

# PRAYER ALERT...

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

### ■ Call for prayer after lost appeal

The head of The Christian Institute is urging Christians to pray for religious freedom in Britain after the Supreme Court rejected the appeal application of a Christian registrar disciplined because of her opposition to civil partnerships. Lillian Ladele was refused permission to challenge a previous ruling, which found she had not been discriminated against by Islington Council in north London when it had disciplined her for refusing to conduct same-sex civil partnership registrations. Ms Ladele, who worked as a registrar for the council for 16 years, refused to conduct the ceremonies for same-sex couples because she felt it went against her 'religious conscience'. Judges concluded that Ms Ladele had broken the law by refusing to serve someone because of their sexuality, illegal under Labour's 2007 Sexual Orientation Regulations. Colin Hart, director of The Christian Institute, which has backed Ms Ladele's legal campaign, said her case demonstrated how changes to the law had become 'coercive'.

**Pray:** for Christians to have wisdom and boldness as we face legislation no longer based on Judeo-Christian principles. (Is. 53:11)

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/call.for.prayer.after.christian.registrar.loses.discrimination.appeal/25458.htm>

### ■ British military offensive continues

We thank God that the Government warnings of possible large numbers of fatalities in Afghanistan have so far proved pessimistic, although last weekend saw the 5th soldier killed in under a week <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/8555399.stm> The number of injured soldiers is rarely mentioned in the media, but official statistics show that in the period 1st January to 15th February there were 64 wounded in action. The continued toll on the Medical teams is immense from evacuation by helicopter to the Field Hospital, onwards to Selly Oak Hospital in Birmingham and then rehabilitation at Headley Court. We should remember the Chinook pilots who fly troops into the operation, and those evacuating the injured often under fire, as well as the Medical teams at every stage in the care of the injured, and trust that their workload will be manageable and that soldiers continue to get the best possible care.

**Pray:** for physical, emotional and psychological healing for our injured soldiers as they learn to cope with the changes to their lives. (Pr 3:5)

**More:** <http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/AboutDefence/CorporatePublications/DoctrineOperationsandDiplomacyPublications/OperationsInAfghanistan/OpHerrickCasualtyAndFatalityTables.htm>

### ■ Prime Minister hails 'historic' Northern Ireland justice vote

The devolution of policing and justice powers to Northern Ireland marks the end to decades of strife, said Gordon Brown. Out of the 105 votes cast in the NI Assembly, a total of 88 supported the move, with 17 against. 'It sends the most powerful message to those who would return to violence: that democracy and tolerance will prevail,' he said. Policing and justice powers will be devolved on 12 April after a 38-year gap. Disagreement on the timing of the devolution of the justice powers

had threatened to collapse Northern Ireland's power-sharing administration. In February, Northern Ireland's two main parties, the DUP and Sinn Fein, reached an agreement which, now the vote has been passed, will see a justice minister elected.

**Pray:** for increasing positive co-operation between the DUP and Sinn Fein to benefit all in NI. (Mt 5:9)

**More:** [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern\\_ireland/8558466.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/8558466.stm)

#### ■ Religious adoption agency seeks exemption from Equality Bill

Catholic Care is seeking to be free to refuse adoption to same-sex couples because it believes that a proper family unit should be 'made up of a man and a woman whose lives together are fulfilled by the blessing of children'. Christopher McCall QC, representing the adoption agency, said: 'Since the introduction of the regulations under the Equality Act there is perceived to be a barrier in the way of the charity. To make its services available to same-sex couples would conflict with tenets on which it has based its work.' Meanwhile a recent amendment to the Equality Bill is forcing religious establishments to allow civil partnerships to take place on their premises. Tim Pearson, Director of The Way said: 'It seems that we are fast approaching the time when the Churches in this country will be persecuted and we as individual Christians will have to stand our ground in the face of this opposition'.

**Pray:** for the freedom for Christian agencies to be able to operate according to Christian principles and for our legislators to honour this. (1Co.16:13)

**More:** [http://www.theway.co.uk/feature.php?id=7996&this=Religious\\_adoption\\_agency\\_seeks\\_exemption\\_from\\_Equality\\_Bill](http://www.theway.co.uk/feature.php?id=7996&this=Religious_adoption_agency_seeks_exemption_from_Equality_Bill)

#### ■ Lifestyle more important than dogma in UK mission, says evangelist

Steve Hollinghurst argues in his new book 'Mission-shaped Evangelism' that 'lifestyle is far more important than dogma' in 21st century Britain. He says Christians can no longer base evangelism on the assumption that a large percentage of the population was raised or educated within a Christian framework. Rather, he says the Church today must follow the method of the early Christian Church, which spread the Gospel to the known world by involving itself in other cultures. His book coincides with the publication of another new book 'Raised With Christ' by Adrian Warnock, in which the popular Christian blogger argues that the Church must preach the resurrection if it is to see revival. Perfectly timed for Lent and the approach to Easter, he writes: 'Not preaching about the resurrection is a major reason for the weakness, lack of joy, poor growth, spiritual decline, compromise with sin, and many other problems in the Church today.'

**Pray:** that these authors' views will be widely read and re-focus our minds on Mission. (Mt.22:15-21)

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.co.uk/article/lifestyle.more.important.than.dogma.in.uk.mission.says.evangelist/25441.htm>

#### ■ Cherish your churchyard

Thousands of growing churches are preparing to celebrate Cherishing Churchyards Week this June as part of the UN's International Year of Biodiversity. The nationwide project is being run by conservation charity Caring for God's Acre (CfGA) and is supported by the CoFE's national environmental campaign Shrinking the Footprint. There are an estimated 12,000 CoFE churchyards. Around half of them already run biodiversity projects, in rural and urban areas, while remaining respectful to their users, particularly family and friends of those buried there. During the week (Friday June 18 to Sunday June 27) CfGA is encouraging churches to run an event to raise awareness and celebrate the treasures of their churchyard. Last year activities included, church tower tours, scything workshops, guided walks and talks, flower identification, family events and storytelling. CfGA spokesperson Andrea Gilpin said: 'Churchyards are unique and special places. Each one is packed full of interesting natural and built features ranging from the beautiful ancient yew trees to the gravestones telling the stories of past parish inhabitants.'

**Pray:** that visitors to our sacred places begin to recognise the faith of those who have gone before. (Is.22:23)

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/cherish.your.churchyard/25446.htm>

#### ■ Loss of trust is our fault too, says Roman Catholic election guidance

Without a wider debate about a shared vision for society, electioneering 'may well be confined to bitter arguments over issues of particular policy', the RC Archbishop of Westminster, the Most Revd Vincent Nichols, warns in the introduction to the book Choosing the Common Good, from the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. Among other major concerns, the book addresses the common good, migration, faith, and marriage and family life. Governments do well when they interfere as little as possible while supporting parents, they say, call for the encouragement of 'a more realistic view of married life'. They conclude with a call for the part played by faith to be clearly recognised in society. 'Care must be taken not to put obstacles in the way of religious belief and practice which reduce it to devotional acts,' the bishops warn. Faithworks, the Christian social action charity, is also pressing for recognition of churches' and Christian charities' contribution to welfare provision locally.

**Pray:** that the Church's voices be heard and respected by the Government following the May election. (2Ch.1:1)

**More:** <http://www.churchtimes.co.uk/content.asp?id=90666>

## EUROPE

#### ■ Dutch church orders inquiry into sex abuse allegations

Dutch Catholic bishops have ordered an independent inquiry into alleged sexual abuse of children by priests. The investigation would be launched 'as soon as possible' into more than 200 reported cases of abuse, they said. Earlier, the Vatican defended its response to child sex abuse allegations in a number of European states, saying it had reacted rapidly and decisively. The Dutch Catholic Church offered its apologies to the victims: 'To the victims of abuse in Catholic boarding schools, the religious leaders and bishops offer their deep-felt condolences and apologies,' a statement said. Allegations first centred on a school in eastern Netherlands, with people saying they were abused by Catholic priests. This prompted

dozens more alleged victims from other institutions to come forward in recent days. The German, Austrian, Irish and US Catholic churches have all been damaged by sexual abuse scandals, and suggestions that senior clergy covered up what was happening.

**Pray:** for the Catholic Church in particular and the damage caused by abuse charges and pray that there would be a speedy resolution and healing. (1Cor.6:9)

**More:** <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/8558311.stm>

#### ■ Spain liberalises its law on abortion despite strong protests

The Spanish Senate has approved a sweeping new law that, under the guise of women's rights, allows abortion without restrictions up to 14 weeks and gives 16 and 17-year-olds the right to have abortions without parental consent. Abortions are also allowed in the first 22 weeks of pregnancy if the foetus has a serious or incurable disease. Despite huge rallies and polls against it, the new law brings the country in line with its more secular neighbours in Northern Europe and it is the latest of a series of Socialist-led reforms undertaken by the Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero. At the end of last year, millions of anti-abortion campaigners protesting against the liberalisation of abortion laws marched through Madrid, in one of the largest demonstrations since anti-war protests in 2003 and 2004. Civic and religious groups chartered 600 buses and several planes to bring people in from other cities.

**Pray:** that the Senate even at this stage would reconsider its secular and liberalising of laws and listen to the people. (Jn.16:21)

**More:** <http://www.ccfon.org/view.php?id=1005>

## WORLDWIDE

#### ■ Nigeria: Army ignored warning of massacres in Jos

Nigeria's Plateau state governor accused military commanders of ignoring warnings of an attack on Sunday near the city of Jos. Hundreds of Christians died in three villages in a small area tucked in the middle of the mainly Christian south and Muslim north. The massacre is seen as revenge for a previous bout of killings of Muslims in January. Security forces are accused of failing to stop the clashes. Nigerian police denied the claims. The army has not yet responded to the accusations but troops are patrolling the area to prevent further clashes. More gunfire in villages near Jos late on Tuesday caused villagers to flee the area. The governor said he warned the army of suspicious reports of people with weapons hours before they attacked but no action was taken. The latest massacre happened even though a strict curfew is supposed to have been in place. (See also Prayer Alert 0610)

**Pray:** that the Lord will give Acting President Jonathan and his administration wisdom in the ongoing conflict and for those responsible for the massacre to be swiftly brought to justice. (Ps.7:6)

**More:** <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/8558246.stm>

#### ■ Nigeria: Deep sorrow in Jos community

Since the January attacks in Jos, Christian leaders, Muslim leaders and youth have been gathering to resolve perceived, real or even imaginary problems. By speaking frankly and airing their grievances a process was being developed to enable the community to move forward. Then on Sunday more villages were attacked by Muslim extremists. Right Reverend Ben Kwashi, Archbishop of Jos, said: 'Some communities may never again be recognised in history because generations have been wiped out. Hundreds of corpses littered burnt houses, roads, bush paths, farm areas and hiding places. Is there no other way by which matters can be resolved except through this sadistic and cruel way of making peoples' lives miserable?' Archbishop Kwashi asked. 'For me, as a Christian, human life is so sacred that no one, absolutely no one, should tamper with it, no matter what religious faith you belong to.' The Archbishop and villagers have strongly criticised the government's inaction during the massacre. He said there was an enforced curfew in the area, but wondered why no security had been available to prevent the violence from occurring.

**Pray:** that the security forces would actively protect Christians from further violence, and that the spiritual strongholds of violence and anti-Christian hatred would be defeated. (Jn.6:68 & Pr.2:6)

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/nigerian.archbishop.grieves.for.lost.generations.after.attacks.on.christians/25461.htm>

#### ■ India: Hindu hope from March 15th

Hindus hope to have their sins forgiven between Jan.14 and April 28 at India's Kumbh Mela festivals. Millions go on pilgrimage to rivers, lakes, hills, and mountains where there are shrines associated with particular deities. These places are thought to be gateways to the higher realms. Pilgrims travel to the four cities of the Kumbh Mela to bathe in their holy rivers when the planets are auspiciously aligned, making Kumbh Mela the largest religious gathering in the world. The next main Haridwar bathing dates are between March 15 and April 14. Haridwar means 'gateway to god'. 80 % of India's population still worship Hindu idols and believe bathing in these rivers during Kumbh Melas will wash away their sins and give them everlasting life. Astrology determines the best dates to bathe.

**Pray:** that this year's gatherings at the Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati rivers would be the launch of a journey to the one true living God. (Hos.14:3)

**More:** <http://www.go2southasia.org/2010/03/hindus-hope-to-have-their-sins-forgiven-at-india%E2%80%99s-kumbh-mela-festivals/>

#### ■ Nepal: Campaign to restore Nepal as Hindu state

Nepal's dethroned king is supporting a campaign to restore the country as a Hindu state. 64-year-old Gyanendra and former queen Komal went to a forest area where a popular Hindu saint called Kali Baba, was conducting a ritual to restore Hinduism as the state religion in Nepal. Kali Baba announced he would sacrifice his life if Hindu state status is not restored

within the next nine days. Kali Baba said, 'My demand is re-declaration of Hinduism as Nepal's state religion. I have the support of Nepal's major political actors who accept they made a mistake declaring Nepal secular. I am certain this will happen because more than 85 per cent of the Nepali population adheres to this ancient religion. See also: [http://www.telegraphnepal.com/news\\_det.php?news\\_id=7300](http://www.telegraphnepal.com/news_det.php?news_id=7300)

**Pray:** that now would be the time for the one true Ancient of Days to save the lost of Nepal. (Is.51:5)

**More:** <http://news.outlookindia.com/item.aspx?676264>

#### ■ **Morocco: Christians expelled for proselytising**

In a police and army raid, Christians who cared for abandoned and orphaned children at the Village of Hope near Meknes were expelled from Morocco. Christian literature and CDs were seized and workers accused of converting minors to Christianity. A spokesman said they had been open about their faith for the 10 years they have strived to take in and foster children abandoned by society. Islam expert Steven Emerson told CBN News five years ago, 'I think we should be very concerned about the continued operation, cultivation, support and probably growth of al Qaeda cells in North Africa.' Last month a Bible study in a private Moroccan home was raided. (See also Prayer Alert 0710) Could this be linked to the rise of radical Islam in Morocco?

**Pray:** for God's people to be hidden as they do the things He has called them to do in a spiritually hostile environment. (Ps.91:4)

**More:** <http://www.cbn.com/cbnnews/world/2010/March/Christians-Expelled-from-Morocco-for-Proselytizing/>

#### ■ **Middle East: Indirect Israel talks called off**

Israel's Interior Ministry controlled by the ultra-Orthodox Shas party announced it would build 1,600 new housing units in a religious Jewish settlement in an area of the occupied West Bank annexed to Jerusalem by Israel. The announcement caused the Palestinian president to decide not to enter planned negotiations leading to a final peaceful land agreement. Israel's spokesman to the Arab world said, 'It is difficult to handle a coalition Government in a democracy where you have so many players. There are parties for the peace process and other parties controlling the Interior Ministry who are more conservative when it comes to the peace process. The Israeli Government wants to promote the peace process and there has been a complete freeze of building settlements in the West Bank; but Jerusalem is a totally different issue and building in Jewish neighbourhoods in Jerusalem will continue.'

**Pray:** for the peace of Jerusalem. (Lev.26:6 & Ps.44:3)

**More:** <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2010/03/201031023521904316.html>

## PRAISE REPORTS

#### ■ **Camberley mosque plan rejected by council**

Controversial plans to build a mosque in Camberley have been thrown out by councillors at a heated meeting. The local Bengali Association's bid to knock down a listed building and build a domed mosque was rejected by Surrey Heath Borough Council. Local historians and residents had argued the town's heritage must be protected and opposed the plans. Abdul Mojid, who chairs the Association, said they would consider whether to appeal against the decision. More than 350 people packed into Camberley Theatre in Knoll Road, with some residents queuing from 9 o'clock in the morning for a ticket. The plan involved knocking down the listed Victorian school building in London Road, which is about half a mile from the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst. The plans had been approved by the council's planning committee earlier this year, but overturned on a technicality. Nahrni Choudhury, who spoke at the meeting on behalf of the Bengali Welfare Association, accused some of the campaigners of racism.

**Praise:** God for this decision and pray that any appeal will also be stopped. (Jn.9:31)

**More:** <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/surrey/8561342.stm>

#### ■ **Scottish pensioner, aged 90, leaves fortune to Salvation Army**

The Salvation Army is renowned for helping people, sometimes when they themselves are in desperate need. But in its own hour of need, a Salvation Army branch in a small Scottish town got a pleasant shock after it received a donation of £850,000 from a pensioner who had benefited from the Christian organization's welfare services. When 90-year-old Robert Saddler, a retired Edinburgh architect who lived in Forfar, died in 2009 he left the Salvation Army a small fortune in his will. Major Jim McCluskey, team leader of the Army's Angus county's community service, told Ecumenical News International, 'We have been thrown a lifeline with this legacy. It is truly God sent.' The Salvation Army's North Scotland Divisional Commander, Major Martin Hill, said, 'Many people will benefit from Mr Saddler's kindness. We will now be able to look at various needs of older people in the Angus area.'

**Praise:** God for Mr Saddler and his gift that will benefit so many through the work of the Salvation Army. (Ps.37:21)

**More:** <http://www.eni.ch/featured/article.php?id=3843>

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