

PRAYER ALERT...

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PRAISE REPORTS

■ Doctors pray for patients in Western Ukraine

Prayer meetings for doctors and medical staff are taking place in St. Jehoshaphat Church in Lviv, Western Ukraine, reports The Christian Telegraph in reference to The Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church website and credo-ua.org. Such cooperation of clergy and medics is called to help patients that are in need of healing. The meetings were founded by Father Vladimir Gruz who, while studying in Austria, took a great interest in the idea of one doctor, who started a prayer group with her staff. 'Although medicine in the West has an abundance of resources, doctors understood that they are merely instruments in God's hands and, without Him, these doctors could not treat patients,' notes Father Vladimir. He adopted this Western practice for Ukraine in light of the mass violations of patient rights and late medical aid, leading to cases of death and disability in the country.

Praise: God for the prayers of the doctors and that He would heal those who are in need. (Lk.9:2)

More: <http://www.christiantelegraph.com/issue13865.html>

■ Australia: Church leaders speak out for traditional marriage

Twenty of Australia's senior church and denominational leaders have urged the Government to protect the definition of marriage in Australian law. The Joint Statement on the Significance of Marriage follows: Marriage is the lifelong commitment and faithful union of one man and one woman. As such, marriage is the natural basis of the family because it secures the relationship between biological parents and their children. As Christian leaders representing different denominations or churches, we join together and affirm our shared commitment to promote and protect marriage. We honour the unique love between husbands and wives; the vital place of fathers and mothers in the life of children; and the corresponding ideal for all children to know the love and role modelling of a father and mother. We call on our Government to: protect this definition of marriage in Australian law, and not change the meaning of marriage by adding to it different kinds of relationships.

Praise: God for this stand by the church and that the Government will protect traditional marriage. (Jer.29:6)

More: http://ausprayernet.org.au/newsletter/DisplayNewsletter.php?e_id=00000002315#st2

BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ Government under fire from former Archbishop of Canterbury

The Government has been heavily criticised by Lord Carey, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, over its decision not to back four British Christians who have taken their cases to the European Court of Human Rights. Lord Carey had appealed to Prime Minister David Cameron, asking him to support the four Christians who were ruled against by British Courts. Among these were Shirley Chaplin and Gary McFarlane, whose cases were handled by the Christian Legal Centre. Two of the four cases relate to the freedom of Christians to wear a cross in the workplace and two concern instances where the freedom of Christians to act in accordance with their conscience has been trumped by homosexual rights. The Government has stood by the British courts and argued that these Christian individuals have not been discriminated against. It further argued that neither the wearing of a cross nor the following of conscience are an integral part of the Christian faith.

Pray: that Lord Carey's comments will be listened to and lead to a change of heart. (Pr.31:9)

More: <http://www.christianconcern.com/our-concerns/religious-freedom/government-under-fire-from-former-archbishop-of-canterbury>

■ **Scotland: 95% of religious violence is against Christians**

In 2010 and 2011 there were 693 charges aggravated by religious prejudice in Scotland. This means a nearly 10 per cent increase in a year and the highest level in four years. 95% of this violence was directed against Christians. Statistics published by the Scottish Government today provide new detail on the scale of religious hate crimes across Scotland. The information has been made available following a pledge made by the First Minister. The data shows that in 2010-11 58 per cent of charges related to offences which were derogatory towards Roman Catholicism and 37 per cent of charges related to offences which were derogatory to Protestantism. 2.3 per cent related to Judaism, and 2.1 per cent related to Islam. There were charges with a religious aggravation in 27 out of Scotland's 32 Local Authority areas.

Pray: for a reversal of these trends; and that God will restrain the hand of the enemy. (Pr.10:11)

More: <http://www.intoleranceagainstchristians.eu/reports-and-documents-detail/article/scottish-government-reveals-95-of-religiously-motivated-violence-is-directed-against-christians.html>

■ **Government figures show that homelessness is up by 13%**

The number of households declared homeless so far this year is up by 13 per cent from the same period last year, according to Government figures. According to Homeless Link, the umbrella group for over 500 charities, 35,680 households have been accepted as homeless by local authorities since the start of 2011 and the numbers of people placed in bed and breakfast accommodation has risen by 30 per cent to 9,240 compared with the same period last year. Jacqui McCluskey, of Homeless Link, said: 'As a result of the recession, cuts and the high cost of living, the number of homeless people continues to rise. Especially alarming is the jump in number of people becoming homeless because they have had to leave their privately rented homes. We are concerned that this trend will accelerate as the government's changes to housing benefit bite. Becoming homeless shouldn't be inevitable. Urgent action is needed to keep more people in their homes.'

Pray: for all those who are homeless or likely to become so and that safeguards will be put in place by the Government to protect them. (Ps.70:5)

More: <http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/15879>

■ **BPAS to post morning-after pills out for free at Christmas**

The morning-after pill will be posted out to women for free throughout December under a 'vulgar' new scheme which has been slammed by critics. BPAS, (British Pregnancy Advisory Service), is encouraging women to stock up ahead of the Christmas party season. A poster advertising the scheme shows the word 'sex' in Christmas-tree lights, and bears the slogan: 'Getting 'turned on' this Christmas?' And a dedicated website for the controversial service is entitled santacomes.org. Josephine Quintavalle, of the ProLife Alliance, has branded the campaign 'incredibly vulgar'. Norman Wells, director of the Family Education Trust, said: 'The pill was supposed to be a prescription-only drug under the control of doctors yet it is now being marketed as a 'just-in-case' drug and supplied free of charge. BPAS's telephone service will inevitably lead to underage girls lying about their age in order to access it.' A spokesman for BPAS has admitted that some children 'will not be completely honest about their age'.

Pray: for proper and effective control over the issuing of such drugs. (Pr.4:11)

More: <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/bpas-to-post-morning-after-pills-out-for-free-at-christmas/>

■ **Lavish presents ruining Christmas**

Parents should spend less on presents because commercialisation is ruining Christmas, according to David Cameron's top adviser on childhood, who urged families not to give in to 'pester power' and resist the temptation to get into debt by buying lavish gifts. Mr Bailey, who is the chief executive of Mothers' Union, a Christian charity, warned that commercial pressures threatened to undermine the message of Christmas. 'Parents have high levels of anxiety about presents,' he said. 'They feel as though they have to purchase expensive gifts because that's what all the other children have.' He said that children should not be treated as 'mini-consumers' and said they would benefit in the long run from having fewer possessions. 'This is a stressful time of the year. There's pressure to buy expensive things. Children admit they pester their parents but it's terribly sad that we end up leaving parents feeling utterly guilty after Christmas, having desperately tried to make ends meet.'

Pray: for all those for whom Christmas merely presents a financial worry rather than a simple celebration of our Lord's birth. (Pr.14:15)

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/8949218/Lavish-presents-ruining-Christmas-warns-childhood-tsar-Reg-Bailey.html>

■ **Archbishop calls for action on care for older people**

The Archbishop of York, Dr John Sentamu has today called for urgent and lasting reform of the way care is funded for older people in England, stating that the system is no longer fit for purpose. Writing an open letter to the Prime Minister and his fellow Taxpayers in England, the Archbishop has asked the Government to consider a new social covenant to protect the most vulnerable in society. He said, 'A truly caring and Christian society is one that sees older people, not as a growing and irrelevant burden, but as a rich treasure store of energy, experience and wisdom to be placed at the service of the young and of its future. Ensuring the conditions under which older people can make the special contribution of which they are capable is key to releasing this treasure. Providing a sustainable long term funding arrangement for the care of older people is a vital part of ensuring those conditions.'

Pray: for a society that respects and honours its senior citizens and values their role in partnership with its younger members. (Job.12:12)

More: <http://www.archbishopofyork.org/articles.php/2278/archbishop-calls-for-urgent-action-on-funding-of-care-for-older-people-a-new-social-covenant>

■ 'Trans equality' teaching for 5-year-olds considered

Schoolchildren as young as five may be taught about 'transgender equality', a Government document has disclosed. Theresa May, the Home Secretary, signed the foreword to the new plan along with Lynne Featherstone. The move, which is being considered by the Department for Education (DfE), was highlighted in the Government's new action plan for advancing transgender equality. But one campaigner has warned that these issues are adult ones and should not be discussed in class at such a tender age. Margaret Morrissey, founder of campaign group Parents Outloud, said: 'These are adult issues and we should leave it until children are older or until they ask. The problem is we are overloading our children with issues that they should not have to consider at a young age. PSHE is already overloaded with other issues.'

Pray: that our education standards will be upheld and young minds be protected. (Ps.12:5)

More: <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/trans-equality-teaching-for-5-year-olds-being-considered/>

EUROPE

■ Belgium: Liege reeling after killing spree

A gunman opened fire on passers-by and threw grenades in a central square of the Belgian city of Liege, fatally wounding at least four people and injuring scores more before apparently killing himself. Separately, on Wednesday police found a woman's body in a warehouse used by the gunman, who has been named as Nordine Amrani. Late on Tuesday a Liege hospital announced that a 17-month-old girl had become the fourth victim of the shooting spree, after two teenage boys and a 75-year-old woman were earlier confirmed killed. Officials said at least 120 others were also wounded in the attack. Daniele Reynders, the public prosecutor for Liege, told reporters 'Amrani committed suicide with a bullet to the head. He left no message to explain his act'. Police had recently raided his Liege home seeking cannabis plants, but had found arms instead. In 2008, he was sentenced to almost five years in prison for illegal possession of arms and growing cannabis.

Pray: for all those caught up in this atrocity that God will bring them physical, spiritual healing and peace. (Col.1:2)

More: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2011/12/20111213125725322987.html>

■ Turkey: Al Qaeda accused of planning to bomb churches

A large-scale Al Qaeda plot to bomb 'all the churches in Ankara,' as well as the Turkish Parliament and U.S. Embassy in the Turkish capital, was made public today (Dec.9). According to Compass Direct News (CDN), the 50-page indictment, following the arrest of suspects last July, outlined the militants' revised 'jihad' strategy to begin focusing their attacks against Turkey before waging war against the United States and other countries. Police seized 700 kilos (1,500 pounds) of explosives, along with assault rifles, ammunition, bomb-making instructions and detailed maps of Ankara. Among the CDs, detailed maps, sketches and building diagrams, police also discovered lists of the names and home addresses of Christian clergy and other church workers residing in Ankara. The news took Christian leaders in Ankara by total surprise, according to one Turkish Christian leader in Ankara. 'No one has had any news about this until now,' he said.

Pray: for the work of the authorities as they combat the Al Qaeda menace and protect those under threat. (Ps.32:7)

More: http://www.compassdirect.org/english/country/turkey/article_124391.html

WORLDWIDE

■ Syria: US and Russia at odds

Russia and the US have clashed over US calls for the UN Security Council to take action against Syria over their crackdown on anti-government protests which has left at least 5,000 people dead. Russia's foreign minister rebuffed calls for Moscow to join countries imposing sanctions on the Syrian government saying Western nations had taken an 'immoral' stance by criticising Russia and heaping pressure on Assad while turning a blind eye to violent action by armed anti-government protesters. US State Department said, 'We are again calling on our partners to be willing to take action and speak out for the innocents suffering at the hands of the regime.' Syria's uprising has become an armed battle along the Turkish border. Military defectors, (Free Syrian Army) and thousands of Syrian refugees are on the Turkish side using local smuggling networks and support among villagers to stage cross-border attacks. Government forces have stepped-up border patrols and reprisal raids on villages.

Pray: for the safety of innocent refugees in the areas of unrest along the Syrian border and for villages where anti-government protests have been staged. (Ps.12:5)

More: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/12/20111213124929891303.html>

■ Egypt: Elections continue into 2012

The first stage of the elections for the People's Assembly was mostly peaceful. The second voting stage begins 14th December. Results show the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) and the An-Nour party will win 60-70% of the seats in this first stage with no party achieving an overall majority. A coalition government will be formed. The FJP is dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood, with some Christians, including a vice president and several candidates. Support for the Salafist based (i.e. hard-line Islamist) Al-Nour party was higher than anticipated. Many fear a strong Islamist presence in the lower house of parliament leaving minorities, including Christians, further marginalised and restricted. However Coptic Catholic Patriarch Antonios Naguib said, 'We have a great hope that a better situation will come out.' Many are working hard for democracy and a society and constitution based on human rights, equality and civic society.

Pray: God's purposes will come about through the second stage of voting and a democratic government will be elected. (Ac.4:25-27)

More: <http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/election-results-in-egypt-worry-catholic-leaders/>

■ South Asia: EU asked to support minority rights

The British Pakistani Christian Association (BCPA) was among the groups at the European Parliament in Brussels to present the EU with a manifesto to prevent human rights abuses against minorities. The document states that religious,

ethnic and sexual minorities are among the most vulnerable groups in South Asia, facing the threat of land grabs, assault, forced conversions and murder. Attacks on places of worship, businesses and homes are frequent, and life is made difficult in some places as a result of discriminatory laws. Many of these human rights abuses go unreported. The report states it is too difficult for people and human rights organisations in South Asia to access support from the EU. The manifesto recommends that the EU take steps to close the gap between its institutions and human rights campaigners working on the ground in South Asian countries. See also article 4 below.

Pray: the Lord will enable the manifesto to be acted upon in Asia. (Ps.113:7)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/human.rights.groups.press.eu.to.support.minority.rights.in.south.asia/29019>

■ **Pakistan: Christians attacked in land grab**

Eight police officials and armed associates of a retired senior military officer arrived at the fields of Nazeer Masih and ordered seven women working at cultivating chickpeas to leave' said the area Christian rights advocate. The men told the workers that they had come to take possession of the 12.5 acres that Nazeer Masih owns which they claimed had now been allotted to the Pakistan Army for distribution among retired officials. The women had been cultivating the land since 1976. About 800 Christians have lived in the district for the last 50 years. Christians have cultivated 10,000 acres over the years. The land is actually owned by the government but Christians own the properties according to record with the local revenue department. In recent years Muslims have successfully seized land from Christians because Christians are a marginalized minority.

Pray: for Christians to be allowed to continue to live in peace and farm the land. (Zec.7:9)

More: <http://www.opendoorsuk.org/news/stories/index.php?newsitem=6&date=01dec2011&country=pakistan>

■ **Ethiopia: Police and Muslim students demolish church**

More than 500 Muslim students accompanied by Muslim police officials burned down a church in the village of Qoto Baloso. Four days earlier 30 police tried to destroy it but managed only to remove the roof when Christians protested. The court ruled that the church was built without proper authorisation and therefore had to be demolished. The church has stood on the land for over 60 years, and the supreme court of the south nations had previously ruled in favour of the Christians when a Muslim business man claimed ownership of the land. All the government officials in the area are Muslims. Non Muslims there live and worship in fear. The actions of the Muslim police as well as the students show the growing Islamisation of Ethiopia.

Pray: the Ethiopian government will stop violations against the rights of Christian minorities in areas dominated by Muslims. (Lev.19:15)

More: <http://www.persecution.org/2011/12/13/ethiopian-police-and-muslim-students-demolish-church-2/>

■ **Uzbekistan: Churches banned from evangelism**

Authorities warned churches not to allow youngsters and children to attend worship services and not to carry out missionary activities. Deputy Head of Administration met officials of the Catholic, Russian Orthodox, Presbyterian, Seventh-day Adventist and Baptist churches in Angren city telling them, 'All unregistered religious activity is a criminal offense, in defiance of the international human rights agreements Uzbekistan is a party to.' He demanded the churches provide him with lists of members (a move resembling the time when Uzbekistan was still part of the Soviet Union). Church leaders refused to give names amid concerns authorities could pressure individuals. These developments came after a Baptist Christian, was fined 80 times the minimum monthly wage when police broke up a meeting of Baptists on holiday together. Also, two schoolgirls stopped attending church after police threatened they 'will be in police records and thrown out of school'.

Pray: that fanatical religious persecution will not re-emerge in the region. (Ps.37:11)

More: <http://www.worthynews.com/11112-uzbekistan-churches-banned-from-evangelism-youth-worship>

■ **INSIGHT ARTICLE: Sunni Shiite troublesome relationship**

The New York Times reported: The withdrawal of the United States from Iraq leaves Mr. Abu Risha and the militia units he commands, known broadly as the Sunni Awakening, to navigate increasingly troublesome relations with the central Shiite-led government of Iraq. See: <http://atwar.blogs.nytimes.com/category/iraq-war-2003-2011/> The Sunni Awakening, remain outside the new Iraqi police force and army and the ragtag groups of men wearing jeans and carrying rifles at dusty checkpoints throughout western Iraq are a loose end left by the United States. Some Awakening members are former insurgents and members of Saddam Hussein's Baath Party who fought in a nationalist wing of the Sunni uprising early in the war, a matter of grave concern to the Shiite-dominated government. Without the buffer provided by the Americans relations between the Awakening and the central government, always touchy, are growing increasingly strained, and the government now wants the Awakening to disband by Dec. 31st. For INSIGHTS into Shiite and Sunni relationships across the Middle East click the **Info** button.

Pray: for a progressive atmosphere of peaceful relationships across various tribal groups in Iraq. (Ps.147:10-11)

Info: http://site.prayer-alert.net/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=355&Itemid=93

PRAYER FORUM OF THE BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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