

PRAYER ALERT...

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BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ Emergency budget

The Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne's emergency budget has met a lukewarm response from some Christians fearful that its impact will be felt by those least able to afford it. The Chancellor presented the severest budget for nearly 30 years outlining tax hikes and painful cuts to public spending. Paul Morrison, a member of the Methodist Church's Joint Public Issues Team, said the taxation burden should be put on the people who could afford it rather than those least able. Chris Sheldon, Deputy Chief Executive of Kingdom Bank, welcomed the efforts to reduce the nation's massive deficit. 'I am pleased to see that the government is taking the issue of balancing the country's income and expenditure so seriously,' he said. 'It is a strong biblical principle that we should not spend more than we can afford and that applies to the country in the same way that it applies to individuals'.

Pray: for us to balance the collective responsibility we hold to address the national deficit whilst protecting the most vulnerable. (Pr.1:3)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/emergency.budget.draws.mixed.reaction.from.christians/26157-2.htm>

■ Councils drop opening prayers

Leicester City Council, in addition to Enfield Council, has banned Christian prayers at the opening of council meetings. Colin Hall, Leicester's new Lord Mayor and member of the National Secular Society (NSS) says: 'I personally consider that religion, in whatever shape or form, has no role to play at all in the conduct of council business.' Jayne Buckland, Mayor of Enfield, has chosen to replace the prayers with poetry readings in a bid to 'support and encourage the arts'. Last month it was revealed (See Prayer Alert 1910) that the NSS was trying to use the courts to ban the North Devon Council of Bideford from starting its meetings with Christian prayers. London's Mayor Boris Johnson slammed the NSS's campaign, pointing out that Parliament has prayers before its meetings, and that it is helpful for both believers and non-believers. These examples reflect the growing influence of the NSS on our civil life.

Pray: that Christian prayers will be reintroduced by future civic leaders where they have been banned. Pray about the anti-Christian influence of the National Secular Society. (Lk.18:7-8)

More: <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/council-drops-prayers-for-poetry-readings/>

■ ITV: One hour of religion this year

ITV will broadcast just one hour of religious programming this year while Five will not show any, the channels have admitted to the Church of England. Adding to fears that Britain's commercial television stations no longer see the value of traditional shows about faith, Channel 4 has scrapped the post of Commissioning Editor for Religion. The channels say audiences are no longer interested in programmes solely about religion, so they cannot afford to continue making them. It leaves the BBC as the main provider of religious documentaries and acts of worship on television whose public service licence requires BBC1 and BBC2 to broadcast 110 hours a year. However, BBC's coverage of spiritual matters has been criticised by senior clergy who says it risks treating Christianity like a 'rare species'. ITV and Channel 5 both cite economic pressures to target larger audiences as the reason to cut religious broadcasting that attracts smaller audiences.

Pray: for ITV management to rethink their schedules and retain some religious broadcasting. (Gen.4:7)

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstoppers/religion/7846218/ITV-will-broadcast-just-one-hour-of-religious-programming-this-year.html>

■ Marriage and family breakdown

Turning the tide of marriage and family breakdown is impossible. Is it? This is the theme of the Family Education Trust AGM and Conference this year. Sir Paul Coleridge, who is a senior judge in the Family Division of the High Court, and who has argued that promoting marriage as 'the gold standard' of family structures is long overdue, will address the conference. Also speaking will be Dr Arik Sigman who is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine and Associate Fellow of the British Psychological Society. He will be talking about his book 'The Spoilt Generation: restoring adult authority in child development'. Lisa Bullivant will also be speaking about her bold public stand against inappropriate sex education at her daughter's primary school. The Family Education Trust AGM and Conference is being held this Saturday 26 June in London.

Pray: for those attending this conference, that they and others will receive informed opinion on the restoration of family and marriage. (1Ti.3:4)

More: <http://www.anglican-mainstream.net/2010/06/11/turning-the-tide-of-marriage-and-family-break-down-is-impossible-or-is-it/>

■ Bishops: Share the Good News

The Church of England's long history of witnessing to the unique significance of Jesus Christ is a duty that continues in today's multi-faith environment, reiterates a new report. It affirms that missionary activity has always been a hallmark of the Anglican Church's life and should continue to be so. The report's foreword notes that: 'the fear of getting it wrong should never obscure the Christian's commitment to the good of all and to making Christ the centrepiece of that good. Too much reticence is as untrue to our history and our vocation as too much stridency.' The document draws on case studies from across the country, where dioceses and parishes are actively engaged in inter-faith dialogue by expressing a 'sensitive confidence' about the Christian faith. The report suggests that there is a real desire among people of other faiths to hear about the beliefs which motivate Christian action and witness.

Pray: for us all to speak out our belief in the Gospel message. (Mk.16:15)

More: <http://www.cofe.anglican.org/news/pr5710.html>

■ Scottish assisted suicide Bill

Scotland remains steadfastly opposed to legalised assisted suicide according to the responses of a Holyrood consultation. The End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill, proposed by independent MSP Margo MacDonald, would allow the terminally ill and those who are 'permanently physically incapacitated' to seek assistance in ending their lives. A public consultation on the controversial Bill has revealed that 86 per cent of the consultation's respondents, some 601 people and organisations, were opposed to the Bill. Gordon Macdonald, Public Policy Officer for the pro-life group Care Not Killing Scotland, welcomed the response, saying: 'We are very pleased there has been an overwhelming body of evidence against the Bill'. The most common objections raised by the respondents was that the Bill, if passed, would allow children as young as 16 to commit suicide. The Church of Scotland cautioned that 16-year-olds, who are considered too young to drink or drive, are not 'emotionally mature' enough to make such decisions.

Pray: for protection and sanctity of life to be respected by our governors. (Ge.1:26)

More: <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/fresh-blow-to-scottish-assisted-suicide-bill/>

■ Swearing and violence on TV

Viewers find violence on TV 'acceptable' according to a BBC poll of a mere 300 people, including children of 11. The poll claims that sexual violence on screen is seen as 'part of life' as long as it is not 'gratuitous'. These findings are based on flimsy evidence but will feed into programme makers' guidelines. Ofcom has been accused of giving broadcasters a green light to swear after consulting only 130 people. Its study included special input for minority groups like those who are transgender or travellers and suggested that people were willing to tolerate various swear words on TV throughout the day. (See Prayer Alert 1910) Vivienne Pattison, Head of Mediawatch UK, said: 'No one has ever complained to me there is not enough violence on the telly. But I hear a lot from people who think there is too much.' She condemned the decision to consult children: 'Big themes should be decided by people who are at least old enough to vote'.

Pray: that planners portray the role models shown on TV to inspire audiences to follow God's way. (Mt.4:10)

More: <http://www.mediawatchuk.org.uk/>

EUROPE

■ Euthanasia deaths increase in Holland

The number of euthanasia cases in Holland has increased by 13 per cent in one year, prompting the Dutch Government to launch an official inquiry. Last year 2,636 Dutch people were killed by euthanasia, with 80 per cent of the victims dying at home after being administered lethal drugs, whereas in 2008 this figure was 2,331. The rise in euthanasia deaths has prompted the Dutch Health Ministry to launch an inquiry into the nation's euthanasia laws. Pro-lifers have warned that the increase has been caused by the demise of Holland's palliative care system. Phyllis Bowman, Executive Officer of Right to Life, said: 'I am sure that the increase in numbers of people opting for euthanasia is largely a result of inadequate pain control.' Holland became the first country in the world to legalise voluntary euthanasia in 2002, but the Dutch Government has acknowledged that involuntary euthanasia poses a serious problem. (See story in GB & I above)

Pray: that the Dutch Government would reconsider the present law and restore the sanctity of life. (1Cor.3:16-17)

More: <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/euthanasia-deaths-increase-in-holland/>

■ EU urged to 'do more' to tackle global food crisis

Top BBC journalist George Alagiah has urged Europe's decision makers to do more to address the global food 'crisis.' The news anchor told a Brussels conference that the world needs to increase food production by 100 per cent by the year 2050 'in order to sustain itself.' He said, 'As the world's population continues to grow, and more and more households in emerging economies join the world's middle class, the demand for animal protein is expected to double by 2050'. The conference was organised by the International Federation for Animal Health Europe (IFAHEurope). Those attending the conference were told that there is an urgent need for realistic policies to address the challenge and the role the animal health industry can play. At present, 1.02 billion people do not have enough to eat, 907 million of these live in the developing world. 'Some 20 per cent of animal productivity is lost due to diseases in animals'.

Pray: that the delegates from this conference would use their knowledge to raise awareness in their home nations. (Pr.12:11)

More: http://www.theparliament.com/no_cache/latestnews/news-article/newsarticle/eu-urged-to-do-more-to-tackle-global-food-crisis/

WORLDWIDE

■ Pakistan: Groups intent on inciting violence

The gateway town of Jhang (the name means war) gives access for the Taliban and al-Qaeda into the west of Pakistan and into Afghanistan. The group Sipah-e-Sahaba, (Warriors of God) have their headquarters in Jhang, and are feared so much that many will not mention their name, calling them 'green hats' (turbans). In President Musharraf's time they were banned and splintered into three groups to disguise themselves. They are now reforming openly as one group. They know there is a spiritual power which they serve, believing it gives them protection. This is making them unusually bold, travelling to Sind and Karachi outside their Punjab homeland. They are the group claiming responsibility for many attacks in the Punjab where Christians and their villages were destroyed. Some of their attacks have been to incite hatred against ethnic groups. (See Prayer Alert 2709)

Pray: for God's intervention in confrontational situations and for His Spirit to protect and lead Christians at this time. (2 Tim.1:7)

More: <http://www.criticalppp.com/archives/13016>

■ Iran: Excellent and tragic reports

The number of Christians in Iran has grown from 500 known believers in 1979 to at least 100,000 today. Church leaders have reportedly said that millions can be added to the church in the next few years -such is the spiritual hunger that exists and the disillusionment with the Islamic regime. Iran is a strategic gateway nation with a growing church that will impact the Islamic world. For stories of how God is transforming Iran go to: <http://www.iranaliveministries.org/> Against this backdrop we learn of continual crack-downs on Christians by Iran's security forces, the most recent being a raid last Friday on a prayer meeting in Tehran where Christians were praying for fellow believers jailed in earlier raids. The Iranian Church is a growing, secretive, delicate alternative way of life in Iran that many are embracing. They need our continued prayers as they grow into their inheritance.

Pray: for God to comfort and protect his children in detention and increase international pressure to allow religious freedom nationally. (Ps.5:3,4)

More: <http://www.bosnewslife.com/13141-breaking-news-iran-crackdown-on-national-protestant-movement-members-detained>

■ Iran: Alarming report 'US and Israeli troop concentrations'

Iranian sources report the Revolutionary Guard deploying men and equipment in a 'war alert' situation' in the Caspian Sea region due to increasing US and Israeli military personnel in Azerbaijan. On June 22 a Revolutionary Guards commander tasked with 'repelling' an US-Israeli offensive said, 'reinforcements are being dispatched to West Azerbaijan Province because some western countries are fuelling ethnic conflicts to destabilize the situation in the region.' Asian News reported '12 US warships transited through the Suez Canal a few days ago. Three naval squadrons are currently in the region. Forces appear to be in position for a possible attack against Iran's nuclear sites. Late July and early August could provide a window of opportunity for action. Iran threatens chaos in Saudi Arabia if it is attacked. Economic factors are determining the timing of the crisis.' Debka reports confirmed that in the last few days, Israel transferred a large number of bomber jets to bases in Azerbaijan, via Georgia, and US special forces are also concentrated in Azerbaijan in preparation for a strike.' <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/US-military-pressure-increasing-in-the-Persian-Gulf-18743.html>

Pray: that military and political leaders would act wisely and would seek peace. Pray that the strongholds of violence in the region would be bound. (Ps.5:10-12)

More: <http://www.debka.com/article/8868/>

■ World: G8 proposal for new 'World Currency'

The Russian President introduced a new coin described as 'a united future world currency' as the World's Reserve Currency. The coin bearing the words 'unity in diversity' was minted in Belgium. 'We are discussing both the use of other national currencies including the rouble as a reserve currency, as well as supranational currencies. We really live at a unique time, and we should use it to build a modern, prosperous and strong Russia, that will be a co-founder of the new world economic order.' Mededev said. Earlier this year the UN called for the replacement of the US Dollar and the creation of a global reserve bank and a new world currency to protect emerging markets from the 'confidence game of financial speculation'. (Advances in digital technology places the world on the verge of an identification system capable of monitoring virtually every human transaction - an ominous development for serious students of Biblical prophecy.)

Pray: for God to build His global Kingdom in all areas of our lives as monetary systems are reviewed. (Rev.13:16-17)

More: <http://www.bosnewslife.com/13206-russian-president-shows-new-world-currency-at-g-8-summit>

■ West Africa: Slow motion famine

'Warnings of an impending food crisis in Niger sounded by the UN and other aid agencies late last year met with little response from the international donor community. Contributions are starting to trickle in at the UN, but by the time enough aid gets through it will have come too late for many - most of them babies and young children.' said UN Humanitarian Affairs chief, Jan Egeland. See: <http://us.oneworld.net/article/never-again-niger-famine-latest-crisis-that-could-have-been-prevented>

Pray: for an incredibly effective response to the cry for relief and aid that is needed right now. (Job 5:10-11)

More: <http://english.aljazeera.net/video/2010621204319754684.html>

■ Zimbabwe: Collapse of the education sector

A Christian Students' Association in Zimbabwe has rebuked the country's power-sharing government for allowing the continuing collapse of the education sector in the country. 'The cosmetic inclusive government has failed the young people of Zimbabwe as evidenced by the state of the education system,' a Student Christian Movement said on 16th June, the Day of the African Child, when the killing in 1976 of black South African pupils protesting inferior education, and the compulsory teaching of Afrikaans is remembered. The collapse of the social services delivery system in Zimbabwe is directly linked to the human-created governance crisis and unless this is resolved the children of Zimbabwe will continue going to lecture rooms without lecturers, and getting into libraries without books.

Pray: for the power sharing government to release appropriate funds and structures into needy administration bodies. (Dt.25:4)

More: <http://www.eni.ch/featured/article.php?id=4185>

■ Pakistan: Christian child enslaved

An 11-year-old Christian boy, Sanish Masih, is malnourished, weak and ill from working in slave-like conditions for a Muslim landowner who kidnapped him and forcing him to work off his family's debts. His mother said, 'He is frequently invited to convert to Islam by the landowner, Ashraf Cheema, and in return he is promised to be freed from the iron chains, his work will be eased, he will be served better meals, and the debt of his father and brother might also be forgiven. According to Dawood Masih of the National Commission of Justice and Peace, 'Danish Masih works without break from 4am to 11pm, often in iron chains, on half a loaf of bread per day. At press time local Christian leaders had petitioned the deputy superintendent police to recover Danish Masih.

Pray: for an end to the exploitation of the weak and poor by the rich and powerful. (Ps.82:3-4)

More: <http://www.compassdirect.org/english/country/pakistan/21950/>

PRAISE REPORTS

■ Jamaica: Druglord arrested

Christopher 'Dudus' Coke, the alleged Jamaican druglord who is facing extradition to the United States, has been captured, after a manhunt for him triggered deadly unrest across Kingston last month. 'The security forces wish to confirm reports that Christopher Lloyd Coke, for whom police are holding a warrant of arrest regarding extradition proceedings, was arrested,' Police Commissioner Owen Ellington said. Local church leader Rev Al Miller earlier said that he had 'helped in the process to hand over Coke'. The church leader had helped in negotiations to ease tensions after a police operation to capture Coke that left 73 people dead in a Kingston slum. (See Prayer Alert 2210) Jamaican police backed by troops descended on Coke's stronghold in the impoverished Tivoli Gardens slum last month seeking to arrest him.

Praise: God for this answer to our prayers for the cleansing of Kingston. (Ps.145:1)

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/centralamericaandthecaribbean/jamaica/7848317/Jamaican-druglord-Christopher-Dudus-Coke-arrested.html>

■ Ground-breaking Christian iPhone application

Want to ride the Jesus wave into the 21st century? There's an app for that! Revolutionary new media company DV8 Media has released 'The Life of Jesus', the first-ever comprehensive mobile phone application dedicated to the life of the Christian savior. Containing cutting edge original video and audio productions, engaging interactive games, Christian-themed communication tools, and the full text of the New Testament, searchable and bookmarkable, 'The Life of Jesus' is designed to bring a new generation of Christians and the Christian community together to reinforce Jesus' philosophy in a hip, sleek and technologically advanced production. DV8 will enable always-on access to the tech-savvy spiritually minded. 'We can break down old paradigms and bring the teachings of Christ to a new, younger international audience,' explained Geoff Tyson DV8's Managing Director. The application will be available through the Apple Store beginning 23 June 2010. Please visit www.thelifeofjesus.net.

Praise: God that He has an app for everything! (Pr.15:23)

More: <http://www.earnedmedia.org/pnch0623.htm>

PRAYER FORUM OF BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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