

PRAYER ALERT...

An initiative of the Prayer Forum of the British Isles & Ireland
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Issue 2710

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Friday 2 July 2010

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BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ Women Bishops

The Archbishop of Canterbury has spoken of his desire to see women ordained as bishops in the Church of England in a way that does not 'violently disrupt' the common life of the Church. At their Conference in Portsmouth, Dr Rowan Williams asked Methodists to pray for the Church of England ahead of key debates on women bishops in its General Synod in York next week. 'My hope and prayer is that we shall see women ordained as bishops in the Church of England. My hope and prayer is also that we shall do that in a way that does not violently disrupt some of the features of our common life, causing us actually to lose one another in a sense.' Further 'I am quite prepared to be 'Petrine' for quite a long time on that one' [a reference to the leadership style of Peter who compromised on certain principles in order to preserve order and hierarchy within the church].

Pray: [that a wise resolution to this debate will result equitable/agreeable/fair to all parties. \(Jn. 8:16\)](#)

More: <http://www.christianpost.com/article/20100630/anglican-leader-seeks-prayers-ahead-of-debate-on-women-bishops/index.html>

■ Church appeal over lap-dance club

An Oxford congregation lost its appeal on 30th June 2010 to overturn the variation of a licence to run a lap-dancing club just 50 yards from their church. The Rev Vaughan Roberts, Rector of St Ebbe's Church, lodged an appeal after Oxford Council's Licensing Committee granted the variation to Greene King to run Thirst Lodge in Pennyfarthing Place, off St Ebbe's Street. He said: 'We still feel that granting the licence to permit lap-dancing at this sort of establishment was totally inappropriate because of its proximity to the church and because these types of clubs can make women feel vulnerable - there are hundreds of young female students who live nearby and women who park their cars in the nearby Westgate Car Park. We wouldn't be keen to see such a club anywhere because lap-dancing degrades God's gift of sex.' Would the licence have been granted had the club been sited next to a mosque (Ed)??

Pray: [for local churches to stand up for Christian values in the public square. \(Mk.16:15\)](#)

More: <http://www.christianlegalcentre.com/>

■ Methodists to 'pay attention' to God

The Methodist Conference in Portsmouth last Saturday heard a fresh call from the new President to pay attention to God and to those who have been discarded or rejected by society. The Rev Alison Tomlin said paying attention to God meant living with Him at the centre and loving, even enemies. 'We talk about God as central, except of course that the God we serve tends to spend a lot of time on the edge, on the periphery, on the outside, not within our buildings, not within the places we choose to call home, but out there with those who have been discarded, rejected, those who are distressed and distraught. So if we are serious about paying attention to God at the centre of our lives we have to make sure that we are paying attention far wider than ourselves.'

Pray: for all Christians to renew their commitment to put God at the centre of our lives. (Rev.7:17)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.co.uk/article/methodist.conference.hears.call.to.pay.attention.to.god/26186.htm>

■ Politics and the Gospel

American writer and theologian Wayne Grudem, co-translator of the English Standard Version of the Bible, addressed a packed St. Helen's Church in Bishopsgate, London, tackling the question of whether political involvement distracts from the Gospel. He said God was calling Christians in the UK to 'stand against evil' and 'threats that would silence the Gospel and remove it from the public square,' particularly laws passed in recent years promoting homosexuality and attempts to loosen existing abortion regulations. Grudem argued that far from being a distraction from the Gospel, Christian involvement in politics was necessary. He pointed to the proliferation of secularist campaigns and warned that they 'threaten the voice of the Church and the voice of Christians' and 'remove from government God's teaching about good and evil.' 'How can government officials rightly serve God if no one is able to let them know what God expects of them?' he asked.

Pray: for a wider understanding that Christians have a vital role to play in politics and government. (Is.9:6)

More: <http://www.christianpost.com/article/20100625/engaging-in-politics-does-not-distract-from-gospel-says-writer/index.html>

■ New wine in old church buildings

This week saw the publication of English Heritage's first national survey of England's places of worship. This documents the state of 14,500 church buildings from Gothic Anglican confections to nonconformist chapels and Quaker meeting houses. The survey found that fewer than half are in fair or good condition, while ten per cent are at risk of dereliction. While heritage campaigners understandably lament the demise of beautiful, historic buildings, an emerging form of religious life beyond buildings tells a rather different story. This is a tale of change and transformation - one which necessarily involves a degree of pain and loss - out of which church communities are forging a different relationship to the bricks and mortar which traditionally lies at the heart of Christianity in Britain. Examples are offered in the survey of new models of worship, many letting go of the idea that the physical place in which 'church' takes place is somehow uniquely sacrosanct, to be reserved for religious purposes only.

Pray: that God's voice is heard where two or three come together. (Mt.18:20)

More: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/belief/2010/jun/30/religion-church-buildings-change-decay>

■ Chaplaincy to the armed forces

150 years ago the Methodist Church purchased land in the garrison town of Aldershot to provide a place of worship for the men stationed in the camp. The Methodist Conference has celebrated 150 years of this ministry, which has provided support to military personnel and their families throughout more than 15 conflicts, from British colonial rule in South Asia to the ongoing war in Afghanistan. Revd Stephen Hancock, an army chaplain from Abingdon, said; 'From the centurion at the Cross to chaplains serving today in the UK or overseas - Navy, Army and Air Force - little seems to have changed. People still need to experience the love of God in places where war is the norm. It is not always pleasant, not always fun, not always rewarding, but it is part of the Great Commission to 'go' and we few who serve today press on in the hope that we can direct people to the Son of God.'

Pray: for all chaplains working in places of war that they will be safe and that they may hold the Gospel message as a light in a dark place. (Jn.12:46)

More: <http://www.methodist.org.uk/index.cfm?fuseaction=openogod.newsDetail&newsid=449>

■ Cortege of seven servicemen

The families of seven servicemen killed in Afghanistan joined thousands of well-wishers yesterday evening as their coffins were driven through Wootton Bassett in Wiltshire. It was the largest single repatriation since the bodies of eight soldiers were returned to RAF Lyneham last July. Family members placed flowers on top of the hearses as they paused for a minute's silence next to Wootton Bassett's War Memorial. Many relatives wore T-shirts bearing the name of their family member. The hearses carried on to a hospital in Oxford, where post-mortems are due to take place. Among the many former service personnel attending was Lance Corporal Mark Barber, 22, of the Household Cavalry, who knew two of the dead soldiers, Isaac and Halliday. 'The way they died was just terrible. We've come here to pay our respects,' he said.

Pray: for the families of those who have died in this conflict and for those who place their lives at risk daily. (Mt.5:4)

More: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2010/jun/30/soldiers-wootton-bassett-afghanistan>

EUROPE

■ Italy seeks an end to crucifix ban

Catholicism stopped being the state religion in Italy in 1984. The Italian government is appealing to the European Court of Human Rights to overturn a ban on classroom crucifixes. The case against crucifixes was brought by a woman who argued that her children had a right to a secular education under Italy's constitution. Last year the court agreed with the mother, saying parents should be able to bring up children as they saw fit. Her victory caused uproar in Italy, where 90% of the population describe themselves as Christian. Italy started its appeal against the court's ruling - which was widely interpreted as interference in the country's culture, history and religion - on Wednesday. If the government loses, it would mean that all religious artefacts in classrooms across the European Union could be outlawed. A government minister said the ruling was 'shameful' while Education Minister Mariastella Gelmini said the crucifix was a 'symbol of our tradition', and not a mark of Catholicism.

Pray: that secularism is countered in this important case. (Ps.31:23)

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/italy/7862824/Italy-appeals-against-ban-on-school-crucifixes.html>

■ Human Rights Watch and torture

Three countries - France, Germany and the UK - acquire foreign intelligence for security and police matters from countries that routinely use torture to obtain information, claims a report issued on 28 June by Human Rights Watch. Additionally the use of torture intelligence in the fight against terrorism damages the credibility of the European Union, as they contradict anti-torture guidelines. Intelligence services in the three countries claim it is impossible to know the sources and methods used to acquire shared information in states such as Algeria, Syria, Jordan, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan and Pakistan. But officials in the UK and Germany have made public statements indicating that they believe it is sometimes acceptable to use foreign intelligence even if obtained under torture, the report notes. The 62-page long document cites the case of Djamel Beghal, whose statements made under ill-treatment in the United Arab Emirates were used against him in a French court, where he was on trial for plotting a terrorist attack.

Pray: that even those plotting inhumane deeds are treated humanely. (Ps. 79:11)

More: <http://euobserver.com/9/30378>

WORLDWIDE

■ World: Micah Challenge calls Christians to pray

The International Christian movement Micah Challenge is calling upon millions of Christians to pray and take action against extreme poverty as part of its 10.10.10 campaign. Today (Thursday) marks the 100-day countdown to 10.10.10, when as many as 100 million Christians worldwide will remind their political leaders of the promises they made to halve extreme global poverty by 2015. Micah Challenge and its many partner organisations, including The Salvation Army, World Vision and Tearfund, warn that unless urgent action is taken now, many of the Millennium Development Goals agreed in 2000 will not be met. On October 10, Christians will join in saying a specially written 10.10.10 prayer asking for God's intervention on behalf of those still suffering in poverty and confessing their own failure in ignoring God's call for justice. They will also make a promise to remember the poor and remind their political leaders of the need to keep their commitments to the poor.

Pray: And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. (Mic.6:8)

More: http://www.christiantoday.com/article/micah_challenge_calls_christians_to_pray_and_act_for_worlds_poor/26201.htm

■ G20: Leaders agree to halve deficits by 2013

Leaders at the G20 summit in Toronto, Canada have agreed to cut national budget deficits in half by 2013. Heads of state also agreed to new rules that would force British banks to boost their funds by £130 billion to reduce the risk of another Lehman Brothers-style collapse. In a reversal from the unity of the past three crisis-era Group of 20 Summits, the leaders decided to adopt 'differentiated and tailored' economic policies for each country. 'Our challenges are as diverse as our nations,' US President Barack Obama said. 'But together we represent some 85 per cent of the global economy, and we have forged a coordinated response to the worst global economic crisis of our time.' George Osborne, Chancellor of the Exchequer, hailed the G20 statement as a vindication of the coalition government's policy. A sign of how much work was involved to forge the G20 consensus, is that negotiators spent at least 45 hours drafting the summit's final communique.

Pray: that the policies the world leaders have adopted will not only benefit the rich but also the poorer nations. (Ecc.5:11)

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/financetopics/g20-summit/7858162/G20-summit-leaders-agree-to-halve-deficits-by-2013.html>

■ APOLOGY:

Last week's story on the G8 proposal for new 'World Currency' was wrongly attributed to the current G8 taking place in Toronto, Canada. We apologise but the story actually referred to the G8 meeting that took place in L'Aquila, Italy last year.

■ Morocco: Purge of Christians continues

Morocco expelled a teacher for allegedly attempting to convert Muslims to Christianity. According to the Spanish newspaper 'El Pais', authorities expelled Sara Domene of Spain for 'threatening public order.' It's a common phrase used to allege 'proselytizing.' Domene, also a member of an evangelical church, denies the charge, saying she was giving Spanish lessons. The 1992 constitution guarantees freedom of religion for all while designating Islam as the state religion. Any criticism of Islam is banned under the Penal Code and is punishable with up to five years in prison. The government is being especially vigilant this year in upholding the code. In March, King Mohammed VI expelled 20 foreign missionaries. Shortly afterward, about 7,000 Moroccan theologians publicly supported his decision. Several mission agencies note that this action set the stage for another wave of deportations and expulsions. The latest round reveals itself as a calculated effort to purge Morocco of all Christian elements. (See Prayer Alert ????)

Pray: that many followers of Christ will be able to continue His work in Morocco. (Ps.5:11)

More: <http://mnnonline.org/article/14419>

■ Pakistan: Christian Professor beaten for refusing to convert

Muslim students attacked a Christian Professor at Peshawar University College this month after he refused their demand to convert to Islam. Psychology Professor Samuel John, a father of four who has been teaching at the college for 12 years, said that as he came out of his house on the campus on June 14, about 20 to 25 students rushed and assaulted him. When

his wife learned what was happening, she ran to help him, but the students beat her as well. Both the Professor and his wife were rushed to hospital, where they were treated for their injuries, with John listed in critical condition. He reported the matter to the dean of the college, but the official was unable to take any action because the Islamic students councils are supported by political parties and powerful Islamic groups, the professor said. 'I am still getting threats, saying, leave the university or accept Islam – if you don't convert, we will kill your family.'

Pray: for God's protection over all His people as they stand firm for their beliefs. (1Cor.16:13)

More: <http://www.compassdirect.org/english/country/pakistan/22047/>

■ USA: Christian legal society loses right to remain Christian

On 28 June 2010 the Supreme Court issued a majority decision that a California Law School can require a Christian group to open its leadership positions to all students, including those who disagree with the group's statement of faith. This decision affirms the 'all comers' policy of Hastings College of the Law (Hastings), which requires all groups to open all positions to all students, regardless of beliefs. The case parallels events in 2007 at Exeter University, England, where the Christian Union (CU) had to resist an attempt by the Students' Guild to remove a number of its long standing rights and privileges, the Guild claiming that the CU constitution did not conform to its Equal Opportunities standards. Andrea Minichiello Williams, Director of the Christian Legal Centre, commented: 'It is vital that in a free and democratic society people should be able to organise themselves around core beliefs without interference'.

Pray: that the rights of Christians will be upheld by the courts. (Ps.94:8)

More: <http://www.ccfon.org/view.php?id=1118>

■ Indonesia: Islamist hardliners declare 'war' on 'Christianisation'

Islamist hardliners are using violent talk about the 'Christianisation' of Bekasi, amid rising interfaith tensions in the city. Nine Islamic groups meeting in this West Javan city have reportedly joined forces in a campaign to prepare local mosques to 'wage war' on the growing Christian influence in the city. The group is recommending that each local mosque should form its own laskar or 'paramilitary unit' to enforce Sharia laws or strict Islamic practices on local Muslims – and insisting that the Bekasi administration's policymaking should reflect this code. Hardliners say they are reacting to what they see as a concerted attempt by the church to extend its reach in Bekasi, a commuter city for Jakarta. Mass baptisms of Christians who were raised as Muslims are cited as a particular issue for concern. Church leaders are now calling on President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono to defend the Christian minority in the face of mounting intimidation.

Pray: against moves to revive religious tensions in a nation still recovering from conflict fuelled by jihadists. (Ps.55:9)

More: <http://www.releaseinternational.org/pages/posts/indonesia-islamist-hardliners-in-bekasi-declare-war-on-christianisation-720.php>

PRAISE REPORTS

■ S. Asia: Bamboo artisans share Jesus

Nearly every day, five S. Asian tribal women travel to surrounding villages to sell their hand-crafted bamboo items. But when these women go to the markets, they bring something else with them: Jesus. Even though these rural women don't know how to read, they bring Gospel tracts with them everywhere they go. One week, the women had an extraordinary opportunity before them when they visited one of Laxmi's relatives, Shalini. She had suffered for more than a year from a tumor in her neck. In faith, the five women shared Jesus' love with Shalini and prayed for her. God answered their cries and healed Shalini, completely removing the tumor that had plagued her for so long. Shalini and her whole family saw Jesus' power and chose to follow Him, leaving their old traditions and religious practices to put their trust in the one true God. Six other families in their village also chose Jesus.

Praise: God for His wonderful healing power. (Ac.10:38)

More: <http://www.assistnews.net/STORIES/2010/s10060152.htm>

■ Russia: Love of Christ to disadvantaged children

At former communist camping grounds, that once indoctrinated children that there is no God, thousands of needy children across the former Soviet Union will learn about the gift of hope in Christ this summer. At least 5,000 children across Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, Chechnya, the Northern Caucasus and Central Asia will take part in at least one hundred camps coordinated by Russian Ministries in the coming months. Since 1999, Russian Ministries has been running their camping programme, bringing hope to thousands of street kids, orphans, children with alcoholic parents, children with disabilities and children from families affected by HIV/AIDS and the ravages of violence and war. 'Summer camps are the most effective and strategic opportunities for evangelical outreach in order to reach out to the next generation,' explained Russian Ministries' Senior Vice President Sergey Rakhuba.

Praise: God for this initiative and for all those who will hear His message. (Is.52:7)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/russian.ministries.brings.love.of.christ.to.disadvantaged.children/26000.htm>

PRAYER FORUM OF BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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