



# PRAYER ALERT...

An initiative of the Prayer Forum of the British Isles & Ireland  
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Issue 4910

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Thursday 2 December 2010

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## BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

### ■ Traditional Christian Christmas

Local authorities should celebrate Christmas in the traditional Christian way and stop worrying about the PC brigade, said Communities Secretary Eric Pickles. He called for an end to 'Christianophobia'. Mr Pickles said councils should stop introducing 'politically correct' versions of Christmas such as 'Winterval', which combines secular and inter-faith religious elements. The Communities Secretary called for councils to take pride in British Christian heritage by celebrating the nativity and all the traditions surrounding it. He said: 'We should actively celebrate the Christian basis of Christmas, and not allow politically correct Grinches to marginalise Christianity and the birth of Christ. The war on Christmas is over, and the likes of Winterval, Winter Lights and Luminous deserve to be in the dustbin of history'. John Midgely, founder of the Campaign Against Political Correctness, said 'It is absolutely right in our country that Christmas should be celebrated and it does not cause offence to other religions'.

**Pray:** for local authorities and councils to have the courage and confidence to celebrate a Christian Christmas. (2Co.3:4)

**More:** <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/celebrate-traditional-christian-christmas-says-govt-minister/>

### ■ Day of prayer for Ireland

Christians from different churches in Ireland have felt drawn to join together to issue a call for prayer for their nation at this time. Ireland is undergoing a period of economic, political and social upheaval, shaking the very fabric of its society. In the midst of this upheaval Christians are calling for prayer to seek God's help in a very definite way, and meeting to ask God for His intervention. They have invited churches to plan events and gatherings for prayer. Join with them on Friday the 3rd December 2010, to pray for Ireland. They are asking people to pray individually at home, in groups, at special church services, at work, at school, in colleges, wherever. They suggest that times of prayer can be short or long, using favourite forms of prayer, or at a church service, mass, bible study etc.

**Pray:** for the Lord to help Ireland in response to their day of prayer. (2Ch.6:19)

**More:** [http://www.irishchristians.ie/index.php?option=com\\_k2&view=item&id=13:a-day-of-prayer-for-ireland](http://www.irishchristians.ie/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=13:a-day-of-prayer-for-ireland)

### ■ Christmas and credit

Christians Against Poverty is urging people not to give into the temptation of taking a loan to cover the cost of their Christmas celebrations. The debt counselling charity says it is not out to kill the festive season but that it wants people to have a clear spending strategy to see them safely into the New Year. Chief Executive Matt Barlow believes such a strategy is wise as yet more economic uncertainty looms on the horizon. 'These are difficult times for a lot of us and the temptation is to say 'at least we'll have a great Christmas' and use that as an excuse to spend what we haven't got,' he said. The charity has released its top ten tips for avoiding festive debt. These include being honest with family members if things are tight, not buying gifts for others out of obligation, and clubbing together with relatives to buy the kids' presents.

**Pray:** for Christmas to be a simple, honest celebration of Jesus' birth rather one of financial excess. (Pr.1:3)

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.co.uk/article/dont.do.christmas.on.credit.debt.charity.warns/27142.htm>

#### ■ God's big society

The new Bishop of Chelmsford, the Rt Rev Stephen Cottrell, has issued an Advent challenge – make a difference with 'God's big society'. Bishop Stephen is one of the authors of Church House Publishing's 2010 Advent book Ready Steady Slow, which includes contributions from the Archbishops of Canterbury and York. Preaching at his installation service the day before Advent Sunday, in Chelmsford Cathedral, Bishop Stephen said: 'If we live prayerful, faithful lives, if we shine with the light of the risen Christ, then our world will be changed. For God's big society is made up of a thousand little deeds of sacrifice and kindness.' The pocket-sized Ready Steady Slow urges readers to take five minutes to change the world by following the daily 'tread gently' challenges. Examples include making your own compost, taking a go-slow coffee break, having a paperless party and slowing down on the roads. All the challenges are accompanied by a reflection and prayer.

**Pray:** for a huge response to this initiative and that it will contribute to a positive change in the world. (Php.4:5)

**More:** <http://www.cofe.anglican.org/news/pr10710.html>

#### ■ Climate change failure is moral outrage

Scotland's religious leaders have described the West's failure to help developing nations cope with climate change as a 'moral outrage'. Senior members of the country's Christian and Islamic communities outlined their position in a letter to Prime Minister David Cameron. They urged the UK government to do all it could to ensure progress was made at the UN climate change conference. The summit is due to open in Cancun, Mexico, on Monday. The letter to Mr Cameron has been signed by the Moderator of the Church of Scotland's General Assembly, John Christie, the head of the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland, Cardinal Keith O'Brien, the Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church, David Chillingworth, and Shaykh Ruzwan, a senior figure in the Islamic community. It adds: 'It is a moral outrage that as yet developed countries appear unwilling to find the money so urgently needed to deal with this issue.'

**Pray:** for the Cancun summit and that world leaders will strive to make significant progress. (Job.22:28)

**More:** <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-11857143>

#### ■ David Cameron's wellbeing index

The Prime Minister announced that from next April the Government would be measuring how much the lives of British people are improving 'not just by our standard of living, but by our quality of life'. His plan for a wellbeing index has come under fire from critics who have already written it off as 'airy fairy and impractical'. However, the cynicism is not shared by everyone. Emrys Jones, of Care for the Family, said the index could give a clear indication of what matters most to people and enable the Government to prioritise areas that impact most strongly on people's happiness levels. 'Economic growth is vital, as without jobs people can struggle to take care of their families, but it's also important to consider our wellbeing as a nation and identify what makes us truly happy, such as investing more quality time in our families,' he said.

**Pray:** that the nation's quality of life improves despite our economic hardships.(Is.32:18)

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/christians.see.some.benefit.in.david.camerons.wellbeing.index/27151.htm>

#### ■ GAFCON Primates' boycott meeting in Dublin

At least ten Primates from the Global South are now expected to boycott the Primates' Meeting in Dublin in January. Five African Primates, members of the GAFCON Primates' Council (See <http://www.gafcon.org/>) confirmed that they would not attend the two-yearly meeting. In addition, it is understood that the Primate of South-East Asia, the Primate in Jerusalem & the Middle East, and the Primate of the Indian Ocean, will not go to Dublin. Furthermore it is expected that two new Primates, Primate of the Southern Cone, and the Primate of Rwanda, will also boycott the meeting. Five further Primates, from West Africa, Tanzania, Nigeria, Uganda, and Kenya — say they 'join with other Primates from the Global South in declaring that we will not be present'. They acknowledge the Anglican Covenant is 'well-intentioned' but say they 'have come to the conclusion the current text is fatally flawed'. In response, Canon Kenneth Kearon, secretary general of the Anglican Communion, said: 'The decision whether to come remains a matter for the Primates'.

**Pray:** for the Anglican Covenant to succeed in representing the broadest sense of Anglicanism. (1Co.13:1)

**More:** <http://www.churchtimes.co.uk/content.asp?id=104604>

## EUROPE

#### ■ Roma unwelcome throughout Europe

Unwanted and marginalized, the Roma people have become the target of governments across Europe. In 2010, France launched a campaign against them, expelling 13,000 - many of them landing in Romania. (See Prayer Alert 4010, 3810 & 3510) The problem is that life is worse in Romania and other eastern countries where Roma tend to concentrate. Unemployment in Roma towns has soared. Opportunities are so scarce that a once-itinerant people are on the move, suspicion following them wherever they go. Southern Baptist International Mission Board (IMB) missionaries have started two significant ministries with the Roma: 'From Everywhere To Everywhere' trains Roma believers to go across Europe and share the Gospel with other Roma. 'Far Away Romany Missions' is a summer programme dedicated to providing biblical and evangelism training to the Roma. 'Burning Bush' is a rapidly growing Roma church with 3,000 members - located in a Romanian town with a population of 7,000.

**Pray:** for the work of IMB missionaries and for the openness of the Roma people to the Gospel. (Is.52:7)

**More:** <http://www.mnnonline.org/article/15019>

### ■ Free speech and religion in Russia

A survey by a Russian think tank shows that the Russian people are conflicted over freedom of expression and perceived attacks on Christianity. This past summer, sociologists at the Levada Centre found that 58 percent of Russians believe people should enjoy freedom of speech, which means they have the right to publicly criticize religion. At the same time, 21 percent believe that the authorities should have the right to fine or imprison people who publicly criticize religion because such criticism could 'undermine the reputation of the church.' The survey comes in the wake of a high-profile trial of two Russian intellectuals who organized a 2006 exhibition called 'Forbidden Art', and were subsequently charged with degrading and insulting the Christian faith and believers. The art depicted an Orthodox icon of the Virgin Mary made out of caviar. Western-style freedom of speech is still scarce in the former Soviet Union.

**Pray:** that such controversies will open up opportunities for the Gospel and so transform the hearts and lives of many people. (Jn.15:18)

**More:** <http://www.sga.org/2010/11/news-and-analysis-4/>

## WORLDWIDE

### ■ North Korea: Keep praying

The North Korean attack against a South Korean island on 23 November is being called 'one of the most serious incidents between the two nations since the Korean War.' It was North Korea's third major provocative action this year. China has called for an emergency meeting of the six countries involved in talks about the North's nuclear disarmament. But South Korean President Lee Myung-bak said he was not interested in resuming the six-party talks immediately, according to South Korean news agency Yonhap. See:

<http://www.christiantoday.com/article/global.church.leader.urges.koreas.to.refrain.from.use.of.force/27164.htm> Western observers learned that North Korea has a modern uranium enrichment facility with at least 1,000 centrifuges - potentially offering Pyongyang [the capital of North Korea] another route to nuclear power. Observers speculate hostility may be an attempt to manufacture North Korean victories ahead of the exchange of power from Kim Jong-Il to his son, Kim Jong-Un. North Korea is number one on the Open Doors World Watch List 2010.

**Pray:** for the Lord to intervene in this conflict, establishing and maintaining peace. (Ps.37:37)

**More:** <http://www.win1040.com/post.php?id=917>

### ■ Egypt: Christians pray for protection

Raised tension between the Coptic community and the Muslim majority have come to a head with the news that extremists who have been killing Christians in Iraq may also target believers in Egypt. Prayer meetings are being held at churches throughout Egypt amid heightened security. In Cairo, the number of security officers standing guard outside churches has doubled. In Zamalek, visitors to a recent Christmas bazaar and festival at the All Saints Cathedral were met with body searches, metal detectors and sniffer dogs. News agencies report that the Government has asked pastors to 'cancel unessential, large-scale public meetings'. President Hosni Mubarak has made a statement through the state-run MENA news agency promising protection for Copts. (See

[http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5gkvnjf1Ae6bhDh\\_dzqoRKxQ5pluw?docId=CNG.b7b0e11361e7847889195c6db3707f9e.dc1](http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5gkvnjf1Ae6bhDh_dzqoRKxQ5pluw?docId=CNG.b7b0e11361e7847889195c6db3707f9e.dc1)) His promise coincides with heated debate in the media over 'Coptic heritage' and its 'Islamic identity'.

**Pray:** against religious fanaticism and the fear it creates and pray for harmony between Muslims and Christians in Egypt.

**More:** <http://www.charismamag.com/index.php/news/29670-muslim-mob-in-egypt-firebombs-christian-homes-businesses>

### ■ Indonesia: The front line against radical Islam

Some of the most dangerous international terrorist networks are using Indonesia as a base to recruit, plan and train for attacks on Western targets. The Indonesian government is launching several security operations aimed at crippling the terror activity. But the fight against radical Islamists is far from over. Banda Aceh, a city 1,000 miles from Jakarta was almost wiped out the night during the 2004 Indonesian tsunami. Six years later, Banda Aceh has bounced back. The economy is thriving, tourism is up, and foreign investments are pouring in. But a group of Muslim radicals have now moved into the area and set up a base of operations. 'These radical groups came in the name of doing disaster relief and some were able to set up bases which became conduits that later helped Jihad groups set up,' explained Sidney Jones, an American terrorism expert living in Indonesia.

**Pray:** for God to employ the NGO operations working for good in Indonesia to shame and repel iniquity in disguise. (Job12:22)

**More:** <http://ausprayernet.org.au/newsletter/DisplayNewsletter.php>

### ■ Tanzania: Christian fears growing

Radical Islamists have demolished two church buildings on Tanzania's semi-autonomous island of Zanzibar on Sunday Nov. 21, and congregation members have since received death threats. The church buildings which belong to the Tanzania Assemblies of God and the Evangelical Assemblies of God Zanzibar were torn down at about 8 p.m. said Bishop Fabian Obeid of EAGZ. This is the latest in a string of violent acts aimed at frightening away Christians in the Muslim-dominated region. The destruction on the island off the coast of East Africa has raised fears that Muslim extremists could go to any length to limit the spread of Christianity, church leaders said. A church member who requested anonymity reported hearing one Muslim saying, 'We have cleansed our area by destroying the two churches, and now we are on our mission to kill individual members of these two churches – we shall not allow the church to be built again.'

**Pray:** for the Christians of Zanzibar to overcome fear, be protected and encouraged by the power of God's Holy Spirit. (Ro.8:39-39)

**More:** <http://www.compassdirect.org/english/country/tanzania/28938/>

#### ■ **Pakistan: Government cannot pardon Christian woman**

The Pakistani government was barred on Monday by the country's high court from pardoning a Christian woman sentenced to death for alleged blasphemy. A lawyer argued that a pardon would be illegal while the case was pending in the courts. 'Since the matter is in the high court, the government cannot now make any move to pardon Bibi,' lawyer Allah Bakhsh Leghari told Agence France-Presse. Asia Bibi was sentenced early this month to death by hanging for allegedly speaking against the Prophet Muhammad. (see last week's Prayer Alert) Religious leaders including Pope Benedict XVI, and human rights groups have called for her release but conservative Muslims have threatened anarchy if President Asif Ali Zardari pardons Bibi. Federal Minorities Minister Shahbaz Bhatti said he expects her to be freed, his preliminary findings from investigations of all accusations showed she was innocent.

**Pray:** for God's mercy and justice to rule and reign through all decisions made regarding Bibi's future. (Is.14:3-4)

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/high.court.says.pakistani.government.cannot.pardon.christian.woman/27163.htm>

#### ■ **Philippines: Anglican leader appeals to free 43 detainees**

A church leader has renewed his appeal for supporters to help persuade President Benigno Aquino to free 43 church-based health workers detained for more than nine months, accused of being members of a clandestine communist-led New People's Army. The workers were conducting primary health-care training for communities, and deny the allegations. 'Another day in prison for the 43 is another day of justice denied,' said the Rev. Rex Reyes, general secretary of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines and a priest in the Episcopal Church of the Philippines. Reyes requested support from global church organizations, human rights advocates and civil libertarians. After pressure from these groups a presidential spokesperson said on November 16th that the presidential palace had organized a team to review the case of the 43 detainees and, 'A prompt resolution would be forthcoming.'

**Pray:** for God's mighty right hand to hold this situation and guide it through to an imminent release for the detainees. (Is.42:7)

**More:** [http://www.episcopalchurch.org/81808\\_125811\\_ENG\\_HTM.htm](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/81808_125811_ENG_HTM.htm)

## PRAISE REPORTS

#### ■ **Russia: New Baptist Churches being planted**

The Baptists utilize effectively the freedom of worship in the country. Mass evangelism and distribution of tracts aren't efficient any longer and new methods have to be implemented, reports the press centre of Russian Union of Evangelical Christian-Baptists. Baptists in Russia trace their history to 1867. There are now about 80 000 Baptists who worship in 1,750 local churches. Revd Alexey Smirnov, the president of the Baptist Union in Russia says: 'The number of Baptist churches in Russia is growing and the most important task of the Union is to train leaders as well as keep the unity. The work with youth and children is particularly vital as it had not been possible during the era of communist regime.' Revd Ruvim Voloshin, the vice-president of Baptist Union responsible for missionary ministry stresses that about 200 new Baptist congregations are currently being planted all over the vast territory of Russia.

**Praise:** God for the growth of His church and the planting of new congregations. (Ac.5:42)

**More:** <http://www.christiantelegraph.com/issue11510.html>

#### ■ **World: 500 mark in audio Bible translations**

This month marks an exciting landmark in the world of audio Bible translation. 'We have got to our 500th language that we have recorded,' explains Bill Lohr with Faith Comes By Hearing (FCBH). 'About 4.6 billion people speak those languages in the world today.' Beyond the fact that now billions of people, literate or not, could potentially access the Scriptures, the 500 mark has special meaning for FCBH. 'The reason that's significant for us is that it puts us a quarter way to our goal, which is in 2016, we want to have 2,000 languages recorded. That will effectively be about 97 percent of the world's population.' That is truly FCBH's heartbeat and passion: to provide every person, regardless of literacy or location, with the opportunity to access Scripture in their heart language. FCBH now has over 50 recording teams in 27 countries working on new translations to meet their 2,000 language goal by 2016.

**Praise:** God that faith comes from hearing the word. (Ro.10:17)

**More:** <http://www.mnnonline.org/article/15013>

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