

# PRAYER ALERT...

An initiative of the Prayer Forum of the British Isles & Ireland  
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## PRaise REPORTS

### ■ Salvation Army band to represent Switzerland at Eurovision Song Contest

A Salvation Army band has won the right to represent Switzerland at next year's Eurovision Song Contest for the first time. Featuring a 94-year-old on stand-up bass, the six-piece band romped to victory despite stiff competition from more accomplished groups boasting big record sales. The band will carry the weight and hopes of Swiss expectation next year in the Swedish town of Malmo with its English language ballad entitled 'You and Me', which departs from the traditional brass-band Army sound with heavy electric guitars. But the band has spurned the Eurovision kitsch and sequins, with most of its members wearing the traditional Salvation Army uniform. In its only concessions to 21st-Century fashion, the lead guitarist wears jeans while a tambourine-waving singer wears a polo shirt emblazoned with the Salvation Army motif. The group's victory was described as 'sensational' by Tages Anzeiger, a Swiss newspaper.

**Praise:** [God for this wonderful opportunity to sing God's praises and witness to an international audience. \(Jdg.5:3\)](#)

**More:** <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/switzerland/9750415/Salvation-Army-band-to-represent-Switzerland-at-Eurovision-Song-Contest.html>

### ■ European Council President points to Christ

Not many people would see the European Union as 'Christian', but Jeff Fountain, former director of YWAM Europe and currently heading up the Schuman Centre for European Studies in the Netherlands, points to the Christian conviction of the European Union's founding father Robert Schuman: 'We are called to bethink ourselves of the Christian basics of Europe by forming a democratic model of governance which through reconciliation develops into a 'community of peoples' in freedom, equality, solidarity peace which is deeply rooted in Christian basic values.' (Robert Schuman, 1958) Although the overwhelming trend in Europe has been one of secularisation, which has been reflected in the general tenor of EU policy making, Christians have carried key roles in the EU, bringing their influence to bear where possible. The current president of the European Council, Belgian Herman van Rompuy, is a devout Christian. At the annual prayer breakfast of the European Parliament a few weeks ago he talked openly about his Christian faith.

**Praise:** [God for all Christians in positions of authority who have opportunities to share their faith. \(Heb.13:16\)](#)

**More:** [http://joelnews.org/#6cc/custom\\_plain](http://joelnews.org/#6cc/custom_plain)

## BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

### ■ Disabled people call for new deal

Disabled and sick people, including actor and comedian Francesca Martinez, have launched a petition calling for an end to what they call the 'War on Welfare' (WOW) being waged by their own Government. The campaigners want an independent,

cumulative impact assessment of the Coalition's controversial Welfare Reform Act, which has attracted massive opposition from charities, experts, peers, community groups, disability organisations, churches and civic groups. The activists include people with learning and mental health difficulties, their families and carers. 'The welfare budget, and particularly benefits going to sick and disabled people, has been heavily and unfairly targeted for cuts,' says War on Welfare. Spearheaded by actress and comedian Francesca Martinez the WOW petition aims to get 100,000 signatures to end this War On Welfare by the Government. A remarkable 2,000 people had signed the petition on the Government's own e-democracy website within a little over four hours of its launch.

**Pray:** that this initiative will result in an end to this war on welfare for the needy. (Ps.9:18)

**More:** <http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/17654>

#### ▣ Children going hungry because they cannot afford meals

Children are still turning up to school hungry and skipping meals at lunchtime because they cannot afford to eat, research suggests. Some youngsters have been spotted stealing toast as they are so hungry, and in another case, a teacher found two girls sharing a packed lunch in the school toilets because one had no money for food, according to a report by the Children's Society charity. The study, based on a survey of around 570 teachers, reveals serious concerns among school staff. Almost three in four (72%) of the teachers surveyed said they have seen pupils coming into school with no lunch and no way to pay for one. Nearly half (45%) said that children are often hungry during the school day. The study, conducted with the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) and the National Union of Teachers (NUT), also reveals that two-thirds (66%) of school staff say that teachers are providing pupils with food or money for meals if they turn up for lessons hungry.

**Pray:** for the children who are missing out on lunches because of poverty or stigmatisation. (Pr.10:

**More:** <http://www.standard.co.uk/news/health/children-going-hungry-because-they-cannot-afford-meals-8414071.html>

#### ▣ NSPCC launches new anti-child abuse awareness campaign

A new publicity campaign by the NSPCC aims to help prevent sexual abuse of children by encouraging people to report their concerns. The recent allegations against Jimmy Savile and others have exposed many tragic cases of sexual abuse against the young, says Peter Watt, director of the NSPCC. 'We are concerned that, as many of his victims were abused in the 1970s and 80s, child sex abuse could be seen as more a problem of the past. Furthermore, we are worried from the findings of the case that people don't know where to turn for help in reporting child abuse, or hesitate to report abuse until they feel 100 per cent certain it has taken place. That's why we're launching a new ad campaign encouraging people to contact the NSPCC if they are concerned about a child. Our advert aims to remind people that child abuse remains a widespread problem and children are still abused today.

**Pray:** for all measures that will help to make child abuse a thing of the past. (Mk.9:42)

**More:** <http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/17615>

#### ▣ Archbishop of Canterbury: society can't wait to get old people 'off our hands'

British society is missing out on a massive contribution the elderly could play because too many people are simply waiting for them to die, the Archbishop of Canterbury has warned. In his last speech in the House of Lords before he steps down, Dr Rowan Williams said too many older people were tolerated rather than valued and that the extremes of human life – childhood and old age – were both being sidelined because of an eccentric idea that only those in the so-called prime of life could make a contribution. He warned that the tendency to view older people as 'dependants' or a 'problem' was the root cause of neglect and abuse yet their unpaid care or volunteering work was worth the equivalent of at least £50 billion. Despite this, older people are routinely seen as 'passive' and dependants instead of an asset, he said. (See Prayer Alert 43-2012)

**Pray:** for greater understanding that all groups in society have value (Mt.25:40)

**More:** <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/9744882/Archbishop-of-Canterbury-society-cant-wait-to-get-old-people-off-our-hands.html>

#### ▣ Don't be a Scrooge, Christians tell Chancellor

Anti-poverty campaigners delivered a copy of the Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol to George Osborne. Alan Pinch, a Quaker, Stephen Pennells, a Roman Catholic, and Graham Martin, an Anglican, are all supporters of Church Action on Poverty. They fear that Britain may be returning to the levels of poverty and contempt for the poor described by Dickens in A Christmas Carol. The trio cycled to the Chancellor's constituency office in Knutsford where they dropped off the festive classic. The 20-mile journey started at Manchester's Albert Square Christmas Market and stopped along the way so that members of the public could sign a statement to the Chancellor. Pinch said: 'Chancellor Osborne is at severe risk of turning into a modern day Scrooge, and we want to add our voices to the many calls for him to change track.'

**Pray:** that the message behind this topical one will be taken seriously and encourage the Chancellor to change track. (Ecc.8:1)

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/dont.be.a.scrooge.christians.tell.chancellor/31213.htm>

#### ▣ Police account of 'pleb' row inaccurate?

David Davis hopes to overturn a 'gross injustice' against the former chief whip Andrew Mitchell over a confrontation with officers in Downing Street, stating the Police had been called into question by a series of recent revelations. Davis said the Police log has 'very similar wording' to two emails sent to an MP by a serving officer who claimed to have witnessed the incident. The MP handed the emails to No 10. The Police Officer has now admitted he was not present. The Police log and emails claimed the incident was witnessed by several people. CCTV footage shows only one member of the public witnessed the incident. Mitchell and Davis were refused permission by the Met commissioner to see the Police log and are relying on a newspaper version which Davis said, 'If it is an accurate account of the Police log it would get torn to shreds in Court for what was clearly not true.'

**Pray:** for a fair enquiry that resolves this issue and for any hidden agendas to be revealed. (Ps.15)  
**More:** <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2012/dec/19/david-davis-police-andrew-mitchell>

## EUROPE

### ■ **Kyrgyzstan: Girl 'burned' for faith in Christ**

A young Kyrgyz girl is forced to work in a sewing workshop after being tortured by her parents in Kyrgyzstan because she converted to Christianity, well-informed investigators said on Tuesday, December 18. The troubles began when the girl 'accepted Jesus as her Lord and Saviour' during a church meeting despite opposition towards Christians in this heavily Islamic nation. When her parents found out about her decision, they were very upset and took her home to their village where she was soon mistreated. They wanted her to recant and renounce her faith in Christ, so they began to beat her systematically till she lost consciousness. Yet the girl did not give in said Open Doors, which is in close contact with local believers. They then started pulling her hair and put her face against the stove, burning her face. In spite of this, she remained faithful, the group claimed.

**Pray:** for those who are persecuted for their belief, to be protected from those wishing them harm. (Ps.71:13)

**More:** <http://www.bosnewslife.com/25344-kyrgyzstan-girl-burned-for-faith-in-christ>

### ■ **Uzbekistan: Prosecution for singing and reading Bibles on holiday**

Police in Uzbekistan on 1 December raided a group of about 80 Protestants on holiday together, Forum 18 News Service has learned. Charges under six different articles of the Code of Administrative Offences have been brought against four of the group, who were meeting together discussing their faith and singing Christian songs. Police confiscated three Bibles and 100 Christian songbooks, insulted the group, and took the fingerprints of all present. People must worship 'only in registered places specifically set up for religious purposes', police insisted to Forum 18. In November three Protestants were fined sums of between 100 and 20 times the minimum monthly wage for meeting together, reading their Bibles, singing Christian songs, praying, and possessing religious books – all without state permission. The books, including Bibles, were ordered to be destroyed.

**Pray:** that God will bless and protect those who gather to worship. (Ps.5:11)

**More:** <http://www.forum18.org/>

## WORLDWIDE

### ■ **NIGERIA: Pilgrimage and persecution**

15 000+ Nigerian Christians will have participated in the 2012 pilgrimage to Jerusalem this year. So far 11,060 pilgrims have visited Israel and more are expected. The 2012 Christian pilgrimage will end on Dec. 24. The only changes in plans were that visits to Mount Sinai were suspended because of unfavourable security reports. The Israeli authorities reciprocate Nigeria's love for Israel by always making the pilgrims' stay in the Holy land worthwhile. See:

<http://nigeria.news24.com/National/News/15-000-Nigerian-Christians-to-participate-in-pilgrimage-20121219> Meanwhile at home, Nigerian Christians are asking churches across the world to pray for their safety from deadly attacks this Christmas, amid renewed threats. Boko Haram has been attacking Christians from northern Nigeria. Dozens have died in bombing attacks during Christmas services over the past two years. Church leaders this year are, 'very worried' believing that the security situation will not protect Nigerian Christians going to church on Christmas Day. Boko Haram has killed over 770 Nigerians in 2012.

**Pray:** that the pilgrims abroad and the persecuted at home will be spiritually uplifted this Christmas and for the Nigerian government to do more to protect congregations and thwart violent extremism. (Ps.145:18-20)

**More:** <http://www.persecution.org/2012/12/15/nigerian-christians-fear-attack-on-christmas/>

### ■ **Indonesia: Persecution at Christmas**

Indonesian National Police will increase security in seven prime target areas for terrorist attacks ahead of the Christmas and New Year celebrations from Dec 23rd through Jan 1st. During this period, police will heighten security at the 38,499 registered churches across Indonesia and will step up security on roads, train stations, bus terminals, tourism sites and malls. Pray against terrorist activities from militants with links to Jemaah Ansharut Tauhid. As much of the world becomes more dangerous for Christians each year, many in the church defy the threat of terrorist violence by worshipping as a community of believers.

**Pray:** that in this season of great joy and peace that tension and strife may not interfere with Christian celebrations. (Ps.46:9-11)

**More:** <http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/home/national-police-beefing-up-security-for-xmas-new-year-period/561390>

### ■ **USA: Gun laws / compassion for Newtown**

As observers around the world mourned the teachers and children killed in Newtown, many expressed frustration with a US political system that has left guns so easily accessible. The German Foreign Minister signed a condolence book for the victims at Berlin's US Embassy. In Moscow dozens of Russians spontaneously placed flowers at the US Embassy over the weekend, news of the tragedy was shared across the Internet in China, which witnessed its own school attack on Friday. (see item 4 below) Across Europe heads of state expressed their grief, shock and horror plus mounting frustration with a US political system that has left dangerous weapons legal and accessible to the public. Mexico is directly affected by US gun

laws. Other nations that have experienced mass homicides by a lone shooter have reformed legislation and question why the US can't do the same.

**Pray:** for all who have been touched by this atrocity to know God's comfort and sustenance (Ps.55:4-5, 16-17) Pray also for clarity and tightening of US gun laws. (Ps.45:4)

**More:** <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Global-Issues/2012/1218/Global-sympathy-for-Newtown-antipathy-for-US-gun-laws-video>

#### ■ China: Primary school knife attack

China is soul-searching after a shocking knife attack on a Chinese elementary school on the same day as the Newtown shooting in the US. 36-year-old Min Yongjun burst into an elderly woman's house and stabbed her. Then he broke into a nearby school and stabbed and slashed 23 children. The attack lit up the Internet - but barely registered with Chinese official state media. The lack of reporting of the Chinese attack has drawn sharp criticism of the ruling Communist Party's readiness to reflect on the ills of U.S. society but not on China's own. The Xinyang Daily (whose circulation area includes the school) devoted its page-one story on Monday to the local education system without mentioning the attack. State media reported that Mr Min was influenced by doomsday rumours that an apocalypse will take place on Friday 21 December. 100+ people belonging to the 'Almighty God Christian group' have been arrested across China for spreading doomsday rumours. See: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-20765528>

**Pray:** for opportunities for Christians to minister to the victims and their families; pray also for China to have a more open style of media coverage and to focus on genuine news. (Ps.55:11-23)

**More:** <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/12/19/us-china-attack-media-idUSBRE8BI0E920121219>

#### ■ Philippines: Typhoon death toll reaches 1,043

The death toll from Typhoon 'Pablo' (international name Bopha) reached 1,043 by Wednesday. It destroyed over 24.1 billion pesos worth of properties, including almost 16.4 billion pesos in agricultural crops and products. Only 645 of the recovered bodies have so far been identified. Rescue teams are searching for 844 people, among them over 300 fishermen, who went missing when the typhoon flattened villages and plantations. 25,953 people are still staying in 63 evacuation centres in southern Mindanao. 701,224 families, or 6,203,826 persons, in 40 cities and 34 provinces were affected by the typhoon, which also damaged 167,295 houses. An estimated 2.3 million Filipino workers have been directly affected - mostly women, youth aged 15-24, and vulnerable or unpaid family workers with limited income and social security. Pray for the relief agencies trying to bring the much needed aid and support. Pray for the government to provide the support needed to rebuild homes.

**Pray:** for God to supernaturally inspire relief agencies as they work among the storm victims showing His mercy to those who have endured and are still enduring so much suffering and loss. (Ps.30:10)

**More:** <http://news.asiaone.com/News/AsiaOne%2BNews/Asia/Story/A1Story20121218-390376.html>

#### ■ Afghanistan: Taliban power struggle

A serious power struggle has erupted among Afghan Taliban's top leaders. Two top-ranking members of the Quetta Shura have been battling for control and their feud resulted this week in the assassination of one senior Taliban official by members of an opposing faction. The centre of the storm is the Taliban's top military leader, the former Guantanamo detainee Mullah Abdul Qayyum who earned a reputation as a merciless fighter on the battlefield, but as a commander is often brutal to underlings and seems incapable of responding quickly to changing conditions on the ground. Recent complaints from senior field commanders have risen to crisis levels. According to both a senior member of the ruling council and a former cabinet minister in the Taliban regime, commanders accused him of showing no respect for his men in the field and ignoring their basic needs.

**Pray:** for God to use the recent Taliban unrest to bring about His purposes for Afghanistan. May their lines of authority come under His mighty authority. (Is.32:1-3)

**More:** <http://www.thefrontierpost.com/news/14566/>

#### ■ Asian countries financial crimes

The developing world lost nearly US\$1 trillion in 2010 as a result of corruption, tax evasion, and other financial crimes not involving cash transactions, according to a report by Global Financial Integrity. Corruption has grown steadily over the past decade despite unprecedented efforts by governments and non-governmental organizations to curb it. Much of the proceeds of drug trafficking, human smuggling, and other criminal activities, which are often settled in cash, are not included in these estimates. The 80-page report found that China suffered the greatest losses followed by Mexico, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, and Russia. Other countries that were ranked in the top 10 for 2010 losses included Iraq, Nigeria, Costa Rica, the Philippines and Thailand. Developing economies are hemorrhaging more and more money at a time when rich and poor countries alike are struggling to spur economic growth. This report should be a wake-up call to world leaders that more must be done to address these harmful outflows.

**Pray:** for an end to the astronomical sums flowing out of the developing world into off-shore tax havens and developed-country banks. (Pr.18:5)

**More:** [http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Global\\_Economy/NL19Dj03.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Global_Economy/NL19Dj03.html)

## PRAYER FORUM OF THE BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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