

PRAYER ALERT...

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www.prayer-alert.net editor@prayer-alert.net

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BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ Ban council's Christian prayers, say secularists

A secular campaign group is trying to use the courts to ban a North Devon Council from starting its meetings with Christian prayers. Bideford Town Council has had prayers at its meetings since the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, but now the National Secular Society (NSS) says the practice infringes on the human rights of non-believers. Mike Judge, head of communications at The Christian Institute, said: 'It's a tradition that's gone on for hundreds of years. This is really a move by aggressive atheism trying to shove Christianity out of public life.' Reports say Bideford Council won't be able to afford top lawyers to fight the case. But Mr Judge said: 'The council shouldn't back down. It isn't in breach of human rights law. Parliament has prayers, is Parliament illegal?' A survey by the Daily Mail of 181 councils in England and Wales found 118 start their meetings with a prayer – of which nearly all were Christian.

Pray: for Bideford Council as they defend their right to start meetings with prayer. (1Ti.2:8)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/devon/8659479.stm>

■ Commentators speak out over street preacher arrest

Another street preacher in the UK has been arrested for proclaiming Christian teachings about the sinfulness of homosexual behaviour. Dale Mcalpine was handing out leaflets in Workington when he was approached by a police community support officer identifying himself as homosexual. The officer arrested Mr Mcalpine because in the course of a conversation he said his belief was that homosexuality is a sin because it is against the word of God. This is the second time in five weeks that a Christian has been arrested in the UK for preaching Christian sexual ethics. By law a police officer has no right to call upon a citizen to desist from lawful conduct. (See <http://www.christian.org.uk/wp-content/downloads/the-law-relating-to-street-evangelism.pdf>) Article 9 of the Human Rights Act confirms that 'everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion' and 'in public or private, to manifest this religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance.'

Pray: for police guidance to recognise the rights of free speech of all parties including Christians. (Ac.20:20-21)

More: <http://www.christiantelegraph.com/issue9641.html>

■ Complaints surge over swearing on TV and radio

Record numbers of people are complaining about the use of foul language on TV and radio programmes. Ofcom, the communications regulator, received 500 complaints in the first three months of this year, and has been asked to rule on a further 1,159 complaints from 2009. These figures represent a significant increase since 2006 when there were 841 complaints. Critics have attacked the use of obscene language, and called on Ofcom to impose stricter guidelines. Vivienne Pattison, Director of Mediawatch-UK, said: 'This kind of language is not tolerated in the office or in the playground, so why is it on television?' Last week Doctor Who fans reacted angrily to what they claim is the 'sexualisation' of the show, saying

the material was 'totally inappropriate' for a family drama. <http://www.mediawatchuk.org.uk/> In the series Amy works as a kissogram, dressing variously as a mini-skirted nun, policewoman and nurse.

Pray: that our new Parliament will reconsider media standards together with Ofcom. (Pr.13:5)

More: <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/complaints-surge-over-swearing-on-tv-and-radio/>

■ **Politicians come out in support of Global Day of Prayer for London**

Speaking ahead of Thursday's election, Christian candidates have come out in support of Global Day of Prayer London and its call to a national day of prayer. Tens of thousands of Christians are expected to turn out for the Global Day of Prayer event at West Ham football stadium on June 13. Labour's Stephen Timms said he hoped the day of prayer would be followed up with greater service in the community. Global Day of Prayer is a fantastic event. It attracts a very large number of people coming together with tremendous exuberance and a very strong sense of prayer and worship as well.' David Burrowes, Conservative parliamentary candidate for Enfield said, 'The Global Day of Prayer would have added significance this year, falling after the General Election on May 6. That's something that we all need to do and it couldn't be a better time in the first month of a government as it's setting out its direction.' Simon Hughes, Liberal Democrat candidate for North Southwark and Bermondsey, made a similar call.

Pray: for the Global Day of Prayer and that it will help set God's path for the new Government. (Zec.3:7)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.co.uk/article/politicians.come.out.in.support.of.global.day.of.prayer.for.london/25839.htm>

■ **Churches appoint new Safeguarding Adviser**

Elizabeth Hall has been appointed to the post of Safeguarding Adviser for the Church of England and the Methodist Church in Britain. Rev Dr Martyn Atkins, General Secretary of the Methodist Church, said: 'Our churches take the safety and wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults very seriously, and we have a responsibility to offer the highest standards in safeguarding. This role is central to that work and we are pleased to welcome Elizabeth to our team.' The Rt Revd Anthony Priddis, Chair of the Church of England's Central Safeguarding Liaison Group, adds: 'Elizabeth's range of experience in the statutory sector will be of great benefit in helping churches across both denominations keep up to date with the latest good practice in this area, and in offering professional support to our network of diocesan safeguarding advisers.' Elizabeth said, 'I am excited about taking on this role. I look forward to the opportunity to use my safeguarding and child protection expertise within the church communities.'

Pray: for Elizabeth as she takes up this challenging role to care for our youngsters. (2Ti.1:14)

More: <http://www.cofe.anglican.org/news/prsafeguardingadviser.html>

■ **Christians warned of increasing marginalisation in the UK**

Christians in the UK are facing increasing marginalisation and oppression under new laws originally intended to safeguard equality, Christian leaders have warned. The frank warning was delivered to around 1,000 Evangelical Christians at the Bible by the Beach conference held in Eastbourne over last weekend. They heard how equality laws have led to the dismissal of Christians who offered to pray for clients or patients, the closure of adoption agencies that refuse to place children with same-sex couples, and charities losing funding because of their Christian ethos. The conference explored the court ruling last week involving Gary McFarlane, (See Prayer Alert item above &1810) a relationship counsellor with Relate Avon who was dismissed for telling his employers that he could not counsel same-sex couples because of his Christian beliefs. The speaker warned that Christians needed to be aware that 'rampant, illiberal secularism' had become the prevailing attitude in the UK.

Pray: that God would strengthen all those in the front line of attacks against their faith. (Ps.18:32)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/christians.warned.of.increasing.marginalisation.in.the.uk/25834.htm>

■ **Judge hits out at 24-hour drinking**

A judge has blasted 24-hour licensing laws after sentencing yet another troublemaker for a late night drunken brawl. Supermarkets have also been slammed this week for slashing the price of a pint to 40p ahead of the World Cup. Judge Christopher Harvey Clark QC is calling for a review of 24-hour licensing laws after becoming frustrated at dealing with cases of drunken violence 'almost on a daily basis'. This latest case involved a 31-year-old former soldier from Bournemouth, who attacked his victim after he flicked a kebab in his face during a night out. Judge Harvey Clark said: 'Speaking as someone who has to deal with such violence, almost on a daily basis, there is far too much violence and drunkenness on the streets of Bournemouth late at night. It may, in part, be due to the relaxation of the licensing laws. I would hope that relaxation is reviewed in the foreseeable future.'

Pray: that the 24-hour drinking law will be reviewed in the near future. (Joel.1:5)

More: <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/judge-hits-out-at-24-hour-drinking/>

EUROPE

■ **First Christian Share Index launched**

Europe's first Christian Share Index was launched last week by Stoxx Limited, a global index provider and creator of the leading European equity indices. The Stoxx Europe Christian Index will measure the performance of 533 companies selected from the Stoxx Europe 600 Index according to the values and principles of the Christian religion. According to The Financial Times, companies in the index include HSBC, Nestlé, Vodafone, Royal Dutch Shell and GlaxoSmithKline. It has been formed to enable investors to participate in the performance of European companies which are compliant with Christian moral and social doctrines. 'With the launch of the index, Stoxx acknowledges the growing number of Christian

market participants who wish to invest in accordance with their religious beliefs,' said Hartmut Graf, CEO. 'The new index provides a broad representation of European companies who act responsibly on an ethical, environmental, social and economical level; and are therefore inline with Christian values.'

Pray: for Christians everywhere that they will be wise with their finances as they seek God's guidance. (Pr.1:5)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/first.christian.share.index.launched/25798.htm>

■ Lutherans see signs of convergence with Catholics on Eucharist issue

A German Protestant bishop has urged Roman Catholic and Lutheran churches to draw up a joint declaration on their shared beliefs about the Eucharist, one of the issues that have divided them for hundreds of years since the Reformation. 'Our understandings of the Eucharist or Lord's Supper are no longer that far apart,' said Lutheran Bishop Friedrich Weber, who deals with relations between the Catholic Church and the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany (VELKD), a grouping of eight German regional Protestant churches. This follows a separate initiative of a group set up by Lutheran and Catholic churches in Sweden and Finland that has been discussing ways in which the two church traditions might advance the results of a 1999 joint Lutheran-Catholic declaration on the Doctrine of Justification. There is now greater consensus on, 'the foundations of spiritual life, faith and sacraments, especially baptism and Communion'. Differences nevertheless remain in the ministry of pastors and bishops.

Pray: for the world-wide Church in all its diversity that ways would be found to bring about unity. (Jn.17:20-21)

More: <http://www.eni.ch/featured/article.php?id=4038>

WORLDWIDE

■ USA: Times Square suspect tutored by suicide trainer

The Times Square bombing suspect was Pakistan-born Faisal Shahzad who received instructions from the Pakistan Taliban's suicide bomb trainer. If this is verified the suspected links between Pakistan Taliban and Shahzad would mark a stark shift in how it and related jihadist groups pursue their goals. So far Pakistan's Talibans have focused on attacks within Pakistan and in India, not the US. Pakistani investigators are also probing Shahzad's possible connections with Jaish-e-Muhammad an outlawed Islamist militant group. US and British intelligence officials estimate that about 100 Westerners have in recent years taken advantage of lengthy trips to the region to complete training at jihadi camps in Pakistan and returned to their home countries. In the light of the new evidence the Pakistani army is likely to come under more pressure from its US allies to clamp down on Pakistan Taliban strongholds if strong links with Shahzad emerge.

Pray: that God's presence in Pakistan would grow as Christians reach Taliban members with the Gospel. (Ps.46:9)

More: <http://feeds.bignewsnetwork.com/?sid=631769>

■ Afghanistan: A Pakistani Pastor wants to reach the Taliban

Pasr Anwar Fazal Masih founder of Eternal Life Ministries International and Isaac TV ministries wants to take the message of Christ to the Taliban in war-torn Afghanistan. He believes this can be achieved if his Pakistan-based Isaac TV can transmit via satellite by August 2010. The setting up of Christian TV in Pakistan, a 170 million nuclear-armed nation, has been commended not only by the Christians of Pakistan but also by many Christian brothers and sisters abroad. Meanwhile this Christian leader has called on the international community to keep its focus on the needs of the Afghan people after weeks of rancour between the US and Afghanistan as they try to agree on a democratic way forward after the election. Adding the acute poverty in Afghanistan had to be a 'top priority' for the international community and the Afghan government at the upcoming peace 'jirga' - or consultative assembly - and parliamentary elections. See <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/needs.of.afghan.people.must.not.be.forgotten.says.christian.aid/25698.htm>

Pray: that God would use every resource, including technology, to release His love and purposes into the lives of the unreached. (Ps.47:8)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/pakistani.pastor.wants.to.reach.taliban.in.afghanistan/25833.htm>

■ Somalia: Attacks on Christians spreading

Fighters of Somalia's feared Islamic militant group al-Shabab are killing Somali Christians as part of a crackdown on 'non-Islamic culture.' US based advocacy group International Christian Concern said three al-Shabab gunmen executed Mu'awiye Hilowle Ali at close range on Monday and he died on the spot in front of his house west of Mogadishu. See <http://www.bosnewslife.com/12638-somalia-militants-kill-christian-as-attacks-spread> On Tuesday they killed Yusuf Ali Nur a leader of the underground church movement in Somalia who was on a list of people the Islamic extremists suspected of being Christian. Al Shabaab has links with al-Qaeda and has vowed to rid Somalia of Christianity. The latest deaths come after several executions of Somalis suspected of membership of a suppressed yet resilient underground faith movement in Somalia. A number of Christians have been beheaded by the radical Islamists out to topple the fledgling Transitional Federal Government and introduce a strict version of sharia law.

Pray: that the Christian Somali faith would be strengthened and grow, as the persecution and fear of death diminishes. (Ps.41:12)

More: <http://www.compassdirect.org/english/country/somalia/18721/>

■ Iraq: Christians targeted in Mosul blasts

Buses transporting mainly Christian university students from Hamdaniya to Mosul were the target of two bomb blasts earlier this week. The Mayor of Hamdaniya said, 'All of the passengers were Christian students. They go in buses like that to Mosul's University after the troubled times when Christians were targeted in the past.' A doctor at the hospital said at least 17 were critically injured. About 750,000 of Iraq's 30 million population are Christians. The US-based National Council of

Churches have sent a letter to Hillary Clinton asking her to urge Iraqi officials to do more to protect Iraq's Christian community. 'Our concern is now particularly acute because it is possible that tensions will increase as various political forces continue to vie for power following the recent elections. We fear that a growing climate of ,mistrust and animosity will further threaten the fragile Christian community' the letter said. Attacks remain common, especially in Baghdad and Mosul.

Pray: for God's people continually to experience an awe-inspiring sense of His presence in every circumstance. (Ps.18:16-17)

More: <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2010/05/201052113858638936.html>

■ Laos: Freedom for the poor

Laos National Growth and Poverty Eradication Strategy states, 'Poverty is the lack of ability to fulfil basic human needs such as food, adequate clothing, permanent housing, access to health, education and transportation services.' However, a Christian working in Laos reported, 'When a compassionate man tried to distribute clothing to the poor living in the bitter cold mountains of Laos the response from the village headman was, 'Why? The poor are social parasites and useless.' The Buddhist-Animist worldview in Laos believes people are poor, sick or come upon hard times because of bad 'karma' - they did something bad in this life or a previous life and are now reaping the consequences. Most tribal groups in Laos are animists - believing everything is controlled by good and bad spirits, so sickness or poverty results from offending the spirits and the answer is to make offerings to appease the spirits. Pray for Christians modelling a Biblical worldview as they unconditionally care for the poor.

Pray: for God to look down with compassion on the nation of Laos and give His wisdom to relief and community workers. (Ps.33:12)

More: <http://www.undplao.org/whatwedo/achmdgnpovred.php>

■ Mexico: Human rights observers killed

The Triqui region of Mexico is mainly populated by indigenous people and is one of the poorest and most troubled in the country. For more than 30 years it has suffered inter-community conflicts in which scores of people have been killed. State and federal authorities have rarely taken action to hold those responsible to account. Human rights organisations called for the Mexican federal authorities to thoroughly investigate an ambush on a Caravan of thirty Human Rights Observers which left two officials dead and several injured on Tuesday 27 April 2010. Jyri Antero Jaakola, a Finnish observer and indigenous human rights defender Alberta Cariño were killed in the attack and a journalist and an activist were injured. The group was on its way to document long-running human rights abuses and to provide humanitarian assistance.

Pray: for NGO's and those authorized to establish law, order and aid in Mexico to succeed against corruption and conflict. (Ps.68:1)

More: <http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/12066>

PRAISE REPORTS

■ Wycliffe, DOOR to translate Bible for deaf people

Wycliffe Associates and a ministry to the deaf have announced a new partnership to translate the Bible into sign language for the millions of people who do not have access to the Scriptures. Deaf Opportunity Outreach International (DOOR) will work with Wycliffe Bible Translators and teams of deaf translators to bring the Scripture to video format. 'Being blind separates you from things, but being deaf separates you from people,' explained Bruce Smith, president/CEO at Wycliffe Associates. 'We want to make sure that being deaf doesn't separate you from God,' Smith said. According to Wycliffe Associates there are more than 200 identified sign languages being used in the world and some 70 million people worldwide communicating with sign language.

Praise: God for the work of Wycliffe and DOOR bringing the Word of God alive to all people. (Ro.8:35a)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.co.uk/article/wycliffe.door.to.translate.bible.for.deaf.people/25825.htm>

■ Welsh Christian Party win another Council seat

Martin Wiltshire has become Britain's second Cllr (Elect) for the Christian Party 'Proclaiming Christ's Lordship' in the Town Council by-election held yesterday in Llandrindod Wells West Ward just 9 months after the leader of the Christian Party of Wales, Jeff Green won their first town council seat. The election was triggered when Councillor Jones resigned two month ago for personal reasons. Cllr Wiltshire is a self-employed family man who has lived in the Ward for many years. Cllr Wiltshire beat the two other contestants by winning 51% of the votes. The second and third places shared the rest.

Praise: God for the election of Cllr Wiltshire that his faith and actions will be testimony to God's hand on his life. (2Ti.2:15)

More: <http://www.christianparty.org.uk/news.html>

PRAYER FORUM OF BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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