

PRAYER ALERT...

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BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ **FRIDAY FOCUS: 19 June 2009 - Hope for the Fatherless - Psalm 10:12-18**

In 2007 the BBC reported 'Nearly a quarter of children lived with only one parent and nine out of ten of those households were headed by lone mothers.' **Pray:** For the children who struggle with missing their Dad's especially on Fathers Day (21 June), that they would know God's love and Fatherhood. For fathers, thanking God for our Dad's and those who have been like father's to us. And ask God to raise up fathers for the fatherless and good male role models.

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

■ **Romanians flee homes after attack**

A five-day-old girl is among more than 100 Romanian people who have spent the night in a church hall after fleeing their homes in south Belfast. The group of about 20 families said they left their homes in the Lisburn Road area after suffering racist attacks for almost a week. Anna Lo, an Assembly Member for the Alliance Party in south Belfast, said the families were 'very frightened'. A meeting will be held later to find emergency housing for those affected. Bernie Kelly, from Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, said it had been a very traumatic experience for the families. 'The whole thing has escalated very quickly,' she said. The BBC's Mark Simpson said that in some parts of Belfast racism had become the new sectarianism. But the help of the church had shown a positive side to the people of Belfast as well, she added.

Pray: for victims of such bigotry here and elsewhere. (Ps.5:11)

More: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/8104287.stm

■ **We must all tackle sectarianism, says Church of Scotland chief**

The Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland has said he wants to see sectarianism stamped out in Scotland. The Rt Rev Bill Hewitt told a group of schoolchildren from West Lothian that the country needs to become more tolerant and inclusive. Drawing on his recent trip to Belfast, the Presbyterian leader remarked on how a young man was brutally murdered after a Celtic v Rangers football match, because of bigoted factions in the local area. Youngsters from seven schools in Armadale met at the denomination's headquarters in George Street, Edinburgh. They discussed how faith prejudices divide communities. Mr Hewitt urged them to put their differences aside and said he believed that the pupils, from non-denominational and Roman Catholic schools, had much more in common than some might imagine. The Moderator added: 'The Church of Scotland supports any effort to stamp out sectarianism. Communities are coming closer together but there is still some way to go.'

Pray: that all those involved in raising awareness and stamping out sectarianism would be anointed for the task. (Lk.4:18)

More: <http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/9675>

■ Christians urged to pray and act against Coroners and Justice Bill

Christian Concern for our Nation is urging Christians to pray and act against a Bill passing through Parliament that could lead to the legalisation of assisted suicide and the removal of a free speech protection clause in relation to sexual orientation. The Coroners and Justice Bill will be debated in Parliament on June 23 and may go to vote the following day. Under current law, Christians have the right to discuss, criticise and urge abstinence from certain forms of sexual conduct. CCFON has warned that if the Bill is passed, it will 'open the door to police investigation of Christians for merely commenting on the Christian viewpoint on sexual conduct and thereby prohibit the preaching of the Gospel'. CCFON is also inviting Christians to join in a prayer meeting in Westminster on June 22. 'Stand with us at this crucial time to unite, pray and act, and to encourage all those in your churches to do the same.'

Pray: for a full appreciation of the concerns of Christians by MPs during the forthcoming debate. (Heb.13:7)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.co.uk/article/christians.urged.to.pray.and.act.against.coroners.and.justice.bill/23599.htm>

■ Tory conference adds new 'gay pride' event

The Conservative Party has included a 'gay pride' social event for the first time in this year's conference schedule. Conservative Pride is listed as one of just four social events announced so far for the conference in October. Last year's Conservative conference prompted a storm when delegates were given vouchers to visit a lap-dancing club as part of their event packs. The description of this year's gay pride event reads: 'This high profile event is expected to draw over 700 guests who'll party the night away with surprise special guests and a senior Shadow Cabinet member speaking at the event.' The event is being advertised with a rainbow coloured version of the Conservative Party's logo. Last month it was reported that reaching out to homosexual groups was to become one of David Cameron's top five priorities as part of a drive 'to show that 'new Toryism' is still alive and kicking'.

Pray: against this emphasis on 'gay pride' and its influence on politics and the media. (1Cor.6:9)

More: <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/20090617/tory-conference-adds-new-gay-pride-event/>

■ Epidemic of marriage breakdowns overwhelming courts says top judge

Marriage must be re-established as the 'gold standard' for relationships to halt an epidemic' of family breakdown - which is overwhelming the family courts, a -senior judge said yesterday. Mr Justice Coleridge, a family division judge, said the consequences of family break-up for society were so great that it could no longer be a purely private matter, and called for a national commission to consider the problem and its solution. In a speech in Westminster he blamed unrealistic expectations about relationships. 'What I hope in all humility I am drawing attention to is the endless game of 'musical relationships' or 'pass the partner', in which such a significant portion of the population is engaged in the endless and futile quest for a perfect relationship which will be attained, it is supposed, by landing on the right chair or unwrapping a new and more exciting parcel,' he said.

Pray: that marriage, the gift of God, will be re-established as the permanent basis of family life. (Heb.13:4)

More: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2009/jun/17/divorce-epidemic-judge-warning>

■ Britons urged to try a simple act of kindness

Juliet Stevenson, Michael Palin and the Archbishop of Canterbury are among the first of thousands across Britain to put time aside for refugees as part of a campaign to acknowledge their contribution to the country. A group of charities – including Refugee Action and the Red Cross – is encouraging the public to carry out one of 20 'simple acts' during Refugee Week, this week. From inviting a refugee for tea, to cooking a foreign dish or learning another language, authors, comedians and actors have helped to complete more than 2,000 acts already, with thousands more expected as the week goes on. The Archbishop of Canterbury who undertook one of the simple acts by spreading the word about the concept of refuge, said: 'Receiving refugees is not a matter of somebody signing papers in some remote office. It's a matter of making friends with new neighbours and turning strangers into a part of the community.'

Pray: for this message to spread and for people to get involved and perform a 'simple act'. (1Jn.4:7)

More: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/this-britain/britons-urged-to-try-a-simple-act-of-kindness-1704825.html>

EUROPE

■ European Churches warn right-wing extremists

The European Parliament must not become a showplace for extremist forces was the warning from the General Secretary of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe. Bishop Michael Buenker issued the warning in the wake of last week's European Parliament election which saw radical right-wing parties make gains across Europe. He said that although some of the radical right wing parties had attempted to posit themselves as defenders of the Christian faith during their election campaigns the content of their policies was diametrically opposed to the Christian message. 'The Christian faith requires love of neighbour and respect for others, solidarity and responsibility for a peaceful life together. That does not go with xenophobic and racist slogans.' The group said in spite of its defects the EU remained an important project of European unification particularly in times of crisis in which close collaboration beyond frontiers is indispensable. It is calling for democracy in Europe to be strengthened.

Pray: for more Godly and Christian philosophies to be established and filter through the resolutions of this body of men and women. (Gen.11:5 & Ro.15:6-7)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/protestant.body.warns.of.rightwing.harm.in.europe/23589.htm>

■ MEP's gear up to join political groups and elect new President

On 14 July MEP's first act will be to elect a new President. The holder of this key post is Parliament's most public face and represents it internationally. Political groups still have formally to decide on their candidates, but possible names are already circulating. Their number is set to grow ahead of the July sitting. Meanwhile political groups are being formed as parties from across Europe unite under ideological umbrellas. The parliament's president is elected for a two-and-a-half-year term. Negotiations take place between Parliament's political groups on the basis of their relative strength after the election to determine what candidate can achieve the necessary majority, with agreements in the past often spanning the two presidential mandates during the full legislative term. Ultimately though, it is a secret ballot of all Parliament's members which determines who will occupy the chair.

Pray: for the MEP's as they make these important decisions of electing a new President and to which groupings they should belong. (Pr.2:6-8)

More: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/public/story_page/008-57103-187-07-28-901-20090612STO57094-2009-06-07-2009/default_en.htm

WORLDWIDE

■ Iran: Story behind Iran

Pre AD651 Zoroastrianism was the dominant religion and is still practiced today by many mainly affluent Persians. With images and concepts not dissimilar to Christianity Zoroastrians are able to grasp the truth of Christianity in many ways. An Arab invasion in 636 started the Islamic rule of Persia, but since 1963 when a 'white revolution' programme was embarked upon Iran has had various streams of 'revolutionary aspiration' to become more modern and western with the main rebellion coming from the educated youth and Islamic fundamentalist clergy in opposition with authoritarian rule. Right now Iran has a frustrated generation of well educated 'baby boom' people born after the 1979 Islamic Revolution, with an estimated 70% of Iran's population being under 30 years of age. Iran is on a journey out of isolation and into the modern more Westernised world; let's pray that this journey is peaceful with Christ greeting them at their destination.

Pray: that God would build and prosper his kingdom in Iran, using all those in places of authority to establish Godly government of the region. (Da.6:25-28)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/iranian.christians.dispute.election.results/23618.htm>

■ Iran: Refugee beaten for his faith

Since Iranian Nasser Ghorbani fled to Turkey seven years ago he has been unable to keep a job for more than a year as one way or another his co-workers would learn he was a convert to Christianity and then shortly after he would be sacked. No one had been violent with him until three weeks ago when a co-worker in Istanbul hit him on the temple so hard he knocked him out. 'I've always had problems at work in Turkey because I'm a Christian, but never anything like this,' he said. If an Iranian convert to Christianity doesn't suffer violence life is full of pressure and uncertainty at work. For Christians by birth there are no pressures or problems but people like Ghorbani who want to leave Islam to follow Jesus are fired. A 2008 Global Report states there were 2,100 Iranian refugees and 2,300 Iranian asylum-seekers. It is estimated that there is an Iranian house church in each of 30 'satellite cities' where the government appoints refugees and asylum seekers to live.

Pray: for Gods hand of protection over Christians who can't return to Iran. (Ps.41:11-13)

More: <http://www.compassdirect.org/en/display.php?page=news&lang=en&length=long&idelement=5963>

■ Mexico: Three Christians murdered

Gunmen ordered a priest and two seminarians out of their vehicle and killed them in a drug-plagued region of western Mexico. The three were killed as they drove through a town in Guerrero state on their way to organize a spiritual retreat. Guerrero's director of investigative police said no arrests have been made and no motive has been determined for the killings, but Roman Catholic clergy in Mexico complain that they are increasingly targets of attacks and extortion demands as the nation wrestles with a wave of drug cartel-fuelled violence; (See Prayer Alert 1109) saying they have become hostages in violent confrontations between drug cartels living among them. In April priests in northern Mexico were urged to take extra precautions after an archbishop commented on where the nation's most-wanted trafficker may live. The coastal state of Guerrero is used by drug traffickers to grow marijuana and opium poppies and has been mired in drug violence for years.

Pray: for God to work through the various agencies to break the satanic hold on lives and bring the whole community into the kingdom of light. (Jdg.5:31)

More: http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090615/ap_on_re_la_am_ca/lt_drug_war_mexico

■ Egypt: Court bans 'Christian' on ID card

For the second time an Egyptian court has rejected a Christian convert's request to change his religious affiliation on his identity card in a ruling described by critics as 'a severe blow' to freedom of religion of ex-Muslims. The judge rejected the application of Maher Ahmed Al-Mo'tasem Bellah Al-Gohari to change his religious affiliation from Muslim to Christian citing Islamic and public order concerns. Egyptian identity cards must report the faith of the holder. Al-Gohari and his daughter Dina, aged 12, live in hiding and in continuous fear since radical Islamists incited mobs to kill him for apostasy. 'The disappointing verdict dealt a severe blow to freedom of religion to Muslims who would like to come out of Islam and convert to Christianity,' said United Copts of Great Britain in a statement. The verdict was based on the Shari'a law which prohibits conversion of Muslims to any other religion and 'disruption to public order.' (See also Prayer Alert 2009)

Pray: that converts to Christianity in Egypt will no longer be victims of the Egyptian governments appeasement to Islamist radicals. (Col.2:6-8)

More: <http://www.bosnewslife.com/7894-egypt-court-bans-christian-on-ex-muslims-id-card>

■ Kenya: Faith groups want more support to end human trafficking

Global Inter-faith Alliance against Human Trafficking has called on governments, non-governmental and faith-based organizations to work together in combating human trafficking at a workshop. They focused on creating awareness among young people who are most vulnerable, finding ways of contacting and counselling victims and training government officials to identify victims of the vice. Also intercepted children saved from the hands of traffickers have nowhere to go and faith-based organizations needed to create a network of shelters for them. Member of Parliament Millie Odhiambo said laws were needed to focus on protecting sex abuse victims, and they also need assistance from the international community. Victims from Kenya and East and Central Africa are passed through Nairobi en route to Italy, Germany and South Africa. Human traffickers also kidnap people for their body parts which are then sold off.

Pray: for God to mightily bless and smooth the progress of this initiative and ask him to birth more partnerships to eradicate child trafficking. (Mt.18:5-9)

More: <http://www.cisanewsafrika.org/story.asp?ID=3970>

■ North Korea: May fire missile toward Hawaii

A Japanese newspaper reports North Korea may fire a long-range ballistic missile toward Hawaii in between July 4 and 8 amid escalating tensions between them and the United States over Pyongyang's nuclear and missile programs. The missile is believed to be a long-range Taepodong-2 with a range of up to 4,000 miles (6,500 kilometres), and would be launched from North Korea's northwestern coast, said the Yomiuri daily, Japan's top-selling newspaper. The report cited an analysis by the Japanese Defense Ministry and intelligence gathered by U.S. reconnaissance satellites. The Yomiuri report was the latest in mounting media speculation that the communist country could launch a long-range missile soon, following its underground nuclear test on May 25. The United Nations punished North Korea over the May nuclear test by expanding an arms embargo and authorizing ship searches on the high seas. North Korea claimed its nuclear bombs are a deterrent against the United States and accuses Washington of plotting with Seoul to topple its secretive regime.

Pray: for a transfer of power from dictator Kim Jong Il to his 26-year-old youngest son, Jong Un, and for a change of government in the natural to represent a change of national spiritual authority. (Eph.6:12)

More: <http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5gon062DlnM-aarORNinhk5kDuyRwD98SSVOO1>

PRAISE REPORTS

■ Indonesia: Healings and miracles causing underground church to grow

Pentecostals on the tsunami-ravaged coast of Indonesia are experiencing a wave of conversions and healings. In the strongly Muslim Aceh province of northern Sumatra - where 167,000 people died in the 2004 tsunami - the underground church movement is growing, with Pentecostal congregations thriving. Indonesia has an official policy of religious tolerance, but in Muslim-dominated areas Christians face open hostility and persecution. In Aceh province, churches must register with the authorities and are not permitted to evangelize. Many Christians choose to meet in unregistered - or underground - churches. Sumatra is one of the least evangelized places on earth, according to Operation World. But since the tsunami - which wiped out 15 percent of the population of Aceh's provincial capital Banda Aceh - numerous underground churches have put down roots. Read the full article in Charisma magazine via the 'More' link herewith.

Praise: God for these wonderful testimonies to His power and grace. (1Chr.16:12)

More: <http://www.charismamag.com/index.php/news/22219-underground-church-growing-in-muslim-dominated-indonesia>

■ Qatar: Christians celebrate consecration of Marthoma Church

The place of worship is the latest addition to the Inter-Denominational Church Complex, in the southern suburbs of Doha. Marthoma Church belongs to a Christian Protestant denomination based in Kerala India and in communion with the Anglican and Independent Syro-Malabar Churches. 2500 faithful attended the ceremony. Thanking the Qatari authorities for having 'conceded the space' for the place of worship Metropolitan Joseph Mar Thoma noted that the Arab emirate is the 'fifth country in the Gulf to have this community's church, after Kuwait, Bahrain, Sultanate of Oman and the UAE'. He also invited the faithful to 'to remember the contributions and sacrifices of those who worked hard to make the worship place a reality'. The first Christian church to open in the country was St Mary's Catholic Church in March 2008. Strict Islamic laws had previously barred the country's Christian community from public prayer and religious services.

Praise: God and celebrate with the 150,000 Christians living in Qatar for religious tolerance in an Islamic country; and pray for Saudi Arabia which remains the only Gulf state still to ban churches. (1Ch.29:11)

More: <http://www.asianews.it/index.php?l=en&art=15504&size=A>

PRAYER ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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