

PRAYER ALERT...

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PRAISE REPORTS

■ Church of Scotland rejects same-sex marriage proposals

The Church of Scotland has given an unequivocal 'no' to the Scottish Government's proposal to redefine marriage. In its response to the Scottish Government's consultation, the Kirk said the proposal 'fundamentally changes' the historic understanding of marriage as a relationship between one man and one woman. 'Scriptural references to marriage, whether literal or metaphorical, all operate under this understanding,' it said. 'To redefine marriage to include same-sex unions may have significant and, as yet, inadequately considered repercussions for our country, for the wellbeing of families, communities and individuals.' The Church said it was concerned by the speed at which the Scottish Government is proceeding with the issue, saying that the debate had so far been 'patchy, undeveloped and exclusive of both ordinary people and the religious community'. The Church went on to reject the Government's proposal to legalise the registration of civil partnerships on religious premises. (See Prayer Alert 47-2011 & 45.2011)

Praise: [God for the Church of Scotland's stand and pray for a positive response by the Scottish Government. \(1Ki.8:52\)](#)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.co.uk/article/church.of.scotland.rejects.samesex.marriage.proposals/28972.htm>

■ Mozambique: Deaf hear and blind see

God has been doing many great things in the bush village of Nanjua,' report missionaries Rolland and Heidi Baker from Mozambique. 'We first visited there three months ago. Since then there are no more deaf people there to pray for because they are all healed. Also, the chief of the village got saved and we are currently completing the building of their church. Isn't God good! During a recent outreach there we saw miracles and many salvations. We met a blind man named Samuel. He came to us saying that he had heard us praying and that God had told him to come to where we were. He became completely blind in 2010. After praying for him he could see colours, faces and shapes. Heidi took him to a mango tree and he counted the number of mangos on the branch - something he could not do before. He spoke with much excitement, 'Now I can walk home by myself with no one to assist me!' Later that same day, along with many others, he was baptized in the river.'

Praise: [God for His miraculous power over the deaf and blind. \(Ps.146:8\)](#)

More: <http://www.joelnews.org/>

BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ Riots could return without effort to reach young people

The Archbishop of Canterbury has warned that last summer's riots may return unless the government and civil society do more to reach out to young people. Writing in the Guardian, Dr Rowan Williams attributed the unrest in part to 'massive economic hopelessness' and a lack of opportunities for young people. He said that many of the rioters were people who had 'got used to being pushed to the margins and told they are dispensable'. 'Too many feel they have nothing to lose because they are told practically from birth that they have no serious career opportunities' he said. While the Archbishop acknowledged the selfishness of the rioters' actions, he said that demonising destructive young people would not help to

address the problem. Instead, he went on to suggest that greater consideration be given to the impact on young people in debates over spending cuts, adding that the idea of cutting provision to youth services was 'manifestly indefensible'.

Pray: that the Government will face up to its responsibilities and challenges in reaching the young. (Dt.30:11)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/riots.could.return.without.more.effort.to.reach.young.people/28987.htm>

■ Christians a minority at 'biased' BBC

The BBC employs more atheists and non-believers than Christians, an internal 'diversity' survey has found. The new research has been seized on by critics who accuse the Corporation of bias against Christianity and marginalising the faith in its output. The survey found that just 22.5 per cent of all staff professed to be Christians. BBC veteran Roger Bolton, who until recently presented BBC Radio 4's religious current affairs programme, Sunday, said: 'There is an inbuilt but unconscious bias against religion, fuelled by the fact staff are not representative of the public. It is not a conspiracy but it needs a correction.' Peter Kearney, spokesman for the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland, said the statistics confirmed the belief that the BBC is 'institutionally incapable of reflecting the society it serves since BBC staff are not representative of the audience they broadcast to'.

Pray: for the BBC and their work, that it may present a better-balanced view of our society including the Christian community. (Ps.11:7)

More: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2069649/Christians-minority-biased-BBC.html>

■ Guardian editor and MP criticise Bideford prayer case

An assistant editor at The Guardian and the Labour MP Chris Bryant have both hit out at a secularist pressure group's attempt to ban a local council from saying prayers. Last week the National Secular Society (NSS) went to the High Court in an attempt to end Bideford Town Council's practice of saying prayers at the start of its meetings. Commenting on the case Michael White an assistant editor at The Guardian, warned that the case raised a wider question 'about the intolerant impulse many people have to inflict their views on others'. He said that 'communities should surely be allowed to sort out their own arrangements' without interference from the NSS. And Chris Bryant, the Labour MP for Rhondda, questioned why the case had even gone to court. Mr Bryant said 'surely the 16 members of Bideford Council, who have already voted on this twice, should be allowed to pray, if they want to.'

Pray: for the Bideford Council to be empowered in their stand and for the NSS to recognise that a period of reflection is helpful before meetings. (Job.33:26)

More: <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/guardian-editor-and-mp-criticise-nss-prayer-case/>

■ Supermarkets accused of misleading consumers

Supermarkets have been accused of hoodwinking shoppers with a series of false and misleading pricing claims that could leave them open to prosecution, according to a damning report. An investigation into pricing and offers at Britain's four major supermarket chains found that all were guilty of making erroneous or untrue assertions, some of which breach consumer regulations. Bogus price drops, promotions which offer no savings and larger 'value' packs which are relatively more expensive than smaller alternatives were uncovered by the report. The study by the BBC's Panorama programme comes a year after the Office of Fair Trading told supermarkets they must stop attempting to mislead consumers, or risk 'enforcement action'. Deborah Parry, an expert in consumer law, said some of the practices being undertaken were potentially illegal. The Office of Fair Trading said it would 'welcome' the chance to view the report.

Pray: that in this time of austerity, retailers would be honest and transparent in all pricing of goods. (Lev.19:11)

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/newsbysector/retailandconsumer/8931398/Supermarkets-accused-of-misleading-consumers.html>

■ English RC leader welcomes 'Scotland for Marriage'

A campaign group which is seeking to preserve the definition of marriage for Scotland has been welcomed by the head of the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales. Archbishop Vincent Nichols said the group's name, 'Scotland for Marriage', gave a 'very positive message'. The group's launch comes as the consultation on redefining marriage in Scotland draws to a close – the final date for submissions is 9 December. He commented that a similar message was needed for England – a public consultation on how to change the law in England and Wales will begin next year with the Westminster Government wanting to redefine marriage by 2015. The Church said it was concerned by the speed at which the Scottish Government is proceeding with the issue, saying that the debate had so far been 'patchy'. The Church went on to reject the Government's proposal to legalise the registration of civil partnerships on religious premises. (See also Prayer Alert 47-2011 & 45.2011)

Pray: for the Church and authorities in Scotland as they consider marriage. (Heb.13:4)

More: http://www.christian.org.uk/news/english-rc-leader-welcomes-scotland-for-marriage/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3Achristianinstitute+%28The+Christian+Institute%29

■ Baptist churches hit by record levels of metal theft

Metal theft from Baptist churches has risen to record levels this year. By the end of October Baptist Insurance had received 110 claims for theft of metal, already 25 more than it handled in its previous worst year. In 2008 it dealt with nearly 90 claims from the churches it insures. The total cost of the metal theft claims for 2011 stands at more than £160,000, again a record. The theft of metal from churches is linked directly to the price of lead, which rose sharply at the start of 2011. 'We have seen a huge increase in theft of metal,' said Katri Link, Baptist Insurance press officer. 'This year has been the worst year for metal theft, both in terms of number of claims and cost of claims. At the start of the year we saw the price of metal go up - the demand in the market from the Far East is high - and there is a direct correlation.' Churches everywhere have been suffering, although 2008 remains the worst year across all denominations.

Pray: for the protection of church buildings from this kind of crime and increase of police and community awareness. (Dt.5:19)

More: <http://www.baptisttimes.co.uk/news1.htm>

■ Quakers in Britain call for greater tax justice

Quakers in Britain, as members of the 'Close the Gap Campaign', have called for greater tax justice in a letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Caroline Lucas MP, Kate Green MP and Jeremy Corbin MP have introduced a Private Members Bill (Tax and Transparency Bill) to enhance transparency in corporate payment of tax. Tax evasion and avoidance is estimated by the Treasury to cost the UK purse at least £35 billion annually. Others estimate the number to be substantially higher. This is nearly nine per cent of UK tax revenue and the efficient collection of this revenue would lessen the demand to cut social and welfare expenditure which is hurting the poorest in our communities so much. Treasury estimates also suggest that those who are avoiding paying their contribution are mainly wealthy individuals and corporations, so the recouping of this money would not harm the poorest and most vulnerable.

Pray: that this Private Members Bill bring the right response from those who avoid paying correct taxes. (Ps.1:6)

More: <http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/15868>

EUROPE

■ Czech Republic: Europe rise up!

'Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you.' This was the Scripture used to call a gathering of European Christians in Prague from December 1st-3rd. For many years Europe has been on the periphery of the Holy Spirit's blowing. Delegates at the conference took a stand believing if the European nations come together and start building a unity in Europe God will command a blessing. Christians in Europe are taking a stand against a divided Europe. The delegates intend to start to learn what is happening in particular countries and begin praying for one another. The delegates also acknowledged, 'It is possible that this unity cannot come about without repentance of the things we have been guilty of in the past because we trespassed against other countries. We should also repent of all prejudices we have against other countries and their people.'

Pray: for God to bless this initiative towards unity. Pray also that the desire to pray together will grow and birth more 'Prayer Watches' and 'Houses of Prayer and worship'. (Is 40:3)

More: <http://europeanconvocation.com/vision.html>

■ Netherlands: Mobile euthanasia teams being considered

Plans to introduce mobile medical teams that can euthanase people in their own homes are being considered by the Dutch government. The teams of doctors and nurses would be sent out from a clinic following a referral from the patient's doctor. The proposals were disclosed by Edith Schippers, the health minister. In a written answer to questions from Christian Union MPs she said that mobile units 'for patients who meet the criteria for euthanasia but whose doctors are unwilling to carry it out' was worthy of consideration. 'If the patient thinks it desirable, the doctor can refer him or her to a mobile team or clinic,' the minister wrote. In her written answer Ms Schippers suggested that 'extra expertise' could be summoned in complicated cases involving mental health problems or an inability to consent to euthanasia because of dementia.

Pray: against this move by the Dutch government increasing the availability of euthanasia. (Lev.24:17)

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/netherlands/8938917/Mobile-euthanasia-teams-being-considered-by-Dutch-government.html>

WORLDWIDE

■ Pakistan: Threats and strained relationships

Arif Ferguson is in hiding after death threats from the Taliban because he shared his faith with Muslims and expressed views against the blasphemy law in a local newspaper. Release International said, 'This latest death threat confirms that militants now regard even opposing the blasphemy laws as a 'crime' deserving of death.' They will not permit debate in parliament or in the press. This intensifies the risk to Christians in Pakistan who take issue with intolerance and extremism.' We are asked to pray also about the relationships between Pakistan and NATO which have deteriorated; nationwide protests continue against NATO after an attack that killed 24 soldiers in November; Pakistan has asked the US to vacate an air base and has blocked transport of NATO supplies across the border.

Pray: for Pakistan's leaders to courageously repeal the blasphemy laws and work with the nations to establish peace in the area. (Pr.15:29)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/release.warns.of.increasing.persecution.in.pakistan/28989.htm>

■ Afghanistan: Street children

50,000 children work on the streets of Afghanistan's capital. Some are orphans, others work to support their families selling chewing gum, magazines, or trinkets others polish shoes, wash cars or dispense good luck from a can of burning herbs. Some simply beg. All are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse by criminals and police. A Christian within the country has asked us to pray for the protection of the children trying to survive. Organisations are needed to provide support for children and their families. Pray that some of the aid to the country would go to help the street children and that these children would be introduced to the One who loves little children.

Pray: for Christians working in various communities to have more of God's anointing as they attempt to make a difference in the lives of the people. (Mt.19:14)

More: <http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/afghanistan.html>

■ Iraq and Afghanistan: Shiites and Christians targeted

Iraq: 30 died in car bomb attacks against Shia Muslims celebrating Ashura in Baghdad and Hilla. The attacks follow violence against Christian shops and properties in the Kurdistan region. Also in Dahuk three shops and a community centre belonging to Chaldean Christians were burnt in a campaign that targets 'all that is contrary to Sharia, by Islamists who want to radicalize Iraq. Unfortunately there is no 'moderate movement' capable of containing the fundamentalist drift against

Christians in the north. The Christian community is an easy target in the game for the conquest of power. Afghanistan: 59 died in bombings against Shiite Muslims. An Afghan official said, 'the bomber in Kabul was a Pakistani, affiliated to Pakistan's extremist Lashkar-i-Jhangvi group, which has killed thousands of Pakistani Shiites.' The faction is linked to Al-Qaeda. See http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5iuiDw_85Fc_czcRRDdjV3ooxsrlw?docId=CNG.8d286bd1dbe15a516592439618a32be0.3c1

Pray: in the midst of turmoil and terror, that God's purposes for the region would prevail. (Mt.6:10)

More: <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Violence-in-Iraq-targets-Shiite-pilgrims-and-Christian-stores-23366.html>

■ Mexico: Bishop pleads with drug cartels

The Bishop of Cuernavaca in Morelos has added his voice to appeals for peace between feuding drug gangs over Christmas. Poet-turned-peace activist Javier Sicilia became a full time peace campaigner after his 24-year-old son was murdered by a drug cartel in March. Now the Bishop has joined the calls for a truce saying, 'I appeal to them as brothers and in the name of God to understand that this is not the way of goodness, that this is not the way of peace, that this is not the way of life as brothers and sisters, and as human beings.' The number of people killed in gang-related violence since 2006 is 40,000. Mgr. Cortes said the violence was causing pain and distress to Mexicans and the perpetrators were acting 'more through ignorance than malice. We must be messengers of peace, and hope that this Christmas will be a time of peace and love for all.'

Pray: for God in His mercy to hear the cries of thousands mourning the death of a loved one because of drugs. (2Sa.22:3)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/bishop.pleads.with.mexicos.drug.cartels.to.lay.down.arms.for.christmas/28990.htm>

■ USA: Stricter 'Insider-Trading Laws'

Democrats and Republicans on the House Financial Services Committee on Tuesday advocated new restrictions on insider trading to help lift waning public trust in Congress. Previous efforts to pass restrictions on insider trading have not advanced in Congress. The issue re-emerged after a report by the CBS News program '60 Minutes' highlighting members of Congress buying stock in companies during debates on legislation that might affect the businesses. See also 'Corruption in Politics Prayer Alert 47-2011. 'This is about restoring faith,' said Representative Tim Walz, a Minnesota Democrat who is sponsoring legislation to explicitly ban insider trading. CBS reported, 'during the 2008 financial crisis the ranking Republican on the Financial Services Committee bet stock prices would fall while being briefed privately that a global crisis might be imminent.'

Pray: for all that is hidden to be revealed and for financial corruption to end in all political arenas. (Ro.2:13)

More: <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/07/business/congress-considers-new-limits-on-insider-trading.html>

■ Burma: Christians face deadly attacks

On November 30th as US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton arrived in Burma to support Burma's apparent reforms to discuss minority rights, government troops killed civilians and burned houses 450 miles away in Christian majority state Kachin. Soldiers fired four rounds of mortar shells at civilians killing a woman and injuring six other villagers in Waingmaw Township, a battalion burned down ten homes in Nam Wai village and five in Hpa Ke village. The killing and arson followed two explosions that killed a student and injured another the previous night in Myitkyina. Local residents suspected government agents planted the bombs. The twin blasts rocked the state capital days after an explosion killed seven children and three internally displaced Kachin people and injured 16 children at an orphanage. Two sons and a grandson of a Christian couple who run the orphanage in their home were among those killed, but police arrested the family, alleging they had detonated it.

Pray: for the Burmese authorities to honour their agreement to implement minority rights reforms. (Am.5:24)

More: http://www.compassdirect.org/english/country/burma/article_124091.html

■ France: Alpine glaciers in retreat

French Alps glaciers have lost 1/4 of their area in the past 40 years according to the largest annual gathering of Earth scientists, (American Geophysical Union). It mirrors findings of retreat occurring in other sectors of the Alps across the borders of several nations. The French Alps glaciers inventory was produced through the University of Savoie. See <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-16025568>. Meanwhile in a South African convention on climate change running from 28th November to 9th December Christian youth discuss the message that God's creation needs better care as young people from church and faith-based organisations on six continents take 'Youth For Eco-Justice' training. Roger Schmidt, Secretary for Youth said, 'Creative young people are capable of breaking the deadlock in the world in terms of climate change with a new understanding of the connection of justice and ecology.'

Pray: for more to catch the vision of eco-justice and for governments to put global concerns ahead of national industrial development. (Ps.24:1-2)

More: <http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/15872>

PRAYER FORUM OF THE BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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