

Prayer Alert

ISSUE 35-2018 | Friday 31 August 2018
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I will praise You, Lord, among the nations; I will sing the praises of Your name. (2 Samuel 22:50)

We are pleased to enclose this week's edition of Prayer Alert.

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Thank you again for standing with us in prayer over the nations.

David Fletcher – Editor

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Praise Reports

Goodbye 'rock fame', hello adventures with God

Jean du Rand's father leads a vibrant church, and there were Afrikaans Baptist pastors on his mother's side; but in 2010, while a member and songwriter in a successful South African band, and still in his teens, he became involved in alcohol and drugs. He didn't find the happiness that this lifestyle was supposed to bring, and during a university lecture he experienced God's presence. The Holy Spirit said, 'You know Jean, I have plans for your life. You can come with Me now and leave this place, or you can come in five years. I'm going to use you either way, and it's up to you how much pain you want to traverse.' Jean chose 'now'. He is now about to release some Afrikaans worship songs 'with a difference'. You can hear one of his songs [on Youtube](#):

Praise: God for keeping His hand on us, even when we make misguided choices. (Ephesians 2:19)

More: gatewaynews.co.za/goodbye-rock-music-hello-adventures-with-god/

India: jailed Christians released

Four Christians in the eastern state of Jharkhand, in prison since May on charges of forced conversion, have been released. Voice Of the Martyrs Canada (VOMC) said their troubles began when the father of one of the believers said they had attempted to physically force him to convert to Christianity. Police had said that Somaru Manjhi's daughter, Sumanti, was to be married on 30 May. The 65-year-old man said he was beaten with a bamboo stick by Sumanti, her fiancé Rupash, and two Christian missionaries after he opposed his daughter's desire for a Christian wedding. VOMC said, 'We are pleased to report that after investigation, the four falsely accused Christians have been released from police custody. However, while praising God for their release, we remain mindful of their need for God's help and protection as they return to their communities and families.'

Praise: God for justice and ask him to protect his people from Hindu extremists. (Psalm 101:1)

More: www.bosnewslife.com/38712-india-state-releases-jailed-christians

British Isles & Ireland

Scotland: time to turn

'Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other.' (Isaiah 45:22) 'Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.' (Acts 3:19) On 23 August hundreds of Christians from a wide variety of churches gathered in Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow for the first of the 'Encounter' meetings to launch The Turning - Scotland. For ten days (23 August to 3 September), in Edinburgh and Glasgow teams will spread out to share the Gospel in one-to-one conversations. At the time of writing over 250 had signed up to take part in Edinburgh, over 100 in Glasgow, and around 65 in Aberdeen; these numbers may increase as the week goes on and word spreads.

Pray: for all who have come to Christ to receive powerful discipling through local churches. (Romans 10:13)

More: mailchi.mp/c114adeeee55/pray-without-ceasing-pfs-newsletter-2167609?e=509d356d4f

Wales: children 'walk the streets hungry'

The Church of Wales said that during the summer holidays youngsters 'walk the streets hungry', and a new approach to help is needed. Child poverty was described as the most serious issue facing the Welsh government. Although the church provides food packages, it is concerned that many children are still missing out. The Trussell Trust distributed 5,382 emergency packages last year, and expects the total to be higher this year. 2,500 children have had meals at 56 schools in 16 areas through a government scheme this summer, and Flintshire council has called for others to follow its lead in giving holiday lunches. The church has called for the £1m spent on this scheme to be used to safeguard community-based activity schemes. Many activity schemes are disappearing because of local authority budget cuts. They propose that the food element could be provided by charities.

Pray: for improved summer projects for the 74,569 children eligible for free school dinners. (Psalm 144:12)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-45270644

Intercessor Focus: students

September means a new school term. Please remember the thousands of five-year-olds going to primary school for the first time, particularly the fearful, or those panicking as they face an unfamiliar environment. Pray for their parents watching them go (and letting them go). There will also be 11-year-olds anticipating entering secondary education; pray for their peace of mind in the first few weeks of changes and more serious studies. Pray for God to watch over the 16- to 18-year-olds as they study for A Levels. Also remember those entering university and striking out on their own for the first time, experiencing new places, new activities and new people. Pray for effective Christian witness during 'freshers weeks'. Ask God to inspire Christian youths and young adults in their choices of friendships and activities. Please pray for young people starting voluntary gap placements, particularly those serving in mission agencies at home and abroad. (Linda Digby – Prayer Alert Team)

Pray: for God to provide wise and supportive workers for CUs and Christian youth groups. (Psalm 29:18)

More:

No child should feel the need to self-harm

In response to a survey by the Children's Society which stated that tens of thousands of children are hurting themselves on purpose and a quarter of 14-year-old girls in UK have 'self-harmed', the Bishop of Gloucester said that no child should feel unhappy because they don't conform to the expectations of their peers and society. For the past two years she has spearheaded #Liedentity - a campaign focused around engagement with children and young people in schools and colleges to combat the lie that 'who you are' is predominantly about 'how you look'. To see a video of the Bishop's talk on body image anxiety [go to https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=5&v=SLPAIhbr998](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=5&v=SLPAIhbr998)

Pray: for churches and youth workers to address the challenge of self-harming. (Psalm 139:14)

More: www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/news/bishop-gloucester-no-child-should-feel-need-self-harm

Sex education and the myth of neutrality

Philippa Taylor, of Christian Medical Fellowship, writes on her blog, 'The Department for Education is drafting guidance for schools which are now required to teach Relationships Education (RE) at primary school and Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) at secondary school. It is seeking views from the public on these drafts before they are put before Parliament and the final guidance is published. This is an important time in the development of sex and relationships resources in the UK. School sex education is intended, for good or for ill, to influence both attitudes and behaviours to improve sexual health. Whether improvements occur very much depends on what is in the curriculum.'

Pray: for an exceptional number of Christians to voice their views on these drafts. (John 8:32)

More: www.cmfblog.org.uk/2018/08/30/sex-education-and-the-myth-of-neutrality/

PM visits Africa ahead of Brexit

Theresa May visited Africa on a major mission to build up new trade relations ahead of Brexit. Pray that every detail of conversations with South African, Nigerian and Kenyan leaders will be used to re-engage with a fast-growing continent which some feel British business and politicians have neglected in recent years. Pray that the delegates who travelled with her (trade minister George Hollingbery, minister for Africa Harriett Baldwin, secretary of state for Wales Alun Cairns, a Stock Exchange representative, and the Lord Mayor of London Charles Bowman) will in the future be able to build on the links made. A Government statement before the visit stated, 'This comes at a time of enormous change across Africa with a unique opportunity, as the UK moves towards Brexit, for a truly global Britain to invest in and work alongside African nations, with mutual benefits.'

Pray: for wide-ranging trade to be established and built on in the coming years. (Jeremiah 29:11)

More: www.gov.uk/government/news/theresa-may-to-lead-ambitious-three-nation-trip-to-africa

British / French relations

On 28 August President Macron told French ambassadors in his annual address, 'France wants to maintain a strong, special relationship with London but not if the cost is the European Union's unravelling'. He urged Europe to exert itself as 'a trade and economic power', which defends its strategic interests. [See https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/macron-eu-unity-is-more-important-than-close-relationship-with-postbrexit-britain-a3920896.html](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/macron-eu-unity-is-more-important-than-close-relationship-with-postbrexit-britain-a3920896.html) Meanwhile about 35 French boats surrounded and rammed five British vessels, leading to an angry standoff in an longstanding dispute over scallop fishing in the English Channel. The French accused British boats of over-fishing off the coast of Normandy, stating they are protecting scallop beds. As they threatened to reignite a simmering 'scallop war', the British fishermen called on the Government to intervene. Some believe this incident is exacerbated by the Brexit negotiations. [See](#)

Pray: for the UK government to get a fair Brexit deal for fishermen, regardless of opposition. (Psalm 4:6,7)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-45337091

Anti-therapy film

The BBC's News at Ten recently featured a one-sided report on a film about Christian 'gay conversion therapy'. The Miseducation of Cameron Post is about 'a gay teenager sent away to a Christian camp that uses prayer and therapy to try to change her sexuality.' Despite the film clearly being used to agitate for a ban on any kind of therapy, no counterpoint or challenge was made. The programme was designed to promote the film without any attempt to balance its portrayal of the world. In July, the government released an LGBT action plan that included banning 'gay conversion therapies' and may press ahead with the idea in the autumn. However a recent study suggested that, at least for religious men, therapy to help move away from unwanted same-sex attraction can be beneficial in a number of different ways.

Pray: for people who have benefited from this kind of therapy to have their voices heard. (Genesis 1:27)

More: mailchi.mp/769c3ae09df2/christian-weekly-news-597521?e=354f1ab5aa

Europe

Arctic Resilience Forum

Last week it was reported that the Arctic Sea is breaking up for the first time on record, and we prayed for nations to acknowledge climate change and seek ways to turn it around. The acceleration of climate change has greater impact on the Arctic region than elsewhere, posing serious threats to the sensitive environment and those who depend on it. Good cooperation is needed between researchers, public authorities, companies, and Arctic inhabitants. Pray for the adoption of a new kind of climate-resilient thinking. Further development is needed in flood warning systems and dam safety. In response to these needs, and as part of its 2017-2019 chairmanship of the Arctic Council, Finland will be hosting the first Arctic Resilience Forum on 10-11 September 2018.

Pray: for Arctic populations, wildlife, and natural resources to be protected in seasons of change. (Psalm 65:9,10)

More: arctic-council.org/index.php/en/our-work2/8-news-and-events/494-arctic-resilience-01

Ireland: Pope begs forgiveness for sex abuse

Pope Francis visited Ireland on 25 and 26 August and begged forgiveness for clerical child sex abuse. He said no-one could fail to be moved by stories of those who 'suffered abuse, were robbed of their innocence, and left scarred by painful memories'. In a speech at Dublin Castle, the Pope expressed his shame at the Catholic Church's failure to address adequately the 'repellent crimes' of sex abuse by clergy. He later met eight survivors of sexual abuse, telling them that he viewed clerical sex abuse as 'filth'. Since the last Papal visit Ireland has 'modernised' laws on abortion, contraception, divorce and same-sex marriage. Pray for the church to move on, even stronger, now that past sins are repented of.

Pray: for the Church to stand firm as values and belief systems around it change. (Ephesians 6:14)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-45311353

Worldwide

Mauritania: national assembly election

On 1 September, the North African desert country Mauritania will have an election for its national assembly. 146 members will be elected for one- or four-year terms. Most of its population is nomadic, but a third of Mauritians are registered voters. It is one of the world's poorest nations, and one of the most religiously restricted. Sunni Islam and Sharia law have ruled them over a thousand years. The government prohibits conversion to Christianity. Those who do so face the death penalty, and must not enter non-Muslim households. A caste system grants privileges to certain groups. They marginalise darker-skinned Mauritians or anyone who holds a worldview other than Islam. The Islamic terror group AQIM (Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb) operates in Mauritania.

Pray: for God to soften hard hearts and refresh and renew Christians who are weary and dry. (Psalm 119:28)

More: win1040.com/post.php?id=44195

Kenya: Freedom Sunday

IJM has released a Freedom Sunday promo video to media houses, churches, and the general public in Kenya. We have been asked to pray for a positive reception and widespread engagement from the Kenyan church. This video is unique in bringing together leaders from a variety of Christian denominations (including Catholic, Anglican and evangelical) to speak with one voice about the role of the church in addressing police abuse in Kenya. Pray that many churches will participate in Freedom Sunday, and that members will be moved to help vulnerable families in their communities who have suffered from police abuse. Pray for an unprecedented number of churches to dedicate Sunday 23 September to ending slavery and helping to rescue every child, woman and man living in slavery.

Pray: for congregations to learn about slavery and partner with IJM to end it. (Psalm 25:17)

More: www.ijm.org/freedom-sunday-2018/

Kenya: Theresa May visit

At the time of writing Theresa May is visiting Kenya. There is a desire for both countries to develop trust and trade in the future. On her visit the PM was joined by several ministers and 29 business representatives from various industries. We can pray that her visit will initiate and bolster improved post-Brexit trade and cultural ties between the nations. Many believe that in the past Britain has

not treated Kenya with equality, but rather as a bully, while the Chinese have humbly generated business: statistics show that China has dwarfed UK imports to Kenya over the last three decades. Pray for the West to rethink foreign policy. One of the Kenya-UK partnership agreements was a commitment to improve lives of people living with disability.

Pray: for the UK to become more involved in supporting and trading with Kenya. (Genesis 34:21)

More: www.standardmedia.co.ke/ktnnews/video/2000160584/united-kingdom-pm-theresa-may-visits-kenya-to-boost-trade-ties

Syria: Idlib, the final battle

Syria is preparing to take back the last stronghold, Idlib, and Russia is warning of a terrorist chemical attack. American warships, cruise missile delivery systems, strategic bombers and other hardware arrived in the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf on 27/28 August, and NATO has called for restraint (see) If violence escalates in Idlib, the two million people in the area will be in grave danger. Militants seem reluctant to lay down their arms, which makes the coming days crucial for the fate of Idlib and all Syria. A Russian press release (see <http://tass.com/pressreview/1019220>) stated, 'A military strike against terrorists occupying Idlib will inevitably happen, and Moscow and Ankara see eye to eye here.' However, Turkey has twelve military outposts in Idlib governorate under an agreement with Russia and Iran for 'de-escalation zones', and there are intense diplomatic talks between Ankara and Moscow to prevent a Russian-backed Syrian army invasion. See

Pray: for everyone to exercise restraint and not worsen a disastrous humanitarian situation. (Genesis 27:8)

More: www.rt.com/news/437200-syria-idlib-us-chemical/

Iran: campaigns for Christians

Amnesty International has called for the release of four Iranians sentenced to a combined total of 45 years in prison. Its report calls for urgent action from the Iranian government to quash the convictions and sentences of Victor Bet-Tamraz, Shamiram Isavi, Amin Afshar-Naderi, and Hadi Asgari, 'as they have been targeted solely for the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedoms of religion and belief, expression, and association, through their Christian faith'. They are currently free on bail, awaiting the outcome of their appeals. Also dual-nationality UK/Iranian charity worker Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe is serving a five-year jail sentence after being accused of spying. Her British husband has been campaigning for her release, and the UK's foreign secretary has also attempted to secure her freedom. She is currently in hospital, after suffering panic attacks following three days of freedom from jail.

Pray: for the regime to overturn false and unjust spy charges against Christians. (Psalm 81:7a)

More: www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2018/08/amnesty-launches-writing-campaign-for-release-of-four-iranian-christians/

Myanmar: human rights crisis

Oscar-winning actor Cate Blanchett described to the UN security council meeting in New York 'gut-wrenching' accounts from Myanmar of Rohingya people being tortured, raped and killed in front of their relatives. 'How can any mother endure seeing her child thrown into a fire?' she said. The UNHCR goodwill ambassador also praised Bangladesh for taking in more than 700,000 refugees, calling it 'one of the most visible and significant gestures of humanity of our time'. UN secretary general António Guterres has called for those behind the Rohingya crisis to be held accountable, urging the council to act on what has become 'one of the world's worst humanitarian and human rights crises'. However Aung San Suu Kyi probably won't be stripped of her Nobel peace prize, despite revelations around the Rohingya crisis. The UN report said that Myanmar's military carried out mass killings of Muslim Rohingya. See <https://www.theguardian.com/world/video/2018/aug/29/cate-blanchett-tells-of-atrocities-against-rohingya-children-video>

Pray: for nations to dismiss military denial. Pray for justice for the tens of thousands killed, and protection for survivors. (Job 8:3)

More: www.theguardian.com/world/2018/aug/30/aung-san-suu-kyi-wont-be-stripped-of-nobel-peace-prize-despite-rohingya-crisis

Saudi Arabia: repression

Five Saudi activists face possible execution for 'participating in protests', 'chanting slogans hostile to the regime', and 'filming protests and publishing on social media'. The five, including women's rights campaigner Israa al-Ghomgham, have spent over two years in prison. Now their deaths are demanded. Their plight reveals the emptiness of claims that Saudi Arabia is 'liberalising' after the death of King Abdullah and that the heir apparent, Prince Muhammad bin Salman, is a driving force behind 'modernisation'. Over the past year, dozens of activists, clerics, journalists and intellectuals have been detained in a pattern of widespread and systematic arbitrary arrests and detention. Under current 'reforming' 146 people were executed in 2017, many for political dissent, which the Saudi authorities rebrand as 'terrorism'. The regime permits women to drive, but executes them for speaking out of turn. Christians are treated as second-class citizens and persecution is an ongoing and serious problem. Apostasy is punishable by death for Christian converts who refuse to recant. See also <https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/world-watch-list/saudi-arabia/>

Pray: for Saudi Arabia to change and not just talk about modernisation. (1 Samuel 10:6)

More: www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/aug/26/dont-be-deluded-our-saudi-partners-are-masters-of-repression

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Prayer Alert is produced in partnership with

The World Prayer Centre, Cornerstone House, 5 Ethel Street, Birmingham, B2 4BG, England.

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