



PRAYER ALERT...



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BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ More on the Pope's visit

During his weekly general audience at the Vatican Pope Benedict XVI declared: 'I can't wait to undertake my trip to the United Kingdom'. He said he was aware that preparation for the controversial visit had required 'a vast amount of work by Catholics, the British Government and local authorities in Scotland, Birmingham and London. The Pope said it would be 'a particular joy' to beatify the Anglican convert Cardinal John Henry Newman. 'This truly great Englishman lived an exemplary clerical life and through his many writings made a fundamental contribution to the Church and society,' Pope Benedict said. The Pope will beatify Cardinal Newman at Cofton Park, Birmingham, on Sunday Sept. 19, bringing the 19th century clergyman a step closer to sainthood. The Pope begins his visit in Edinburgh where he will be received by the Queen before celebrating mass at Bellahouston Park in Glasgow.

Pray: [that the Pope's visit will raise the spiritual awareness of the UK population. \(2Sa.22:26\)](#)

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopics/religion/the-pope/7989636/Pope-wont-be-arrested-in-UK-protesters-admit.html>

■ Call for overhaul of Gift Aid system

The public policy think tank ResPublica has called for a 'radical' overhaul of the Gift Aid system to bring it up to speed with the digital age. It said the system was 'antiquated' and 'bureaucratic' and that it was 'an anomaly in this day and age' that charities are still unable to claim Gift Aid online. A new report warned that charities were losing out on as much as £750 million each year because of the current paper-based system. It claims that the current system places unnecessary burdens on HMRC and individual charities and is so inefficient that the cost to the taxpayer of processing each claim amounts to around £5. The think tank said that the high administrative costs had created a 'perverse disincentive' for the Treasury to encourage more people to use Gift Aid on their donations. It wants the current system to be digitised to make it easier for charities to claim Gift Aid.

Pray: [for more efficient systems to ensure a greater part of donations being effectively used. \(2Cor.8:20-21\)](#)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.co.uk/article/think.tank.calls.for.radical.overhaul.of.gift.aid.system/26648.htm>

■ Archbishop of York on sex trafficking

The Archbishop of York, Dr John Sentamu, has spoken out on the issue of sex trafficking, criticising the Government for opting out of an EU directive on the issue. Speaking in the Yorkshire Post he said: 'According to the International Labour Organisation there are at least 2.45 million people in forced labour globally as a result of people trafficking. A large proportion (43%) is trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation, and an overwhelming majority of those sold into this sex trade (98%) are women or girls. Sex trafficking is nothing more than modern day slavery. This is women being exploited, degraded and subjected to horrific risks solely for the gratification and economic greed of others. I am therefore stunned to

learn that the Government are 'opting out' of an EU directive designed to tackle sex trafficking. We need to join with our European brothers and sisters and put an end to this evil trade.'

Pray: for the Government to take a more pro-active role with Europe to stamp out this vile trade. (Isa.1:4)

More: <http://www.archbishopofyork.org/2982>

■ Broadcasting a Back to Church welcome

The Church of England is advertising Back to Church Sunday 2010, September 26, on the radio stations Classic FM and Heart FM, to deliver a message of welcome into the homes of 1.3 million people. The adverts will support 400,000 personal invitations that members of over 4,000 churches will send to their friends, when the friend-inviting-a-friend initiative enters its seventh successive year of allowing people to rediscover and explore churchgoing with a very warm welcome. The Bishop of Worcester, the Rt Rev Dr John Inge, whose diocese is one of those investing in the advertising, said: 'We've chosen these two stations as they get to places we can't and talk to some of those we've lost touch with via the unique relationship people have with radio. Some three million people said they would go back to church if invited - and the adverts are helping us give the people we're missing that warm invitation.'

Pray: for those who receive or hear this invitation that they will be greatly encouraged to return to church. (Isa.44:22)

More: <http://www.cofe.anglican.org/news/pr7710.html>

■ God no longer male, Scottish Episcopal Church rules

A new form of worship, removing words such as 'Lord, he, his, him' and 'mankind' from services, has been written by the church in an attempt to acknowledge that God is 'beyond human gender'. Episcopalian bishops have approved the introduction of more 'inclusive' language, which deliberately removes references suggesting that God is of male gender. The controversial changes were discussed at the Church's General Synod recently. The minutes of the Synod reveal that female priests had asked why God was still referred to as a man. 'It is political correctness,' said Rev Stuart Hall of the Scottish Prayer Book Society. 'It is quite unnecessary. The word man in English - especially among scientists - is inclusive of both sexes. Those who try to minimise references to God as the Father and Christ as his Son have great difficulties, because the New Testament is shot through with these references.'

Pray: that the import of God's Word is not minimised by shallow linguistic arguments. (Jn.1:1)

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstoppers/religion/7982904/God-no-longer-male-Scottish-Episcopal-Church-rules.html>

■ Jealousies 'ruining' Welsh nonconformism

The Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Wales made a desperate plea on 7 September to nonconformist Christians in Wales. Addressing the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Wales in Lampeter, Rev Gwenda Richards said that selfishness has resulted in jealousy and strife among Welsh Christians and churches. 'The great tragedy of Nonconformism in Wales is the unhealthy competitive approach that has thrived between denominations, between churches and even between members. Since the beginning of last century we've lived off competition - and I daresay that jealousy and stubbornness arising out of competition will be the death of us. Nonconformists need to find their unity in God.' The Presbyterian Church of Wales has around 30,000 members in more than 700 churches. Its General Assembly is currently meeting at Trinity Saint David University, Lampeter.

Pray: that a united vision may be granted to the Church in Wales. (Ge.11:9)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/moderator.says.jealousy.and.strife.are.ruining.welsh.nonconformist.christianity/26650.htm>

■ Sex shop opposed by locals

Hundreds of people turned out at a public meeting against plans for a sex shop near a small English village. Sex shop company Cocktails Limited wants to open a store close to Sawtry, which has a population of just 6,000. Local MP Shailesh Vara gave his support to locals who say a sex shop would 'cast a shadow' over Sawtry. Ward Councillor Darren Tysoe, who chaired the public meeting, said a 'unanimous and strong message' had been delivered that 'we don't want a sex shop in Sawtry'. The sex shop is planned for a former Little Chef building just off the A1. Keith Walters, a former councillor, said: 'Sawtry is a quiet, rural, family-friendly village. It's not big enough to have a bank or building society and can't have cable TV. But apparently, someone can impose a branch of the largest sex shops in Europe against our will.'

Pray: for the District Council to heed and respond positively to the views of the local people of Sawtry. (Ep.5:3)

More: <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/sex-shop-close-to-village-opposed-by-locals/>

EUROPE

■ EU: Iran stoning case

The European Union presidency has said that Iran's suspension of a stoning sentence against a woman convicted of adultery is not enough and demands it be completely overturned. Foreign Minister Steven Vanackere of Belgium, who holds the EU's rotating presidency, said that Iran's concession that the punishment against Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani could be eased did not meet the human rights conditions the EU is insisting on. He said the Belgian presidency would work hard 'to achieve that the punishment will be unequivocally repealed'. This week, several European Union nations and the continent's biggest human rights organization have criticised Iran for its plan to stone the 43-year-old mother of two even if Teheran has put the plan on hold for now.

Pray: that the inhumanity of Iran's sentencing policies be overturned by prayer and politics. (Ps.2:1-3)

More: http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2010/09/09/world/AP-Iran-Stoning.html?_r=1&ref=europe

■ Germany: Chancellor faces Muslim wrath

Chancellor Angela Merkel praised what she described as 'the bravery' of a Danish cartoonist who caricatured the prophet Mohammed at an award ceremony honouring his achievements for freedom of speech. Praising illustrator Kurt Westergaard, she said '(he) has had to fear for his life since the publication of the cartoons in 2005.' Merkel emphasized that media freedom is an important element of rights in Europe. 'It does not matter if we think his cartoons are tasteful or not, if we think they are necessary and helping or not'. The question, she said, was, 'Is he allowed to do this? Yes, he is.' There have been at least three attempted attacks on the 75-year-old Westergaard or his Danish newspaper, Jyllands-Posten, since he and 11 other artists angered Muslims around the world by creating the cartoons four years ago. Muslim protesters have burned Danish and other Western embassies.

Pray: that Muslim sensitivities in non-Muslim countries be more attuned and less radical to local customs and conventions. (Ps.35:4-6)

More: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/worldnews/article-1310443/German-chancellor-faces-Muslim-wrath-praising-Danish-cartoonist-caricatured-Prophet-Muhammad.html#ixzz0z1zjldhw>

WORLDWIDE

■ USA: Pastor 'suspends' Qur'an burning

A Christian pastor in the US state of Florida has called off and then threatened to reconsider plans to burn copies of the Muslim holy book in a bonfire on Saturday to mark the ninth anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on New York and Washington, DC. The event had been roundly criticised and stoked fears of violence around the globe. (e.g. see below) Rev Terry Jones said on Thursday that he made the decision to cancel the event because the leader of a planned Islamic centre near the so-called Ground Zero site in New York had agreed to move its location. However, the developers behind the planned Islamic centre said they had not agreed to any such deal. During a televised news conference on Thursday, Jones called on others not to burn copies of the Qur'an. He said instead, he would fly to New York to speak with Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, the head of the planned New York Islamic centre.

Pray: that this proposed disrespectful action will not go ahead and that God would over-rule here and in other similar situations. (1Pe.2:17)

More: <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/americas/2010/09/20109921337885578.html>

■ India: Church threatened over Quran burning

Christians have sought protection for a church in Madhya Pradesh state after an anonymous letter threatened to blast it if the Dove World Outreach Centre in Florida went ahead with its plan to burn Qur'ans on Sept. 11 to mark the ninth anniversary of terror attacks in the United States. The letter posted on Aug. 31 threatened to blast the Church of North India's Bethlehem Church situated in Bhopal, the state capital. The church's pastor Rev Sanjay Solomon told ucanews.com that the letter would hold the church 'responsible' if a Qur'an was burned. The church authorities 'immediately approached' the police for protection. Archbishop Leo Cornelio of Bhopal said he had already met Muslim leaders in the city soon after media first reported about the Qur'an burning plan early last month. The Archbishop said Christian groups condemn the plan because burning a Holy Book 'is a serious crime that cannot be pardoned.'

Pray: against such actions that are done in the name of Christ the Prince of Peace. (Lk.10:19)

More: <http://www.cathnewsindia.com/2010/09/08/church-threatened-over-qur%E2%80%99an-burning/>

■ India: Christians detained on 'false hope' accusation

A pastor and two other Christians who were attacked by extremists have been charged with 'outraging the religious feelings' of others. Pastor Dilip Chakravarty, Ganga Ram and Shankar Lal of the Church of God in Chhattisgarh have been held at Dhamtari district jail since police arrested them on Aug. 29. Police officers were acting on a complaint made by Hindu extremists who accused the Christians of 'forcible conversion' by offering 'money and false hope'. The extremists had already taken the law into their own hands by launching several attacks on the Christians, which had reportedly left Ganga and Shankar with fractures to their hands and legs. The extremists had also tried to force the pair to return to Hinduism. The three Christians have now been charged with 'deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion'. Local Christian leaders strongly deny the church was involved in 'forcible conversion'.

Pray: that Christians would be led by the Holy Spirit and protected from these accusations. (Nu.14:9)

More: <http://www.releaseinternational.org/pages/posts/india-christians-detained-on-false-hope-accusation-747.php>

■ Vietnam: Tragic details emerge in persecution

International Christian Concern (ICC) has learned new details about recent religious persecution in Vietnam and the following brutal cover-up. Vietnamese authorities ordered the Christian Con Dau village, near the city of Da Nang, to be abandoned to build a resort on the site. When the people resisted water irrigation was shut off to the rice fields, cutting off the main source of income and food. On May 4, 2010, Vietnamese police surrounded and attacked a funeral as it approached the cemetery. Police arrested and beat 62 persons. After the initial incident, special police units have since returned to Con Dau multiple times, demanding information and forcing villagers to sign self-incriminating statements and to spy on each other. ICC's Regional Manager, Logan Maurer, stated, 'The Vietnamese government has exposed its brutality and greed, torturing and killing Christians to make room for their ambition. The tourist resort they plan to build in Con Dau will have its foundation in blood'.

Pray: that the Vietnamese government would recant and reverse its decisions. (Ps.5:11)

More: <http://www.bpsos.org/en/save-condau/summary-of-events>

■ **Iraq: Christian killed in region proposed as safe haven**

The murder of another Iraqi Christian from Mosul has renewed fears in that city, where the Christian minority has been the focus of a series of targeted killings. Louyaé Behnam was abducted last week from his home in Karkosh, a town in the Nineveh district. Ironically, his family had moved to Karkosh to escape the violence in his native Mosul. The Islamic group that kidnapped him demanded ransom. His family paid \$15,000 - only to have his dead body returned. This latest in a series of murderous assaults is particularly significant for two reasons. First, it comes almost immediately after the withdrawal of US combat troops from Iraq, as the country's residents worry about their prospects for future security. Second, the victim was abducted from the Nineveh Plains region, which has been suggested as a safe refuge for the country's Christian minority.

Pray: for the Christians in Iraq that they would be protected at this time in the nation's history. (Ps.3:8)

More: <http://www.catholicculture.org/news/headlines/index.cfm?storyid=7380>

■ **Nigeria: Fear of fresh violence**

A prison break by an armed group known as Boko Haram has raised fears of renewed violence in northern Nigeria just months before elections. The group staged a raid on the prison on Tuesday night in the town of Bauchi, freeing more than 100 followers. The attack left the prison in ruins and showed the group, which is seeking to institute sharia (Islamic law) in the country had access to the sophisticated weapons it needed to overpower the prison guards. The attackers fired on the prison guards as they were breaking their daily Ramadan fast on Tuesday evening. Authorities have arrested 13 suspects in connection with the prison break although residents in and around Bauchi remain afraid that Boko Haram will launch other attacks. Boko Haram - which means 'Western education is sin' in the (northern) Hausa language - was blamed for riots and attacks in the north last summer that left more than 700 people dead.

Pray: that the expected violence will not happen and the enemy will be confounded. (Ps.7:9)

More: <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/africa/2010/09/20109922058670653.html>

PRAISE REPORTS

■ **China: Investing in confident Christians**

Three decades ago, China's Cultural Revolution saw some of the most dramatic restrictions on the practice of religion ever seen. But today's communist rulers have radically altered their views about religion and have granted substantial freedom to Christians prepared to worship within state-sanctioned churches. Within these boundaries, Christianity is growing in China as never before - and doing so supported by millions of dollars of government funding. On the outskirts of Nanjing, a building site illustrates the scale of the communist state's commitment to supporting the development of Christianity. Local officials say that the building under construction will become China's largest state-sanctioned church - with space for 5,000 worshippers. It represents just one example of the strategy to encourage the development of religion in China.

Praise: God for this growth of His Church in China but also remember the huge numbers of Christians meeting in house churches still facing persecution. (Zec.8:12)

More: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-11020947>

■ **China: Christian faith plus Chinese productivity**

At first glance, it looks as though it could be any other factory driving the rapid development of the Chinese economy. But this is no ordinary enterprise because here religious faith is as important as profit. In fact, the owner of the Boteli Valve Group in Wenzhou would like to see all his staff convert to Christianity. And such a factory is not a one-off: it is part of a growing number of businesses run by Christian entrepreneurs whose success is now being studied by the Chinese government. Every Monday morning, the senior managers gather together and pray about the business. Once a week, members of staff are encouraged to attend an on-site Christian fellowship meeting, where they read the Bible and pray for each other.

Praise: God for this development and pray that this example would lead to many more. (Mt.25:20)

More: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-10942954>

■ **Cuba: Church leader released**

A respected Cuban church leader who was unexpectedly arrested and tried in court last week has been cleared of all charges after his accusers gave contradictory evidence against him. According to Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), Reverend Roberto Rodriguez, was allowed to return to his family and is recuperating at home after being found not guilty of 'threatening behaviour.' The pastor was forced to hitchhike from Cardenas to Santa Clara. They arrived at 1am and the following day travelled to the town of Placetas, in Central Cuba, where Rodriguez stood trial on 2 Sept. Prosecutors recommended that Rodriguez be given a one-year prison sentence, following what CSW called the contradictory evidence given by his accusers, the tribunal had no choice but to find him not guilty, although the court handed down a fine to the church leader.

Praise: God for justice and the release of Rodriguez. (Am.5:24)

More: <http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/2010/s10090026.htm>

PRAYER FORUM OF BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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