



# PRAYER ALERT...



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

### ■ BBC's unholy row over Halloween

The BBC has been criticised for giving too much coverage to Halloween. Not the occasionally terrifying outfits that the Strictly Come Dancing contestants were treated to last weekend but a news report about a coven of witches who gathered to celebrate Samhain, the turning of the year from light to dark. The decision to allow so much airtime to the minority event in Weymouth, Dorset, was questioned at a time of a 16% cut in the corporation's budget. 'I understand the BBC might choose to concentrate on something for one day, but I consider it to be symptomatic of a much bigger problem across the BBC,' said Christian Institute spokesman Mike Judge. 'They downplay Christianity and up-play paganism which is unreflective of British society. It does create an atmosphere where it's OK to marginalise Christians.' We can only hope that Christmas gives the corporation a chance to redress the balance.

**Pray:** for the BBC to ensure programme planning better reflects the requirements of a mainly Christian nation. (Mi.5:12)

**More:** <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/mediamonkeyblog/2010/nov/02/bbc-halloween-row>

### ■ Religiously 'illiterate' politicians

The Church of England has accused the last Labour government of being 'religiously illiterate' and treating believers as 'sub-rational' elements that must be contained. Left-wing politicians fostered a culture of suspicion towards all faith groups in the aftermath of the 2005 and 2001 attacks by Islamic extremists in London and the US, according to a Church report. 'While senior Conservatives have a more positive view of the role of religion in public life, many Liberal Democrats remain deeply sceptical', the report from the Church's Mission and Public Affairs department said. The criticism came as the Church of England outlined plans to run community cohesion projects to improve relations between different faiths. It is now bidding for £5 million as part of its response to David Cameron's vision of the 'Big Society'. The Communities Secretary, Eric Pickles, has promised that the days of the state trying to 'suppress' Christianity and other faiths are 'over'.

**Pray:** for politicians of all parties that they will appreciate and recognise the positive role of faith communities in the U.K. (2Ch.30:12)

**More:** <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopics/religion/8102811/Religiously-illiterate-politicians-treat-all-faiths-with-suspicion-says-CofE.html>

### ■ Christians' freedom to express beliefs at risk

Prominent clerics, including Lord Carey, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, argue that supporters of homosexual rights must not be allowed to 'coerce silence'. Their comments centre on a landmark legal challenge by a churchgoing couple who were banned by a council from becoming foster parents because they believed homosexuality was unacceptable. The bishops claim that the case will determine whether Christians can continue to express their beliefs in this country. They say that the High Court will be ruling on a 'clash of rights' which threatens to label religious belief as 'problematic' if it decides that it is acceptable to discriminate against those with traditional Christian views on homosexuality. For background information to the case see: <http://www.thisisderbyshire.co.uk/news/Christian-couple-await-fostering-ruling/article-2829126->

[detail/article.html](#). Lord Carey said 'So many Christians are being marginalised as a result of this hard secularism which is knocking traditional ethics'.

**Pray:** that secularism will be checked and religious freedom of expression will be upheld. (Mk.16:15)

**More:** <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newsttopics/religion/8098796/Christians-freedom-to-express-beliefs-is-at-risk-warn-bishops.html>

#### ■ Bibles burned, hymnbooks slashed

Yobs in West Yorkshire burned Bibles and slashed hymnbooks in an attack against a Methodist church in a village near Bradford. The attack on Birkenshaw Methodist Church was discovered earlier this week when an art group went to hold their meeting. A large crucifix had been ripped from an interior wall, chairs slashed, and wires leading to the church's speakers and piano keyboard cut. Rev Graham Edwards, the church's minister, said: 'Everyone is very upset and it is very sad to go to the effort of refurbishing the whole place to find somebody will break in and, for what seems like no reason at all, will destroy and ruin things'. The church has 61 members and was refurbished two years ago. This attack could cost them a further £2,000. In Westry, near March, a 19th century Cambridgeshire church was gutted by a massive fire, reportedly started when yobs set Bibles and prayer books alight.

**Pray:** that God will infuse His people with His Spirit in their fight against their attackers. (Ps.92:7)

**More:** <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/bibles-burned-hymnbooks-slashed-in-bradford-attack/>

#### ■ Fight the good fight

Veteran civil rights campaigner and Baptist minister the Rev Jesse Jackson has urged Christians never to stop fighting for the poor - especially in this period of austerity. During a brief visit to the UK the Baptist minister, who founded the social change Rainbow PUSH coalition, said the church was compelled to challenge injustice. But citing his long record, which includes campaigning with Dr Martin Luther King, Mr Jackson said as long as Christians fought, they would inevitably secure victories that would make the world a fairer place. Mr Jackson was in the UK to speak at an event entitled A God of Justice, organised by Christian Aid in collaboration with the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Church.co.uk. He was also a guest speaker at a Christian Aid supporters day and lobby of Parliament in support of the world's poor. He said he had seen 'tremendous changes' in his 50 years as a campaigner.

**Pray:** for all Christians to rise to Rev Jackson's challenge to keep fighting for justice. (Dt.16:20)

**More:** <http://www.baptisttimes.co.uk/news1.htm>

#### ■ Churches urged to step into breach created by cuts

The Archbishop of York, Dr Sentamu, said it was 'madness' to cut investment from public services and communities after the Government unveiled its cuts to public spending in the Comprehensive Spending Review. Dr Sentamu urged people to 'stand up and call on the state to play its part by investing in Britain's recovery'. The Bishop for Urban Life and Faith, the Rt Rev Christopher Chessun, who will be translated from Woolwich to Southwark early next year, said: 'The cuts are accompanied by changes to the way welfare and housing are provided. This has implications not just for vulnerable individuals, but whole communities.' The Bishop of Bristol, the Rt Rev Michael Hill, told BBC News it was 'slightly chilling' that the Government had 'targeted some five million benefit recipients, and is trying to knock down their benefits. Nobody thinks that's a bad thing for people who are clearly cheating the benefit system, but my understanding is that the majority aren't'.

**Pray:** that God's Spirit will move communities to succour the needy. (Pr.14:31)

**More:** <http://www.churchtimes.co.uk/content.asp?id=102987>

#### ■ Call for more abortion counselling provision

Tory MP Nadine Dorries urged the Government to instruct clinics to provide counselling to women who seek terminations. She said such 'informed consent' would lead to a reduction in UK abortion figures, currently around 200,000 a year. Opening a short Commons debate, former nurse Ms Dorries said: 'If any of us were referred to a hospital today for a minor procedure, e.g.an ingrowing toenail operation, the procedure would be explained to us in detail. We would be aware of the level of pain we would experience, told exactly what would happen while we were under the anaesthetic and be given follow-up appointments. A woman who has an abortion has none of that: she is discharged at the end of the day out onto the street and left to come to terms with the roller coaster emotional journey she will still be in the midst of.'

**Pray:** that very sensitive consideration is given by health professionals to the spiritually vulnerable. (Ps.34:18)

**More:** <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/mp-in-call-for-preabortion-counselling-provision-2123829.html>

## EUROPE

#### ■ Switzerland: 'Protect religious minorities' says Muslim at talks with Christians

The coordinator of a Muslim initiative to promote common ground with Christians says that leaders of the two religions have a duty to protect adherents of the other faith against followers of their own. 'For both our religions harming religious minorities among us is evil, is absolutely forbidden and is ultimately a rejection of God's love and a crime against God Himself,' Prince Ghazi Bin Muhammad Bin Talal of Jordan said on the opening day of a 1-4 November meeting of Muslim and Christian leaders and scholars in Geneva. Prince Ghazi is the co-ordinator of the 'Common Word' initiative, a document released in 2007 by 138 Muslim scholars seeking common ground between Christian and Islamic religious traditions.

<http://acommonword.com/index.php?lang=en&page=option1> Organizers say it is intended to address issues of common

concern and provide guidance for co-operation between Muslims and Christians. Addressing participants, WCC General Secretary the Rev Olav Fykse Tveit said religious leaders need to provide 'moral leadership' in their communities.

**Pray:** that the truth as revealed by the Holy Spirit permeates all discussions. (1Cor.2:13)

**More:** <http://www.eni.ch/featured/article.php?id=4526>

#### ■ **Russia: Churches set on fire**

Three churches in a predominantly Muslim province in Russia were set on fire by arsonists early Monday. One of the buildings, an Orthodox church in the village of Ordzhonikidzevsky, was almost totally destroyed. An Orthodox church and a Baptist church in the nearby city of Karachaevsk sustained only minimal damage after the night guard for one put out the fire and the night guard for the other called fire fighters. All the three arson attacks happened between 4:00 a.m. and 6:00 a.m. on Monday and were set when flammable objects were thrown through the churches' windows. Vandalism of churches is rare in Russia's mainly Muslim North Caucasus. The head of the regional Spiritual Administration for Muslims believes Monday's arsons were aimed at destabilizing the mixed Christian and Muslim society.

**Pray:** that these attacks will not influence the different religious communities living in the region. (Ps.2:10-11)

**More:** <http://www.christianpost.com/article/20101101/arsonists-target-3-russian-churches-burn-1-to-ground/>

## WORLDWIDE

#### ■ **Iraq: Christians have requested our prayers**

Middle East Concern have forwarded a prayer request for Iraqi Christians following a major incident at the Syrian Catholic Church of Our Lady of Salvation Church in Baghdad Sunday. Claims of responsibility have appeared on websites used by extremists. Christian leaders in Iraq are concerned that this attack might prompt further internal displacement of Christians within Iraq. Iraqi Christians request our prayers that: a. The bereaved will know the peace, presence and comfort of Jesus. b. The wounded and traumatised will know the healing touch of Jesus. c. Those involved in providing pastoral care will know the Spirit's grace and gentleness. d. Christians across Iraq will know the Father's protection. e. The security situation in Baghdad will improve. f. Any Christians that feel obliged to leave Baghdad will find places of safety and be able to return soon. g. Church leaders in Baghdad will know the Spirit's guidance in all things, especially concerning services.

**Pray:** that God would use every situation to draw people to Himself and strengthen the believers in Iraq. (Jn.8:36)

#### ■ **INSIGHT ARTICLE: Christian minorities in Iraq**

More than twelve bombs struck Baghdad on Tuesday evening, killing 36 people and wounding 320 others in coordinated blasts two days after Al Qaeda linked gunmen stormed a church in one of the deadliest attacks in a year. (see item 1 above). Baghdad security officials were considering an immediate curfew on the city. 'We don't know what's happening right now. There are so many explosions and reports we're overwhelmed' said an anonymous interior ministry official. The bombings were spread among coffee shops over a one-hour period in the early evening. Almost eight months after Iraqis went to the polls there is still no new government in place. Many say this political deadlock fuelled the violence. In 2008 the Chaldean Archbishop of Kirkuk, Luis Saca, asked the Iraqi government to protect Iraq's Christians; for INSIGHT to aid intercession for Christians in Iraq click '[info](#)'.

**Pray:** for persecuted and displaced Christians to know God's provision and comfort and for God to raise up a righteous government. (Nu.15:16)

**More:** <http://www.prayer-alert.net/info/IraqChristiansNov1.pdf>

#### ■ **Vietnam: Crackdown on Christians**

Since August thousands of armed soldiers, police and security forces have been trying to 'wipe out' Christians who refuse to join a state-approved church. The security forces have been 'strategically placed' to watch Christians in 23 villages in Vietnam's mountainous Gia Lai province to ensure no one is still worshipping God or attending an independent church for worship. The security police are ordered to arrest, torture and send to prison any one who violates this religious law. There was no immediate comment from Vietnamese officials, but the Foreign Ministry has in the past denied reports of wrongdoing. Vietnam's Communist government allows Christians to join the official Evangelical Church of Vietnam but many Degar Christians prefer to worship in house churches. 'The Vietnamese government has created a new religion and built a new church but it is not religion and church that we need.' said a local Christian.

**Pray:** for Vietnamese Christians to have the right to worship Jesus Christ in the church of their hearts. (Jn.4:23)

**More:** <http://www.bosnewslife.com/>

#### ■ **Nigeria: Potential ethnic violence flaring**

Violence between the the Berom Christians and Hausa Fulani communities flared up in March this year and community leaders in Nigeria's Plateau State are appealing again for calm in villages outside the city of Jos. At least six people - women and children - were killed, cattle slaughtered and homes burned in one village this week. In January and March this year, similar attacks prompted a spiral of rioting and killing in the region that left hundreds of people dead. Leaders in Ranwianku are urging residents not to think of revenge. In one incident an elderly woman, unable to flee the armed gang, was killed along with a young mother and four small children. Ranwianku is a predominantly Christian settlement. The attackers spoke the Fulani language.

**Pray:** that the two communities would learn to love their neighbour and live together peacefully. (Mt.6:12-13)

**More:** <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-11657987>

#### ■ **USA: Evangelical leader tweets for change**

Following the results of the midterm elections, Christians are being urged to pray for their elected leaders. Chuck Colson, the former top aid to President Nixon said, 'First things first. I will be on my knees, begging God to have mercy on this country and on His Church. And we should pray for our newly elected representatives and senators. Conservative evangelicals and Catholics need to acknowledge that we have no political home.' Colson cheered on the victories of pro-life candidates: Dan Coates of Indiana and Rand Paul of Kentucky. Dr. Rand Paul said the country had been hit by a 'Tea Bag tidal wave' fuelled by angry Americans. In his podcast last week Chuck Colson stated there was room for a religious revolution. Of the parties, Democratic and Republican, Colson praised the Tea Party for attempting to change the culture of Washington.

**Pray:** that the grassroots movement will be directed by God and actioned by men of integrity in America. (Ps.45:4)

**More:** <http://www.christianpost.com/article/20101103/evangelical-leader-tweets-for-change-election-night/>

#### ■ **Middle East: Palestinian children 'victims of violence'**

Palestinian children are attacked by a handful of extremist settlers according to a report on settlement expansion investigating thirty-eight incidents resulting in three dead children and injuries to forty-two others. Continued settlement expansion has impacted the security of the Palestinian children. In eight cases soldiers colluded with the attack by either joining in, turning a blind eye or punishing the victims rather than the perpetrators. Twenty-one of the attacks were carried out in and around the southern city of Hebron and another seven near Nablus in the north - areas where settlers follow extremist ideologies. The study found 'Israel's failure to enforce the law and hold the perpetrators accountable for their actions had created an atmosphere in which settlers enjoy impunity and Palestinians live in fear.' None of the settlers involved in the violent incidents have been prosecuted.

**Pray:** for an end to all violence in this territory. (Ps.36:6)

**More:** <http://www.asharq-e.com/news.asp?section=1&id=22884>

#### ■ **Azerbaijan: Religious tolerance?**

Four Baptists in Azerbaijan were each given a five day jail term after a police raid on a Harvest Festival celebration in a private home, Forum 18 News Service has learned. Around 80 Baptists were present when police raided the home after turning off the gas and electricity to prevent church members from preparing a festive meal. They recorded the names of all those present also photographing and filming them. After a late night closed court hearing the home owner and three others were given five-day prison terms. Police insisted there was nothing unusual about a late Sunday evening court hearing, claiming that 'it happens'. In a separate case a court in Baku has handed down a large fine on a Jehovah's Witness for offering religious literature on the streets. More stories of religious intolerance can be found by clicking the more button.

**Pray:** for all that is ungodly in Azerbaijan to be revealed and removed from the legal system. (Job.8:20)

**More:** [http://www.forum18.org/Archive.php?article\\_id=1505](http://www.forum18.org/Archive.php?article_id=1505)

## PRAISE REPORTS

#### ■ **Russia: Christmas project to bring hope of Christ to 50,000 children**

Russian Ministries is aiming to provide gift-filled shoeboxes along with children's Bibles to 50,000 needy kids across Russia and the former Soviet Union this Christmas. 'Our plan is that 50,000 children will receive those gifts but also learn about Jesus through the story that will be shared with them by young people on behalf of their churches who put together a presentation on the birth of Jesus, who became the greatest gift of all,' said Russian Ministries' President Sergey Rakhuba. He added: 'Christmas is the greatest opportunity to reach out to children with the Gospel, but during that time the atmosphere creates more open space and especially in those territories where Christianity is not as influential. It's also a great opportunity for young potential leaders in Russia, who we like to equip with these Christmas boxes, which we like to call Gifts of Hope.'

**Praise:** God for this initiative that brings hope to so many young people. (Ps.105:1)

**More:** <http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/2010/s10110004.htm>

#### ■ **India: Girls rescued out of trafficking**

Three girls from different states of India, sold off to brothels in Solapur city a few months ago, were rescued last week by Indian Rescue Mission (IRM), an organization that rescues minor girls forced into prostitution and offers justice and rehabilitation for these victims. These girls were rescued from a city hotel in a joint operation conducted by Indian Rescue Mission and Maharashtra State police on October 28, 2010, after they had discovered the trafficking racket based on the investigations conducted by IRM. The police swung into action and arrested a lady brothel keeper and the lodge owner, along with other pimps who were engaged in forcing these girls into prostitution. Among the rescued girls, three were minors and were trafficked from different parts of the country. The girls told the police that they were sold to the brothels in the city and were forced to entertain clients who visited the brothel.

**Praise:** God for the work of IRM and pray that the authorities would be granted more powers to fight this evil trade. (Mk.7:21)

**More:** [http://www.breakingchristiannews.com/articles/display\\_art.html?ID=8348](http://www.breakingchristiannews.com/articles/display_art.html?ID=8348)

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