

PRAYER ALERT...

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

■ Cumbria deaths will be 'incomprehensible' to community

For the people of west Cumbria, the events of this week will be almost impossible to comprehend. In this part of north west England, shootings are rare and major crime is almost unheard of. But in the past nine months, the communities here have endured a succession of severe incidents, natural and man-made. People are still homeless from last year's floods. The Keswick school bus crash 10 days ago in which three people died is still recent and raw. But the shootings will eclipse those, both in terms of violence and the shock that will reverberate throughout the remote area where these killings took place.

Pray: for all the people involved with this and other tragedies that God would minister to them in their need. (Rev.22:17)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/10220740.stm>

■ Police Service NI urges politicians to calm marching season tension

Politicians should do more to calm tensions during the marching season, the police have said. It cost almost £3m to police parades last summer and the bill could be even higher this year. There are fears dissident republicans may try to cause trouble in some areas, like the Ardoyne in north Belfast. Police sources told the BBC, politicians should work harder to encourage the resolution of contentious parades and reduce the likelihood of confrontation. While they are hoping for the best, they have to prepare for the worst, which means large numbers of officers and equipment have to be deployed. The PSNI said it has the resources needed, but also said politicians should do more to defuse tensions. Senior sources have told the BBC they would like politicians in potential trouble spots like north and west Belfast, Portadown and Rasharkin, to be more proactive.

Pray: for a peaceful and tolerant approach to the marching season encouraged by local politicians. (2Jn.6)

More: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/10211009.stm

■ The Not Dead Yet UK 'resistance' campaign

The campaign kicks off with the launch of a charter that will be sent to all MPs, asking them to support the campaign's aims and commit to fighting for disabled and terminally ill constituents. Campaigners point out that some people view disabled people's lives as not worth living. High profile cases of disabled people who want the law changed to make assisted suicide easier are the exception rather than the rule, they say. Baroness Jane Campbell of Surbiton, convenor for Not Dead Yet UK, pointed out that the likelihood of cuts in services across the country will create additional challenges for disabled people. She said: 'There have been two attempts to weaken assisted dying legislation in the past four years, with further discussions taking place in the Scottish parliament now. We face a bleak situation if calls for assisted suicide to be lawful are renewed whilst vital services are being withdrawn or denied.'

Pray: that MPs will oppose any change to the current law and that disabled and terminally ill people should have the same legal protection as everyone else. (Ac.17:24-26)

More: <http://www.theresistancecampaign.org.uk/news/new-resistance-campaign-urges-mps-to-sign-up-to-charter-as-disabled-pe/>

■ 'Child in the Midst' - 5 - 6th June

Viva has facilitated the World Weekend of Prayer for Children at Risk since 1995. The scale of this weekend has grown over the years and now, as we partner with many prayer ministries and networks, millions of people join us each year to pray for and with vulnerable children. We come together to pray that children all around the world would know the love of Jesus in their everyday lives, and be able to claim for themselves God's incredible offer of abundant life. We also hope that, helped by our prayers, more people will be mobilized to manifest the love of God to this generation. Please consider praying with us over the weekend and perhaps even holding an event of your own. The World Weekend of Prayer - Child in the Midst booklet has many imaginative ideas for interactive intercession and different ways of engaging people in prayer. You can download it here:

Pray: for all children at risk and that many would be inspired to reach out with God's love for this generation. (1Jn.3:1)

More: <http://www.transformations-ireland.org/news/2010/05/child-in-the-midst.php>

■ Doncaster teens encouraged to show love without sex

Teenagers in Doncaster are being encouraged to list 101 ways to show love without having sex on their prom night. In a refreshing change from the 'take a fist-full of condoms' approach, NHS Doncaster has launched an 'It's Your Prom Night – Get it Right' campaign. The campaign aims to encourage youngsters, aged between 15 and 17, to discuss ways of expressing their love. Suggestions put forward by pupils have included going for romantic walks on the beach, writing a poem and sending flowers. The campaign is an attempt to reduce the number of teenage pregnancies in the borough. Bronwynn Slater, of Doncaster Primary Care Trust, said: 'Prom night can be a very special and emotional occasion for teenagers and they often want to share these moments with their boyfriend or girlfriend. But there are lots of different ways that they can show their feelings for each other without having sex'.

Pray: that this campaign will prove successful and set a new path for attempts to reduce teenage pregnancies. (1Co.13:4-7)

More: <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/doncaster-teens-encouraged-to-show-love-without-sex/>

■ Cardinal to lead Irish sex abuse investigation

Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, the Emeritus Archbishop of Westminster, will lead a team of senior Catholics sent by the Pope to Ireland to investigate how the Church was able to cover up decades of sex abuse by priests. Cardinal Murphy-O'Connor will carry out a wide-ranging investigation into the scandal, which has caused outrage among Irish Catholics and forced the resignation of three bishops. Working alongside prominent cardinals and archbishops from the US and Canada, he will look at procedures that are currently designed to prevent abuse and study possible ways to improve them. The inquiry, which begins in the autumn, will initially focus on four dioceses - Armagh, Dublin, Cashel-Emly, and Tuam - and then be extended to others. Cardinal Murphy-O'Connor will lead the investigation in Armagh, visiting churches and seminaries and interviewing rank-and-file Catholics.

Pray: for Cardinal Murphy-O'Connor as he leads this difficult and sensitive investigation. (Ex.15:13)

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/vaticancityandhollysee/7790597/Cardinal-Cormac-Murphy-OConnor-to-lead-Irish-sex-abuse-investigation.html>

■ Edinburgh 2010 seeks to guide 21st century mission

The Edinburgh World Missionary Conference 2010 opened on Wednesday with the aim of providing direction for Christian mission in the 21st century. Hundreds of leaders from around the world gathered in Edinburgh, Scotland, to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the first-ever global mission conference, Edinburgh 1910. From June 2 to 6, mission experts will convene to discuss nine major themes, including Christian mission among other faiths, mission and post-modernities, and Christian communities in contemporary contexts. Unlike the original World Missionary Conference in 1910, however, the 2010 gathering brings together Christians from different traditions – ranging from the Roman Catholic Church to evangelical and Pentecostal churches – and from nations worldwide. Organizers hope this week's conference will facilitate conversations between mission leaders from the older mission movements of the North and the new mission movements from the South and East.

Pray: for delegates to the conference that the Holy Spirit will lead them and that God will grant them wisdom. (Ps.34:11)

More: <http://www.christianpost.com/article/20100601/edinburgh-2010-seeks-to-guide-21st-century-mission/index.html>

EUROPE

■ Christian documentary to be aired at prestigious TV Festival

A documentary by SAT-7, a Christian satellite television service to the Middle East and North Africa, has been chosen for screening at the European Television Festival of Religious Programmes in Berlin, along with programmes from the BBC, Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen (ZDF, German national television) and other TV stations across Europe. Lasting from June 2-6, the festival will show 23 programmes from a total of 70 entered in the competition. Entries came from 36 stations throughout Europe, Canada and the Middle East. Held every three years, the festival shows off and rewards programmes which touch on values in religion, faith and ethics.

Pray: that the SAT-7 programme will receive Godly recognition in this mainly secular sector. (1Cor.16:18)

More: <http://www.christiantelegraph.com/issue9923.html>

■ Green week 2010: biodiversity brainstorm

How to stop the loss of biodiversity without impeding human development is one of the biggest conundrums of modern times. Experts from around the world have gathered in Brussels this week to brainstorm on the problem. The UN has also designated 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity. More than 3000 scientists, business leaders, environmental advocates and government officials are taking part in the forum, called Green Week. Biodiversity refers to the abundance and variety of plant and animal species and their habitats. A large number and wide range of natural habitats and species are essential to maintaining the earth's ecosystems. Humans have caused massive losses in biodiversity, mainly by destroying plant and animal habitats. The UN estimates that species are now disappearing at 100 to 1000 times the natural extinction rate. A third of the 1.75m known animal and plant species are under threat.

Pray: that this forum would lead to significant advances to benefit the world we live in. (Gen.1:26-31)

More: http://ec.europa.eu/news/environment/100601_en.htm

WORLDWIDE

■ Gaza: Egypt eases blockade

Over 100 Gazans crossed the border into Egypt when they temporarily eased its blockade following the Gaza-bound flotilla incident. On Wednesday at Rafah people crossed the border on foot along with four trucks carrying tents, blankets and 13 power generators donated by Russia and Oman, plus two buses with 150 Palestinians including patients seeking medical assistance abroad and those with foreign residency permits. Israel's friends as well as foes are calling for Israel to lift the Gaza blockade. Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel would not lift the siege citing 'ongoing weapons smuggling into Gaza and the ease of these transfers could be facilitated without a naval, air and land blockade.' The Egyptian blockade was imposed after Hamas took power in Gaza. Palestinians regularly smuggle arms, fuel and goods from Egypt through underground tunnels while above the Egyptian government is constructing a 7 mile, bomb-proof, steel barrier along the border that goes 59ft underground. See: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/8664316.stm

Pray: that this incident would birth changes that enable Gaza's communities and businesses to flourish while enabling Israel to protect herself from terrorism. (Ps.12:5&7)

More: http://www.hcnonline.com/articles/2010/06/02/conroe_courier/news/0603_natwlrbrfs.txt

■ India: Hindu intolerance to Christianity

Hindu nationalists on May 27 falsely accused a pastor of forcible conversion in Karnataka after disrupting a worship service. The Global Council of Indian Christians reported that the Hindus also warned the Christians not to worship in the area. Extremists from Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh barged into the rented home of Pastor Barmanagowda as he led a house church service affiliated with the Karnataka Evangelical Association. The extremists forced the pastor to the police station and filed a complaint of alleged forcible conversions. They warned him against conducting worship services in the village and told him to vacate his home and leave the area. On May 23rd in Andhra Pradesh Hindu extremists from the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh damaged a church building and installed an idol of the Hindu god Hanuman inside it. (This deity is believed to give courage, hope, knowledge, intellect and devotion).

Pray: for God to give the persecuted church in India strength, hope and wisdom as they continue to gather in His name. (Ps: 25:1-2)

More: <http://www.compassdirect.org/english/country/india/21035/>

■ Eritrea: Continued arrests and prison deaths

Open Doors report Pastor Gebreab aged 35 disappeared 18 days ago and no one has been able to learn his whereabouts from local authorities. He is married with an 8-year-old son and an infant daughter. The government criminalised independent Protestant churches in 2002 - closing buildings and banning all meetings even in private homes. Over 2,000 Eritrean Christians including dozens of pastors and church leaders remain imprisoned, denied legal counsel or trial and subjected to severe torture for their faith. Senaiti Habta died last month from prolonged anaemia and malaria. She was incarcerated in a metal shipping container with 14 others in suffocating heat during the day and freezing temperatures at night, deprived of fresh air, sanitation and medical attention. According to local sources officials offered her freedom and medical attention if she would recant her Christian beliefs, but she refused.

Pray: that prisoners and their families would know God's peace, strength, love and grace to endure seek to be a powerful witness for Christ. (Gal.2:20)

More: <http://www.opendoorsuk.org/resources/wwl.php?country=09>

■ Uzbekistan: Evangelical group condemns crackdown on churches

The Religious Liberty Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance - representing over 400 million Christians worldwide - expressed concerns about police raids on Protestant congregations in Uzbekistan and the detention of several Christians. A particular concern was a recent police raid on The Church of Christ in Tashkent, one of the largest Protestant churches in the capital. Police without a warrant detained eight church members, seized properties and imprisoned three church members for 15 days on charges including the violation of strict religious regulations of the former Soviet nation. Five other church members received heavy fines with three of them forced to pay about eighty times the average monthly minimum wage. The troubles began during a May 16 Sunday worship service attended by 500 people, which was interrupted by police, the secret police, tax inspectorate, fire inspectors and the sanitary-epidemiological service.

Pray: for Christians in Uzbekistan, and for justice and equality for the church in Central Asia. (Ro.8:34-35)

More: <http://www.worthynews.com/8236-evangelical-group-condemns-uzbekistan-crackdown-on-churches>

■ **Japan: Prime Minister resigned**

Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama announced his resignation after eight months in office, citing a broken campaign promise regarding the removal of a western military base from Okinawa to be the reason for his resignation. With parliamentary elections scheduled for July, Hatoyama 'faced growing pressure from his own party to step down.' The escalation of tensions between North and South Korea were among the reasons Hatoyama listed for keeping the base. He said shutting it down would only further destabilize the region. Hatoyama is the fourth Japanese prime minister to resign from office in just four years.

Pray: that hearts will turn from national instability to matters of eternity, and for God to establish leaders to guide Japan with integrity and humility. (Ecc.3:11 & Dan.2:21)

More: <http://uk.ibtimes.com/articles/20100602/the-japanese-yen-tumbles-on-uncertainty-after-prime-minister-resigns-jun-2.htm>

■ **Australia: Students challenge refugee stereotypes**

Next week Australian schools, parishes and youth groups will engage young people in the contentious debate currently taking place in Australia around refugee and asylum seekers. A coalition of Australian Christian development agencies is inviting schools to tackle the issue as part of Simply Sharing Week 2010 which encourages Australians to learn about and become involved in issues of social justice. The educational resource, 'See the Real Me, not Just the Refugee', includes real-life stories of refugees and provides age-relevant classroom activities and Bible studies.

Pray: that the youth of Australia will pass on perceptive Christian values to the wider community on the refugee issues that Australia faces. (Ex.22:21)

More: <http://au.christiantoday.com/article/australian-students-challenge-refugee-stereotypes/8345.htm>

■ **Guatemala: Twin disasters**

Guatemala has been hit with the Pacaya volcano erupting last Thursday and hurricane Agatha hitting the coast 24 hours later. The rains brought mudslides and road wash-outs that have resulted in nearly 100 deaths. New Life Children's Home, located 8 miles north of the volcano received a hail of small rocks and ash and the international airport was shut down immediately. The rains continue, rivers rise and in isolated areas there is news of more deaths in landslides.

Pray: for God's provision for those facing flash floods and mudslides. (Ps.40:2-4a)

More: <http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/2010/s10050176.htm>

PRAISE REPORTS

■ **Hong Kong's Protestant churches blooming**

Protestant churches in Hong Kong are blooming with an annual growth rate of 6.2% over the last five years and the number of Protestants in the former British colony is drawing close to 300,000. The number of practising Protestants surpassed 290,000 in 2009, rising from just over 216,000 in 2004, according to the results of a new survey released by the Hong Kong Church Renewal Movement. The figure surpasses the growth experienced by Protestant churches in Hong Kong from 1999 to 2004, when the number of practising Protestant rose from just under 176,000 in 1999 to nearly 217,000 in 2004, an annual growth rate of 4.3%. Rev Luk Fai, President of the Bethel Bible Seminary, revealed the new statistics in the latest edition of Christian Weekly magazine.

Praise: God for the growth of His Church and pray for its continued development and protection. (Ac.49:50)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/hong.kongs.protestant.churches.blooming/26009.htm>

■ **London cracking under prayer**

The M25 Nutcracker was part of Global Day of Prayer London and took place in various guises all around the capital. The M25 region hosted prayer activities in twelve locations (prayer altars) and seventeen junctions on the M25 were covered in prayer. Each junction was seen as a gateway in and out of the capital, vitally important in the nation's communications and commercial life. The link below will take you to a video of a few who prayed in a light aircraft right around the M25 on Monday (24 May) It shows them praying the Lord's Prayer over the QE2 Bridge and the Thames. You can find a full written report on www.transformationhurrock.com.

Praise: God for drawing His nations to Him in the unity of prayer and worship around the globe. (Jn.17:21)

More: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CQNKHc3PpMQ&feature=youtube_gdata

PRAYER FORUM OF BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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