

PRAYER ALERT...

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PRAISE REPORTS

■ Gloucester Council apologises for stopping a Christian group handing out tracts

Following the intervention of the Christian Legal Centre, Gloucester City Council has issued a statement apologising for stopping a Christian group from handing out leaflets and admitting it was wrong to stop them. The apology follows the threat of legal action after Gloucester City Council told a group of Christians that they could not distribute Christian literature in the town's city centre. The tracts were being handed out by members of at least ten city churches during 'Bible Day Gloucester' last month. Andrea Minichiello Williams, CEO of the Christian Legal Centre, which is supporting the group, commented: 'This is a victory for free speech. Gloucester City Council is to be commended for reversing their decision to ban the distribution of Christian literature. The Christian Gospel is all about freedom and freedom has been upheld in Gloucester. So much of what we value as a nation stems from the teachings of Jesus.'

Praise: God for the change of heart by Gloucester City Council. (Pr.92:1)

More: <http://www.christianconcern.com/our-concerns/religious-freedom/gloucester-council-backs-down-after-christian-group-stopped-from-shar>

■ Saudi woman publicly announces her faith in Christ

Last week a Saudi woman who introduced herself as 'Maryam' announced in a video published on the internet that she has forsaken Islam and converted to Christianity, according to Mohabat News. Apparently, she is the first Saudi-Arabian woman to publicly declare her faith in such a manner. The new convert said in the published video that she hasn't removed her Hijab for fear of her life and to keep her identity unknown. The publishing of the video on the internet angered Saudi officials and Muftis. They highly criticized the video and called urgently for necessary measures to stop Christian evangelism in Saudi Arabia. In the short video, Maryam says: 'I have quit the darkness of Wahhabi Islam and entered the light of Christianity. I dreamt that I needed to do this. Jesus Christ came to visit me in my dream and gave me the name of Maryam (Arabic pronunciation of Mary).'

Praise: God that He speaks through dreams and visions and pray for Maryam's continued blessing. (Joel.2:28)

More: <http://blog.godreports.com/2012/08/first-saudi-woman-publicly-announces-her-faith-in-christ/#more-1992>

2012 LONDON GAMES



■ Athletes in action - Olympians of faith

The following is an excerpt from Athletes in Action report on the prayer effort during the Olympic Games: 'Now that the Olympic Games are under way, we hope all of you are enjoying being able to pray for the 10,500 competing athletes BY NAME on a regular basis. We have heard so many great comments from many of you about how you are using this as a learning experience for your children, praying as a family or using the names with Sunday school classes. We're so blessed not only to have you help us cover these athletes with prayer but also that you are so EXCITED about doing it! It makes all

the work worth it! You might want to check out some of our stories on Olympians of Faith and pass these along to friends. Gives you someone to cheer for who loves God and is competing for His glory alone! You'll find those stories on this list with live links'.

Pray: that the testimonies of Olympians of faith will bless all those that they come into contact with. (1Cor.2:1)

More: http://www.athletesinaction.org/news/post/2012/07/17/Olympians-of-Faith-Features-Spotlight-Christian-Athletes-in-London-2012.aspx?utm_source=Constant%2BContact&utm_medium=Email%2BCC&utm_campaign=OLYMPIC2012

■ Churches help out after failure of Weymouth Olympic initiative

Weymouth's Bayside Festival for the Olympics has gone into liquidation. But churches from the area are helping shocked stallholders and security staff. Festival organisers closed their gates on Friday, blaming poor attendance. The Rev Anni Douglas, co-ordinator of Weymouth and Portland churches Refresh 2012 said, 'We sent our volunteers round the site to see how people were feeling, listening to them and providing refreshments. They really appreciated it and we had a good response,' she added. Refresh 2012, set up by the local churches to provide activities, youth events and exhibitions at the Olympic sailing site, were also hit by the closure. Refresh 2012 had offered to meet with the festival organisers Mainsail Ltd and the borough council on Friday to try to rescue the event. But their offer to mobilise an army of 300 local church volunteers to run the site and keep it going fell on deaf ears.

Pray: that the Christians in Weymouth will still be able to serve the community with offers of God's love. (1Pet.4:10)

More: <http://www.ekkleisia.co.uk/node/16898>

■ Crowds far surpass expectations for Church-hosted events

The number of people attending the hundreds of Olympic opening night events hosted by churches have far exceeded expectations, according to reports from round the UK, reports Michael Ireland, Senior International Correspondent, ASSIST News Service. Churches in Buckinghamshire had expected 2,500 people for their Opening Ceremony Festival but around 6,500 people turned up, according to a report by Krishana Kraft in www.morethangold.org.uk. 'It was a wonderful night for the entire family,' said organizer Rev Martyn Groves. 'Sky News broadcast live from our location. Many people thanked us for hosting the event, and we were able to tell them of our plans for the next two weeks like our two-week Kids' Holiday Club,' Groves said. Meanwhile, people queued round the block to pack into Purley Baptist Church in Surrey to attend the family-oriented Opening Ceremony Festival organized by local churches, according to the More Than Gold website.

Pray: for the continued success of the Olympic activities being run by churches throughout the country. (Heb.13:1-2)

More: <http://www.christiantelegraph.com/issue17050.html>

■ Salvation Army get on their bikes for Olympics

Many Olympic venues are already achieving iconic status - but one about to enter the public's consciousness already has an illustrious history. Next Saturday and Sunday the Salvation Army-owned Hadleigh Farm in Essex will play host to the Games' mountain biking event. It will be the first time an Olympics event has been hosted on land owned by the Salvation Army. The commercial farm is more than 120 years old and is continuing the work started by William Booth in helping unemployed or marginalized members of society to retrain and find employment. Comprising 600 acres of crop and 300 acres of organic grassland with a highly-regarded tea room and farm shop, it also houses a training centre to help people with special educational needs learn subjects such as IT and carpentry.

Pray: that this event will raise awareness of the work of the Salvation Army at Hadleigh Farm amongst those with special needs. (Ps.135:13-14)

More: <http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/2012/s12080033.htm>

BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ Call to respond to Government consultation on Internet safety

Campaigners are calling on members of the public to respond to a Government consultation on Internet safety. A petition launched by Premier Christian Media Trust and the Safermedia charity called upon the Government to force Internet Service Providers to make accessing pornography an adult-only opt-in service. More than 100,000 people signed the petition. Now Premier and Safermedia are asking the signatories to go one step further in their support by submitting a response to the consultation. The consultation asks for views 'on how parents and children can become better educated about how to minimise risks when online, but also to hear about the potential for technical solutions, and what can be done to address problems such as cyber-bullying'. The 10-week consultation was launched in June but the campaigners have criticised the timing, as it falls over the summer period when many families are on holiday.

Pray: for a massive response to the consultation that will encourage both Government and Internet Service Providers to make the changes needed. (1Jn.2:16)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.co.uk/article/call.to.respond.to.government.consultation.on.internet.safety/30409.htm>

■ 'Evangelicals are like totalitarian Muslims', says Government advisor

Evangelical Christians have been labelled extremist, and likened to 'totalitarian Muslims' by a senior Government advisor. Alan Judd, an advisor to the Secretary of State for Education, was commenting on recent free school applications by Evangelical Christians. Mr Judd's comments were strongly refuted by the Evangelical Alliance, which said the comments demonstrate a 'woeful lack of religious understanding at the heart of Government'. Steve Clifford, General Director of the Evangelical Alliance, said: 'It is wrong and worrying that a senior Government advisor brands evangelical Christians as extremist. There are approximately 2 million evangelical Christians in the UK, the fastest growing part of the Church worldwide. They take their faith seriously, but that does not make them extremist.' Commenting on the news, the

Conservative Home blog highlighted that evangelical Christians were also often misrepresented by the media and portrayed as horrendous bigots or murdering lunatics.

Pray: for better understanding of the Evangelical movement by government, its advisors and some parts of the media. (2Cor.10:3-5)

More: <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/evangelicals-are-like-totalitarian-muslims-says-govt-advisor/>

■ Police and churches partner to tackle crime

Speaking at a conference organised by Faith in Britain and the Metropolitan Police Service, Commissioner Bernard Hogan Howe said, 'There's no way that we can police this city alone - we have to do this with the people not to them.' The conference came just ahead of the first anniversary of the riots that brought scenes of violence, arson and looting to the streets of London, Manchester and other parts of the UK. The Commissioner concluded by saying, 'It can't be just about enforcement - it has to be about diversion, encouraging people to live a better life.' Les Isaac, whose Ascension Trust has pioneered Street Pastors across the UK, challenged the Church to act. 'If my gospel is just for Sunday morning it is absolutely useless, if it is just for heaven then it is not to be talked about. It starts here on earth in a very practical way.'

Pray: that this conversation will produce more ways in which the Church can help the Police's work tackling the many forms of disorder in society. (Ps.33:12-14)

More: <http://www.eauk.org/current-affairs/politics/police-and-churches-partner-to-tackle-crime.cfm>

■ Police chief warns on spending cuts

One of Britain's most senior police chiefs Sir Norman Bettison of West Yorkshire Police warned that Government spending cuts will leave officers unable to cope with a repeat of the riots that swept the country last year. He said the demand for forces to axe 20% from their budgets by 2015 will put public safety 'in jeopardy' and make policing widespread disorder virtually impossible. His fears were echoed by the chief constable of South Yorkshire Police, David Crompton who said minimising the impact on frontline services will become impossible if there are further cuts. 'At the moment we are keeping a lid on things and they are going in the right direction. That is a tribute to everyone in this force.' Both forces ruled out privatising frontline services and following the example of Lincolnshire Police, which has signed a controversial £20 million contract with security firm G4S.

Pray: that God would give the Government wisdom as they utilise the diverse budgets at their disposal. (Pr.16:16)

More: <http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/local-national/uk/police-chief-warns-on-spending-cuts-16195266.html>

EUROPE

■ Norway called beacon of hope one year after massacre

Bishop Munib A. Younan, President of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), has called Norway a beacon of hope and inspiration for the way it has dealt with the horror and pain of last year's massacre. Younan was speaking on 30 July at the week-long St Olav Festival in Trondheim, which runs from 28 July to 5 August, according to a report from Lutheran World Information, the LWF's news service. He spoke following the one-year anniversary of Norway's deadliest attack since the Second World War, where an anti-Muslim extremist on 22 July 2011, killed 77 people in two separate attacks in Oslo and on the island of Utoya where a youth camp was gathered. 'You have shown, in the way you have processed the horror and pain of 22 July 2011 that you do not accept violence as a means of obtaining social and political change. You represent today - in our tested, pluralistic world - values of social justice, multiculturalism and unity in diversity,' he noted.

Pray: that Norway will continue to shine as a beacon of hope. (Job.27:8)

More: <http://www.ekkleisia.co.uk/node/16890>

■ Spain foils terror plot involving ultra-light aircraft

Over the years, terrorists have used sports drinks, shoes, and even underwear to hide explosive material. Now, authorities in Spain say three terror suspects were experimenting with ultra-light planes. Spanish authorities believe the terrorists intended to use pleasure craft for far deadlier purposes. They also believe they were linked with al-Qaeda, long known for its obsession with arming aircraft. Today a judge in Spain's National Court will question the suspects and decide whether they'll remain detained. They include a Russian, a Russian of Chechen descent, and a Turk. Authorities arrested the Turk in the southern town of La Linea and picked up the other two in the central town of Ciudad Real.

Pray: for the continued vigilance of the authorities in the face of the variety of ways that terrorists use to attack. (2Tim.4:18)

More: <http://europenews.dk/en/node/57164>

WORLDWIDE

■ Afghanistan: Refugees in Pakistan

Pakistan faces international pressure to extend the stay of Afghan refugees beyond 31st December. The Pakistan Government's response is, 'When their refugee status expires on December 31st they must leave.' Pakistan intends to expel 3 million Afghans, 1.7 million of them registered and more than half of these living in camps. Most refugees have lived in Pakistan for more than 30 years, and have nothing to return to; their homes, lands and businesses have been destroyed by war or taken by others. Although they live in extreme poverty they would have even less in their native land. Bukahri, an Afghan tribal elder who has been in Pakistan for 30 years running an electrical shop and doing social work said, 'I'm not saying we won't go, but at this point in time, Afghanistan is weak and will not be able to take this burden.'

Pray: for Afghanistan to prepare for this influx and for many to have homes land and businesses restored. Pray also for refugees to be introduced to the One who is their shield and provider. (Ps.18:36)

More: http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/NH07Df02.html

■ Syria: Syrians are 'terrified'

'People are terrified,' said Chaldean Christian Bishop Antoine Audo. 'The situation is becoming more and more violent and uncertain.' Thousands have already fled the war-torn areas and those trapped in the crossfire are running out of food and basic supplies. People are sleeping in schools and parks, there is a great human need now, we don't know what will come next. Scores of people are being killed every day as hundreds are continuously being forced from their homes.' While al-Assad's regime has been portrayed as tyrannical by many some suggest that at least it protected religious freedom and allowed minorities like Christians to live in peace. Many fear Syria will change if radical Islamists take over and bring in Sharia law.

Pray: that this terrible war will ultimately bring about God's way forward for the people of Syria and that many will turn to the One who rescues the lives of the needy. (Jer.20:13)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/aleppo.bishop.syrians.are.terrified/30425.htm>

■ Nigeria: Gunmen and bombs

A suicide bomber in Damaturu Nigeria has killed at least six soldiers and two civilians when he rammed a car into a military vehicle that was part of a convoy. No group has said it carried out the bombing. Damaturu is frequently attacked by Boko Haram. See: <http://www.mmegi.bw/index.php?sid=11&aid=295&dir=2012/August/Tuesday7> Nineteen worshippers were killed when gunmen opened fire at Deeper Life Evangelical Church during their Monday evening service in Kogi State. No group has yet claimed responsibility, but Boko Haram has claimed scores of attacks on churches in northern and central Nigeria in recent months. Twenty-four hours after the church attack gunmen came to a local mosque and tried to force their way in as Muslims gathered for their Tafsir prayer. They opened fire and killed two soldiers guarding the premises. See: <http://allafrica.com/stories/201208080062.html> Nigeria is Africa's most populous nation and largest oil producer. It is roughly divided between a Muslim north and Christian south.

Pray: for Christian and Muslim leaders in Nigeria's Government to be able to instil calm and a peaceful co-existence. (Pr.29:4)

More: <http://www.france24.com/en/20120807-nigeria-gunmen-storm-deeper-life-bible-church-okene-kogi-state-15-dead-boko-haram-unrest>

■ World: Night of Power and Egyptian students

Muslims worldwide search for 'The Night of Power' during the odd nights of the last ten days of Ramadan, the Muslim month of fasting. For fourteen centuries Muslims have stayed up all night listening to lectures and reading the Quran, reflecting on their lives, the objects of their wants and fears and seeking their creator in prayer. In 2012 The Night of Power will fall around August 9 -18th - In Egypt some Christians formed a nationwide covenant to pray and fast during Ramadan and reach out to Muslim neighbours in love. Wearing t-shirts declaring 'Jesus loves you,' the students distributed boxes filled with bottled water and bags of figs at busy intersections. Knowing commuters were eager to get home to break their fast, they handed out their 'gifts' to the gridlocked motorists. Each bag also held a CD from a joint concert featuring a Christian singer and a Muslim religious chanter.

Pray: during Ramadan for many Muslims to meet the true Creator God and may the Egyptian Christians be empowered and protected as they share the love of Jesus. (Ps.50:1-2)

More: <http://www.islamicity.com/articles/articles.asp?ref=IC0112-380>

■ Congolese churches issue a 'cry of distress' over war

Protestant churches in the Democratic Republic of Congo have issued a 'cry of distress' following increased killing and displacement of civilians in the fighting between the army and rebels in the eastern parts of the country. Hundreds of people have been killed, according to various reports, but exact numbers are difficult to ascertain. More than 15,000 have sought refuge in Rwanda and Uganda, according to the churches. 'We denounce these wars and the attempt by the rebels to balkanize our country,' said the Rev Josue' Bulambo Lembelembé, a vice-president of the Church of Christ in Congo in North Kivu in a statement on 4 August. Since 1994, an estimated six million people have died in meaningless wars, the churches said. Currently, nearly two million people are displaced in DRC and millions are at the mercy of militias who kill, rape and loot, according to Oxfam, a UK charity.

Pray: for the people of DR Congo that God would intervene and stop the killing and answer the cry of distress. (Ps.5:1-4)

More: <http://www.eni.ch/featured/article.php?id=5851>

PRAYER FORUM OF THE BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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