

# PRAYER ALERT...

An initiative of the Prayer Forum of the British Isles & Ireland  
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Issue 1210

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Friday 19th March 2010

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## BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

### ■ Bishop to lead nationwide election hustings

Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali believes all UK Christians should take an active interest in the General Election and has accepted an invitation by the 'Christians and Candidates 2010' initiative to figurehead a series of hustings in local constituencies. He will chair debates where candidates of the main political parties make their views known to local Christians, and local Christians can put forward issues of deep concern to their prospective MPs. Depending on the General Election date the events should run from 17-30 April in partnership with local Church leaders and candidates. It is hoped local churches nationwide will provide similar forums for meaningful interaction between Christians and government contestants. Bishop Michael said many groups have been influential on this country's political process, and in the run up to a General Election Christians should confront their would-be MPs with their questions.

**Pray:** that now would be the time for Christian ethics and values to be woven back into British politics. (Pr.21:1)

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

### ■ **INSIGHT ARTICLE: De-Christianising of the U.K.**

In the above article Bishop Michael reminds us that Christians need to be actively involved in the General Election. As good citizens we are called to pray for those who 'rule' over us. Whilst the foundations of our country are undoubtedly Christian, over the past forty years we have allowed these foundations to be eroded and are rapidly seeing them destroyed. Christian festivals have been replaced by secular holidays, Christian services in schools have ended, Christian broadcasting has diminished and much of the media ridicules Christian morals. To a considerable extent Christian teaching on sexuality has been discarded, marriage rejected, Sabbath abolished by Sunday trading. Pagans are chaplains in hospitals, prisons and educational establishments and reverence for life is often rejected. Informed passionate intercession will spearhead an end to this decay. A few of the opinions and values of our Members of Parliament across the parties are recorded in this INSIGHT article as we pray into the coming General Election.

**Pray:** for a government with sound judgment and Godly understanding of the times. (Pr. 8:15-16)

**More:** <http://www.prayer-alert.net/info/Election2010-1.pdf>

### ■ Muslim gangs imposing sharia law in British prisons

Radical Muslim gangs are imposing a form of sharia law inside some of Britain's prisons, a BBC investigation has found. Non-Muslim inmates at the high-security Long Lartin jail have been forced by the gangs to stop playing 'Western' music and take down pictures of women from their cells, according to one former prison officer there. Prisoners at the jail, although allowed to cook their own food, are not allowed to prepare pork for fear of offending the Muslim inmates, the officer said. The officer, speaking to Radio Five Live's Donal Macintyre show, told how younger prisoners were targeted for forced conversion to Islam by the gangs. 'They went along because they were intimidated. They genuinely weren't of the Muslim faith,' she said. 'I knew one lad quite well, who was approached by the radical Muslims and he changed.'

**Pray:** for support and encouragement for the prison authorities to stop any bullying and extremism. (Ps.49:5)

**More:** <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newsttopics/politics/lawandorder/7428933/Muslim-gangs-imposing-sharia-law-in-British-prisons.html>

#### ■ Alliance to combat violence against women

A new alliance is bringing together Christians from around the world with a common goal of ending violence against women. The initiative, which is due to launch in June, has emerged from the aid agency Tearfund. They said it will 'incubate' Restored over the next three years, and host the new alliance as it builds up its own capacity and identity. 'We hope that many UK organisations and partners around the world will want to join Restored, and that we will find ways to stand together as men and women in the family of God to bring an end to the unacceptable abuse that many women face', Peter Grant said. Tearfund is one of the UK's Christian relief and development agencies, working in over 50 countries. 'Violence against women takes many forms and is clearly an issue for many in the UK as well as in the poorest parts of the world,'

**Pray:** for all women who are victims of violence in the UK and the world. (Ps.72:14)

**More:** <http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/115>

#### ■ Baroness Deech: English law no longer has clear concept of marriage

Baroness Deech, the chairman of the Bar Standards Board, claims that the traditional Christian image of a lifelong union of man and woman is no longer accurate because of the changing nature of relationships and the introduction of legal rights for same-sex couples. She believes human rights law may soon rule that it is discriminatory to ban homosexuals from marrying in the same way that heterosexual couples do. However Lady Deech adds that some differences between civil partnerships and marriages should be preserved, and criticises recent Labour laws that allow same-sex couples to be named on birth certificates with no mention of a father. The crossbench peer will make her comments in the latest of a series of public lectures as professor of law at Gresham College, London. She has previously considered the idea that families could be forced to look after grandparents in their old age.

**Pray:** that the Christian understanding of marriage will not continue to be sidelined but be upheld. (Heb.13:4)

**More:** <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newsttopics/politics/lawandorder/7449696/Baroness-Deech-English-law-no-longer-has-clear-concept-of-marriage.html>

#### ■ David Cameron supports faith schools

David Cameron has pledged his support for faith schools and has indicated that a Conservative Government would oversee an increase in their numbers. During an interview with The Jewish Chronicle Mr Cameron declared himself to be 'a big supporter of faith schools, personally as well as politically'. Mr Cameron, whose daughter attends a Church of England school, said: 'I think that faith schools are a really important part of our education system and they often have a culture and ethos which helps to drive up standards. If anything, I would like to see faith schools grow. Through our school reform plans, there will be a real growth in new good school places and we're anticipating that some of these will be in faith schools.' Shadow Children's Secretary Michael Gove showed his support saying: 'We would like to see parents who want their children in faith schools to have that chance'.

**Pray:** that the Government elected this year will recognise the importance of faith schools. (Ro.1:12)

**More:** <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/david-cameron-pledges-support-for-faith-schools/>

#### ■ Interactive Lent reflection gets hundreds talking about meaning of Easter

An interactive Lent reflection has seen hundreds of people post their thoughts on the Easter story on Facebook and Twitter. More than 1,000 people have signed up to follow Easter (LIVE) on the social networking sites since the initiative was launched by the BibleFresh movement last month. It asks people 'What does Easter mean to you?' and invites them to post their musings for others to read and reflect on. The reflections range from the thoughtful, 'A time when Jesus kept his promise to me and every other human being on the planet' to the light-hearted, 'A hot cross! (No bun intended)'. The Archbishop of York, Dr John Sentamu, is among the church leaders backing the initiative. He posted his view: 'Remember God's Son was raised 2new life so that we might live. We are an Easter people & Alleluia is our song.'

**Pray:** for this original initiative, that it will reach people who might never give Easter a second thought. (1Pe.1:3)

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.co.uk/article/interactive.lent.reflection.gets.hundreds.talking.about.meaning.of.easter/25494.htm>

## EUROPE

#### ■ Vatican: Pope addressing paedophilia crisis

Pope Benedict XVI said on Wednesday that he would sign a pastoral letter to Ireland's Roman Catholics about the paedophile priest scandal that has rocked their country. Voicing his 'deep concern' over the crisis, the pope told his weekly general audience at the Vatican that he would sign the long-awaited letter on Friday and would send it 'soon after.' Revelations of widespread child abuse by clergy, compounded by evidence of a cover-up rocked the Irish Catholic Church late last year. Since then, new abuse scandals have swept other European Catholic churches, including those of Austria, The Netherlands, Switzerland and the pope's native Germany. The primate of all Ireland Cardinal Sean Brady who has been facing calls to resign over his role in the scandal and apologised on Wednesday. 'I want to say to anyone who has been hurt by any failure on my part that I apologise to you with all my heart,' he said.

**Pray:** that the Pope's message will help to bring closure and healing to the many hurt people involved. (Pro.15:3-5)

**More:** <http://www.france24.com/en/20100317-pope-sign-letter-irish-catholics-over-paedophilia-crisis>

### ■ Anglicans to meet in Geneva to promote peace and justice

Some 35 members of the Anglican Peace and Justice Network (APJN) will meet in Geneva, Switzerland, from 13 - 20 March, 2010. Representing over 20 countries and all the world's continents, participants will learn more about making their voices heard within the UN system in Geneva. In parallel, they will be introduced to UN policies and programmes to inform their own work on peace and justice worldwide. The meeting, facilitated by the Anglican UN Office in Geneva, will include presentations by prominent UN and civil society representatives and will facilitate an Anglican presence at the UN Human Rights Council. Through participation in panel discussions and plenary sessions, APJN members, who include both clergy and laity, will share their own experiences of issues such as truth and reconciliation, transitional justice, forced displacement, women and health, and children and education. To further theological reflection on these topics, thematic Bible studies and Eucharistic services will be held daily.

**Pray:** that the delegates will gain much and be able to make their voices heard within the UN. (Eph.5:19-20)

**More:** <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/acns/news.cfm/2010/3/12/ACNS4691>

## WORLDWIDE

### ■ Egypt: Twenty five Christians injured

Twenty five Coptic Christians were injured by Muslims last Friday after an attack on a church community centre. The attack lasted for ten hours and resulted in nine houses burned. It arose from a sermon by a radical sheikh. The sheikh's style of Islam was reviled in the press by the Muslim Indian head of a Centre for Studies in Mumbai, who said, 'I condemn the attacks against Christians in Egypt in the strongest possible manner, human life is sacred and no one can claim the right to attack another human being for any reason. This is unacceptable.' (See <http://www.speroforum.com/site/article.asp?id=29048&t=Islam%3A++Egypt%3A+++Muslim+leader+condemns+violence+against+Christians+in+Egypt>) The attack took place the same day the US Commission on International Religious Freedom issued a statement condemning the Egyptian justice system for not prosecuting violence against Copts, after growing instances of Christians being attacked, murdered and having property and possessions violated.

**Pray:** for the Copts to know the freedom of forgiving, for the Muslims to know the freedom of God's word and for religious freedom in Egypt. (Is.9:7)

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/muslim.attack.injures.23.coptic.christians/25481.htm>

### ■ Iran: Court sentences post-vote rioters

Sentences have been handed down to eighty-six detainees of Tehran's 'Western-led post-election unrests' on charges that include taking part in illegal riots and disrupting public order. The sentences issued by the Tehran Revolution Court have been transferred to the Implementation of Sentences Bureau, the court's public relations office announced in a Tuesday statement. It added that most of the sentences that were issued to the eighty six are prison terms. The sentences were issued for charges such as 'conspiring against national security, spreading propaganda against the establishment, membership in hostile and anti-Revolutionary groups, taking part in illegal gatherings, and disrupting public order.' Iranian security and justice officials have publicized evidence of US and European involvement in planning and backing the post-election riots in Tehran that included killing and injuring law-enforcement officers as well as destroying and burning public and private properties.

**Pray:** for God to use global and internal voices to implement just and righteous sentences in dealing with this unrest. (Ps.89:13-15)

**More:** <http://www.presttv.ir/detail.aspx?id=121015&sectionid=351020101>

### ■ Morocco: Christians ask for prayer

Christians in Morocco request prayer after police raided two Christian run orphanages. (See last weeks Prayer Alert) It is understood that the second orphanage continues to operate but is under considerable scrutiny. There has been a wave of deportations of expatriate Christians, where police officers take them into custody to question for some hours, inform them their residency permits are revoked on orders of the Ministry of Justice, and take them to the airport. In some cases involving families the wives remain in Morocco while their children complete the current academic year. The estimated number of cases of Christians from several nationalities deported is more than 35. Moroccan Christians request our prayers for the decision to close the orphanage to be reversed and for the second orphanage under scrutiny to continue operating normally. They also ask that those deported will know the Father's comfort and His plan for their future and for no further deportations or raids on Christian ministries.

**Pray:** also that the national Moroccan Christians will be strengthened, not intimidated, by these events. (Is.16:4,5)

**More:** [http://www.givengain.com/cgi-bin/giga.cgi?cmd=cause\\_dir\\_news\\_item&cause\\_id=%20%20%201489&news\\_id=83795](http://www.givengain.com/cgi-bin/giga.cgi?cmd=cause_dir_news_item&cause_id=%20%20%201489&news_id=83795)

### ■ Nigeria: More Christians killed

Eyewitnesses report more murders. (see Prayer Alert 0610, 0710 & 1110) Under the cover of darkness and driving rain Muslim herdsmen disguised as soldiers with machetes entered the village of Byie early Wednesday March 17th setting fire to homes and shooting into the air to drive frightened villagers into the night. They then butchered and burned over a dozen Christians. 'I can confirm 13 people have died while six others are critically injured,' said Information Commissioner Gregory Yenlong. The dead included seven women and four children. It came as international Christian aid workers tried to reach previously attacked villages located in the area of Jos. Also on Wednesday Nigeria's acting president sacked his entire cabinet without giving any reason for the dissolution of the cabinet. Permanent secretaries took charge of the ministries on Thursday 18th March, almost a month after parliament empowered him.

See: <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/africa/2010/03/20103183255713731.html>

**Pray:** for God in his mercy to break the stronghold of death and confusion over this region. (Is.45:2)

**More:** <http://www.bosnewslife.com/11983-breaking-news-over-dozen-christians-killed-in-nigeria>

■ **Pakistan: Gunmen storm charity**

Militants armed with guns and grenades stormed the offices of World Vision in the North West Frontier Province where Taliban and Al-Qaeda-linked militants have waged a deadly campaign. Seven aid workers were killed in the 'brutal and senseless' attack which caused the suspension of all of World Vision's operations in Pakistan. Many charities have left the area as Islamist violence has soared. About 300 World Vision staff worked in Pakistan since the 2005 earthquake. 'Our staff are motivated by a desire to provide a better life for children,' said World Vision's regional vice president in response to questions about what motivated the militants' attack. 'Where extremists teach hate we work with mothers and fathers to help needy children, where extremists sow violence we work with farmers planting seeds of a more prosperous community, and where extremists encourage intolerance our staff nurture respect for human life and human dignity.'

**Pray:** for international NGO's to ensure the safety of their workers and for terrorist organizations operating in the region to be defeated. (Ps.7:6)

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/seventh.world.vision.worker.dies.after.attack.on.pakistan.office/25500.htm>

■ **Israel: Continued rocket attacks**

A small Islamist faction calling itself Ansar-al-Sunna claimed responsibility for the third rocket attack from Gaza in 24 hours that killed a man. Two earlier rockets landed near Sderot. In a statement e-mailed to reporters in Gaza the al-Qaida-inspired faction said the attack was a response to Israel's 'Judaization' of Islamic holy places in Jerusalem and elsewhere in the West Bank. The attack came on the same day as a visit to Gaza by EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton, the most senior international official to visit Gaza in more than a year. She told reporters, 'I condemn any kind of violence. We must find a peaceful solution to the issues and problems. What we have been saying to the Israelis for a long time is that we need to allow aid into this region, to be able to support the economy to grow to enable people to have the things they are clearly lacking.'

**Pray:** against retaliation for these attacks and that Mrs Ashton's comments would become a reality. (La.2:19)

**More:** <http://www.jpost.com/Israel/Article.aspx?id=171296>

## PRAISE REPORTS

■ **Catholic adoption society wins court battle over gay rights exemption**

A Catholic adoption society has unexpectedly won a High Court battle against legislation forcing it to consider homosexual couples as parents. Catholic Care had said it would have to give up its work finding homes for children if it was made to comply with the new anti-discrimination legislation. The Charity Commission had rejected its plea to an exemption under the Sexual Orientation Regulations but a High Court judge this morning allowed the adoption charity's appeal. Mr Justice Briggs, sitting in London, ordered the commission to reconsider the case in the light of the principles set out in his judgment. (See Prayer Alert 1110)

**Praise:** God for this answer to prayer and pray that God will uphold His law over that of the world. (Rom.8:6-8)

**More:** <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstoppers/religion/7463779/Catholic-adoption-society-wins-court-battle-over-gay-rights-exemption.html>

■ **Haiti: A million pray instead of Mardi Gras Festival**

There's talk that the Lord is moving in an unprecedented fashion in Haiti, reports Jeremy Reynolds, correspondent for ASSIST News Service. According to a news release from Reciprocal Ministries International, for the first time in Haitian history the country's president cancelled Mardi Gras and replaced the festival with three days of prayer and fasting. From Feb. 12 through Feb. 14, more than a million people each day gathered across from the National Palace. A leader said, 'In unity and humility we cried out to God. One can truly assert that God has visited Haiti during these three days and has poured his shower of blessing and forgiveness over our nation.' (See also Praise item in Prayer Alert 1010)

**Praise:** and thank God for this development and pray for God's transforming power to continue. (Ps.104:30)

**More:** <http://www.christiantelegraph.com/issue9105.html>

■ **God shaped my career says NI police chief**

Northern Ireland's chief constable claims that God had called him to the region's top policing job. Matt Baggott, who is a born-again Christian, said he felt his entire 33-year career in the police had been mapped out for him by a higher power. In a candid interview about his deeply held beliefs, the 51-year-old father of three explained how much his faith had influenced him and his wife's joint decision that he should apply to take over from the outgoing Sir Hugh Orde last year. 'We came to a point in our lives round about the end of spring last year, beginning of summer, where we both felt something was going to happen, we both have a very strong Christian belief,' he said.

**Praise:** God for this powerful testimony from a man in authority in NI. (1Cor.1:5-7)

**More:** <http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/breaking-news/uk-ireland/god-shaped-my-career-police-chief-14720607.html?service=Print>

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