

PRAYER ALERT...

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Friday 26 June 2009

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BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ **PRAYER FOCUS: 26 June 2009 - Hope for transformation - 2 Timothy 2:24-26**

With all that is happening in our nation, we as a Church need to show God's loving kindness and truth for Him to bring transformation.

Pray: That God will use us in our community to reveal His love and truth. For God to bring economic transformation and urban regeneration to deprived areas that we know of.

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

■ **Christian registrar demoted for refusing to preside over gay 'marriages'**

Theresa Davies said she was forced to move from her £26,000 a year job at Islington Council because of her deeply-held religious objections to same-sex civil partnerships, which were introduced in 2005. Miss Davies, 58, is the second registrar at the North London council to leave the post. Last year her colleague Lillian Ladele, 48, refused to carry out any 'sinful' gay weddings and proceeded to take the council to court for alleged discrimination on the grounds of her religious beliefs. However an Employment Appeal Tribunal ruled in December that the council had acted lawfully in expecting its entire registration staff to perform the ceremonies, a decision she seeks to challenge in the Court of Appeal. Miss Davies, who has worked for the council for 18 years, said: 'Doctors can opt out of performing abortions on conscience grounds so why can't I opt out of civil partnerships?'

Pray: against the ongoing 'politically correct' nature of legislation and discrimination against Christians. (Ps.32:6-7)

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstoppers/religion/5594962/Christian-registrar-demoted-to-receptionist-after-she-refused-to-preside-over-gay-marriages.html>

■ **Woman quits job over necklace ban**

A hospital worker from Gloucestershire who was ordered to remove a Christian cross necklace for health and safety reasons has left her job. Helen Slatter, 43, who worked as a blood sampler at Gloucestershire Royal Hospital, did not accept the hospital's offer she could carry it in her pocket. She had been warned by Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Trust that she would be sent home if she did not comply. A trust spokesman confirmed on Tuesday Ms Slatter had handed her notice in. In a statement Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust said it was 'disappointed' at Ms Slatter's resignation. 'We were disappointed that Helen took this decision and had offered to meet her again to discuss her concerns. The trust does have a uniform policy which prohibits the wearing of necklaces and chains for the safety of both patients and staff. We would like to make it clear that Helen had not been the subject of disciplinary action'.

Pray: for all Christians in the workplace that God would equip them to stand firm against these attacks on their faith. (Ps.109:3 & 28)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/gloucestershire/8114911.stm>

■ **New guidelines to help Christians and Muslims share faith**

The first ever set of guidelines giving advice for Christians and Muslims who want to share their faith in an ethical way will be launched next Wednesday at Islamic Relief's Headquarters in London. The guide, which contains 10 points of advice, has been produced by the Christian Muslim Forum, a national body set up in 2006 to improve relationships between the two faiths. Youth Specialist on the Forum, Dr Andrew Smith, will be one of the key speakers at the launch. He has been working for the evangelical organisation Scripture Union in inner city Birmingham for the past 14 years and has been active in promoting his own faith whilst at the same time seeking to listen to and understand his Muslim neighbours. The launch will be chaired by the Vice-Chair of the Christian Muslim Forum, Dr Richard Cheetham, the Bishop of Kingston, and will be attended by representatives from Muslim and Christian missionary organisations.

Pray: for all those involved in this launch that their work will help replace mistrust with God's love and care for each other. (Dt.4:6)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.co.uk/article/new.guidelines.to.help.christians.and.muslims.share.faith/23641.htm>

■ **BBC is anti-Christian and pro-Muslim says ex host**

The BBC is keen on programmes which attack churches and there is a wider secularist campaign 'to get rid of Christianity', an ex-presenter says. Don Maclean, the former Radio 2 religious programme host, also says the broadcaster is 'keen on Islam'. He said: 'you don't see any programmes on Anglicanism that don't talk about homosexual clergy and you don't see anything on Roman Catholicism that doesn't talk about paedophiles. They seem to take the negative angle every time. They don't do that if they're doing programmes on Islam. Programmes on Islam are always supportive.' He added: 'I think there's a secularist movement in this country to get rid of Christianity. Something must be done.' At the weekend it emerged that the Church of England will tackle the BBC over its coverage of the Christian faith. In a document which has the backing of bishops, the Anglican Church accused one BBC channel of treating religion like a 'freak show'.

Pray: for a balanced view when broadcasting and that the Christian message will remain strong. (Col.4:3)

More: <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/20090623/bbc-is-anti-christian-and-pro-muslim-says-ex-host/>

■ **Controversial Antichrist film with uncut scenes of torture and pornography**

A film described as 'an abomination' which features scenes of torture and pornography is to be shown in its entirety when it is released in cinemas next month. Antichrist, which includes graphic un-simulated sex and a scene of genital self-mutilation, has been authorised for release with no cuts by the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC). The decision to allow the film a release with even the most explicit scenes included has proven controversial. The film, which is released on July 24, has been rated '18' by the BBFC, and will be promoted before its release with trailers rated '15', prompting fears that many under-18s will watch the film. John Beyer, the director of Mediawatch-UK, which campaigns for socially responsible broadcasting, condemned the BBFC's decision to give Antichrist a mainstream rating. 'Films of this sort, with such extreme content, should not be classified for public exhibition anywhere,' he said. 'The BBFC should have declined classification and rejected this film'.

Pray: that the BBFC would look again at their classifications system and respond to the pressure of those seeking moral standards in our media. (Jas.1:21a)

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/film/film-news/5586289/Controversial-Antichrist-film-with-uncut-scenes-of-torture-and-pornography.html>

■ **Local Muslims oppose planned 'mega-mosque'**

The first-ever survey of local opinion about a proposed mega-mosque close to the site of the 2012 Olympics stadium has found that more people would prefer a mixed use of the site. Nearly 7 in 10 residents (68%) in the East London borough of Newham said they would prefer a mixed-use development of houses, shops and community facilities to the 12,000-capacity complex proposed by Islamic sect Tablighi Jamaat. In the survey undertaken by ComRes, nearly 6 in 10 of Muslim residents in Newham (58%) also said they would prefer a mixed-use development for the site. 'These first results are provisional as far as we are concerned and must be treated with caution,' said Cllr Alan Craig, leader of the Christian Peoples Alliance opposition group on Newham Council, who commissioned the survey. 'But they are helpful as Newham people have not previously been consulted - they have been kept in the dark by Newham Council and Tablighi Jamaat.' Prayer Alert 3308, 3108, 3008, 2708)

Pray: for all those involved in opposing this controversial mosque that God would give them wisdom. (Pr.4:6-8)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/local.muslims.oppose.planned.megamosque/23668.htm>

EUROPE

■ **Human rights campaigners have high hopes for Swedish EU presidency**

Sweden's history of progressive positions within the European Union on human rights has campaigners optimistic about the upcoming Swedish presidency of the EU. Amnesty International, the human rights NGO, said in Brussels on Tuesday that while they are not in the business of ranking EU member states in terms of their commitments to human rights, with Sweden in charge of the EU for the next six months, the group is 'very hopeful'. 'Sweden made a considerable impact on the EU's broader human rights agenda during its last presidency in 2001,' said Lise Bergh, secretary-general of Amnesty

International Sweden, speaking to reporters ahead of the presentation of a series of recommendations for Stockholm's turn at the helm of the bloc. Amnesty is in particular hoping the Swedes will turn around the EU's track record on torture in recent years.

Pray: for the EU and the upcoming presidency that the human rights agenda will move forward with Sweden at the helm. (Pr.14:23)

More: <http://euobserver.com/9/28359>

WORLDWIDE

■ **INSIGHT: Iran: Crying for freedom**

News this week brings dramatic reports from Iran of more than 3,000 reformers arrested, some 600 wounded, and conflicting reports of death tolls with some saying at least 19 have been killed by the security forces and CNN reporting unconfirmed number of deaths at 150. Right now Iranian Christians are crying out to God for freedom and are asking the global church to stand with them in prayer. For nearly thirty years the church has struggled against severe restrictions and outright persecution which has driven many Christians underground. For an anonymous report on the Iranian Christian situation click the INSIGHT button right

Pray: for the Iranian peoples as they face the current challenges within their nation that God would bring transformation.(Dan.2:21)

Info: <http://www.prayer-alert.net/info/2609IRAN.pdf>

■ **Iraq: Finding a future for Iraqi Palestinians**

Seven hundred and eighty Iraqi Palestinian refugees are currently living in an inhospitable desert camp known as Al-Tanf that resembles a prison camp and is one of the most desolate refugee camps in the world. The people are Iraqi Palestinians who fled Iraq when they were targeted after the U.S. invasion. Syria would not allow entry to those who fled leaving them trapped in no-man's land between two borders. Many from the camp were settled in Europe and some managed to illegally enter Syria but later had to return as they could not survive in this clandestine way. One woman tells of her lawyer husbands murder followed by death threats against her and her children, causing them to flee on fake passports because they would be refused entry to Syria as Iraqi Palestinians.

Pray: that this camp and three similar border camps would be closed as the United States attempts to fairly resolve the thousands of human tragedies created by the Iraq war. (1Ch.16:43)

More: <http://www.refugeesinternational.org/blog/iraq-finding-future-iraqi-palestinians>

■ **Sudan: Archbishop seeks renewed peace commitment**

The Archbishop of Canterbury has called for a renewed commitment to sustainable peace in Sudan. Williams warned that peace in Sudan was being threatened by 'unfulfilled' commitments and delays to implementing the Comprehensive Peace Agreement that ended 21 years of civil war in 2005. He said there was an urgent need for the Sudanese Government, Sudan People's Liberation Movement and the international community to demonstrate their renewed commitment to implementing the CPA, and called for continuation of disarmament and efforts towards a referendum in 2011. 'We need to recognise that unless the commitments around the CPA are honoured there is no chance of settling the conflict in Darfur, and I therefore urge a renewal of commitment and a readiness to work for measurable results as soon as possible.' He called for people to pray for sustainable peace throughout Sudan.

Pray: for an end to quarrelling over land, water and tribal issues. For the different peoples to identify and honour each others needs. (Gen.26:22)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/archbishop.seeks.renewed.commitment.to.peace.in.sudan/23640.htm>

■ **Zimbabwe: Christians give 'unity government' low score**

Zimbabwe's coalition government has failed to address widespread hunger and human rights violations in the country a Christian youth movement has charged. 'The sad reality remains that the expectations of the public remain largely unmet.' the Students Christian Movement of Zimbabwe said in a report made available to Ecumenical News International. 'It is sad to note that little has been done to bring about economic sanity in the country and most people are still living below the poverty line,' said the students, noting that the majority of workers earn one to 3.5 percent of what they need to meet the cost of basic requirements. 'The law enforcement agencies continue to implement the law in a partisan manner and the culture of impunity for the police remains intact. Even the attorney-general has failed to demonstrate non-partisanship and independence, with cases of retributive violence in some areas.

Pray: for the success of the government of unity in Zimbabwe and all the changes needed that would bring this about. (Ps.133:1)

More: <http://www.eni.ch/featured/article.php?id=3114>

■ **Afghanistan: Shift needed in combat**

US and Nato troops must make a 'cultural shift' from conventional warfare to protecting Afghan civilians. US troops will be told to withdraw if they are in danger of hitting civilians. A US General said, 'Even with the best intentions if our operation causes loss of property or loved ones there is almost no way somebody cannot be impacted in how they view the government and us the coalition forces.' Gen McChrystal took command of the 56,000 US troops and 32,000 Nato-led forces in Afghanistan last week and is expected to release new guidelines advising troops to break off from firefights with the Taliban rather than call in air strikes that might kill civilians. The deputy commander of Nato-led forces in Afghanistan

said a 'fundamental mindset change' had been taking place for some time and was now being reinforced under Gen McChrystal.

Pray: that this shift in attitude will lead to a permanent positive swing towards peace in the region. (Is.59:1)

More: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/8118013.stm

■ **Vietnam: Continued crackdown on Protestant Christians**

Several Protestant Christians in Vietnam, including Degar-Montagnards were uncertain where to worship as government forces raided and destroyed churches in recent weeks. Christians anticipated more arrests after police reportedly summoned a dozen people involved in last month's three-days of mourning and prayers following the recent destruction of the first church of the Degar-Montagnards, a mainly Christian ethnic group. Over 80,000 Degar-Montagnards in the area and abroad stayed home for three days and three nights, to mourn because they failed to protect their church in Buonmathuot in the Central Highlands. The government confiscated the church and removed the cross in 1975 after the Communist victory in the Vietnam War, but it had remained standing until now. There have been some arrests of Christians recently amid an apparent crackdown on Christian worship outside the official churches in the communist nation.

Pray: for the Lord to be a refuge for the oppressed as they trust in His provision for them. (Ps.9:10-14)

More: <http://www.bosnewslife.com/7953-vietnam-continues-crackdown-on-protestant->

■ **Pakistan: Parcel bomb critically injures Christians**

A Christian colony was the subject of a parcel bomb blast in Pakistan in the latest of a series of incidents targeting the minuscule community. According to a source at least 10 Christians were injured when a parcel bomb exploded in Hasilpur, Bahawalpur district. Pakistan government censors such incidents to avoid international pressure and mounting human rights violations. Even the presence of Christian internally displaced persons in refugee camps were not revealed for the same reason. The incident comes close on the heels of a Christian man hacked to death for using a cup designated for Muslims.

Pray: that the minority Christians in Pakistan would be bold in the midst of oppression and rejoice in God's provision for them. (Ps.74:21)

More: <http://mychristianblood.blogspot.com/archive/2009/06/20/parcel-bomb-critically-injures-christians-in-pakistan.html#more>

PRAISE REPORTS

■ **BBC bows to viewers and curbs swearing after 9pm watershed**

The BBC is to tone down the amount of sex and swearing screened following the 9pm watershed, because viewers were dismayed by the moral decline in programme standards. In a sign that the BBC's policy of pushing back the boundaries was out of step with public attitudes, its own survey found that viewers condemned the proliferation of foul language and offensive content. Responding to the largest piece of audience research ever undertaken by the BBC, the BBC Trust said it had asked Mark Thompson, the director-general, to consider broadcasting the most offensive language between 9pm and 10pm only in 'exceptional' circumstances. The BBC is now planning an about-turn in several areas of editorial policy. The 9pm watershed will no longer be regarded as a cut-off point after which audiences can be subjected to swearing and sexual content. Programmes will be obliged to carry warnings of potentially offensive content at all times of the day. (See Prayer Alert 2209)

Praise: God for this answer to prayer and move towards cleansing our airwaves. (Ps.111:1)

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/tvandradio/5628315/BBC-bows-to-viewers-and-curbs-swearing-after-9pm-watershed.html>

■ **Yemen: Radio used to start house churches**

The number of Christians in Yemen is growing as a result of a radio-based 'Church in the House' programme that began in December 2008, reports the Far East Broadcasting Company (FEBC). Since this Middle-Eastern country of 23 million is predominantly Muslim, there are no churches that people can go to. Staff from Feba (FEBC's sister organization) worked alongside producers born in Egypt, Syria and Lebanon to create 36 programmes that teach the biblical outline for house church. It is hoped that listeners will be encouraged to form fellowship groups in their own homes during and after listening to these broadcasts. In 2004 Feba began broadcasting in a Yemeni dialect, which received amazing response. Yemenis couldn't believe that their fellow countrymen were talking about Christ in their local dialect.

Praise: the Lord for this programme and for the fruit that we can look forward to seeing. (Gen.9:7)

More: <http://joelnews.squarespace.com/>

PRAYER FORUM OF THE BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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