

PRAYER ALERT...

An initiative of the Prayer Forum of the British Isles & Ireland
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Contact Us

Donations

Friday 29 May 2009

■ British Isles & Ireland

- [FRIDAY FOCUS: 29 May 2009 - Hope for our world - Psalm 96](#)
 - [Harman snubs 'prejudice against Christians' plea](#)
 - [Nurse loses job over church advice to patients](#)
 - [Church of Scotland votes to appoint gay minister](#)
 - [Vulgar truth about obscenity on TV](#)
 - [Young people bearing brunt of UK recession](#)
 - [Scottish abortions reach record high](#)
- ## ■ Europe
- [Help for poor countries at Paris climate talks](#)

■ Worldwide

- [North Korea: Christians pray](#)
 - [Burma: Global campaign](#)
 - [Lebanon: Elections June 7th](#)
 - [Pakistan: Taliban claim bombing](#)
 - [Uzbekistan: Unrest](#)
 - [Iran: Authorities persecute father of convert living in England](#)
- ## ■ Praise Reports
- [China: All 16 Imprisoned Christians released from detention in Henan province](#)
 - [Pentecost Festival shines a light amid the recession](#)
 - [Big Church Day Out](#)

BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ FRIDAY FOCUS: 29 May 2009 - Hope for our world - Psalm 96

On the Global Day of Prayer (May 31st), millions of Christians from around the world will gather in churches, cathedrals, parks, stadiums, towns and cities to pray and worship the Lord.

Pray: For revelation of Jesus in every land (particularly the unreached peoples in the world). For God's people to come together in a spirit of unity and humility to pray for God's will to be done locally, nationally and globally.

More: <http://www.worldprayer.org.uk/resources/friday-focus/>

■ Harman snubs 'prejudice against Christians' plea

The Minister for Equality, Harriet Harman, has ignored an MP's call for a House of Commons debate on prejudice against Christians in the public sector. The appeal came from Conservative MP Julian Brazier during House of Commons Business Questions on Thursday. Miss Harman played down his concerns and ignored the call for a debate. She said she would refer his point to the Department for Children, Schools and Families. Addressing Miss Harman in her capacity as Leader of the House of Commons, Mr Brazier asked: 'May I appeal for a debate during the forthcoming term on prejudice against Christians in a growing proportion of the public services?' He cited 'a string of incidents involving health service and local authority workers being penalised for offering to pray for people, for saying 'God bless' to them and so on'.

Pray: for all Christians in Parliament that they will be equipped by the Holy Spirit to speak boldly against prejudice. (2Tim.3:16)

More: <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/20090527/harman-snubs-prejudice-against-christians-plea/>

■ Nurse loses job over church advice to patients

An NHS Nurse with over 40-years experience has been sacked after he suggested two 'patients' might go to Church to relieve stress during a role play session on a training course. Committed Christian, Anand Rao, aged 71, was taking part in simulated situations as part of an exercise in palliative care. He had elected to go on the training session and found his own grant funding to do so. The Christian, a bank staff nurse in hospitals run by the Leicester NHS Trust, advised two persons playing the roles of husband and wife patients they might like to try going to church to relieve stress. He has recently instructed the Christian Legal Centre to advise him and is considering taking legal action for religious discrimination against his former employer. Anand Rao says that he, and thousands of his former patients, will be staggered that someone who has given four decades to caring for people can be treated in the way he has.

Pray: for those who are unjustly penalised when speaking about their beliefs. (Ps.40:10)

More: <http://www.christianlegalcentre.com/view.php?id=746>

■ Church of Scotland votes to appoint gay minister

An openly gay minister on Sunday praised the decision of the Church of Scotland to dismiss a challenge to his appointment by religious conservatives - the latest case involving sexuality to create a division in the Anglican Communion. The church's ruling body voted to support the appointment of the Rev. Scott Rennie, who was previously married to a woman and is now in a relationship with a man. Rennie was first appointed as a minister 10 years ago, but has faced opposition since he moved to a church in Aberdeen, Scotland, last year. He has been unable to take up his post while the Church of Scotland considered appeals from his critics. 'I'm relieved, humbled, I'm obviously pleased and I'm really looking forward to going to be with my new congregation,' Rennie told reporters on Sunday. Protesters had lobbied the Kirk - the Church of Scotland's ruling executive - over Rennie's case, saying his appointment was not consistent with the teachings of the Bible. (See Prayer Alert Issue 1909, 2009)

Pray: for wisdom and guidance from God for all those involved in this issue. (Ps.111:10)

More: http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090524/ap_on_re_eu/eu_britain_gay_minister

■ Vulgar truth about obscenity on TV

According to Mark Thompson, director-general of the BBC, it would be perfectly acceptable if this article were peppered with profanity because we are all quite relaxed about that sort of thing. He bases this assertion on a recent survey which is to go before the BBC Trust this week and purports to show that most viewers do not mind bad language on television. In fact, a substantial minority are in favour of less censorship than we have at the moment. The Trust requested a review of editorial standards following the Russell Brand-Jonathan Ross debacle. The survey reveals a lack of concern among viewers about the use of bad language, particularly after the 9pm watershed. Thompson goes on to assure us that 'in the interests of creative freedom' the BBC will continue to 'push boundaries'. So that's all right then. Thompson and his executives will no doubt feel justified in arguing that they are quite au fait with what viewers do and don't like because they've asked them.

Pray: that the church would speak out against vulgarity and obscenity in our media and push for moral standards to be upheld. (Jn.8:15-16)

More: <http://www.express.co.uk/posts/view/102027/Vulgar-truth-about-Obscenity-on-TV>

■ Young people bearing brunt of UK recession

Research carried out by the Prince's Trust and Cass Business School suggests young people - especially those in deprived areas - are the hardest hit with 425,000 people under the age of 25 now claiming Jobseeker's Allowance. One in six young people are claiming Jobseeker's Allowance in some areas of the UK, including Merthyr Tydfil, South Wales and Wansbeck, Northumberland. This figure has risen to one in five young people in Blaenau Gwent, South Wales. The Prince's Trust warns that local charities set up to help disadvantaged young people are facing an upward spiral in demand just as the economic climate threatens funding. To make matters worse, a survey of 500 companies released by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) shows that only one in five firms plan to take on 16-year-olds leaving school in the next few months.

Pray: for all our young people especially those who start their adult life seemingly already on the employment scrapheap without hope. (Pr. 23:18)

More: http://news.sky.com/skynews/Home/UK-News/Recession-Britains-Youngsters-Bearing-Brunt-Of-Downturn---425000-Claiming-Jobseekers-Allowance/Article/200905415288607?lpos=UK_News_Third_UK_News_Article_Teaser_Region__7&lid=ARTICLE_15288607_Recession%3A_Britains_Youngsters_Bearing_Brunt_Of_Downturn_-_425%2C000_Claiming_Jobseekers_Allowance

■ Scottish abortions reach record high

The Scottish Government has described news of a rise in the number of abortions performed as 'disappointing'. Between 2007 and 2008 the number of abortions performed had risen by 79 to 13,817, an all-time high. Over 3,000 were carried out on teenagers, 343 on girls aged below 16. Around a third were repeat abortions - terminations carried out on women who had already been through the procedure at least once before. This figure had risen from 3,617 to 3,770 between 2007 and 2008. There is concern that increases in repeat terminations reflect a growing tendency for abortion to be regarded as a form of emergency contraception. Scottish Public Health Minister Shona Robison said: 'It is disappointing that there has been a rise in the number of abortions carried out in Scotland.'

Pray: for women who are faced with deciding about an abortion and a greater understanding that abortion is not a form of contraception. (Dt.30:19)

More: <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/20090526/scottish-abortion-reach-record-high/>

EUROPE

■ Help for poor countries at Paris climate talks

The world's biggest polluters made progress on a global deal to finance efforts to fight global warming and help poor countries cope with it, the French hosts of climate talks said Tuesday. However, the environment ministers and top climate officials from 17 nations gathered in Paris appeared to make little headway toward agreement on how deeply to cut their emissions of gases that contribute to climate change. The top U.S. negotiator on climate change, Todd Stern, defended the Obama administration's commitment to what he called a 'seismic change' in the country's carbon emissions and attitude toward fighting global warming. Earlier Tuesday, France and Germany had said the United States wasn't going far enough

in its emissions targets. Despite such differences, French Environment Minister Jean-Louis Borloo said glimmers of progress emerged at the end of two days of closed-door talks.

Pray: for governments everywhere that they would not dilute past promises but uphold them. (Ps.140:12)

More: <http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/ap/world/6441925.html>

WORLDWIDE

■ North Korea: Christians pray

The underground Christian body in North Korea has launched a prayer campaign for evangelisation in the country in response to the government restarting its nuclear weapons programme and threatening war against its neighbour South Korea. North Korean authorities have intensified tactics to expose underground church members and Christians in North Korea are suffering terribly for their faith. Of the estimated 200,000 in political prison camps, an estimated 40,000 to 60,000 are Christians. Now with the firing of several missiles and the ongoing war footing the scrutiny of believers has increased. Being discovered to be a Christian can result in imprisonment in labour camps, torture or even public execution. North Koreans risk their lives for their faith, yet have started a prayer campaign for evangelising the entire country. Dictator Kim Jong-Il is said to be greatly afraid of the expansion of Christianity in North Korea, attributing the fall of communism in Eastern Europe to the expansion of Christianity.

Pray: for Christianity to grow and the replacement of dictator Kim Jong-Il. (Ps.68:1-3)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/n.korean.christians.pray.amid.govt.military.aggression/23455.htm>

■ Burma: Global campaign

On Wednesday '64ForSuu.org' a website and global campaign to free Aung San Suu Kyi was launched, calling for the release of Burma's democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi and all of Burma's political prisoners. The launch has backing by major celebrities, a coalition of NGOs and trade unions and coincides with the day her house arrest expires. The UN has already ruled that her detention is illegal. More than 2,100 political prisoners are being held in Burma's jails. She is currently being held in Insein Prison, notorious for its terrible conditions and horrific treatment of prisoners. Political prisoners in Burma are routinely subjected to torture and often denied medical treatment. There is concern for her health as she was seriously ill last week, but denied medical care by the regime. For over thirteen years she has been detained, refused visitors, with no phone line and post intercepted.

Pray: that this campaign will bring about a turn of political and spiritual events in Burma. (Job 5:15)

More: <http://www.burmacampaign.org.uk/index.php/burma/campaigns/aung-san-suu-kyi/>

■ Lebanon: Elections June 7th

Elections in Lebanon occur every five years but this election has the potential to make the divisions in Lebanon grow even sharper. This election is a loose equivalent to every member of the US House of Representatives, or all the British parliamentarians coming up for re-election at the same time. Except in Lebanon there are far more than two major political parties! Sometimes described as a 'neighbourhood of gangs,' Lebanon is a small country characterized by religious and political diversity. Religion and politics run deep and determine who people are, who they associate with and how they live. After generations of violence between groups in Lebanon her people are increasingly committed to their own allegiances while still longing for change. Many Lebanese are becoming numb to the constant chaos that these divisions create. This election needs to be peaceful. - Source: www.cryoutnow.org

Pray: for the spirit of God to bring more reconciliation and forgiveness in Lebanon and for the outcome of the election to be accepted regardless of the results. (Ps.133)

More: http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition_id=1&categ_id=2&article_id=102413

■ Pakistan: Taliban claim bombing

Hakimullah Mehsud, a deputy to the Taliban leader told the BBC by telephone that the attack in Lahore which injured more than 200 people, and targeted buildings belonging to the police and intelligence agency, was in response to the army's operation in the Swat valley. The caller threatened similar attacks in other Pakistani cities saying 'the attack is to avenge the fighting in Swat.' He also said the Taliban had been preparing to hit Lahore from the day the operation started in Swat. Giving a warning of similar attacks in other Pakistani cities on government installations, he advised citizens to evacuate. 'We love the people of Pakistan, and because of this love we politely ask the citizens of Lahore, Islamabad, Rawalpindi and Multan to please evacuate their cities because we have marked out government targets there against whom we will carry out attacks such as have never happened before,' he warned.

Pray: for intelligence operations to successfully intercept communications, discover clandestine cells and peacefully calm hostilities in Pakistan. (Ps.121:1-2)

More: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/8071307.stm

■ Uzbekistan: Unrest

A suicide bombing and raid on the border suggests Islamic militants are returning to Uzbekistan after an extended sojourn in Pakistan, suggesting President Islam Karimov's administration may be in for a volatile summer. The suicide bombing left at least one police officer dead and several wounded and looks like the work of Islamic militants. While Uzbek authorities seem in control tension had been growing in Uzbekistan in the days and weeks before the clashes, with a lot of arrests being made in various locations prior to the incident. Some experts see a link between the fire-fight and the anti-Taliban

offensive in Pakistan, saying less secure Pakistani safe havens are causing Central Asian militants to return home, resulting in an insurgency in Central Asia. Although the Uzbekistani are against the illegitimate Karimov rule they do not want to become part of a radical Islamic world.

Pray: for God to bring His changes over the area and infuse a right spirit to reign over and through the people. (Ps.121:7-8)

More: <http://eurasianet.org/departments/insightb/articles/eav052709.shtml>

■ Iran: Authorities persecute father of convert living in England

After warning the Muslim father of a Christian Human rights activist living in England, they would arrest him if his son didn't stop his activities, Mr Vashahi senior was arrested by Iranian authorities, made to give details of extended family and interrogated for six days. Mr. Vashahi junior converted to Christianity while in England and founded the Iranian Minorities Human Rights Organization. The Iranian government has increasingly been putting pressure on this family whom Mr. Vashahi junior has not seen in six years. 'It is a good example of harassment, showing how far the government will go if we let them. In Iran we can't talk, and in Europe they want to silence us; it's a very worrying sign.' Mr. Vashahi said. Compass has learned of four confirmed arrests of Christians in the last two weeks in the capital city of Tehran, while sources said a new wave of arrests has rolled across the country.

Pray: that through this and similar situations many would be strengthened in their Christian walk. (Mk.10:29-31)

More: <http://www.compassdirect.org/en/display.php?page=news&lang=en&length=long&idelement=5932&backpage=summaries&critere=&countryname=&rowcur=>

PRAISE REPORTS

■ China: All 16 Imprisoned Christians released from detention in Henan province

The remaining 16 Christians from China Gospel Fellowship house church group who were imprisoned by the Public Security Bureau in Henan province were released early from administrative detention on the afternoon of May 9. ChinaAid (www.Chinaaid.org) says in a media release that even though the prisoners had not completed their sentences of 10-14 days in detention or paid their fines of 1,000 Yuan (\$150 US), the officials did not require any other terms for their release. ChinaAid sources said the early release of the prisoners was due to pressure from the international community and meant that, 'the government admits what they did was wrong.' When ChinaAid sent out a press release on the incident, two of the Christians were released the same day, but 16 remained in prison. (See Prayer Alert 1909)

Praise: God for this speedy answer to prayer. (Ezr.8:23)

More: <http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/2009/s09050132.htm>

■ Pentecost Festival shines a light amid the recession

Britain may be in the midst of its worst economic downturn in decades, but that hasn't stopped Share Jesus International from blanketing the capital in hundreds of events all aimed at bringing the church out of the building and into the heart of the city. Thousands of people are expected to take part in the six-day long Pentecost Festival, and its diverse programme of music, dance, art exhibitions, lectures, comedy, sports and film. The inaugural Pentecost Festival was held last year and drew more than 10,000 people to events across the city. Speaking ahead of this year's event, from 26 to 31 May, festival director Andy Frost, said he was excited about the message Pentecost Festival was bringing to the capital this year. 'In an age when people often claim that Christianity is in terminal decline, Pentecost Festival demonstrates the innovative nature of the church as it demonstrates God's compassion in the world,' he said.

Praise: God for this opportunity for believers to gather to demonstrate God's joy and freedom to those around. (Dt.16:15)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/pentecost.festival.shines.a.light.amid.the.recession/23449.htm>

■ Big Church Day Out

The first edition of Big Church Day Out took place on Sunday, at Winston House in West Sussex. It was breathtaking! 14000 Christians from all over the UK came along with their churches to worship God at this festival, to sing along with Delirious as well as Michael W Smith, Israel Houghton and New Breed, Graham Kendrick, YFriday and many more. It was just stunning to see so many people giving praise to God, and there was something very special in the air.

Praise: God for the Holy Spirit's inspiration in calling His people together in praise and worship. (2Chr.29:30b)

More: <http://www.bigchurchdayout.co.uk/index.php?Home-1>

PRAYER FORUM OF BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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