

PRAYER ALERT...

An initiative of the Prayer Forum of the British Isles & Ireland
www.prayer-alert.net editor@prayer-alert.net

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BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ British schools opt-out from Christian assemblies

A growing number of British schools are dropping traditional Christian assemblies in favour of multi-faith meetings and 'moments of reflection'. More than 140 primary and secondary schools across Britain have won the right to opt out of the legal requirement to provide a daily act of worship which is 'broadly Christian' in character. (See also: <http://www.christianpost.com/article/20101204/wrong-to-exclude-god-from-classroomsays-u-kthink-tank/>) Some schools have adopted Islamic assemblies. The highest number of opt-outs from traditional assemblies is in Bradford where 47 schools have decided to introduce 'new-style' assemblies. Rt Rev Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali reminds us that: 'The Judaeo-Christian tradition provides the connecting link to our island story. Without that tradition, it is impossible to understand the language, the literature, the art or even the science of our civilisation. It provides the grand themes of virtue and vice, atonement and repentance, resurrection and immortality. It undergirds and safeguards our constitutional and legal tradition'.

Pray: that the Gospel message will continue to be taught to our schoolchildren and sustain our shared heritage. (Mk.16:15)

More: <http://www.christianconcern.com/our-concerns/education/british-schools-opt-out-from-christian-assemblies>

■ Target for 1,000 'Mission Resolutions'

Church Mission Society is looking for 1,000 people to make Kingdom-minded resolutions this New Year. The 'We Are Saying Yes' campaign is being launched to inspire people to make resolutions that put a bit more of God's mission into their everyday life. Some of the suggestions on the campaign website including praying for the person in front in the supermarket queue, joining a campaign, making friends with someone of another faith, and fasting from impulse buys. CMS web manager Jeremy Woodham said: 'So many people have given up making resolutions because they think they'll never keep them. We're giving people the chance to make a resolution that matters – and providing a space for them to share tips, ask for prayer and tell their stories. We think the impact of 1,000 people taking a small step in mission could have a fantastic ripple effect.'

Pray: for many more than 1,000 people to commit to this original approach to mission. (Is.48:15)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/church.mission.society.sets.the.target.for.1000.mission.resolutions/27200.htm>

■ 'Not Ashamed' campaign gathers momentum

The Not Ashamed campaign was launched nationwide last week to encourage Christians to speak up about the value of Britain's Christian heritage and the Christian faith. A copy of the campaign's leaflet, written by Lord Carey, was delivered to 10 Downing Street and Buckingham Palace. The leaflet describes Christianity in Britain as being 'under attack' and warned of an attempt by the usual suspects of secularists and atheists to 'air-brush' the Christian faith out of public life. Lord Carey said: 'It appears that flowing from a combination of well-meaning political correctness, multiculturalism and overt opposition to Christianity, a new climate, hostile to our country's tradition and history, is developing'. Nearly 16,000 people have signed the Not Ashamed declaration, which states that Jesus Christ is good news for the nation.

Pray: for the continued growth of the Not Ashamed movement as an influential voice. (Ac.13:47)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.co.uk/article/not.ashamed.campaign.hopes.for.christmas.chart.success.with.new.song/27198.htm>

■ 24/7 Prayer to become Fresh Expressions partner

The 24/7 Prayer movement has become a formal partner of the Fresh Expressions initiative. The announcement follows conversations between the head of Fresh Expressions, Bishop Graham Cray, and 24/7 leaders Andy Freeman and Pete Greig. 'The result was that it felt like the right time, something that God wanted us to do,' said Freeman, who sits on the 24/7 Council. 24/7 Prayer began as a single student-led prayer vigil in Chichester in 1999 and has since grown to become an international movement of prayer, mission and justice, spanning more than 100 countries. Freeman said he was particularly interested to see how younger people could be involved in starting up fresh expressions of church and how prayer rooms could be used as part of the listening process for people interested in building mission communities and fresh expressions. Bishop Cray, Archbishops' Missioner in the Church of England, said he was delighted that 24/7 Prayer was joining Fresh Expressions.

Pray: that God will bless and encourage this movement through His Holy Spirit. (2Co.9:12)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.co.uk/article/247.prayer.becomes.fresh.expressions.partner/27186.htm>

■ Soldiers killed on active service

The continuing loss of life of our Armed Forces in Afghanistan is distressing but when it is allegedly due to 'friendly fire' it becomes more poignant. Each soldier's life is precious, but needless accidents, including for example road traffic accidents, are more difficult to comprehend. Most recently the Ministry of Defence has named a soldier killed in Afghanistan as Private John Howard, from 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment. The 23-year-old New Zealand-born soldier was serving with 16 Air Assault Brigade's Reconnaissance Force when he was killed last Sunday, 5 December. Our prayers thank him for his selfless giving and seek the Lord's support for his grieving family.

Pray: for the safety of our troops deployed in Afghanistan and for the families of those killed and seriously injured. (Ps.29:10-11)

More: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-11935632>

■ Teenagers search for family values

Young people want to learn about responsible parenting rather than sexual mechanics in sex education, a recent survey has revealed. Around three quarters of teenagers interviewed said that a relationship does not need to involve sex. The findings challenge the current emphasis in sex education on the mechanics of safe sex. The survey, conducted among over 2,000 13 to 16-year-olds from a range of schools and backgrounds, has surprised experts in the field. Researchers from Hull University said that they were surprised that the majority of those surveyed supported 'moral' ideas about having sex. The survey revealed that the single most important 'fact of life' for both boys and girls was parenting. Commenting on the findings, Norman Wells of the Family Education Trust, said: 'Young people are clearly tiring of the negative messages they are receiving about pregnancy and parenthood from sex educators obsessed with contraception'.

Pray: that Christian morality supporting the ideals of marriage and family values is disseminated strongly to our young people. (Heb.13:4)

More: <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/teach-us-more-about-family-values-say-teenagers/>

■ Sexualisation of children

Proposed laws against clothing that sexualises children would be impractical, parenting experts have warned the Government. MPs would struggle to draw up rules on the acceptable length of skirts or height of heels that could be worn by young girls, it is claimed. It emerged at the weekend that the Government is to commission a review of inappropriate products and images targeting girls as young as 10. The chief executive of the Mothers' Union, Reg Bailey, will produce a report on the ways in which children are put under pressure by retailers and advertisers to grow up too fast. This could lead to industry standards being established or individual businesses being prosecuted, while parents could be given new powers to challenge inappropriate adverts or products. Pippa Smith, co-chairman of Safermedia, said: 'Unfortunately children are quite a high priority on the marketers' list. I think there's got to be willpower with the Government'.

Pray: for clarity in formulating standards and laws that will see an end to much of the commercial sexualisation of children. (Jn.17:15)

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstoppers/politics/8182356/Laws-against-sexualisation-of-children-impractical-say-campaigners.html>

EUROPE

■ Poland welcomes first black MP

A Nigerian-born pastor has become the first black member of Poland's lower house of parliament (Sejm) in what is being seen as a large step forward in the nation's race relations, reports Michael Ireland, Chief Correspondent, Assist News Service. According to the website www.newspoland.pl John Godson has held Polish citizenship for ten years. He will take the place of Civic Platform's Hanna Zdanowska, who resigned from her parliamentary post after winning Sunday's local government elections in Lodz. Godson was previously serving as a local councillor in Poland's central city. In an interview with Polish Radio Lodz, Godson declared that he will still remain active in promoting his home city even though he will be spending much of his time in Warsaw on national affairs. Godson is also the president of the African Institute in Poland as well as a pastor of the Church of God in Christ, a Christian Pentecostal church active in Poland.

Pray: that Godson will live up to his name and Jesus will be seen in him in all that he does. (1Cor.2:5)

More: <http://www.christiantelegraph.com/issue11594.html>

■ **Belgium: Court allows to sue for 'wrongful birth'**

The Brussels Court of Appeal has ruled that parents may sue physicians who fail to diagnose 'serious disabilities' of pre-born children, assuming that had the parents known they would have had the disabled child killed through an abortion, reports LifeSiteNews.com. The September 21st ruling said, 'certainly, the misdiagnosis did not cause the child's disability, which existed before the error and which could not be remedied.' But, the court said, 'the injury [that] must be compensated is not the disability itself, but the fact of being born with such disabilities.' The court commented that abortion is in the best interest of the child whose parents would have it killed, noting that since abortion was legalized, 'the legislature must have intended to help avoid giving birth to children with serious abnormalities, having regard not only to the interests of the mother but also to that of the unborn child itself.'

Pray: that this ruling will be reversed and life would be honoured. (Is.42:5)

More: <http://www.christiantelegraph.com/issue11592.html>

WORLDWIDE

■ **Israel: US scraps demand for Israel settlements freeze**

A senior US official told the BBC that attempts to get Israel to renew a partial freeze on settlement construction in occupied territory had failed. He said this did not mean the end of Washington's efforts to revive Middle East peace talks. There are about 2.5 million Palestinians living in the West Bank. The Palestinians say settlement-building and peace talks are incompatible. Israeli defence minister Ehud Barak said talks with the Americans had been postponed because Washington was distracted by the fallout from the release of secret documents by the whistle-blowing website Wikileaks and the crisis over North Korea.

Pray: for a way forward that enables Israelis and Palestinians to trust and live with each other under Gods covering of peace. (Ps.133)

More: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-11943599>

■ **Iran: High court urged to reverse death sentence for Christian**

Iran's pre-Islamic religious groups – Zoroastrians, Christians, and Jews – are recognized as 'protected' religious minorities in the constitution. But according to the U.S. State Department's latest report, 'government respect for religious freedom in the country has continued to deteriorate.' An estimated 300,000 people in Iran are Christians. The International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran made an appeal in support of Youcef Nadarkhani who was charged with apostasy and his lawyer has filed an objection to the sentence with the high court. 'To execute someone based on the religion they choose to practice or not practice is the ultimate form of religious discrimination and disregard for the freedom of conscience and belief,' said Aaron Rhodes a spokesperson for the Campaign. Rhodes argued 'there are no articles in Iran's Islamic Penal Code that refer to apostasy as a crime.'

Pray: for Iran to stay within its own legal framework and for Youcef to be released immediately. (Pr.3:13)

More: <http://au.christiantoday.com/article/iran-high-court-urged-to-reverse-death-sentence-for-christian/9742.htm>

■ **Nepal: Housewives are AIDS' worst victims**

World AIDS day was observed on December 1st. Though Nepal was hailed by the UN as achieving a significant decline in new HIV infection rates, they are now witnessing a new alarming trend with housewives accounting for nearly half of the fresh infections. The rocketing increase of housewives contracting HIV/AIDS is linked to the growing migration of Nepali men abroad for jobs, especially to India, from where they bring the disease back home to remote areas where people find it easier to go to India across the border for jobs, business, education and even entertainment. Nepal's HIV/AIDS efforts are heavily dependent on international assistance. This situation leads to babies needlessly being born infected when they could easily have been HIV-free if their mothers were granted greater access to testing and treatment.

Pray: for streams of Godly education to support all initiatives intended to halt the spread of aids. (Job27:11)

More: http://www.nepalyouthfoundation.org/programs/health/newlife.html?gclid=CITicvB3KUCFYIe4Qod13_80A

■ **Afghanistan: Persecution of Christians**

Men are being imprisoned in Afghanistan because of their faith. Accused of converting from Islam they face life in prison or the death penalty. Two we know of from a reliable source have been held for over six months without trial or formal charges being filed against them. They appeared at an initial tribunal to hear the case against them, but the trial has since been put on hold and court documents sent to the prosecutor's office for review. Meanwhile the two men continue to be held and they and their families suffer. Compass Direct report; An Afghani amputee in prison for his Christian faith since May faced a judge on November 21st without legal representation or knowledge of the charges against him. It is not known the outcome of this case. Said Musa was arrested in May after the local TV station broadcast images of Afghan Christians being baptized and worshipping. There were other arrests in May and June during the ensuing man-hunt against Christians. See: <http://www.compassdirect.org/english/country/23987/28442/>

Pray: for their safety as they are held under very harsh conditions and for the Lord's strengthening of their faith. (Ps.7:1)

More: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KuKmm9XOQAs>

■ **Pakistan: Reward for killing Christian woman condemned**

Pakistan's Federal Minister for Minorities Affairs, Shahbaz Bhatti, condemned the recent announcement of a reward for killing the jailed Christian woman, Asia Bibi, on death row for blasphemy. Maulana Yousuf Qureshi, a hard-line imam known for making reward-for-murder calls, offered \$6,000 to anyone who kills Asia Bibi during his Friday sermon at the largest mosque in Peshawar. He said, 'There are hundreds of thousands of people including mujahedin (warriors) and Taliban who are ready to sacrifice their lives for the honour of the Prophet Muhammad. Anyone of them could finish her.' The high court has yet to set a date for Bibi's appeals hearing.

Pray: for God to place more of his shield around Bibi and her family. (Ps.71:1-2)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/pakistan.minister.condemns.reward.for.killing.christian.woman/27196.htm>

■ **China: Christian cyber attack and house-church crackdown**

ChinaAid has received information from more than one reliable source that 'Operation Deterrence' crackdowns are narrowly focussed on Christian churches and may be solely directed at China's vibrant network of house churches and their members. Recent government actions against Christians have included official harassment of influential house church leaders and cyberattacks that brought down ChinaAid's Chinese and English news websites. In recent years the Beijing regime had stepped back from its hostility toward and opposition to the house church movement; leading many Christians in China and overseas to believe that these unregistered congregations could win official sanction without having to join the government-run Three-Self Patriotic Movement, the only Protestant church officially allowed to function in China. Operation Deterrence harks back to the previous era of hostilities that for decades drove unknown hundreds of thousands of believers to worship in secret and fearing for their lives and freedom.

Pray: China would see unity in all her churches and that house churches would be able to have a dialogue with the government. (Is.25:5)

More: <http://www.chinaaid.org/2010/12/china-launches-major-crackdown-on-house.html>

■ **Malaysia: 'Faith Purification' centres**

A two-hour journey from the capital city of Kuala Lumpur revealed an isolated encampment where some Christian converts say they've been taken to be forced back to Islam. The Malaysian government calls the facilities 'retreat centres' where Muslims willingly go to strengthen their faith. However one Christian, who wishes to remain anonymous, said, 'They force Christians to recite Islamic prayers and the Koran, to do all the things you're suppose to do as a Muslim. They're trying to force us to believe what we can't believe. These re-education centres come from the power of darkness.' Another former Muslim said he lost his property, job, and family after officials learned he'd become a Christian. He's hiding from the government. Traditionally, Malays are Muslim. Five years ago, there were less than 200 Malay Christians in the country. Today, there are an estimated 1,000 or more. Christian Growth is being targeted.

Pray: for the power of Christian evangelism to grow and be protected in Malaysia. (SS.4:16)

More: <http://www.cbn.com/cbnnews/world/2010/November/Malaysias-Christians-Stand-Firm-Despite-Muslim-Pressure/>

PRAISE REPORTS

■ **Assisted suicide Bill rejected in Scotland.**

MSP's were given a free vote yesterday, allowing them to vote according to their consciences rather than along party lines. The End of Life Assistance Bill was crushed by 85-16. Gordon Macdonald, of the Care Not Killing alliance said it was a fantastic result and a 'victory for the most vulnerable in our community'. In rejecting the controversial legislation, he said MSP's recognised that legalising assisted suicide would 'seriously endanger public safety' and had instead given a ringing endorsement to palliative care. 'The sheer magnitude of the Bill's defeat should settle this issue in Scotland for a generation,' he said. 'The key argument that decided this vote and the similar votes in the House of Lords in 2006 and 2009 is a simple one. The right to die can so easily become the duty to die.' (See Prayer Alert 4710)

Praise: God for this answered prayer. (Mt.10:30-31)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/scottish.parliament.rejects.assisted.suicide.bill/27178.htm>

■ **Word of God, all 788,280 read out over 5 days**

Shakespeare's Globe Theatre has announced plans to read the Bible on stage in its entirety for the first time. Up to 20 actors will take turns to recite the Old and New Testaments from start to finish. With a total of 788,280 spoken words, the reading will take an estimated 69 hours. 'As far as we can tell, we are the first theatre ever to have presented a full reading of the Bible,' said a spokesman for the theatre, in Southwark. 'We're starting on Palm Sunday and finishing on Easter Monday, simple, un-staged, and a rare opportunity to experience one of the most significant pieces of world literature in its entirety.' The performance will celebrate the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible, the English translation published in 1611. Some 50 scholars chosen by the king created a unified Bible for England and a masterpiece of English literature.

Praise: God that His very words will be spoken and will bring life. (Heb.4:12)

More: <http://www.thisislondon.co.uk/standard/article-23904135-globe-spreads-the-word-of-god-all-788280-of-them-read-out-over-5-days.do>

PRAYER FORUM OF BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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C/O World Prayer Centre, Cornerstone House, 5 Ethel Street, Birmingham, B2 4BG, England