

PRAYER ALERT...

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BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ **FRIDAY FOCUS: 27th February - Hope for change - Jeremiah 18:1-10**

Tomorrow, many will be seeking God in an urgent national call to prayer for the state of our nation (28th Feb). **Pray:** For God to soften the hearts of His people; that they will repent and turn to Him. For God to give a new confidence to the Church to speak and stand up for righteousness. For people to respond to the message of hope brought by God's Word.
More: http://worldprayer.org.uk/uploads/Friday_Focus_web_version_Feb_2009.doc

■ **Country's prayers' with Camerons**

The whole country's thoughts and prayers are with the opposition leader David Cameron and his family after the death of six-year-old Ivan, Prime Minister Gordon Brown has said. He was speaking in the Commons as prime minister's question time was cancelled. Mr Brown said the death of a child was an unbearable sorrow that no parent should have to endure'. Shadow foreign secretary William Hague thanked the PM for his words and said David and Samantha Cameron had passed on thanks for the messages of sympathy.

Pray: as we remember the Cameron family at this time, let us also remember all those who look after handicapped children, the carers and the medical staff. (Ps.55:22)

More: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/7910125.stm

■ **Companies told to stop religious discrimination**

Employers have been warned by a leading management body to ensure staff are not discriminated against because of their religious beliefs. The Chartered Management Institute (CMI) has issued new guidelines on religion and belief in the workplace in light of a surge in religious discrimination cases. They encourage employers to educate themselves on different religions and to 'appreciate that there are differences'. Managers are also urged to 'harness diversity' and 'understand differences without being biased'. The CMI advises that it is the responsibility of managers to know religious discrimination law and make 'reasonable changes' to workplace policies. Figures for the twelve months leading up to April 2008 show 600 employees taking companies to a tribunal over religious discrimination. This increased from 486 cases two years earlier. Andrea Williams of the Christian Legal Centre, which backed Mrs Petrie's case, (See Prayer Alert 0609) was cautious about the CMI's new guidelines but admitted they were a good starting point.

Pray: for this guidance by CMI to be taken up by other professional organisations and lead to changes in people's attitudes. (Ro.10:12)

More: <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/20090217/companies-told-to-stop-religious-discrimination/>

■ Public 'favour Christian religious values'

A BBC poll suggests that most people want religion and the values derived from it to play an important role in British public life. Of those questioned by ComRes, 62% were in favour. Meanwhile, 63% of those questioned agreed that laws should respect and be influenced by the UK's traditional religious values. The proportion of Muslims who agreed (79 per cent) was higher than for Christians themselves (70 per cent). The findings contrast with calls from some politicians and secularist groups to exclude faith from the public arena. A significantly greater proportion of the Muslims and Hindus polled supported a strong role in public life for the UK's (essentially Christian) traditional religious values. The findings support other evidence of an alliance between people of different faith groups in resisting secularism. Many Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and members of other minority religious groups would rather have a Christian-based framework to national life, than one that is entirely secular.

Pray: that policymakers who misunderstand political correctness issues will learn to understand that people of all faiths want a strong set of religious values. (Ps.46:10)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/7906595.stm>

■ Social workers 'scapegoats for society's ills'

A 'noisy culture of blame' was at work in Britain today, with frustrations for failed families often vented on social workers, according to the Rt Revd Richard Holloway, former Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church. The profession had become 'modern Britain's scapegoat for society's ills', he said in Edinburgh on the 40th anniversary of the Social Work Scotland Act. Dr Holloway was speaking in the wake of the Baby P case – the toddler who was visited by social workers and other agencies 50 times before he died. Debating the 'shattering of structures' that had led to 'destructive social behaviour', Dr Holloway said that 'moral orphans' were 'thrown to the state to deal with, and it is social workers who are called upon to do remedial catch-up with inadequate resources in the context of a society increasingly uncaring in its attitudes to troubled, often, feral children'.

Pray: for social workers everywhere to be given the skills and wisdom to face the difficult challenges they face on a daily basis. (Pr.24:5-6)

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

■ Family policies 'dad-proofed' to give fathers bigger role

Ministers have ordered Whitehall to 'dad-proof' its family policies, amid concerns that schools, hospitals and other services are preventing fathers from taking a more active role in their children's lives. Civil servants have been asked to make sure the government is targeting its parenting initiatives at fathers as well as mothers to break the current 'mother-domination' of family policy. Plans already under way include an order to schools to send children's reports to their absent fathers as well as their home addresses, and moves to encourage maternity wards to let fathers spend their child's first night at the hospital instead of being sent home alone. Campaigners for fatherhood welcomed the plans but were unhappy that the government was still refusing to improve paid paternity leave beyond the current two weeks. Beverley Hughes, the minister for families, said: 'Everything is so mother-dominated in public services and we're trying to change that'.

Pray: that the government will be granted wisdom as it makes decisions that affect young people's lives. (Pr.3:3-4)

More: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2009/feb/21/fathers-family-policy-government>

■ Christians pray for end to global poverty

Christians in the UK will unite this week with fellow believers around the world in praying for an end to global poverty. As part of Tearfund's Global Poverty Prayer Week, churches are calling out with one voice for God's intervention in areas affected by poor sanitation and lack of clean water, climate change, and high rates of HIV among other challenges. Christians will also pray for disaster relief and the impact of the local church in places of need. 'Is it his world in our hands, or is it our world in his hands?' said Matthew Frost, Tearfund's Chief Executive. 'Whichever way you look at it, God has invited us to be part of restoring this fallen, broken, beautiful world. He has given us the privilege of partnership. And we know that he answers prayer.'

Pray: for a stirring of hearts to join the prayer week and pray for an end to global poverty. (Ps.17:1)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.co.uk/article/christians.pray.for.end.to.global.poverty/22600.htm>

EUROPE

■ Praying God can use France to reach Europe for Jesus

Beginning next week, from March 1st through March 21st, the international prayer coalition, Pray for France, is inviting Christians from around the world to intercede for France. 'I have been amazed at the increased openness in France to Jesus in just the past year,' said David Broussard, president of the Christian Community Foundation of France, one of the coalition partners. 'This is the fruit of passionate prayer and we are encouraged to continue the momentum through this year's prayer campaign. We saw amazing results after last year's prayer campaign—most notably in the renewed friendship and alliance with Israel. This move has brought a blessing to the nation of France and Sarkozy's presidency is one that, while controversial, has moved spiritual mountains and shaken up the status quo.' Geographically, politically, and socially the centre of Europe, France has one of the lowest percentage of Evangelical Christians in all of Europe (.8%) and is over 30% atheist.

Pray: for the church in France and for God to grant an outpouring of His Spirit and blessing upon them that will lead to a greater acceptance of Jesus. (2Co.4:15)

More: http://www.breakingchristiannews.com/articles/display_art.html?ID=6416

■ **Estonia: Least religious in the world**

Five EU members figure among the world's top 10 least religious countries, with Estonia leading the list, a new poll has shown. Just 14 percent of Estonians answered positively to the question: 'Is religion an important part of your daily life?' according to a poll released by Gallup. Estonia is followed by Nordic countries Sweden and Denmark, where 17 and 18 percent of those asked answered positively to the same question. The Czech Republic comes fifth at 21 percent, just after Norway (20%), while France is ninth with a quarter of French people declaring religion important in their daily life. The UK, Finland, the Netherlands, Lithuania, Latvia and Bulgaria were also among the countries where most people did not consider religion to be such an important part of their lives. By contrast, Italy, Portugal, Poland, Romania and Greece emerged as the EU's most religious members.

Pray: that God would send His fire of revival across Europe bringing His transformation power to the nations. (Ps.80:18)

More: <http://euobserver.com/9/27587>

WORLDWIDE

■ **Sudan: Uganda's Lord Resistance Army plunder**

The Lord Resistance Army (LRA) a brutal, blasphemous Ugandan terrorist militia, which has been led for over 20 years by spirit medium Joseph Kony, has been targeting civilians and churches in Southern Sudan and north-eastern Congo. In the face of joint military attacks by Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan to dislodge the LRA from their hideouts the rebels are still at large and increasingly more deadly. The UN calls the ongoing joint offensive against the LRA and the fallout of the operation 'catastrophic,' acknowledging lack of protections for civilians by the authorities responsible. In one area alone the LRA numbering less than 100 massacred more than 900 civilians. The horror is typically representative of LRA but now on a larger scale creating a humanitarian crisis of huge magnitude in a region already bleeding from human sufferings of rape, abduction, burned inside their own houses, or bludgeoned to death.

Pray: for the tens of thousands of homeless civilians in displacement shelters or refugee camps and the hundreds who have been abducted or left to fend for themselves. (Ps.9:12-14)

More: <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article30154>

■ **Nigeria: Thousands displaced 11 killed**

Eleven people were killed, 100 hospitalized and 4,500 homeless were evacuated to two army barracks after religious clashes in the northern Nigerian city of Bauchi. The violence escalated over the weekend when Muslim youths went on a rampage attacking Christians and burning churches. The Muslims apparently responded to the torching of two mosques hours before, but it was difficult to verify those claims. Tensions have risen in since February 13 when Pentecostal Christians allegedly barricaded a pathway used by Muslims attending Friday prayers at a mosque. However Christian observers suggest that the Christian minority may have been targeted by Muslim extremists. 'We know that churches and mosques were destroyed,' said a spokesman for Open Doors, 'for instance Sunday morning, at least two churches were engulfed by flames.' So far, the Red Cross reported over 200 houses, six churches and three mosques torched. Police commissioner Adanaya Tallman Gaya said in a statement that the situation remained difficult.

Pray: for effective security to be provided by the army and police so that neither Christians nor Muslims have to take the law into their own hands. (Pr.10:9)

More: <http://www.bosnewslife.com/6130-news-alert-religious-clashes-kill-11-in-nigeria-thousands-displaced>

■ **Somalia: Islamist rebels seize Somali town**

A Somali Islamist group known as al-Shabab, with links to al-Qaeda, has overpowered pro government forces and captured the town of Hudur. This is the latest in a string of gains by the movement opposed to UN-sponsored reconciliation efforts in Somalia. About 50 were killed and 120 injured from two days of fighting just days after the new president returned to the capital. It was hoped the moderate Islamist president elected in a UN brokered peace deal, would set up a new unity government. The first group of nearly 100 lawmakers and ministers arrived in Mogadishu from Djibouti on Wednesday to help the president to create a functioning national government, something they have not had since 1991. BBC Africa says the spreading influence of Islamic fundamentalists allied to al-Qaeda will be viewed with considerable alarm by Somalia's neighbours Kenya and Ethiopia as well as by the United States.

Pray: that Christians speak forth the word of God to overcome demonic schemes and for the international community not to tolerate injustice and violence. (Ps.72:12)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/7909880.stm>

■ **Zimbabwe: Tsvangirai in SA requesting assistance**

Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai travels to South Africa today, (Friday) for the first time in his official capacity to seek an immediate rescue package to stabilise Zimbabwe's comatose economy and explore the use of the rand to improve foreign currency liquidity. He heads a delegation including Finance minister Tendai Biti and Foreign Affairs minister Simbarashe Mumbengegwi as they meet South African President Kgalema Motlanthe, Finance Minister Trevor Manuel and central bank chief Tito Mboweni. The delegation would not include officials from the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe.

Pray: that Zimbabwe would receive all the financial support needed to stabilise the economy and deal with the humanitarian emergencies. (2Ch.14:11)

More: <http://www.thezimbabweindependent.com/index.php/local/22056-tsvangirai-travels-to-sa-in-bid-to-get-assistance->

■ **Iraq: Army withdrawal timescale**

President Obama is preparing a major speech to be delivered in the next few days regarding a timetable for withdrawing from Iraq. Meanwhile a prayer bulletin from Religious Liberty says, 'As was expected, the Sunni Arabs defeated the

incumbent Kurds in the elections and will now take power in Nineveh. Last weekend (21 & 22 February) the Iraqi military launched Operation New Hope (Arab units with US assistance) in an effort to control the situation in Mosul. A reported 74 terrorists were arrested. Kurdish Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani warns that if the situation between Kurds and Arabs is not resolved prior to the departure date for US troops from Iraq 'it will be war between both sides'. However, many observers believe war could be imminent. There are reports of escalating clashes between Arab Iraqi army units and Kurdish peshmerga (armed) forces. A long violent battle for northern Iraq may be just beginning.'

Pray: for God to direct leaders how and when to leave Iraq and for the Iraqi church to know how to respond to those around them amidst imminent changes. (Pr.21:15)

More: <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/Business/story?id=6954907&page=1>

■ Iran: Persecuting religious minorities

Iran is fighting off accusations of persecuting the small (non-Christian) sect of the Baha'i. The government arrested seven leaders of the Baha'i community nine months ago. Paul Estabrooks, for Open Doors International, says Christian believers are already in the crucible, and the heat is expected to intensify. 'They're subject to incredible pressure. First of all, they have to operate under complete secrecy. Then when they are discovered, which has happened quite frequently in this past year, their punishment is severe.' In 2008, there were 73 documented arrests of Christians in Iran. A source working closely with churches noted that 'with elections coming this year, there will be more arrests. The regime rules through fear, and they want Christians to be afraid.' Estabrooks says though small, the church is vibrant. 'I spent some time with a group of young people from the Iranian church. I was just impressed with their passion for sharing Christ. They are not worried. Their desire is to see people come to Christ.'

Pray: for God to strengthen those who come to Christ despite the threats they may face and for continued growth in the church in Iran. (Heb.10:25)

More: <http://mnnonline.org/article/12339>

PRAISE REPORTS

■ United Arab Emirates: Healings in almost every main service

One might expect to find such a vital Christian congregation as the King's Revival flourishing in the US or Australia, however, this 7,000-member church, which has 24 pastors is situated in Dubai. King's Revival Church International began as a small house church of 7 people, led by a pastor from Sri Lanka in 1991 and has grown to become the largest Evangelical church in the Middle East. There are 14 services weekly, 4 in English, the rest in other languages. Aside from some strong restrictions (no proselytizing among them), non-Muslim religions have been allowed by the government to thrive for the most part. A spokesperson said, 'The main reasons the church has grown is because in practically every main service we get people healed instantly.'

Praise: God for this vital ministry and for all He is doing throughout the Middle East. (Ps.30:2)

More: http://www.breakingchristiannews.com/articles/display_art.html?ID=6415

■ North Korea: Underground university trains missionaries

An American missionary group, Seoul USA, has opened an 'underground university' in South Korea to train North Korean Christians to spread the gospel among their compatriots. The group is offering a 12-month intensive training course in Seoul to North Koreans wanting either to return home as missionaries or to reach out to North Korean refugees in other nations. They report a growing trend for 'North Korean exiles who are eager to return to China and North Korea to reach their countrymen'. Meanwhile, the strained relationship between North and South Korea has deteriorated as the Communist Pyongyang announced it is 'scrapping all military and political agreements signed with the South'

Praise: for protection, success, and wisdom for all those seeking to bring the gospel to North Korea. (Jos.1:5-7)

More: <http://www.releaseinternational.org/pages/posts/north-korea-underground-university-trains-missionaries506.php>

■ Blears 'glad' prayer nurse back at work

Reinstating Caroline Petrie, a Christian nurse who was suspended after offering to pray for a patient, was 'common sense' says Communities Secretary Hazel Blears. Speaking on the BBC's Today Programme Mrs Blears said she wants to see an end to 'political correctness gone mad'. Also appearing on GMTV, she said: 'If you look at the issue with the nurse, I am delighted that common sense prevailed, she is back at work. She wasn't going to impose prayer on people, she just said 'would you like me to' and common sense has prevailed in that case.' (See Prayer Alert 0609)

Praise: God for this wonderful answer to prayer and pray that common sense would continue to prevail instead of so called political correctness. Pray for Caroline Petrie as she resumes work in Weston-super-Mare after such a stressful time. And also pray for the many other Christians who are persecuted in their places of work by those with a secular agenda. (2Tim.2:26)

More: <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/20090225/blears-glad-prayer-nurse-back-at-work/>

PRAYER FORUM OF BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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