

PRAYER ALERT...



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BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ Christmas snubbed by Scottish Government

The Scottish Government has come under fire for completely failing to mention Christmas in its 'Winter Festivals' programme. In an official news release the Government mentions St Andrew's Day eleven times, Hogmanay five times and Burns Night several times. But Christmas is not mentioned at all. Bashir Mann, a prominent figure in Glasgow's Muslim community, has criticised the omission of Christmas, saying: 'This is political correctness gone mad. Why should we be offended? Scotland's religious population is 98 per cent Christian. Why should they not be allowed to celebrate their biggest religious festival? If my neighbour is celebrating Christmas, then I should join him. That's what my religion tells me.' And John Deighan, parliamentary officer for the Roman Catholic Church of Scotland, described the omission as 'disappointing and hurtful'.

Pray: that the protests by the Church and others would lead to the reinstatement of Christmas as central to the nations beliefs. (Job11.4:5)

More: <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/christmas-snubbed-by-scottish-government/>

■ Problems continue for St Paul's as protesters stay put

Problems continue for St Paul's as protesters stay put. Anti-capitalist protesters forced the cathedral to close its doors to the public for the first time in 72 years. St Paul's Cathedral is considering taking out an injunction to remove hundreds of anti-capitalist protesters occupying the churchyard. The cathedral has been in talks about legal action with the City of London Corporation. Around 300 protesters have gathered outside the cathedral in the last 10 days since the Occupy Wall Street demonstration went global. They continue to defy requests by St Paul's to leave voluntarily, despite their presence forcing the cathedral to close its doors to the public for the first time since World War II. The cathedral, situated in London's financial district, is estimated to be losing around £16,000 every day in lost tourism income – revenue that is vital to the upkeep of the building. The cathedral reportedly turned away worshippers from services on Sunday. Only a scheduled wedding has taken place. The canon chancellor of St Paul's Dr Giles Fraser who has been sympathetic to the protest camp outside which has led to the cathedral's closure has resigned from his post.

Pray: that a just solution to these protests would be found. Pray that the Church would take this opportunity to witness to the protesters. (Mic.1:2)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/problems.continue.for.st.pauls.as.protesters.stay.put/28805.htm>

■ Demoted for expressing views on marriage

A public sector employee in Manchester has been demoted after he posted comments on his private facebook page questioning the idea of homosexual 'marriages' taking place on religious premises. Adrian Smith, an employee of tax-payer

funded Trafford Housing Trust, posted a comment in response to a BBC news headline about civil partnerships taking place on religious premises, saying that this was an 'equality too far.' The comment, written outside of working hours, appeared on his private page and could only be seen by Mr Smith's friends. A work colleague posted a comment in reply, asking if Mr Smith disagreed with the government's proposal. He responded, saying: 'No, not really. I don't understand why people who have no faith and don't believe in Christ would want to get hitched in church. The Bible is quite specific that marriage is for men and women.'

Pray: for Christians everywhere that they would continue to speak out boldly for our Christian beliefs. (Ac.4:29)

More: <http://www.christianconcern.com/our-concerns/sexual-orientation/christian-demoted-for-expressing-views-on-marriage>

■ Warning over religious persecution

Former Tory minister Ann Widdecombe has accused the Government of double standards when it comes to religious and homosexual persecution abroad. Miss Widdecombe told a Christian charity's conference that Prime Minister David Cameron was threatening to cut aid to countries which persecuted gays but was not doing anything to help persecuted Christians. 'If David Cameron is tough on governments which persecute gays, why can't he be tough on those who persecute Christians?' she told the Aid to the Church in Need annual conference. 'You stand a better chance of earnest representation if you are a hedgehog than if you are a persecuted Christian.' Aid to the Church in Need claims 75% of all religious persecution in the world is directed against Christians with 105,000 killed every year for faith-related reasons.

Pray: that our Government would be wise in its judgements and speak out for all those who are persecuted. (1Pet.4:6)

More: <http://www.google.com/hostednews/ukpress/article/ALeqM5hMpS3rPIRrKWhuhkiYEwE8XesCSA?docId=N0218681319290928371A>

■ Peer in bid to dismantle law on Christian assemblies

A Lib Dem peer in the House of Lords has tabled an amendment to remove the requirement for Christian worship in schools. Currently schools must have a daily act of collective worship. Collective worship must be 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character.' Parents can withdraw their children and teachers are also permitted to opt out. But now Lord Avebury, a Liberal Democrat peer, has tabled an amendment to end the requirement for collective worship in all schools apart from faith schools. Earlier this year a secularist campaign group said that Christian assemblies should be banned because they breach children's human rights. The National Secular Society wrote to Education Secretary, Michael Gove, demanding that the law on Christian assemblies be abolished. But a spokesman for the Department for Education said the law on Christian assemblies 'encourages pupils to reflect on the concept of belief and the role it plays in the traditions and values of this country.' (See Prayer Alert 36-2011)

Pray: that this further challenge to our faith would be thwarted. (Pr.6:23)

More: <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/peer-in-bid-to-dismantle-law-on-christian-assemblies/>

■ Church helping Scotland's poorest communities

The Church of Scotland has launched a radical new regeneration programme to boost some of the poorest parts of the country. The Chance to Thrive project will work with eight communities on development initiatives over the next five years. The Church says the onus of the project will be on the hopes of the people, rather than buildings. It wants to support local people in bringing about long-term change through their own ideas rather than 'having ideas imposed from outside'. Communities will be supported by a panel of volunteers with relevant experience as entrepreneurs, community workers, business planners, artists and architects. It is hoped that the projects will lead to the development of major new and sustainable church-based community facilities. 'Over the last decade the Church of Scotland has doubled its commitment to Scotland's poorest neighbourhoods.'

Pray: that this move by the Church of Scotland would lead to long-term change to some of the neediest people. (Dt.15:11)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/church.helping.scotlands.poorest.communities.thrive/28806.htm>

■ National Week of Prayer for our streets

A week of prayer for the nation, based on the extensive network of Street Pastor projects, for the week of 24th-31st October 2011. The focus for the week is asking God's blessing on our nation and the line in the Lord's Prayer 'Thy kingdom come thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven'. Praying locally for a change nationally! Ask God what he wants you to do in your area and involve as many people as possible from other churches and ministries as well as your Street Pastor groups. You can do as much or as little this week as you wish, but please do something and keep Street Pastors informed as to what you are planning as they can share ideas with people. As we are asking God to bless our town and nation, ask the Council if there is something you can do to help.

Pray: for our streets and towns that God would bring revival and bless our nation. (Mt.6:10)

More: <http://www.streetpastors.co.uk/PrayerSupport/WeekofPrayer/tabid/781/Default.aspx>

EUROPE

■ Turkey: Earthquake

Tens of thousands are sleeping in tents or cars. The Turkish Red Crescent has already distributed 13,000 tents but Reuters reported tent shortages, particularly in remote villages. After announcing to the world they did not want help to deal with the earthquake aftermath, Ankara has now accepted Israel's offer of aid and allowed their Defence Ministry to send a plane carrying 7 mobile homes to quake-devastated areas with more aid to follow. Turkey also agreed to receive relief from

Armenia, but a formal request had not been received by Wednesday, four days after the earthquake struck. Turkey is now prepared to receive relief missions from thirty countries, which earlier had offered assistance but been rejected. These countries include Russia, US, China, Japan, as well as the EU. See: <http://news.am/eng/news/79414.html> Aslan International, working in Turkey, said 'The hearts of the whole nation are shaken. Let us grieve with those who have lost everything, we ask you to plead with God for mercy on the nation of Turkey.'

Pray: for all government rescue efforts, for more rescue vehicles and paramedics, doctors to get to Van quickly, for the weather - meteorologists are predicting snow. For those still trapped to be found quickly. In your mercy Lord hear our prayer.

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/call.for.prayer.as.turkey.quake.death.toll.rises/28813.htm>

■ Pope to promote peace with world religious leaders

Pope Benedict XVI has invited 300 religious leaders to a meeting in Assisi in Italy to repudiate 'violence in the name of God' amid growing tensions fuelled by fundamentalists across the world. The day of Inter-religious Council, which will be held today in St Francis of Assisi's birthplace, is intended to be a 'journey of reflection, dialogue and prayer for peace and justice in the world,' the Vatican said. Over 50 Islamic representatives are expected to attend the talks from several countries, including Saudi Arabia and Iran. They will be joined by Rabbis, Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, Sikhs, a Zoroastrian, a Bahai and representatives of Taoism and Confucianism as well as of other traditional religions from Africa and America. For the first time, four atheists will also attend the meeting, which is traditionally organised so as not to coincide with the Muslim day of prayer on Friday, the Jewish one on Saturday or the Christian one on Sunday.

Pray: as the religious leaders gather that God would bring unity and peace among them. (Ps.34:15)

More: <http://www.worthynews.com/top/capitalfm-co-ke-news-2011-10-pope-to-promote-peace-in-talks-with-world-religious-leaders/>

WORLDWIDE

■ Libya: Prayer for new future

Arab World Media are sharing with you so you can pray with understanding. Pray for those 1) who need to work through what they have seen and experienced 2) the hurt and grieving 3) for healing, peace and a sense of community to prevail against fear or despair for the future 4) Many women have been raped - rather than being made to feel dirty and ashamed may they be supported and loved by families and community 5) Those who have committed war crimes to be brought to justice and that those bringing them to justice would do so lawfully 6) the National Transitional Council as it seeks to rebuild Libya and bring stability and for future leadership 7) Government to be just and fair, working against corruption and for the people 8) That all the hurt, suffering and pain would result in something greater than we can imagine and the name of Jesus to be known and glorified by many Libyans!

Pray: for mission agencies and tent makers to reach out to Libyans with the message and hope of Christ while tackling difficult subjects and questions. (Ro.15:21)

More: <http://www.arabworldmedia.org/index.php/discuss/40-blog/206-hope-found-libya>

■ Libya: Islamic Sharia Law

Mustafa Abdul Jalil, chairman of the National Transitional Council, declared Libya a liberated nation in a ceremony in Benghazi on Sunday, three days after the death of former dictator Moammar Gadhafi and said 'Islamic Sharia law will be the basis for the country's new government.' He called Libyans to show patience and tolerance as the transitional government begins rebuilding the country after eight months of civil war, promising all legislation will be based on Sharia law, and any laws that contradict Sharia will be nullified. The country's banking system will also be run according to Islamic principles. Jalil also encouraged anti-government protesters in Syria and Yemen to carry on until they 'achieve their hopes.'

Pray: a new democracy to be birthed that would acknowledge and treat justly all religions in Libya. (Ps.119:45)

More: <http://www.cbn.com/cbnnews/world/2011/October/Libya-Transitional-Leader-Declares-Liberation/>

■ Sudan: To be a Muslim state

Sudan's current constitution theoretically grants freedom of religion, recognising that the state is 'multi-religious'. On Wednesday 12th October Sudan's President Omar Hassan al-Bashir said he plans to adopt an entirely Islamic constitution and strengthen Sharia law, raising the threat level for Christians and other non-Muslims in a 'Muslim state'. He said, '98% of the people are Muslims and the new constitution will reflect this. The official religion will be Islam and Islamic law the main source of the constitution.' It comes amid reports of increasing threats and pressure on churches in Sudan and targeted assaults on Christians, pastors and churches in the border region of South Kordofan, which has been under attack by the Sudanese military.

Pray: for the safety of over a million Christian southerners still living in Sudan, as well as for non-Muslim and non-Arab northerners. (Ps.20:1)

More: <http://www.barnabasfund.org/Sudan-to-become-official-Muslim-state-in-ominous-move-for-Christians.html>

■ Egypt: Anti-Christian violence provokes military

Egypt's military prosecution has summoned two Egyptian activists for questioning over the Army's attack on a mostly Christian protest two weeks ago. This is another indication that the Army is seeking scapegoats for the violence that killed as many as 28 people. The two activists, Alaa Abd El Fattah and Bahaa Saber, were due at the military prosecutor's headquarters Tuesday 25th for allegedly inciting violence, but their summons was postponed until this Sunday, after Mr. Abd El Fattah returns from travelling abroad.

Pray: that Egypt's military will take responsibility or hold accountable the troops that ran over and shot peaceful Christian demonstrators. (Is.32:16-17)

More: <http://www.alaskadispatch.com/article/anti-christian-violence-provokes-egyptian-military>

■ **Thailand: Bangkok serious flood warning**

Fears of worse flooding across Bangkok grow and parts of Bangkok could face serious flooding for up to a month. (See Prayer Alert 42-2011) Residents were told to get their belongings to high ground as central Bangkok could be swamped by up to 1.5 metres of water if barriers brake. Current flood water is expected to remain in Bangkok for two to four weeks before going into the sea. The Thai government has declared a holiday from October 27 to 31 to allow people to evacuate their homes at a time of expected high estuary tides. Authorities are pumping out water around the east and west of Bangkok. The Chao Phraya River winds through Bangkok and the city's fate rests on dykes along the river this weekend. Residents have cleared supermarkets of bottled water and are hoarding food such as rice and instant noodles. Tap water has deteriorated since floodwater broke through temporary dikes into a water canal used for producing tap water.

Pray: this will not turn into a humanitarian disaster.

More: <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/asia-pacific/2011/10/2011102642316925880.html>

■ **Somalia: Christians face more violence**

Christians in Somalia were confronted with more violence last Sunday when a suspected Islamic militant blew himself up. The African Union peace mission said the suicide bomber injured two AU peacekeepers. Peacekeepers blamed al-Shabab, a group which wants to establish an even more strict Islamic regime and targets what it considers 'infidels' or a 'person without Islamic faith' including Christians. Sunday's violence was also a reminder for Christians to be on high alert following new revelations that Al-Shabab beheaded a 17-year-old boy last month.

Pray: the Lord will protect and provide for His people wherever they are living. (Ps.20:1-2)

More: <http://www.worthynews.com/11033-somalia-christians-face-more-violence-amid-suicide-attack-beheading>

PRAISE REPORTS

■ **Towards 2012: Nov 2011- Nov 2012 - at a glance**

The prayer strategy that has been evolving over recent years is now beginning to come into focus as different ministries, organisations and networks run according to how the Lord has been leading them. Follow the link for some of the main things already in place.

More: <http://www.prayerforum.org/towards-2012/>

■ **Ethiopia: Transforming the lives of street boys**

The Bible is being used to transform the lives of thousands of boys rescued from the streets in Ethiopia. The Lighthouse Boys Home has helped some 6,000 boys since it opened 13 years ago. The Bible Society gives the home copies of the Bible as books and in audio. So along with food, shelter and training they also get to listen to, read and study the Bible – something the home's Director, Kashun Tesfaye says has transformed hundreds of lives. 'There are many problems for boys on the streets. If the weather is cold they drink oil from cars to keep warm. They go hungry. They end up eating garbage. They don't use clean water or drink clean water. The Bible gives these young people hope for the future. I believe that's because the Bible gives hope to all people. The children are able to understand the word of God and get hope in God,' he says.

Praise: God for the hope that God gives to all those who accept His word. (Jer.29:11)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/transforming.the.lives.of.street.boys.in.ethiopia/28801.htm>

PRAYER FORUM OF THE BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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