

PRAYER ALERT...

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BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ Christians upset over UK's first TV abortion advert

The head of the Christian Legal Centre has condemned the first ever TV advertisement for abortion services. Marie Stopes made TV history when it advertised its abortion services on Channel 4 on Monday. The ad asked 'Are you late?' referring to women who may have missed a period. It will run throughout June. It is being broadcast as part of a wider campaign by the registered charity to 'confront the taboo of abortion.' The plans have upset pro-life and Christian groups, who are considering legal action to halt the broadcast of the advert. While commercial abortion clinics are prohibited from advertising on TV by the Broadcast Committee of Advertising Practice, the ban does not cover not-for-profit abortion providers like Marie Stopes.

Pray: for a balanced approach to counselling rather than a direct route to abortion as seems to be promoted in the advert. (Rev.4:11b)

More: <http://www.christianpost.com/article/20100520/christians-upset-over-uks-first-tv-abortion-ad/index.html>

■ BBC TV 'sees religion as tiresome obligation'

Religious coverage is seen as a 'rather tiresome obligation' by 'secular and sceptical' BBC television staff, a Radio 4 broadcaster has said. Roger Bolton called for the appointment of a BBC religion editor to improve coverage of faith matters. He was speaking at the Sandford St Martin Trust awards for religious programmes, for which he was chairman of the judges. The BBC replied that its commitment to religion broadcasting was 'unequivocal'. Mr Bolton, who presents BBC Radio 4's Feedback programme, told the London ceremony that a religious perspective was often 'bafflingly absent' both on air and in editorial discussions behind the scenes. A BBC spokeswoman said there was 'no downward trend in our religion and ethics television output'. Earlier this year, the Church of England's general synod expressed 'deep concern' at a perceived cut in religious programming by mainstream broadcasters. (See Prayer alert 2010)

Pray: for God to protect the religious content of the BBC and pray that believers would speak out boldly for their faith. (Ph.1:9-10)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/8705560.stm>

■ Bishop of Croydon calls on God for World Cup help

The Bishop of Croydon, the Rt Rev Nick Baines has written a series of prayers for the World Cup. The first prayer calls for all who work and play in the tournament to be guided, guarded and protected and that fans will find the tournament a 'source of celebration'. In his second, Bishop Baines asks God to smile on the host country, South Africa, and all those who travel to 'join in the party'. Another, written for those with no interest in the game, asks that they may be granted 'the gift of sympathy'. The Church of England's Bishop Baines, a Liverpool fan, said: 'More than half the population pray at some time

and everyone will be affected by the World Cup in one way or another, so it makes sense to have some prayers for those that want to use them.'

Pray: for all those involved directly or indirectly in this major event both in South Africa and around the world. (2Ch.30:23)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/8700262.stm>

■ Britain in the grip of 'epidemic of loneliness'

Technology and the pressures of modern life are today blamed for creating an epidemic of loneliness, as increasing numbers of people rely on the Internet to communicate with friends and family. A major report by the Mental Health Foundation suggests that more than one in ten people in Britain feel lonely 'often', as increasing numbers choose to live alone, work long hours and see each other less and less. The findings, from a survey of more than 2,200 adults from across Britain, suggest loneliness affects people of all ages but that women are more likely than men to report feelings of isolation. 'Once loneliness becomes chronic, it is difficult to treat,' the report adds. 'People who are chronically lonely can get stuck in a loop of negative behaviour, and might push others away or seek transient contact, such as multiple sexual partners, which can make them even more isolated.'

Pray: for all those who are lonely that God would bring friendship into their lives. Pray also that the Church will find ways of reaching these people. (Ps.68:6a)

More: http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/health/article7135506.ece

■ Rebuilding Britain: six pillars to strengthen our society

Our culture has its foundations in historic Christian values. We must respect them as we negotiate our future, says the Rt Rev James Jones. Rebuilding Britain rests on the six pillars of family, freedom, friendship, faith, fairness and the future of the earth. These are the columns that need strengthening if the edifice of our society is to withstand the winds of change. They have their foundations in the historic Christian values of our society. We are in danger of cutting ourselves adrift. And, as Lord Hailsham once warned, 'cut flowers never produce seed or fruit'. The Rt Rev Jones, writing in the Telegraph says 'The failure of public policy on the family is that it has focused mainly on child poverty, when the biggest problem facing children is not economic hardship but emotional deprivation.' He goes on to outline his 'Six Pillars' based on Christian values.

Pray: for our nation and its new government that we will, by God's Grace, seek a future taking heed of Rt Rev Jones suggestions. (Ps.37:37)

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopics/religion/7744426/Rebuilding-Britain-six-pillars-to-strengthen-our-society.html>

■ 11-year-olds set to debate rape, prostitution and porn

School children as young as eleven could be given lessons about rape, prostitution and pornography, but critics have warned that the lessons are 'too explicit' for youngsters. Charity Rape Crisis has released educational packs for secondary schools, which can be bought for £100, as part of a campaign to end violence against women. They will prompt pupils to debate issues surrounding rape, and will also encourage them to act out a role play, which includes obscene language, where a boy and girl recall a drunken encounter. But Nick Seaton, from the Campaign for Real Education, has criticised the scheme, saying: 'It is irresponsible and certainly not suitable for young children and probably not for older children either. 'Just because these things happen does not mean that children need to have them rammed in their faces. Sensible parents will be extremely perturbed that their children are being introduced to this sort of information at a young age.'

Pray: for a considered, sensitive and appropriate programme of sex and social education. (Ps.34:11)

More: <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/11-year-olds-set-to-debate-rape-prostitution-and-porn/>

■ All-day drinking laws to be reviewed

All-day drinking laws are set to be reviewed by the new coalition government in an attempt to crack down on binge drinking, it has been revealed. The Liberal Democrat-Conservative manifesto has revealed that the controversial law, which has often been blamed for an increase in violence, will either be tightened or scrapped altogether. Speaking at the Police Federation conference earlier this week, Home Secretary Theresa May said that the problems that had stemmed from the introduction of the law needed to be addressed. A report by the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) criticised the current lack of action being taken to tackle the binge drinking culture which is apparent in the UK. According to the advice offered by the ACMD, the drink driving limit for young people should be lowered and more information provided about the levels of their drinking. (See also Prayer Alert 3609 & 1909)

Pray: that the Government would seriously reconsider the legislation on 24-hour drinking. (Pr.20:1)

More: http://www.theway.co.uk/feature.php?id=8077&this=All-day_drinking_laws_to_be_reviewed

EUROPE

■ Russia: Baptist Pastor beaten to death

According to the Russian Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, Pastor Yuri Golovin, a preacher at the Central Baptist Church in St Petersburg, was beaten by unknown assailants outside the home of an elderly church member whom he had intended to visit. After the assault, Pastor Golovin managed to get the attention of the church member, who immediately called an ambulance. Sadly, Pastor Golovin died of his injuries at the hospital. There has been no confirmation of what motivated the attack, but a report in the International Christian Newspaper indicates that his assailants may have been local drug addicts. Yuri Golovin had been the head of The Gideons chapter in St Petersburg and Leningrad. Youth pastor Anton

Tretyak said that Yuri had been a wonderful example of a living Christian, who was not ashamed of witnessing about Christ and living for Christ.

Pray: for the family of Pastor Yuri Golovin. Pray also that the Lord will bring those responsible to justice and that this tragedy will lead to many new opportunities for the Gospel. (Heb.12:1)

More: <http://www.sga.org/2010/05/baptist-pastor-beaten-to-death-in-st-petersburg/>

■ Europe seeks new levy on banks

A network of national funds should be introduced so the cost of bank failures are not met by the taxpayer, the EU internal market commissioner has said. Michel Barnier said such funds would provide part of a broader system aimed at preventing future financial crises. Banks would be required to pay a levy into the funds which would not be used to bail out failing banks, but manage failures in 'an orderly way'. Mr Barnier said: 'I believe in the 'polluter pays' principle. It is not acceptable that taxpayers should continue to bear the heavy cost of rescuing the banking sector. They should not be in the front line,' he said. And the EU report said that any levies that banks were made to pay should not be passed on to their customers in the form of higher charges.

Pray: that this proposed levy would be found acceptable. (Lev.19:15)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/10159631.stm>

WORLDWIDE

■ Jamaica: Brave stand against drug lords

The gun battles in Kingston to capture Jamaican drug lord Christopher 'Dukas' Coke are similar to Mexico's long war on its drug lords. (See Mexico drug baron shoot out <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/troops-capture-drug-baron-in-shootout-1951981.html>) Leaders in both countries had to make courageous decisions when they decided to confront the most powerful drug lords with guns and the rule of law. They also decided to send their worst drug lords to the United States for trial. This takes tremendous courage. The drug gangs are tightly woven into each nation's politics, a co-existence ending up badly for the country, as Jamaican Prime Minister Bruce Golding now admits. When he turned against established drug lord 'Dudus', the battle turned parts of Kingston into a war zone, as street battles are necessary for cleansing Jamaican society.

Pray: for a complete cleansing of Kingston, no longer labelled one of the murder capitals of the world, but called a city of blessings. (Pr.11:11)

More: <http://www.csmonitor.com/Commentary/Editorial-Board-Blog/2010/0525/Jamaica-attacks-like-Mexico-s-drug-war-reveal-a-brave-stand-against-drug-lords>

■ Nigeria 1: Politics of identity

Rev Zang Tengong said a religious war is under way for the soul of Nigeria and believes the central city of Jos is the frontline against Islam's expansion southwards. 'I know what Jesus says but Islam is a demonic religion and these people are very dangerous - this is a religious war, we will fight to the last drop of blood.' Like many other Christian leaders across this city he is convinced the church is confronting Jihad; an echo of 19th-century campaign of Islamic conquest and conversion by Usman Dan Fodio. Nelson Ananze of Community Action for Popular Participation said, 'A great divide is between indigenous people who claim it's their land, and those they call settlers.' Muslims are not given business contracts or indigene forms (entitlement to schooling and state jobs).

Pray: for God to intervene in ethnicity struggles, political power rivalry and religious tension in what was once a laid back cosmopolitan city. (Ps.3:8)

More: <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=89243>

■ Nigeria 2: al-Qaida offers to train and arm Muslims

The leader of North Africa's al-Qaida branch has offered training and weapons to Nigeria's Muslims to fight the Christians following sectarian violence. Abdelmalek Droukdel, leader of al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, has accused Nigerian Christians of killing hundreds of Muslims in a 'Crusader war' and promises to train Muslim youths and supply them with weapons and equipment. He exhorted Nigerians to 'push your sons into the fields of Jihad to become the fighting vanguard in defence of the Muslims blood and honour.' Violence between Christians and Muslims in central Nigeria left 326 people dead late last month.

Pray: for law and order to be restored, that Christians will not retaliate with further violence but will show Christ-like love.(Ps.17:7)

More: http://ausprayernet.org.au/newsletter/DisplayNewsletter.php?e_id=00000001889#st4

■ Somalia: 14 Christians killed observing Pentecost

Somalia's minority Christians bravely observed Pentecost amid gunfire on Sunday May 23. Witnesses reported at least 14 people died in clashes between pro-government troops and Muslim militants who have killed Christians and pledged to turn Somalia into a strict Islamic state. Residents said fighters from the insurgent group al-Shabab tried to advance on the presidential palace overnight but were stopped by government troops and African Union peace keepers.

Pray: God will strengthen and protect the body of Christ in Somalia and intervene in every national conflict for His purposes. (Ps.5:8)

More: <http://www.worthynews.com/8144-news-alert-somalia-christians-observe-pentecost-amid-gunfire-14-killed>

■ **Gaza: Convoy of humanitarian aid**

Eight cargo ships with more than 10,000MT of building materials, medical equipment, medicines, Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) machines, unavailable in Gaza, CT scanners, X-ray and kidney dialysis machines will set sail for the Gaza Strip on 27 May in a symbolic attempt by activists to break the three-year Israeli blockade. Scores of smaller vessels carrying passengers from 140 nations are part of the 'flotilla' which will attempt to dock in Gaza City on 28 May. Passengers include 50 parliamentary members from EU and Arab nations, and Israeli Knesset member Hanin Zoabi. Israeli foreign affairs ministry spokesperson described the fleet as a 'publicity stunt' adding 'International aid organizations and the private sector of Gaza ensure that all the necessary food, medicine and clothing are provided to the Strip via Israel.'

Pray: for God to spread his protection over the needy and have mercy on those suffering injustice. (Ps.9:8-9)

More: <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=89255>

■ **Zimbabwe: 700,000 destitute evictees**

Amnesty International and coalition of partners said the government of Zimbabwe must take action to protect hundreds of thousands of people living in substandard settlements five years after a programme of mass forced evictions and demolition of settlements across the country affecting more than 700,000 people - leaving them without a home or livelihood or both. Most were driven deeper into poverty by Zimbabwe's economic crisis. An operation aimed to provide shelter for the victims and improve their living conditions was a failure and abandoned. The NGO has called on the Zimbabwean government to provide adequate alternative accommodation or compensation to those left homeless and jobless. Victims are surviving in plastic shacks without basic essential services and their needs are at risk of being forgotten because their voices are consistently ignored.

Pray: and cry out to God for His provision to be released for Zimbabwe's forgotten victims of injustice. (Pr.2:21)

More: <http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/12244>

PRAISE REPORTS

■ **Iran: Maryam and Marzieh acquitted, free and now safe**

Two Christian prisoners of faith have been acquitted of all charges 14 months after their arrest - and are now safe in a country outside Iran. Maryam Rustampoor and Marzieh Esmailabad left Iran last Saturday - with a warning from the courts that they would be 'dealt with severely' if they were ever involved in Christian activities in Iran again. Maryam said: 'The prayers of people encouraged and sustained us throughout this ordeal.' They were arrested in March 2009 (Prayer Alert 1609) and charged with 'apostasy' and 'propagating Christianity'. They were held at Tehran's Evin prison where they endured repeated interrogations and solitary confinement. They were released on bail in November. (See Prayer Alert 4709) The Iranian authorities have also released on bail a couple from Isfahan, Hamid Shafiee and Reyhaneh Aghajary, following a large bail payment. They have been told to expect a future court summons.

Praise: God for the release of Maryam and Marzieh, bless them with a fruitful ministry and pray all charges against Hamid and Reyhaneh will now be dropped. (Ps.145:3-4)

More: <http://www.releaseinternational.org/pages/posts/iran-maryam-and-marzieh-acquitted-free-and-now-safe-707.php>

■ **Re Westminster 2010 Declaration of Christian Conscience**

The election result of a coalition government has produced a better balance on Christian conscience issues. 63 MPs with poor voting records and only 10 with good voting records stepped down. Thirty two MP's made the Westminster pledge to 'respect, uphold and protect the right of Christians to hold and express Christian beliefs and act according to Christian conscience'. Thirty eight were 'supportive' of the pledge, twenty four new MPs are Christians including nine members of the Conservative Christian Fellowship and one from the Christian Socialist movement.

Praise: God for mercifully watching over nations - and ask him to carry us deeper into a Christian inheritance. (Ps.22:4)

More: <http://www.westminster2010.org.uk/news/election-results-in-more-mps-supportive-of-christian-conscience---mond/>

■ **Christians pray to heal Britain**

Christians gathered in every borough of London on Pentecost Sunday to pray for God to heal Britain. The prayer gatherings were held as part of the Global Day of Prayer, which united an estimated 250 million Christians worldwide as the movement marked its tenth anniversary. Global Day of Prayer London facilitated prayer gatherings in churches and parks in all 33 London boroughs, testimony to the movement's huge growth in the UK since it was launched in 2006. Convener of the Global Day of Prayer London, Jonathan Oloyede said: 'We're asking God to open up a new Britain, that it no longer is to be broken Britain, but for it to be healed,' he said.

Praise: God for His call on intercessors to prayer for the healing of the nations. (Rev.22:1-2)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/christians.pray.to.heal.britain/25969.htm>

PRAYER FORUM OF THE BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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