

PRAYER ALERT...

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Donations

Friday 13 March 2009

■ British Isles & Ireland

- [FRIDAY FOCUS: 13 March - Hope for those seeking work - Phil 4:4-7](#)
- [Church offers training on redundancy, unemployment and debt](#)
- [Northern Ireland Church leaders say attacks will not derail peace process](#)
- [Belief in God helps you not to panic](#)
- [Parents face court action for removing children from gay history lessons](#)
- [Pray for the UK Joint Force Medical Group \(Tri-Service\)](#)

■ Europe

- [EU: Set for bruising G20 encounter with US](#)
- [Germany: Merkel speaks of 'shock' over Winnenden killings](#)
- [Sweden: Growing Muslim Influence](#)

■ Worldwide

- [Global: Timeline of school shootings](#)
- [America: Churches offer counselling after shooting](#)
- [Islamic world: In crisis](#)
- [Pakistan: Clashes mark protest](#)
- [India: Orissa's Christians still fearful](#)
- [Mexico: US ready to aid drug fight](#)
- [Zimbabwe: Car crash](#)

■ Praise Reports

- [China for Christ in post-revolution era](#)
- [Churches kick off Biblethon Festival](#)

BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ **FRIDAY FOCUS: 13 March - Hope for those seeking work - Phil 4:4-7**

With the increasing uncertainty in the global economy, and the threat of unemployment and redundancy looming for some. **Pray:** For the stimulation of cash-flow into the economy to encourage bank lending, to improve consumer confidence and create new jobs. For many people to turn to God in their crisis and find His love, support and wisdom.

More: http://worldprayer.org.uk/uploads/Friday_Focus_web_version_Feb_2009.doc

■ **Church offers training on redundancy, unemployment and debt**

Clergy and others involved in churches in Worcestershire and Dudley will learn more about how the current difficult financial situation could affect their congregations at a workshop on redundancy, unemployment and debt next Wednesday. The training course in Worcester, will aim to provide those attending with some knowledge so they can help those who might be threatened by unemployment, or facing financial difficulties, and to know who to direct them to when more expert help is needed. The workshop has been organised by Faith at Work in Worcestershire, a chaplaincy organisation involving all of the main Christian denominations, which regularly visits businesses and employers in the area to listen to any concerns staff may have and offer practical support where appropriate. The workshop will also include some time for discussion around the experiences of clergy to date and what the future might hold.

Pray: for the church as it takes up the challenge to help those facing financial difficulties at this time. For this initiative and others across the country. (Mt.6:25-34)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/church.offers.training.on.redundancy.unemployment.and.debt/22751.htm>

■ **Northern Ireland Church leaders say attacks will not derail peace process**

Gunmen of the Real IRA killed two British army soldiers, at Masserene Barracks in Antrim, and a PSNI officer in Craigavon within the past week. These are the first army casualties since Stephen Restorick was shot, and two RUC men were killed 10 years ago by the IRA. Apart from the human tragedy and the shock of such cold blooded killings, these deaths have greater significance in their potential to signify a return to terrorism on the streets of Northern Ireland. In response thousands have gathered in peace rallies across the province and politicians have presented a united front over the murders. At the weekend former First Minister Ian Paisley said, 'There is grieving, but beyond the despair there is being born a new spirit of unity that we have never seen before.' Senior church leaders in Ireland have vowed that the murders of two soldiers and a policeman by republican dissidents will not force NI back to its troubled past. www.eauk.org has some helpful articles and links.

Pray: for the families who are grieving the loss of their loved ones. Pray for wisdom for the politicians and the Chief Constable of the PSNI. Pray also that there will not be any retaliation to these murders from the Loyalist paramilitaries. (Pr.28:17)

More: <http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/local-national/thousands-in-northern-ireland-attend-peace-vigils-after-horrific-murders-14222014.html>

■ **Belief in God helps you not to panic**

Tests found those who admit they believe in God were less likely to suffer anxiety and stress when asked to perform various mental tasks and, as a result, performed better. The stronger their belief, the calmer they remained even when they made a mistake, said the study by scientists measuring brain reaction during a set of mental agility tests. However those with a strong religion were also less likely to realise they made mistakes and therefore less likely to fix them, said the report in the journal Psychological Science. Researchers who questioned the subjects of the experiment said the best performers were not fundamentalists but felt strongly that God had given them 'meaning.' But atheist groups said the results do not prove God exists only that having strong beliefs can help, so people may have done just as well if they believed in Father Christmas. Those who were not particularly religious but believed in God did better than non-believers.

Pray: that God will increase our faith to enable us to handle whatever the world throws at us. (Lk.17:5-6)

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopics/religion/4944369/People-with-faith-less-likely-to-panic-under-pressure.html>

■ **Parents face court action for removing children from gay history lessons**

Parents face possible court action for withdrawing their children from lessons on gay and lesbian history. More than 30 pupils were pulled out of a week of teaching at a primary school which included books about homosexual partnerships. The controversial content was worked into the curriculum at George Tomlinson School in Waltham Forest, East London. The council has declared that children who missed the lessons will be viewed as truants. The ruling means some families could breach rules that children should not be absent for more than 19 days a year. Sanctions include spot fines, parenting contracts and ultimately court action. The parents, who objected to the lessons on moral and religious grounds, said the content was more appropriate to secondary age pupils. Both Christian and Muslim parents had objected to the theme linked to Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender History Month. The parents were given no notice, just a newsletter mentioning the week and that certain themes would be taught.

Pray: for our children that they would be protected from the excesses of liberal trans-gender teaching. (Lev.18:21)

More: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1160067/Parents-face-court-action-removing-children-gay-history-lessons.html>

■ **Pray for the UK Joint Force Medical Group (Tri-Service)**

For medical staff, as with most Service Personnel in Afghanistan and Iraq, the working day is about 14 hours with no days off – so it is exhausting and dangerous. Retrieval teams - a Chinook helicopter its crew and a Medical team; extract the injured from the front line, frequently under fire. The injured include not only our soldiers, but local men, women and children and sometimes the Taliban. It is vital to start treatment immediately, getting fluids into the wounded and using clamps and tourniquets to stop bleeding of those who have lost limbs. Treatment requires concentration, accurate calculation, meticulous record keeping and a calm level head in situations that can resemble scenes from a horror film. Invariably injuries are not isolated to one person so there is considerable pressure on the staff in coping with and prioritising casualties. Alongside the injured there may be friends or children of those who have died or have sustained injuries, and the staff must cope with them all. View ITV programme videos:

<http://www.itv.com/ITVPlayer/Programmes/default.html?ViewType=1&Filter=2448>

Pray: for the physical and psychological protection of our serving Medical staff and retrieval teams; for stamina and skill to do their jobs well and for the Lord's calmness in these times. Pray for the difficulties of communication with locals. Praise God for the many lives that have been saved. (Eph.3:16-21)

More: <http://www.tvthrong.co.uk/documentary/doctors-and-nurses-war-part-3-final>

EUROPE

■ **EU: Set for bruising G20 encounter with US**

A new policy divide appears to be opening up between the EU and the US over the extent stimulus spending programmes should be used to combat the current global recession. Speaking on Monday following a three hour meeting of 16 euro zone finance ministers, the group's president, Jean-Claude Juncker, signalled that the recent US call for a global spending boost in 2009 was in direct contrast to what euro zone finance ministers considered appropriate. The striking divergence between governments either side of the Atlantic is likely to mean heated debate when the two sides meet on 14 March for a meeting of G20 finance ministers and on 2 April at the G20 leader's summit.

Pray: for the G20 summit as it meets to discuss global strategy that they will be given God's wisdom to answer the needs of the nations, rich and poor alike. (Is.58:10)

More: <http://euobserver.com/9/27742>

■ **Germany: Merkel speaks of 'shock' over Winnenden killings**

Germany's Chancellor has been speaking of her shock at the gun rampage in Winnenden. She called it an appalling crime, saying it was unimaginable that so many died in so short a time. Angela Merkel said: 'I am horrified, and shocked by what has happened. It's a day of mourning for the whole of Germany. Our thoughts are with the families and family members. We're thinking of them and praying for them.' See also 'World' item following.

Pray: that God will minister to all those involved in this atrocity. (1Jn.3:12)

More: <http://www.euronews.net/en/article/11/03/2009/merkel-speaks-of-shock-over-winnenden-killings/>

■ **Sweden: Growing Muslim Influence**

A few years ago, the Guardian newspaper called Sweden the most successful society the world has ever known. But Sweden today is being transformed by a large influx of immigrants from the Middle East. Sweden's third largest city, Malmö,

sits just across the water from Denmark. To visitors, Malmö seems quiet, nice, maybe a little boring; quintessentially Swedish. But under the surface, Malmö has serious problems. On Saturday when Israel played Sweden in a Davis cup tennis match in Malmö, an estimated 6,000 leftists, Arabs, Muslims and anarchists protested the Israeli presence, and hundreds attacked police. Almost no fans were allowed inside to watch the tennis, because authorities feared disruptions or possible violence against the Israeli team. Massive immigration has made Malmö today one quarter Muslim, and stands to transform it into a Muslim majority city within just a few decades. Malmö has been so accommodating toward immigrant Muslims that a local Muslim politician has declared that 'The best Islamic state is Sweden!'

Pray: that the church in Malmö would reach out with the Good News of Jesus Christ to those who have been drawn to the city. (Mt.9:35-38)

More: <http://www.cbn.com/CBNnews/556299.aspx>

WORLDWIDE

■ Global: Timeline of school shootings

The latest shooting at a high school in Germany has left 16 people dead; including the teenage gunman, in Germany's worst such incident since 2002 when 2 pupils, 12 teachers, a secretary and a policeman were killed. Schools, colleges and universities across the world have been the scenes of multiple shooting incidents in recent years. September 2008:- Finland 9 students and a teacher killed, February 2008:- Illinois US 27 killed and 18 injured in a university lecture hall, November 2007:- Finland seven students and a teacher killed in a high school, April 2007:- Virginia, US 32 fatally shot at a Tech University, November 2006:- Germany, 14 teachers, two students and a policeman killed, April 1999:- Colorado, US 12 students killed and a 26 pupils and a teacher wounded, 1996:- Dunblane, Scotland 16 kindergarten children and their teacher killed in 3 minutes, April 1999:- Colorado, US 12 students and a teacher killed, 26 wounded. In every case the killer committed suicide.

Pray: for an end to the timeline of death over our nations youth and ask God to release His timeline and bring about a season of hope for this generation so that the time can be redeemed. (Ps.149:6-9)

More: <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/europe/2009/03/200931114418421747.html>

■ America: Churches offer counselling after shooting

Michael McLendon rained down terror on three small Alabama towns before finally killing himself in a deadly shooting rampage on Tuesday. His killing spree ranged across a quiet rural area of the state where such dramatic events are completely unknown, hitting the towns of Kinston, Samson and Geneva. See:- <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/7936382.stm> Now many are seeking the help of local pastors to help them deal with such a tragic loss.

Pray: for an anointing on the churches as they reach out with God's love to the devastated citizens and on the intercessors opposing the works of darkness in order to establish the Kingdom of heaven on earth. (Eph.6:11)

More: <http://www.cbn.com/CBNnews/556704.aspx>

■ Islamic world: In crisis

Arab and Muslim countries are trying to find ways to reassert their dignity and uphold human rights but are increasingly turning inward towards Islamism and its calls for Sharia and caliphate. US support for Israel and corrupt Arab states fuel fundamentalism, while the Islamic world wants to modernise. Fundamentalism is growing in the Arab and Islamic world as it's seen as a solution to their problems. A world survey shows a majority of people in eight predominantly Muslim countries reject al-Qaeda and attacks on civilians but also oppose US policies in the Middle East and the world, recording a No vote to bombs and US military bases, with a high percentage of people wanting the unification of all Islamic countries into a single Islamic state. What the survey shows is that Islamic fundamentalism is growing at all levels. For more and more people it is a solution to the troubles facing the Arab and Muslim worlds.

Pray: for a wake up call to the undercurrents of Islamic plurality and for God to remove the spiritual blindness from the Muslims searching for identity so they come to know 'the One who sees me' through Jesus Christ. (Gen.16:10-13)

More: <http://www.asianews.it/index.php?!=en&art=14658&geo=2&theme=&size=A>

■ Pakistan: Clashes mark protest

Riot police clashed with lawyers and opposition activists across Pakistan Thursday as thousands of people defied the government to launch a mass protest that threatens to plunge the country once again into chaos. Despite a ban on public protests and the detention of more than 300 activists on Wednesday, opponents of President Asif Ali Zardari set out on a four-day 'long march' from at least three cities and headed towards the capital, Islamabad. Organisers hope that hundreds of thousands will join the march, culminating in front of the national parliament on Monday, to demand that the government re-instate judges deposed under Pervez Musharraf, the former President. The former Prime Minister has urged Pakistanis to join the march and to rise up against their weak civilian government. The protest follows tensions after a court ruling barred opposition leader Nawaz Sharif and his brother from holding public office. The government says the march aims to destabilise the country.

Pray: against the oppressive forces working against democracy (Ps.24:1) asking God to usher in His purposes to break power struggles. (Ps.24:7)

More: <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article5894232.ece>

■ India: Orissa's Christians still fearful

Dhimmitude' is the term for 'the legal and social conditions of Jews and Christians subjected to Islamic rule'. Dhimmitude keeps the 'dhimmi utterly subdued' (Qur'an, Sura 9:29) paralysed by humiliation and fear. The Nazis took a leaf from the Islamic book when they forced the Jews to wear distinctive clothing. Christians displaced by the violence in Orissa last year

are forced to submit to a form of subjugation that mirrors that of dhimmitude. Christians are not permitted to use the public restrooms when Hindus are there; they must salute tribals whenever and wherever they meet them; and Christian women are forced to wear humiliating clothing. If a Christian is riding a cycle and happened to meet a 'Hindu' Tribal he has to get down from the cycle and walk. Christians who dare to go to the Church are prescribed sanctions like 'no access to drinking water wells, ponds, gathering of firewood, etc.

Pray: for a removal of suppressive lies that cloak Hindu nationalism and for the Holy Spirit to stir the church to pray against this evil attacking the Indian Church. (2Cor.10:4)

More: <http://www.ea.org.au/default.aspx?id=a108acd3-694a-440d-a69e-1a36ee67039a>

■ Mexico: US ready to aid drug fight

US Defence Secretary said America wants to increase military assistance to Mexico in their fight against drugs trafficking, and praised the Mexican president's courageous effort tackling the cartels that predecessors refused to acknowledge. He was prepared now to help Mexico in its fight against the cartels controlling the flow of illegal narcotics. More than 1,000 people have been killed so far this year and more than 6,000 people were killed in 2008 in drugs related violence. He said aid could come through military hardware, training and intelligence support to the Mexican authorities in their fight against the well-armed and organised drugs traffickers. A US Pentagon report said the drugs-related violence could turn Mexico into a failed state. A Mexican drug lord fugitive is reputedly one of the richest people in the world earning an estimated fortune of \$1bn (£720m). See:-<http://news.sky.com/skynews/Home/World-News/Mexicos-Most-Wanted-Drug-Lord-Joaquin-Guzman-Makes-Forbes-Magazine-Rich-List/Article/200903215239847>

Pray: for God to work through the various agencies to halt this hold on lives held by the kingdom of darkness and to turn the whole situation around into the kingdom of light. (Gen.1:3 & Mat.4:16)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/7918101.stm>

■ Zimbabwe: Car crash

Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai ruled out foul play in the car crash that injured him and killed his wife, Susan, declaring the collision was an accident. Speaking to mourners gathered at his Harare home he said, 'When something happens, there is always speculation but I want to say in this case, if there was any foul play, it was one in a thousand. It was an accident, and unfortunately it took her life.' There was suspicion among Mr Tsvangirai's Movement for Democratic Change supporters that it was an attempt on his life by Mugabe's secret police. But the MDC has been careful to avoid fanning potential retribution saying, 'We cannot talk about foul play until it has been proved what really transpired. Police are making their own investigation; we are also making our own.' Colleagues feared a prolonged absence by their leader would damage the MDC.

Pray: for a powerful healing of Mr Tsvangirai in mind, spirit, emotions and wellbeing; and for this tragedy to somehow strengthen his resolve to do whatever God tells him to do. (Ps.55:16-18 & Jos.1:4-6)

More: <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,25164603-32682,00.html>

PRAISE REPORTS

■ China for Christ in post-revolution era

They were arrested, tortured and killed for their faith, but more than 40 years after the Cultural Revolution, Chinese Christians are getting bolder about sharing their faith in public. Christian businessmen are openly dedicating their companies and their lives to spreading the gospel - despite the risk of government crackdown. A few blocks from Beijing's famous Tiananmen Square, one such shop went from selling antique furniture and paintings to owning one of the largest and most popular Christian stores in Beijing. Today they have another ministry - a ministry that can be found in the backroom. For a few hours every week, men and women gather to worship, pray and study how to manage their finances from a Biblical perspective. 'We are teaching them how important it is to be a good steward of their money,' the owner said. 'God wants us to be honest and ethical with our finances. Otherwise, God won't bless us and we in turn cannot be a blessing to this nation.'

Praise: God for those He is using to spread the gospel through teaching a righteous work ethic. (Dt.32:2)

More: <http://www.cbn.com/CBNnews/541490.aspx>

■ Churches kick off Biblethon Festival

Nearly 200 people from over 20 local churches in England kicked off a Bible reading marathon last Friday during which the Scripture will be read in public for 10 days. St Mary's Church in London is the host of what it describes as the 'unusual' event where people will be reading from the Bible, starting from the book of Genesis, every day until March 15 from 9 am to 9pm. Students from parish schools, youth clubs and churches will participate in the event. The object of the festival is to raise the profile of the Bible in England and to open up the church and allow the Bible to speak for itself. The finale will be a celebration service where all those involved will come back together to read the final chapter of the Bible together. After the Scripture reading, a party will take place in the Church for people to share their reflections of the event.

Praise: for those involved in this event and that the 'Word of God' will be heard by many people afresh or perhaps, by some, for the first time. (Ro.10:17)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.co.uk/article/churches.kick.off.biblethon.festival/22722.htm>

PRAYER FORUM OF BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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