

# PRAYER ALERT...

An initiative of the Prayer Forum of the British Isles & Ireland  
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Donations

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## ■ British Isles & Ireland

- [FRIDAY FOCUS: 10 April 2009 - Hope for New Life - John 3:16-17](#)
- [Coalition questions worth of G20 deal](#)
- [Archbishop confronts BBC over its treatment of Christianity](#)
- [Christian Party declares 'poster war' on the BNP](#)
- [Churches highlight new evidence on problem gambling](#)
- [Care homes come under pressure to cut costs](#)
- [NHS chaplaincy represents excellent value for money](#)

## ■ Europe

- [Italy: Quake rescue effort extended](#)
- [Azerbaijan: Police raid religious gathering](#)

## ■ Worldwide

- [Zimbabwe: A ministry to Zimbabwe works promisingly](#)
- [India: General elections start 16 April](#)
- [Iraq: Four Christians killed in two days](#)
- [Egypt: Muslim rioters attack Christian shops](#)
- [Indonesia: Accused over violations in West Papua](#)
- [China: Persecution to escalate in 2009](#)

## ■ Praise Reports

- [Cuba: Pastor's trial suspended for a third time](#)
- [BBC and C4 both announce new Bible series for TV](#)

## BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

### ■ **FRIDAY FOCUS: 10 April 2009 - Hope for New Life - John 3:16-17**

The power of what Jesus accomplished in His death on the cross and His resurrection is amazing.

**Pray:** That the amazing accomplishment of Jesus' life, death and resurrection will be shown in and through His church, at this season of Easter and throughout the rest of the year. For someone you know who does not yet know Jesus as their Lord and Saviour, that this week they would know God's touch and love and the true meaning of Easter.

**More:** [http://worldprayer.org.uk/uploads/Friday\\_Focus\\_Apr\\_2009.doc](http://worldprayer.org.uk/uploads/Friday_Focus_Apr_2009.doc)

### ■ **Coalition questions worth of G20 deal**

Aid agencies have questioned whether the G20 agreement reached in London last week will really help the poorest in the world become better off. The G20 agreed on a \$1 trillion deal to help deal with the recession and said they would take strong action against tax havens. The Put People First Coalition of 160 organisations, including Christian Aid, Tearfund, World Vision, questioned whether the deal really signalled a break from the 'failed policies that brought about the global crisis'. One member of the coalition, Jubilee Debt Campaign, said it welcomed the G20's recommitment to debt relief, but added it was concerned that IMF loans could come with strings attached. JDC said, 'It is imperative that the IMF immediately stops attaching damaging austerity conditions to its funding, and that funding for the poorest countries comes mainly in the form of grants,' reports Church Times. In addition, Paul Cook of Tearfund, said that more should have been done to link financial support to fighting climate change.

**Pray:** for the leaders of the nations that they will not forget their promises to those who are worse off than themselves. (1Ti.6:17-18)

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/coalition.questions.worth.of.g20.deal/23000.htm>

### ■ **Archbishop confronts BBC over its treatment of Christianity**

The Archbishop of Canterbury has accused the BBC of ignoring Christians. Dr Rowan Williams has complained to the Director General, Mark Thompson, that the corporation's religious programming is declining. At a meeting at Lambeth Palace Dr Williams warned Mr Thompson that concerns were mounting among senior Church of England members that the BBC is giving preferential treatment to minority faiths. He urged the BBC Director not to ignore its Christian audience. The Archbishop's concerns were raised after the head of religious programmes, Michael Wakelin, a Methodist preacher, left his position. The favourite to succeed him is Aaqil Ahmed, a Muslim who was commissioning editor for religion at Channel 4, along with the recent appointment of a Sikh to produce Songs of Praise, has raised fears within the Church that the

Christian voice is being sidelined. Last year Mr Thompson caused controversy when he suggested that Islam should be treated more sensitively by the media than Christianity because Muslims are a minority religion.

**Pray:** for the media, particularly the BBC, that they will not sideline Christianity for the sake of political correctness and that they will remember the Christian foundations of our nation. (Ps.31:18-19)

**More:** [http://ausprayernet.org.au/newsletter/DisplayNewsletter.php?e\\_id=0000001705#st4](http://ausprayernet.org.au/newsletter/DisplayNewsletter.php?e_id=0000001705#st4)

#### ■ **Christian Party declares 'poster war' on the BNP**

The Christian Party has declared 'poster war' against the British National Party after the BNP launched an election poster with a depiction of Jesus and a scripture from the Gospel of John. The BNP launched the poster campaign in an attempt to attract Christian voters. The Christian Party campaign has started with four electronic digital billboards in London's Oxford Street featuring an Easter message and poster declaring: 'Britain is a Christian Country. Vote to keep it that way!' The Oxford Street digital posters will be accompanied by a massive leaflet campaign. Billboard sites have also been booked on major motorways across the country ahead of the Easter Bank Holiday, including the M1, M25, M11 and A127. Rev George Hargreaves, leader of the Christian Party said: 'We are prepared to take on the BNP. It would be a tragedy if Britain stepped back into the darkness of racism, particularly as the world celebrates a black man in the White House. They must be stopped.'

**Pray:** that the message is made clear that we should stand up for our Christian faith and roots. (1Jn.1:5)

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/christian.party.declares.poster.war.on.the.bnp/23002.htm>

#### ■ **Churches highlight new evidence on problem gambling**

An alliance of nine UK Christian organisations is calling upon the Government to heed evidence published last week that undermines Government proposals to double the stake and the prize money for pub gambling machines. If the proposals receive the green light, the levels of prize money available to casual gamblers will increase for the first time ever to above the level of weekly benefits. Their campaign, 'Fruitless', is urging the government to rethink the plans. The groups claim that the Government is in danger of breaking its commitment to base gambling policy on evidence and to use regulation to minimise problem gambling. Two reports published by the Gambling Commission offered substantial evidence that problem gambling is more prevalent in areas of social deprivation and amongst those who drink heavily or have poor health. 'At this time of over 2 million unemployed and many families facing a difficult financial future it cannot be right to encourage increased gambling amongst the most vulnerable in our society.'

**Pray:** for our government that they will be granted wisdom over decisions that affect society's vulnerable people. (Ps.25:9)

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/churches.highlight.new.evidence.on.problem.gambling/22957.htm>

#### ■ **Care homes come under pressure to cut costs**

Care for the elderly and infirm could be threatened by the recession as care homes come under pressure to cut costs, the head of a new 'super-regulator' told The Times. Baroness Young of Old Scone, the chairwoman of the Care Quality Commission, said that she was most worried about the quality of social care services as large care home providers or family-run businesses might 'cut corners' because of the recession. From next year, the record growth of public spending is expected to be curbed, and 'everybody's going to be strapped for cash', she said. 'The local authorities already have less money and they're beginning to put pressure on fees to go down, and as a result providers have got to find ways of providing care more cheaply, and cutting costs can sometimes mean cutting corners'. 'We've got to keep a really close eye on this,' she added.

**Pray:** for those in care, the carers and care managers. As economics force cutbacks pray that the quality of life and happiness of those in care is not jeopardised. (Lev.25:35)

**More:** [http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life\\_and\\_style/health/article6011720.ece](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/health/article6011720.ece)

#### ■ **NHS chaplaincy represents excellent value for money**

The National Secular Society (NSS) is arguing that the NHS should stop funding chaplaincy services. The Society claims that £32 million is spent every year by hospital trusts and that money would be better directed elsewhere. In 2007, research produced by Theos revealed that chaplaincy care since 2005 had been cut by 54,217 hours per annum. Commenting on the campaign by the NSS, Paul Woolley, Director of Theos, said: 'Hospital chaplaincy plays a vital role in patient care. It's not an optional extra. £32 million pounds is a tiny fraction of the £100 billion NHS annual budget - 0.032%. Chaplains give unique support to patients, relatives and staff, especially in times of personal crisis. Our research indicates that chaplaincy care is greatly valued'.

**Pray:** that God would protect this vital role that brings recognised holistic support to patients.

**More:** [http://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/NHS\\_chaplaincy\\_represents\\_excellent\\_value\\_for\\_money.aspx?ArticleID=3016&PageID=14&RefPageID=5](http://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/NHS_chaplaincy_represents_excellent_value_for_money.aspx?ArticleID=3016&PageID=14&RefPageID=5)

## EUROPE

#### ■ **Italy: Quake rescue effort extended**

The Italian government has extended the duration of its search for survivors of Monday's earthquake in the Abruzzo region, as far as Sunday. But rescue workers believe the chances of finding anyone alive are remote, and so will focus on recovering bodies and assessing the extent of the damage. No survivors have been found by rescue workers since late on Tuesday. Earlier, the death toll rose to 278 after three bodies were removed from a collapsed student building in L'Aquila.

About 28,000 people have been left homeless around the stricken region. Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi has been criticised for suggesting the 18,000 people living in tents should treat it as a 'weekend of camping'. Preparations are meanwhile under way for a state funeral on Friday for most of the victims. It will also be a day of national mourning. Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, the Vatican's secretary of state, will lead a memorial service in a suburb of L'Aquila, Abruzzo's capital.

**Pray:** for all those effected by this quake, the victims' families, the injured, the homeless and those who are trying to deal with the aftermath of this disaster. May God give them strength and His peace. (Ps.57:1)

**More:** <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/7991519.stm>

#### ■ Azerbaijan: Police raid religious gathering

Police in the central town of Agdash in Azerbaijan, have refused to explain why eight officials, including their officers, raided a peaceful religious meeting in a private home. On the afternoon of March 25, eight men raided the Agdash home of a long-standing Baptist who is in her seventies. Church members told Forum 18 that the seven officers were accompanied by the local official of the State Committee for Work with Religious Organizations (the only one to identify himself). Accompanying the eight were two cameramen. The Baptists told Forum 18 that officers insulted them for their faith. During the raid, one of the police officers told them, 'We have long been after you and now we've caught you!' Baptists claimed that parents had been invited to send their children to the home to listen to Bible stories over the Novruz spring festival holiday. They said the 12 children were all there with their parents' specific permission.

**Pray:** for believers who are sharing the good news, that God would protect them from the enemies that try to silence them. (Ps.59:1-3)

**More:** <http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/2009/s09040036.htm>

## WORLDWIDE

#### ■ Zimbabwe: A ministry to Zimbabwe works promisingly

Although Zimbabwe's national unity government has launched an ambitious 100-day reform programme, a cholera outbreak and mass starvation threatens to derail it. Although the country has just adopted the U.S. dollar and the South African rand as its currency, replacing the Zimbabwe dollar, there's a long way to go. Ordinary Zimbabweans are desperately short of food, healthcare, clean water and safe sanitation. Because the country's water and sewage systems have not been repaired, cholera is on the rise. The World Health Organization says more than 91,000 cases of cholera have been reported. There were concerns that humanitarian response might be thwarted or overseas aid stolen. However, Global Aid Network's Charles Debter says, 'We have contacts at the highest level of government with the new Prime Minister, and through those relationships we're able to ensure that the aid is reaching its intended destination.'

**Pray:** that the desperate needs within Zimbabwe may be transformed by righteous and just decisions by government and those who seek to help the populace. (Ps.1:6)

**More:** <http://www.mnnonline.org/article/12519>

#### ■ India: General elections start 16 April

India has a long election season as more than 700 million votes need to be collected. Voting starts on 16 April and goes through until 13 May, with the results due to be announced on 16 May. Displaced Christians in Orissa living under constant threat of Hindutva violence wonder if they will even get to vote, let alone be able to vote freely. Hindutva-advocate Manoj Pradhan has been nominated by the Hindu nationalist BJP as their candidate from the communally-split G Udayagiri assembly constituency. Pradhan is currently in prison on multiple charges including incitement, murder and arson, arising from the anti-Christian programme in Kandhamal in August-September 2008. The security situation for Indian Christians is most serious, particularly those in remote Hindutva strongholds like Kandhamal. It is just tragic that five years of Congress-led UPA Federal rule has permitted Hindutva to advance unchallenged. Across India, religious liberty and security hang in the balance.

**Pray:** for a peaceful election and that the Lord would raise up a Godly government free from radical elements. (Ps.4:3)

**More:** <http://www.ea.org.au/default.aspx?id=2c2e0620-50da-4dd0-8901-44ed9921e7a2>

#### ■ Iraq: Four Christians killed in two days

International Christian Concern has learned that on April 1 and 2, four Iraqi Christians were killed in Baghdad and Kirkuk. Though the perpetrators of the murders are not yet indicated, Islamic fundamentalists, criminal gangs and other armed groups have been behind attacks against Christians in Iraq in the recent past. According to the Middle East Times, on April 1 Sabah Aziz Suliman was killed in Kirkuk. The following day Nimrud Khuder Moshi, Glawiz Nissan and Hanaa Issaq were killed in Dora, a historically Christian neighbourhood of Baghdad. Iraqi Christians have been paying a heavy price due to the instability in the country following its invasion in 2003. In a recent press conference, Archbishop Louis Sako, said, 'A total of 750 Christians have been murdered in the past five years, including Archbishop of Mosul Paulos Faraj Rahho.' Archbishop Sako is the Chaldean Catholic Archbishop of Kirkuk.

**Pray:** for the families of the martyred Christians and for all the persecuted Christians in Iraq. (Mt.5:10)

**More:** [http://www.christiannewstoday.com/christian\\_news\\_report\\_220.html](http://www.christiannewstoday.com/christian_news_report_220.html)

#### ■ Egypt: Muslim rioters attack Christian shops

Hundreds of Muslims have attacked Christian shops and a police station in the Egyptian city of Alexandria, following rumours that a Muslim man was stabbed and killed by his Christian landlords. The trouble started when many Muslims

gathered at a mosque for funeral prayers for the dead man, Abdel Razeq Gomaa. They then started to chant 'They'll die, they'll die.' Three Christian brothers were accused of murdering the man. According to security forces, Gomaa was the only Muslim tenant in a building owned by the three men, and was injured in an earlier fight with the brothers. It has been reported that the three brothers have been detained in connection with Gomaa's death. Around 10 per cent of Egypt's population are Coptic Christians and while relations with the Muslim majority are usually quiet, they can sometimes explode in disputes over land, religious buildings, women or small acts of violence.

**Pray:** for peace to reign across Alexandria and that truth and justice will guide the authorities. (Is.59:1&8-9)

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/muslim.rioters.attack.christian.shops/22999.htm>

#### ■ **Indonesia: Accused over violations in West Papua**

The human rights situation in West Papua continues to deteriorate seriously in the run-up to Indonesia's general election, says the Australian-based Institute for Papuan Advocacy & Human Rights. Local people have been shot and critically injured, say human rights observers, in an operation they claim was organised by Indonesian security forces against West Papuan demonstrators in Nabire on 6 April 2009. Nine people have been confirmed shot by security forces. A police officer was also wounded and many other protesters and police are reported to have suffered injuries.

**Pray:** for the situation in West Papua during the Indonesian elections that the authorities would control the extremists to allow a fair election. (Lev.19:15)

**More:** <http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/9184>

#### ■ **China: Persecution to escalate in 2009**

Most religious liberty monitors believe persecution of the Church will escalate in China during 2009 as the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) tackles growing dissent and anger over repression, injustice and increasing economic hardship. Last week the UN Human Rights Council (which is dominated by un-free states) commended China's human rights record. But persecution is escalating. Amongst those recently arrested are house-church Christian Yuan Shenlun (70), who has already spent 14 years in prison for his faith, and Christian lawyer Gao Zhisheng, who was severely tortured in 2007. Sources report that the CCP has ramped up efforts both to identify Christians and to portray Christianity as a subversive foreign force. This is a very dangerous development.

**Pray:** against the anticipated persecution of Christians in China and that God would protect them in times of trouble. (Ps.12:5)

**More:** <http://www.ea.org.au/default.aspx?id=2d5674db-8521-4aeb-81b6-ffa0896508cb>

## PRAISE REPORTS

#### ■ **Cuba: Pastor's trial suspended for a third time**

Pastor Rodriguez was due to appear in court on 19 March after receiving a court summons for the third time in several months. As on the previous two occasions, however, the trial was suspended at the last minute. As before, no reason was given, and although the family is hopeful that these constant postponements signify that the case may be dropped altogether, for the moment the charges still stand. The family reports that they have received many letters from CSW supporters and that these have been a wonderful encouragement. (See also Prayer Alert 1209 & 0109)

**Praise:** God for this wonderful answer to prayer (again) and pray now that the charges will be completely dropped. (2Ch.16:9a)

**More:** <http://www.csw.org.uk/urgentactioncubarodriguez.htm?ea.url.id=6062&ea.campaigner.email=tony@prayer-alert.net>

#### ■ **BBC and C4 both announce new Bible series for TV**

The BBC announced a major new six-part religious series for BBC Four – 'A History of Christianity'. Presented by Diarmaid MacCulloch – a leading historian and Professor of History of the Church and Fellow at St Cross College Oxford – 'A History of Christianity' will reveal the true origins of Christianity and delve into what it means to be a Christian. The series of six 60 minute episodes will be shown in autumn 2009 on BBC Four and then repeated on BBC Two. Also Channel 4 is to follow up its 'Christianity: a History' with a series of personal interpretations of the Bible. 'The Bible - a History' will map out the origins, ideas and influence of seven key sections of the holy book, tracing how they came into existence and how they have moulded the world. Pioneer Productions' is in talks with commentators, writers and thinkers as potential presenters for each of the seven 60-minute films.

**Praise:** God for these two new initiatives and pray that His word will be put clearly and accurately over the airwaves. (Jn.17:17)

**More:** [http://www.mediawatchuk.org.uk/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=386&Itemid=92](http://www.mediawatchuk.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=386&Itemid=92)

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