

PRAYER ALERT...

An initiative of the Prayer Forum of the British Isles & Ireland
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Issue 1409

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Friday 03 April 2009

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BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ **FRIDAY FOCUS: 3 April 2009 - Hope for Families - Psalm 68: 5-6**

Families are God's order. When Jesus took on flesh he became part of a family on earth.

Pray: For your family whatever its shape, that God would touch/continue to touch it. For a family you know that is under pressure whether through relationship issues, past hurts, financial problems or any other difficulty.

More: http://worldprayer.org.uk/uploads/Friday_Focus_Apr_2009.doc

■ **G20: Gordon Brown draws on religion to warn 'markets need morals'**

Gordon Brown has called on religious leaders to help develop a 'shared moral sense' that will govern markets and the economy in the wake of the global economic crisis. In a speech at St Paul's Cathedral, the Prime Minister drew on religious doctrine in a highly-personal address which warned that 'markets need morals'. The speech intended to set the tone for this week's G20 summit in London by placing world leaders under a moral obligation to agree new rules for the financial system. In the speech, the Prime Minister said: 'Now that people can communicate instantaneously across borders, cultures and faiths, I believe we can be confident that across the world we are discovering that there is a shared moral sense'. It is highly unusual for a British politician to publicly draw on religious themes. Leaders have reached an agreement to tackle the global financial crisis with measures worth \$1.1 trillion (£681bn).

Pray: that the decisions made by the G20 would lead to shared moral values by the nations of this world. Pray also for the Nato summit this weekend. (1Ti.6:17-18)

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopics/religion/5084464/Gordon-Brown-draws-on-religion-to-warn-markets-need-morals.html>

■ **Married couples 'will become a minority'**

Married couples will make up only 41 per cent of the over-16 population by 2031, when they will be outnumbered by divorcees, single people and cohabiting couples. The Office for National Statistics predicts that the fastest-growing group will be those who remain single. A third of 30 to 44-year-olds will be 'un-partnered or never married' by 2031 compared with 22 per cent today. Among 45 to 66-year-olds, 19 per cent will be single compared with 9 per cent today. Experts say that young people are not forming relationships because they are under increasing pressure. Anastasia de Waal, of the think-tank Civitas, said: 'Many more are living at home with their parents, which is a bit of a killer for romance. Others are living far from their work and find it difficult to meet people.' There were 231,450 marriages in 2007, 3.3 per cent fewer than the year before.

Pray: for marriage, given by God to be at the heart of family life, community and society. (Heb.13:4)

More: http://women.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/women/relationships/article6011575.ece

■ Go-ahead for family planning TV ads 'insane'

Government plans to allow the TV advertising of abortion clinics and around-the-clock advertising of contraceptives has been slammed by pro-life groups. The move is an attempt to combat the UK's teenage pregnancy rates, the highest in Europe. But Dr Peter Saunders of the Christian Medical Fellowship said, 'the Government strategy on teenage pregnancy, based on condoms, the morning-after pill and abortion, has failed'. He said the 'whole approach creates an atmosphere where it is seen as acceptable for teenagers to indulge in recreational sex'. Pro-life Conservative MP Nadine Dorries branded the proposals 'insane'. Michaela Aston of Life warned that well-funded advertising from clinics and condom manufacturers would 'encourage young people to have sex'. A Brook Advisory Centres spokesperson countered, saying advertising would reduce confusion.

Pray: for our government and the media that they would be given wisdom in how to address the teenage pregnancy problem. (Job15:8)

More: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1164901/Government-plan-allow-abortion-condom-ads-television-year-olds.html>

■ Pray for service families on changeover of deployed forces

March and April is the main changeover period of Service personnel to and from Afghanistan and Iraq and it can be a very difficult time for them and their families. They can be away from 6 months to over a year. This puts enormous pressure on marriages. For the serving person, deployment can be exciting as they switch attention away from family and onto fellow soldiers. Unlike the soldier's the spouse can find themselves isolated, struggling to cope with all the demands of the home and the loss of their best friend and companion. They are expected to manage and to be the mother and father to their children. Added to this, they are likely to experience anxiety for the safety of their loved one and fear for the future should they be killed or return seriously injured. The soldier may well return with post-traumatic stress. A couple re-uniting at the end of deployment can find the experience a nightmare and their marriage could be under severe threat.

Pray: that God would protect marriages within the Armed Forces and keep relationships alive whilst apart. Pray for smooth reunions and the ability for both partners to recognise each other's difficulties. (Ecc.4:12)

More: <http://www.afcu.org.uk/prayer.htm>

■ London Homelessness Prevention Officer told 'say 'God Bless' and we'll sack you'

A Homeless Prevention Officer with Wandsworth Council has been suspended from work for nearly two months for encouraging a homeless woman with an incurable medical condition to look to God for help, after doctors told her they'd given up hope. Duke Amachree who has worked for the local authority for almost 18 years was suspended for discussing his faith with a client, and was told in an investigatory interview on 17 March that he should not raise the issue of religion at work. Not only was Mr Amachree told it was inappropriate to 'ever talk about God', he was also told that he may not even say 'God bless'. Mr Amachree, a member of the UK World Evangelism Church in London, was summoned to an interview as a result of a complaint made against him by a member of the public.

Pray: for all Christians as they face challenges to their faith, that God would give them supernatural insight. (1Co.2:12-13)

More: <http://www.christianlegalcentre.com/view.php?id=716>

■ C of E Bishop resigns to meet Muslim challenge

A Church of England Bishop who received death threats after saying that parts of Britain had become 'no-go areas' for non-Muslims is quitting his Rochester Diocese in order to work with persecuted Christians. Dr Michael Nazir-Ali's new role is likely to see him involved in helping Christians in the Middle East and Pakistan, the land of his birth. He has also revealed that he intends to work with Muslim converts to Christianity in Britain. Commentator Melanie Phillips said it was 'a shocking rebuke to the Church that he has to leave his post of influence and authority as a bishop in order to carry out the church's core duty to defend its own against attack.' As Bishop of Rochester, Dr Nazir-Ali gained a reputation for speaking out on controversial topics such as Islam and homosexuality.

Pray: for Nazir-Ali that God would anoint him and use him mightily in his new role in boldly defending our faith and particularly the support for Muslim converts. (2Ti.1:7)

More: <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/20090331/c-of-e-bishop-resigns-to-meet-muslim-challenge/>

EUROPE

■ Official launch of the European Parliament Working Group on Human Dignity threat

The president of the European Parliament, Prof. Dr. Hans-Gert Pöttering MEP, delivered the Inaugural Address of the European Parliament's Working Group on Human Dignity, on Wednesday 25th March in Strasbourg. More than 30 MEPs and Ambassadors attended this exceptional meeting, which was the occasion for many MEPs to boldly reaffirm their commitment to Human dignity. 'The Working Group believes human beings are made in the image and likeness of God, our Creator. It is precisely this image and likeness which man acknowledges in himself with such profound awe and respect to call human life sacred; and in so acknowledging, allows the moral sense to testify that certain properties are inalienable; indelible from conception to death.'

Pray: for this initiative to grow and take firm root in the decisions that our political leaders make on our behalf and on the way we relate to each other as God's creation and image. (Gen.2:7)

More: <http://www.theparliament.com/latestnews/news-article/newsarticle/hans-gert-poettering-addresses-the-european-council/>

■ Turkey: Lawyer plans European court case in defense of Turkish Christian's

The lawyer of two Turkish Christians on trial for 'insulting Turkishness' plan to take their case to the European Court of Human Rights after they were fined 600 Turkish lira (US\$360) for taking 'illegal' church offerings, trial observers said in comments monitored by BosNewsLife Saturday March 28. In a statement, defence attorney Haydar Polat suggested the ruling could set a precedent crippling to churches. Nearly all Protestant fellowships in Turkey are reportedly registered as associations, with very few having status as a recognized religious body. The strict application of the law would therefore limit the ability of churches collecting funds. Tastan and Topal, who converted from Islam to Christianity, said the fines for collecting funds was an attempt to take away attention from 'a lack of proof' and no-shows by the prosecution team's witnesses over the larger charge of 'insulting Turkishness.'

Pray: for our Turkish brothers and their lawyers as they challenge the Turkish authorities in the European Courts. (Jas.1:5)

More: <http://www.bosnewslife.com/6812-lawyer-prosecuted-turkish-christians-plans-european-court-case>

WORLDWIDE

■ World: Crisis watch for April

Nine conflict situations around the world deteriorated last month. In Sudan fears of up to 1.5 million being at risk of losing food, water and shelter, while tensions in the capital continue to rise as the government moves to brutally repress signs of pro-ICC support. In Sri Lanka intense fighting between government forces and Tamil Tigers left hundreds dead and many more wounded. Some 150,000 civilians remain trapped in the violence. In North Korea, the government intention to launch a communications satellite in early April prompted outcry over the country's nuclear ambitions. Guinea-Bissau experienced political uncertainty after the assassination of the army chief, several senior officers and President Vieira. In Madagascar former Antananarivo mayor Andry Rajoelina was voted president in defiance of the constitution. Kenya saw the murder of two prominent rights activists and growing strains within the fragile coalition government, as well as the emergence of new tensions in the Central African Republic, Sierra Leone and Northern Ireland.

Pray: God to provide opportunities for individuals, governments and NGO's to resolve conflicts and for His Holy Spirit to minister to his people in the midst of conflict, violence and fear. (Is.60:2-3)

More: <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=6035&l=1>

■ Congo: Civilians flee widespread unrest

Oxfam reported some 250,000 people in the Democratic Republic of Congo have been displaced following an operation to flush out Hutu rebels, The joint operation against the rebels earlier this year was hailed as a great success by both Rwanda and DR Congo. But now that the better-trained and equipped Rwandan army has left DR Congo, the Hutu militia is reportedly re-emerging from the forests. Oxfam says various armed groups are now attacking civilians in the east and making it difficult to deliver aid to those displaced, with widespread looting, burning of villages and an unacceptable peak of sexual violence. Oxfam report being very worried that continued military operations are having a serious effect on the people who have had to flee their homes, where the army and other militias has already displaced more than one million people. Congolese soldiers not having been paid for the past three months adds to the problem.

Pray: for God to powerfully provide for the people terrified of attack from the many armed groups in the region. (Ps.25:16-20)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/7977493.stm>

■ Congo: Protection for Christian outreach

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, there are people who have never heard about Jesus, so from April 11-25 a group of eight American volunteers aged from 17 to 46 will present the JESUS film 15 times and coordinate follow-up with new Christians through local churches. 'With the long history of violence and war in the Democratic Republic of Congo, one of the most relevant concepts for people is forgiveness,' said the group leader Robert Newkirk.

Pray: for God's protection over this group and for his leading in all the places they go and in all they do. (Ps.12:7)

More: <http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/2009/s09030182.htm>

■ Indonesia: Christians fear gains by Islamic parties in elections

Indonesians will go to the polls to elect a new parliament on 9 April. Indonesia has a multi-party democracy and coalitions are normally needed to have legislation passed. To get their legislation through the assembly, the large parties will pursue quid pro quo deals with the small parties, a situation the small parties can exploit as they 'auction' their votes to the highest bidder. Whilst this can be beneficial and have a broadening or moderating effect on legislation, it can also provide an opportunity for the small and unpopular pro-Sharia Islamic parties to advance their Islamic agenda. During 2008 the incumbent President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) passed a number of controversial laws sponsored by Islamic parties whose support he will need if he is to be re-elected as president in July. Islamisation freely advancing by such political means would be a serious threat to religious liberty in Indonesia. There is also concern that Indonesia could be shaken by post-election violence. The Christians are less than 10% of the population and fear further marginalization.

Pray: against the issues of religious totalitarianism and religious nationalism and for a Godly spirit to invade the democratic vote. (Eze.34:16)

More: <http://www.asianews.it/index.php?l=en&art=14880&theme=8&size=A>

■ Columbia: Guerrillas threaten and kill Christians

A pastor in North Colombia was threatened with death if he did not meet the National Liberation Army (ELN) by the Arauca River. He was taken by canoe to the other side of the river and intimidated and given three options: cooperate with the revolutionary cause of the guerrillas, leave or die (The pastor, who requested anonymity, survived the ordeal). Although the

ELN has been at odds with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), in the north they co-existed without conflict. Guerrillas control the south-western area where last November four Christians were killed. The FARC guerrillas say evangelicals are their worst enemy. Also your prayers are welcome for Pastor William Reyes. (See P.A.4508). It is six months since he disappeared while travelling home from the city of Valledupar and recently threatening messages have been left for his family and an attempt made to grab his daughter

Pray: that God in his mercy will provide a restraining atmosphere over guerrilla forces in Columbia and a wall of protection round Christian communities. (Zep.3:15)

More: <http://intercessors.wordpress.com/2009/03/21/colombia-guerrillas-threaten-pastor/>

■ Morocco: Expels Christian missionaries

The Interior Ministry said the Christians, including four Spaniards and one German woman, were detained Saturday while meeting Moroccan Muslims in Casablanca. In a statement carried by local media the ministry said the Christians were sent to Spain by boat. 'Numerous pieces of evangelical propaganda material were also seized including video cassettes in Arabic that advocated conversion to Christianity.' The Associated Press quoted an unidentified official as saying that Morocco 'has nothing against the Christian faith but felt the missionaries 'had gone too far.'" Authorities throughout North Africa have become increasingly wary of what they view as an effort by Protestant churches and groups to spread Christianity in the overwhelmingly Sunni Muslim region. Morocco's King Mohammed VI is also 'commander of the believers and protector of the Muslim faith'.

Pray: that the Church and more Christian agencies would find ways to speak up for religious liberty and for the victims of religious persecution. (Ro.12:4-5)

More: <http://www.bosnewslife.com/6826-morocco-expels-christian-missionaries>

■ Israel: Obama preparatory phone calls

Barack Obama, currently on his first overseas trip as president phoned Binyamin Netanyahu in the early morning hours Wednesday and congratulated him on his first day in office making clear that US support for Israel's security was unwavering and wished him well. According to Netanyahu's office the conversation lasted close to 30 minutes and was held in a 'friendly' atmosphere. The two agreed to meet in the near future, though no date was given. Netanyahu said in a press interview that he supported Obama's policy of engaging Iran as long as it would bring to an end Teheran's nuclear program. He thought Iranian economy is weak making Iran susceptible to sanctions that can be ratcheted up by a variety of means. He also had an extended conversation with Russia Prime Minister Vladimir Putin that was described as 'warm'. According to Netanyahu's office, Putin said Netanyahu was a 'welcome guest in Moscow.'

Pray: that God's agenda would be worked out through the coming months in international agendas for peace. (Is.52:7)

More: <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1238562879456&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull>

PRAISE REPORTS

■ Burundi: President commits to 'put God before everything'

The President of Burundi, Pierre Nkurunziza, a born-again Christian, is currently taking the lead in building free primary schools in his country. With the help of outside donors and the Burundi government, the local people are constructing the schools themselves. Every Saturday they have to engage in community work. In addition to expanding access to education, the Burundi government offers free medical care for pregnant women and children under age 5 to help reduce the nation's child and infant mortality rate. The education and health-care projects are part of Nkurunziza's efforts to bring reconciliation and development in a nation where some 300,000 people died during a 12-year civil war between the minority Tutsis and the majority Hutus. Elected with 92 percent of the vote in 2005, the year the war ended, Nkurunziza negotiated a historic peace agreement in 2006 and arranged for the Hutu rebels he once led to be employed by the national army to foster unity.

Praise: God for President Nkurunziza and his righteous leadership and pray for his continued blessing and God's protection. (Ps.21:6)

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

■ Uruguay: Expansion of Christian broadcasting

God is answering many prayers in Uruguay as the country has been experiencing a tremendous growth in the number of Christian radio stations over time. It has grown from zero to more than 50 in just four years. The Serving In Mission (SIM), Radio Ministries Advocate, Stan Bruning, said that for several years it has been the desire of the SIM Uruguay Director to start a Christian radio station in Uruguay. 'In 2003, there were no Christian stations, and only a few commercial stations which sold time for Christian programming. Early efforts were discouraging due to the apparent impossibility of getting a frequency, but now there are more than 50 non-commercial Christian radio stations in Uruguay, including 'Radioamor' or 'Loveradio' which operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Recently, the Radioamor station was upgraded from a 15-watt FM transmitter to a 100-watt FM transmitter and has the potential to impact 300,000 listeners with the Gospel.

Praise: God for seeds of the gospel being sown and ask for a bumper harvest of Christians in Uruguay. (Ro.15:20-21)

More: <http://www.assistnews.net/STORIES/2009/s09030173.htm>

PRAYER FORUM OF BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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Prayer Alert is a partnership project of the Prayer Forum of the British Isles and Ireland
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