

PRAYER ALERT...

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BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ **FRIDAY FOCUS: 31 July 2009 - Hope for those caught in poverty - Proverbs 8:12-21**

As unemployment figures and house repossessions continue to rise, the number of people living below the poverty level has increased.

Pray: For wisdom, strength and endurance for those struggling with financial problems and those facing losing their job or home. For God's provision for organisations and charities which help those in poverty, that they will be a blessing to those that need advice and support.

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

■ **Now is a good time for Christians to enter politics, says Cox**

Human rights activist Baroness Caroline Cox believes now is a good time for Christians to consider going into politics. Speaking at this year's Keswick Convention, she told Christians that politics was no longer a well-respected arena to work in following the recent MPs' expenses scandal. Baroness Cox, who was deputy speaker of the House of Lords from 1985 to 2005, said the scandal made it 'an even better time for young Christians to go into politics to make a difference. Parliament has got a bad name – all the more reason to go into it and change it,' she said. Baroness Cox advised, however, against young Christians going straight into politics from university. 'One of the problems with some of our politicians is that they have never done anything else but politics,' she said. 'I think it is helpful to have more life experience of some profession or business or other experience.'

Pray: that Christian's would take up the challenge to bring Christian ethics and principals to politics in our nation. (1Kg.3:9)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/now.is.a.good.time.for.christians.to.enter.politics.says.cox/23896.htm>

■ **Anger after Bible defaced in British gallery**

Christians voiced anger and dismay Tuesday after a Bible, part of an exhibition inviting viewers to add their reflections, was defaced with offensive and foul-mouthed scrawl. Glasgow's Gallery of Modern Art has decided to put the Bible in a glass case after the exhibit, part of a display entitled Made in God's Image, was vandalised. Artist Jane Clarke, a minister at the Metropolitan Community Church, had asked visitors to annotate the Bible with stories and reflections. But visitors took the invitation further than she had anticipated. 'This is all sexist pish, so disregard it all,' wrote one person, while another described the Bible as 'the biggest lie in human history'. Clarke said: 'I had hoped that people would show respect for the Bible, for Christianity and indeed for the Gallery of Modern Art. I am saddened that some people have chosen to write offensive messages.' On Tuesday over 100 people gathered outside the gallery to protest at what they said was vandalism. See video link: <http://www.youtube.com/user/ZionBaptistChurch65>

Pray: that the Word of God would break through into the darkness of those who do not believe. (Heb.4:12)

More: http://www.breitbart.com/article.php?id=CNG.cb687fb425ea2bc9d53a15c7e635a94f.3c1&show_article=1

■ **Library bans Sunday school's 'religious' poster**

Jacalyn Oghan, wanted to advertise the craft, singing and drama day for children at her church. Despite the poster clearly stating that children of all religions could 'come along and have fun', she was told she could not put the poster up at Jubilee Library in Brighton. 'I was told my poster could not be displayed because it had religious content. Mrs Oghan added it riled her that the library was also selling sweets that were 'clearly poking fun at Christianity'. The 'Messiah Mints' have a picture of Jesus on the tin and the flippant message: 'Here's that Jesus fella again – and this time he's spreading minty freshness into the mouths of the masses.' She commented: 'It is so sad that they can do that, yet an inoffensive poster inclusive to all faiths is deemed non-PC.' She described the council ruling as 'political correctness gone mad'.

Pray: for councils who, out of fear of criticism, impose rules that do not reflect the real life of the communities they represent. (Dt.32:3)

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstoppers/religion/5919056/Library-bans-Sunday-schools-religious-poster.html>

■ **Atheist summer camp launched in Somerset**

An atheist summer camp for children has been launched in Somerset to offer an alternative to religious camps for youngsters. Camp Quest UK, which is being held near Bath, offers 24 places. Its website claims the camp is for the children of 'atheists, agnostics, humanists, freethinkers and all those who embrace a naturalistic rather than supernatural world view.' There are currently six branches of Camp Quest operating in North America. Organisers said the purpose of the camp was to encourage critical thinking and provide children with a summer camp 'free of religious dogma'. The camp, supported by scientist Richard Dawkins, plans to expand after receiving hundreds of inquiries. The event has been set up by Samantha Stein, a postgraduate psychology student from London. 'It is not about changing what they think, but the way that they think,' she said. 'There is very little that attacks religion; we are not a rival to religious camps'.

Pray: for those who run these camps that God would reveal the truth to them by His Spirit and protect the minds of the young people. (Ps.5:11)

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstoppers/religion/5922810/Atheist-summer-camp-launched-in-Somerset.html>

■ **One million children living in overcrowded homes, says Shelter**

More than one million children in England now live in overcrowded homes, a rise of 54,000 in the last two years, a charity warned today. New figures released by Shelter highlight the record number of under-15-year-olds living in cramped conditions, with one in 10 children in overcrowded housing. Shelter said overcrowding was devastating for family life and health, with children up to 10 times more likely to contract meningitis as a result. Sam Younger, Shelter's chief executive, said the problem of children living in overcrowded conditions in particular had been hidden for too long. 'There is no doubt that overcrowding has a massive impact on children's health, safety and future prospects and can cause depression for parents struggling to cope in cramped conditions,' he said. 'With many children unable to study due to a lack of space, the impact of overcrowding is robbing them of an education and a fair chance in life.'

Pray: for a new understanding of the implications of overcrowding and an increase in building family-sized homes. (Pr.24:3)

More: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2009/jul/29/one-million-children-overcrowded-homes>

■ **Anglican leader mulls two-track Communion**

The Archbishop of Canterbury Dr Rowan Williams has issued a lengthy response to the recent move by The Episcopal Church in the US to open its ordination process to all individuals, including practising homosexuals. Dr Williams, spiritual leader of the Anglican Communion, acknowledged the real possibility of the global body adopting a 'two-track' model in which there would be 'two styles of being Anglican'. Rather than a full-on schism, Anglicans in the 77 million-member body would try to work together while holding different theological convictions over such issues as homosexuality. 'It helps to be clear about these possible futures, however much we think them less than ideal, and to speak about them not in apocalyptic terms of schism and excommunication but plainly as what they are – two styles of being Anglican, whose mutual relation will certainly need working out but which would not exclude co-operation in mission and service of the kind now shared in the Communion,' he wrote. (See also Prayer Alert 2909)

Pray: for God's guidance for Dr Rowan Williams and the other church leaders as they seek to resolve this difficult issue. (2Ch.1:10)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.co.uk/article/anglican.leader.mulls.twotrack.communio/23885.htm>

EUROPE

■ **Turkey: Christians fear no justice for killers of publishers**

Turkish Christians fear those responsible for murdering three Christian publishers will not face justice and that authorities will be unable to tackle 'structural injustice' towards the country's Christian minority, trial observers said. Middle East Concern (MEC), an advocacy group closely monitoring the case, told BosNewsLife that two key witnesses failed to appear in court last week and that a new hearing is scheduled for August 21. Five men have been charged with murdering Turkish Christians Necati Aydin, Ugur Yuksel and German Tilmann Geske, at the Zirve Christian publishing house in the eastern town of Malatya in April 2007. Investigators have said that the knife wielding attackers tortured and slit the throats of the three men. Five men, aged 19 and 20, were detained soon after the murders, and their trial opened in November 2007.

MEC said it was concerned however about the 'non-appearance of two witnesses despite court orders requiring their attendance and testimony' during the recent July 17 court hearing.'

Pray: that justice will be done and not be buried but exposed to the light. (Pr.18:5)

More: <http://www.bosnewslife.com/8466-turkey-christians-fear-no-justice-for-killers-of-publishers>

■ **Russia: Orthodox Patriarch's contentious Ukraine visit**

A 10-day trip to Ukraine by Patriarch Kirill I of the Russian Orthodox Church is to include visits to monuments and pilgrimages to Orthodox Church monasteries located in the heart of western Ukraine, for centuries a locus of religious disputes. The journey is fodder for media and bloggers to discuss its political subtext. The Patriarch and a top aide however said the visit is pastoral and its aims are spiritual. Since the Soviet Union collapsed, Russia and Ukraine have had uneasy relationships divided by divergent world views and complex religious rifts including breakaway Orthodox groups and a centuries-long Orthodox-Catholic divide.

Pray: that this charge of spiritual energy for reconciliation in the region will influence the problems in public life and the historical roots of division. (Mt.6:10)

More: <http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/10015>

WORLDWIDE

■ **Nigeria: Christians in the North need prayer**

International Christian Concern has learned that Islamic extremists killed a pastor and razed five churches in the city of Maiduguri, Nigeria on July 27. They also attacked two churches in the Nigerian city of Potiskum. Yakubu Sabo, a husband and father of seven was hacked to death with a machete by the violent Islamic militant group Boko Haram. Sabo pastored a church of Christ congregation in Maiduguri. Deeper Life Church, evangelical Mission and Church of the Brethren are three of the five other churches set ablaze by Islamists in Maiduguri. In the city of Potiskum Islamists attacked First Baptist Church and Church of the Brethren. They also burned the musical instruments and a sound system of the churches before police came and chased them away. Sharia law doesn't affect Christians, but this violence shows how Christians are affected by groups that are bent on imposing Sharia laws all over Nigeria, said Rev. John Joseph Hayab.

Pray: for God to protect, comfort and defend His Christians in Northern Nigeria. (Ps.77:15)

More: <http://www.persecution.org/suffering/newssummpopup.php?newscode=10556>

■ **Burma: Verdict delayed in Suu Kyi trial**

A court in Burma has postponed delivering its verdict in the trial of opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi. The court had been due to rule on the case on Friday, but the verdict has now been delayed until 11 August. The judges said they needed more time to review the case, according to Western diplomats in Rangoon. Aung San Suu Kyi is accused of breaching the terms of her house arrest by allowing an uninvited American to stay in her home. Despite international calls for her release, a guilty verdict has been widely expected. Analysts suggest that the delay may signal a belated recognition on the part of the government at the level of anger over Ms Suu Kyi's prosecution. Riot police surrounded the prison on Friday, following warnings in the local media that any protests against a guilty verdict would not be tolerated.

Pray: for the Burmese nation; for peace to reign and a just solution to the trial Aung San Suu Kyi.

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/8176296.stm>

■ **Iran: More opposition demonstrations in Tehran**

Iran's opposition leaders have decided to go ahead today with a commemorative event for those slain last month, even if the authorities have banned it. The march on Thursday marks the 40 day anniversary of the deaths of demonstrators who had protested against elections they called fraudulent, which led to the re-election of Ahmadinejad. Among those remembered is a 27 year old lady killed while watching the protests, and whose death was captured on cell phone. The video of her death uploaded onto the Internet has become a symbol for the opposition movement to the rule of Ahmadinejad and Supreme Guide Khamenei. Under public pressure and because of the tension within the leadership, the Iranian government has released 140 prisoners arrested during the unrest last month, and says it hopes to release almost all those arrested by August 7. But at least twenty of those arrested will go on trial tomorrow August 1st.

Pray: for a supernatural release of God's purposes for Iran and the whole region. (Ps.68:28)

More: <http://www.asianews.it/index.php?!=en&art=15918&size=A>

■ **Iraq: Prayer for Christians**

Pray for followers of Jesus living in Iraq. On Sunday a 30 year old Christian man was shot to death by gunman. Last week as many as seven churches were bombed. And many experts say that the full scope of the raging religious violence is not known because Christians often do not report assaults for fear of even greater reprisals. These are very trying days for believers in this war-torn nation. Persecution is nothing new for followers of Jesus. It has been our lot for 2,000 years. But around the world persecution today is worse than it has ever been. For instance, since 2003 and the beginning of the Iraq war nearly 500,000 Christians have been forced into exile. Pakistan, Nigeria, China, and India are also hotspots of physical opposition against believers. God's promises are clear. He does not say that we will be immune from suffering for our faith. In fact, we are to expect it. He does promise that he will be with us through the pain. And he encourages us to walk through such sufferings together. Those of us in the West are not there physically with our brothers in sisters. But we can join them in prayer, asking God to comfort, protect, support, and guide them.

Pray: that we would be strengthened to pray prophetically and persist in intercession for our inclusive family in Christ. (1Cor.12:12-13)

More: <http://blog.beliefnet.com/prayerplainandsimple/2009/07/prayer-the-iraqi-christians.html>

■ Fiji: Arrest of leaders prompts prayer request

The British Methodist Church is asking Christians to pray for the Methodist Church in Fiji following the arrest of seven of its leaders last week. They were arrested in connection with the Church's annual Conference due to take place in August. Government officials have since released the Church leaders but banned the Conference out of fear that discussions will focus on political issues. Christine Elliott, Secretary for External Relationships for the Methodist Church in Britain said, 'It is clear that the Fijian Prime Minister is making a strong statement about who is in power. The Methodist Church is the largest faith group in Fiji holding a significant amount of power amongst the people with considerable influence over voters. The leadership of the Church is determined to stand against the government and has lobbied the UN regarding religious freedom and human rights.' Adding, 'It is important that we hold our brothers and sisters in Fiji, their government and all in the islands in our prayers during these challenging times.'

Pray: that the people of Fiji would be able to remain within the laws of the land while proclaiming fearlessly the Gospel of Jesus Christ. (Da.7:14-15)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/arrest.of.fiji.church.leaders.prompts.call.for.prayer/23886.htm>

■ India: Persecution of Christians continues

Over the past week a mob of about 20 Hindu extremists attacked a Christian prayer meeting and accused them of forceful conversion in Karnataka. Four Christian workers were arrested in Bangalore on the basis of a complaint of forceful conversion. The Pastor of a Children's learning centre for poor families was attacked in Haryana and the Christians told to leave; when the pastor reported the matter to the police he was told to vacate the building as soon as possible as he invited trouble by staying in the area. In Madhya Pradesh about 50 Hindu extremists attacked a Sunday baptism worship service of the Assembly of God Bethel Church and accused the Christians of forceful conversion.

Pray: for peace, justice and religious tolerance in India and for God's work to continue as Christians are empowered with courage and boldness. (Mat.16:18)

More: <http://www.worldevangelicals.org/news/article.htm?id=2550&cat=main>

PRAISE REPORTS

■ UK Christian doctor reinstated after same-sex adoption controversy

Dr. Sheila Matthews, a Christian doctor who was removed as a medical advisor to an adoption panel after asking to be able to abstain from voting on occasions when she would be requested to recommend children for adoption by homosexual couples, has been reinstated by Northamptonshire County Council following media and public support. However, County Council has stipulated that Matthews will no longer be able to serve the adoption panel as a voting member. Andrea Minichiello Williams, Director of the Christian Legal Centre which represented Dr. Matthews, said 'We are grateful for the support of the media and the pressure this applied, and to the members of public who made their feelings known to the council, and their desire for justice to prevail. However, it is entirely unsatisfactory that she is unable to remain a panel member and vote on the adoption panel on cases where placement with a heterosexual couple is the proposed outcome.' (See Prayer Alert 2609)

Praise: for Dr Matthews and the Council that they will review their decision and reinstate her as a voting member. (Ro.8:33)

More: <http://www.lifesitenews.com/ldn/2009/jul/09072709.html>

■ Canada: Planting Persian Churches

A young Iranian came to Canada and ended up in jail because of gang activity. A chaplain and others prayed for him and the man came to Christ, was released from jail early and is now serving in a local church. – This is just one story of many throughout Canada where Iranians are hearing God's voice. In Canada also a new prayer guide to help Christians discover what is happening behind the scenes in Iran and pray effectively is being launched this week. The guide is commended by a number of Christian leaders. The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada's Ministries to Muslims is inviting pastors, ministry leaders and church leaders in Toronto, Ontario to an outreach prayer and planning meeting in September to establish effective Muslim outreach networks. Leaders of a British Columbia Church have partnered with local leadership and an Iranian believer to plant a daughter Persian Church. This partnership continues as more Iranian believers are baptized.

Praise: God for all He is doing to reach the émigré of Iran; and pray that they will return to Iran with God's message for their families and friends. (Ps.68:11)

More: <http://www.canadianchristianity.com/nationalupdates/090724briefs.html>

PRAYER FORUM OF THE BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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