

PRAYER ALERT...

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BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ Many Christians concerned about same sex marriage.

A new poll by ComRes has found that a massive 83% of church-going Christians in the UK are opposed to plans by the Conservative Party to legalise homosexual marriage, and 57% of all respondents are 'less likely to vote' for the party because of this move. The poll results are likely to be viewed as very concerning by the Conservative Party, as church-going Christians represent several million votes. The poll found that: 83% were opposed to homosexual marriage; 93% were concerned that clergy would have to conduct homosexual marriages against their consciences; 85% that the value of marriage would be further undermined; 88% that schools would be required to teach the equal validity of same-sex and heterosexual relationships. Andrea Minichiello Williams, CEO of Christian Concern, said: 'God has ordained that marriage is between one man and one woman. These truths are timeless and are for the benefit of mankind. We ignore them at our peril.'

Pray: for the sanctity of marriage as based on Biblical truths to be preserved. (Heb.13:4)

More: <http://www.christianconcern.com/our-concerns/sexual-orientation/57-of-uk-christians-likely-to-abandon-the-conservatives-over-same-se>

■ Secret Children

'Open Doors' has launched a prayer initiative called Secret Children: 49 Days of Prayer. Launched last Sunday on the International Day of Prayer, Open Doors is encouraging as many people as possible to get involved in daily prayer between now and Christmas Eve for children persecuted for their Christian faith. The organisation says 'Who knows how many there are? We estimate 30 million, maybe more, and they come from all over the world: North Korea, Algeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Egypt, and Colombia. With your support we can put a child through school, help them learn a trade, support them while their parents are in prison, or pay for their medical care. We use safe houses to protect them from harm and provide trauma counselling for children living with 'horror movies' inside their heads.' Their parents face terrible choices: between staying faithful to Jesus or protecting their children; between raising their children as Christians or keeping them physically safe.

Pray: for these children and for the work of Open Doors. (2Cor.4:8-9)

More: <http://www.opendoorsuk.org/resources/secretchildren/>

■ Redefining marriage could have 'massive impact'

Redefining marriage so that couples of the same sex can get married could have a 'massive impact' on society, the Scottish Government has been warned. The Government, led by the Scottish National Party (SNP), is currently holding a consultation on whether to rewrite the definition of marriage. The Roman Catholic Bishop of Paisley met the SNP's deputy leader Nicola Sturgeon to discuss the controversial plans last week. John Deighan, the Roman Catholic bishop's parliamentary officer, described the meeting, saying: 'The bishop said the Church is against this because it will be fundamentally damaging to society and the government. 'If you look at the number of civil partnerships taking place it's tiny, yet this change could have massive impact on the society far beyond those numbers. 'Marriage is a fundamental human institution based on the socialising of children and that needs to be respected.'

Pray: for governments to listen to the advice about the vital role of marriage in society. (Pr.19:20)

More: <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/redefining-marriage-could-have-massive-impact/>

■ Liven up sermons

Sermons delivered by Catholic priests are often painfully 'grey and dull' and need to be livened up with the 'scandal' contained within the Bible, the Vatican's most senior cultural official said. Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi said preaching in churches had become so formulaic and boring that it risked becoming 'irrelevant' to congregations accustomed to the excitement and immediacy of television and the internet. 'The advent of televised and computerised information requires us to be compelling and trenchant, to cut to the heart of the matter, resort to narratives and colour,' said the cardinal, who as the head of the Pontifical Council for Culture is the Vatican's unofficial minister for culture. Too many priests employed theological language that was 'grey, dull and flavourless' and instead should spice up their sermons with graphic stories contained in the Bible, which used much more forceful imagery. The Bible was 'crowded with stories, symbols and images,' he said.

Pray: for all those who preach to be led by the Holy Spirit to convey the Word in relevant and appropriate ways. (Ac.11:15)

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/8872795/Catholic-priests-urged-to-liven-up-sermons.html>

■ Military can lead on moral values and ethics

Former head of the army said Britain is losing its moral compass to such a degree that the armed forces can no longer rely on young recruits to behave in a way once expected. General Lord Dannatt, a committed Christian, has previously expressed concern about British society, suggesting that many members of the armed forces lacked moral values when they joined up. Speaking in a lecture sponsored by Theos, a thinktank he said now the military can teach society about the importance of ethics and morality. 'In the past it was often assumed that young men and women coming into the armed forces would have absorbed an understanding of the core values and standards of behaviour required from their family or from within their wider community. Such a presumption, he adds, cannot be made now.

Pray: that ethics and morality will become central to our forces and to our nation. (Jas.1:21)

More: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2011/nov/08/military-moral-values-ethics-dannatt>

■ Watchdog moves to curb sexualised songs on radio

Media watchdog Ofcom is clamping down on radio broadcasters which flout rules meant to protect children from inappropriate music lyrics. Ofcom is concerned about a number of cases where 'offensive language was broadcast, some at times when children were particularly likely to have been listening'. The watchdog has met with the radio industry and plans to publish guidance 'by the end of the year to clarify the rules in the broadcasting code'. The move comes as it is revealed the Government is to look at putting cinema-style age classifications on music videos. Although current radio rules ban inappropriate or offensive material when children may be listening, Ofcom says they are being flouted.

Pray: that these moves by Ofcom and the Government to curb inappropriate material being broadcast will be successful. (Ps.139:24)

More: http://www.christian.org.uk/news/watchdog-moves-to-curb-sexualised-songs-on-radio/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+christianinstitute+%28The+Christian+Institute%29

■ Tax plea to Chancellor

Church representatives delivered a letter to Chancellor George Osborne on Monday asking the Government to tackle tax avoidance in order to 'close the gap' between the rich and the poor in the UK. Among the signatories was the President of the Methodist Conference, the Rev Leo Osborn. While welcoming the Coalition Government's commitment to protect the poorest and most vulnerable people from the impact of the current spending cuts, Church leaders said they were concerned that the cuts were nevertheless having a 'severe impact' on many of the people they worked with on a daily basis. 'In this climate, as Churches, Christian organisations and individual Christians, we are increasingly concerned about the impact that tax avoidance and tax evasion are having on the public purse,' they said.

Pray: that tax avoidance will be tackled by the Chancellor and Government. (2Cor.8:13)

More: <http://www.methodistrecorder.co.uk/mrhlines.htm>

EUROPE

■ G20 seeks stronger IMF to fight debt crisis

Leaders of the world's most powerful economies have agreed to increase the resources of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in order to help alleviate the debt crisis that threatens to spread across Europe. Despite the consensus, leaders struggled to reach concrete plans on how to do so, as the G20 summit, which has largely been overshadowed by euro-zone efforts to tackle the Greek debt crisis, concluded in the French resort of Cannes last Friday. 'It's important that the IMF sees its resources reinforced,' European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso told reporters. Al Jazeera's Jacky Rowland, reporting from Cannes, said the summit's final communiqué stressed 'desirable trends and tendencies rather than measurable objective'. She continued: 'There was a lot of talk about slogans such as strong, sustainable growth, but it was rather thin on actual detail about how this would be achieved.'

Pray: for the world as it tackles the economic problems and that the rich will learn generosity and not be governed by greed. (Pro.28:25)

More: <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/europe/2011/11/201111464940325870.html>

■ Azerbaijan to tighten restrictions on religious literature

By mid-November, Azerbaijan's parliament will have adopted stricter amendments for those who produce or distribute religious literature. Heftier fines and long prison sentences will now be the punishment for those who do not submit their religious literature to compulsory state censorship before producing or distributing it, according to Voice of the Martyrs, Canada. Prison sentences will be as long as five years, and fines will be as high as nine years' official minimum wages, reports Forum 18 News. The new restrictions come just months after an amendment made to Azerbaijan's Religion Law. In June, the nation invoked a requirement for all religious communities that 50 adults must state that they are founders in order for the group to apply for registration. The law tightens its grip around religious necks each time an amendment is added, keeping Azerbaijan in the top 25 Most Persecuted countries in the world.

Pray: that these restrictions would not hinder the spread of Christian materials and the Gospel. (2Th.3:1)

More: <http://mnnonline.org/article/16434>

WORLDWIDE

International: Day of prayer for the persecuted church

On Sunday 13th we are asked to intercede for the Persecuted Church. Globally 100 million Christians are persecuted. Open Doors USA are saying, 'They know the Lord is with them – but is there anyone else?' On Sunday the church is invited to unite and pray that they would be strong and courageous. In October, 14 year old Ugandan, Susan, was tortured by her father for becoming a Christian. Unable to walk and hospitalised for 4 weeks she has a long recovery road ahead, but doctors are optimistic. Pray Susan would know that she has a loving Christian family who cares and is praying for her. For resources to aid informed intercessions for the persecuted click the more link.

Pray: for God's protection and comfort wherever the enemy attempts to captivate body, mind, or spirit. (1Cor.12:26)

More: <http://www.onewiththem.com/>

Syria: Crackdown has killed 3,500+

Ravina Shamdasani spokeswoman for U.N. Human Rights Office said 'The brutal crackdown on dissent in Syria has claimed the lives of over 3,500 Syrians. Since Syria signed the League of Arab States peace plan last week 60+ people are reported killed by military and security forces, including at least 19 on the Sunday marking Eid al-Adha. Bab Amro neighbourhood has been bolstered by a steadily growing number of army defectors. Canadian news 'Globe and Mail' reported Syria planting landmines along the border with Lebanon as refugees flee the crackdown on protestors. Syria is a regional nexus, bordering five countries with which it shares religious and ethnic minorities and in Israel's case a fragile truce. Its alliances extend to Lebanon's Hezbollah movement and Iran's Shiite theocracy. Turkey has opened its borders to anti-Assad activists and breakaway military rebels. See: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/syria-plants-landmines-on-lebanon-border/article2220810/>

Pray: for Christians throughout the region to be protected, and for changes that initiate positive results. (Pr.14:11)

More: [http://www.jpost.com/MiddleEast/Article.aspx?id=244806&utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%](http://www.jpost.com/MiddleEast/Article.aspx?id=244806&utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%2Fjpost%2Fmiddle-east)

Burma: New restrictions on religious activity

Christian Solidarity Worldwide reported, 'Kachin State sent a letter to local churches, 'concerning Christians conducting cultural training,' requiring Christians in Phakant Township to submit a request at least 15 days in advance for permission to conduct 'short-term Bible study, Bible study, Sunday school, reading the Bible, fasting prayer, Seasonal Bible study and Rosary of the Virgin Mary Prayer.' CSW said a request for permission must be accompanied by recommendations from other departments and submitted to the Township Administration Office. Meanwhile because Burma's health spending is less than \$5 dollars per person the Anglican Church has recruited hundreds of volunteer health workers to be sent to rural communities to provide education particularly pertaining to HIV (a subject that is taboo in Burma.) See: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/volunteer.health.workers.go.extra.mile.to.tackle.hiv.in.burma/28810.htm>

Pray: for the Lord to bring about a change amongst Burmese leaders in attitude towards religious minorities. (Pr.21:1)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/new.restrictions.on.religious.activity.in.burmas.kachin.state/28850.htm>

Iran: Nuclear programme

The International Atomic Energy Agency's report on Iran's nuclear programme released Tuesday drew criticism from Iran, China and Russia, while the United States and Israel suggested more sanctions, or even military action against Tehran. see: http://isis-online.org/uploads/isis-reports/documents/IAEA_Iran_8Nov2011.pdf Iran's representative to IAEA called the report politically motivated. President Ahmadinejad said the IAEA should release reports on U.S. atomic bombs concealed in 1,000 military bases. The report was released against the backdrop of Israeli media speculating on possible military action against Iran's nuclear sites, with Israel saying it maintains the right to choose how to best defend itself and its citizens. Israel Hayom daily reported 'Israel and the United States plan to hold a joint exercise dubbed 'Austere Challenge' in May 2012 to test their defence against ballistic missiles. Some 5,000 Israeli and U.S. troops will participate in the manoeuvre; the largest and most significant joint exercise in the allies' history

Pray: against the tensions between Tehran and the West. (Ps.110:1)

More: http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/world/2011-11/09/c_131237539.htm

Turkey: Grave concern for 150 Iranian-Christians

Following a 7.5 Richter earthquake on the 23rd October in Van, Turkish and Islamic 'Aid Agencies' have not offered any form of assistance to nearly 3000 destitute Iranian asylum seekers living there. Strong after-shocks have repeatedly rocked the city and most of the local population has fled. The headquarters of the National Police, where most of refugee affairs are dealt with, was destroyed. Of about 3000 Iranian men, women, and children refugees from Iran about 150 are Christian escapees from the injustices of the Islamic Regime. Reports from Van show the Turkish government is only helping the local population, the Islamic Red Crescent agency has point blank refused to extend help to Iranian refugees & asylum

seekers. Turkish 'aid agencies' and 'Islamic Republic's Aid Agencies' have not offered help or assistance to Iranians forced to endure winter weather, lack of shelter and hunger.

Pray: for justice and the release of appropriate humanitarian aid immediately, and for God's comfort for His people. (Ps.14:4-6)

More: http://www.fcnn.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2692:grave-concern-for-the-safety-and-health-of-more-than-150-iranian-christians-in-the-earthquake-city-of-van&catid=127:iranian-christian&Itemid=593

■ **Nigeria: 150 killed**

Militant group Boko Haram carried out gun and bomb attacks on churches and police stations in northern Nigeria, killing 150+ people and injuring 100 others on November 5th. Confirmation came as frightened mourners tried to leave their homes to begin burying their dead. Boko Haram seeking Sharia law across the nation pledged more attacks. Suicide attackers driving a utility vehicle detonated explosives at a military unit deployed to curb violence. Police stations, a bank and six churches were also attacked. The Jerusalem area, a predominantly Christian neighbourhood, was targeted; elsewhere hundreds of youths staged protests after gunmen opened fire on a Christian congregation in Kaduna state; also on November 3rd a village prayer meeting of mainly women and children at St. Augustine Catholic Church was attacked leaving two people dead. When attackers fired many escaped into the bush.

Pray: for Christians to know God's peace, and to remain calm and prayerful as they face a new dimension of attack on the Church. (Mt.5:38,39)

More: <http://www.worthynews.com/11052-scores-killed-in-attack-on-nigeria-churches-police>

■ **Egypt: Christian teenager killed for displaying cross**

The Muslim teacher of Ayman Labib (17) told him to cover up a cross tattoo. Ayman refused, instead displaying another cross under his clothes. The infuriated teacher attacked Ayman with other students joining in. Ayman fled to the toilets where the assault continued, he died at the scene. After the teenager's funeral over 5,000 Christians marched through the streets of Mallawi calling Ayman a 'Martyr of the Cross.' Two Muslim students were arrested. The senior investigating officer tried to influence witnesses to say the murder resulted from friction between students. The parents of other students didn't allow their children to give statements to the police fearing harassment from school administration and the families of the two arrested boys. The head teacher has been suspended; two supervisors and two social workers who were on duty when Ayman died were referred to an investigation committee.

Pray: for justice. (Pr.21:15)

More: <http://www.barnabasfund.org/Christian-teenager-killed-at-school-in-Egypt-for-displaying-cross.html>

PRAISE REPORTS

■ **Revival Run helps prayer travel the world**

You can pray on one location, or take your prayers (or the prayers of others) to travel the world. British youth organization Revival Run introduced the idea of 'prayer staking': prayers are written on wooden stakes and carried from one place to another. When placing the stake in a street, town or country, believers pray for the advance of the Gospel in that locality or nation. At 24-7prayer's recent Euro-gathering in Germany, participants took prayer stakes for every language group in Europe, which implied a commitment to travel there to pray and share the Gospel.

Praise: God for this prayer initiative. (1Th.5:17)

More: <http://vimeo.com/30736300>

■ **Scottish churches embrace new sporting craze**

The Church of Scotland is set to roll out a brand new sport in its churches following a successful pilot in east Glasgow. Racquet WALL is similar to squash but played on only one wall. The game proved hugely popular in trials with a local primary school at the Church of Scotland-run Church House in Bridgeton. The venture has been developed by the Scottish Churches Commonwealth Games programme in association with Scottish Squash and Racketball Limited (SSRL), who said the response from children had been 'astonishing'. Following the official launch this Wednesday, churches across Scotland will soon be hosting the game to help as many youngsters get involved as possible. John Dunlop, SSRL's chief executive, said its priority was to engage people in the squash and racquet ball sports and tackle the 'serious health and wellbeing issues that all of society faces today, which sport can help to address'.

Praise: that this idea bringing physical health will lead to spiritual blessing through contact with the Church. (3Jn.1:2)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/scottish.churches.embrace.new.sporting.craze/28868.htm>

PRAYER FORUM OF THE BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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