

PRAYER ALERT...

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BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ Will Christians swing the 2010 UK election?

Tony Blair's spokesman Alastair Campbell famously once said the prime minister didn't 'do God' when talking to the media illustrating how Christianity is generally treated at Westminster. Explicit mention of religion is seen as 'un-British', a bit 'American' and a 'turn-off' to the electorate. But, with a closely fought election in the offing and a desperate fight taking place for marginal seats, might candidates become more open about their beliefs if it means a few more votes? The preacher Canon J Johns thinks they should. He urges his fellow believers to 'do our best to find out about our local candidates'. He adds: 'We might want to ask whether they are genuinely committed to moral values or do they simply adopt whatever is the current fashionable view? Does the candidate place their party's ideology above everything else? Would they be prepared to vote against the party line on moral grounds?'

Pray: for wisdom and discernment when 'weighing' political rhetoric to recognise honesty in moral issues. (1Ch.29:17)

More: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/election_2010/8607964.stm

■ One in three constituencies to hold church hustings

The number of church hustings registered on CARE's election web site Make the Cross Count broke through the 200 mark over the weekend, with more than 220 church hustings now registered. Nola Leach CARE's chief executive said, 'The number of hustings registrations surpassed all expectations. When we set out we hoped we might get 50, never expecting that two weeks into the campaign we would have over 200! We continue to be unaware of any larger single source of hustings. It's wonderful to see the church playing such a strategic role during this election.' Dan Boucher, CARE's director of parliamentary affairs said of the site, which addresses subjects as diverse as human trafficking and euthanasia, child poverty and religious liberty. 'We really hope that Make the Cross Count empowers Christians to make the most of their hustings and to ask challenging questions, putting Christian concerns and priorities right at the heart of this election.'

Pray: for the Holy Spirit to empower Christians to voice God's will and purposes in the run-up to the election. (Ro.12:2)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.co.uk/article/one.in.three.constituencies.to.hold.church.hustings/25743.htm>

■ Young people gather to pray for the Election

The Message Trust prayer coordinator James Aladiran says 'We have a heart to see God release a Great Awakening to the UK. We've got our next prayer gathering coming up on the 1st of May called Prayer Storm. The vision is to mobilise the youth of the Nation to a lifestyle of Intercession. With the Election coming up we believe this is a key moment for the church to rise in Intercession for the Nation. Have a look at this 1 minute video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=legRuRFrgeQ> In Prayer Storm, explains James, 'We believe God wants us to be a people who pray not just because we should, but because

it has become a part of our lifestyle.' Prayer Storm, taking place at Audacious City Church, Manchester will focus on the needs of our country at a time of massive political change and will ask for God's blessing on the next Government.

Pray: that God would listen to the cries of His young people. (1Ki.8:52)

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

■ First nationwide survey of churches launched

The first nationwide survey of all the churches, chapels and meeting houses in the UK, was last Monday. The National Churches Trust Survey 2010 includes buildings of every Christian denomination, of all ages and conditions, and aims to understand how they are maintained, repaired, funded and used by their local communities. The survey hopes to create a national picture of the current status of places of worship. It will remain online until mid-June. All churches, chapels and meeting houses in the UK are being encouraged to complete the survey which offers guidance, tips and technical support to help participants. Andrew Edwards, Chief Executive of the National Churches Trust, said: 'A single, national survey will make a considerable difference to our understanding of church buildings across the UK. These buildings are important, not just as places of worship but also as centres of local life. This survey is seeking to capture the contribution they make to our heritage and our communities'.

Pray: for this survey that it will allow the people of the Church to better care for and use the physical buildings that we use as places of worship. (1Ch.28:10)

More: <http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/11896>

■ Only God can heal wounds in body of Christ - Archbishop

The Archbishop of Canterbury has told Anglicans at the Fourth Global South to South Encounter in Singapore that it is only the work of God's Spirit that can heal tensions within the worldwide Anglican Communion. Dr Rowan Williams said in a video message to the meeting this week that the recent actions of certain provinces had made the 'confusion, brokenness and tension' in the Anglican family 'still more acute'. Dr Williams pointed to the Anglican Communion Covenant, a document aimed at uniting the provinces despite their divisions, as a new way of 'grounding' the Communion's mission and laying the foundation for its future. 'It is the work of the Spirit that heals the body of Christ, not the plans or the statements of any group, or any person, or any instrument of communion' he said.

Pray: that God would send His Spirit to heal the broken body of His bride. (Mt.12:25)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/only.god.can.heal.wounds.in.body.of.christ.archbishop/25750.htm>

■ More babies born early fuel calls to lower abortion limit

The number of babies born weighing just 2lbs has more than doubled in the last two years, causing pro-lifers to reinforce the demand to lower the abortion limit from 24 weeks. Statistics do not disclose at what stage the babies were born but reports suggest that a child weighing less than 2lb 3oz is likely to have been born at least three months early. This would inevitably include some babies being born at an age when they could, in other circumstances, have been aborted. The number of tiny babies stillborn has almost halved during the same time span. The latest figures, from the NHS Information Centre, show that in 2008/09, some 3,836 children weighing less than 2lb 3oz (1kg) were born in England and Wales. That is a 115 per cent rise on 2006/07. A spokesman for the ProLife Alliance said: 'These statistics are yet more proof that more and more babies are being born very prematurely and surviving'.

Pray: that in the light of these changing statistics the decision over the abortion limit would be reconsidered. (Job.31:15)

More: <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/more-babies-born-early-fuel-calls-to-lower-abortion-limit/>

■ Padded bikinis for 7-year-olds dropped after outcry

Primark has been forced to withdraw padded bikinis for seven-year-olds after critics condemned the store for fuelling child sexualisation. The Children's Society slammed the popular high street chain for 'premature sexualisation and unprincipled advertising'. A child protection consultant who works to help victims of paedophilia said: 'It never fails to amaze me just how many High Street household names are now prepared to exploit the disgusting 'paedophile pound'.' Parents warned that children were facing pressure to grow up too soon. Penny Nicholls, director of children and young people at The Children's Society, said: 'We know from our research that commercial pressures towards premature sexualisation and unprincipled advertising are damaging children's well-being. The evidence shows that adults feel children are more materialistic than in past generations, while children themselves feel under pressure to keep up with the latest trends.'

Pray: for our youngsters and against pressures that promote the premature sexualisation of our children. (Eph.5:5)

More: <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/padded-bikinis-for-7-year-olds-dropped-after-outcry/>

EUROPE

■ Belgian Prime Minister Yves Leterme resigns

Belgian Prime Minister Yves Leterme resigned on Thursday after a key Flemish party withdrew its support and toppled his coalition government, a senior minister announced. 'There was no other choice but for the government to resign,' Finance Minister Didier Reynders told reporters after the Flemish liberal Open VLD party pulled out of the five-party coalition. Open VLD were frustrated by the failure to solve a long-running dispute between Belgium's Dutch-speaking and Francophone communities.

Pray: for the Belgian peoples as they consider a new Prime Minister that there would be a meeting of minds. (Pr.3:13)

More: <http://www.france24.com/en/20100422-belgium-leterme-resigns-vld-liberals-democrats-quit-ruling-coalition>

■ EU ties support for Kyrgyzstan to democracy

The European Union said on Tuesday it would offer Kyrgyzstan's interim government political and economic support if satisfied it was committed to a quick return to democracy. EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton said she was encouraged by early signs, including pledges of a new constitution and elections, but underlined the need for the involvement of all parties and ethnic groups. 'If we are satisfied that the provisional government is committed to a quick return to legitimacy and genuinely wants to join the democratic family, the European Union will be ready to provide the necessary political, financial and technical support.' Russia and the United States have pledged aid to Kyrgyzstan, where President Kurmanbek Bakiyev was ousted on April 7, but Washington and the EU have not yet recognised the new government. (See Prayer Alert 1610 & 1510)

Pray: against any breakdown and disunity amongst the leaders. (Job.22:21)

More: http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2010/4/21/worldupdates/2010-04-20T212702Z_01_NOOTR_RTRMDC_0_-478535-1&sec=Worldupdates

WORLDWIDE

■ Iran: House-church pastor assaulted and arrested in Karaj

The Farsi Christian News Network (FCNN) says that on Wednesday, April 14, 2010, at 4:30 pm, several plain clothes security officers, introducing themselves as 'agents of the Ministry of Information,' invaded the home of a local house-church pastor in the city of Karaj, which is situated about 13 miles west of the capital of Tehran, and after threatening those who were present there, assaulted and arrested the pastor, named Behnam Irani, and transported him to an undisclosed location. 'Sources in and around the city of Karaj report that approximately 10 young men had gathered to fellowship and practice their newly found faith by studying the Bible, void of any political or current issues, when this attack occurred,' said a FCNN spokesperson. 'Each attendee was informed that they had attended an illegal meeting and in the coming days they would be called and summoned for further questioning by the authorities.'

Pray: for the believers in Iran that the Lord would protect them and uphold those who are being imprisoned for their faith. (Ps.32:6-7)

More: <http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/2010/s10040122.htm>

■ Pakistan/Afghanistan: Peace process

President Karzai will visit the White House next month and then participate in an international peace conference between Afghanistan and Pakistan. About 1,400 Afghans representing the nation's ethnic, regional and political factions are scheduled to gather for a peace jirga next month to reach a national consensus for talking with insurgents to end a 9-year-old war. Jirga is a term for a decision making assembly of male elders used in criminal cases rather than by laws or police. Pakistan's President Asif Ali Zardari and Afghan President Hamid Karzai agreed on Wednesday to revive the joint grand jirga process to develop a strategy for reintegration and reconciliation. Jirga could be the way forward to restore peace as the two countries redefine their ties and engage with the Taliban to restore peace and end years of suspicion and political feuds. The US visit is extremely important as the US doubt this is the right time for talks with top Taliban leaders who think they are winning the war.

Pray: for God's purposes to regulate the White House meetings and for His intervention in Jirgas to bring internal peace for the area. (Is.32:3)

More: <http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5hvWEqwq3CrRvaQCmt21MfoYhjZJQD9F7PPUO0>

■ Thailand: Thai protest stand-off intensifies

The Thai government is blaming unnamed 'terrorists' for explosions which hit commuters in Bangkok on Thursday night, amid deadlock in the Thai capital. Early on Friday, hundreds of riot police crossed a major road to confront red-shirt anti-government protesters. But the police later stepped back from confrontation and the reds agreed to move further away from their barricade. Britain, the US and Australia have issued new warnings against travelling to Thailand in the attacks' aftermath. Six weeks of red-shirt protests have severely challenged the Thai government. The protesters are occupying swathes of Bangkok's shopping hub and have built barricades, the largest of which faces police in the Silom business district. Pressure is rising on the government to find a way out of the conflict but room for negotiation appears to be slim, correspondents say. United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said through a spokesman that it was 'a moment requiring restraint on all sides'.

Pray: against extreme measures on all sides and for restraint to allow for peaceful negotiation. For Christians working in Thailand to have freedom to share the Gospel. (Mt.24:12-14)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/8638942.stm>

■ Africa: One in four Christians has superstitious beliefs

Roughly one in four Christians in sub-Saharan Africa believes sacrifices to spirits or ancestors can protect them from bad things happening, according to a recent 19-country survey on religious attitudes in Africa. Sizable percentages of both Christians and Muslims - a quarter or more in many countries - say they believe in the protective power of juju (charms or amulets). In Tanzania and South Africa more than half the people surveyed said they believed that sacrifices to ancestors or spirits could protect them from harm. Many people also say they consult traditional religious healers when someone in their household is sick, and sizable minorities in several countries keep sacred objects such as animal skins and skulls in their homes and participate in ceremonies to honour their ancestors.

Pray: for the Holy Spirit to invade the mindset of all who are deceived and for all who call on the name of Jesus Christ to be correctly birthed into God's family. (Ps.96:5 & Jn.3:3)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/one.in.four.christians.in.africa.holds.fast.to.superstitious.beliefs/25719.htm>

■ **Canada: Bill hailed by Pro-Lifers**

'No woman should be threatened, intimidated or pressured into aborting a child against her will. Not in a nation such as ours that values life and human rights.' The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada has announced that they are endorsing Bill C-510 the proposed legislation that would criminalize the coercion of pregnant women to obtain abortions. The bill was introduced last Wednesday by Conservative MP Rod Bruinooge would ensure that pregnant women who choose to carry their child to term will have that decision respected and protected. This is a bill that, while not addressing the legality of abortion in any way, will make it a criminal offence to coerce a woman into an unwanted abortion. Bruinooge has named his bill 'Roxanne's Law' after Roxanne Fernando whose boyfriend attempted to coerce her to have an abortion. She refused to have the unborn child killed and was beaten and left to die in a snow bank.

Pray: the Canadian government and society to have God's thoughts and support programs and resources protecting unborn children and their mothers. (Ps.139:16)

More: <http://www.lifesitenews.com/ldn/2010/apr/10042008.html>

■ **Lebanon: relationships with Syria, USA and Israel**

The Obama administration is committed to improving relations with Syria despite its moves to aid the Iranian-backed Hezbollah militia in Lebanon. Israel regards Hezbollah as a major threat and accuses Syria of providing the group with Scuds. A Scud has a far longer range and can carry a much bigger warhead than the rockets Hezbollah has used in the past, and could reach anywhere in Israel from Hezbollah bases in southern Lebanon. Lebanon is independent providing freedom of religion and freedom to practice all religious rites provided public order is not disturbed. They have no state religion and officially recognizes 18 religious groups of Christianity, Islam and Judaism. Around one-third of the four million people are Christian and two-thirds are Muslim. Hezbollah (whose name means party of god) is based in Lebanon and it is a state-within-a-state gaining support among many Lebanese Shiites by providing social support to operate schools, hospitals, and agricultural services for thousands.

Pray: for God to use this situation at this time to draw more into His family and may the bride of Christ in the Middle East be called deeper into the presence of the Lord Jesus. (SS:4:8)

More: <http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5hx DzV2v2jrhRDQkI0V9heGBJZcLgD9F83JUG2>

PRAISE REPORTS

■ **Nun's murderer now says 'Christians are India's hope'**

Samadar Singh was jailed for 11 years for murdering a nun but today he is a different man. While in prison his wife divorced him and his first son died and he plotted how to take revenge against the man who pushed him to kill the nun. But he also received a visit from another nun who was the murdered nun's natural sister. She hugged him and called him brother. He was profoundly touched and from this embrace his journey of repentance began. He is now released and the murdered sister's family has become his own. He realises that India's right wing hate Christians and says, 'I want everyone to know that missionaries give us hope through their service which is to make us a strong and independent people. I can say without a doubt that the missionaries do nothing but work and help the poor and the marginalised. They have no secret design other than serve God.'

Praise: God for all He is doing across India through His people. (Is.43:18-19)

More: <http://www.persecution.org/suffering/newssummpopup.php?newscode=12164&PHPSESSID=9deb4cd3d9a048f5c04ece31fdec9fb0>

■ **Iranian doctor comes to faith after watching Christian TV**

Towards the end of 2009, an Iranian doctor from a religious family in a smaller city of Iran was watching Elam's evangelistic television program 'Healing for the broken hearted.' He was deeply moved by testimony of the Christian on the program. When the presenters invited viewers to call in for prayer he did so despite the risks. The Elam counsellor shared with him and he requested follow up contact. So they gave his details to one of the church planters in Iran who courageously went to visit him in early 2010. The Doctor heard the Gospel once more and then repented right there in his office. Believers are meeting with him regularly to disciple him.

Praise: God for this new brother in Christ, and pray for him to grow and be a powerful Christian witness in his city. (Ps.73:23-24)

More: <http://www.elam.com/articles/Prayer-News/>

PRAYER FORUM OF THE BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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