

PRAYER ALERT...

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

Issue 46-2011	Website	Contact Us	Donations	Thursday 17 Nov. 2011
■ British Isles & Ireland			■ Worldwide	
✦ Christians still feel marginalised - report			✦ America: Condoleezza Rice says, 'Turn to the Holy Spirit'	
✦ Black and white churches come together			✦ Syria: Descent into civil war?	
✦ Anger over Ryanair's plans for sex scene apps			✦ India: Two Christian communities attacked	
✦ The Catholic Church to re-evangelise inactive members.			✦ Egypt: Christians under threat from Muslim Brotherhood	
✦ Liverpool unveils UK's first gay street signs			✦ Afghanistan: Taliban	
✦ Tesco funds Gay Pride but drops Cancer Research			✦ Sudan: Troops bomb refugees fleeing persecution	
✦ 24-7 Prayer & Alpha say fill 2012 with prayer			✦ Iran: Fears for condemned pastor's welfare	
■ Europe			■ Praise Reports	
✦ Netherlands: Civil servant fired for opposing gay marriage			✦ Bible verses on Christmas stamps	
✦ Russia: Chief editor urges Christians to evangelize in media			✦ Indonesia: House church planting among Muslims	

BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ Christians still feel marginalised - report

A new report out from Premier Christian Media warns of a 'strong bias' against Christians in British public life. The media group's report is based upon consecutive polls it has commissioned in recent years to gauge perceptions among Christians and non-Christians. Feelings of marginalisation were found to be particularly strong amongst Christians. In a 2008 survey of 500 Christians, 73% said they felt Christians were being unfairly marginalised in British society. That was followed by a C-Panel poll the following year which found that 66% of Christians felt there was greater negative discrimination towards Christians than other faiths. Although non-Christians were far less likely to agree that Christians were being marginalised, poll results revealed a sympathetic general public. Premier noted perceptions of 'favouritism' towards Muslims in particular and a bias towards homosexual lobby groups.

Pray: against the ongoing marginalisation of our faith in all levels of society. (Pr.10:11)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/christians.still.feel.marginalised.report/28872.htm>

■ Black and white churches come together

Black and white churches in the UK tend not to mix, but last week saw an unprecedented event under the banner of HOPE. More than 70 Christian leaders from black and white denominations and organisations gathered at Jesus House in North London to plan ways to work together to bring HOPE to communities across the UK. As a result, next year's celebrations of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee look set to see six million people across the UK eating Sunday lunch together Christians partying with their neighbours at the heart of their communities – just one of a range of mission activities under the HOPE banner, which will lead to a year of united church mission throughout the UK in 2014. HOPE's Executive Director Roy Crowne said 'The goal is a lasting spiritual change in the lives of individuals, as communities are transformed by churches working together in mission with practical action as well as words.'

Pray: for all those working with HOPE and for the success of their mission. (Jos.1:7)

More: <http://www.anglican-mainstream.net/2011/11/13/black-and-white-come-together-as-church-mission-movement-gathers-pace/>

■ Anger over Ryanair's plans for sex scene apps

Ryanair has come under fire over plans to develop apps that will allow passengers to watch adult film content during flights. The budget airline wants to launch apps that passengers can log into via their iPads or smartphones and then pay to watch movies that include sex scenes. Ryanair Chief Executive Michael O'Leary said: 'Hotels around the world have it, so why wouldn't we?' The airline is also considering apps for in-flight gambling. Morality in Media (MIM) has reacted with anger to the plans. It is asking pro-family organisations based in Europe to contact Ryanair in opposition to the plans. The US-based group's President has advised travellers to avoid using Ryanair. 'We will stop this outrage before it gets started,' said Dawn Hawkins, Executive Director of MIM. 'Ryanair, which hopes to expand its market to US destinations as well, is creating an unsafe environment for every individual who travels on their planes.'

Pray: for Ryanair to recognise the unsuitability of such content within an aircraft carrying a 'general audience'. (Ps.119:115)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.co.uk/article/anger.over.ryanairs.plans.for.sex.scene.apps/28879.htm>

■ The Catholic Church to re-evangelise inactive members.

The Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales has launched its first outreach campaign to get people back into church, with its lapsed membership thought to number as many as five million. It started at the weekend in York with Crossing the Threshold, a national tour of talks and workshops to help clergy and parishioners re-evangelise friends and family. Around a million people regularly attend mass on Sundays, but church leaders say there are many more who are baptised but do not go. Kieran Conry, Bishop of Arundel and Brighton, said 'There are probably people out there who would like to come back but don't know how to go about it. There is a fear of standing out, of doing the wrong thing.' Churches could be intimidating places, said Conry, and it was important for those taking part to offer a personal invitation to lapsed Catholics to return. The tour will also take in Birmingham, Crawley and Cardiff.

Pray: for all those who have drifted away from church of any denomination that they may once again find fellowship there. (Mal.3:6)

More: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/nov/13/catholic-church-reevangelise-campaign>

■ Liverpool unveils UK's first gay street signs

Liverpool has become the first city in the UK to carry a homosexual rainbow emblem on some of its street signs, despite other councils banning Christian symbols. Liverpool City councillor, Nick Small said: 'The new signs clearly show that we are recognising where the LGBT scene is based in the city and that it is a very important part of our city life.' The city's enthusiasm to promote the emblem stands in contrast to other local councils that have banned Christian symbols from public display. Camden Council in North London told a church group that it could not advertise an event on religion and climate change unless it removed words like 'Christian' and 'God' from the text. Staff at Salisbury Council were told not to use the phrase 'singing from the same hymn sheet' when talking to people because the religious reference might offend atheists.

Pray: for the authorities that make unwise decisions that go against common sense may their ideas be thwarted. (Ps.94:8)

More: <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/liverpool-first-to-have-%e2%80%98gay-rainbow%e2%80%99-logo-on-street-signs/>

■ Tesco funds Gay Pride but drops Cancer Research

Tesco has sparked outrage after dropping its support for the Cancer Research 'Race for Life', and announcing shortly after that it would now become a headline sponsor of Britain's largest gay festival. The supermarket giant has supported Cancer Research for more than a decade, helping the charity raise hundreds of millions of pounds towards combating the illness – estimated to affect one in three of the population. But now the retail chain has signed a deal to become a major sponsor of Pride London, and will host the festival's family area.

Pray: that this move by a major retail company would be looked at carefully in light of its involvement with the wider community. (Eph.5:15)

More: http://www.christian.org.uk/news/tesco-funds-gay-pride-but-drops-support-for-cancer-research/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+christianinstitute+%28The+Christian+Institute%29

■ 24-7 Prayer & Alpha say fill 2012 with prayer

As the Olympic and Paralympic Games approach, Pete Greig, a founding champion of 24-7 Prayer, author of 'Red Moon Rising' and Director of Prayer for Holy Trinity Brompton is helping to launch a year of prayer called Kingdom Come 2012, challenging God's people to pray that the name of Jesus will be lifted high in our lands once again. Kingdom Come 2012 is a partnership between 24-7 Prayer and Alpha to encourage thousands of churches to fill an entire year with night and day prayer, aiming to build on the success of unprecedented years of non-stop prayer across Scotland in 2010 (The Big If) and Ireland in 2011 (What If?). Nicky Gumbel, Vicar of Holy Trinity Brompton says 'Prayer is the power behind our vision to see the re-evangelisation of our nations and the transformation of society. In 2012 we are going to be praying like never before.' For more information please contact kingdomcome@24-7prayer.com.

Pray: that the Church will take up the challenge to pray in the kingdom and transformation of our nations. (Mt.6:10)

More: www.24-7prayer.co.uk/kingdomcome

EUROPE

■ Netherlands: Civil servant fired for opposing gay marriage

A Christian civil servant has been fired by the Dutch city of The Hague for refusing to oversee same-sex marriages on Biblical grounds. Wim Pijl said on Tuesday that he would take legal action against the dismissal despite parliamentary support for gay weddings. 'For me this is a personal case,' explained Pijl. He also told reporters that God opposes same-sex marriages. 'As a Christian I learned from the Bible that there is only one marriage, between a man and a woman.' The Hague city government said through a spokesman that it had no other choice than to dismiss Pijl as he had 'refused to take back his remarks.' The Netherlands has 104 civil servants refusing to perform same-sex marriage ceremonies, according to Dutch gay rights group COC.

Pray: for Pijl and others who are standing up for their Christian beliefs. May the Lord empower them to stand firm. (Ps.37:23)

More: <http://www.bosnewslife.com/19058-news-alert-dutch-christian-civil-servant-fired-for-opposing-gay-marriage>

■ Russia: Chief editor urges Christians to evangelize in media

During the General Council of the Associated Russian Union of Christians of Evangelical-Pentecostal Faith, Mr. Pavel Gusev, editor-in-chief of the 'Moskovskij Komsomolets' (Komsomolets – member of the Communist Union of Youth)

newspaper and chairman of the Moscow Union of Journalists, urged Christians to preach the Gospel in mass media. Gusev noted that Christians often come to him and say, 'Look what they are writing about us! They are saying we are underground churches, that we are a sect! Where is the truth?' I reply to them 'Moskovskij Komsomolets has 82 newspapers and magazines published. You are free to publish your thoughts in them and I promise I will not correct any letter!' promised the editor-in-chief. 'Imagine that Christians would preach the Gospel and speak about their work everywhere. I think it must be your first goal. Believers don't have to propagandize their teaching; you only have to tell people about you and your work. They will see and hear,' underlined the chairman of the Moscow Union of Journalists.

Pray: that Russian Christians will take up the challenge to write about their faith. (Mt.24:14)

More: <http://www.christiantelegraph.com/issue14530.html>

WORLDWIDE

■ America: Condoleezza Rice says, 'Turn to the Holy Spirit'

Condoleezza Rice recently told students at the University of Mobile that asking God for guidance has been the driving force of her career - and that yielding to a 'higher power' in difficult times is always beneficial. The former Secretary of State told 400-plus students that her Christian faith and the decisions she makes are inseparable, and urged them to follow the Holy Spirit, as she has, to remain optimistic and persevere. 'It's not that you say, 'Well, is this the right thing to do?' It's that you ask for guidance and are always aware that you have a higher power to which to appeal.' Rice was, answering a question about how her faith impacted her role as Secretary of State 'The best part about being a person of faith is that I could be continually optimistic even in hard times, I don't know how people who can't appeal to the Holy Spirit get through those hard times,' she continued.

Pray: that across the world God would raise up more Christian leaders and anoint them to talk publicly about their faith. (Ps.40:4-6)

More: <http://www.cbn.com/cbnnews/us/2011/November/Condoleezza-Rice-Shares-Faith-with-Alabama-Students/>

■ Syria: Descent into civil war?

Army defectors attacked and destroyed parts of the Air Force Intelligence building in Harsata, (a major military base near Damascus). It is the Free Syrian Army's most high-profile attack since anti-government protests began. The rebel army was formed by military defectors opposed to Mr Assad and affirmed 15,000 members by mid-October, saying more soldiers and officers are defecting every day. They work alongside the Syrian people to topple the government and 'stand up to the irresponsible military machine which is protecting the regime'. The government has severely restricted access for foreign journalists, and reports of violence are extremely difficult to verify. The BBC's Jon Leyne, in Rabat for the Arab League meeting, says reports of the attack show how the situation in Syria is becoming more serious by the hour. It is also a graphic illustration of how the conflict is moving close to being a civil war which might affect the whole region; rather than a fight between unarmed protesters and the government.

Pray: and call to God, for all those in distress, and may Jesus Christ reveal his truth and wisdom and change the hearts of those in authority. (Ps.55:18 & 139:20-21)

More: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-15752058>

■ India: Two Christian communities attacked

Ultra-nationalist Hindu Bajrang Dal activists attacked members of two different Christian communities engaged in a prayer service, accusing them of practicing forced conversions. The episodes took place on November 12th and 13th in Karnataka. The assaulted Christians are now in prison. This brings to 40 the number of attacks against the Christian community of the state in 2011. 'Two incidents in two days belie every promise regarding religious freedom made to the Christian community by the Chief Minister of Karnataka, a member of the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party). Collusion between the government of the BJP and the Sangh Parivar is very real, the attacks are deliberate and meticulously planned. As long as these movements escape the harsh measures of the Indian criminal justice system, violence will continue.'

Pray: for freedom of public worship for Christian minorities across secular India. (Ps.71:1)

More: <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Taipei,-Democrats-against-China%E2%80%99s-attempts-to-interfere-in-vote-23168.html>

■ Egypt: Christians under threat from Muslim Brotherhood

Egyptian Coptic Christians living in the United States sent a letter to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton imploring her to take more action against the 'crime against humanity' facing the Christian population in Egypt from the Muslim Brotherhood.' Monir Dawoud, head of the American Coptic Association said, 'The radical Muslim Brotherhood was attempting to annihilate Christians and other religious minorities in the country.' Dawoud called for a guarantee of rights for all minorities to be included in the new constitution after Egypt's new government is elected in less than three weeks, and that aid to Egypt be conditional on the country's justice toward Christians and minorities. The letter states, 'The Muslim Brotherhood is waging what it calls 'civilization jihad' against the United States and other freedom-loving countries in order to secure their submission to the Islamic totalitarian political-military-legal doctrine called Sharia.' Repeated calls to stem the popularity of the Muslim Brotherhood have been heard in Congress.

Pray: Egypt's government would choose to take a balanced attitude towards Christian minorities allowing them to openly follow Jesus Christ. (Ps.85:12-13)

More: <http://www.crosswalk.com/blogs/religion-today-blog/egyptian-christians-us-call-for-action-persecution.html>

■ Afghanistan: Taliban

A survey of 6,348 Afghans by the Asia Foundation between July 2nd and August 11th showed support for the Taliban dramatically declined over the last two years from 56% to 29%. This is coupled with a high level of support for the government's reconciliation and negotiation efforts with armed opposition groups. See

<http://feeds.bignewsnetwork.com/?sid=201052223> Nevertheless on Wednesday three coalition service members were killed as a result of two separate bomb blasts on the first day of a three-day loya jirga in Kabul, (a grand assembly of more than 2,000 delegates from around the country to discuss Afghanistan's future relationship with the United States. It also includes talks about possible negotiations with the Taliban.) On Monday, a Taliban spokesman strongly condemned the loya jirga, fueling fears of Afghan officials and those attending the loya jirga that the militant group may be planning attacks to disrupt it.

Pray: that God will enable Afghanistan to continue to develop a safe environment, children's education, clean drinking water and well equipped clinics and hospitals. (Ps.68:1-3)

More: <http://channel6newsonline.com/2011/11/roadside-bombs-kill-3-nato-troops-on-first-day-of-afghan-loya-jirga/>

■ **Sudan: Troops bomb refugees fleeing persecution**

The Sudanese military are accused of dropping five bombs on the Yida refugee camp in Unity State, South Sudan where 20,000 refugees escaping violence and persecution are housed. The camp is home to people from the Nuba Mountains where northern troops are targeting groups considered 'disloyal' to the northern regime. The Nuba people are mainly Christian and northern President Omar al-Bashir vowed to enforce strict Sharia or Islamic law across Sudan when South Sudan became an independent nation in July. Christians in the Yida camp told the US Commission on International Religious Freedom that they are being targeted and pastors reported churches being burnt and looted, and soldiers killing Christians for being 'enemies of Islam'. One of the bombs landed in a schoolyard, but failed to explode. 300 children were in class at the time.

Pray: for all affected by persecution and destruction of property to know God's peace and have their prayers answered. (Ps.4:3)

More: <http://www.releaseinternational.org/pages/posts/sudan-northern-troops-bomb-refugees-fleeing-persecution-906.php>

■ **Iran: Fears for condemned pastor's welfare**

Compass Direct News reports that the mistreatment of Youcef Nadarkhani, amounts to physical and psychological torture, a source close to the pastor's family said. An Iranian church member said that communication with Nadarkhani is limited, but sources close to the imprisoned Christian indicate he has undergone physical and psychological torture. 'Certainly he was hit, his telephone conversations are heard by authorities' the source said, adding he has been in extreme situations spending time in a solitary cell unable to talk to others for long times and also is told he will be killed. Visitors to Youcef have seen evidence of torture, adding 'long periods of solitary confinement can cause mental trauma, although we have not seen any evidence in Youcef of being in a bad mental state.'

Pray: for God's Holy Spirit to continue to protect Youcef's mind. Pray also for his speedy release despite not recanting his faith. (Heb.10:35)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/fears.for.welfare.of.iranian.pastor.facing.execution/28898.htm>

PRAISE REPORTS

■ **Bible verses on Christmas stamps**

Bible chapter and verse references have been printed on the face of this year's Christmas stamps, unveiled by Royal Mail to mark 400 years of the King James Version of the Bible. The series of seven stamps feature Bible references taken from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. The stamps also include pictures of nativity scenes. Royal Mail, which alternates between religious and secular themed stamps each Christmas, released the new designs last week. Stephen Agar from Royal Mail said: 'Christmas stamps help deliver festive messages of good cheer and celebration across the UK and around the world. This year's stamps feature scenes from the Nativity, together with the Gospel references from the King James Bible which inspired them.'

Praise: God that the message of His Word will be seen on all our mail this Christmas. (Ps.18:30)

More: <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/royal-mail-reveals-nativity-stamps/>

■ **Indonesia: House church planting among Muslims**

The Muslim world is complex. But from the teeming cities of Southeast Asia to the tribal villages of Central Africa to the arid deserts of the Middle East, there is a common denominator in how God is working to draw people to Himself. Mission organization Pioneers launched a video series that tells the story of what indigenous church planting looks like in the Muslim world. The first one is about a city in Indonesia where small groups of Muslim seekers and new believers are gathering to study the Bible, pray and then put their faith in action. In the face of persecution, spiritual warfare and poverty, Jesus is building His church.

Praise: God that His Church continues to grow despite the difficulties. (2Th.2:14)

More: <http://www.pioneers.org/multiply/indonesia.aspx>

PRAYER FORUM OF THE BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

Please feel free to distribute Prayer Alert to anyone you feel will benefit from its ministry. All we ask is that you do not edit or change it in any way or charge for its use without contacting us for written permission.

Prayer Alert is a partnership project of the Prayer Forum of the British Isles and Ireland
C/O World Prayer Centre, Cornerstone House, 5 Ethel Street, Birmingham, B2 4BG, England