

PRAYER ALERT...

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

Contact Us

Donations

Friday 24 April 2009

■ British Isles & Ireland

- [FRIDAY FOCUS: 24 April 2009 - Hope for older people - Timothy 5 v 1-4](#)
- [Atheist to join new BBC religion board](#)
- [Budget draws mixed response from Christians](#)
- [Church calls for 48-hour working week](#)
- [Government criticised for gambling legislation change](#)
- [Children in Northern Ireland twice as likely to pray](#)
- [Sex & the City Judeo - Christian conference](#)

■ Europe

- [European Evangelicals to meet for General Assembly](#)

■ Worldwide

- [Zimbabwe: A 'must see' documentary](#)
- [Egypt: Christians killed in feud](#)
- [South Africa: Jacob Zuma will take office under a cloud of doubt, says Desmond Tutu](#)
- [Sri Lanka: Christians facing death threats](#)
- [Darfur: Mia Farrow to go on hunger strike](#)
- [Israel: Holocaust Day overshadowed by anti-Israel rhetoric](#)

■ Praise Reports

- [Power of forgiveness continues for German missionary widow Susanne Geske](#)
- [UK Christians discovering new confidence](#)

BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ **FRIDAY FOCUS: 24 April 2009 - Hope for older people - Timothy 5 v 1-4**

For the first time ever in the UK, there are now more pensioners than under-16s. However, respect for the older generation and inclusion of them in society is sadly lacking, with a consequent loss to us all of their wisdom and life experience.

Pray: For resources locally and nationally to be allocated appropriately to the older population. That older people would not be side-lined in the church and society, but rather be honoured and given a voice.

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

■ **Atheist to join new BBC religion board**

An atheist group which is to begin advising the BBC on religious programmes such as Thought for the Day is heralding the change as a 'great step'. Prominent atheists such as A C Grayling and Phillip Pullman have also welcomed the move to allow 'non-religious' groups to influence religious programming. However, the move is likely to exacerbate concerns that the BBC is increasingly neglecting its Christian audience. The BBC will take advice on its religious programming from the new Standing Conference on Religion and Belief, an independent committee replacing the old Central Religious Advisory Committee. Andrew Copson of the British Humanist Association will sit on the new committee. He is expected to push for an increased contribution from humanists on Radio 4's religious slot, Thought for the Day. Last month the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, was reported to have met with BBC Director General Mark Thompson to express his concern that the corporation is ignoring its Christian audience. (See Prayer Alert 1509)

Pray: for an awakening of the spiritual desires of man and a desire to know God in response to those who seek to deny Him. (Jer.31:34)

More: <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/20090421/atheist-to-join-new-bbc-religion-board/>

■ **Budget draws mixed response from Christians**

While the Methodist Church has welcomed measures in Chancellor Alistair Darling's spring budget to help the unemployed, Christian Aid says the Government has wasted an opportunity to lead the world on climate change. The measures in this latest budget pledge to help young people under the age of 25 who have been unemployed for more than a year to find work or training. They also commit the Government to improving back to work services and Jobcentre Plus. The Government's first ever carbon budget broke new ground by including legally binding caps on greenhouse gas emissions. Christian Aid dismissed the budget as a 'wasted opportunity' to lead the world on climate change and criticised the Government for showing a 'disappointing lack of ambition and leadership'. Christian Aid expressed delight, however, at the decision to protect the UK's aid budget, which it had feared was under threat.

Pray: as the implications of the budget are disseminated and for our Government as it faces up to the challenges of governing. (Is.9:6)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/budget.draws.mixed.response.from.christians/23148.htm>

■ Church calls for 48-hour working week

Leaders of the Presbyterian Church of Wales have written to Prime Minister Gordon Brown urging the Government to end its opt-out of a European directive that limits the working week to 48 hours. The Rev Ifan Roberts, General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church of Wales, voiced concern for the welfare of the 460,000 people in the UK who, according to the TUC, work more than 60 hours a week. 'The balance between work, family and social life is a matter of concern because long hours at work can be detrimental to health. The proposed change would also reduce the pressure on families,' he said. This debate comes at a particularly important time. The present economic situation is bound to cause tensions within families as workers come under extra pressure to work longer hours. 'Now is the time to consider changes to working practices so that conditions improve as the economy emerges from this downturn.'

Pray: for those who have to work long hours. Pray that ways and means can be found to remove this pressure from family life. (Ps.46:1)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.co.uk/article/church.calls.for.48hour.working.week/23128.htm>

■ Government criticised for gambling legislation change

This week Parliament agreed to double the amount of money that can be staked and won on the kind of fruit machines found in pubs and amusement arcades. This means that the prize limit on fruit machines will be higher than weekly benefit levels, at a time when many families will be struggling to make ends meet. In response, an alliance of nine UK Christian organisations has issued the following statement: 'We are deeply disappointed, though not surprised, by the decision of Parliament to accept the Government's proposals to increase stakes and prizes for category C and D gaming machines. The Government had promised that no such increase would be made until a further gambling prevalence study had been published and has reneged on this promise. We do not know what effects this legislation will have on the levels of problem gambling or on the lives of those already addicted to slot machines, but we have always urged the Government to act with caution.'

Pray: for those who are snared by gambling and succumb to its addiction and for legislators to recognise their responsibilities in such matters. (Is.3:14-15)

More: <http://www.methodist.org.uk/index.cfm?fuseaction=openotogod.newsDetail&newsid=342>

■ Children in Northern Ireland twice as likely to pray

Children in Northern Ireland are twice as likely to pray regularly as children in other parts of the UK, according to a new survey. The survey by CBBC's Newsround found that 57 per cent of children in Northern Ireland prayed most days, whereas the UK average was only 22 per cent. The results also showed that 47 per cent of Northern Irish children want to do well at school and make their parents happy, compared with 34 per cent across the UK. Sixty-three per cent of children in Northern Ireland said that some children in their school were very badly behaved and made it difficult to learn, compared with 54 per cent across the UK. Northern Irish children also seemed to be less comfortable with the internet, with nine per cent saying they felt uncomfortable using it, compared to only two per cent in the whole of the UK. Children in Northern Ireland were also found to be more concerned about the credit crunch, money problems, animal cruelty and the environment.

Pray: with thanks for the response of the NI youngsters and that God would protect their faith. (Col.1:9)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/children.in.northern.ireland.twice.as.likely.to.pray/23120.htm>

■ Sex & the City Judeo - Christian conference

Today and tomorrow Anglican Mainstream and CARE will be hosting a 'Sex & the City Conference'. It is advertised as: Ideal for clergy, rabbis, psychologists, therapists, educators and others concerned about the plethora of sexual issues confronting us in today's society, including mentoring the sexually broken, the sexualization of culture, pornography, the Bible and sex, and marriage, the family and sex. There will be a special focus on how religious professionals and friends/relatives can respond biblically and pastorally to those struggling with unwanted same-sex attraction. The gay press have apparently found out the venue for this conference despite restricting this to delegates only and are threatening disruption. For background information and more detail click the 'More' button.

Pray: for safety, wisdom and grace for the speakers, conference leaders and delegates, for the right people to be recruited as security and for favour with the police. (Ps.91:11)

More: http://www.anglican-mainstream.net/?page_id=6239

EUROPE

■ European Evangelicals to meet for General Assembly

'Are evangelical's good news people?' That is the question for the European Evangelical Alliance (EEA) and European Evangelical Missionary Alliance General Assembly this week. Delegates from 38 countries are meeting in Tarragona, Spain, from April 21 to 24. EEA General Secretary, Gordon Showell-Rogers, will outline his vision for a Europe shaped by good news people, while the keynote speaker, Micah Challenge International Director Rev Joel Edwards, will challenge the delegates to incarnate good news to today's society. Mr Showell-Rogers said: 'As we meet, Europe faces great challenges, and Christians face particular pressures – from materialism and indifference to radical secularism and intolerance of free

speech. But with these challenges come immense opportunities. By uniting to reflect Christ, evangelicals in Europe can bring hope to communities in times of economic instability and individual isolation'.

Pray: for the evangelical church across Europe that it will be strengthened for the task. (Mic.6:8)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/european.evangelicals.to.meet.for.general.assembly/23089.htm>

WORLDWIDE

■ Zimbabwe: A 'must see' documentary

On Monday I attended a private showing of 'Mugabe and the White African' in London. An intimate and moving feature-length documentary, charting one family's extraordinary courage in the face of a relentless campaign of state-sanctioned terror. The story of Mike Campbell - one of the few remaining white farmers to have held-out against Mugabe's brutal land seizure programme - took the unprecedented step of challenging President Mugabe before the SADC (South African Development Community) international court - to defend his property and to charge Mugabe and his government with racial discrimination and violations of Human Rights - and win. Mike has suffered years of multiple land invasions and violence at his farm, even as late as last week. This film, much of it shot covertly, documents the astonishing bravery and dignity of a white African family who risked everything they have and everything they are in defence of what is right. This is a 'must see' documentary to be shown on More4 soon. See the film trailer by clicking the 'More' link.

Pray: for Mike, Ben, Laura and Angela that God will send His angels to protect them and others like them. (Ps.91:11)

More: <http://www.mugabeandthewhiteafrican.com/13.html>

■ Egypt: Christians killed in feud

Two Christian men have been shot dead after an Easter vigil in the south of Egypt, security sources say. Another Coptic Christian was reported injured in the attack near the village of Qena. Police are searching for four Muslim men suspected of having carried out the shooting, which is thought to have been the consequence of a family vendetta. A security source quoted by Reuters said those killed had recently been freed from prison for killing a Muslim. Vendettas are common among clans in southern Egypt, being pursued equally bitterly within faith communities as between Christians and Muslims. Coptic and Orthodox Christians marked Easter on Sunday, a week later than their Catholic and Protestant counterparts. Copts account for about 10% of Egypt's 80 million population.

Pray: against these family feuds especially where Christians are involved, that they would remember God's laws. (Mt.19:19)

More: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/8007919.stm

■ South Africa: Jacob Zuma will take office under a cloud of doubt, says Desmond Tutu

As South Africans voted in an election that Mr Zuma, the leader of the African National Congress, is almost certain to win, Archbishop Tutu declared that corruption allegations against the future president should have been tested in court. All 16 charges against Mr Zuma, ranging from corruption to fraud and from racketeering to tax evasion, were dropped earlier this month. This quashed any chance of the ANC leader, who has always protested his innocence, ever standing trial. 'I'm very concerned that we didn't do as well as we should over the charges,' said Archbishop Tutu. 'It would have been a great deal better for himself and for our country if the charges had been cleared by a court, not something that was done administratively. I don't think it's good for him, I don't think it's good for the country that there should be a doubt.' Asked whether this left a 'cloud' over Mr Zuma's head, Archbishop Tutu replied: 'I think most people would say so, yes!'

Pray: for the nation of South Africa following the elections that God would raise up Godly people to positions of influence in the nation. (Dt.19:10-11;17-18)

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/southafrica/5200628/Jacob-Zuma-will-take-office-under-a-cloud-of-doubt-says-Desmond-Tutu.html>

■ Sri Lanka: Christians facing death threats

Release International has received reports of death threats against a Christian pastor and intimidation from Buddhists and Hindus aimed at preventing worship services from taking place. The reports come just days after human rights organisations issued a global call to prayer for Sri Lanka, where churches have come under increasing attack amid a prolonged civil war. According to Release partner the National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka, a church in Hambanthota District was forced to cancel services on Good Friday and Easter Sunday after its pastor received a death threat. Four men reportedly stood outside the pastor's house on April 8 shouting 'Christian come out' while his wife and children were at home alone. When the pastor hurried to his home, one of the men threatened to kill him unless he left the village by morning. CAFOD has expressed grave concern at the fate of an estimated 100,000 civilians in the north east of the country as a deadline for the Tamil Tigers to surrender expired.

Pray: for Christians in Sri Lanka that God would protect them from persecution and pray for all those who have been displaced by the recent conflict. (Rom.8:35)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/sri.lankan.christians.facing.death.threats/23103.htm>

■ Darfur: Mia Farrow to go on hunger strike

Mia Farrow is to go on hunger strike as an 'expression of outrage' over the ongoing Darfur crisis in Sudan. The American actress and humanitarian campaigner will begin her fast on Wednesday next week and hopes her actions will spur US President Barack Obama and other world leaders into action. Writing on her website, the 64-year-old star of Rosemary's Baby said: 'I am preparing for a hunger strike. On April 27th I will begin a fast of water only in solidarity with the people of

Darfur and as a personal expression of outrage at a world that is somehow able to stand by and watch innocent men, women and children needlessly die of starvation.' The Sudanese government recently expelled around a dozen aid agencies from within its borders, including Oxfam and Médecins Sans Frontières, after the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for the country's president, Omar al-Bashir, on suspicion of war crimes.

Pray: that Mia Farrow's sacrifice will lead to the desired action amongst world leaders. (Ps.90:13)

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newsttopics/celebritynews/5201823/Mia-Farrow-to-go-on-hunger-strike-over-Darfur.html>

■ Israel: Holocaust Day overshadowed by anti-Israel rhetoric

Remembrance Day was marked around the world on Tuesday in memory of the 6 million Jews killed by the Nazis in World War Two. At the former concentration camp of Auschwitz in Poland, thousands of dignitaries and young Jews from around the world gathered for the annual 'March of the Living' to the crematorium in nearby Birkenau. The three-kilometre march has been an annual event for more than thirty years. In Israel, the whole nation came to a standstill at 10 am as sirens pierced the morning air to mark two minutes' silence in remembrance of the dead. In an opening speech last night, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's comments focussed on events earlier on Monday: Netanyahu strongly condemned a controversial anti-Israel speech by the Iranian leader, adding that Holocaust deniers would never be allowed to carry out another genocide against the Jewish people. (See Prayer Alert 1609)

Pray: that people everywhere would never forget what happened and stand up to those who think otherwise. (Joel.3:16-17)

More: <http://www.euronews.net/2009/04/21/holocaust-day-overshadowed-by-anti-israel-rhetoric/>

PRAISE REPORTS

■ Power of forgiveness continues for German missionary widow Susanne Geske

Two years ago Susanne Geske went on Turkish television and forgave those who killed her husband Tilmann Geske, her testimony continues to impact many lives today. After this humble missionary shared her story of the power of forgiveness recently at the mission-net congress in Oldenburg, Germany, the 3,000 delegates were so inspired and moved by her story they all stood to their feet and applauded her in a powerful display of solidarity. Three evangelical Christians were brutally murdered, 18 April 2007, in Malatya in South East Turkey, where 45-year old Tilmann Geske worked as an interpreter in the Christian Publishing House Zirve. Two other Turkish Christians were also found tied up and their throats slit. According to Turkish press reports the victims were brutally tortured. Geske's body showed 156 knife wounds. In the midst of this turmoil the German mother of three was interviewed by Turkish television when she quoted Christ's words on the cross: 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' (See Prayer Alert 1607,1608 &1609)

Praise: God for the way He is using Susanne's powerful testimony of forgiveness to encourage others. (Ps.37:28-29)

More: <http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/2009/s09040112.htm>

■ UK Christians discovering new confidence

In his first major speech as General Director of the Evangelical Alliance, Steve Clifford said, 'It is wonderfully encouraging to see how the Church of Jesus Christ is finding fresh confidence, as we position ourselves in the heart of our communities and as we demonstrate the Gospel through our being good news as well as talking good news. I am absolutely convinced that Christians uniting together in their faith is good for our society. It offers communities and individuals health and well-being, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Christ has called us as His Church to be the hope for our nation.' Speaking of transformed Christians transforming society, he added, 'We must have confidence in the Gospel story. Alpha and Christianity Explored courses, as well as our 'gossiped' conversations with our neighbours, friends and workmates, all have the power to impact lives.' He went on to express his wish to see unity of Gospel activity through both words and actions and to see transformation that speaks to the very heart of our society.

Praise: God for the confidence and transforming power He has put into our hearts by His Holy Spirit. (2Tim.1:7)

More: http://www.breakingchristiannews.com/articles/display_art.html?ID=6617

PRAYER FORUM OF BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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