

PRAYER ALERT...

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BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ **FRIDAY FOCUS: 5 June 2009 - Hope for Government - Proverbs 8:15-16**

As we continue to hear stories of dishonesty and abuse of power in the Palace of Westminster and ministerial changes, we need to mobilise prayer for the whole parliamentary system. 7-12th June marks the Week of Prayer for Parliament and Government. See link herewith: <http://www.prayerforum.org/resources/initiatives/>

Pray: That any remaining corrupt practices and processes will be brought to light and be dealt with. For local government councillors and MEP's elected or re-elected yesterday that they will govern wisely; also for the election of the Speaker of the House of Commons later in June.

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

■ **UK Church must wake up, says GDOP London leader**

The convener of the Global Day of Prayer London has delivered a tough call to Christians in the UK to wake up and take an uncompromising stand for their faith. An estimated 10,000 Christians across London prayed in each of the capital's 33 boroughs as part of the Global Day of Prayer held in 220 countries on Pentecost Sunday. Speaking at the Newham prayer meeting in East London, Pastor Jonathan Oloyede said that it was time for Christians to pray and act. He said Christians in the UK needed to 'stop trying to be nice and cute' in the face of threats to their faith and the wellbeing of the nation. He stressed that he was not asking Christians to be violent or unkind but rather to be bold and 'true to the calling you have as a citizen of the Kingdom'. (See Praise Item & Prayer Alert 0509)

Pray: for the Holy Spirit to quicken our hearts to live our faith boldly with confidence in God. (Heb.13:6)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.co.uk/article/uk.church.must.wake.up.says.gdop.leader/23480.htm>

■ **UK atheists call for faith schools to be curbed**

A group representing UK atheists has said that faith schools should have their religious ethos made subject to the Government's Equality Bill. The British Humanist Association (BHA) was responding to a letter published in the London Times newspaper on Tuesday signed by religious ministers which claimed that faith schools were 'discriminatory'. The BHA said in terms of the Equality Bill they would be working to 'pressure Parliament to outlaw religious discrimination in our schools'. In a statement Andrew Copson, Director of Education at BHA, said: 'We too were deeply disappointed that the Equality Bill 2009 has simply imported the wide exceptions that allow state-funded faith schools to discriminate in their admissions, employment and curriculum.' Faith schools often outperform other state schools and opponents suggest this is because they 'cherry pick' pupils. But faith schools say their success is down to their religious ethos.

Pray: that faith schools would be protected against attacks by non believers and continue to be places of excellence. (Dt.11:18-20)

More: <http://www.ionainstitute.ie/>

■ **SNP bid to save RC adoption agencies**

The Scottish Government has been seeking a survival route for Roman Catholic adoption agencies to stop them being shut down because of their religious beliefs about marriage. The agencies only place children with married couples or single people, in keeping with the church's teaching. But 'gay rights' laws mean this policy could be challenged in court. It has emerged that Scottish Education Secretary, Fiona Hyslop, lobbied the Westminster Government to give the agencies an 'indefinite' exemption from the Sexual Orientation Regulations. In the event, the agencies, which have a reputation for finding homes for 'hard-to-place' children, were given a short-term exemption which ran out at the start of this year. One of the UK's Roman Catholic adoption agencies has decided to close, while seven others have cut their ties with the church and changed their policies to allow same-sex couple applications.

Pray: for God's guidance to those who must make decisions about these care homes and how they reflect Christian principles. (Ro.12:2)

More: <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/20090602/snp-bid-to-save-rc-adoption-agencies/>

■ **The big question: Can anything be done to stop young people carrying knives?**

A Government report released this week says that carrying a knife is becoming normal among young people. The report, written by the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, says that more teenagers are carrying knives because of fear and a lack of faith in the police to keep them safe. Keith Vaz, the chairman of the committee, said that there were signs of an 'arms race' between rival gangs of youths which is perpetuated by young people carrying knives because they believe their peers are too. But it is the rise in the number of teenage stabbings which gives most cause for concern. In the same 11 year period, the number of youngsters aged 18 and under being stabbed has increased from a low of 443 in 1998-99 to 931 in 2007-08 – a 110 per cent increase. In London last year, 22 people under the age of 20 were stabbed to death compared to two in 1999.

Pray: for the young people who find themselves in a culture that promotes the carrying of knives that they may be empowered to reject such foolishness. (Dt.11:16)

More: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/the-big-question-can-anything-be-done-to-stop-young-people-carrying-knives-1695317.html>

■ **Christians risk rejection and discrimination for their faith, a study claims**

The first poll of Britain's churchgoers, carried out for The Sunday Telegraph, found that thousands of them believe they are being turned down for promotion because of their faith. One in five said that they had faced opposition at work because of their beliefs. More than half of them revealed that they had suffered some form of persecution for being a Christian. The findings suggest a growing hostility towards religion in this country, which has been highlighted by a series of clashes between churchgoers and their employers. Church leaders, including the Archbishop of York, Dr John Sentamu, have urged Christians to 'wake up' and defend their beliefs after the suspension of Caroline Petrie, a community nurse, for offering to pray for a patient. Churchgoers are likely to be further concerned by new guidelines that warn that employees face dismissal if they share their faith with colleagues at work.

Pray: for all those within the church who are standing up for Christian biblical principles that God would use them for His purposes. (Mt.5:10)

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopics/religion/5413311/Christians-risk-rejection-and-discrimination-for-their-faith-a-study-claims.html>

■ **Christians being 'sidelined', says head of Asian Christian Fellowship**

The head of the Asian Christian Fellowship told MPs Wednesday that Christians in the UK are facing increasing persecution. In a consultation on the persecution of Christians in the UK today, Canon Yaqub Masih claimed that Christians are facing discrimination by employers, in the public sector and in local and central government on occasions where they feel the need, in conscience, to share their faith or live it out in the workplace. The consultation was hosted by MPs at the House of Commons. It comes days after The Telegraph published the results of a poll – see item above. Speaking ahead of the consultation, Mr Masih said he wanted Christians to 'stand for Christ and Christian values' in multi-cultural, multi-faith Britain and to raise their concerns with the Government about discrimination against Christians.

Pray: that we will remain strong in our faith and stand firm against discrimination. (Eph.6:18)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/christians.being.sidelined.says.head.of.asian.christian.fellowship/23506.htm>

EUROPE

■ **Belarus: Evangelical Church faces imminent eviction**

There was uncertainty about the future of one of the largest evangelical churches in Belarus after authorities ordered it to abandon its building in the capital Minsk. New Life Church confirmed that it received a letter on May 22, 2009 from the Property Maintenance and Repair Department of the Moscow District of Minsk demanding that the church leaves its current complex no later than Monday, June 1, or face forcible eviction. If the church did not leave the Department says it will have to undertake necessary measures to settle the case in accordance with the current legislation. However believers are not intending to leave the building so on June 1st more than 500 Christians and 11 pastors from different churches across the country gathered in the New Life church building for prayer. The church does not intend to leave the building and continues to pray.

Pray: with our brothers and sisters in Christ for victory against the authorities seeking to close their church. (Mt.16:18)

More: <http://www.newlife.by/eng/index.php>

■ Call for Euro Churches to unite to fight secularism

The Churches of England and Greece must stand together as bulwarks against the forces of secularism and social decline in Europe, the Archbishop of Athens and all Greece said last week at a meeting between leaders of the two churches in Athens. 'The Church of Greece and the Anglican Communion constitute two of the main sources of Christian faith in the old Continent,' Archbishop Leronymos said in a statement given to the delegation led by the Bishop of London, the Rt Rev Richard Chartres, along with the Bishop of Birmingham, the Rt Rev David Urquhart, the Archbishop of Canterbury's ecumenical adviser the Rev Jonathan Goodall, and the Anglican Chaplain in Athens, Canon Malcolm Bradshaw. Both churches faced the 'same challenges, the same problems, the same quests' Archbishop Leronymos said.

Pray: that the church would remain united in its fight against the secular worldview. (Ps.133)

More: <http://www.religiousintelligence.co.uk/news/?NewsID=4532>

WORLDWIDE

■ Israel: Massive military exercise

Israel launched a military exercise last Sunday to help ready the nation for a full-scale war. Operation 'Turning Point 3' lasted five days simulating a simultaneous war against Hamas in Gaza, Hizb'allah in Lebanon, the Syrian army, the Palestinian Arabs in the West Bank and Israel's Arab citizens, who were expected to riot and assist Israel's enemies in the case of such a war. Its aim was to test Israel's preparedness from the government down to the citizen in the street. It also checked coordination between local authorities and the various military and other organizations involved. Pro-Arab media have charged, 'Israel's self-defence exercise could ignite all out regional war.' The Lebanese government had its army on high alert along the Israeli border and has lodged complaints with the United Nations. Hizb'allah has also said it placed its terrorist forces on a ready footing.

Pray: that this military exercise does not lead to an escalation of fear, tension and violence. Pray for lasting peace through Jesus for all peoples in the heart of the Middle East. (Ac.10:34-36)

More: <http://www.jnewswire.com/article/2655>

■ Middle East: Obama reaches out to Muslim world

In a keynote speech in Cairo, Mr Obama called for a 'new beginning' in ties. He admitted there had been 'years of distrust' and said both sides needed to make a 'sustained effort to respect one another and seek common ground'. Mr Obama said the US bond with Israel was unbreakable but described the Palestinians' plight as 'intolerable'. A day after delivering the much-anticipated speech in Egypt he was speaking in the German city of Dresden. Obama called for a redoubling of efforts towards a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestinian conflict, saying he is confident progress can be made this year. 'The United States can't force peace upon the parties. But what we've tried to do is clear away some of the misunderstandings,' he told reporters in Dresden. Speaking alongside Obama, Angela Merkel, the German chancellor, praised the US president's Cairo speech, saying it could be a point of departure for Middle East peace efforts.

Pray: for leaders on all sides to have the will and determination to bring about a practical and comprehensive peace between Israel and her Arab neighbours. (Mic.5:5)

More: <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/europe/2009/06/20096591729913767.html>

■ Lebanon: Pivotal elections spotlight Christians

Election results will reveal the degree to which revolutionary Shi'ite Iran is ascendant in the region. Opinion polls have the Hezbollah-led March 8 Alliance in front of a close contest. In the event of an election victory Hezbollah will doubtless opt for a 'unity government' enabling it to control Lebanon without the full burden of government or risk to Western aid. This would hopefully prevent a Gaza-style descent into civil war and chaotic destitution. The outcome of the election rests with the Christian swing vote in a volatile region on the verge of intra-Muslim (Sunni v Shi'ite) and Hezbollah v Israel conflict. To curtail election-related violence Lebanese authorities will deploy 50,000 soldiers and Interior Security Forces Units ahead of the elections in regions populated with a Christian majority. The potential for intra-Christian conflict which has a long history in Lebanon is very real.

Pray: for God to move among the nations and for Lebanese Christians to focus on God and not man or party. (Hab.1:5)

More: <http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/2009/s09060011.htm>

■ Iraq: Five-year-old Christian boy kidnapped and killed

The body of five year old Tony Adwar Shaweel was found two months after an unknown group abducted him and demanded a \$50,000 ransom. He had been shot several times. Kidnappings are still common in Iraq but Tony's death is seen as more proof that criminal gangs are specifically targeting the Christian community. Four Christians have been killed in Kirkuk alone in the past two months. Violence in Iraq has subsided but attacks on Christians and other religious minorities continue. While most Iraqis who fled the nation want to come back Christians are much more likely to register as refugees and seek asylum abroad. 'They simply do not feel safe enough in Iraq.' Refugees are scattered in Syria, Jordan and elsewhere with 2 million Iraqis sheltering in other parts of the county. Minority Palestinians, Iranians and Turks are also living in precarious conditions in Iraq.

Pray: for Tony's family and all who have lost family, homes, identity and hope. (Is.51:7)

More: <http://www.releaseinternational.org/pages/posts/iraq-96-five-year-old-christian-boy-kidnapped-and-killed564.php?g=11>

■ **Australia: Defence minister quits**

Joel Fitzgibbon, Australia's Defence Minister has resigned after being under fire for failing to declare gifts received, including two trips to China. There had also been a conflict over contact between the government and his brother's company. He is the first person to leave the Labour government ministry since Prime Minister Kevin Rudd won power in November 2007. Australian newspapers reported that Mr Fitzgibbon's letter to Mr Rudd said he could not be 'satisfied' that he had 'entirely conformed with the Ministerial Code of Conduct'. The prime minister told a press conference on the issue that Mr Fitzgibbon had been a first class defence minister. However his ministers knew that his government expects high standards of accountability. Mr Rudd said a statement would be made 'very soon' on a replacement defence minister.

Pray: for God to continue to refine the Australian government; and for His fire to spread across the globe. (Mal.3:1)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/8082388.stm>

■ **North Korea: American journalists detained**

Laura Ling and Euna Lee were detained by North Korean authorities while on assignment along the border between China and North Korea. They were scheduled to go on trial June 4 charged with entering the country illegally and intending 'hostile acts.' The families have been silent until now because the situation is very sensitive and they were trying to allow diplomacy to take its course. But the girls are essentially in the midst of a nuclear standoff and the family said was time to talk publicly and try to encourage the two governments to communicate and bring the situation to a resolution on humanitarian grounds. The girls were working on a story about cross border trafficked women, but had no intention to cross into North Korea and details of what happened the day they were arrested are unknown. Doctors are concerned for Laura who has not been allowed medication.

Pray: that the Obama administration will not allow the North Koreans to use the two Americans as bargaining chips. (Is.59:19)

More: <http://www.assistnews.net/STORIES/2009/s09060008.htm>

■ **Nepal: Militant Hindus plant bomb in Church**

Two Christians were killed in an attack on a Kathmandu church in the Himalayan nation of Nepal, this week. Militant Hindus claimed responsibility for the bomb blast which injured 14 others at Assumption Church. At least 250 people were attending services at the church May 23 when a plastic bag left in a seat exploded. Both of the deceased victims were Indian. One was a 15-year-old girl; the other was a 30-year-old newlywed visiting family in Nepal. A 10-year old boy was among the injured. The attack was the work of the Hindu Defence army, a group with ties to Indian extremist groups. Its members killed a Catholic priest last year. They pledge to rid Nepal of all Christians and Muslims.

Pray: for God's hand to restrain the aggressive attitude towards Christians and for His people to hear His words of hope and comfort. (Pr.19:21)

More: <http://www.cbn.com/cbnnews/shows/cwn/2009/May/WorldWatch-Updates-on-the-Global-Church/>

PRAISE REPORTS

■ **The world's biggest prayer meeting**

Global day of Prayer 31st May 2009 could well prove to have been the biggest prayer meeting as all 220 nations (listed in Operation World) took part this year – the first time ever. The British Isles and Ireland saw a record number of events registered with many more taking part in Church services up and down the nations. London had around 45 events with the full endorsement of the Prime Minister and the Mayor. We are starting to hear wonderful answers to prayer e.g. zero crime in one location for a period during the 10 days of prayer – full reports by mid June both from British Isles and the world. See link herewith: <http://worldprayer.org.uk/gdop---welcome/> and the 'More' link.

Praise: for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. (Hab.2:14)

More: <http://www.globaldayofprayer.com/>

■ **Sentamu tops poll of 'most respected' living Christians**

The Archbishop of York, Dr John Sentamu, has been nominated as 'the most respected living Christian' in a national poll of churchgoers. The poll, conducted by ComRes for Premier Christian Radio, asked, 'Which living Christian, currently in the public eye, do you respect the most?' The founder of Christian Charity Oasis Steve Chalke secured joint second place in the poll alongside American Evangelist Billy Graham. Responding to the poll results, the Archbishop of York's spokesman said: 'Dr. Sentamu believes that he is an unworthy servant of a most worthy Lord. He often quotes the old African proverb that 'those who stand out, only do so because they are being carried on the shoulders of others'. Chief Executive of Premier Christian Radio, Peter Kerridge said: 'He is a nationally respected figure by Christians and non-Christians alike. He is a role model for many Christians as one who lives by what he preaches.'

Praise: God for this unworthy servant of a most worthy God – may he be an example to us all. (Mt.20:26-28)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/sentamu.tops.poll.of.most.respected.living.christians/23508.htm>

PRAYER FORUM OF BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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