

PRAYER ALERT...

An initiative of the Prayer Forum of the British Isles & Ireland
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Issue 2909

Website

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Friday 17 July 2009

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BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ **FRIDAY FOCUS: 17 July 2009 - Hope for our families - 1 Peter 3:8-12**

Family life can come under pressure from many areas, but God loves families and wants them all to flourish.

Pray: That God will restore family values and strengthen the bonds within family life in our nations. For family members to experience the love of God.

More: http://worldprayer.org.uk/uploads/Friday_Focus_July_2009.doc

■ **Thought for the day: Leave the Today programme's God slot well alone**

Thought for the Day on Radio 4 is in the news again today because Mark Damazer, the donnish controller of Radio 4, admitted on the BBC's weekly Feedback programme that the corporation is considering opening it up to secularists – part of 'a wider range of views'. Dr Ghayasuddin Siddiqui, leader of the Muslim Parliament, said: 'All faiths have been sidelined. Thought for the day is practically the only place where you can hear religious thoughts and it is sad if this important outlet becomes marginalised. There is a market for faith and the BBC needs to learn that this is a respected institution which should not be diluted.' Michael White writes in his Guardian blog, 'That seems fair enough to me. Live and let live, I say. Secularists dominate the airwaves for the other 23 hours and 57 minutes of the day, so why not keep three minutes for the faiths?'

Pray: that those who control the media will recognise that people who belong to faith groups are a significant part of their audience and should be served accordingly. (Ps.119:46)

More: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/blog/2009/jul/14/michael-white-thought-for-the-day>

■ **Church of England 'may back rebel US Anglicans'**

Dropping the moratorium on appointing gay bishops could boost moves in the Church of England to back breakaway American Anglicans, a UK campaigner claims. Canon Chris Sugden, a leader of the newly-launched UK section of the Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans (FCA), told the BBC News website the decision by the Episcopal Church in the US was 'extremely worrying and serious'. He said it could increase support for a motion at the Church of England's General Synod to declare fellowship with the Anglican Church of North America (ACNA). The ACNA is a union of groups which broke away from the Episcopal Church following the appointment of an openly gay bishop, Gene Robinson, in New Hampshire. At the same time, Canon Sugden complains, advocates of a 'gay agenda' in the church are determined to keep pushing the issue. This includes bringing Bishop Robinson to speak at the UK church's youth festival, Greenbelt, in August. 'A number of us are very concerned about that,' he says. A private member's resolution is circulating at the Church of England's General Synod, calling on the English Church to declare itself in fellowship with the ACNA.

Pray: for England's General Synod, considering a resolution on the English Church to declare itself in fellowship with the ACNA.
More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/8149812.stm>

■ Church says Government has Muslim funding bias

Archbishop of York says the Government has become 'unbalanced' in its approach. It blames political correctness and fears about Islamic extremism for ministers' preoccupation with funding Muslim groups. The situation has left churches challenged to maintain their presence in poorer areas, the report warns. The report, co-authored by Rt Revd Stephen Lowe, Bishop for Urban Life and Faith, says there is a 'great deal of inconsistency in the way individual [Government] ministers deal with religious groups'. It continues: 'Christian groups in particular have suffered irrational prejudice against their funding applications and a lack of understanding of the nature and sometimes fragility of the local church. 'There is a perception, perhaps justified, that it has been easier for Islamic groups to receive financial support than other faith groups.'

Pray: that honesty, fairness and balance will pervade Government decision making. (Pr.1:3)

More: <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/20090713/church-says-government-has-muslim-funding-bias/>

■ Archbishop of York compares teen murder victims to John the Baptist

The Archbishop of York, Dr John Sentamu, has likened the 'meaningless' murders of innocent teenagers such as Ben Kinsella and Rhys Jones to the death of John the Baptist. He also drew a comparison between Robert Mugabe and King Herod in a sermon on the suffering caused by violence. Dr Sentamu referred to John the Baptist after Bible verses about his murder were read during the Sunday morning Eucharist at York Minster. He warned members of the Church of England's governing body, the General Synod, not to lose sight of the goal of Christian renewal. He went on: 'The big priority for all of us is an unceasing renewal of commitment to Christ. Sometimes in the complexity of the activities of the Church we are so busy with committees, synods, administration and making the wheels go round that we are in danger of forgetting that none of these things matters, if it is carried out by people who have not been with Christ before they have been with others.'

Pray: for all church leaders as they seek to 'manage' the church and pray that they will remain focussed on the Gospel message. (Ps.145:11)

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopics/religion/5809614/Archbishop-of-York-compares-teen-murder-victims-to-John-the-Baptist.html>

■ Compulsory cooling off period for UK couples seeking divorce

A three-month 'cooling off' period for couples before undergoing the divorce process has been advised by a leading Conservative think tank in the UK. The report 'Every family matters' was released by the Centre for Social Justice today. It proposes that both parties should reflect on their marriage and deliberate over the financial impact and outcome of the split. Former Conservative party leader and director of the CSJ, Iain Duncan Smith, said: 'The cooling-off period will help save some worthwhile marriages.' The document, released today, proposes a tax break to promote marriage and wishes to follow an Australian programme which sends couples to relationship counselling centres in order to 'save saveable marriages,' according to Mr Duncan Smith. The number choosing to marry in the UK fell from a peak of 480,285 marriages in 1972 to only 270,000 in 2007. However the report states: 'Courses can improve marriage, develop parenting skills and reduce divorce by 30 per cent in the first five years of marriage.' (See also Prayer Alert 2809)

Pray: that the church would take up the challenge in offering marriage and family courses to the wider community. (Ez.44:23)

More: <http://www.anglican-mainstream.net/>

■ Urgent prayer for our armed forces

The Armed Forces urgently need all our prayers not only for their safety and protection in Afghanistan but for recovery from the traumas of the last week. These soldiers on the front line are physically, emotionally and mentally drained. Those killed and wounded in the last few days have shocked and saddened the remaining soldiers adding to their stress. One soldier writes; 'Some of my colleagues who are further forward are working phenomenally hard at the moment, past the point of endurance. Well past the point of endurance in fact. So my prayer request is for a bit of peace to give my colleagues some desperately needed rest and for healing, recovery and swift recuperation for all members of our Battlegroup. Also continued prayer for those who have lost their loved ones recently - I know you will be joining the prayers of everyone who knows Christ here in theatre, and many who don't know Him too!'

Pray: for peace, rest and recuperation for all those on the front line; for healing from the traumas they are experiencing. Also continued prayer for the families and friends of those lost and injured in this conflict. (Ps.23)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/8146737.stm>

EUROPE

■ European church leaders urged to offer hope to crisis-hit world

A gathering of European churches has opened in the French city of Lyon with an account of how a church rebuilt itself after religion was banned, and with a call for Christians to be at the forefront of resisting all forms of violence and racism. 'As Christians, we dare to hope, even in an age when millions of people all over the planet are in despair, under pressure from the global economic crisis, and are overwhelmed by uncertainty,' said the head of the Albanian Orthodox Church, Archbishop Anastasios, when he addressed delegates at the 15 July opening worship service of the once-every-six-years assembly of the Conference of European Churches. About 300 delegates from the grouping's 120 member churches - principally Anglican, Orthodox and Protestant - and 500 other participants are attending the 15-21 July assembly. It is taking place under the theme, 'Called to One Hope in Christ', inspired by a passage from St Paul's letter to the Ephesians 4:4.

Pray: that the delegates would be united, refreshed and inspired in their calling to the great commission. (Mt.28:18-20)

More: <http://www.eni.ch/featured/article.php?id=3177>

■ **Belarus: Foreign pastor banned from preaching, church warned it may be closed**

Belarus has warned a church in the capital Minsk that it could be closed after a foreign pastor preached at a worship service, Forum 18 News Service has learned. Pastor Boris Grisenko, a Ukrainian, was also fined. Alla Ryabitseva, head of the city's Department of Religious and Ethnic Affairs, claimed to Forum 18 that 'I have been to the United States. Visitors to the country can't just go and speak at a religious service without permission.' District police chief Viktor Pravilo refused to say how he had found out that a foreigner was preaching in the New Testament Pentecostal Church, religious communities having long complained to Forum 18 of KGB secret police surveillance. Asked whether the police did not have more important matters to deal with than a foreigner preaching at a religious service, Pravilo put the phone down. Foreigners engaged in religious activity have long been a target of state hostility, along with their Belarusian co-religionists.

Pray: that the authorities would reconsider and realise that the gospel message is not an attack on the state.

More: http://www.forum18.org/Archive.php?article_id=1326

WORLDWIDE

■ **Iran: Christian satellite channel interrupted**

The Iranian government has cracked down on communication following the presidential election. Christian satellite channels have been among its victims. Terry Ascott, CEO of SAT-7 International said many satellite channels including the Christian channel have been affected. 'What is strange is the government has found a way to block channels beaming into Iran without jamming satellites that would affect the entire Middle East. Somehow they have developed a new technology to simply and simultaneously block access to multiple channels in the major cities – which is the first time we have seen such a thing.' Nearly a month after the election Iranian citizens continue to organize street protests against Ahmadinejad. Last month's demonstrations have numbered tens of thousands but more recent protests are estimated as thousands. Media agencies have said it is hard to know exactly how many protesters there are because Iranian authorities have banned reporters from leaving their offices to cover the demonstrations.

Pray: for Christian technicians to overcome this challenge and for people facing the challenge to be more open than ever to the Gospel. (Ro.8:28)

More: <http://www.christianpost.com/article/20090711/iran-interrupts-christian-satellite-channels/index.ht>

■ **India: Hoardings 'strictly prohibit' preaching about Jesus Christ**

Groups opposing missionaries have put up three anti-Christian hoardings in Bastar district in central Indian state of Chhattisgarh sternly warning the Christians not to preach about Jesus Christ in the area. The Hindu extremist 'World Hindu Council' and a youth wing of the group have been known for their anti-Christian stance in the past. The signboard put up in three different places said, 'Preaching about Jesus Christ is strictly prohibited in the area, and a penalty of 1,130 Indian rupees (about 23 U.S dollars) will be imposed on those found guilty.' The hoardings also have pictures of Hindu deities along with names of the extremists group. The hoardings stand against the constitution of India where religious freedom to profess, practice and propagate has been granted equally to all the citizens of India. Successive persecution faced by Christians in India today endanger its democracy. Many Dalits have embraced Christianity, but extremist groups say they are forcefully converted resulting in Christian persecution.

Pray: for God to continually release His power and authority over India as Christian evangelism moves forward in this continent. (Ro.5:6)

More: <http://www.christianpost.com/article/20090715/india-hoardings-strictly-prohibit-preaching-about-jesus-christ/index.html>

■ **India: Recent incidents of persecution**

Being a Pastor or even an active Christian leaves you open to physical violence, imprisonment and false accusations in some areas of the country. A small sample of recent persecutions include: Madhya Pradesh - Hindu youth extremists chanting 'Praise lord Ram' attacked a Baptist pastor in his church. Extremists beat a pastor and his family, destroyed church musical instruments and stole belongings. Pastor left unconscious and another pastor beaten for alleged forceful conversion. Karnataka - 12 Christians detained on a false complaint of conversion. 20 people beat Christians and registered false complaints – a pastor and his wife were detained. Worship service disrupted and church closed alleging the church had an illegal license. Andhra Pradesh - A pastor arrested on a baseless complaint of forceful conversion, he was later beaten by extremists. Police detained Christians on false accusations. Assam - Vandalized Baptist church and threats to two Christian girls. Tamil Nadu - pastor seriously injured near his church.

Pray: for God's enabling power to be poured into and surround those living by faith for God's provision in the face of persecution. (Dt.31:6)

More: <http://www.compassdirect.org/en/display.php?page=news&lang=en&length=short&idelement=6010&backpage=summaries>

■ **America: Obama, Maliki to meet next week**

US President Barack Obama will meet at the White House next Wednesday with Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Maliki. A statement announcing the visit says the countries are 'close partners' in building a sovereign, stable and self-reliant Iraq. Iraqi forces recently assumed responsibility for security in major cities after US combat troops withdrew from towns and cities on June 30. Some 130,000 US troops remain in Iraq, but they now have a lower profile. All American forces are to

leave the country by December 31, 2011. Iraq wants the United States to help it recover millions of Saddam-era documents that were seized by US troops or looted in the mayhem of 2003.

Pray: for the meeting to establish positive relations, eradicate inconsistencies in perceived historical details and begin to build stronger trust between the two cultures. (Ro.12:14)

More: <http://www.jordantimes.com/?news=18455>

■ Saudi Arabia: Leader calls for interfaith dialogue

King Abdullah called for a dialogue among monotheistic religions Monday, marking a first for the ultra-conservative Muslim kingdom. 'I ask representatives of all the monotheistic religions to meet with their brothers in faith,' Abdullah told delegates to a seminar on 'Dialogue Among Civilizations between Japan and the Islamic World, 'If God wills it, we will then meet with our brothers from other religions, including those of the Torah and the Gospel to come up with ways to safeguard humanity.' Abdullah said the country's top clerics have given him approval to pursue his idea and that he plans to get the opinion of Muslim leaders from other countries. He also intends to address the United Nations on the subject. 'We have lost sincerity, morals, fidelity and attachment to our religions and to humanity, the disintegration of the family and the rise of atheism in the world – a frightening phenomenon that all religions must confront and vanquish.'

Pray: that this meeting of religion and culture will strengthen the acceptance of God's word and develop his provision for the lost in the darker areas of the continent. (Mt.1:22)

More: <http://www.christianpost.com/article/20080325/saudi-arabia-leader-calls-for-interfaith-dialogue/index.html>

■ Mexico: Drug cartel kills 12 federal agents

A powerful Mexican drug cartel has unleashed a killing spree against the authorities in a challenge to the leadership of the President in his home state. The bodies of a dozen federal anti-drug agents were found on a mountain highway in Michoacán, the home state of Felipe Calderón. The killing of the agents was the worst loss of life in a single attack since President Calderón took office in 2006, taking the war between the narcotics gangs and the Government into uncharted territory. Their murders were the boldest of at least ten reprisal attacks. The surge in violence marks a potential shift in Mexico's drug wars, which have claimed 11,000 lives during the presidency of Mr Calderón, who ordered the army to intervene.

Pray: for the Mexican Christians to be used mightily by God to break and remove the spiritual blanket of lawlessness and addiction over the country. (Lk.10:18-19)

More: http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/us_and_americas/article6715478.ece

PRAISE REPORTS

■ Christian teacher facing sack is re-instated after threat of legal action

A senior London teacher, suspended and threatened with the sack for expressing his Christian beliefs at work will be back at work next term after threat of legal action. Kwabena Peat was suspended after he complained that a staff training day was used to promote homosexual rights, and to marginalise and label those who disagreed with homosexual practice. Andrea Minichiello Williams, barrister and director of the Christian Legal Centre said: 'Although we consider this a great victory for common sense, the School is still seeking to control Mr Peat's views and behaviour by not allowing him to talk about what has happened, both within the school or via the media, which has been very supportive. Mr Peat was discriminated against for expressing his Christian faith and his invitation to consider Christianity was deemed 'harassment'. What kind of society are we living in when a legitimate orthodox Christian view as expressed by Mr Peat is construed in this way?' (See Prayer Alert 1809)

Praise: God for this victory for common sense and prayers based upon 2Ch.20:17.

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

■ Global Visions: International bible project and evangelism

In Israel a project with government support hopes to create bridges between cultures and faiths united by love and reverence for the Bible. The first phase of an interfaith effort to hand-inscribe 100 Bibles in their native languages and display them in Jerusalem went on display on Monday at the Bible Lands Museum. Taiwan's representative to Israel proposed that the Bibles should eventually form a travelling exhibition around the globe reflecting how Christianity was spread from Jerusalem two millennia ago. Meanwhile Joel news reported (<http://joelnews.squarespace.com/>) a vision to start 118,130 houses of prayer as over 3,000 Christian workers from 100 nations gathered in China to develop strategies to complete the Great Commission. Up to half of the participants were Chinese from Hong Kong and mainland China. A large map of the world's nations and un-reached peoples about the size of two basketball courts enabled participants to walk, visualize and pray on it, making commitments to take the Gospel to those who have never heard.

Praise: God for powerfully anointing people with His spirit of evangelism to take us on into the 21st century. (Mt.28:18-20)

More: <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1246443798386&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull>

PRAYER FORUM OF BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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Prayer Alert is a partnership project of the Prayer Forum of the British Isles and Ireland
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