

PRAYER ALERT...

An initiative of the Prayer Forum of the British Isles & Ireland
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Issue 31-2012

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Thursday 2 August 2012

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PRaise REPORTS

■ Olympic cross

A wooden cross has been specially crafted by the Catholic Church to symbolise its service to others during the Olympics. It has been placed at the Joshua Camp, an international gathering of Catholics providing hospitality and organising service projects to coincide with the Olympics. James Parker, Catholic Executive Coordinator for the 2012 Games said, 'We wanted to create a keepsake that symbolises everything the Games truly represent, something we could then pass on to future Olympic host nations. As Christians our lives mean nothing without the cross and so this seemed to be the most suitable object of commission for ourselves and as a future gift to others.'

Praise: and thank God for the abundant Christian witness permeating through the whole of the Olympic season.

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/catholics.reach.out.with.olympic.cross/30377.htm>

■ Praise Bus & Prayer Rally

The atmosphere was 'electric' as the Praise Bus rolled into London last week, says one of the people behind the historic project. The open top double decker left Land's End on 19 May and traversed the nation ahead of the Olympic torch, travelling more than 8,500 miles through England, Scotland and Wales and playing host to over a hundred musicians and singers who filled the air with Christian-inspired music. An estimated million people saw the Praise Bus during its 65-day journey. Also, a 70-day prayer relay ended its journey in Westminster last Thursday, having accompanied the Olympic torch to 70 towns and cities as it criss-crossed the nation. In each location, church leaders exchanged a prayer baton containing prayers and a specially written prayer of blessing. The final stop was the Emmanuel Centre, a stone's throw away from the Houses of Parliament and Westminster Abbey where a prayer session was hosted by Christian groups serving in Parliament.

Praise: God for the diversity and unity of the Christian witness of the Church across the British Isles.

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/national.prayer.relay.ends.in.westminster/30357.htm>

2012 LONDON GAMES



■ Child sex trafficking threat

Major sporting events such as World Cups and Olympic Games are often preceded by warnings about a rise in prostitution and sex trafficking as a result of the impending influx of spectators. The children's charity Barnardo's has warned hoteliers and bar staff near to the Olympic Park in Stratford to be on the lookout for any vulnerable youngsters during the Games, and has produced a leaflet to help those in the travel and hospitality industry to spot the signs of sexual exploitation. Barnardo's has also called for better data collection of the crime to prevent children being abused during the next few weeks. Chief executive Anne Marie Carrie said, 'With a huge influx of visitors to the capital everyone needs to play their part in spotting the signs that sexual exploitation is taking place. We must pull together to ensure that protection of vulnerable children is gold standard during the Olympics.'

Pray: for effective communications between the many agencies working to eliminate sex trafficking in our towns and cities. (Ps.17:13)

More: http://www.london24.com/news/crime/olympic_child_sex_trafficking_a_threat_says_charity_1_1453812

■ Religion playing strong role in background of Olympic Games

In a BBC radio broadcast, Anglican canon Duncan Green called on people everywhere in the world to live together in peace and harmony, in the spirit of the Olympic Games. The Multi-Faith Centre at the Olympic Village will be run by 50 chaplains working on shift around the clock and catering for the spiritual health needs of athletes from countries where Judaism, Islam, Christianity, and other religions are widespread. Many of the Church of England's parishes are planning events to coincide with the Olympic Games, while Anglican and Roman Catholic churches are organizing 'large screen' festivals which will bring together as many as 500,000 people. British churches will be supported by thousands of volunteers from Britain, the US, Latin America, and Scandinavia. Christian churches are providing free accommodation for more than 350 family members of athletes who would otherwise not have been able to attend the Games because of costly hotel prices.

Pray: for the volunteers, many working instead of taking a vacation, to experience God's blessings on all they undertake in His name. (Ps.145:1-7)

More: <http://www.eni.ch/featured/article.php?id=5829>

■ Church celebrates Lizzie Armitstead's Olympic win

A church in Otley, Yorkshire, is celebrating the Olympic silver medal win by Lizzie Armitstead as she finished the Women's Road Race on Sunday. She grew up in Otley and was in Junior Church at the Bridge United Reformed Church. She was also part of the Bridge Church Scout group. Her parents, John and Carol, are still members of the church, and her grandfather, the Rev Jeff Armitstead, is a retired URC minister. The congregation sent a card to Lizzie prior to her big race and sped home from Sunday worship to make sure they didn't miss her fantastic cycle road race. The church had planned a special 'Sing Olympics' for the evening worship and the mood was especially celebratory after Lizzie won Team GB's first medal of the London 2012 Games. Church Treasurer Andrew Howard said, 'Many of the church members have known Lizzie since she was a baby, and have watched her progress over the years. We are all absolutely thrilled that one of our own has had such success.'

Pray: that Lizzie and other Christians living in the Olympic Village will shine and reveal the Light of Christ amongst their fellow Olympians. (Mat.5:14-15)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.co.uk/article/church.celebrates.lizzie.armitsteads.olympic.win/30378.htm>

■ Pakistani Christians praying for team

Pakistanis are very excited watching their players show their best performance and send a message of peace to the world. For several years sports events have faced challenges in Pakistan. The memory of winning titles brings back smiles and provides a chance to people of all walks of life to celebrate. According to the Pakistan Olympic Association, 'There are 18 hockey players, two athletes, two swimmers, a shooter, 23 players, and 16 officials taking part in the 2012 Olympics.' Assist News Service Pakistan spoke to many Christian sports players and various other people to find out what they are saying about Olympics 2012, and what they expect from their players. Johnson Gill Christian cricket coach and Gospel minister said, 'I am with my team, and wish them best of luck as Pakistan badly needs to win gold medals to bring back the Games to Pakistan.'

Pray: for international impartiality and the true Olympic spirit to be displayed throughout the Games. (Pr.22:1)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/pakistani.christians.praying.for.their.olympic.team/30365.htm>

BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ World hunger summit on last day of Olympics

David Cameron confirmed a hunger summit will be held in London on August 12th, the last day of the Olympics. It was debated by the G8 in May and aims to speed up efforts to combat hunger and malnutrition globally. Heads of states, NGOs and private-sector leaders are expected to attend. No specific targets have been set so far, although NGOs are likely to push for a commitment to significantly reduce malnutrition by the next Olympics. David Cameron said it's important we remember people in other parts of the world who, far from being excited about the Olympics, are actually worried about their next meal and whether they are getting enough to eat. Save the Children reported, 'Malnutrition is the underlying cause of death for 2.6 million children each year.' Beijing, Athens and Sydney claimed regeneration from their Games London's legacy could be enormous if the world follows Britain's lead and helps millions of the world's neediest children.

Pray: that the hunger summit will kick-start genuine efforts to address world hunger. (Ps.82:1-4)

More: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/2012/jul/27/david-cameron-hunger-summit-olympics>

■ PM on collision course with Church

The Prime Minister David Cameron said he is absolutely determined that the Coalition Government would be 'legislating for gay marriage in this parliament.' He went on to say, 'The promise I can make you is that this coalition government is committed both to changing the law and also working to change the culture and the Conservative party absolutely backs that. This is something that I personally feel very passionately about.' In a separate development the Scottish Government intends to bring forward a bill introducing same-sex marriage in spite of strong opposition. The PM's claim of support from the Conservative party stands at odds with the public statements of various MPs, including Cabinet ministers who oppose the plans. On Friday leading Evangelical Christian groups released a written prayer for marriage to be used throughout the nation. See: <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/christians-urged-to-pray-for-marriage/>. The call for prayer has been jointly issued by CARE, Christian Concern, the Evangelical Alliance and The Christian Institute.

Pray: for the debate on marriage in society to be bathed in prayer - and for David Cameron to perceive God's unique way forward. (Ps.119:18)

More: <http://www.christianconcern.com/our-concerns/sexual-orientation/pm-on-collision-course-with-church-as-uk-governments-press-ahead-wit>

■ Scottish Women's Aid cases rising 'year on year'

Wigtownshire Women's Aid started as a counselling service 25 years ago but quickly extended its operations to women's refuges. Co-ordinator Hazel Maider said they continue to see the need for this service rise in south west Scotland. 'In part I think some of it is due to people being more aware of 'abusive relationships' now and should be asking for help sooner than they did in the past. 'The service has been praised by the region's Deputy Chief Constable who said the role played by non-statutory organisations such as Women's Aid was vital. Women's Aid UK reported - 2 women a week are killed by a current or former male partner - 1 in 4 women will be a victim of domestic violence in their lifetime, many of these on a number of occasions - one incident of domestic violence is reported to the Police every minute.

Pray: for crimes against women to receive increased attention, and for more professionals to be trained in recognising and addressing abuse within families. (Ps.140:4)

More: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-south-scotland-19049586>

■ Cooperating Christian organisations release Jesus Agenda

Micah Challenge has partnered with Christian Aid and Compassion UK to produce a new DVD entitled 'The Jesus Agenda'. This new production is actually a 9-week DVD-based course, which explores the biblical framework for advocacy through a social engagement perspective. Using the framework put forth by Luke 4:18-19, 'The Jesus Agenda' highlights the role of advocacy in the civic sphere and its relationship with the Proclamation, Power and Promise that is taught in Scripture. 'The Jesus Agenda' aims to raise awareness of God's heart for the poor and how He wants His followers to seek justice for the oppressed,' the Rev Joel Edwards, Micah Challenge International Director, told The Christian Post. With a new understanding of how followers of Christ are to seek justice for the neglected and marginalised, 'The Jesus Agenda' will enable advocates from around the globe the opportunity to be better informed and prepared so as to demand action from local governments.

Pray: for many to follow the DVD course and that it will have a far-reaching practical impact. (Lk 4:18-19)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/micah.challenge.releases.jesus.agenda/30367.htm>

■ Green council accused of 'vilifying' Christian

Britain's only Green Party council has been accused of 'violent prejudice' against Christians as it considers expelling a member who spoke out against same-sex marriage. Christina Summers, a member of Brighton and Hove City Council in Sussex, has been ordered to face a party disciplinary panel after voicing dissent over the issue. She was the only member of the council who at a meeting last week voted against a motion in support of the Government's plans to allow homosexual couples to marry. Miss Summers, a devout Christian, says that she strongly supports gay rights and the introduction of civil partnerships but could not back the change to marriage laws on religious grounds. She argued that equality did not require changing the traditional definition of marriage and told colleagues it was a matter of 'freedom of speech' for her. However, fellow Green councillors voted to launch an 'official inquiry process' into her stance, accusing her of bringing the party into disrepute.

Pray: for Christina's right to express her own belief to be upheld, and may the Green Party respect the principles of free speech. (Ps.19:8)

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/9429730/Green-council-accused-of-vilifying-Christian-over-gay-marriage-stance.html>

EUROPE

■ Estonia: Evangelism and prayer

Last week over a thousand Christians visited Tallinn in Estonia for a week-long series of events designed to share the love of Christ with old and young. They aimed to make the gospel relevant and attractive to those who have never heard the message, or considered it outdated and useless. About 50 projects took place, including serving the needs of the poor and marginalized, offering sports clinics, challenging teens in discussion of life's issues, concerts and seminars for professionals. Everything was bathed in 40 days of prayer as churches asked God to move in mighty and supernatural ways throughout the city.

Pray: for Estonians as they reach out with God's love, pray also for the Estonians organising the Polish Alpha Initiative which could revolutionize the spread of the gospel in Poland. (Ps.80:3)

More: <http://prayeurope.com/interact/articles/heartbeat-tallinn-has-arrived/>

■ Romania: Mission team visits church facing closure

While Romania is no longer a communist country, the government is trying to control the Church. Legislation being considered by the Romanian government specifically targets smaller churches. Patrick Klein with Vision Beyond Borders says, 'The government is making it more and more difficult, there's talk of closing churches with less than 200 people.' Vision Beyond Borders sent a mission team of 10 people to Romania to work with a church under threat of closure if this legislation is passed. Despite this threat the church's ministry is growing and impacting Romania for Christ. One of the elders wife has a gypsy background and they have a heart for the gypsy people and were encouraged when the teams ministered to the gypsies. He said, 'I really love these people. I want to reach them with the Gospel.'

Pray: for every people group in Romania and neighbouring ex-communist countries, to hear the truth of God's love for them. (Mat.28:19-20)

More: <http://www.christiantelegraph.com/issue17034.html>

WORLDWIDE

■ North Korea: Gospel balloons

'Seoul USA' has launched balloons filled with Bibles and Christian literature into North Korea for 40 years. In April they began attaching GPS tracking devices to the balloons to refine their effectiveness. Seven days after the first GPS tracking

launch North Korea began blocking GPS signals from South Korea. Jamming disrupts passenger air flights and ships. The jamming signals are coming from somewhere near the demilitarized zone between the two Koreas. This is precisely the area where Seoul USA's payloads have been shown to land. The jamming reveals just how concerned North Korea is over the balloon launches. North Korea doesn't fear military might. Economic sanctions don't slow them down. The economic situation in N Korea is dire, for internal reasons apart from external sanctions But the spread of the gospel is a direct and serious challenge to the message that Kim Il Sung is god and deserves the unquestioned allegiance of the people. To halt the spread of that message it seems that North Korea will stop at nothing.

Pray: for a softening of hearts and minds of North Koreans to God's truth; may now be the season of fruitfulness from this 40 year ministry. This may be one peripheral form of Christian witness to N Koreans, but there are many more effective ones, not least from Yonggi Cho's Church (Ps.95:7b-8)

More: <http://vomcblog.blogspot.co.uk/>

■ Iraq: Widows of Iraq

Women of Iraq have suffered the pain of three wars in 32 years. As a result 9% of Iraqi women are widows. Often the younger recently widowed women with only one or two children find new husbands. But for older widows and those having more children remarriage is rare and sometimes impossible. Several foreign governments actively helped the widows while their military forces were in Iraq. The Iraqi government itself has also made efforts to help the women, but the sheer scale of the problem is overwhelming for government agencies and their budgets. One can imagine the distress of women who have lost their husbands in a society which restricts female work and social activities. Having enough well-paying work to raise a family is beyond their ability, for many. A number have even turned to short or long term prostitution.

Pray: for a workable network of administration of resources to be created for orphans and widows. (Ja.1:27) Pray also during Ramadan for the people of Iraq to meet Jesus Christ (John 17:3).

More: <http://www.30-days.net/muslims/muslims-in/mid-near-east/iraqi-widows/>

■ China: Christians try to take legal action

A house church in far Western China's region of Xinjiang that took legal action against local police for earlier persecution has been targeted again by the police. On Sunday July 22nd Police took pastor Zhong Shuguang, his wife and fifteen other believers into custody for a day and confiscated church books. In April and May the church filed for an administrative review for having its church leader, Zhong Shuguang taken into custody for 15 days. Now the church has been targeted for a series of retaliatory actions by the local police. In July agents illegally entered the house of Zhong on the pretext of investigating an illegal meeting and took the projector, computer and other computer-related items. ChinaAid strongly condemns the authorities disregard for the law and wilfully trampling on the right to religious freedom of its citizens.

Pray: that the Chinese Christians currently being persecuted will experience God's protection and provision against illegal interference and attacks and may they continue to find creative opportunities to grow. (Ps.20:1)

More: <http://www.persecution.org/2012/07/29/chinese-christians-try-to-take-legal-action-face-new-detentions/>

■ Syria: Fight continues for Aleppo

With the bloodshed mounting in Aleppo the Arab League chief accused Assad's government of atrocities. A report on the Aleppo carnage Amnesty International said, 'Scores of demonstrators and bystanders, most of them young men and boys but including several children and older men, have been shot dead and hundreds injured in the city by security forces and the notorious Shabiha, the armed militias working alongside government forces. Some of the victims were bystanders who were not taking part in the demonstrations. Families of demonstrators and bystanders shot dead by security forces have been pressured to sign statements saying that their loved ones were killed by 'armed terrorist gangs'. Life for Aleppo's three million residents is becoming unbearable under military siege. An activist told the Associated Press by Skype. 'There is not enough food and people are trying to leave. We really need support from the outside. There is random shelling against civilians.'

Pray: for international protection for those who are trapped in the city and the 200,000 who have managed to escape.

More: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/08/20128125840642184.html>

■ India: Pastor and believers attacked

Twenty Bajrang Dal activists roughed up pastor Kamalesh and more than fifty believers at a prayer meeting in a in Bakli Village 55 kilometers from Raipur Chattisgarh. Men women and children were attending a prayer meeting at a house in a slum cluster on July 22nd, and during the prayers twenty armed men from Bajrang Dal openly identified themselves and threatened the pastor and believers. They accused Kamalesh of proselytization, desecrating idols and defaming and blaspheming their gods and goddesses. The perpetrators commanded the pastor and the believers to chant hymns praising Hindu gods and goddesses - the believers refused to oblige. The radicals tormented the congregation for 45 minutes and then left; but before leaving they threatened the women that they will not hesitate to violate them if they continue to follow Jesus Christ.

Pray: for God to build up and empower His Church in India as they face increasing anti-Christian violence. (Is.62:10)

More: <http://www.persecution.org/2012/07/30/radicals-threaten-to-rape-christian-women-in-indian-village/>

PRAYER FORUM OF THE BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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**Prayer Alert is a partnership project of the Prayer Forum of the British Isles and Ireland
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