Alimujiang from the clutches of a powerful state. (Job.5:16)

More: <http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/2009/s09120035.htm>

■ Worldwide: Doctors at war against human trafficking

A newly formed organisation, 'Doctors At War' is calling doctors worldwide to join the fight against global sex trade. The long-term healthcare ramifications of 27 million victims throughout the world include post-traumatic stress disorder, panic attacks, depression and a host of other mental health issues along with countless physical health problems. The cost worldwide to provide healthcare for these survivors will be overwhelming. Doctors At War will work on projects focusing on connecting healthcare and human trafficking. With hundreds of doctors from approximately 20 countries already involved this is intended to be a globally influential organization. A representative said, 'Doctors At War seeks to fight this evil, and to bring relief, rescue and restoration to the victims. I am honoured to be able to make a contribution to this effort.'

Pray: that many doctors across the globe would hear and respond to this call to work for the vulnerable. (Ps.35:10)

More: <http://www.earnedmedia.org/daw1208.htm>

■ Eritrea; Thirty Christian women arrested

The Eritrean government arrested 30 elderly Christian women who were praying together in a house on Saturday. The women are mostly members of an evangelical church 'Faith Mission Church' which has a history of over 50 years in Eritrea but became a target of government crackdown after a law requiring churches to register with officials was adopted in 2002. It is impossible for the Faith Mission Church to register because the government only allows three Christian denominations

to legally exist - the Eritrean Orthodox Church, the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran Evangelical Church of Eritrea. Faith Mission has Methodist roots.

Pray: for the immediate release of the innocent intercessors and for an end to this violation of freedom of religion in Eritrea. (Ps.40:17)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/eritrea.arrests.30.evangelical.christian.women/24845.htm>

■ Myanmar: Orphans threatened with deportation from Thailand

There is uncertainty over the fate of 76 Burmese children in Thailand after Thai police stormed the 'Glory to God' orphanage near Myanmar's border where they were staying. The police put the names of all the residents on a register and asked them to prepare for deportation. After fleeing Myanmar, formally known as Burma, in June the children were temporarily moved to an orphanage close by. However due to malaria in the orphanage and the subsequent death of one girl they were quickly shifted to another location. It has been a week since the children between the ages of six and sixteen were moved to the new location 100 miles from the orphanage on the Myanmar-Thailand border.

Pray: that God would protect the children's lives and bring His peace and provision to the staff. (Ps.82:3)

More: <http://www.bosnewslife.com/10142-news-alert-burma-orphans-threatened-with-deportation-from-thailand>

■ Brazil: Police accused of routinely killing suspects

Police in Sao Paulo, and Rio de Janeiro, routinely commit unlawful executions, Human Rights Watch has alleged after a two-year investigation found evidence that officers often covered up such killings as justified self-defence. Rio is due to stage the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympics and needs to reduce violence in the face of well armed drug gangs. Human Rights Watch's detailed study of 51 cases showed credible evidence that police in Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro shot alleged criminals and then reported that the victims had died in shootouts while resisting arrest.

Pray: for God to enable the police to be more effective and for shrewd policing against drug cartels. (2Sa.22:7)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/8402761.stm>

■ Maldives: Freedom of religion

Hostility to freedom of religion exists in the Maldives where Islam is the only legal faith. This hostility extends to parliament considering a draft bill to ban the already barred course of building non-Muslim places of worship. Some Maldivians anonymously identify themselves in weblogs as secular or non-Muslims but are severely restricted. Why? One Maldivian told Forum 18 'few Maldivians understand religious freedom because there is a fear that to consider religious freedom is equivalent to being blasphemous.' Maldivians are under this impression because they are told that in Islam there is no freedom to choose one's religion.

Pray: that as God gathers His harvest, non Muslim places of worship will be built and many thousands will investigate, hear and respond to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. (Lk.10:2)

More: http://www.forum18.org/Archive.php?article_id=1383

PRAISE REPORTS

■ Mandate: Belfast's a taste of heaven

'It was 'a taste of heaven' is how one visitor described the dramatic sound of 2,000 male voices filling Belfast's Waterfront Hall. Men from the UK, Ireland and other nations took part in one of Europe's biggest men's conferences. The November event offered a programme of Christian worship and teaching on the theme of 'Hope- filled Men – Lights In A Troubled World'. Looking at the adventures of 'a man just like us' Elijah living in a culture troubled and disconnected in a postmodern island. BUT proclaiming none of this is new, for Elijah faced similar crises and It's together that we can change the world.

Praise: God for new wineskins for such a time as this.(Ps.133:1)

More: http://www.breakingchristiannews.com/articles/display_art.html?ID=7379

■ Christian hoteliers cleared in Muslim woman abuse row

Benjamin and Sharon Vogelenzang were cleared on Wednesday of insulting a Muslim guest for wearing the hijab and berating her for her beliefs. The Christian couple were accused of asking if convert Ericka Tazi was a terrorist when she came down to breakfast wearing her hijab on her last day at the hotel. The 60-year-old claimed she was abused for an hour and asked if she was a killer 'like the prophet Muhammad'. Mrs Tazi told the court that she was left traumatised after being insulted by the couple. Mr Vogelenzang denied insulting her although his wife admitted suggesting that the hijab was a form of bondage. 'There's no way I would insult any of my guests, I never have, I never would,' she said. District judge Richard Clancy dismissed the case against them after a two-day trial at Liverpool magistrates' court. He said there were no witnesses to support Mrs Tazi's allegation of abuse.

Praise: God for His intervention in this case and pray for His protection over all believers facing persecution. (1Th.3:7)

More: <http://www.metro.co.uk/news/805636-christian-hotel-couple-cleared-of-muslim-rant>

PRAYER FORUM OF BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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