



# PRAYER ALERT...



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

### ■ All Christians to back Pope's visit

The Evangelical Alliance has called on Christians of all denominations to support the Pope's visit to Britain. The organisation, which represents around a million evangelical Christians, believes the papal visit is especially timely as Christians face growing hostility from a small but influential secular wing. It acknowledges that the visit is taking place amid anger over the Church's handling of child abuse cases and strong opposition to its stance on issues like homosexuality, women and abortion, but says there are 'other critical issues at stake' that will affect Britain's future as a whole. The Alliance is urging all Christians to support the Pope's address. The Evangelical Alliance said it hoped the Pope's visit would 'act as a catalyst' for society to protect religious freedom in Britain and overseas.

**Pray:** for the Pope and his message of religious freedom as he continues his visit to the UK. (Ga.5:1)

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/evangelicals urge.all.christians.to.back.pope.visit/26703.htm>

### ■ Peacemaking Sunday

Churches are being encouraged to mark the United Nations' International Day of Peace on 19 September - Peacemaking Sunday - using ecumenical worship resources provided by the Baptist Union of Great Britain, The Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church. The United Nations' International Day of Peace is celebrated on 21 September and provides an opportunity for individuals, communities and nations to focus on peace and peacemaking in the world and within their own lives. The three denominations have compiled a selection of art, prayers, a sermon guide, meditation and a commissioned hymn designed to help congregations focus on peace this coming Sunday. Mrs Val Morrison, moderator of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church, says 'Peacemaking Sunday and the United Nations' Day of Peace highlight our need to pray for peace in the many areas of conflict across the globe, but also, in our own lives and relationships.' (See also World/Africa below)

**Pray:** for God's peace to be upon us all. (Mi.4:3)

**More:** <http://www.methodist.org.uk/index.cfm?fuseaction=opentogod.newsDetail&newsid=461>

### ■ Children exposed to inappropriate TV

Two thirds of parents in the UK believe children are exposed to unsuitable content on television before the watershed, a survey has shown. An online survey of 1,004 parents of children under the age of 18 revealed that 67 per cent thought inappropriate content was broadcast before 9pm. A further 80 per cent said they felt films and video games with violent or sexual themes can be accessed too easily by children. The research, conducted for The Mothers' Union, also showed that most parents think television, films, magazines and the Internet make children sexually aware at a younger age. The charity has called for a ban on marketing and selling sexualising products to children under 16 and put in place safeguards to protect children under 16 from viewing displays of goods of a sexual nature.

**Pray:** for the media to recognise their responsibility in protecting children and young people. (Dt.5:29)

**More:** <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/kids-exposed-to-inappropriate-tv-say-majority-of->

#### ■ Head's job in peril

Council bosses are investigating a head teacher who urged school girls to show more modesty in how they wear their uniform. Robert Kelly, rector at Berwickshire High School in the Scottish town of Duns, said flouting uniform rules by wearing short skirts and half-buttoned blouses would encourage inappropriate thoughts among boys. But some parents thought he was blaming girls for unwanted male attention, and he is now under investigation by the Scottish Borders Council. Union leader Ken Cunningham said: 'There will be a lot of sympathy for Mr Kelly as it's a difficult issue that affects schools around the country – there's no way he should lose his job and I hope common sense will prevail. 'I'm very worried about sexualisation, particularly of young girls, which I think has got worse. Parents and schools have a duty to ensure that dress is sensible – common sense is the key factor.'

**Pray:** for God's guidance to all involved in this matter and for common sense to prevail. (1Ti.2:9)

**More:** [http://www.christian.org.uk/news/head%e2%80%99s-job-in-peril-over-call-for-school-uniform-modesty/?utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=feed&utm\\_campaign=Feed%3A+christianinstitute+%28The+Christian+Institute%29](http://www.christian.org.uk/news/head%e2%80%99s-job-in-peril-over-call-for-school-uniform-modesty/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+christianinstitute+%28The+Christian+Institute%29)

#### ■ Clergy battle against sham marriages

Rev Tim Codling, Rector of St John the Baptist, Tilbury Docks, in Essex, has said his church has been 'violated' by fraudsters targeting it for sham marriages. The diocese has admitted that the problem has become unmanageable. Mr Codling has referred 64 marriages in the past three years to the Police and Immigration Authorities, after becoming suspicious. Once married, non-European nationals can apply for British citizenship. Mr Codling said that he has undoubtedly married bogus couples. On four occasions he interrupted wedding ceremonies and escorted couples from the building. On one occasion he inserted the names of railway stations into the vows to catch out a bride who failed to notice the interpolation. His church may have been targeted because of its good links to Stansted and London City airports. 'When a couple come with a bishop's licence you're in a difficult position. You assume everything is in order.'

**Pray:** for divine protection for vicars and their families from dangerous criminal gangs orchestrating sham marriages.

**More:** <http://www.churchtimes.co.uk/content.asp?id=100313>

#### ■ Archbishop Rowan Williams responds to Hawking

Belief in God is not about plugging a gap in explaining how one thing relates to another within the universe, the Archbishop of Canterbury said, responding to Professor Stephen Hawking's assertion, in his new book, that there is no place for God in theories of the creation of the universe. Professor Hawking contends: 'Spontaneous creation is the reason there is something rather than nothing, why the universe exists, why we exist'. Dr Williams told The Times that belief in God: 'is the belief that there is an intelligent, living agent on whose activity everything depends for its existence. Physics on its own will not settle the question'. Former Bishop of Rochester, Dr Michael Nazir-Ali, said that it was right to ask where the laws of the universe came from. 'As I understand him, the professor claims that gravity brought everything into existence. But again, where did that come from? On what was it acting? Nothing plus nothing cannot equal something.' (See Prayer Alert 3610)

**Pray:** that the Church's voice is strengthened and empowered to overcome doubting messages. (Job11:4)

**More:** <http://www.churchtimes.co.uk/content.asp?id=100356>

#### ■ Real IRA says it will target UK bankers

Banks and bankers are now potential targets for the Real IRA, its leaders have warned in an interview with the Guardian. Despite having only 100 activists they also said that targets in England remained a high priority. One element in the Real IRA's recent activity has been a wave of so-called 'punishment' shootings and beatings of those they deem 'antisocial elements' in nationalist working class areas. In Derry alone they have shot around two dozen men over the last 18 months. Its leadership was unapologetic over what its critics have described as 'rough justice'. The group believes such attacks are popular and can garner support in areas where the communities were previously alienated from the police. They dismissed Sinn Féin's claims that its electoral strategy would ultimately yield a united Ireland despite the majority of nationalists in Northern Ireland still voting for Sinn Féin and an overwhelming majority backing the peace process.

**Pray:** for the forces of law to defeat criminals operating as self-appointed community leaders. (2Co.6:14)

**More:** <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2010/sep/14/real-ira-targets-banks-bankers?dbk>

## EUROPE

#### ■ France: Showdown on Roma at EU summit

A row over France's crackdown on Roma (Gypsy) migrants from Romania and Bulgaria looks set to dominate a summit of EU leaders in Brussels. President Nicolas Sarkozy was furious after an EU official compared France's removal of Roma with the deportation of gypsies during World War II. EU justice commissioner Viviane Reding also threatened legal action against France. The EU leaders will also discuss ways to prevent a new financial crisis. And they will seek to co-ordinate their approach towards emerging powers like China and India. This was not meant to be a summit about the Roma, but Mr Sarkozy seems determined to go on the offensive in Brussels to defend France's reputation as the home of human rights. He is said to be scandalised by Ms Reding's criticism, mockingly suggesting the Roma should go to her country, Luxembourg. (See also Prayer Alert 3510)

**Pray:** that the French government would consider the human rights of the Roma people and the injustice of current decisions. (2Ch.19:7)

**More:** <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-11323053>

### ■ **Russia: Prisons look to faiths for moral guidance**

Russia's prisons, struggling with a growing crime rate, overcrowding and shortfalls in funding, are turning to religion to bring moral guidance to inmates. The move marks a dramatic change from the Soviet system, when clergy and believers were often imprisoned for their faith. 'We have signed agreements with all of the leading confessions of our country,' said Aleksandr Reimer, the Director of Russia's Federal Correctional Service, in an interview with the Rossiiskaya Gazeta, an official government newspaper. Although the Russian Orthodox Church has become increasingly close to the State in recent years, Reimer said that imposing Russia's largest religion on inmates was not the goal. Reimer said that the correctional service had started a pilot project with the Russian Orthodox Church in four regions of Russia to introduce prison chaplains.

**Pray:** that the Church will take up the challenge and bring God's wisdom and guidance to the prisoners.

**More:** <http://www.eni.ch/featured/article.php?id=4411>

## WORLDWIDE

### ■ **Israel - Palestine: Exchange fire as leaders talk**

A Palestinian was killed by Israeli air strikes on the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip on Wednesday as Israeli and Palestinian leaders were set to hold peace talks in Jerusalem. (See Prayer Alert 3610) One man was killed and two others wounded by strikes carried out on smuggling tunnels along the Gaza-Egypt border, Palestinian medics and security officials said. The raids followed a morning of Palestinian rocket and mortar fire into Israel and came ahead of a new round of peace talks vehemently opposed by Gaza's militant Hamas rulers. The Israeli military confirmed that aircraft attacked tunnels but gave no details. One rocket and eight mortar rounds had earlier been fired from Gaza, a military spokeswoman said, with the rocket striking near the port city of Ashkelon. The Popular Resistance Committees, a small militant group, claimed responsibility for the attacks and like Hamas is also strongly opposes peace talks with Israel.

**Pray:** that God will bring reconciliation and peace and bless the work of peace-makers. (Nu.10:9)

**More:** <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5jNE1Jtr1YzBKuhnaQxovjygl26A>

### ■ **Egypt: Security forces storm Monastery**

Middle East journalist Mary Abdelmassih, reports that on Tuesday, September 7, a 300-man security force, backed by a large number of cars and armoured vehicles, attacked the Egyptian monastery of St Macarius of Alexandria in Wadi Rayan, Fayoum province. The monks in the monastery were assaulted with tear gas, batons and stones and three of the monks were seriously wounded. 'The security forces prevented the delivery of limestone bricks to be used for the construction of cells for the monks within the grounds of the ancient monastery. The forces also attempted to confiscate bricks already delivered but the monks sat on the bricks and refused to move,' she said. The monks believe that the government wants to prevent any construction on the premises to hinder any increase in the number of monks living there, 'though cells for the monks are badly needed,' said Father Boulos.

**Pray:** against these attacks on the Church. (Ps.20:1)

**More:** <http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/2010/s10090082.htm>

### ■ **USA: Muslim wipes website of lawyer who helped convert**

A US lawyer who successfully defended Rifqa Bary, a teenage Christian convert from Islam, has had his organisation's website destroyed by a Muslim hacker. John Stemberger is also facing a \$10 million lawsuit filed by the lawyer who represented Miss Bary's Muslim parents. Mr Stemberger represented Rifqa Bary, who hit the headlines last year when she told US media that she would not be safe with her Muslim parents and feared an 'honour killing'. Her father has denied the allegations. Earlier this week Mr Stemberger's pro-family organisation, the Florida Family Policy Council, said that a Muslim hacker had managed to access their website, disabling parts of it and interfering with the inner workings of the site. The hacker left an 'obscene message on the events page explaining in broken English who he was and why he was hacking the site', according to Mr Stemberger.

**Pray:** that God would put a spiritual firewall around Christian websites. (Pr.2:8)

**More:** <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/muslim-wipes-website-of-lawyer-who-helped-convert/>

### ■ **Indonesia: Church leaders attacked**

The Sunday morning attack on the Rev Luspida Simandjuntak and church elder Hasean Lumbantoruan Sihombing left the former with a concussion and the latter with a knife wound to the liver. According to eyewitness reports, a gang of about seven riding on motorcycles ambushed the two church leaders. After stabbing Sihombing and striking Simandjuntak on the head with a wooden plank, the attackers fled the scene. Both church leaders were then rushed to Mitra Keluarga Hospital in East Bekasi for treatment. Following the attack, Indonesia's president, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, immediately called on authorities to investigate and hold accountable those responsible. Yudhoyono has been widely criticized in the media for failing to crack down on Islamic hard-liners, who were immediately suspected of carrying out Sunday's attacks. While most people in Indonesia practice a moderate form of Islam and abhor violence, attacks on religious freedom by hard-liners have been steadily increasing.

**Pray:** for God's protection around His people and for the government to have success over hard-liners. (Ps.32:7)

**More:** <http://www.christianpost.com/article/20100913/2-indonesian-christians-beaten-on-way-to-prayer-meeting/index.html>

### ■ **Africa: Peacemaking highlighted by Day of Prayer**

The World Council of Churches (WCC) is inviting Christians to observe the International Day of Prayer for Peace with prayers and liturgies that give special attention to peacemaking projects in Africa. This year's Day of Prayer for Peace, set

for 21 September 2010, features African churches working to build cooperation and reconciliation within and between diverse communities. African church leaders and the WCC General Secretary will observe the day with prayer and worship in Nairobi. The peace prayer day, on the same date as the United Nations' International Day of Peace (<http://www.un.org/en/events/peaceday/2010/>) is an initiative of the WCC Decade to Overcome Violence. It focuses on Africa this year as part of the final year of the decade. One of the African projects featured is a 'Peace Village' project in Uganda which supports the process of healing in communities marked by conflict, trauma and pain.

**Pray:** that our prayers will be heard and God would bring peace where there is discord. (Ps.65:2)

**More:** <http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/13100>

#### ■ India: 14 killed as anti Christian violence spreads

Tensions remained high on Wednesday, September 15, in several parts of India where reports of Qur'an burning in the United States sparked deadly attacks against Christian institutions. In the village of Tangmarg, in India's Kashmir region, at least 14 people were killed and scores injured over the weekend when thousands of angry Muslims took to the streets and torched a Christian school. 'The students are not hurt, but the building has totally burnt down,' said Bishop Pradeep Kumar Samantaroy of the Church of North India. He said officials were informed of a possible attack and that Christians requested protection, but that 'no action was taken'. The demonstrations were fuelled by reports that although a Florida pastor called off his plans to burn the Qur'an, Iran's state-run TV, which is widely available in India, showed footage of a different man destroying a Qur'an in Tennessee. (See also Prayer Alert 3710)

**Pray:** that any further actions that would bring the Church into disrepute and cause outrage would be stopped at source. (2Pet.2:1-2)

**More:** <http://www.bosnewsline.com/13830-14-killed-as-anti-christian-violence-spreads-in-india>

#### ■ Iran: State TV reports arrest of nine Christians

In its news night programme on Friday 10th September Iranian State television announced that nine people had been arrested on the charge of carrying out evangelism just outside Hamedan. In this report State television mentioned that two of these people were being supported by organizations that are based outside the country, in particular the United States and Great Britain, but they did not mention the nationalities of these people. In this report it has been said that 'the other seven people who were arrested are Iranian and were cooperating with these Christian-Zionist organizations'. This report labels the arrested people as 'Christian Zionists' and 'evangelicals' but it did not say anything about their relationship with Israel or Zionists. In the Iranian government culture 'Christian-Zionists' is a title that they use to call Evangelical Christians who are benefiting from having access to a number of networks and TV satellite programmes for evangelism.

**Pray:** for believers in Iran that God will help them to overcome the pressure of the authorities. (Rev.17:14)

**More:** [http://www.fcnn.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=2317:the-report-by-the-iranian-state-tv-about-the-arrest-of-nine-christians-in-hamedan&catid=127:iranian-christian&Itemid=593](http://www.fcnn.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2317:the-report-by-the-iranian-state-tv-about-the-arrest-of-nine-christians-in-hamedan&catid=127:iranian-christian&Itemid=593)

## PRAISE REPORTS

#### ■ British church attendance turns a corner

For years now, the words 'church attendance' have rarely been read apart from the rather gloomy utterance of 'in decline'. But it seems there may be more to smile about than any of us realised as the latest figures out from Christian Research show that attendance in the Catholic Church and Church of England have stabilised, while the Baptist Union has seen sizable growth. The statistical evidence coming from Christian Research in recent years has all pointed to long-term decline. The last five years have seen a halt in the decline, however, with average weekly attendance in Catholic churches remaining steady at around 900,000 since 2004, welcome news just days before the Pope's visit to Britain. The same trend can be seen in the Church of England, where average weekly attendance has hovered at around 1.2 million year on year since 2001, whereas the Baptists have also seen an increase.

**Praise:** the Lord for this trend and growth in His Church in our nation. (Ps.135:1-2)

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/british.church.attendance.turns.a.corner/26699.htm>

#### ■ Fantastic month in UK

This month we are delighted to report that three new Houses of Prayer are being launched. We welcome Glasgow House of Prayer, Sheffield House of Prayer and European House of Prayer. International House of Prayer Kansas is sending a team in November 2010 to the UK for three meetings in Newcastle on Tyne, Manchester and London (see the website). Houses of Prayer are a phenomenon. Prior to any outpouring of revival God has always called his people to pray, to intercede for a hurting world. Behind each House of Prayer there is a unique story of a God who loves His created world and is preparing to claim it for Himself. He has called individuals and groups to build for Him Houses of Prayer.

**Praise:** Praise be to God for the prayerful initiatives shown by these Houses of Prayer. (2Sa. 22:47)

**More:** <http://www.housesofprayer.net/>

## PRAYER FORUM OF BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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