

# PRAYER ALERT...

An initiative of the Prayer Association of the British Isles & Ireland  
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## BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

### ■ Equality legislation means our very right to believe is under fire

This Government has never learnt that you can't legislate for equality and freedom. You can pass laws that protect people from specific harm. You can make it illegal to do harm to others or to their property. But fuzzy, feel-good laws, under which we're generally enjoined to be nice to one another, are too easy to draft and dangerous to implement. The latest such Bill has been drafted by the Minister for Women and Equality, Harriet Harman. The Equality Bill allegedly aims to consolidate earlier anti-discrimination legislation into a single, simple, happy and enlightened Act of Parliament, one consequence of which will be to require Christian churches not to discriminate against homosexuals and transsexuals or, in the case of Roman Catholics, against women or married men as candidates for priesthood. Baroness O'Cathain, a Tory peer and an evangelical Christian, last week claimed that the Equality Bill was, for Christian freedom, the 'single most damaging Bill to come before the House in my 18 years as a Member'.

**Pray:** for our Government that it would be granted wisdom and understanding in its decisions. (1Cor.10:23)

**More:** <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/columnists/georgepitcher/6855636/Equality-legislation-means-our-very-right-to-believe-is-under-fire.html>

### ■ Christian teacher fired for offering to pray for pupil

A Christian teacher has been sacked from her job after offering to pray for a sick pupil during a home tutoring visit. Olive Jones said she was made to feel like a criminal for sharing her faith and claims that this is yet another example of Christians being persecuted because of 'political correctness'. The Christian Legal Centre, which is backing this case, blame the 'heavy-handed so-called equalities agenda that discriminates against Christians'. The 54-year-old mother of two, who taught maths to children too ill to attend school, said she mentioned prayer during a tutoring session with one of her pupils. But just hours later she was hauled before her managers for questioning. She said her bosses had decided her comments about faith could be seen as 'bullying' and dismissed her from her role at Oak Hill Short Stay School and Tuition Service in Somerset. Mrs Jones, a teacher with 20 years experience, now fears she may never work again.

**Pray:** for Olive at this difficult time for her and that she will remain strong in her faith. (Eze.18:9)

**More:** <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/christian-teacher-fired-for-offering-to-pray-for-pupil/>

### ■ Charity Road-show set for launch

The Christian Institute is set to launch a Charity Road-show to help reassure churches and charities of their rights and freedoms within new charity guidelines. Colin Hart, the Director of The Christian Institute, said: 'Recent court cases have highlighted the importance of Christians knowing their rights and being willing to stand up for them.' He added: 'The secular

spotlight is also being turned upon churches and Christian organisations.' Between January and May, at ten separate venues, a panel of experts will provide help on keeping the law and understanding freedoms. The full-day events include workshops on the Charity Commission's new 'public benefit requirement'. There will also be workshops on the church as an employer, best practices, financial issues and public evangelism. This is the Christian Institute's first Charity Roadshow. It comes at a time when a Christian couple have been taken to a criminal court for merely having a discussion about religion.

**Pray:** for this initiative as many seek help and support at a time of 'persecution'. (Ro.8:35)

**More:** <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/charity-roadshow-set-for-launch/>

#### ■ **Be available for God, says bishop**

Ability or inability do not matter to God, what matters is that we are available for him, says the Bishop of Shrewsbury. The Rt Rev Mark Rylands is inviting people to make a new start with God, our family and the world's poor by making a new start with their prayer life. Reviewing progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, he writes that more than one billion people will be in poverty by 2015 as a result of the global economic and food crises, while 78 million children are still excluded from education and nine million children die before their fifth birthday from preventable causes. 'In the face of such a challenge what are we to do? The Gospel and example of Jesus compels us not to turn our backs on the poor and vulnerable. So, redouble our efforts, strengthen our cooperation and solidarity. Yes, and as part of that effort what about a new start with an old habit? Prayer,' he says.

**Pray:** for a revival of prayer, particularly for the poor and vulnerable. (Ro.12:12)

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.co.uk/article/be.available.for.god.says.bishop/24982.htm>

#### ■ **Ed Balls has seen the light on marriage**

There is more joy in heaven, it must be acknowledged, over one lost sinner who repents than over 99 righteous people. So the angels will be dancing over Ed Balls's Damascene conversion to the cause of holy matrimony. After more than a decade of constructing the fiscal architecture to discriminate against married couples, Mr Balls has seen the light and come out in support of marriage. Announcing a green paper next month, the Schools Secretary says he now wants to live a new life, bolstering 'stable parental relationships' and 'changing the direction and face of policy'. That's intriguing, because he's changing the direction and face of the policies that his own Government, and very substantially he himself, has put in place. Only just before Christmas, Labour's deputy leader and minister for women and equality and stuff, Harriet Harman, attacked David Cameron's pro-marriage stance.

**Pray:** for the place of marriage in society and that words will become actions. (Heb.13:4a)

**More:** <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/columnists/georgepitcher/6898649/Ed-Balls-has-seen-the-light-on-marriage.html>

#### ■ **Children being forced to grow up too quickly, says Williams**

Children are being forced to grow up too quickly, the Archbishop of Canterbury said in his Christmas sermon. Dr Rowan Williams criticised the rush to create independent citizens who can stand on their own two feet, and highlighted the plight of hundreds of thousands of children around the world who are caught up in civil wars. He said children needed to be nourished with a stable upbringing and that being 'dependent' on parents did not have to be seen in a bad light. He said parents should treasure the dependency of their children and that rushing them to become independent beings was leading to misery and exploitation. He said the state of dependence is one in which people can learn 'to ask from each other, to receive from each other, to depend on the generosity of those who love us and stand alongside us' and he urged adults to 'guarantee that there is nourishment and stability' for the people in most need.

**Pray:** for those children who are without family and parental support. (Pr.17:6)

**More:** <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2009/dec/25/rowan-williams-religion>

#### ■ **True happiness comes from family and community, says Archbishop of Westminster**

In his Christmas homily, the Archbishop of Westminster Vincent Nichols questioned the wisdom of the world that tells us happiness comes from wealth, status, celebrity and how we are regarded by society. 'We know that our happiness lies much closer to home; in our steady relationships of friendship and love; in family and community.' While we have this longing for a sense of community, he said, a recent visit to Feltham Young Offenders Institute reminded him that too many of our young people have resorted to gangs and gang violence to bolster their weakened sense of identity. The duplicity, deceit and bitterness within us and our society, can be overcome by accepting the gift of God's love and forgiveness that comes among us in the Christmas celebration of the incarnation. Then, individually, and as a society, we may grow again. And in that growth lies our true happiness; a happiness of forgiveness, serving others, shared joy and lasting love.

**Pray:** for relationships, friendships and love; in family and community. (Ps.68:3)

**More:** [http://www.catholic-ew.org.uk/ccb/catholic\\_church/media\\_centre/press\\_releases/press\\_releases\\_2009/true\\_happiness\\_comes\\_from\\_family\\_and\\_community\\_says\\_archbishop\\_nichols\\_at\\_televised\\_christmas\\_midnight\\_mass](http://www.catholic-ew.org.uk/ccb/catholic_church/media_centre/press_releases/press_releases_2009/true_happiness_comes_from_family_and_community_says_archbishop_nichols_at_televised_christmas_midnight_mass)

## EUROPE

#### ■ **Germany: Christian fathers put in jail for shunning explicit sex education**

An international human rights organization announced it will pursue a civil lawsuit on behalf of parents who want to control their children's education and withhold them from explicit sex education and play-acting classes required by the German government. Joel Thornton of the International Human Rights Group told World Net Daily the government in Salzkotten, Germany, is sending the fathers of these children to jail for terms of one week because they have refused to turn them over to school officials for mandatory sex classes. According to a report from Richard Guenther, European director for the IHRG,

eight families of Christians have decided to withhold their children from required sex education classes in Salzkotten. The students who are being held out of sex education classes also are not being allowed by their parents to participate in a play-acting programme called 'My Body Belongs to Me,' which essentially teaches children how to engage in sex, the report said.

**Pray:** for Christians as they take a stand against liberal legislation especially when targeting the young. (2Ch.16:9a)

**More:** <http://www.wnd.com/index.php?fa=PAGE.view&pageId=118635>

#### ■ **Unhappy with Copenhagen accord, churches urge ongoing action**

Faith groups have expressed disappointment and anger over the outcome of the United Nations talks on climate change that have ended in Copenhagen, pledging to continue to press for climate justice. 'With a lack of transparency, the agreement reached by some countries was negotiated without consensus but rather in secret among the powerful nations of the world,' the World Council of Churches' programme executive on climate change, Guillermo Kerber, stated. Kerber said an agreement called the Copenhagen Accord, 'was negotiated between five countries, the US, China, India, South Africa and Brazil'. He said, 'It maintains that the scientific thinking for keeping temperature increase below 2 degrees Celsius is important, but failed to make commitments to reduce emissions to keep the temperature rise in check.' Caritas Internationalis, an international consortium of Roman Catholic relief agencies, and CIDSE, an alliance of Catholic development agencies, denounced the Copenhagen accord as 'a weak and morally reprehensible deal which will spell disaster for millions of the world's poorest people.'

**Pray:** that the limited agreement made in Copenhagen will achieve much more than anticipated.(Rm.1:19-20)

**More:** <http://www.eni.ch/featured/article.php?id=3641>

## WORLDWIDE

#### ■ **India: Prayer and worship meeting disrupted by police**

The Karnataka state police barged into a church, disrupted the prayer meeting, and alleged that the pastor and members of the church were engaging in 'forceful conversion' at Koppa in Karnataka state, India on Sunday, December 27. This was revealed by the Global Council of Indian Christians, who stated that the police team entered the India People Ministry Church, Koppa, at about 11:30 a.m. and forced Pastor D.M. Kumar, aged 50, to immediately stop the worship. It was alleged that they warned the pastor that he would be arrested if he continued to conduct worship or prayer services in this same location. It was also alleged that the police verbally abused the pastor for conducting a worship and prayer service 'without government permission.'

**Pray:** for the Christians in Koppa that God will strengthen and equip them with all wisdom and spiritual power. (Ro.12:11)

**More:** <http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/2009/s09120195.htm>

#### ■ **India: Nurse facing suspension for holding Christmas get-together**

A Christian nurse in Mandya district of Karnataka is facing suspension for holding a Christmas get-together at her work place. Sophia Parimala Rani has been working in Pandapura Government Hospital in Mandya for the past 10 years. As in past years, Rani held a Christmas get-together for staff and patients at the hospital on Friday, Dec. 25. The Christmas programme under the oversight of Evangelist Babu at about 3pm came to an abrupt halt after a group of Hindutva radicals barged into the hospital and hurled abuses and allegations of forceful conversion. GCIC said the hospital authorities informed the Pandapura Police Station after which both the parties were reconciled. They, however, 'forcefully' obtained an apology letter from the nurse, the advocacy group added. After the compromise, the radicals complained to Dr Jairam, the Head of Department, to take action against the nurse. 'It is learned from inside sources that the hospital has prepared a suspension letter which will be handed over on Monday, Dec. 28,' GCIC said.

**Pray:** that God would give believers the ability to withstand this kind of attack on their faith. (Tit.1:16)

**More:** <http://in.christiantoday.com/articles/nurse-facing-suspension-for-holding-christmas-get-together/5015.htm>

#### ■ **Iraq: Christians attacked in north on Christmas Day**

A group of Shiite Muslims attacked an Assyrian Christian town in northern Iraq on Christmas morning, according to reports over the weekend. The assailants, a minority ethnic group called Shabak, took over the entry checkpoint into the Christian-dominated town of Bartilla, about 28 miles north of Mosul, and tore down Christmas decorations in the Assyrian market, reported Assyrian International News Agency (AINA). Witnesses say they also harassed a Christian procession headed toward St Mary church, throwing rocks at the group. Around 100 armed Shabaks later tried to enter St Mary Church but church guards reportedly blocked them from entering, leading to a conflict and an exchange of gunfire that left four Christians wounded. Assyrians in Bartilla, who are unarmed, fear more attacks against their community in the near future. The attack in Bartilla followed a church bombing at St Thomas Church in Mosul last Wednesday that killed two men and wounded five others.

**Pray:** that God would protect the believers from these attacks. (Ps.12:7)

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/christians.attacked.in.northern.iraq.on.christmas.day/24985.htm>

#### ■ **Zimbabwe: Archbishops condemn police intimidation against Anglicans**

The Archbishops of Canterbury and York have condemned fresh police intimidation against members of the Anglican Church in Zimbabwe in the last week. Churchgoers, including clergy and local bishops, were barred from entering their churches on Christmas Day by police, who also threatened them with arrest and violence. Dr Rowan Williams and Dr John Sentamu hit out at the intimidation, saying that the church was the only lifeline for people 'ground down by unceasing unemployment and lack of basic services. We condemn unequivocally any move to deny people their basic right to worship.

To prevent people from worshipping in their churches on Christmas Day - unable to receive the church's message of hope - is a further blow to civil liberties in Zimbabwe,' they said. 'Such unprovoked intimidation of worshippers by the police is completely unacceptable and indicative of the continued and persistent oppression by state instruments of those perceived to be in opposition.'

**Pray:** for the people of Zimbabwe that God would set them free from oppression and bring transformation. (Ps.12:5)

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/archbishops.condemn.police.intimidation.against.anglicans.in.zimbabwe/24983.htm>

#### ■ Israel: Jewish Christian seeks protection following repeated attacks

A Christian of Jewish origin who has been attacked on the streets here four times because of his faith in Christ and is seeking police protection. Jerusalem resident Yossi Yomtov said police have been slow to investigate hate crimes against him by youths wearing kippahs, cloth skullcaps typically worn by observant Jews. In two of the attacks a youth plied him with pepper spray and stun gun shocks, he said. 'This young man cursed me for my belief in Christ,' Yomtov told Compass. 'He used ugly curses and spoke in highly abusive language.' Yomtov, who founded the social activist group Lemallah ('Upward') after moving to Israel from the United States in 1999, said he was last attacked on Dec. 19. On that occasion his group was holding a demonstration in downtown Jerusalem, he said, when a man chanting anti-Christian slogans and using foul language approached him and began striking him. Police never showed up in spite of many calls to the police station, he said.

**Pray:** that Jewish believers would be given protection against persecution by non-believers. (Ps.5:11)

**More:** <http://www.compassdirect.org/english/country/israel/13055/>

#### ■ Indonesia: Thousands celebrate Christmas despite attacks

Thousands of Christians have celebrated Christmas in a volatile area of Indonesia's West Java province, despite concerns of more attacks against them. At least 5,000 worshippers living in the city of Bekasi reportedly gathered in the unfinished St. Albertus Church for a Christmas Eve mass, a week after it was attacked by an angry Muslim mob. Christians said hundreds of Muslims began the Islamic New Year last Thursday, December 17, by attacking the Catholic Church, throwing stones and setting fires to it. Kristina Maria Rentetana, head of the church building committee, told reporters that the crowd shouted 'destroy it' and that 'even women carrying babies' participated in stone throwing. Most damage was reportedly done to the makeshift security post and the developer's office. The Indonesian Committee of Religions for Peace has urged authorities to increase security for Christians, who comprise a minority in this mainly Muslim nation.

**Pray:** for the security and protection of believers as they worship in volatile places. (Ro.8:35)

**More:** <http://www.bosnewslife.com/10513-thousands-celebrate-christmas-in-indonesia-after-attacks>

## PRAISE REPORTS

#### ■ Gambian jail nightmare over for mum

A South Devon Christian missionary, jailed for sedition in the Gambia, has been released. Fiona Fulton, from Torquay, and her husband David, originally from Troon, Ayrshire, were sentenced to 12 months in prison with hard labour last December. The Foreign Office has now confirmed Mrs Fulton was deported back to the UK on Tuesday after being released from the Gambian jail. Mr Fulton remains in prison after three more years were added to his jail term. Friends and family of the South Devon-based couple were last night celebrating Mrs Fulton's release after campaigning relentlessly to see her and David freed. Martin Speed, pastor of the Westhoughton Pentecostal Church in Bolton which supported the couple's missionary work in the Gambia, said the community's prayers had been answered. The couple were arrested in November 2008. They were sentenced to one year in prison with hard labour. The couple always denied the charges against them.

**Pray:** God that Fiona has been released and pray that David will be able to join her soon. (Is.42:6-8)

**More:** <http://www.thisissouthdevon.co.uk/news/Gambian-jail-nightmare-mum/article-1661907-detail/article.html>

#### ■ Nepal: Church grows exponentially to one million believers

The number of Christians in Nepal is growing exponentially. This is reported by American researcher Dr. Cindy Perry, who recently finished a study on the Nepali church. Many new churches have not just been planted in Nepal, but also in nations where Nepali workers have migrated to. 'This is a special development,' Perry says. 'When a Nepali comes to Christ, he apparently also becomes an evangelist straight away.' Until 1951 Nepal was closed to the outside world. Nepali Christians were few and mainly lived in north India on the border with Nepal. 1990 in the Kingdom of Nepal it was officially prohibited to have another religion than Hinduism. It was hard for Christians to fellowship and many were imprisoned. In 1990 a revolution broke out, followed by a new constitution that granted freedom of religion. In 50 years the number of baptized Christians has grown from 26 in 1960 to one million today.

**Pray:** God for this wonderful growth of His church in Nepal and long may it continue. (Ps.95:1)

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

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