

PRAYER ALERT...

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Friday 24 July 2009

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BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ FRIDAY FOCUS: 24 July 2009 - Hope for young people during summer - Proverbs 22:6

Today will see the last of the schools finishing for the summer holidays.

Pray: For wisdom for parents to give protection and safety for young people from the dangers in our society during the summer break. For the many Christian summer camps, festivals and church youth initiatives taking place over the summer that God will use them to impact the lives of young people.

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

■ Swine Flu

The 'walking well' of Britain are fearful. Present infection levels of the British population are around 0.1%. It will no doubt rise, but the swine flu deaths so far look to be less than the number who die in car accidents in the same period; and maybe double the historical average number of normal flu deaths in the same period. Although swine flu is common in pig-farming, so far health inspectors have found no infected pigs anywhere in Mexico. It was called 'swine flu' because the last strain of flu genetically resembling this one was found among swine. (Had it been called 'fluffy bunny' flu perhaps we would be less scared) Has Satan used the media to infect us with apprehension and fear? How people respond to a potential emergency determines the impact and the meaning of that emergency, although people with existing respiratory disease, diabetes, obesity, immune suppression and pregnant women should be aware of potential risks, many people are becoming over fearful because of the powerful media coverage of flu.

Pray: for God to remove the shroud of apprehension over our land and help our media to recover a more composed approach to reporting. (2Tim.1:7)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/8159488.stm>

■ Christian teacher tells of race slurs by pupils aged 8

A teacher claims he has been sacked for reprimanding pupils who made racist remarks about his being a Christian. Nicholas Kafouris said he lost his post because he would not tolerate the 'openly racist' behaviour of pupils as young as eight. He said the predominantly Muslim youngsters openly praised Islamic extremists in class, and hailed the September 11 terrorists as 'heroes and martyrs'. Mr Kafouris taught for more than ten years at Bigland Green Primary in Tower Hamlets, East London, where almost all the 465 pupils are from ethnic minorities and a vast proportion do not speak English as a first language. He is taking the school, its headmistress and assistant head to an employment tribunal where he will claim he was forced out after highlighting the rise in racism among pupils. Mr Kafouris says he completed 'Racist Incident Reporting Sheets' in writing about each incident, but he claims his concerns were ignored.

Pray: that God would equip the saints with wisdom when confronting situations like this in the world we live in. (Ps.111:10)

More: <http://www.assistnews.net/STORIES/2009/s09070128.htm>

■ Church rejects claims about gay parenting

The Roman Catholic Church has reacted angrily to comments endorsing gay parenthood from a charity with strong links to the Church. Terry Prendergast of Marriage Care, which is partly funded by the Church, said there was no evidence children were harmed by having same-sex parents. But the organisation representing Catholic bishops said children need parental role models of both genders. It said Mr Prendergast, a former priest who has since married, was 'wrong'. In a statement, the organisation acknowledged that although it was difficult to define what a family was, the Church still believed that stability for children came from having parents of opposite genders who could provide different role models. They said it was 'inconsistent with Catholic teaching to plan or promote a notion of family from which (these elements) are deliberately excluded.'

Pray: for a fresh understanding of the role of the traditional family in bringing up children and the valuable contribution it makes to society. (Heb.13:4)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/8159662.stm>

■ Heard the one about a rabbi, an imam and a priest, who walk into a bank?

Have you heard the one about the rabbi, the imam and the priest – and the trip they took together to the bank? If you're waiting for the punch line, that arrived last Wednesday (22nd), when an unlikely platoon of religious leaders marched on the City headquarters of the Royal Bank of Scotland armed not with bricks but books. Three to be precise: the Torah, the Qur'an and the New Testament. They delivered them to the RBS chairman, Sir Philip Hampton – but not in a friendly way. They're meant as a warning to the titans of finance that a campaign is coming, in fact one that started on Wednesday in both Britain and the United States, aimed at changing the way banks do business by reviving a law as old as money itself. The law in question is the prohibition on usury: that there should be limits on the amount a lender can charge a borrower and that to charge too much interest is immoral.

Pray: for the re-establishment of sound moral values within the financial sector. (Ps.15:5)

More: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/belief/2009/jul/22/debt-interest-religion-usury>

■ Another urgent prayer alert for the military medical services

Injured service personnel are evacuated from Afghanistan by UK based medical teams and returned for treatment at University Hospital Birmingham (UHB). These medical teams work exceptionally long hours as they fly out to Afghanistan, pick up the patient and then return to the UK, monitoring and providing essential care to these critically ill patients. At UHB, NHS personnel together with their military colleagues are responsible for the care of the injured soldier. Most injuries are complex and involve many specialties throughout the hospital. Consequently, the increase in the numbers of injured troops coming back from Afghanistan is having an impact particularly in Trauma, Surgery and Intensive Care. Then there is the patient who has to cope with the conflicting emotions of having survived a serious incident, alongside the boredom of lying in hospital and the possibility that their injuries can mean life may not be the same again.

Pray: for skill, wisdom and insight for medical staff as they treat the injured; for service personnel confined to bed and stripped of their independence; thank God for the quality of care and the dedication of the medical staff. (1Pe.5:2)

More: www.prayer4ourforces.org.uk

■ Second child abuse uproar engulfs Catholic Church in Ireland

A report detailing the alleged sexual abuse of 450 children by Roman Catholic priests in the Archdiocese of Dublin was handed to the Irish Government yesterday. It is the second one this year to examine the extent of abuse perpetrated by members of the Catholic Church in Ireland and will undermine further its position in a country that only a few decades ago conformed rigidly to standards set by the Vatican. The Report of the Dublin Archdiocese Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse was delivered to Dermot Ahern, the Justice Minister, who must decide if and when to make its findings public. Two priests named in the report are facing prosecution and publication may prejudice their trials. The report is likely to produce evidence of how bishops sought to cover up the activities of paedophile priests by moving them from diocese to diocese, thereby facilitating the abuse of children over a wider area.

Pray: for all those affected by this report, especially the victims of abuse. (Ez.34:16a)

More: <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/ireland/article6722491.ece>

EUROPE

■ Sweden: Church says gender is irrelevant

The former Swedish state church is introducing a gender neutral marriage ceremony and redefining Biblical concepts of gender and marriage, thus alienating itself from the global and the historical church. Bishops and leaders from the Church of England's Council for Christian Unity and the Faith and Order Advisory Group express deep concerns over these moves in a letter to the head of the Church of Sweden. They write: 'If we understand the situation in the Church of Sweden correctly what is now proposed appears to be a fundamental re-definition of the Christian doctrine of marriage and of basic Christian anthropology.' This comes at a time when the Church of England fears for the fragile unity of Anglicanism over new gay marriage moves. However Sweden.SE reports, 'Young people are receptive to spirituality.' A theology student says almost all of the young people she meets are open to questions relating to religious and spiritual matters, even though they may have objections to ecclesiastical matters.

Pray: for the Swedish nation to experience a longing for spiritual dimensions and deeper truths that neither science nor a high material standard can fill. (Ps.42:1)

More: http://www.varldenidag.se/index.php?option=com_content&task=blogcategory&id=101&Itemid=162

■ **Orthodox Patriarch wants Euro-body with Catholics, Anglicans and Protestants**

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomeos I, a spiritual leader who represents Eastern Orthodox Christianity, has called for the creation of a churches' umbrella body in Europe to include Roman Catholics alongside Anglicans, Orthodox and Protestants. 'It is only by engaging in dialogue and by closely cooperating that the churches will prove capable of proclaiming the Gospel of Christ to the world in a convincing and effective way,' the Orthodox leader said in a 19 July address in Lyon, France to mark the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Conference of European Churches. (See also Prayer Alert 2909) CEC now has about 120 member churches, principally Anglican, Orthodox and Protestant, but Bartholomeos said that Europe needs a grouping that includes the Catholic Church. This would help to promote unity between churches and enable them to act jointly on issues in Europe such as secularisation, human rights violations, racism, the economic crisis and threats to the environment.

Pray: May the fulfilment of John 17: 23 come to pass from meetings like this. (Ps.133)

More: <http://www.eni.ch/featured/article.php?id=3187>

WORLDWIDE

■ **INSIGHT: Afghanistan**

A report from Persecution.org tells us that more than 3.5 million Afghans live outside the country in Pakistan and Iran, escaping a country subject to civil wars, political violence, religious and political extremism and misrule in recent years. Under its newly formed Islamic regime Afghanistan remains one of the most impoverished states in the world and one of the worst violators of Human Rights with a small low profile Christian community of mostly expatriates. Conversion from Islam is punished by death under the Sharia Law. The new constitution has no reference to Sharia but reports state 'converts to Christianity face social discrimination, threats and have even been murdered.' There are no Christian or Jewish schools, no Christian churches and one synagogue. Immigrants and non-citizens may practice their own religions. In Kabul, 200 to 300 expatriates meet at Christian worship services held in private locations. A more detailed profile to help you with informed intercession for some of the people of this region can be found if you click the 'Info' button.

Pray: that the Christians of Afghanistan may continue to be protected from harm and pray also for the Afghani children who grow up in fear and hatred of outsiders. (Jer.32:17)

Info: <http://www.prayer-alert.net/info/3009Afghaninsights.pdf>

■ **Saudi Arabia: Human rights**

Amnesty International has strongly criticised Saudi Arabia over abuses allegedly committed as part of its counter-terrorism operations. In a report the human rights group says since 2001 thousands of Saudi suspects have been detained for years without charge or trial. The 69-page report describes Saudi Arabia's human rights record as 'shocking' and 'dire'. It says the international community has been far too quiet about the abuse. In the report, entitled 'Saudi Arabia: assaulting human rights in the name of counter-terrorism' the UK-based organisation accuses the oil-rich conservative kingdom of massive and widespread abuse. It says that two years ago the Saudi interior minister said the country had detained 9,000 security suspects since 2001, and 3,106 were still being held. The report allegations include: thousands detained arbitrarily, prisoners of conscience, abuses of beatings, suspension from ceiling and electric shocks. But no information - not even their names and the charges - was forthcoming.

Pray: for God to stretch out His hand over Saudi Arabia subduing all that is unjust and releasing his purposes for the nation. (Is.45:1-3)

More: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/8162256.stm

■ **Palestine: Prayer request**

A resident of Bethlehem who wishes to remain anonymous has sent us the following request, - 'As the situation in Bethlehem and the rest of Palestine approaches a humanitarian crisis, we call all who care about peace and justice to speak out and prayerfully support the people of Bethlehem at this critical time. Over 70% of the population of Bethlehem now lives below the poverty line and unemployment is up by more than 30%, it was 65 % in the last 3 years. Once a prosperous middle class town, Bethlehem has been economically suffocated and the post-election sanctions have brought the local population to the brink of disaster. We are struggling to buy food, medicine, and basic needs. Bethlehem is imprisoned by a wall separating its people from their farmland, their water supplies and their fellow countrymen. They are resisting this attempt to erase them, from history, but they feel isolated and abandoned. The sanctions exacerbate the crisis as our hospitals run out of medicine and we are plunged into a man-made humanitarian disaster.'

Pray: for an effective medical assistance programme to cover those with severe ongoing medical problems and for family relief programmes covering water, electricity, rent, school fees and other basic needs to the many poor families in the Bethlehem district. (Ps.56:1-3 & Dt.28:12-15)

■ **Congo: Global Witness names British firms dealing with Congo rebels**

A chain linking violent militia in the Congo to England is revealed in a new report from Global Witness. Two British firms are buying minerals that are funding armed groups and fuelling the bloody ongoing conflict that has already killed millions. One is Amalgamated Metals Corporation (AMC), the parent company of THAISARCO, the world's fifth-largest tin-producing company. Their main supplier is Panju, based in the Democratic Republic of Congo, selling metals from mines controlled by

rebel extremist group the FDLR, who were behind the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Among the main shareholders of AMC are Victor Herman Sher, Geoffrey Charles Leacroft Rowan and Giles Robbins, all in the Sunday Times Rich List. The other firm is Afrimex, based in Middlesex, buying from suppliers who fund rebels. The report is called 'Faced with a gun, what can you do?'

Pray: for all that is evil and hidden in global trading to be revealed by God's light and replaced by fair trade and accountability in the higher places of international commerce and industry. (Ps.9:8&16)

More: <http://blogs.mirror.co.uk/developing-world-stories/2009/07/global-witness-names-british-f.html>

■ South Africa: Discontent spreads

Violence in South African townships has spread as residents protest about what they say is a lack of basic services, such as water and housing. Police have fired rubber bullets at demonstrators in Johannesburg, the Western Cape and the north-eastern region of Mpumalanga. In Mpumalanga there were reports of foreign-owned businesses being looted as foreigners sought police protection. More than 100 people have been arrested during the past week. The rising tensions in the townships have revived memories of xenophobic attacks on foreigners last year in which more than 60 people died. Fifteen years after the African National Congress won its first election, more than a million South Africans still live in shacks, many without access to electricity or running water.

Pray: for God to see all the hardship and suffering and in His mercy provide for the poorest people in the townships as the country enters its first recession for 20 years. (Neh.9:32)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/8163187.stm>

■ Yemen: Abducted Christians still missing

The Bishop of the Lutheran Church in Saxony has asked for intercession on behalf of missing Christians who were kidnapped in mid June during an outing near Assda in North Yemen. Six weeks after their abduction there is still no word about their whereabouts or a ransom demand. The German Christian family and a British citizen were with two German bible school students and a South Korean teacher who were later found murdered. The nine Christians were working at a hospital in Saada, which has since been closed for security reasons. The humanitarian agency Worldwide Services, based in the Netherlands, has withdrawn all staff members. It is believed the Christians were abducted for religious reasons; the German development worker was seen talking to a man about the bible. The family wanted to return to East Germany next year when their youngest daughter is due to start school.

Pray: for God to hold the family and friends of these people in His hands, giving them a sense of his nearness and provision at this time. (Ps.90:13)

More: <http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/2009/s09070129.htm>

PRAISE REPORTS

■ Christian nurse in United Kingdom forgives her kidnapper

The Baptist pastor of Nurse Magdaline Makola - who spent ten days tied up and locked in the boot of a car - tells London's Premier Radio she has forgiven her attacker. Justice Ngema has been sentenced to at least eight years in prison after he used Ms Makola's bank cards to fund a Christmas shopping spree while she lay shivering in sub-zero temperatures last December, according to the radio station's website. Nurse Makola was eventually found dehydrated and suffering from hypothermia in Lanarkshire on Boxing Day (December 26) last year. Revd Jim McNaughton from Livingston Baptist Church said Magdaline has been a pillar of strength throughout the ordeal. He told Premier Radio: 'Magdaline herself has always been one that was quick to say that she forgives. It's one thing to say it and another to live it, but I believe she has been given the strength through her faith to express that forgiveness that she needs to give as a Christian'.

Praise: God for Magdaline, His protection over her, leading to her living testimony. (1Jn.5:9-11)

More: <http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/2009/s09070128.htm>

■ Hong Kong: Biblical board game gives hope to young people

In 2007 Pauline Shum Sui-ping was shocked by the increase of suicides among young people and felt that a greater understanding of the Scriptures would help bring a message of hope to those who apparently had none. Her answer was to come up with a board game called 'The Great Leader, Moses' based on the Old Testament prophet's life. She says there are many inspiring messages one can glean from Moses' life, the first being never to give up on oneself. The game can be played by three to six people. Pressed by her customers who liked this game she came up with another one based on the life of Christ, called 'The Great Teacher, Jesus.' This game was launched in September 2008. Young Catholics who have played Shum's games give them the thumbs up.

Praise: God for the diverse ways He releases His truth to the lost and His love through his people. (Jn.5:25)

More: <http://www.ucanews.com/2009/07/16/biblical-board-games-aim-to-give-hope-to-young-people/#>

PRAYER FORUM OF BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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