



PRAYER ALERT...

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BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ Calls for BBC to appoint Religion Editor

The Church of England has called for the BBC to appoint a Religion Editor to bring 'greater depth' to its coverage. A senior correspondent in the position, mirroring similar appointments at the corporation for arts, science and business, would be able to act as a 'trusted guide' through stories about religious issues, according to the church. The Bishop of Manchester, the Rt Revd Nigel McCulloch, the church's lead spokesman on communications, made the call in the church's submission to the BBC Trust's ongoing review of BBC Radio 3, BBC Radio 4 and BBC Radio 7. 'There has been at least one public call or the BBC to appoint a Religion Editor to reflect the importance of religious literacy to any proper understanding of today's world,' said Mr McCulloch in the submission. 'We echo that call, which would provide a recognised expert to bring greater co-ordination and depth to the corporation's religious output across all channels.'

Pray: that the BBC will recognise that such an appointment would be beneficial to its religious coverage. (Isa.41:28)

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopics/religion/7960684/Church-of-England-calls-for-BBC-to-appoint-religion-editor.html>

■ Right to Believe petition

More than 20,000 people have signed a petition expressing support for millions of believers around the world who are denied the right to practice their faith. The Right to Believe petition has been launched by Oxfordshire based Open Doors, which supports persecuted Christians worldwide. It opposes efforts by an Islamic organisation to win the right for governments to choose which religious views are permissible in their country. The Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) is again introducing the Defamation of Religions Resolution in the United Nations this year. Open Doors believes the terms of the resolution impose substantial limits on the freedom of individuals to express their religious beliefs. It would also criminalise defamation of a particular religion, Islam in particular. The organisation said that persecuted Christians were looking to believers in countries with religious liberty to 'walk with them on our knees in prayer and on our feet in action'.

Pray: for opposition to be so strong that this resolution will be defeated in the UN. (Tit.2:8)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/thousands.sign.right.to.believe.petition/26551.htm>

■ Anti-poverty action pledges

Micah Challenge UK is encouraging Christians in Britain to get on board with an anti-poverty action pledge, following the example of public figures. The Archbishop of York has promised to launch a global charity for those in need, the Chief Executive of aid agency Tearfund has promised to inspire his children afresh about world poverty; Andy Flannagan, songwriter and Director of the Christian Socialist Movement, has promised to be part of changing the global economic system. These are just a few of the promises being made at the request of Micah Challenge to help end world poverty. 'What's Your Promise?' is part of the Micah 2010 campaign being mobilised around the world. The promises of Christians, around the globe, will be brought together on Sunday 10th October (10.10.10) when over 100 million people worldwide will stand united in prayer and commitment to a life that remembers those in poverty.

Pray: for all involved in Micah Challenge and for a huge global response to help the poor of the world. (Gal.2:10)

More: <http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/12931>

■ Number of 'gay weddings' plummets

According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) the number of civil ceremonies dropped by almost a fifth to just 7,169 in the UK in 2008, compared with 8,728 in 2007. The latest figure is a drop of more than a half since 16,106 ceremonies in 2006, the first full year after the law was changed. The number of true wedding ceremonies is at a record low as more and more couples cohabit and it seems the civil ceremonies are proving less popular than their supporters had hoped. When Government officials drew up the new laws for civil partnership they estimated that five per cent of the population was gay or lesbian and predicted that 62,000 gay couples would register in the first five years of ceremonies. The ONS published the number of 'divorces' for the first time. There were 180 dissolutions last year.

Pray: for the church's sacrament of marriage to remain as the bedrock of true committed relationships. (Ac.14:22)

More: http://women.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/women/relationships/article6738671.ece

■ STI increase - questions sex education

The Health Protection Agency (HPA) reported 482,696 cases of sexually transmitted infections in UK health clinics in 2009, a 3% increase on 2008, with teenagers and young adults accounting for the majority. According to HPA young women aged 19 and men aged between 20 and 23 are at the greatest risk and of the 12,000 additional cases reported last year over two thirds were women under 25. The figures also revealed that re-infection is a serious issue, with at least 11% of women and 12% of men aged 16 to 19 becoming re-infected with an STI within one year of being treated for a previous one. Despite the increase in infections, which many attribute to an increase in sex education, there have still been calls to increase sex education in schools. Helen Jenkins from Marie Stopes International, stated: 'We fear that STI rates may continue to rise without increasing access to comprehensive sex and relationships education in all British schools'.

Pray: for our young to be strengthened morally by the examples of parents and respected teachers. (Mt.19:16)

More: <http://www.ccfon.org/view.php?id=1161>

■ Alcohol fuelling abortions

New research suggests that women with a high level of alcohol intake are more likely to take the morning after pill or have an abortion. According to the University College London study, women who binge drink have a 40 per cent higher chance of having at least one abortion in the past year. Furthermore, the research found that women who exceed the recommended weekly alcohol limit were 80 per cent more likely to have used the morning after pill. Commenting, Norman Wells, director of the Family Education Trust, said that the findings show that alcohol consumption should not be underestimated. 'The importance of a stable family background and responsible parenting can never be overstated.' Meanwhile, plans to introduce minimum pricing for alcohol in the Greater Manchester area have received support from Prime Minister David Cameron.

Pray: that the legal framework encouraging binge drinking may be changed to discourage it. (Lk.11:53)

More: http://www.theway.co.uk/feature.php?id=8174&this=Alcohol_fuelling_abortions,_study_suggests

■ Budget creating 'huge hardship'

Church Action on Poverty has voiced concern over the impact of George Osborne's Budget one day after a respected think tank warned that financial cutbacks were hitting the poor hardest. The Institute for Fiscal Studies said the Budget had been 'clearly regressive' and was hitting low earners more than those in the upper income brackets. Niall Cooper, CAP's Coordinator, said 'the IFS's report had confirmed the group's worst fears that the Budget was hitting those already struggling to get by and least in the position to cope with cuts to income, welfare and services. They are people who are already just keeping their heads above water and struggling to keep up with their debt repayments and living costs. Even a five per cent loss of income may not sound like very much but it is enough to tip some people over the edge. The cuts are creating huge hardship,' he said.

Pray: that the government will seriously consider the needs of the most vulnerable in our society.

More: <http://www.christiantoday.co.uk/article/budget.creating.huge.hardship.church.group.warns/26584.htm>

EUROPE

■ France: Church anger over Roma policy

French government policy towards the Roma community has provoked the anger of the Catholic Church – from the Vatican itself to individual priests like Father Arthur Hervet. A renowned defender of Roma rights, Father Arthur is returning the Order of Merit he was awarded by way of protest. Describing current policy he said: 'For the last three months this minority has had a real war being waged against it.' Pope Benedict XVI has also spoken out. Although he did not actually name France, he chose to make the following address in French: 'Scripture tells us again and again that all men are called to salvation, and the Scriptures are also an invitation to receive amongst us all legitimate human differences, as did Jesus who gathered together people of all nations and all languages.' The French government has intensified its deportation of illegal Roma people since a violent incident involving the Roma community last month.

Pray: that this policy will not be forced upon them but the authorities would show compassion. (Eph.4:32)

More: <http://www.euronews.net/2010/08/23/church-anger-over-french-roma-policy/>

■ Czech Republic: Controversial homeless plan

Organizations working with the homeless, the country's largest opposition party, the political party likely to lead Prague after autumn elections and homeless people themselves are all speaking out against the plans by City Hall to build an 'integrated assistance centre' for the homeless on the outskirts of the city. Plans approved by the City Council last week will see a new centre being built within six months in Malešice, an industrial area on the eastern edge of the capital. Facilities planned for the centre are described as 'an oasis' for the homeless. Homeless people would be registered but would not be required to live in the new space but would be encouraged to go there. Ilja Hradecký, chairman of a Christian charity that works with the homeless, described the idea as 'absolutely misconceived' and would either see people leaving the camp each day after being taken there against their will or being 'interned', something that he termed a violation of human rights.

Pray: for wisdom to result from the debate over Prague's homeless. (2Cor.8:9)

More: <http://www.praguepost.com/news/5501-outcry-as-city-approves-controversial-homeless-plan.html>

WORLDWIDE

■ Africa: Clergy told re-evangelise church

In an address to 400 Anglican bishops in Entebbe, Uganda Henry Orombi the Archbishop of Uganda said it was time for Africans to 'rise up and bring fresh life in the ailing global Anglicanism'. He called African bishops to shake off their fears, shame and superficial dependency and re-evangelise the ailing churches of the west. On the same day as his address to the Council of Anglican Provinces of Africa the US Episcopalians published a liturgical resource and guide for clergy and same-sex couples. Orombi told those attending the conference, including the Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, that the African Church must go to Europe and the US to revive the 'Mother Church desperate for the Gospel'. Press reports, 'African church leaders will use the meeting to reiterate their concerns about homosexuality and criticise the Archbishop for failing to punish communities that welcome gays and lesbians into the pews and priesthood.'

Pray: for the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ to be with God's people as they use His Word as their plumb line in all discussions (Rev.19:7)

More: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/aug/25/uganda-archbishop-ormbi-ailing-anglican-church>

■ Sudan: South plans mass return ahead of referendum

South Sudan is preparing to repatriate 1.5 million southerners from the north and Egypt ahead of a referendum due next January on whether the South should separate from the North. The proposals suggest returnees travel on trains, buses, and boats. Two million people have already returned to the south since the end of a two-decade conflict. (The great challenge for Christianity in the Sudan has been clashes where religion was a pivotal factor. The North with roughly two-thirds of Sudan's land and population is Muslim and Arabic-speaking. The South's identity is indigenously African with Christian influences and a Western orientation.) If the report 'Come Home to Choose' is implemented thousands of people would arrive daily to an underdeveloped region struggling to cope with its current population. There are warnings of possible violence against southerners living in the north if the south votes to break away from the largely Muslim and Arab north.

Pray: for God to help Sudan move towards establishing a peaceful identity. (Ps.25:4)

More: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-11073919>

■ Iraq: Bishop seeks democracy

'The US has a duty to leave behind peace not chaos when troops finally withdraw from Iraq. We desire, we ask, and we scream for peace and security,' said Chaldean Auxiliary Bishop Shlemon Warduni of Baghdad in an interview with Vatican Radio on August 19th. The last of the US combat troops left Iraq earlier this month formally ending Operation Iraqi Freedom. About 50,000 US troops will remain in Iraq until the end of 2011 to continue training and assisting Iraqi security forces. Bishop Warduni said: 'There are no jobs; there are car bombs, kamikaze attacks and acts of violence.' He also expressed concern about the political deadlock between Iraqi leaders unable to form a government since parliamentary elections in March. 'It's very difficult to live somewhere where there is no law and no government, terrorist elements take advantage of the lack of a stable central authority and come and go as they please.'

Pray: for democracy to be taught and a strong, stable government be birthed (Is.51:4)

More: http://www.catholicleader.com.au/news.php/features/troops-make-final-iraq-exit_60026

■ Zimbabwe: Sunday 26th Sept united prayer

We have been receiving very exciting reports of how all the major denominations in Zimbabwe under the covering of the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe Council of Christian Churches and the Catholic Bishops Conference have expressed willingness to come on board and gather to pray on Sunday 26 September 2010. It is hoped that churches will march through their towns and cities and gather at a central point in their locations to pray as one. What an incredibly powerful time that will be! The Civic Centre ground is the planned venue in Harare where it is hoped that hundreds of thousands of people will gather to pray. Let's support these gatherings in Zimbabwe by calling together as many people as we can in our home towns across the world on Sunday 26 September 2010.

Pray: for continued unity amongst the churches in Zimbabwe; that they would be an effective instrument for peace, stability and prosperity.(2Ch.7:14)

More: <http://www.lovezim.org/>

■ Israel: Direct peace talks every two weeks

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu proposed direct peace talks every two weeks between himself and Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas as 'The only way to solve problems in the Middle East.' The Palestinians intend boycotting the meetings if Israel fails to renew the freeze on settlements in the West Bank. The EU condemns Tel Aviv for jailing pro human rights activist Abdullah Abu Rahmeh for protesting against the West Bank wall. The proposal, drawn up by the premier and his men Wednesday night, will be submitted September 2, when peace talks begin in Washington. 'In the Middle East, serious negotiations require direct discreet and consistent encounters, among the leaders on major issues'. The International Court of Justice declared the construction, begun in 2002, illegal in 2004. Israel has always maintained that the 'security barrier' is to prevent suicide attacks from taking place.

Pray: for ongoing consistent communication that would enable each person to see things with different eyes. (Mal.4:2)

More: <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Netanyahu-proposes-direct-peace-talks-every-two-weeks-19293.html>

■ China: Pastor asks for help

Since May 2008 Pastor Wang Dao of Liangren Church in Guangzhou has had to move his house church several dozens of times and has even had to worship outdoors on two Sundays. After a brief detention by people from the Ministry of State Security he contacted ChinaAid for assistance in issuing an urgent call for prayer. After translating the document, ChinaAid released the letter to Chinese media on August 17 ChinaAid are urging Guangzhou authorities to cease their persecution of Liangren Church and to respect the rights of the citizens to freedom of belief and worship, by allowing them to meet regularly in their own church space. They are urging the international community to prayerfully support Pastor Wang Dao and believe that raising awareness of this and similar cases of persecution and harassment is vital to changing the outcome for the persecuted faithful.

Pray: that this promotion and exposure of truth will grow and make a difference where the church is persecuted. (Is.61:7)

More: http://www.chinaaid.org/qry/page.taf?id=105&_function=detail&sbtblct_uid1=1510&month=08&year=2010&_nc=578d2083567ede6f11619912eb6de8f6

PRAISE REPORTS

■ Kyrgyzstan: A hero in Osh

There were many horror stories coming out of Osh this summer. There was little honour and not much reason for pride on either side of the Kyrgyz-Uzbek conflict. But we did see one hero there. That someone was a Kyrgyz man in his mid-20s who stood in front of the gates to his inner courtyard and home, which had not been touched while the neighbourhood around was torched. This young man protected some 30 of his Uzbek neighbours, mostly women, as a Kyrgyz mob descended on the neighbourhood. He ushered them into his courtyard then went out, shut and locked the gate, and waited, alone, for the mob to arrive. Although the mob knew there were Uzbeks behind his gate, this young man told them the people behind the gate were his neighbours and that they, the Kyrgyz, were not from Osh and should go, immediately. And the mob left.

Praise: God for this young man and pray that his action will be a powerful testimony to his people. (Pr.20:11)

More: http://www.rferl.org/content/A_Hero_In_Osh_/2133354.html

■ Religious education's 12-year growth

This week's GCSE results have confirmed that the number of students taking Religious Education has increased for the twelfth year running. Religious Education has entered the top ten league table of subjects in terms of the number of candidates, and remains in the top five of growing subjects with more than 75,000 candidates; above subjects like Mathematics and History. Nick McKemey, the Church of England's Head of School Improvement, said 'Young people are clamouring for a deeper understanding of religious perspectives on issues of the day and how moral and ethical questions are considered by the major faiths. Twelve years of organic growth in student numbers cannot be ignored. This is a phenomenon that indicates students' appreciation that exploring faith and belief helps them to understand the world and become better global citizens.' He also said it underlines the importance of investing adequate resources and time in its teaching.

Praise: for our young people who are making important decisions having received exam results recently. (Jas.1:5)

More: <http://www.cofe.anglican.org/news/pr7510.html>

PRAYER FORUM OF BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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