

# PRAYER ALERT...

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

### ■ PM's speech criticised by church leaders

The Prime Minister has faced a backlash from Christian leaders after stating in his speech at the Conservative party conference that he backed legalising homosexual marriage. Mr Cameron said in his speech, 'We're consulting on legalising gay marriage. To anyone who has reservations, I say, yes, it's about equality, but it's also about something else, commitment. His comments on homosexual 'marriage' were picked up by a number of church leaders. The Most Rev Peter Smith, Archbishop of Southwark, said, 'Whilst we welcome the Prime Minister's support of marriage, the proposed redefinition of marriage cannot be right. Marriage by its very nature is between a man and a woman and it is the essential foundation of family life. The state should uphold this common understanding of marriage rather than attempting to change its meaning.' A spokesman for the Church of England said 'The Church's view remains of marriage as the life-long union between a man and a woman.'

**Pray:** for Mr Cameron to recognise the divisiveness of his view and to ensure the Government's positive support for heterosexual marriage. (Gen.1:27-28)

**More:** <http://www.christiantelegraph.com/issue14174.html>

### ■ Tory minister uncomfortable with Cameron's gay marriage proposal

Junior defence minister, Gerald Howarth, has distanced himself from David Cameron's plan to legalise marriage for same-sex couples, and told The Telegraph that Tory MPs should not be forced to vote in support of changing the legal definition of marriage if the issue is put before Parliament. According to the newspaper, Mr. Howarth believed many Christians would be 'very concerned' by the proposal. At present, homosexual couples are allowed to enter into civil partnerships which give them similar legal protection to married couples, but the term 'marriage' is used to define heterosexual unions only. Mr Howarth, MP for Aldershot, said that MPs should be given a free vote on the issue as it is a matter of 'conscience. Equality Minister Lynne Featherstone announced last month that a public consultation would be launched in March 2012.

**Pray:** for the Government to seek to protect marriage and not redefine it; may Christians in Parliament speak out boldly and clearly. (Gen.2:24)

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/tory.minister.uncomfortable.with.camerons.gay.marriage.proposal/28740.htm>

### ■ Forced labour investigations across Wales by Soca

Factories, farms and hotels could be forcing hundreds of people across Wales to work against their will. The Serious Organised Crime Agency (Soca) is conducting several investigations into forced labour across Wales. These businesses could be breaking new anti-slavery laws and employers may end up in prison. The chair of the assembly's working group on people trafficking said boys as young as 16 were forced to work. Joyce Watson said along with Government action, the onus was on employers to ensure forced labour did not take place. Anti-Slavery International estimates 5,000 people are in some form of forced labour across the UK. Most forced labour investigations have focused on women being trafficked into

the British sex trade, but Soca is investigating people being made to work in places such as factories, farms and hotels against their will.

**Pray:** for an end to forced labour in Wales and throughout the UK. (Gal.5:1)

**More:** <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-15232101>

#### ■ Asylum-seeker's plight

Sara is from Ethiopia. Her mother died when she was young, and her father mysteriously 'disappeared' after the government was overthrown. Both Sara and her brother were arrested and thrown into prison where she was abused. When eventually set free she escaped to Sudan with the help of her father's friends. From there she flew to England seeking asylum. Her experiences in England have been dreadful, living off handouts, working in a pizza parlour to make ends meet (but asylum seekers are forbidden to work and she was sentenced to four months in Styal prison). She was hospitalised in prison after trying to end her life. She is without hope. If she returns home, she faces imprisonment and torture. If she stays here she will be in 'limbo-land' stripped of her dignity, prevented from living a normal life.

**Pray:** for asylum-seekers in the UK to experience changes for improvement in the asylum system. (Lev.19:10 & Lev.24:22)

**More:** <http://boaztrust.org.uk/>

#### ■ Ofcom issues warning over risqué pre-watershed TV

Ofcom has clamped down on scantily clad singers and dancers appearing on TV before the 9pm watershed, in its new guidance for broadcasters. It comes amid much concern about the sexualisation of children, and follows a furore over sexually provocative dances on last year's X Factor final. The move also comes as the BBC has reportedly cut some overtly sexualised dance moves from its Strictly Come Dancing show. In relation to music videos broadcast before the watershed, Ofcom gives guidance on issues including sexual images, clothing and dancing. The group, which has a statutory duty to protect young people, also cautioned broadcasters to take 'particular care' with 'family shows' – programmes that attract a significant child audience despite not being made for children. An editorial in The Observer backed the new guidance, saying it 'is not prudery to believe that there is an adult duty to try to manage information on behalf of the children in one's care'.

**Pray:** for all media leaders to recognise their responsibility and duty to protect children and young people from such sexualisation. (Pr.4:5)

**More:** <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/ofcom-issues-warning-over-risque-pre-watershed-tv/>

#### ■ Christmas removed from Thomas the Tank Engine to be politically correct

The daughter of the clergyman author who created Thomas the Tank Engine has criticised television producers for writing Christmas out of a new series. Hilary Fortnam said that her father the Rev W Awdry would have been distressed after executives decided to omit religious references from one of his adventures. His relatives protested after the television company which is recording new adventures for the little blue engine rebranded Christmas as 'the holidays' in its latest storyline to comply with 'politically correct' thinking. His daughter said, 'He would feel very strongly about this politically correct age and that those who now write his stories should not have taken Christ out of Christmas. Political correctness against Christian beliefs offends.' She added her father was a vicar for nearly 30 years and 'always impressed on publishers he 'was a priest first and a children's author second.'

**Pray:** for misguided political correctness to be replaced by a better understanding of diverse faith groups who understand and respect each other's traditions. (1Co.2:13)

**More:** <http://www.anglican-mainstream.net/>

#### ■ Choose Life Day of Prayer

An annual National Day of Prayer about abortion is to be held on October 27th. In the last 44 years over seven million babies have been aborted in the UK. It is hoped many will take a stand on the abortion issue next Thursday and pray that our nation would understand the horror of these statistics. Having a disabled child is often a difficult burden to undertake. We can pray for parents who have to make the choice between bringing up a disabled child or ending its life. Pray that the parents of disabled children will receive the support that they need, and thank God for the many people with physical or mental disability who live happy and fulfilled lives. Also on the 27th there will be a rally outside parliament between 1pm and 2 pm, with the intention of putting abortion back in the news and back on the agenda for public debate.

**Pray:** for those considering an abortion to receive advice independent of those who carry out abortions; and for many to work and pray towards making abortion history in the U.K. (Ps.139:13)

**More:** <http://www.imagenet.org.uk/prayerguide.html>

## EUROPE

#### ■ Republic of Ireland: Rejects UN proposals for abortions

The Irish Government rejected recommendations from six European countries that it should legislate for abortion, but pledged to act on a wide range of UN suggestions to improve human rights in other areas. In a report published on 11th Oct by the UN Human Rights Council 126 recommendations were made for Ireland to improve its adherence to human rights norms, the Government accepted 62 and would 'study carefully' a further 49. Of the 15 recommendations it rejected, six related to abortion. They included a call from the United Kingdom to introduce legislation to implement the European Court of Human Rights judgment in the A, B and C v Ireland case and a request from Slovenia to allow abortion 'at least when pregnancy poses a risk to the health of the pregnant woman'. Recommendations on abortion from Norway, Denmark, Spain and the Netherlands were also rejected.

**Pray:** for the UN to recognise that foetal life has the same degree of value as born human life, and for Ireland's stand in this issue to be honoured. (Is.51:4)

**More:** <http://www.anglican-mainstream.net/2011/10/11/ireland-rejects-un-recommendations/>

■ **Germany: Religious university courses for Muslims**

As more Muslims become part of European society, German universities have begun courses aimed at helping Islamic clergy and religious teachers understand German culture, including Christianity and Judaism. The first programme began last year at Osnabrueck University, with another due to start this year at Tuebingen. 'The idea was to have a programme for imams because most of them were educated in Turkey, Morocco, Egypt or Bosnia,' Coordinator of the Osnabrueck programme said. 'They focus very much on theology and the society where they come from, but they don't have enough knowledge concerning the situation in Germany. Some imams don't speak the German language, for example and they don't know German history.' The government is providing funding at four universities that are developing programmes focused on interfaith education and the place of Islam in German society.

**Pray:** that The God of Abraham and Father of Jesus Christ would reveal Himself to them in a new and living way. (Mat.1:1)

**More:** <http://christiancentury.org/article/2011-10/german-university-courses-aim-help-muslims-integrate>

## WORLDWIDE

■ **Egypt: Orthodox leaders request prayer**

Funerals have been held for 26 victims of an attack against Christian protestors in which hundreds were wounded, in what was possibly the worst violence against Egyptian Christians in modern history. The Coptic Orthodox Church held three days of fasting, prayer for divine intervention and mourning. An email from Archbishop Mouneer said, 'I request your urgent prayers as the situation here in Cairo is very inflamed. Many Christians demonstrated after the incident of the burning of a church building (see P.A.40-2011). The demonstrations started peacefully as the people were requesting investigations for incidents of burning and demolishing churches to be completed; and the new law for building churches (promised four months ago) to be passed. Then it turned very violent between demonstrators and the military. On Wednesday there were separate meetings with the House of Bishops and political leaders to discuss a way out of this very difficult situation. I would appreciate your prayers for our beloved country.'

**Pray:** that the Christian and Muslim religious leaders would be able to discuss and implement a way forward for the situation to be defused; also for Christians to know the presence and peace of Jesus. (Ps.3:3)

**More:** [http://www.compassdirect.org/english/country/egypt/article\\_121782.html](http://www.compassdirect.org/english/country/egypt/article_121782.html)

■ **Afghanistan: Part One – 10th anniversary of conflict**

An email from Afghanistan reads, - 'There are more wholehearted followers of Jesus in Afghanistan than there have been since the conquest of Islam (from AD 642 to AD 1000) From the time of the Apostle Thomas there had been training schools and missionaries sent to the Far East. Now in 2011 there are several thousand believers meeting house-to-house, meeting through cyberspace, and occasionally renting meeting rooms at hotels. Every major town in the country has an underground group of followers of Isaaye Masih (Jesus Christ). There is also the Diaspora of Afghan believers in Pakistan, India and other nations. There has never been this much political freedom for women and emerging groups of young leaders. Women can vote. There are more schools, educational institutions, social services, professional training courses, civil action groups, cultural societies and sports leagues in Afghanistan than there ever have been at any other time in its modern history. US and allied intervention created the environment for this, mistakes notwithstanding.

**Pray:** that Afghanistan would embrace its Christian heritage - witnessing to her neighbours far and near with training schools and mission. (Mat.16:18)

■ **Afghanistan: Part Two – 10th anniversary of conflict**

Part 2 of an email from Afghanistan - 'Pakistan is committed to a broken, bloody Afghanistan, and has thrown its budget and its intelligence services into equipping the Taliban, al-Qaeda, and any other group that would agree to decimate that nation. One reason is the fear of the dissolving of its current border with Afghanistan (the Durand Line) which ceded nearly half of Afghanistan away to British India (now Pakistan) for 100 years. The treaty expired in 1993. The Afghans all agree that Pakistan unlawfully occupies some of their best land, the heartland of the Pashtuns. Pakistan knows that a strong, united Afghanistan will press its claim for what amounts to almost half of Islamabad's own beleaguered territories. The Afghan leadership ethos is full of bribery, black market, blood loyalties, and blood feuds. Pray for the tribal elders of each locality, whose corporate decisions can either strengthen or fragment the fibre of their society far more than the Kabul government or its foreign allies.

**Pray:** that elders would shut out the men of blood from their midst and welcome men tasked with development; also that their sons would be saved from the delusion of Islamic martyrdom. (Is.32:1,2)

■ **Zimbabwe: Archbishop asks Mugabe to halt attacks on Anglicans**

Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams met President Robert Mugabe on Oct.10th to deliver a dossier of attacks on Anglicans by excommunicated Bishop Nolbert Kunonga. Kunonga formed a breakaway clique in 2007, seized church property, violently prevented Anglicans from worshipping in their buildings and intimidated clergy. Some priests received death threats at gunpoint. The dossier was made public on Oct.11th stating, 'We respectfully ask that you as head of state put an end to this illegal harassment and allow us once again to use the properties which are rightly ours so that we may worship God in peace and serve our communities and our country.' The document was signed by Archbishop Albert Chama, head of the Anglican Church's Province of Central Africa, five bishops from Zimbabwe and Bishop Trevor Mwamba from neighbouring Botswana.

**Pray:** that the meeting and show of solidarity with local Anglicans against violence would bring about change for Zimbabwe's Christians. (Ps.133)

**More:** <http://www.anglicanjournal.com/nc/news-update-items/article/archbishop-asks-mugabe-to-halt-attacks-on-anglicans-10120.html>

#### ■ **Pakistan: Christians still persecuted**

An innocent spelling mistake by a Christian school girl has proved grounds enough for Muslims to accuse her of blasphemy. Sir Syed Girls' High School has taken the unusual step of accusing one of its students of blasphemy and expelling her after she misspelt a word whilst answering a question on a poem praising Prophet Muhammad. Also a mentally ill Christian man has died whilst being held in prison in Lahore on blasphemy charges. Aslam Masih was also suffering from tuberculosis at the time of his death. Source: <http://claas.org.uk/> Also last Wednesday a mob of 40 Muslim extremists targeted the Christian community of Ahata Kamiyan, killing 25-year-old Sabir Masih and injuring 21 others. The injured, mainly women and children, were immediately taken to a hospital in Multan.

**Pray:** for God to protect the many isolated Christian communities in Pakistan as they follow their faith. (Ps.5:11)

**More:** <http://bibleforums.org/showthread.php/231028-PAKISTAN-%E2%80%93-Extremists-kill-Christian-in-attack-on-colony>

#### ■ **Iran: Pastor Yousef Nadarkhani**

There have been developments in Pastor Yousef Nadarkhani's situation, whose death sentence for apostasy was upheld in court hearings in late September. First, his lawyer has been informed that the case is being referred to Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Second, a reliable source reported on Wednesday 11th October that the Supreme Court announced it would be willing to consider a further appeal. These are unusual developments in Iran's legal system, and are likely to further delay the issuing of a written verdict following the most recent hearing.

**Pray:** for an end of uncertainty and for Pastor Yousef's death sentence to be revoked and conviction overturned. (Mic.6:8)

**More:** <http://www.kansascity.com/2011/10/10/3198918/religious-freedom-and-a-pastor.html>

#### ■ **USA: Mississippi considers anti-abortion 'personhood amendment'**

The anti-abortion movement's policy known as a 'personhood amendment,' which legally defines a person as existing at the moment of fertilization, has been rejected twice in recent years by voters in Colorado. But the effort has found new life in the state of Mississippi, where a personhood amendment will appear on the Nov. 8 ballot.

**Pray:** that Mississippi, the nation's most conservative state, would agree to outlaw abortion. (Ps.36:6)

**More:** [http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/nationnow/2011/10/mississippi\\_personhood\\_amendment.html?utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=feed&utm\\_campaign=Feed%3A+delicious%2Fgqlf+%28Christian+Headlines+Top+Headline%29](http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/nationnow/2011/10/mississippi_personhood_amendment.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+delicious%2Fgqlf+%28Christian+Headlines+Top+Headline%29)

## PRAISE REPORTS

#### ■ **Christians call Government to tackle global corruption**

Thousands of Christians signed Tearfund's Uneath the Truth postcards calling for greater transparency among extractives companies working in developing countries where lucrative business contracts often do little to improve the lives of local people. Representing the people who had signed up to Uneath the Truth, 10,000 postcards were delivered to the Treasury by Director of New Wine, John Coles and Tearfund's Chief Executive, Matthew Frost. They told Treasury Minister David Gauke, MP that this strong response simply reflects the fact that Christians are committed to reversing social injustice and are tired of business as usual. Uneath the Truth urges the UK Government and the EU to bring robust legislation that requires companies to publish what they pay to developing country governments for mining, gas and oil contracts.

**Praise:** God for the thousands who spoke out against injustice in industry and commerce, may this initiative bring about change. (Lev.19:35)

**More:** <http://www.inspiremagazine.org.uk/news.aspx?action=view&id=5685>

#### ■ **South Korea: Amazing church growth**

Seoul's Church began in 1982 with 13 members and now has 100,000 members and 9,000+ branch churches. The Koreans are noted for their belief that prayer changes things and people, and they are hard to keep up with in their zeal and discipline as they come together for long weekend gatherings of fervent prayer. The senior pastor of the church said they now have 700 North Korean members who escaped to the south and who are preparing to take the Gospel into North Korea which some believe will soon open up, but possibly just for a short time. 'These people realize that the door may not be open for long and are willing to lay down their lives - become martyrs - for Jesus Christ.' - See: <http://www.breakingchristiannews.com> Also pilgrims visit a well in Seoul where many believe God miraculously turned salty water into drinkable fresh or 'sweet' spring water eight years ago. Many are healed after drinking it or applying it to their sick parts.

**Praise:** God for the many ways He displays His mercy, grace and power to those whose hearts are continually turned to Him. (Dan.4:3)

**More:** <http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/2011/s11100041.htm>

## PRAYER FORUM OF THE BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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