

PRAYER ALERT...

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PRAISE REPORTS

■ From guerrilla leader to church leader

A man sentenced to 190 years behind bars for a brutal murder is now leading a prison church in Colombia. This came about through the prayers of Christian prisoners and a theological education programme they help direct. This man was so violent he'd served eight years in solitary confinement. But his Christian fellow prisoners prayed for him daily – they would sit outside his cell singing and praying. One night God touched this man and he believed. This had a big impact in the prison. This man eventually graduated from the same theological programme in 2005 and now helps lead the prison church. His sentence has recently been reduced to 19 more years for good behaviour and the programme has been welcomed in 23 out of 25 major prisons in Colombia.

Praise: and thank God for his omnipresent power and answer to every prayer. (Ac.3:19)

More: <http://www.cms-uk.org/Ourstories/Newsarticles/tabid/151/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/4381/From-guerrilla-leader-to-church-leader.aspx>

■ Schools: Opportunity for fresh expressions of Church

A booklet called 'Thirst' from Church Army reveals potential for more school-based fresh expressions of church. Thirst was founded by Sue Butler, who was surprised to find that although the local school was a Church of England primary, the social and cultural gap was too great for parents to join in with traditional forms of church. The reports back from Thirst have been positive, with leaders feeling it has made a tangible difference to the overall life of the school. Church of England primary schools are an 'open goal' for the Church as they tend to be receptive mission contexts for pioneering fresh expressions of church; however there is a challenge in finding pioneering leaders with the necessary links, resources and skills to make the most of the opportunities.

Praise: God for Christian mission work in schools – may every expression of faith grow and flourish. (Ps.34:11)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.co.uk/article/mission.researcher.sees.opportunities.for.church.in.schools/30993.htm>

BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ Oil man called by God

Sometimes we wait the best part of a lifetime for God to lead us into a particular calling and sometimes He grabs the reins and puts everything into top gear. Justine Welby (soon to be Archbishop of Canterbury) began studying theology in 1989 after working 11 years for a French oil company. He has been a bishop for less than a year. His rise has been rapid and remarkable. He has the benefit of understanding commerce, and Mammon. He oversaw the parliamentary inquiry into banking standards and the Libor fixing scandal – earning respect from political circles. Things will change rapidly for him in his next position, no longer focusing his energies on a diocese and parliamentary enquiries. His future has become much more diverse and challenging.

Pray: for God to inspire and use Justin Welby's background to unite the Church of England on women bishops, gay marriage and the international Anglican communion. (Is.41:13,14)

More: http://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/10033178.Justin_Welby_The_oil_man_called_by_God/

■ 15th Nov Police elections

Elections for Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) will take place next Thursday across England and Wales. They are described as the biggest policing shake-up for 50 years. For the first time ever an individual will be responsible for setting police budgets and strategic priorities. A Police and Crime panel sitting alongside the elected Commissioner would make sure that their decisions, including the sacking of a chief constable, were not taken 'maliciously or capriciously'. New York famously managed to halve crime by adopting zero-tolerance policing when Mayor Rudy Giuliani asked his Police Chief to focus on small crimes, sending a message of order being restored. In the UK Ray Mallon, a former Police Officer, helped cut crime in Middlesbrough when he was Mayor.

Pray: for those elected to be free to work independent of political agendas in the communities that they will be responsible for. (Ps.37:37,38)

More: <http://www.policeelections.com/>

■ Reality of austerity

As part of 'Living Wage Week' the Northern TUC will be holding a conference on 'Wages, Poverty and Pay Day Loans - the reality of austerity' on Friday Nov 9th showing how austerity measures have depressed wages and increased the squeeze on living standards and hardship for people in low wage jobs. Facts revealed include * The majority of children living in poverty are in households where at least one person is in work * £6 billion each year is spent in benefits and tax credits to top up the wages of low paid employees * Over 90% of new housing benefit claims are from people in work * If the national minimum wage had increased in line with top earners, it would be more than £19 per hour today.

Pray: for God to give the Government, unions and others in positions of authority His wisdom as they face social and economic problems. (Is.58:10-12)

More: <http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/17329>

■ Universities receive Saudi funds

Over the past decade, Saudi Arabia has been the largest source of donations from Islamic states and royal families to British universities, much of which has been to the study of Islam, the Middle East and Arabic literature. A large share of this money has been used towards establishing Islamic study centres. Prince Alwaleed bin Talal donated £8 million to Cambridge and Edinburgh respectively for this purpose. Over recent years Oxford received Saudi support of £2 million to the Ashmolean Museum and £1 million to the Middle East Centre. There are many other donors. Oxford's £75 million Islamic Studies Centre was supported by 12 Muslim countries. Sultan Qaboos bin Said, of Oman gave £3.1 million to Cambridge to fund two posts, including a chair of Arabic. The Saïd Business School at Oxford University was set up by a Syrian-Saudi businessman, with a £23 million donation.

Pray: for Universities to be able to tap a variety of lucrative sponsors without abandoning established national syllabus and ethos.

More: <http://www.arabnews.com/british-universities-receive-saudi-funds>

■ Climate change march

Christians will join a Campaign Against Climate Change march in London on 1 Dec that starts at the US Embassy. The US consistently rejects the Kyoto protocol and is still the biggest immediate barrier to effective internationally coordinated action on climate. The march finishes at the Houses of Parliament. Christians, Ecology Link and Operation Noah will be joining together ahead of the start of the march for an ecumenical worship service at Grosvenor Chapel. Global climate change is having a devastating impact on the lives of people around the world. In the UK Christian Aid is lobbying the Government to give the poorest people a voice in climate negotiations. They ask us to support their partners by bringing the issues to God in prayer. See: <http://www.christianaid.org.uk/resources/churches/prayer/climate-change.aspx>

Pray: that this march will motivate governments to take further positive actions. (Eph.2:10)

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

■ UK doctors forgo treatment

Thousands of practicing doctors in the UK have drinking problems and suffer from depression, several recent studies reported. They continue to treat patients because of a 'culture of invincibility' and 'presenteeism,' as well as a fear of exposure. A GMC report found that 98 per cent of 1,384 doctors who had underlying health concerns over the past five years were diagnosed with alcohol and substance abuse or mental health issues. While there is no evidence to suggest that ill doctors have harmed patients in their care, the study argued it is likely that they provide a 'less good service.' Dr Max Henderson from King's College London's Institute for Psychiatry said, 'Doctors feel ashamed of being unwell and they don't deal with illness well, they find it hard to exchange the doctor role for the patient role.'

Pray: for doctors suffering burnout, stress, and work-related pressures to find appropriate paths of treatment. (Pr.3:13-17)

More: <http://rt.com/news/uk-work-henderson-health-157/>

■ Abortion consultation U-turn

Health Minister Anna Soubry announced the Government 'did not intend to change the law or the guidelines'. She said that pressing ahead with a consultation on the issue would be nothing more than an 'otiose exercise'. Last year proposals were introduced to ensure women considering an abortion would be guaranteed access to independent advice prior to being referred to an abortion provider. Currently, women considering an abortion are often referred to abortion providers

themselves for advice. Andrea Minichiello Williams, of Christian Concern, commented, 'This is very disappointing and very little has been given to justify the decision to drop the consultation.'

Pray: for all those facing the prospect of having an abortion to have access to quality, independent advice. (Ps.32:8)

More: <http://www.christianconcern.com/our-concerns/abortion/government-makes-u-turn-on-abortion-consultation>

EUROPE

■ Belarus: Dictatorship and Christian persecution

Belarus is bordered by Russia to the northeast. Twenty years ago the Soviet regime fell. Open Doors USA reports Belarus continuing to suffer under a similar regime. In law and practice the government of Belarus violates its citizens' freedom of thought, conscience and religion or belief. Unregistered religious activity is a criminal offence. Many churches have to wait several years to register and all religious activity is monitored by the Secret Police. Active participation in unregistered religious groups results in a two-year term of imprisonment or heavy court-imposed fines. The law restricts religious education for children. On 23 Sep, there were elections in Belarus. President Alexander Lukashenko's supporters won every seat. Lukashenko, formerly a state farm director, has been in power since 1994, presiding over the last dictatorship in Europe. Belarus is stuck in the Soviet past, under the grip of a brutal regime. But a few dissidents still cling to the small hope that things will improve

Pray: for Christians in Belarus to remain strong despite the persecution that they face. (Ps.45:4-6)

More: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/oct/07/belarus-inside-europes-last-dictatorship>

■ Turkey: Patriot missiles on Syria border

Turkey's Foreign Minister said NATO is preparing to deploy patriot missiles to bolster border defences with Syria. The surface-to-air missiles will be able to shoot down aircraft up to 160 kilometers away. His comments appeared to contradict a statement from the Turkish Prime Minister who said, 'We do not have any thoughts of acquiring patriots by paying money,' NATO also said that they hadn't received an 'official' request from Turkey for the missiles. The possibility of enforcing a Syrian no-fly zone where rebel fighters would be protected from attacks by the government's Air Force has been on the table for some time despite NATO's reluctance to intervene in the Syrian conflict without a mandate from the UN Security Council. 'Plans for the deployment were put on hold pending the US election result' a source explained on condition of anonymity because of ministry prohibitions on speaking with the media. The official said missile deployment might happen under a NATO umbrella.

Pray: for God to encourage governments to make the decisions that will bring about the beginning of the end of hostilities. (Ps.97:3-6)

More: <http://rt.com/news/turkey-syria-patriot-missile-border-168/>

WORLDWIDE

■ World: Persecuted Church - Silent for the gospel

For Christians who wanted to speak up for the Persecuted Church but didn't know what to say Release International is running a sponsored silence. Christians in the UK and Ireland will be staying silent in solidarity with Christians silenced for their faith around the world on Nov 25th. Funds raised by the initiative will support victims of persecution like Asia Bibi, a Christian woman on death row in Pakistan for blasphemy. Chinese Christian lawyer Gao Zhisheng, who has been repeatedly arrested, imprisoned and tortured by the authorities and is back behind bars; Iranian pastor Behnam Irani, arrested while leading a Bible study, and severely beaten in jail. There is widespread concern over his deteriorating health. 17-year-old Eva Abdullah from Tanzania, who has been jailed for two years after being accused of desecrating the Koran and Eritrean evangelist Mussie Ezaz, who was arrested in 2007 and is in prison in the capital Asmara.

Pray: that these actions will speak louder than words - raising funds and awareness of the Persecuted Church. (Ps.119:156,157)

More: <http://www.releaseinternational.org/pages/posts/keep-silent-for-the-sake-of-the-gospel---release-launches-sponsored-silence-to-help-christians-silenced-for-their-faith-1046.php>

■ Worldwide: Disabled people not to be ignored

Disabled people must be put 'at the heart' of international development, The Leprosy Mission has said. The estimated billion disabled people worldwide were 'not effectively included' within the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). International leaders were hosted by David Cameron in London last week for discussions on a global development strategy post 2015 - the target year for the fulfilment of the MDGs. The panel is to make recommendations to the United Nations about what should replace the MDGs. The Leprosy Mission said many disabled people around the world were 'excluded' from society and at a greater risk of being trapped in extreme poverty, with half of disabled people being out of work. Head of Programmes Co-ordination at The Leprosy Mission, Sian Arulanantham, said: 'We are lobbying for disability to be specifically included in the new post 2015 framework.'

Pray: for the work of The Leprosy Mission and for a greater awareness of the issues faced by those with any form of disability across the world. (Gal.6:2)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.co.uk/article/global.leaders.urged.to.include.disabled.in.development.plans/30962.htm>

■ USA: America has chosen its future

On paper, Mr Obama should have been in trouble. He became the first president to achieve re-election since FDR with an unemployment rate of 7.9 per cent. A swathe of statewide ballots culminated in US states supporting legalizing marijuana for recreational use, allowing gay marriage and rejecting a call to ban public funding for abortions. These moves were decided among more than 170 ballot initiatives and referendums held across the country. The upsides of Mr Obama's victory ensures the survival of healthcare reform bringing the US more or less into line with other rich countries providing

guaranteed coverage, if and when implemented, for all their citizens; and American foreign policy will be in the hands of a leader of proven cool and sound judgement, who no longer has to worry about his next election. Mitt Romney urged his supporters to set aside partisan differences and Barack Obama also stated his desire to work with Mitt Romney to take the country forward.

Pray: the President to have a united government that will successfully implement solutions to the challenges ahead.(Eph.4:3)

More: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/obama-wins-four-more-years-as-romney-challenge-is-crushed-8289578.html>

▣ North Africa: Sudan/South Sudan border negotiations

Sudan and South Sudan continue to try to negotiate their common border with the help of the UN. The struggle remains over oil resources and pipelines where there is continual border fighting. Refugees who fled Sudan after South Sudan's independence live in dire conditions. Their situation worsens as the rains have started. More than 20,000 Sudanese refugees need to be relocated from the waterlogged and overcrowded refugee camps in South Sudan's Upper Nile. Living conditions, massive influxes of people and lack of potable water have made some camps unlivable. One refugee camp has reached its maximum capacity of 34,500 refugees. We are asked to pray for the basic needs of these refugees to be met, (water, food and sanitation). Pray for the young, old, and frail—the most vulnerable. Ask the Lord to defend the weak and the fatherless and uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed.

Pray: for the negotiators to find a peaceful way forward in the face of extreme hostilities. For justice and righteousness to prevail and protection for those living in this area. (Pr. 11:6 & , Ps.82:2-3)

More: http://win1040.com/prayer_points.php

▣ Egypt: Christians experience lack of law and order

Egyptian Christians have requested our prayers following a series of similar incidents in several provinces across the country in which Christians have been threatened or attacked. Egyptian Christians are keen to stress that there are a range of motivations behind these incidents, and the primary call is for prayer that effective rule of law will be established and applied equitably to all citizens and institutions throughout the country. On 5th Nov a group of Salafists occupied church-owned land in the Shubra district of Cairo. In early Nov the General Manager of the Coptic Agricultural Bank was kidnapped, a ransom was demanded, but effective police action led to his release on 4th Nov with no payment made. In late Oct a Christian concert was stopped. These incidents often occur as a result of inadequate state security provision. Since January 2011 Christian communities have become increasingly vulnerable. Authorities seem unable or reluctant to protect Christians from extremist assailants.

Pray: the government will uphold the rule of law. Pray also for the new constitution currently being drafted. (Ps.7:9)

More: http://www.meconcern.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=563:egypt-lack-of-law-and-order-affecting-christians&catid=7:prayer-requests&Itemid=12

▣ Israel: Syrian infighting spills into Israel

Three mortar shells fired from Syria hit Israel on Thursday. One shell landed on a northern Israeli community, the other two exploded in open areas, in what appears to have been erroneous targeting. This is the third unusual incident involving Syria in less than a week. See: <http://www.haaretz.com/> On Saturday three Syrian tanks crossed the demilitarized border in the Golan Heights. The demilitarized zone in the Golan Heights is patrolled by U.N. peacekeepers to maintain a ceasefire between the neighbours. Israeli media said the tanks were involved in the fighting with rebels. Israeli U.N. Ambassador Ron Prosor said, 'The international community and the Security Council should address this alarming development without delay to prevent further dangerous escalation.'

Pray: for the security and stability of the region. (Ps.9:3-5)

More: http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2012-11-06/news/sns-rt-us-israel-syria-tanks-unbre8a51ev-20121106_1_syrian-tanks-syrian-army-golan-heights

▣ Increase in persecution across '10/40 window'

There has been a steep increase in persecution across the '10/40 window' in the last decade, says Gospel for Asia. It warned that in India alone there had been a '400 per cent' increase in persecution. The 10/40 window encompasses the countries that have been least reached with the Gospel. Gospel for Asia President K P Yohannan said that people who had not experienced persecution 'do not fully understand what it means to have their lives threatened, homes destroyed, rights violated and loved ones imprisoned, all because of embracing faith in Jesus Christ'. Christians in the 10/40 region have had their homes destroyed or been imprisoned because of accusations against them, including accusations of forced conversions. Many have been killed because of their belief in Christ and others have been forced to go underground. 'The increase of this kind of persecution should not be surprising where the Gospel is going forth in unfriendly world areas,' said Yohannan.

Pray: for all Christians around the world who find themselves persecuted for their faith. (2Ti.3:12)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/increase.in.persecution.across.1040.window/30949.htm>

PRAYER FORUM OF THE BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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