

# PRAYER ALERT...

An initiative of the Prayer Forum of the British Isles & Ireland  
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## BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

### ■ Mums angry at plan to show sex education video to primary kids

Angry mums have blasted a primary school's plan to show pupils an explicit sex education video, and warned that it could cause children to experiment sexually. The video, a Channel 4 production called Living and Growing, shows a naked cartoon couple chasing each other around a bed and then having sex, while a voice-over gives a detailed description of the action. Cliff Lane Primary School was planning to show the video to seven-year-old pupils, but outraged mums were left horrified after they saw the graphic DVD during a consultation. Emma O'Brien, whose seven-year-old son attends the school, said: 'There are some body parts kids don't need to know yet. They shouldn't be taught that.' Bryony Surtees, the acting head teacher, responded to the objections, saying: 'We wanted to be open and honest about this sensitive issue as we are mindful that some parents have very strong views on this matter'.

**Pray:** [that the schools authorities would respond to the parents' objections. \(Ps.34:17\)](#)

**More:** <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/mums-anger-at-plan-to-show-sex-ed-video-to-primary-kids/>

### ■ Stage set for key July debates to enable women to be bishops

The Church of England has today published the 142-page report of the Revision Committee that has been considering in detail the draft legislation to enable women to become bishops in the Church of England. Also published is an amended version of the draft, eleven clause Measure and associated draft Amending Canon. The Committee has met on 16 occasions over the past 12 months and considered 114 submissions from members of the General Synod and a further 183 submissions from others. As indicated to the General Synod in February 2010 (scroll to p6), the draft legislation continues to provide special arrangements for those with conscientious difficulties by way of delegation from the diocesan bishop under a statutory Code of Practice. The earliest that the legislation could achieve final approval in Synod (when two-thirds majorities in each of the Houses of Bishops, Clergy and Laity will be required) is 2012, following which parliamentary approval and the Royal Assent would be needed. 2014 remains the earliest realistic date when the first women might be consecrated as bishops.

**Pray:** [for wisdom and guidance to the Synod as these controversial matters are discussed. \(Pr.8:33\)](#)

**More:** <http://www.cofe.anglican.org/news/pr4210.html>

### ■ Methodists seek to boost influence of young members

A website for young people run by young people has been launched by the Methodist Children and Youth Team. Generous is a safe online space designed to enable young people to discuss and act upon decisions made at Youth Assembly – an interactive body designed to maximise the impact of young people's influence on the Methodist Church in Britain. Young people can sign up to the site and pledge their commitment to different goals, such as confronting racist behaviour or challenging Churches on the opportunities available to them. The website offers young people the opportunity to work together on maximising the impact they can have on the wider Church. Every young person who signs up and joins the

debate becomes an activist and voice for social change. Pete Brady, Methodist Youth President, said Generous was a great way for young people to keep in touch with others they met at Youth Assembly.

**Pray:** for this initiative and others that reach out to our young people. (2Ti.2:22)

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.co.uk/article/methodists.seek.to.boost.influence.of.young.members/25869.htm>

#### ■ Church of England clergy asked to cut costs as recession takes toll

Clergy in the Church of England are being asked to cut their cloth to suit the economic times and to prepare for mergers and staff cuts that could drastically reduce pastoral care and worship. A report on finances has found that a quarter of all 44 dioceses are running deficits and plundering reserves to pay stipends and pensions. A similar proportion has liquid reserves to last them one month or less. High staffing levels of clergy and laity are highlighted. The Church of England spends £1 billion a year in salaries and pensions for clergy as well as the upkeep of its buildings, an amount roughly matched by donations from parishes. But rising pension costs mean that every year churchgoers are asked to increase donations. The report, commissioned to help churches to improve 'efficiency and effectiveness', suggests that finances are so finely balanced in some areas that parishioners will have to dig even deeper or face cuts in provision.

**Pray:** for savings to be made that do not jeopardise the core work of the church. (Ho.14:9)

**More:** <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/faith/article7123460.ece>

#### ■ Church of England voices fears over BBC cutbacks

The Church of England has expressed concern that the BBC's controversial strategic review could lead to less religious programming. In its submission to the BBC Trust on director general Mark Thompson's strategy review, the Church of England said plans to refocus programme output must not mean giving up on content that appeals to smaller audiences, including religious output. The Church of England also had concerns that the BBC's online plans to cut half of the web pages it publishes might affect religious output. The church was 'particularly concerned' about online religion and ethics content provided by BBC Regions that it believed was under threat. The church is also concerned with making sure there is 'appropriate resource' set aside to 'ensure high-quality provision of content that reflects and explores religion'. The church, at its general synod in February, reiterated a 'deep concern' about the overall reduction in religious broadcasting on British TV.

**Pray:** for the protection of religious content as the BBC seeks to make changes to the content it provides. (Pr.31:8)

**More:** <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2010/may/12/bbc-church-of-england>

#### ■ Mental trauma 'not rife among UK troops'

Alcohol misuse is a problem among UK troops who have been in Afghanistan and Iraq, but serious mental disorders are not as common as feared, a study says. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) rates are low despite many deployments in foreign combat zones, a study in The Lancet based on 10,000 personnel found. They are significantly lower than those reported among US troops, it adds. The King's College research, funded by the MoD, said more emphasis should be placed on drinking problems than PTSD. Now the new Government is formed, the members of the Cabinet and their staffs will be selected. Please pray for the new Secretary of State for Defence, the new Ministers of State for the Armed Forces and Strategic Defence Acquisition Reform, together with the Under Secretaries of State. Pray too for good relationships between the Armed Forces' Chiefs of Staff and the new government.

**Pray:** for all those who are suffering from PTSD or alcoholic problems following their deployment in combat zones. (1Tim. 2:2)

**More:** <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/8677941.stm>

#### ■ Pagan police get right to take festivals as holiday

Police officers have been given the right to take days off to dance naked on the solstices, celebrate fertility rituals and burn Yule logs if they profess pagan beliefs. The Pagan Police Association claimed yesterday that it had been recognised by the Home Office as a 'diversity staff support association' - a status also enjoyed by groups representing female, black, gay, Muslim and disabled officers. Endorsement would mean that chief constables could not refuse a pagan officer's request to take feast days as part of his or her annual leave. The eight pagan festivals include Imbolc (the feast of lactating sheep), Lammas (the harvest festival) and the Summer Solstice (when mead drinking and naked dancing are the order of the day). Problematically, the pagan festivals also include Samhain (known to non-pagans as Hallowe'en), a day when police leave is often cancelled because of the high incidence of vandalism, violence and antisocial behaviour.

**Pray:** that the problems caused by all these diverse requests will not damage working relationships or effective policing. (Pr.28:19)

**More:** [http://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/Pagan\\_Police\\_Get\\_Right\\_To\\_Take\\_Festivals\\_As\\_Holiday.aspx?ArticleID=4062&PageID=12&RefPageID=5](http://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/Pagan_Police_Get_Right_To_Take_Festivals_As_Holiday.aspx?ArticleID=4062&PageID=12&RefPageID=5)

## EUROPE

#### ■ Pope: Threat to Catholicism comes from within Church

Pope Benedict XVI says the child abuse scandals indicate that the greatest threat to Catholicism comes from 'sin within' the Church. He made his comments in response to a question while en route to Portugal for a four-day trip in which he is due to celebrate open-air Masses in Lisbon as well as at the Catholic shrine of Fatima, and in Oporto. Critics have previously accused the Vatican of attempting to blame the media and the Church's opponents for the escalation of the scandal. 'Today we see in a truly terrifying way that the greatest persecution of the Church does not come from outside enemies', the pontiff

told reporters on a plane bound for Portugal. Benedict said the Church has 'a very deep need' to acknowledge that it must do penance for its sins and 'accept purification'. However, he added that forgiveness should not be a substitute for justice.

**Pray:** for the Catholic Church as it faces up to very deep needs of forgiveness and repentance. (2Cor.7:10)

**More:** <http://www.christiantelegraph.com/issue9720.html>

## WORLDWIDE

### ■ Niger: On the brink of severe food emergency

Niger could have a staggering eight million people starving and around one million children critically malnourished because of repeated drought and irregular rainfall that caused a poor harvest. Reports say many families are abandoning their villages and heading to Niamey city in a desperate search of food. Animals are beginning to die, malnutrition is on the increase and water is increasingly scarce. Many schools are being abandoned and the majority of Niger's farmers fear they will not have seeds to plant for the next harvest in October. Imported Nigerian food is available but is too expensive for most families. Christian Aid has released £100,000 emergency funds to three partner organisations working in the region to provide food for the most vulnerable women and children, give support to cereal banks and food distribution and set up cash-for-work programmes to enable families to buy cereals and grains in the markets.

**Pray:** that Christian Aid's resources would be enlarged, for lives to be saved and livelihoods rebuilt. (1Pe.4:10)

**More:** <http://www.christianaid.org.uk/emergencies/current/west-africa-food-crisis/index.aspx>

### ■ Egypt: Muslims who kill Christians often claim 'Insanity'

Islamist investigators, judges and psychiatrists are only too willing to go with the pretext of insanity plea of 'insanity' to allow fellow Muslims to 'get away with murder' based on the Islamic law - 'Help your brother, whether he is an oppressor or he is an oppressed one.' The latest example of the insanity defence was the murder of a Coptic Christian deacon, George Fathi, who was killed last October deliberately and with premeditation, by two fundamentalist brothers who visited George in his flat, then strangled and electrocuted him until his intestines burst out. His father was sitting in a coffee house facing their flat, saw smoke coming out and when he opened the door he found his son dead and disfigured. The killers opened a butane cylinder and made a fire to cause an explosion but this was averted by the father and neighbours, who testified having seen three bearded men enter the flat earlier. On April 24 the presiding judge in the brothers' case stated that the psychiatric assessment confirmed insanity. At the request of the victim's lawyers, the judge said they could refer the defendant to a psychiatric committee.

**Pray:** for global condemnation to cause a reversal in Egypt's edicts, for the victims of brutal attacks to be conscious of God's presence. (1Pe.2:19)

**More:** <http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/2010/s10050063.htm>

### ■ China: Appeals for help from religious groups

The officially atheist Chinese government requested religious groups and people of faith to help with the rebuilding efforts in a northwest province ravaged by a 7.1-magnitude earthquake on April 14. In an open letter posted on its official Government website China asked the religious community to donate towards reconstruction in the Tibetan area of Yushu in Qinghai Province. The religious community has already donated over 86.9 million yuan, \$12.7 million, for the quake-hit area. The Chinese hope Christian leaders and individual believers can make further donations. The letter also expressed appreciation for the prayers and immediate relief from religious organizations when at least 2,220 people were killed, over 12,000 injured and 100,000 left homeless. World Vision, Caritas Internationalis, ACT Alliance, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and Catholic Relief Services responded to the needs and are still there distributing aid. In recent years China has been more receptive to religion in society despite problems with religious freedom.

**Pray:** for more safe avenues of Christian activity in China and for many to step into open Christian witness as God alters the spirit over the nation. (Ro.10:14-15)

**More:** <http://www.christianpost.com/article/20100511/china-appeals-to-religious-groups-for-help-post-quake/index.html>

### ■ Iraq: Al Qaeda attacks

Monday was the deadliest day of the year in Iraq. Almost 100 Iraqis were killed in a series of attacks. The violence started with drive-by shootings and bombings at security check points in Baghdad. Then two car bombs exploded and while people gathered to help the victims, a suicide bomber attacked the crowd outside a textile factory. One witness said, 'Terrified people were running in different directions. I saw dead people, people burned and crying, wounded people on the ground that was covered with pools of blood. Dozens of wounded people asking for help were lying on the ground.' The government is accusing Al Qaeda and the violence fuels growing fear over the country's political uncertainty. It's been two months since elections there and still no new government in sight. Meanwhile, the U.S. will pull out half of its troops over the next four months.

**Pray:** for God to remove all indecision and enable his choice of government and leadership to be established. (Ex.18:21)

**More:** <http://www.cbn.com/cbnnews/world/2010/May/Almost-100-Iraqis-Killed-in-Deadliest-Day-of-the-Year/>

### ■ Pakistan 1: Christians illegally arrested

Police detained three Christians on false charges of alcohol possession in Sialkot last week at the request of their Muslim employer. The men objected to their boss demanding they work on Sundays. The factory owner seemed to object to the crosses the Christians wore since they began work for him last year. He used to look at the cross with strange looks. Since February no one has been allowed to wear a cross at work. In March he began demanding that only the Christian

employees come to work on Sundays. When two workers objected Factory owner Rana Ejaz promptly accused them of selling alcohol, which is forbidden to Muslims in Pakistan and illegal to sell without a permit. They were arrested, severely beaten and asked to give a false statement that they sold alcohol. The factory owner reportedly said, 'I did all this on the advice of the SHO, Zulfiqar, so that I could terminate the Christian workers.'

**Pray:** that God would strengthen Pakistan's Christians as they continue to demonstrate reason for the hope that they have in Jesus. (2Pe.1:2)

**More:** <http://www.compassdirect.org/english/country/pakistan/19189/>

#### ■ Pakistan 2: Christians beaten and implicated in 'fake' police case

On Easter Sunday Christian families on their way to church were attacked by a gang of 'radical local Muslim youths' who hurled insults at them for being Christian and celebrating Easter. The men's comments became 'perverted' towards the girls and women. A few Christian youths asked the men to stop mocking, then fighting broke out resulting in some Christians being critically injured and rushed to hospital. Ironically the Muslim men lodged a case with the police against ten of the Christian men and despite some of them being hospitalized with serious injuries they were arrested, charged, and jailed. Bail was granted on April 22nd. Well placed local sources requesting anonymity said, 'rich, powerful and politically dominant radical Muslim men of the Faqira clan were hurling death threats and threats of dire consequences on the impoverished Christian families and the Christians were 'still living under the shade of death of horror.'

**Pray:** for the Christian families to be strengthened emotionally and spiritually under the pain of unjust suffering. (1Pe.3:14)

**More:** <http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/2010/s10050050.htm>

#### ■ Middle East: Reconciliation

This weekend Musalaha Ministry of Reconciliation - who promote reconciliation among Palestinian and Israeli believers through the life and teachings of Jesus - are asking readers of Prayer Alert to pray for 40 Israeli and Palestinian young adult believers who are gathering in Cyprus to study one of the most controversial issues in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: historical narrative. Historical Narrative is often misunderstood, contradicted or denied. The young adults will pray, worship and study together and learn to enhance the body of the Messiah in the country. Please pray for their increased understanding among both the Israelis and Palestinians and that the two would be united in fellowship.

**Pray:** for unity between our precious brothers and sisters living amongst such animosity and division. (Ps.133)

**More:** <http://www.musalaha.org/>

## PRAISE REPORTS

#### ■ Iran: Hunger for scripture

Despite persecution, the Iranian church is growing rapidly with over 300,000 New Testaments printed and leading Iranians to Christ. Church leaders are asking for more Bibles as they believe large-scale Scripture distribution will be instrumental in millions of Iranians coming to know Jesus Christ. One church planter received 1,000 New Testaments last month from Elam Ministries and said the New Testaments are the best way to share the love of Christ with the Iranian people. 'I have personally given thousands out over the last few years and I've only had one person tell me they don't want it.' He added, 'A few weeks ago we witnessed to a lady who was about to commit suicide and we gave her a New Testament. Praise God she did not go through with her plans. Please pray for her to find salvation and for the many others in Iran on the brink of suicide. Pray the Word of God will reach them too.'

**Praise:** God for Bible translators and fearless Christians in closed countries and ask Him to open more avenues of ministry throughout Iran. (1Ki.8:42)

**More:** <http://www.elam.com/articles/New-Testaments-for-Iran/>

#### ■ I could be dead but God saved me, says top footballer

A Premiership football star has revealed just how important a part God has played in his life. On the brink of appearing in the final of Europe's second most prestigious competition, Fulham star Zoltán Gera, 31, revealed the life story of how his Christian faith has helped him to overcome many problems in his youth. As a youngster, Mr Gera was driven to the brink by drink, drugs and gambling. He claims he was saved by finding God and now he hopes his remarkable story will serve as an example of how a life tainted by despair can become one graced with hope. His story, which appeared in The Evening Standard, becomes all the more remarkable taking into account that doctors once told him he had subjected his body to so much abuse, through the imbibing of alcohol and illegal substances, that he would never realise his dream of playing football at the highest level.

**Praise:** God for the testimony of Zoltan and others in the public eye. (Jn.19:35)

**More:** <http://www.ccfon.org/view.php?id=1076>

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