

# PRAYER ALERT...

An initiative of the Prayer Forum of the British Isles & Ireland  
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## Issue 0510

## Website

## Contact Us

## Donations

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### ■ British Isles & Ireland

- [Christians attack 'marital affair' billboards](#)
- [Gay couples should be allowed to 'marry' in church, Government minister says](#)
- [Men don't want to sing 'love songs to a man' while the 'vicar wears a dress'](#)
- [Churches launch guide to prepare for 2010 General Election](#)
- [Christian retailers need more support, says Bible Society chief](#)
- [Northern Ireland talks continue - Churches support](#)
- [British Army working with the Afghans](#)

### ■ Europe

- [Romania 'tops EU sex worker list'](#)
- [Davos 2010: Sarkozy calls for revamp of capitalism](#)

### ■ Worldwide

- [Nigeria: Why Jos may erupt again](#)
- [Nigeria: Anglican Archbishop kidnapped](#)
- [Haiti: Church and aid organisations talk of cancelling Haiti debt.](#)
- [International: Governments asked to end secret detention](#)
- [World: Open Doors World Watch list of countries who persecute Christians](#)
- [Egypt: Christians say, 'They try to kill us'](#)
- [Burma: Thousands flee Burma army](#)

### ■ Praise Reports

- [Christians celebrate victory over Government on Equality Bill](#)
- [Bible translator course receives approval by Accreditation Council](#)

## BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

### ■ Christians attack 'marital affair' billboards

Churchgoers have launched a campaign against advertisements for an extramarital dating service, after the Advertising Standards Agency (ASA) refused to intervene. A Facebook group, Stop marital affair.co.uk, advertising publicly in the UK, has gained more than 1,000 members in its first two days. Jon Kuhrt, who works for a Christian charity in London, created the protest group after the ASA declined to act on his complaint about a billboard in Merton which read: 'HELLO GIRLS. Get instant excitement at MARITALAFFAIR.co.uk.' The advertisement, which also featured a picture of a man with no shirt on and a bra slung over his shoulder, for a website which claims to deliver 'uncomplicated adult fun' for 'bored housewives looking for a bit on the side'. On his Facebook page, Mr Kuhrt highlights the 'trauma and suffering caused to individuals and communities by the damage of affairs and the breakdown of relationships they cause.'

**Pray:** that with God's help MaritalAffair.co.uk will prove to be a non-starter. (Ex.20:14)

**More:** <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newsttopics/religion/7071488/Christians-attack-marital-affair-billboards.html>

### ■ Gay couples should be allowed to 'marry' in church, Government minister says

Homosexual couples should be allowed to 'marry' in churches, a Government minister has said. Baroness Thornton, a spokesman for the Government in the House of Lords, said she was 'not unsympathetic' to plans to permit civil partnerships on religious premises. She admitted there were many 'complexities' to be addressed since the ceremonies are currently secular, and because the change will be opposed by some major faiths who believe only a man and a woman can be married. But Lady Thornton went on: 'We want dialogue to move forward and we want all those with an interest in this issue to have their say. We believe that this careful consideration will pay off in how we proceed together to the next stage of resolving this issue.' During a Lords debate on the Equality Bill on Monday night, Lord Alli tabled an amendment that would 'allow civil partnerships to take place on religious premises'.

**Pray:** that a biblical understanding of marriage would be upheld and that the Government would not push secular values on the church. (Ps.111:10)

**More:** <http://www.anglican-mainstream.net/?p=21769>

### ■ Men don't want to sing 'love songs to a man' while the 'vicar wears a dress'

Christian Vision for Men, a charity trying to make church attractive to men, is claiming the church has lost 49 per cent of all males under the age of 30 in the last 20 years due to services becoming too feminine. They have toured dioceses across Britain encouraging vicars to erect big screens above the pulpit during this summer's football World Cup in South Africa and to serve beer during games. The charity is in the process of doing research into why real men don't come to church, and their questionnaire makes, for Ruth Gledhill the Times Religion Correspondent, pretty reading. Read on for some of the reasons they suggest: the image of church is 'women and children' - action songs or kid's plays just emphasise this. The decoration is often very feminine - flowers, embroidered banners, etc. The vicar often wears a dress.

**Pray:** that the Church will be able to meet the needs of all people in the areas they serve. (Ga.6:10)

**More:** <http://timescolumns.typepad.com/gledhill/2010/01/men-who-sing-love-songs-to-a-man-while-the-vicar-wears-a-dress.html#more>

#### ■ Churches launch guide to prepare for 2010 General Election

Eleven church denominations and agencies have launched a set of online resources designed to help Christians prepare themselves for the forthcoming UK General Election - which many pundits now believe will be called in May by the Prime Minister, Gordon Brown. The church bodies have worked together to create an electronic booklet and website at [www.churcheselection.org.uk](http://www.churcheselection.org.uk) hosted by the official ecumenical body Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI). The election materials do not support a particular church view or political party line, but aim to help people engage with a range of important issues facing the country; however they may decide to vote. Rachel Lampard, who worked on the resources, explained: 'We hope that the website will really help Christians engage with the election. The Faith in Politics booklet covers a whole range of policy issues, written by leading Christian experts and campaigners.'

**Pray:** that this website will be helpful to many as they give thought to their part in the forthcoming General Election. (Pr.1:5)

**More:** <http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/11088>

#### ■ Christian retailers need more support, says Bible Society chief

The head of the Bible Society says Christians need to work on improving their relationships with one another if the UK Christian publishing industry is to survive. James Catford was speaking at a recent gathering of 120 Christian retailers and suppliers from across the UK who met to launch Christian Resources Together. The organisation has been set up to support and train Christian retailers and suppliers following the collapse last year of IBS-STL UK, until then the largest distributor and chain of bookshops in the country. Mr Catford spoke of the need to support Christian authors struggling to sell large numbers of their books. 'It's often because we don't have a relationship with them,' he said. 'Partnership comes out of relationship. We can be distinctively different if we cut out the judgemental attitude. We want to see a strong Church but we are only going to get there together with each other.'

**Pray:** for our Christian retailers as they face the challenges of the recession and pray that Christians would rise up and give them their full support. (Lev.25:35)

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/christian.retailers.need.more.support.says.bible.society.chief/25152.htm>

#### ■ Northern Ireland talks continue - Churches support

The British and Irish Prime Ministers left Hillsborough on Wednesday after hosting two marathon days and nights of intense political negotiations over the issue which has threatened the stability of power-sharing at Stormont. In a joint statement, the two men said that progress had been made 'inch by inch, slowly but surely' during this latest round of talks. They said they were hopeful of an agreement by Friday. Late Wednesday night, the leaders of Ireland's four main churches called on all the political parties to redouble their efforts to reach a settlement. Cardinal Sean Brady, Archbishop Alan Harper, Presbyterian Moderator Dr Stafford Carson and Methodist President Rev Donald Ker said they believed that 'No-one wishes to return to the tragic patterns of the past and we believe that the responsibility of the politicians is to ensure that there is no return to dysfunctional division,' the statement said.

**Pray:** for all those involved in the talks that they will, by the Grace of God, be able to reach a lasting agreement. (1Co.1:10)

**More:** [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern\\_ireland/8484352.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/8484352.stm)

#### ■ British Army working with the Afghans

British forces in Afghanistan make extensive use of Afghan workers to assist them in their peace mission. One important role is as interpreters who talk with local people and officials. Interpreters accompany the British patrols and face risks from bombs and fire-fights, but they and their families also face threats from the Taliban for so called 'collaborating' with the NATO troops. These very brave individuals take on a huge risk every day. One interpreter said that the locals know he has worked for the British and he must now constantly move to avoid reprisals.

**Pray:** for this very difficult situation, as these Afghans are a vital link in the peace process in Afghanistan. Pray for their safety, their home villages and thank God for their amazing courage. (Pr. 3:5)

**More:** <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/6584224/Afghanistan-interpreters-working-with-British-Army-abandoned.html>

## EUROPE

#### ■ Romania 'tops EU sex worker list'

Romania has overtaken Russia as the top country of origin of migrant sex workers in the EU, a survey of prostitution across the EU has found. In 2006 the top countries of origin were Russia, Ukraine and Romania in that order, the Tampep network reports. But in 2008 the top three were Romania, Russia and Bulgaria. Romania and Bulgaria joined the EU in 2007. EU-funded Tampep collects data from welfare groups and public health bodies that monitor and help prostitutes. Tampep's data collection is part of an effort to curb the spread of HIV/Aids and other sexually transmitted diseases. According to the survey, Central and Eastern Europe, including the Baltic and Balkan countries, account for around 70% of migrant sex workers in the 27-nation EU. The next largest groups come from Africa (12%) and Latin America and the Caribbean (11%). Italy, Spain, Austria and Luxembourg report that migrants comprise 80% to 90% of the sex worker population.

**Pray:** against this evil trade and that ways would be found to curb its expansion. (Hos.5:4b)

**More:** <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/8481355.stm>

### ■ Davos 2010: Sarkozy calls for revamp of capitalism

French President Nicolas Sarkozy has called for a fundamental rethink of capitalism in the aftermath of the financial crisis. 'We need deep profound change,' he said in his keynote speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos. His comments came as bankers and regulators clashed over proposals to break up banks that threaten the whole financial system. Mr Sarkozy said he wished to restore a 'moral dimension' to free trade. 'Were we not to change, we would be showing tremendous irresponsibility,' he told the bankers and politicians that gather annually in the Swiss alpine resort. US President Barack Obama has proposed curbing the size of banks, preventing key financial institutions from owning hedge funds and barring them from proprietary trading investing to make a profit for themselves rather than on behalf of customers. Bankers in Davos were less than pleased with these ideas.

**Pray:** that the moral dimension would be restored to the financial markets. (Lk.12:15)

**More:** <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/8483896.stm>

## WORLDWIDE

### ■ Nigeria: Why Jos may erupt again

The crisis in Jos came at a sensitive time for a country already in political crisis with the president, Umaru Yar'Adua, (a Muslim) having had medical treatment in Saudi Arabia for the past two months. This throws Nigeria into a leadership vacuum filled by his deputy, Goodluck Jonathan (a Christian). In Jos religion and race interplay between Nigeria's Muslim north and Christian south with Muslims and Christians living in semi-segregated areas. The Muslims are considered settlers (though they have been living there for decades). The land owners are mainly Christian. At <http://www.nation.co.ke/News/africa/-/1066/848750/-/124bbcnz/-/> Christian clerics in Nigeria described last week's violence in the country as part of global terrorism as hundreds of Christians and Muslims died before authorities restored order. Political life in Nigeria balances northern and southern interests so that politics acquires religious overtones, and religious leaders ride on the overtones intensifying the feeling of 'them' and 'us'.

**Pray:** for the Lord to watch over his people in Nigeria, prevent further deaths on both sides and bring peaceful national integration to all. (Ps.1:6)

**More:** [http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=Article\\_C&pagename=Zone-English-Muslim\\_Affairs%2FMAELayout&cid=1264249767357#ixzz0du5ky5Uj](http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=Article_C&pagename=Zone-English-Muslim_Affairs%2FMAELayout&cid=1264249767357#ixzz0du5ky5Uj)

### ■ Nigeria: Anglican Archbishop kidnapped

Gunmen abducted the Anglican archbishop of Benin diocese on Sunday January 24th in southern Nigeria's Edo state. Peter Imasuen the state chairman of the Christian Association of Nigeria was abducted in front of his official residence on his way back from a church service. The kidnappers are reportedly demanding \$750,000 for his release.

**Pray:** for Archbishop Peter's safety and release and an end to aggression in the area. (Ps.3:3)

**More:** <http://www.compassdirect.org/english/country/nigeria/14450/>

### ■ Haiti: Church and aid organisations talk of cancelling Haiti debt.

An umbrella group of Canadian and Haitian aid organizations has called on foreign ministers meeting in Montreal next Monday to cancel Haiti's near billion dollars in foreign debt. 'We hope that you use the weight of your governments to convince international financial institutions to cancel Haiti's entire foreign debt,' said Eric Faustin, representing Canadian-Haitian Development Organizations. Faustin was flanked by Haiti's Prime Minister, Canada's Foreign Minister and US Secretary of State at an emergency meeting aimed at rebuilding Haiti and coordinating disaster relief. Ecumenical News reported on 25 January the Rev. Olav Fykse Tveit asking for authentic development for Haiti that includes bold steps by the international community. He asked for the immediate and unconditional cancellation of the country's foreign debt as it would be morally untenable to do otherwise at this time of extraordinary hardship and destruction. See <http://www.eni.ch/featured/article.php?id=3727>

**Pray:** for the whole international community to respond positively to these exhortations and focus on how Haiti can become sustainable. (Ps.4:1)

**More:** [http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5hXK4wEylh4ei\\_diQ8nYX0xLZub8A](http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5hXK4wEylh4ei_diQ8nYX0xLZub8A)

### ■ International: Governments asked to end secret detention

On 27th January Amnesty International called for concrete steps to end secret detention following publication of a detailed United Nations report on its widespread use in the name of countering terrorism. The UN study highlights the global nature of the problem naming dozens of countries covering every region of the world undertaking secret detention, or being complicit in it through international networks of detainee transfers and intelligence agencies. Secret detentions constitute a series of human rights violations and cannot be justified under any circumstances. 'Secret detention is not only unlawful in itself, it enables a range of abhorrent abuses including torture and extrajudicial execution,' said Widney Brown, Senior Director of International Law and Policy for Amnesty International.

**Pray:** that God would rule through the Governments and that they will implement all the recommendations. (Ps.7:7)

**More:** <http://www.eklesia.co.uk/node/11127>

### ■ World: Open Doors World Watch list of countries who persecute Christians

The 2010 list of persecuted Christians puts North Korea in first position, Iran second and Saudi Arabia third. N. Korea sees religious activity as insurrection to the socialist principle. The regime aims to eradicate Christian activities through campaigns of 150 and 100 days of aggressive searches for secret Christians to arrest, kill and torture in horrible ways. In

Iran 85 Christians were arrested for their faith to distract attention from internal problems. Many Christians are monitored and threatened, causing great fear. Recognised minority Armenian and Assyrian churches reported imprisonment, physical abuse, harassment and discrimination. Church services are monitored by secret police and cell group members are aggressively questioned, beaten and put in jail. Saudi Arabia moved from position 2 to 3 this year, not because religious freedom has improved but due to lack of information. The 'Mutaween' religious police threaten Christians with death threats.

**Pray:** for more Christians in the free world to pray for the persecuted Church. (Ps.69:12-14)

**More:** <http://www.opendoorsusa.org/content/view/432/>

#### ■ Egypt: Christians say, 'They try to kill us'

Egyptian Maher El-Gowhary and his 15 year old daughter Dina never pray twice in the same church, never stay longer than a month in any one apartment. They are constantly under threat, always on the run because they converted to Christianity in a largely Muslim country. Maher and Dina nervously agreed to meet reporters at a Church in Cairo. The priest at the Church said he feared problems from the Egyptian authorities and while he agreed to have us watch his Sunday mass the Priest declined to speak about what is happening in Egypt. Maher and Dina tell their story out of fear and desperation. Born Muslims they chose to convert to the Christian faith (Church) after both claim they had religious visions. Now Maher says 'Muslims try to kill us and will kill us if they find us.'

**Pray:** for God's protection over Christian converts and for many Muslims to see Jesus in dreams and visions. (Nu.24:4)

**More:** <http://liveshots.blogs.foxnews.com/2010/01/26/christian-in-egypt-they-try-to-kill-us/?test=latestnews>

#### ■ Burma: Thousands flee Burma army

Over 2000 ethnic Karen villagers fled their homes on Tuesday after attacks by the Burmese army. It is believed many Christians are among the refugees. Recent attacks began on January 17 when two villagers were shot in Keh Der village. Ten houses belonging to Christians were burned causing many villagers to flee for their lives. At least four villagers were shot and one body had been found decapitated. The next day more villagers were reportedly shot by the government backed troops. Two women and one man on their way to sell goods were taken captive by patrolling troops and tied up. The following day Burmese army soldiers from Naw Soe Camp shot three villagers from Kaw Htoo Toe while they were harvesting bamboo. One tried to help his badly wounded co-worker but was chased and shot at again. A decapitated body has since been found by relief workers.

**Pray:** for all in Burma experiencing exclusion, exploitation, discrimination and violence because of their faith or tribal status. (Ps.143:9-11)

**More:** <http://www.bosnewslife.com/11150-burma>

## PRAISE REPORTS

#### ■ Christians celebrate victory over Government on Equality Bill

Our prayers have been answered after the passing of an amendment to Harriet Harman's Equality Bill in the House of Lords. Peers voted 216 to 178 in favour of Lady O'Cathain's amendment to retain an exemption for religious groups to equality employment laws. Reacting to the result, Lady O'Cathain said: 'I know that very many Christians were praying that justice would prevail as the House of Lords voted on this important issue. Many also wrote wise, sensitive letters to peers, seeking to persuade them of our case. We give thanks to God for the outcome, and we continue to pray for our Government, as Scripture exhorts us to do, that God would bless their counsels.' The Government had wanted to restrict the exemption for religious organisations solely to ministers and other positions that 'exist to promote or represent the religion or to explain the doctrines of the religion'. (See Prayer Alert 0410)

**Praise:** for continued and growing support to oppose these key elements of this bill as it proceeds through Parliament. (Ezr.10:14)

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/christians.celebrate.victory.over.government.on.equality.bill/25156.htm>

#### ■ Bible translator course receives approval by Accreditation Council

The European Training Programme (ETP) a programme that trains hundreds of students in working cross-culturally in language-based development has received approval by the British Accreditation Council for Independent Further and Higher Education. David Morgan, the ETP Director said, 'This is excellent news because it means we can continue to have trainees of all nationalities present on ETP courses and maintain the cross-cultural mix of students, so vital for the areas we cover. It also affirms the effectiveness and high quality of our teaching.' ETP attracts a large number of students who work in minority languages and who come to ETP to update their skills. Others come to ETP to see if working full-time in Bible translation is for them. The annual popular Masters degree in Field Linguistics is validated by Middlesex University. It includes a two year placement with an overseas language project.

**Praise:** for all those who work to translate the Bible and for their work to be received around the world. (2Co.1:13)

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.co.uk/article/bible.translators.course.receives.government.approval/25089.htm>

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