

# PRAYER ALERT...

An initiative of the Prayer Forum of the British Isles & Ireland  
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## BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

### ■ BBC accused of anti- Christian bias

The BBC has been forced to defend an East Enders' storyline after outraged viewers accused the Corporation of anti-Christian bias. The complaints centre around a portrayal of a Christian Pentecostal pastor as a deranged killer whose deeds are motivated by his Christian faith. Viewers watched the pastor failing to help his ex-wife when she was dying, strangling a love rival to death and attacking his current wife. Over 100 viewers have now written to the Corporation saying that they find the storyline deeply offensive. The BBC issued a statement defending their controversial plot. Last year Don Maclean claimed that the BBC is keen on programmes which attack churches, and that there was a wider secularist campaign 'to get rid of Christianity'. Daily Telegraph writer, Damian Thompson, said: 'We are deep into the realms of BBC bias and ignorance here. Only a BBC drama series would, to quote the complainant, 'transfer the practice of terrorist beheadings from Islamist radicals to a fantasised group of fundamentalist Christians'.

**Pray:** that BBC will give a more balanced view of Christians in their future programming. (Ho.14:9)

**More:** <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/bbc-accused-of-anti-christian-bias-by-viewers/>

### ■ NI leaders condemn rioting

Northern Ireland's First and Deputy First Ministers have said there is no excuse and no justification for the violence of recent days. More than 80 police officers were injured in two nights of rioting by nationalist youths. Peter Robinson and Martin McGuinness said there had been 'outright thuggery and vandalism'. Mr Robinson also said comments by a senior police officer alleging poor political leadership were unhelpful. He said he and Mr McGuinness have been working, and will continue, to work for a resolution of the difficulties around parading. McGuinness said both men were 'resolute' in their commitment to tackle sectarianism. 'This will require the community to stand united against all those forces seeking to bring conflict back on to our streets,' NI Secretary of State Owen Paterson praised the police and said those 'who use young people to attack the police and smash up their own area are cynical enemies of the whole community'. (See Prayer Alert 2810)

**Pray:** for seekers of peace to prevail in Ulster and elsewhere. (Jas.1:21)

**More:** <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10617267>

### ■ Swimming lessons during Ramadan

Swimming lessons in some Staffordshire schools should stop during Ramadan to ensure Muslim pupils 'do not swallow water' suggests Stoke-on-Trent City Council in an 11-page Ramadan Guide. It says swimming is acceptable to Muslims but poses a high risk of swallowing water that may break a fast. It also suggests re-scheduling sex education classes during the holy lunar month, as Muslim followers who have reached puberty are required to avoid sexual thoughts during this period. Terry Sanderson, President of the National Secular Society said the guidance is out of proportion. 'Surely it should be

possible for Muslim pupils to be withdrawn from those elements of the school day that they don't want to participate in without imposing these restrictions on everybody, Muslim or not. Rearranging the whole school routine for a whole month to satisfy the religious needs of a few is totally.

**Pray:** that the city council will think again even as the National Secular Society suggests.

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.co.uk/article/chester.churches.unite.to.transform.communities/26265.htm>

#### ■ Churches unite to transform communities

Christians from 18 churches are set to work together this summer to engage in community projects in the north west of England. Engage 2010 is a project 12 years in the making and building on the success of a one-day event in Hoole, Chester in 1997. This one day developed into a week-long Hoolefest in 2004 and then Chesterfest in 2007. Each year it has grown to include more people and to have an even greater impact on local communities. 20 churches have partnered with local businesses and agencies to deliver a week-long youth and community programme. Young people have grown in confidence as they have understood their value and significance as well as building character, self-esteem and teamwork. 18 church congregations from across Cheshire West and Chester are working together with the support of partner organisations including Link Up, The Light Project and Chester Christian Schools Work to organise the programme.

**Pray:** for God's blessing on all those involved in this project as they live the Gospel message. (1Pe.3:15)

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.co.uk/article/chester.churches.unite.to.transform.communities/26265.htm>

#### ■ 'Desperately difficult' to unite Church over Women bishops

The Archbishop of Canterbury admitted today that it will be 'desperately difficult' to keep the Church of England unified in light of its schismatic vote on women bishops. In a heartfelt appeal for unity after a particularly fraught week Dr Rowan Williams called on Anglicans to push ahead with the consecration of women bishops despite the fact that a minority of traditionalists, conservative evangelicals and Anglo-Catholics have threatened to leave the church over the issue. The beleaguered church leader suffered an ignominious defeat on Saturday evening when the General Synod rejected his personal appeal for a series of safeguards that would have provided a separate class of male-only bishops to administer to those who remain vehemently opposed to female leadership in the Church. Father David Houlding summed up the feeling of many conservative clergy members who will feel compelled to leave the Church if the ordination of women bishops goes ahead. 'There are just scraps left of the table and we are beginning to starve,' he said, his voice cracking. 'The door is being slammed in my face.'

**Pray:** for unity in the Anglican Church as it seeks to resolve this key issue. (Jn.17:23)

**More:** <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/desperately-difficult-to-keep-church-together-over-women-bishops-2024774.html>

#### ■ Homosexuals and 'religious marriage'

Equalities Minister Lynne Featherstone disclosed that homosexual couples may be permitted to use 'religious readings, music and symbols'. She said that the Government would now hold talks with those with a 'key interest' in the issue. Unlike in civil marriages, there is little leeway for heterosexual couples to stamp their own mark on the Church wedding vows in a Christian ceremony. Such heterosexual couples tying the knot at Church of England or Church in Wales weddings essentially make the same pledges to one another. Lord Tebbit said: 'I wouldn't want anything done to add to the pretence that a civil partnership is a marriage. That's the key thing.' Andrea Williams of Christian Concern for our Nation says: 'It is vital to safeguard traditional marriage for future generations and for the benefit of society. When society has been described as 'broken', we need to restore a Christian moral framework and family values.'

**Pray:** that Marriage continues as a gift of God in creation through which husband and wife may know the grace of God. (Jer.29:6)

**More:** [http://www.theway.co.uk/feature.php?id=8133&this=Homosexuals\\_could\\_marry\\_in\\_religious\\_ceremonies](http://www.theway.co.uk/feature.php?id=8133&this=Homosexuals_could_marry_in_religious_ceremonies)

#### ■ Blind pursuit of profit must end

The Archbishop of York has hit out at the selfish pursuit of profit and called for a return to the pursuit of social justice and generosity as a means to building a truly wealthy nation. Addressing the Church of England's General Synod in York, Dr John Sentamu said it was understandable that governments wanted to achieve economic recovery after two years of financial crisis, but stressed that recovery should be regarded as a means to an end rather than an end in itself. People should not just be consumers but rather live out their common citizenship in social action or 'good work' beyond paid employment. He argued that profit making was a 'simple and stupid' objective, and called for a return to the principles of honesty and generosity towards neighbours. He said that an obsession with wealth was 'evil' and that society should pursue economic justice rather than solely profit.

**Pray:** for the Holy Spirit to infuse our leaders with social ethics as well as fiscal focus. (Ac.11:15)

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/blind.pursuit.of.profit.must.end.says.archbishop/26261.htm>

## EUROPE

#### ■ European theology faculties warn of shift to religious studies

Representatives of European theological faculties and church theological institutes have warned against universities dropping the teaching of theology in favour of religious studies that are seen as a more general approach, reports Ecumenical News International. 'Theology has a major role to play within the university by countering stereotypes, demonstrating ways of dealing with religious conflict, and working out its own unique specificity in dialogue with other disciplines,' said Orthodox Metropolitan Emmanuel of France, the president of the Conference of European Churches.

**Pray:** that the full message of the Gospel will not be hidden from those who study the scriptures. (Ecc1:13)

**More:** <http://www.christiantelegraph.com/issue10336.html>

#### ■ Hope launch Europe's largest gathering of Christians

Hope will launch in its new form as part of Europe's largest gathering of Christians, an all-night prayer and praise event hosted by the Redeemed Christian Church of God which expects more than 25,000 people to attend. Hosted by Pastor Agu Irukwu of Jesus House, the Hope launch will be part of the Festival of Life on 23 July at the ExCel Centre in London. The General Overseer, Pastor EA Adeboye is also keen to pray over and commission Hope. The event signifies a move towards a wider involvement in Hope from across church denominations and cultural divides and will strengthen partnerships with the black majority church. Hope together is a continuation of Hope 08 and is reforming in response to calls from church and denominational leaders who found it a helpful banner to work under.

**Pray:** that this celebration and launch of 'Hope' will lead to revival in the Church. (Ps.33:22)

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/hope.to.launch.at.europe.s.largest.gathering.of.christians/26270.htm>

## WORLDWIDE

#### ■ **INSIGHT ARTICLE: Ramadan1431 – Muslim month of fasting**

There are at least 200 Muslim people groups of over 100,000 individuals who do not receive any Christian witness. During the 30 days of Ramadan, August 11 to September 9, many Muslims will sincerely seek God through prayer, fasting, repenting of past sins, and attempting to purify themselves through self-restraint and good deeds. In closed countries where Christians are forbidden to openly share their faith we hear testimonies from Muslims to whom Jesus has directly revealed Himself through dreams and visions during Ramadan. We may not be able to reach them ourselves, but we can and ask God to pour out His Holy Spirit on the spiritually dry and thirsty in the three weeks leading up to and through this 'Holy Month'. For inspirations to help your prayers for Muslims click link. (see also item 3)

**Pray:** for many Christian prayers to be released, preparing the way for revelations of God's Kingdom. (1Jn.4:18)

**More:** <http://www.prayer-alert.net/info/Ramadan2910-1.pdf>

#### ■ **Iran: Pastor facing execution plus fears for Christian in solitary confinement**

A well-known Iranian pastor detained in June faces execution after two judges agreed to make him 'liable to capital punishment,' in a crackdown on growing Protestant churches. A senior pastor of the Church of Iran movement, comprising house churches across Iran, said judges had already signed an Islamic death sentence order, pending further investigations. <http://www.worthynews.com/8540-breaking-news-iran-pastor-facing-execution-church-official> Also Ali Golchin has been in Evin Prison's solitary confinement since April 29, and is believed to have been ill-treated. After weeks of petitioning authorities his father was allowed a ten minute visit and found his son 'crying uncontrollably' and in obvious pain. Ali, a chemical analyst, had twice been sent to the prison health centre due to 'weakness and severe stomach aches'. Farsi Christian News Network's sources believe Ali has been ill-treated during interrogation sessions. But praise God for the release of two Church of Iran Christians and the expected release on bail of two other Christians identified as 'brothers Mehdi and Afshin'.

**Pray:** for Ali's spiritual and physical strengthening, and for God to touch the hearts of Iranian officials charged with detaining Christian prisoners of faith. (2Ch.11:17)

**More:** <http://www.releaseinternational.org/pages/posts/iran-family-visit-confirms-fears-for-christian-in-solitary-confinement-726.php>

#### ■ **Palestinians want mediator for peace talks with Israel**

Israeli bulldozers destroyed six buildings in East Jerusalem on Tuesday, resuming the demolition of Palestinian property after a halt aimed at encouraging peace talks. House demolitions are a volatile issue because Israel sees East Jerusalem as part of its capital city, while Palestinians want it for their future capital. No houses had been razed in the eastern sector since last October, and the demolitions indicate a shift from the unofficial freeze Israel imposed after criticism from USA. See <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/14/world/middleeast/14briefs-ISRAEL.html>. Meanwhile, Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad Al-Maliki comments on the peace talks with Israel saying, 'Palestinians and Israelis have been trying to resolve their conflict via direct talks since 1991 but have produced absolutely nothing, before we re-engage again, we have to draw lessons. We, the Palestinians need a third party presence, not only to watch us but to intervene in order to bridge the gaps, build proposals and help the two sides to move in the right direction.'

**Pray:** for a return to direct peace negotiations. (1Sa.7:14 & Ps.122:6)

**More:** [http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition\\_id=10&categ\\_id=2&article\\_id=117054#axzz0tkGRSMcE](http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition_id=10&categ_id=2&article_id=117054#axzz0tkGRSMcE)

#### ■ **North Korea: Jailed Christian attempts suicide**

Aijalon Mahli Gomes, a 30-year-old American sentenced to eight years in a labour camp for illegally entering North Korea, was hospitalised after a suicide attempt. Officials claim he was motivated to kill himself out of 'his strong guilty conscience' and 'his frustration' with the US government's effort to set him free. Gomes, a devout Christian, was captured after crossing into reclusive North Korea from China on Jan. 25th and sentenced in April to eight years hard labour and fined about \$700,000, for 'hostile acts' against the country. In June, North Korea threatened to impose harsher punishment (wartime law) in retaliation to America's 'campaign' of international pressure following the sinking of a South Korean warship in March. Prior to entering North Korea, Gomes was an English teacher in South Korea, and protested for the release of another Christian who illegally entered North Korea to urge leader Kim Jong-il to repent. After more than six months, it is still unclear what Gomes' motivation is for entering North Korea.

**Pray:** for the Lord to strengthen Aijalon as only He can and for many advocates to obtain his speedy release. (Lk.21:19)

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/us.christian.attempts.suicide.in.north.korean.jail/26267.htm>

#### ■ **Uganda: Missionaries injured in bomb blast**

Please pray for six injured missionaries from Pennsylvania and the families of the 74 people killed in a bomb blast last Sunday as they watched the World Cup at a restaurant in Kampala. Five of the missionaries required surgery, before their expected return to USA this weekend. Kampala Police Chief said he believed that Somalia's most feared militia - al-Shabab, which has pledged loyalty to al-Qaida - could be behind the attacks.

**Pray:** for God to keep all those caught up in the blast specially close to Him at this time. (Ps.91:1-2)

**More:** <http://uganda2010.editme.com/>

#### ■ **Haiti: Slow return to normality after earthquake**

Some Haitians feel as if it happened just days ago, the Rev. Kerwin Delicat, a priest based in the city of Léogâne, said as people prepared to mark six months since the January earthquake. Some progress is discernible and eventually there will be a return to normal life, but it's like something that just happened. Many residents still mourn loved ones. For some, trauma is less palpable than immediately after the quake, but others are still struggling to resume their lives. Christian Aid staff had to relocate after their offices were destroyed and they are impatient at the slow pace of some recovery efforts, saying they want the Haitian government to be more forthright in finding better and ultimately permanent, housing for the tens of thousands still in displacement camps and living in tents. It will take a long time for many families to restart a normal life because the consequences have been so huge.

**Pray:** for the mercy of God to flow, for the kingdom of God to advance, and the powers of witchcraft and voodoo to be broken over the nation, so a new day for the Haitian people will arise. (Ps.28:2)

**More:** <http://www.eni.ch/featured/article.php?id=4255>

## PRAISE REPORTS

#### ■ **Foster mother reinstated**

A Christian foster mother has won the right to be reinstated having been struck off after a Muslim girl in her care became a Christian. The foster mother, who had looked after more than 80 children in the last ten years and had an unblemished record, was removed by her local council who accused her of failing to preserve the girl's religion and failing to prevent her from getting baptised. The Muslim girl in question was sixteen at the time and had decided by her own initiative to become a Christian. The foster mother said that she had put no pressure on the girl and had even tried to discourage her initial interest. The girl was in care as she had been threatened with an arranged marriage and faced violence from her family. (See Prayer Alert 0709)

**Praise:** God for answered prayer and continue praying for His protection over those that convert from the Muslim faith. (1Tim.4:12)

**More:** <http://www.christianlegalcentre.com/view.php?id=1135>

#### ■ **Dominican Republic: Largest ever Christian outreach**

Nearly 70,000 people in the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico placed their faith in Jesus through the 'My Hope' Billy Graham TV project. After months of preparation, Christians across the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, equipped with evangelism training and filed with a passion for the Gospel, opened their homes for meetings and witnessed; culminating in over 59,000 home events, TV sermons from Billy or Franklin Graham and a personal testimony from the host. In the Dominican Republic, 55,391 people made commitments to Christ, with 13,797 doing so in Puerto Rico. Altogether more than 5,500 churches from across the evangelical spectrum were involved in the projects. Since My Hope began in 2002, such projects have been implemented in 50 countries.

**Praise:** God for the members of the body of Christ who are stepping out in evangelism. (1T.2:3-5)

**More:** <http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/2010/s10070069.htm>

#### ■ **US Congressmen defend National Day of Prayer**

CNS News reports that 63 members of the House and four senators (both Republican and Democrat), members of the Congressional Prayer Caucus, have filed an amicus brief to defend the National Day of Prayer. Jordan Sekulow, attorney at the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ) which is representing the congressmen, was quoted as saying the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment protects the National Day of Prayer because it is not the call of, or for, a specific religion, it is not mandated, and there are no punishments for not participating. 'That goes back to, what I think the First Amendment is about, which is an establishment of a religion in the United States. That means you don't say that it is, for instance, the Baptist Day of Prayer, just the National Day of Prayer,' Sekulow said.

**Praise:** God for this move to establish prayer to be central to the US government. (Heb.13.7)

**More:** [http://www.breakingchristiannews.com/articles/display\\_art.html?ID=8040](http://www.breakingchristiannews.com/articles/display_art.html?ID=8040)

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