

PRAYER ALERT...

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BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ **FRIDAY FOCUS: 27 March 2009 - Hope for the Nations - 1 Timothy 2:1-2**

The G20 London Summit 2009 meets on 2 April to address the global financial crisis. Pray: For wisdom for the G20 leaders and representatives from leading financial institutions to work cooperatively to restore stability and stimulate global economic growth; for any planned marches to be peaceful. Pray for Christians around our nation and the rest of the world to take responsibility to pray for the G20 summit as they discuss the current world issues of the financial crisis, poverty, climate change and inequalities.

More: http://worldprayer.org.uk/uploads/Friday_Focus_Mar_2009.doc

■ **Christians to rise in prayer ahead of G20 summit**

Christians across the UK and around the world will join in praying this week for world leaders and decision makers to unite around a new vision for the global economy based on values like partnership and care for the vulnerable. The Rise Up prayer initiative is being organised by the Micah Challenge coalition of Christian organisations to coincide with the G20 summit in London on April 2. From March 28 to April 3, Christians will commit to individual daily prayer for the summit and join together in a day of prayer on Sunday. On the day of the summit, Christians are being encouraged to meet up with friends to pray that measures to recover the global economy will be fair and take the poor into consideration. Andy Clasper, Micah Challenge UK Executive Director said: 'Isaiah told God's people to rise, shine and to bring light to a world in darkness. I think he would say the same today'.

Pray: that God will listen to the prayers of His people across the nations and speak into the hearts and minds of the leaders as they meet. (Is.60:1-6)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/christians.to.rise.in.prayer.ahead.of.g20.summit/22885.htm>

■ **God 'will not give happy ending'**

God will not intervene to prevent humanity from wreaking disastrous damage on the environment, the Archbishop of Canterbury has warned. In a lecture, Dr Rowan Williams urged a 'radical change of heart' to prevent runaway climate change. Humanity should turn away from the selfishness and greed that leads it to ignore its interdependence with the natural world. And God would not guarantee a 'happy ending', he warned. Speaking on Wednesday he said just as God gave humans free will to do 'immeasurable damage' to themselves as individuals it seemed 'clear' they had the same 'terrible freedom' as a human race. 'I think that to suggest that God might intervene to protect us from the corporate folly of our practices is unchristian and unbiblical,' he said. 'God's faithfulness stands, assuring us that even in the most appalling disaster love will not let us go - but it will not be a safety net that guarantees a happy ending in this world.' He concluded by saying, 'at the present rate humans may starve, suffocate or drown.'

Pray: that mankind will take seriously its responsibilities to work and take care of the world God has given us. (Dt.28:12-13)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/7964880.stm>

■ Britons are believers of 'fuzzy faith', says survey

Britain is one of the least religious nations in Europe, according to a major survey by the European Union to be published next month. According to the study, only 12 per cent of Britons feel they 'belong' to a church, compared with 52 per cent in France. It also found that the UK has one of the highest rates of 'fuzzy faith' - or people who have an abstract belief in God and an ill-defined loyalty to Christian traditions. The study, conducted as part of the influential EU-funded European Social Survey, will be seen as an indicator of a shift in attitudes and values. Professor David Voas, who led the project, said the UK was involved in a 'long process of disestablishment', with Christianity gradually being written out of laws and political institutions. 'Christian faith will soon have no role among our traditional establishments or lawmakers,' he said. 'It remains to be seen, for example, how much longer bishops will be allowed to sit in the House of Lords.'

Pray: against this process of de-Christianization of our nation, its laws, traditions and establishments leading to ill-defined beliefs. (Ez.18:9)

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newsttopics/religion/5030049/Britons-are-believers-of-fuzzy-faith-says-survey.html>

■ Government plan for churches and charities to deliver health care

The Government and the Church of England have outlined a blueprint to help churches, charities and local authorities work better together to deliver community services such as health, day care and post offices. While the Government is not giving extra funding to the church to adapt any of its 16,000 worship buildings for better community use, it pledged to help combat the 'squeamishness' often felt by funding providers when it comes to giving grants to faith groups. In a report backed by Culture Secretary Andy Burnham and launched in London last Tuesday, the Cabinet Minister and Financial Secretary to the Treasury Stephen Timms, along with other ministers, say faith communities play a 'valuable' but often unrecognised role in local communities. The publication of the document comes as the Church of England seeks to highlight its role as the largest voluntary organisation in the country.

Pray: for the Church, often accused of being irrelevant, as it becomes more involved in peoples' lives in real and practical ways. (Mt.25:35)

More: <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/faith/article5969467.ece>

■ Religious tensions on rise at UK universities

Faith is becoming increasingly polarised on university campuses according to both Christians and secularists. Students are becoming more animated about defending their individual world view rather than fighting Labour's university fees or other hot issues. Speaking to the Church of England Newspaper, both UCCF and the British Humanist Society (BHA) admitted that the atmosphere in university had changed in recent years. Pod Bhogul, press officer for UCCF said that the trend reflected the polarisation demonstrated in culture as a whole. He said: 'Christian Unions exist to give every student in Great Britain an opportunity to hear about Jesus Christ whilst they're at university. Universities are, of course, a market place of ideas where different views can be shared, providing a healthy context for dialogue, debate and discussion.'

Pray: for Christian Unions that many would hear the Good News of Jesus through their influence and testimony. (Is.52:7)

More: <http://www.religiousintelligence.co.uk/news/?NewsID=4150>

■ Druids, Rastafarians and atheists in new religious studies classes

Schoolchildren will be taught about the 'rise of atheism' in a new religious studies GCSE, it has been announced. Lessons will also focus on Druids and Rastafarianism as part of a syllabus designed to boost understanding of religious diversity around the world. Attitudes by different faiths towards same sex marriages, human rights, gender equality and even GM crops will be among the topics covered. The course will largely snub traditional lessons on the Bible and other holy books. Examiners said the syllabus - by one of Britain's biggest exam boards - will make the subject more 'relevant' to students. Anastasia de Waal, head of family and education at the think-tank Civitas, said: 'We seem to be so desperate to make things relevant - to pander to popularity - that our kids aren't being taught the underlying knowledge they need to succeed in the world. We are doing a huge disservice to our young people'.

Pray: for youngsters who are eager to learn about spiritual matters that Biblical foundations and the Gospel of Christ are not sidelined but given a proper place in such studies. (Dt.11:19)

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/5039275/Druids-Rastafarians-and-atheists-in-new-religious-studies-classes.html>

EUROPE

■ Hungary: Churches warn of social breakdown amid financial crisis

Church leaders in Hungary have warned that the financial crisis and increasing unemployment could lead to violence and social breakdown in the country. Rev Balazs Odor, ecumenical officer of the Reformed Church in Hungary, said, 'We were already in bad shape before this global crisis, and we are now affected more deeply than other countries in our region.' Odor said, 'As churches, we have a mission to be on the side of the weak and excluded, and to raise our voices prophetically.' He added that tensions had been increased following the 2006 election, when the distrusted socialist government just managed to hold onto power. The election was followed by street protests. Tens of thousands of Hungarians are said to have lost their jobs as a result of the recession. Industrial output in the country has also fallen by one fifth whilst the forint, the Hungarian currency, has devalued by 39 per cent.

Pray: that the church would continue to help all those in need by offering spiritual input and prayers. (Mt.6:25-34)
More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/hungarian.churches.warn.of.social.breakdown.amid.financial.crisis/22859.htm>

■ **Bulgaria: MP speaks out against rise of Islamic fundamentalism**

Bulgaria's leader of the opposition, Yane Yanev, has spoken out against the forced Islamisation of villages in the southern part of the country. Yanev, who leads the 'Order, Law, Justice' party (RZS) claimed that some parts of the country needed a second liberation from Ottoman rule. Bulgaria was ruled by the Muslim Ottoman Empire from the 14th to the 19th century. RZS leaders visited a number of villages in the south of Bulgaria last week and met concerned teachers and parents who gave evidence of Islamic fundamentalism being imposed on the area. They gave the example of the village of Ribnovo, where the school principal has allegedly imposed a dictatorship on teachers. Teachers are required to wear traditional Muslim clothes, while girl students are encouraged to wear headscarves. In another example, the school principal in the village of Satovcha has been attending classes in radical Islam at an illegal fundamentalist school.

Pray: that God would protect the children from the teachings of those who are trying to impose their unhelpful beliefs upon them. (Ps.140:3-4)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/bulgarian.mp.speaks.out.against.rise.of.islamic.fundamentalism/22855.htm>

WORLDWIDE

■ **India: Christians still under attack**

For background see Prayer Alert 0609. Petitions from rights activists against closure of relief camps are being rejected by the High Court and the Supreme Court is wasting time by returning the petition to the High Court on 23 March, saying it wanted to hear the State's position first. Meanwhile, the Orissa State Government is declaring peace and evicting Christians from the relief camps in order to close them. The traumatised, homeless Christians are then forced to return to their villages without any protection or security. The next petition will be considered on 6 April. On 19 March 15 Maoist rebels killed a Hindu nationalist leader in Rudhiguma village and the Hindu nationalists are saying that a 'nexus' between the Maoists and Christians is responsible. Local Hindu nationalist BJP officials say the situation is 'explosive'. Meanwhile the BJP has named a Hindutva activist as its candidate from the Federal parliament constituency. According to Sahu, Kandhamal is the 'model area' for Hindutva in the entire country. The Indian elections start 16th April.

Pray: for God to use the season of elections to miraculously turn this situation into a victory for truth, humility and justice. (Ps.45:4)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/fears.of.more.violence.after.second.hindu.leader.killed.in.orissa/22880.htm>

■ **Sudan: Uganda's Lord's Resistance Army target christians**

For background on the blasphemous, occultic LRA in Sudan see Prayer Alert 0909. The Congolese government extended the deadline of Operation Lightning Thunder twice, yet when the final deadline expired the LRA had been weakened but not destroyed and its spirit-medium leader Joseph Kony remains at large. The Ugandan Army was asked to hand over control of the operation to Congo and start withdrawing on 15th March. That day, LRA rebels raided Banda Village killing and kidnapping an unknown number of residents. On 19th March, LRA rebels hacked 12 people to death and kidnapped 40 more in Yanguma village. There is now fear in northern Uganda that the LRA might launch reprisals there also. The occultic LRA rapes, kills, mutilates, kidnaps and enslaves in the name of the Lord under the direction, so they claim, of the Holy Spirit. They have received support from Islamic groups in Sudan. They primarily target churches and predominantly Christian communities. Source: World Evangelical Alliance.

Pray: for God's heavenly host to win the battle for authority over the land and for His Holy fire to destroy the evil still attempting to corrupt so that peace would take root and thrive. (Da.7:10)

More: <http://www.fas.org/irp/world/para/lra.htm>

■ **Zimbabwe: Church and children need prayer**

The Anglican Church in Zimbabwe has brought charges against the police chief of Zimbabwe for preventing parishioners from attending church on Sundays. The Diocesan Registrar for the Church said that police commissioner general Augustine Chihuri was working with excommunicated bishop Albert Kunonga to destabilise the church. Kunonga is a strong supporter of President Robert Mugabe and has claimed ownership over Anglican churches and assets, even though he is excommunicated. Anglican bishops do not recognise Mr Kunonga as a Bishop within the Anglican Communion and call for the full restoration of Anglican Property within Zimbabwe to the Church of the Province of Central Harare. Meanwhile the UN reports that the Zimbabwe education system, once heralded as sub-Saharan Africa's finest, is on the verge of total collapse because education policies adopted by the government since 1980 have disintegrated. An estimated 45,000 teachers have left the profession since 2004, and no meaningful learning is taking place.

Pray: against the corrosive spirit of control over the weakest and also for the honourable members of Zimbabwean society. (Mat.5:3-10)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/zimbabwe.anglicans.take.police.chief.to.court/22884.htm>

■ **Afghanistan: Church agencies warning**

Ecumenical News International in Geneva reports: The most severe drought in a decade is fuelling a food crisis in Afghanistan that now threatens millions of people with possible starvation, church-linked humanitarian agencies have warned. 'Unless the international community responds to the issue of hunger in Afghanistan, we will not be able to fulfil any other promises we are making to the Afghan people,' said Marvin Parvez, Asia and Pacific regional coordinator for Church World Service. A US group that belongs to Action by Churches Together International, a global humanitarian alliance of churches and other agencies. The grouping warned that a US\$1.26 million ACT appeal for the drought in Afghanistan was

severely underfunded and had received less than three percent of the requested amount. 'Funding for this emergency remains a significant challenge,' said ACT director John Nduna. 'What are we saying, when only high profile emergencies receive our support?'

Pray: that God in His mercy would remove the anarchy on the land and the climate disorder and chaotic spiritual atmosphere over Afghanistan. (Dt.11:12-15)

■ **China: Missing persons need prayer**

Chinese authorities are torturing Christian human rights activist Gao Zhisheng following the escape of his family to the United States. Advocacy group China Aid Association (CAA) today urged the international community to take action on his behalf. Earlier this year Gao had authorized CAA to release his account of 50 days of torture by state-sponsored thugs in September and October of 2007. CAA and Gao's family are urging concerned people worldwide to sign a petition to the Chinese government advocating his release at www.FreeGao.com. Also World Evangelical Alliance report today that Christian ministries are at risk after American journalists Laura Ling and Euna Lee accidentally crossed the poorly marked border while in China last week preparing a report on North Korean refugees. They were charged with espionage. A serious consequence is that the recorded interviews and sensitive information threatens to endanger Christian ministries assisting refugees on the Chinese border; and a crackdown on targeted individuals may ensue.

Pray: for God's assistance and protection for vulnerable Christians in this hostile atmosphere and for individuals to make wise decisions. (Dt.31:8)

More: <http://www.compassdirect.org/en/display.php?page=lead&lang=en&length=long&idelement=&backpage=&critere=&countryname=&rowcur=>

■ **Israel: Paganism returns**

A story reported in www.haaretz.com said, 'Like many other soldiers who took part in the Gaza operation Omer occasionally took a few moments to pray, but he did not pray to the Lord of Israel. Omer considers himself pagan, and has sworn allegiance to three ancient gods. During combat, he says they appeared before him, giving him strength during the most arduous moments. Omer is still in the army, and therefore refused to be interviewed for this story. Yet he did say he belongs to a religion whose goal is to revive worship of ancient gods. In an online Hebrew-language paganism forum, Omer's accounts of his Gaza experience are standard fare. Another user recalled how he prayed to Anat, the Canaanite god of war, while serving in an elite combat unit. A Bar-Ilan university researcher report on the pagan community in Israel states, 'Modern paganism is comprised of a wide variety of religions and faiths, most of which are based on ancient pagan rituals.'

Pray: for God to powerfully reveal himself to all searching for of truth and that Judaic/Christian opposition to idol worship will prevent and remove existing spiritual deception. (Ex.20:1-4)

More: <http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/2009/s09030143.htm>

PRAISE REPORTS

■ **Iraq: Troops make 'joyful noise'**

A Christian team in Iraq is leading the troops to worship God, and forming a close-knit family of brothers and sisters in Christ. Hope Chapel is well-named because military men and women are filled with hope in this place of worship on the grounds of Camp Victory in Baghdad. Through their worship, the team hopes to point others to a meaningful life in Christ. The praise team constantly changes as units rotate in and out of Baghdad. But no matter who's taking part, team members say they're all family. 'Without God, without this praise team it would have been a rough time and it hasn't been. I've really enjoyed these orders and I'd do this again in a second. They know the battle belongs to the Lord and they are giving him the praise he deserves'. To watch the report from CBN news, click on the 'More' link right.

Praise: God for the many ways He works in the tougher parts of the world and pray for the chaplains, evangelists and spiritual bridge builders working amongst the troops. (Ro.1:8,12,17)

More: <http://www.cbn.com/CBNnews/566664.aspx>

■ **Netherlands: Pastor frees sex-slaves**

Again and again the police visited the girls in their rehabilitation centre, returning with father-figures and other young women. But the girls remained tight-lipped and even hostile towards the police. The authorities realised they were up against a double fear. The girls' handlers had told them the police would throw them out of the country. And, more terrifyingly, they would reap the consequences of voodoo curses spoken out over the girls during rituals in Nigeria. Breaking voodoo curses is not dealt with in police training manuals. Someone then suggested the name of Nigerian pastor Moses Alagbe, who leads a Bible academy in Amsterdam. He agreed to talk and pray with the girls, explaining that the God of the Bible was more powerful than the voodoo curses. One by one he earned their confidence, and eventually ten of them agreed to bring charges and to testify.

Praise: God for His anointing upon pastor Alagbe and for setting the captives free. (Is.42:7)

More: <http://www.joelnews.org/frontpage.htm>

PRAYER FORUM OF BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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