

PRAYER ALERT...

An initiative of the Prayer Association of the British Isles & Ireland
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Friday 12 June 2009

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BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ PRAYER FOCUS: 12 June 2009 - Hope for prodigals - Luke 15:20-24

God does not give up on those who have given up on the church or Him.

Pray: That the church would find ways to communicate God's great love. Pray for a prodigal you know.

More: http://worldprayer.org.uk/uploads/Friday_Focus_June_2009.doc

■ Police accuse innocent Christian of breaking law

Police officers told an open-air preacher in Gainsborough Lincolnshire it is a criminal offence to identify homosexuality as a sin. They said this to Andy Robertson even though he had not mentioned homosexuality in his preaching. He was recording his preaching because the local council had been making allegations about the content of his message. The conversation with police officers was caught on tape. To see the very short video he produced press the more button now.

Pray: that God would use this to highlight bias with regards to freedom of speech and discrimination based on personal agendas. (Ps.9:19)

More: http://www.christian.org.uk:80/issues/2009/freespeechclause/arvideo_08jun09.htm?e080609

■ Atheist cleaners could sue Christian care homes over crucifixes, warn bishops

Church care homes could be forced to remove crucifixes from their walls in case they offend 'atheist cleaners' under the new Equality Bill, Catholic bishops have warned. The way the bill is written means non-Christians could sue for harassment if church authorities do not remove religious imagery, according to Monsignor Andrew Summersgill, general secretary of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. He said the bill, currently being examined by Parliament's Equality Bill Committee, could have a 'chilling effect' on religious expression. Under the terms of the bill, harassment is defined as 'unwanted conduct with the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity, or of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading or offensive environment'. Bishops are concerned that religious authorities could be left in an impossible legal position, because under the bill it would be up to the employer to prove that displaying such an image did not amount to harassment or an employee. (See Prayer Alert 2309)

Pray: for the legislators that they may find wording that avoids harming the very groups it is trying to protect. (Pr.14:3)

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstoppers/religion/5477281/Atheist-cleaners-could-sue-Christian-care-homes-over-crucifixes-warn-bishops.html>

■ People say faith schools divisive

A majority of people in the UK believe offering school places on grounds of religion are likely to undermine 'community cohesion', claims a survey. The Accord group, which campaigns against faith-based admissions, found 57% agreed with its suggestion that choosing by religion could be divisive. The group accuses some faith schools of 'exclusivity and insularity'. The Department for Children, Schools and Families said all English schools had a legal duty to promote cohesion. The department says that in practice faith schools have a higher proportion of ethnic minority pupils than other types of state school. England's education department, which has said it, will create more faith schools where there is parental demand, rejects the claims that they could weaken community cohesion. 'All maintained schools, including faith schools, have a legal duty to promote community cohesion - and Ofsted specifically inspect them on this.

Pray: for faith schools and their practical embodiment of the Word of God. (Php.3:17)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/8089118.stm>

■ **Attorney General: 'Faith is not just for Sundays'**

'Faith isn't an optional extra or something like you put on, like a hat on Sundays, and take off for the rest of the week', says Baroness Scotland, the Attorney General. 'It goes through you like writing on a stick of rock. It is reflected in what you are and what you do. Religion isn't the icing on the cake, it is the cake itself', she told delegates at a media conference for churches earlier this week. Lady Scotland praised faith-based communities for 'making a difference' and 'tackling local problems' in the community. Her comments echoed those made by the Archbishop of York in February in response to a spate of cases where Christians had been disciplined for expressing their faith at work. Dr Sentamu said: 'Asking someone to leave their belief in God at the door of their workplace is akin to asking them to remove their skin colour before coming into the office. Faith in God is not an add-on or optional extra.'

Pray: for Christians in positions of influence that they will be bold and speak out. (2Tim.1:7)

More: <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/20090610/attorney-general-faith-is-not-just-for-sundays/>

■ **'Black Magic' child abuser guilty**

A former police officer who claimed he was a 'Black Magic' high priest has been convicted of sexually abusing a number of children in East Dunbartonshire between 1988 and 1992 in Kirkintilloch. Although the offences took place some time ago McFadden was remanded in custody at the High Court in Glasgow and sentence was deferred for background reports. McFadden resigned from the police that year but was not convicted at that time. He was finally charged several years later. He told one of his victims, a 12-year-old boy at the time, that demons and spirits would kill him and drag him to hell unless he carried out sex acts. He dressed in a black cloak and used a crucifix with a skull and crossbones and an onyx ring, which he claimed gave him power, to terrify the youngster into keeping the abuse a secret. McFadden tried to claim that his victims were making up the abuse but a jury refused to believe him.

Pray: that evil like this will not be hidden and remain in the darkness but be exposed and brought to light. (Mt.4:10)

More: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/glasgow_and_west/8093438.stm

■ **UK churches 'appalled' at EU election gains for extremist party**

Christian leaders in Britain have deplored gains made by the extreme right-wing British National Party in elections to the European Union parliament. The party, which campaigned for the 'voluntary' repatriation of non-white immigrants, won two seats for the first time in the European Parliament. The party also won three local council seats in elections held in England at the same time as the EU poll. 'It is deeply disappointing that we now have a racist party representing Britain in Europe for the next five years and it is vital that our remaining UK representatives dedicate themselves to promote the common good,' said the Rev. Graham Sparkes, spokesperson for the Baptist Union of Great Britain. Commenting on behalf of the United Reformed Church the day after the release of the EU election results, Frank Kantor said: 'We must never become comfortable with the BNP using their position to promote their racist policies.' (See also Europe below)

Pray: for a wider understanding that God loves us all regardless of race and that we should follow His Word too. (Dt.27:19)

More: <http://www.eni.ch/featured/article.php?id=3072>

EUROPE

■ **Christian candidates pleased with European election performance**

The Christian Party and Christian Peoples Alliance say they have made progress at the grassroots with their results for the European Parliamentary election. Their participation in last week's election marked the first time that the electorate have been offered a Christian choice on the ballot paper across the country. The alliance of parties fielded joint candidate lists in England, but with the Christian Party of Wales running its own list. The results marked a rise from 2004's European Parliament election, with a total of 232,755 votes, or 1.7 per cent of the votes cast in England and Wales. With Scotland still to be declared, the alliance came eighth overall. CPA Federal Executive member, Dr Tom Rogers stood in East Midlands said: 'It was remarkable that the alliance performed as well as it did in the election given that campaigning took place in most places only weeks before polling day and the alliance had next to no media coverage.'

Pray: that God will raise up men and women in our nations who would be willing to stand in future elections. (Ps.1:1-2;6)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/christian.candidates.pleased.with.european.election.performance/23563.htm>

■ **Turkey: Christians ask for our prayers**

A prolonged murder trial is undermining the hopes of Turkish Christians that those guilty of killing three Christians would be clearly identified and brought to justice; and an effective challenge to the wider structural injustice whereby Christians are regarded as potential enemies within the state. Five men were arrested at the scene and later charged with the murder of three Christians at a Christian publishing house in 2007. Their trial opened the same year but there has been concern that effective investigations were not carried out to establish who was behind the actual perpetrators. Various government ministries created a culture conducive to violence against Christians because religious minorities are presented as 'an internal threat, a danger and an enemy'. At a recent hearing a defendant's retraction of evidence raised suspicion. Turkish Christians request our continued prayers that the family members, close friends of the victims and the legal team to know the presence and enabling of Jesus throughout the trial process.

Pray: for a positive outcome in this case and for the compensation claim to be instrumental in improving religious tolerance throughout Turkey. (Pr.31:8-9)

More: http://www.givengain.com/cgi-bin/giga.cgi?cmd=cause_dir_news_item&cause_id=%20%20%201489&news_id=14384&cat_id=431

WORLDWIDE

■ Iran: Elections fallout

Women's rights activists say pledges made by rivals of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in today's election offer new hope for their drive to end what they call institutionalized discrimination against women in Iran. The position of women has become a prominent issue in the presidential campaign. Moderates seeking political and social change are bidding to deny the hardliner a second four-year term and say they would enhance the role of women in the conservative Islamic state if they were elected president. Rights campaigner Sussan Tahmasebi said, 'Whoever comes to power has to respond to the demands of the women's rights movement. We are no longer invisible. Women in Iran are subject to discrimination that makes them second-class citizens in divorce, inheritance, child custody, legal matters and other aspects of life. Ahmadinejad endeavours to push women back into the private sphere endorsing them as mothers and wives.

Pray: for a reformed attitude towards women and their role in Iranian society. (Ps.22:27)

More: <http://www.reuters.com/article/newsMaps/idUSTRE55A15C20090611>

■ Peru: Probe after violent eruption

World Council of Churches (349 mainly Anglican, Orthodox and Protestant churches) is urging Peruvian President Alan García to allow an independent internationally-led investigation into recent violence in Peru stemming from government plans to explore gas and oil in ancestral lands of indigenous people. The conflict is but one instance of a series after weeks of protests by indigenous peoples in the Amazonian region over government plans for gas and oil exploration. Clashes between protesters and police took place in the town of Bagua Grande where 30 protesters and about 24 police officers have been killed, according to reports. World Council of Churches head, the Rev. Samuel Kobia, urged the Peruvian government to order an 'immediate cessation of violent repression against indigenous people', to suspend a state of emergency, and to launch a sincere, faithful and meaningful dialogue with indigenous leaders to peacefully and justly resolve the conflict'.

Pray: for a peaceful end to the attitude of gas and oil being more important than people. (Ps.24:1)

More: <http://www.eni.ch/featured/article.php?id=3082>

■ North Korea: Fears for safety of Americans

Christian Solidarity Worldwide says it is 'gravely' concerned for the future of two American journalists who have been condemned to 12 years of hard labour in North Korea. (See Prayer Alert.2309) A report from North Korea's official Chosun Central News Agency states 'Laura Ling and Euna Lee were sentenced in the last week to 12 years of 'reform through labour' after being found guilty of 'crimes against the state and illegal border crossing. 'The US has called for the immediate release of the women, saying the charges are 'baseless'. North Korea has so far dismissed the calls. Christian Solidarity Worldwide has expressed concern over the safety of Ling and Lee in what it describes as North Korea's 'macabre imprisonment system' saying it had found 'indicators of genocide' against religious groups, particularly Christians. Some 200,000 political prisoners are being held in the country's labour camps. Inmates were often subject to 'the most dire living and labour conditions'.

Pray: for North Korea to rescind the sentence and for an international incident resulting from this to be avoided. (Is.59:15,16)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/csw.fears.for.safety.of.american.journalists.imprisoned.in.n.korea/23571.htm>

■ Pakistan: Army posts attacked

Dozens of militants attacked three army posts early on Thursday in a remote region along the Afghan border that serves as the primary base for Pakistan's Taliban. Twenty insurgents and three soldiers died in the clashes that came amid rumblings that the Pakistani military will launch a new offensive there - something that would please U.S. officials who want to eliminate cross-border threats to troops in Afghanistan. In the southwest of the country a bomb exploded in the toilet of a passenger train on the move from Quetta to Karachi killing one and wounding 35 others. Deadly attacks have risen sharply across Pakistan in the past two weeks and are being blamed on militants who have vowed a campaign of bombings in retaliation for the military's offensive to oust the Taliban from the Swat Valley region. 'A citizens militia is exchanging fire with Taliban in two Upper Dir villages' reports anonymous officials who were not authorized to speak to media.

Pray: for continued and coordinated action to break the stronghold of violence, fear and control in Pakistan. (Is.40:29-31a)

More: <http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5hkiMxbHNNH0BqgpWA2ZG6VD6wVTmAD98ODB600>

■ **Sri Lanka: UN concern over camps**

A United Nations official said, 'Most of Sri Lanka's displaced people could still be kept in government-run camps in one year's time'. But the government rejected the suggestion saying that it aimed to resettle most by the end of this year. About 250,000 people fled the final phase of the civil war and in the final weeks hundreds of thousands streamed out and were housed in government-run camps. The UN expressed concern about the permanent nature of the shelters being put up in these camps saying nothing less than a new city had been created. Bulldozers are working constantly clearing jungle and phone lines, schools, banks and even a cash machine has been built. UN officials say government plans to replace tents with more permanent structures is a 'big worry'. About 300,000 are being kept in government-run camps. In the past week the government resettled 2,000 displaced people who fled their homes about two-and-a-half years ago.

Pray: for the government and other authorities to realistically consider ways forward for traumatised, homeless and desperate families who have experienced so much. (Is.32:7-8)

More: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/8094666.stm

■ **Gambia: Prosecution delays Fulton appeal against new charges**

The appeal by British missionary David Fulton against an additional conviction for forgery has been delayed after the prosecution failed to attend a hearing scheduled for Monday 1 June, and prison authorities failed to produce Mr. Fulton in court. The hearing has now been adjourned until Tuesday, 16 June. The presiding female Magistrate has also ordered the Gambian prison authorities to ensure Mr. Fulton's presence at the rescheduled hearing. Mr. Fulton and his wife Fiona had initially received sentences of one year's imprisonment with hard labour in December 2008, after pleading guilty to sedition on the advice of a lawyer, who claimed this would ensure more lenient sentences. At a subsequent trial Mr. Fulton was given an additional three years after pleading guilty to forgery in the hope of receiving the usual sentence of a fine. The Fulton's are now appealing against their sedition convictions, and Mr. Fulton will also be contesting a new charge of impersonating an army official. (See Prayer Alert 1209 & 5008)

Pray: for the Fulton's as they face up to these legal challenges that the Lord will guide and overrule. Pray also for David's health. (Pr.24:5-6)

More: <http://dynamic.csw.org.uk/article.asp?t=press&id=875>

PRAISE REPORTS

■ **UK: Europe at 'tipping point', says 24-7 Prayer founder**

24-7 Prayer is mobilising Christians to pray for Europe in the wake of the scandals hitting the financial and political sectors, and the European elections. Two of the movement's pioneers, Pete Greig and 'Punk Monk' author Andy Freeman have teamed up to produce daily video podcasts addressing the challenges and opportunities for Christians. In the first video released at the weekend, Greig encouraged Christians to help create a viral phenomenon to get hundreds of thousands praying for Europe by sharing the videos on their Facebook or Twitter pages. He said 'there are destinies being shaped right now and it is time to pray and realise what's going on.' Freeman, meanwhile, encouraged Christians to get involved with politics and government. The video podcasts will be posted daily on 24-7 Prayer's YouTube channel. Click on the 'More' link see view.

Praise; God for this new initiative from 24-7. (Is.52:7)

More: <http://www.youtube.com/user/247Pray>

■ **Logos Hope ministry ship**

Logos Hope Operation Mobilisation's new ministry ship and the world's largest floating book fair arrives in London this week for its first ever call to the capital having already welcomed tens of thousands of people aboard in Edinburgh, Belfast and Cardiff. Amy Walker, the ships Project Coordinator said, 'We want to see lives changed and hearts transformed by the power of the Gospel and we just want London to know that God is the God of this city.' It will be docked at Canary Wharf from 12 to 28 June and visitors will be invited to browse through the 6,000 educational books in the book fair and take part in seminars and behind-the-scenes tours. Evangelical Alliance will lead a teachers' conference on Saturday, while Stagecoach co-founder will share about faith in the business world next Thursday. It is hoped the local church will use the ship as a tool to reach out to their local communities, families, friends and the unchurched people they know.

Praise: God for this mission and pray for more international Holy Spirit led initiatives to touch this country. (Ps.34:8)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.co.uk/article/logos.hope.to.reach.london.with.gospel.message/23570.htm>

PRAYER ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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