



PRAYER ALERT...



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BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ Ed Miliband: I don't believe in God

New Labour leader Ed Miliband does not believe in God, he has said. He had previously said his religious views were a 'private matter', and his declaration means two of the three leaders of major British political parties are self-proclaimed atheists. Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg also confirmed he does not believe shortly after being named Liberal Democrat leader, while David Cameron last year said religious faith was 'part of who I am' but admitted he did not go to church regularly. The Labour leader's atheism puts him in stark contrast to his predecessors Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, for whom religion was a central part of their lives. Mr Miliband and brother David are of Jewish descent, but religion did not play a large part in their upbringing by their Marxist father Ralph Miliband. David has said publicly he is an atheist, and was the target of some criticism for sending his son to a Church of England school.

Pray: that our nation's leaders recognise by God's Grace the nation's spiritual dimension. (Ps. 57:8)

More: <http://uk.news.yahoo.com/21/20100929/tuk-ed-miliband-i-don-t-believe-in-god-6323e80.html>

■ Most Britons still identify as Christian

New figures from the Office for National Statistics has found that most British people still consider themselves to be Christian. The number of homosexuals, meanwhile, is far lower than previously estimated. According to the office, 71 percent of the population is Christian. The statistic was welcomed by the Evangelical Alliance. 'Christians have increasingly felt bewildered about what they can and cannot say or do,' Stephen Cave, advocacy director at the Alliance, commented: 'Of course faith is personal to each individual but that doesn't mean to say it's entirely private – far from it. In fact we welcome dialogue with people of all beliefs, including atheists. Where possible we should engage in conversation not confrontation'. The figures will be good news to those who believe Christianity should still have a prominent role in public life and indicate that affiliation to the faith remains strong in spite of declining church attendance.

Pray: for Christians to re-establish our faith as the heart of public life and society. (Pr.1:20)

More: <http://www.christianpost.com/article/20100924/most-britons-still-identify-as-christian/index.html>

■ Archbishop on prison reform

The Archbishop of York, Dr John Sentamu questioned the deterrent effect of imprisonment, severity of sentencing, the pivotal role of communities and the need for restorative justice in his Prisoners Education Trust Annual Lecture. Dr John Sentamu said, 'We should be pained and troubled by the size of our prison population in Britain, the sheer number of individuals who have given up on community – and feel that community has given up on them. We need to show love and compassion while ensuring justice is served and seen to be served'. Dr Sentamu outlined that reintegration should be the stated aim of all justice and penal systems; and that a culture of blame and condemnation alienates both the victim and offender. The Archbishop said: 'Putting more and more people away behind locked doors, for longer and longer sentences, does not help society. Neither does it help the individual'.

Pray: for a wider range of sentencing options that will better serve society and the individual. (Ps.11:7)

More: <http://www.archbishopofyork.org/3000>

■ Late attempt to avert tube strike

The strike weapon is being deployed yet again with its knock on effect to millions of the travelling public. The sick, elderly and infirm will be as badly hit as the hale and hearty. Last-ditch talks aimed at averting yet another strike by London Underground workers are under way. Leaders of the Transport Salaried Staffs Association (TSSA) and the Rail Maritime and Transport union are meeting, as we go to print, London Underground at the conciliation service Acas. Thousands of workers are due to walk out for 24 hours at 7pm on Sunday 3rd October in a row over 800 job cuts, which will cause travel chaos across the capital following another strike earlier in September. TSSA's leader said: 'We hope that the mayor, Boris Johnson, is now genuine in his wish to secure a settlement ahead of the walkout from Sunday.' Two further strikes are planned for November if the dispute remains unresolved.

Pray: for a fair resolution to all industrial disputes so that the innocent are not harmed. (Dt. 25:1)

More: <http://www.independent.co.uk/travel/news-and-advice/late-attempt-to-avert-tube-strike-2093788.html>

■ Bishop hits out at selfish leadership

The Bishop of Lichfield has called on leaders in the Church and secular society to put serving others before their own comfort. The Rt Rev Jonathan Gledhill criticised the MPs' expenses scandal and banking practices, comparing some of today's leaders to the tyrant kings spoken of by the prophet Ezekiel. 'Those who should have been looking after the people, the flock, were apparently fiddling their expenses, awarding themselves huge bonuses, while at the same time cutting the pensions of ordinary folk. In other words they were in leadership for what they could get out of it,' the bishop said. 'A nation loses its social coherence if a few very comfortable leaders enrich themselves at the expense of the majority.' Bishop Lichfield said a bishop's task is not to 'major on keeping the church going for another 10 years. He is here to help us serve our country and those who are scattered like sheep without a shepherd'.

Pray: for all our leaders in whatever field, that they be guided wisely and selflessly. (2Ch.12:6)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/bishop.hits.out.at.selfish.leadership/26791.htm>

■ Reform the ECGD, don't abolish it

Jubilee Debt Campaign, which works for the cancellation of unpayable and unjust poor country debts, says it wants the Export Credits Guarantee Department (ECGD) reformed not abolished. Responding to press reports that the ECGD is 'under review' as part of the Government's 'bonfire of quangos', Nick Dearden, director of the UK coalition, commented: 'We welcome the news that the ECGD is being considered for serious reform. For too long it has underwritten dodgy deals which have harmed human rights and the environment, and created toxic debts in the developing world. But scrapping or privatising the ECGD would leave unanswered questions about whether the state would continue as an underwriter of last resort for UK exports, and how the Government plans to fulfil its manifesto pledge to champion green exports. Privatisation could make the situation even worse if it means public money being spent with no public oversight'.

Pray: that the Government will seriously consider reforming the ECGD. (Job.35:2-3)

More: <http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/13183>

■ Children suffer when parents abandon 'tough love'

Frank Field claims that young people do much better in life if their mothers and fathers set clear boundaries for their behaviour as well as bonding with them and reading to them. The former Labour minister, who is now the Coalition's 'poverty tsar', believes that the end of old-fashioned parenting has held back the poorest children, preventing them from getting good jobs. He proposes that the Foundation Years stage of education, which currently runs from birth to five, should begin when the mother-to-be registers as pregnant with a doctor. In his article today, Mr Field writes that social mobility has stalled over the past 50 years despite rising incomes. He claims the 'subtle and influential' force affecting life chances for children is the changing style of parenting in Britain. 'The sociologist Geoffrey Gorer asked why England had moved by the 1950s from being a pretty violent and uncivilised nation to one of respectability.' Tough love.

Pray: that Frank Field's report is accepted by all parents to improve the life chances of their young. (Mk 10:19)

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/8032830/Frank-Field-Children-suffer-when-parents-abandon-tough-love.html>

EUROPE

■ EU warns France of action over Roma

The European Commission has told France that it faces action over its expulsion of Roma (Gypsy) migrants if it fails to adopt EU rules on freedom of movement by 15 October. France welcomed the fact that the EU was not accusing it of discrimination. But Justice Commissioner Viviane Reding said France had not respected a 2004 EU directive on freedom of movement. The controversial expulsions of thousands of Roma led to a serious row between Brussels and Paris. 'France is not enforcing European law as it should on free movement, so we are launching an infringement process against France,' Ms Reding told France 24 television. Ms Reding also says France has failed to transpose into law a 2004 EU directive on freedom of movement, which sets out procedures for deporting migrants deemed to be staying illegally. (See Prayer Alert 3810 & 3510)

Pray: that the French government reconsiders its current decisions over the Roma. (2Ch.19:7)

More: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-11437361>

■ European Baptists and Protestants agree to cooperate

The European Baptist Federation (EBF) and the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE) have signed an agreement committing the two organisations to closer collaboration. The agreement was signed at a meeting of the EBF

near Rome last week by its General Secretary, Tony Peck, and the General Secretary of the CPCE, Michael Buenker. The two organisations are now 'mutually cooperating bodies' and will attend each other's council meetings and general assemblies. The agreement also binds them to regular joint meetings and consultations to explore points of common interest and concern. Peck welcomed the agreement as a 'clear sign of closer cooperation. Both branches of the Reformation have much to give to each other and much to receive from each other,' he said. Formal and informal relations already exist between many CPCE churches and EBF unions in several European countries, including Britain.

Pray: for this move of cooperation will be a step towards bringing unity in God's Church. (Jn.17:23)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/european.baptists.and.protestants.sign.agreement.of.cooperation/26815.htm>

WORLDWIDE

■ Morocco: Forgotten Christian convert

Advocates question the harsh measures of the Muslim state toward a man who dared speak openly about Jesus and was jailed for 15 years. Jamaa Ait Bakrim, 46, has been in Morocco's largest prison for nearly 5 years because he was an outspoken Christian convert. It is believed the severity of his sentence in relation to his misdemeanour was because he persistently spoke about his faith. A fellow Moroccan Christian said, 'He shared his faith with people around him. In Morocco if you become a Christian you keep it to yourself then no one will bother you.' He added that people need to start speaking up on behalf of Bakrim, who has 'zeal' for his faith and speaks openly about it even in prison. 'Our Moroccan brothers and sisters suffer, and we assume things will be OK and will somehow change later by themselves, They will never change if we don't bring it to international attention.'

Pray: against the principalities and powers that would confine and contain the estimated 1,000 Moroccan Christian converts. (Is.61:1)

More: <http://www.christianpost.com/article/20100918/moroccan-convert-serving-15-years-for-his-faith/index.html>

■ Myanmar: Human rights inquiry

The momentum behind a push to investigate Burma's (Myanmar's) crimes against humanity is growing. Ten governments are now calling for the UN to set up a commission of inquiry over the junta regime's alleged use of rape as a weapon of war, forced recruitment of child soldiers, forced labour, torture and more. As more on these allegations came to light, Canada, France, the Netherlands and New Zealand added their support since the United States backed the move in August. They join Australia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and the United Kingdom. Mission agencies in the country report an open campaign targeting the Arakan, Chin and the Karen, many of whom are Christians. (See Prayer Alert 3110) Vision Beyond Borders' Wes Flint said in an earlier interview, 'The Burmese army is not bashful about 'their goal ' to exterminate the Karen people, to wipe them off the face of the earth.'

Pray: the world would no longer ignore the suffering in Burma, and for God to release the country into physical and spiritual freedom (2Sa.22:7)

More: <http://www.mnnonline.org/article/14775>

■ India: Christian harassment

On Wednesday, evangelist .V K Williams and seven other Pastor/Evangelists were arrested Wednesday morning and are now in police custody in Bodi Nayakanur because they had started a One Day Gospel Outreach which immediately drew an anti-gospel disruption. The local anti-gospel elements and their leadership are putting pressure on the police to book them under false charges. 'Our local Brethren have rushed to the police station and assisted the pastors detained for questioning. Urgent Prayers solicited.' See <http://persecution.in/content/eight-pastors-detained-theni-tamil-nadu>. Also, the Global Council of Indian Christians reported, 'Pentecostal pastor Shivanda Siddi, was arrested during a service at an Assemblies of God Church in Kanataka on Sunday.' About five Hindu extremists disrupted the service and began to humiliate the pastor by tearing his clothes and beating him in front of the faithful. After beating the pastor for about half an hour, they called the police at Yellapur station. The pastor and seven women and children were arrested.

Pray: that the 25 million Christians in India would know God's presence in times of persecution; and experience his enabling when ministering the gospel. (Ps.118:8)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/pentecostal.pastor.beaten.and.arrested.in.india/26806.htm>

■ N. Korea: Sex trafficking

Members of the House Human Rights Commission hosted a congressional hearing last week, shining a spotlight on how China is ignoring the plight of North Korean refugees living in the country. Lawmakers heard firsthand that ninety percent of the women who flee North Korea fall victims to traffickers and the Chinese government does nothing about it. In fact it is the Chinese government's ruthless policy of repatriating North Koreans that makes them so vulnerable to the traffickers. It is hoped that when President Obama meets with the leader of China later on this year he will raise this issue. The administration is silent on these issues and although nuclear issues are important, human rights for the North Korean people is important also. China also returns refugees to North Korea where they face imprisonment and death.

Pray: for more activists to make a stand for the North Korean refugees in China. (Ps.9:18)

More: <http://www.cbn.com/cbnnews/world/2010/September/Lawmakers-Spotlight-NKorea-Sex-Trafficking/>

■ Cambodia: Prayer requests

We have received the following prayer request from Cambodia. 1) 'There is a Festival from October 6 to 8 when the king and the government bow under the Buddhist monks leading the religious rites. 2). Mission Kampuchea 2021 is a church planting movement with a vision to planting one church in every one of the 14,000 villages in Cambodia. Please pray for

more churches to catch the church planting vision and release workers for training. 3) More than 60% of the population is under 18 and the youth prayer movement grew from a few people in 2005 to 250,000 now. The challenge of this movement is finding churches big enough for monthly gatherings. 4) 85% of the population live in the provinces where there is a lack of quality teachers. Students in the provinces score are lower in their achievement after high school.

Pray: for God's provision and anointing as the young church and youth movement in Cambodia grow and for Buddhist rituals to become less significant. (Mt.16:18)

■ **Afghanistan: Post election fallout**

More than 2,400 people competed in the September 18 poll, but corruption is threatening to overshadow the entire process as claims and counter-claims emerge with each passing day. Many incumbent members of parliament who ran for office again expressed concerns that the fallout from the election will create lasting public resentment as many of the people doubt whether the election was fair and honest and they distrust the government's handling of it. It will take weeks or months for the ballots to be counted and the final results announced, Christians in Afghanistan ask us to pray that the ballot counting will be handled honestly and openly so that the people can trust the results of the election; for the elected candidates to truly represent the best interests of the people they represent and the country as a whole.

Pray: that the leaders of the government will govern with righteousness and truth and for peace and prosperity in the Land. (Php.2:13)

More: <http://www.thenational.ae/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20100929/FOREIGN/100929338/1103/rss>

PRAISE REPORTS

■ **Fiji: Charges dropped against Methodist leaders**

The Fijian government has dropped most of the charges against leaders of the Methodist Church in Fiji. Fijian Methodists have made contact with the Methodist Church in Britain to thank people for their prayers and support. All members of the Fiji Methodist Church Standing Committee were charged with attending an unauthorized meeting held in April 2009 and were held for questioning by police in July last year. (See Prayer Alert 3109) Now all but four of them have had their charges dropped due to 'insufficient evidence'. Mike King, Leader of World Church Relationships, said: 'The church leadership was keen to give us this heartening news and to thank the many Methodists in Britain who have prayed so faithfully for the Methodist Church in Fiji.' Methodists in Britain fasted in solidarity with the Methodist Church in Fiji in February after increasing pressure was put on the Church from the country's government led by Commodore Bainimarama.

Praise: God for this move in answer to the believers prayers. (Jn.17:20)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/charges.dropped.against.fijian.methodist.church.leaders/26800.htm>

■ **Orissa: Persecutor turned worshipper**

Once a part of the terrible 2008 persecution against Christians in Orissa, Sharda Tamo now has been changed by the love of Jesus into a fellow worshipper in the very church he tried to demolish. In 2008 he joined a mob that tried to destroy the church's building and climbed on to the roof to break its Christian cross. Today he visits the church every week to worship at the cross of Jesus. The church in Orissa was known for its community outreach and ministry to women and youth and well-respected in the community serving hundreds of people under the leadership of a Gospel for Asia-supported missionary. In 2008 the church was badly damaged and its congregation was murdered or forced out of the village. But the church's days of being a beacon for the love of Jesus are not over, and God's spirit has not left the area.

Praise: God for turning this situation around and ask Him for many more people in Orissa to choose to follow Jesus. (Ps.126:5)

More: http://www.breakingchristiannews.com/articles/display_art.html?ID=8247

■ **USA: Proselytizing Christian banned from library**

16-year-old Caleb Hanson has been banned from all branches of the Chattahoochee Valley Regional Library system for six months for proselytizing. According to a letter to his parents from North Columbus Public Library, Caleb repeatedly asked patrons about their religious faith and offered biblical advice. After several warnings 'not to do it' Caleb began talking to people outside the library. Caleb's parents, Tim and Elizabeth Hanson, are in Columbus on furlough from mission work and living with Elizabeth's parents who are retired missionaries. Caleb is home-schooled and is the youngest of four children. Last year he had a real encounter with the Lord and he wants to witness for Christ. Ordinarily he is shy but he began asking to be dropped off at stores and other locations to share his faith. Caleb's library card has been blocked, and if he returns to the library he'll be criminally trespassing. Praise God for New Life In Jesus Christ.

Praise: God and pray Caleb will take the ban in his stride, as he matures in wisdom and spiritual discernment. (Ac.2:17-21)

More: <http://www.eagletribune.com/worldnational/x1327127547/Teen-banned-from-libraries-over-ignoring-requests-to-quit-proselytizing>

PRAYER FORUM OF BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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