

Prayer Alert

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Give praise to the Lord, proclaim His name; make known among the nations what He has done. (Psalm 105:1)

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

Muslim woman searched for God's love

Aisha (not her real name), 27, grew up in a Muslim family. Her father was devoted to Islam but constantly mis-treated her mother, and Aisha never heard him speak even one kind word to them. The more she watched the oppressive treatment, the more she asked why Allah had created her a girl. She began to reject Allah and his rules. One day she asked her mother why she allowed her father to beat her. 'Allah gave him that authority,' her mother replied. 'Then I don't want to be a Muslim,' she cried. In response, her mother slapped her in the face. 'That is profanity against Allah; you were born as a Muslim and you will stay a Muslim till you die.' Later, talking to a friend at work who was a Christian, Aisha noticed that her friend frequently mentioned God's name in their conversations. She described her home life, and her friend referred Aisha to her pastor. In time she gave her life to Jesus, accepting him as Saviour and Lord.

Praise: God for another soul saved through the witness of a child of God. Pray that Aisha will go on to be a great ambassador for Christ in her community. (1 John 4:19)

More: blog.godreports.com/2018/11/muslim-woman-searched-for-gods-love/

Founder of the 'debt saviours'

In October 2018, BBC2 showed a documentary, The Debt Saviours, about the work of Christians Against Poverty (CAP), which aims to help those who have piled up debts and do not know how to cope. When CAP's founder John Kirkby was himself in that situation back in the 1990's, his world falling apart, a Christian couple took a real interest in him and introduced him to Jesus. His life changed dramatically. He writes: 'This became the model of how CAP works today too: we partner qualified debt counsellors with the love of the church. It's an equal partnership, with both sides determined to see someone become debt-free and know they are loved. Love is what the church does best, and it's an underrated and powerful resource in the UK. All of those who go through CAP's debt relief are given money management principles that will stay with them long after they are debt free. Contrary to popular belief, people in debt do want to pay their debts off, if they can. However, as many of them are on a very low income with little to spare, it would take them decades to achieve and insolvency can be the sensible option. This is why our head office building is called Jubilee Mill, mirroring the Old Testament's Year of Jubilee when debts were wiped.'

Praise: God for John Kirkby and all those who work for CAP, making a difference to literally thousands of lives. (Matthew 18:23-34)

More: www.eauk.org/news-and-views/we-can-make-every-day-a-jubilee

British Isles & Ireland

PM to return to Brussels, still under pressure

Theresa May will make an unscheduled return visit to Brussels for Brexit talks on 24 November, as the UK and EU strive to do a deal in time for the summit of European leaders the next day. After a two-hour meeting with EU officials on 21 November, the PM said progress was being made on the future shape of EU-UK relations. The EU is now in a race against time to complete the text of an accompanying declaration on its future relations with the UK, covering trade, security and other issues, amid concerns from

several member states. Before her first trip to Brussels, Mrs May had come under fire from every imaginable Brexit faction in the House of Commons, but reiterated that her deal delivered on the promises of Brexit and ensured a continued close trading relationship with the EU.

Pray: for Mrs May and all the EU officials, as they seek to finalise everything for the summit. (1 Kings 18:21)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-46297725

Prisons minister speaks out about hope

Over 500 people gathered at Holy Trinity Brompton (HTB) church in London on 19 November to hear from ex-offenders, prison chaplains, and judges. HTB's pastor Nicky Gumbel also interviewed Rory Stewart, the prisons minister, who stated in August 2018 that if he couldn't reduce violence and drugs use in prisons in 12 months he would resign. With nine months to go on that commitment, Stewart said he still believes it's possible. He added, 'I think Christians do have a very important and special role in dealing with prisoners - that's partly because of the centrality of prisoners in the Bible. We have to remember that St Paul was a prisoner, that many of the people that we admire most in our church, many of the early martyrs and saints, were prisoners; and that continues to be true today.' The former diplomat finished by praising the work of community chaplains, who welcome ex-offenders into their church and society. He also said of his own faith, 'I find it the most wonderful cornerstone of my life'.

Pray: that Mr Stewart's faith will encourage him as he seeks to bring prisoners the message of hope. (Acts 5:21-23)

More: www.premier.org.uk/News/UK/Govt-minister-says-Christians-have-the-power-to-transform-prisons

Gambling by children 'a generational scandal'

An audit by the Gambling Commission issued on 21 November has shown the quadrupling of child problem gamblers to more than 50,000 in two years. It also found 70,000 youngsters were at risk, and 450,000 children bet regularly - the equivalent of one in seven children aged 11 to 16. Alan Smith, the Bishop of St Albans, branded the figures as a 'generational scandal', and warned that the UK needs to take the dangers of gambling seriously. The audit also showed that children were being inundated with gambling adverts, with two-thirds saying they had 'seen it on TV', and nearly a million young people had been exposed to gambling through 'loot boxes' in video games or on smartphone apps. See also our recent article on FOBTs: <https://www.prayer-alert.net/praise-reports-pa-site/item/11186-uk-government-backs-down-over-gambling-machines>

Pray: for all who have the power to change this situation, praying especially that parents will receive the help they need to educate their children about the dangers of the internet. (Mark 8:36)

More: www.independent.co.uk/news/child-gambling-problem-betting-tv-adverts-a8643926.html

BBC presenter at odds with her mother over faith schools

Alice Roberts, a professor at Birmingham University who presents BBC documentaries, has been criticised by her own mother for fronting an 'antagonistic' campaign by Humanists UK to end state funding of faith schools. Her mother Wendy, who taught for many years in faith schools, took the highly unusual step of writing to the Sunday Times to say that such schools 'have been and still are a most benign benefit', and she was embarrassed and upset by her daughter's decision. Meanwhile, in a list of 500 top primary schools issued by the Sunday Times, nearly half are faith-based (mostly Catholic or CofE), vying with top fee-paying private schools. The news comes as ministers press ahead with plans to create many new Catholic-only schools in 2019, despite protests from critics. See <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/best-uk-schools-guide-church-schools-challenge-top-fee-paying-preps-9vdj725tn>

Pray: for this humanist campaign not to succeed. Praise God for the growing reputation of many church schools. (Proverbs 22:6)

More: uk.news.yahoo.com/bbc-presenter-alice-roberts-apos-182148417.html

School took all children to a gay pride event

A Christian parent is challenging a London school which took all its children to a gay pride event in June 2018. Heavens Farm Primary School allegedly said the visit did not come under sexual education, and so opt-outs were not granted. Headteacher Susan Papas said at the time: 'We believe that it is important to teach children about diversity and acceptance, and we stand by our decision.' Fourteen parents complained, and on 20 November Izoduwa Adhedo and her husband, with a Christian Legal Centre representative, met the school governors. Mrs Adhedo said, 'After I complained about my young child being forced to take part in an event that goes against our Christian beliefs, the school's attitude towards me changed completely.' She feels that senior staff misled her with incorrect statements of law and failed to follow proper procedures. Her son no longer attends the school, because they were 'bullied out of it'.

Pray: that the school will understand more clearly why its action was distressing and unfair. (Matthew 18:7)

More: www.premier.org.uk/News/UK/Christian-parent-takes-action-after-children-forced-to-attend-gay-pride-event

TV reality show participants pray together

Participants in ITV's I'm a Celebrity have been seen praying together. On 19 November, viewers saw quiz supremo Anne Hegerty offer to spend time in silent prayer for actress Emily Atack, who had been voted by the public to take part in a challenge which would see her locked in a box with more than fifty snakes. Hegerty said, 'Shall I spend twenty minutes silently saying a rosary that everything will go OK?' Atack replied, 'I would love that', and then gave the sign of the cross before sitting down to pray. Singer Fluer East also joined in. Speaking to the camera, she said: 'I was praying, please keep Emily safe. I think she needed that - a bit of calm.' Atack successfully completed her ordeal, winning nine meals for her fellow campmates.

Pray: that the general public, and indeed more celebrities, will be inspired by these celebrities' willingness to be seen praying. (Matthew 5:16)

More: www.premier.org.uk/News/UK/I-m-a-Celebrity-contestants-bond-over-prayer

Call for ban on alcohol advertising in winter

Dr Peter McCann, an alcohol and drug rehabilitation expert, has called for a ban on alcohol advertising in winter and stricter laws on alcohol pricing. He says that new research has established a definite link between the climate and rates of binge drinking and liver disease, and added, 'This weather-related alcohol consumption is directly linked to our chances of developing the most dangerous form of liver disease - cirrhosis - which can ultimately end in liver failure and death.' On the same day, health experts at a WHO summit in Edinburgh heard how minimum pricing introduced in Russia in 2010 has significantly reduced alcohol-related harm. It is still too early to gauge the impact of similar measures rolled out in Scotland recently.

Pray: that this call will be noted and carefully studied by the Government. Pray for all who seek to help alcoholics. (Proverbs 20:21)
More: www.christiantoday.com/uk/health-expert-calls-for-ban-on-alcohol-advertising-in-winter/130970.htm

Europe

Spain: no to Brexit because of Gibraltar?

Prime minister Pedro Sánchez says that Spain will reject the draft Brexit deal unless the status of Gibraltar is clarified. Spain claims the peninsula, ceded to the UK by a 1713 treaty, and wants to ensure that future EU talks with the UK do not cover it. Throughout the Brexit negotiations, Spain - along with Ireland and Cyprus - has conducted separate talks with the UK about specific border issues. On 19 November foreign minister Josep Borrell said that talks on Gibraltar had to be 'separate negotiations', and Mr Sánchez followed up by emphasising that any future negotiations should only be bilateral, without involvement by the EU.

Pray: that God will give great wisdom to all involved in this thorny issue, so that it may be resolved to everyone's satisfaction. (Proverbs 14:34)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-46267684

War of words between Italy and EU

Italy has refused to back down over its expansionary 2019 budget, which EU chiefs claim breaches previous spending agreements. The indebted nation at first unveiled plans for a deficit budget of 2.4% of GDP, three times the previous administration's target. The European Commission rejected the draft and demanded it be revised to a more realistic level. But the Italian government has so far refused to budge, saying the spending plans are in the best interest of the Italian people. Prime minister Salvini has even threatened to veto the next proposed eurozone budget, in retaliation. However, that budget will be available only to those countries which abide by EU rules about budget deficits and debt; so Italy could be left out in the cold if the dispute is not resolved.

Pray: that this dispute will be sorted out quickly, so that it does not result in further hardship for Italy's poor and underprivileged. (1 Timothy 6:10)

More: www.express.co.uk/finance/ciuty/1047836/Italy-news-budget-spending-plans-Matteo-Salvini-EU-eurozone

Worldwide

Rain will hamper California search efforts

California firefighters say rains will aid efforts to contain the wildfires, but will also turn ash on the ground into a thick sludge. Workers will struggle in the mud, and there could be landslides, officials warn. The wildfires have so far claimed a total of at least 80 lives. The fire in northern California, which has destroyed at least 10,500 homes in the town of Paradise, with nearly 1,000 people still unaccounted for, is unlikely to be fully contained before the end of November. Sheriff Kory Honea said it was possible that the full death toll in Paradise may never be known.

Pray: for all those affected by these devastating fires; may the firefighters soon be able to contain them.. (Psalm 116:5)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/46264981

Nepal: church forced to close

After two months of harassment from high-caste Hindus, a church in Nepal has been forced to shut down. Brahmins had disrupted worship of the Pakhluwa Eternal Life Church each week, and accused pastor Tufani Bhar of converting villagers. Church members had resorted to meeting in homes, but the Brahmins issued threats to anyone found meeting even there. Pastor Bhar said that he had tried everything possible to preserve the fellowship, but was unable to withstand the opposition. Initially the Brahmins objected to the use of guitar and drums in the church service, so they worshipped in silence. The next objection was to the monthly Lord's Supper, and opposition rose steadily until they were refused permission to meet at all. Church attendance fell from 30 to 16 people, before disbanding last weekend due to fear.

Pray: for these brothers and sisters to be able to worship again - wherever! Pray against the persecution, and ask God to support the remnant in all things. (Romans 8:31)

More: morningstarnews.org/2018/11/church-in-nepal-forced-to-shut-down/

Afghanistan: battles still raging

Defence minister Tariq Shah Bahrami has said that battles are ongoing in at least ten provinces. He added, 'To be honest, the level of threat is very high and the current facilities available to security and defence institutions are not enough to repel these threats. The enemies of the people of Afghanistan including the backers of terrorists have made their final plots to break our back.' The Taliban have attacked and conquered several areas of the minority Hazara Shia community, and it is feared that they will commit many atrocities there. They have even targeted their mosques and schools. Many Hazaras are fleeing their villages and coming to the capital. The people are suffering, and wondering how long the army will be able to push back the Taliban.

Pray: for continuing strength, wisdom and heavenly power to contain and overcome this aggression. Pray also for the civilians living in fear: may they know God's comfort. (Matthew 28:20)

More: www.tolonews.com/index.php/afghanistan/ghazni-displaced-families-call-govt%E2%80%99s-help

Central African Republic: Christian mission massacre

More than forty people were killed in a militia attack on a Christian mission in Alindao, around 180 miles east of CAR's capital Bangui, on 15 November. The attackers torched a church and forced 20,000 displaced persons who were sheltering in an adjacent compound to flee. A local politician told journalists, 'We have counted 42 bodies so far, and we are still searching for others. The camp has been burned to the ground, and people fled into the bush.' Christian-majority CAR has been wracked by violence since 2012, when Seleka Islamists overthrew the government. The deployment of a UN international peace-keeping force and repeated negotiated ceasefires between the government and armed groups have had little impact on the ground.

Pray: for the families of those killed and for the dispossessed; may they know the comfort that comes from Jesus. Pray also for an end to violence in CAR and elsewhere. (Psalm 34:14)

More: barnabasfund.org/en/news/more-than-40-slaughtered-in-attack-on-christian-mission-in-car

Myanmar: refugee status lost

At least 28,000 ethnic Chin (mainly Christian) refugees in Malaysia and India have lost their refugee status and are faced with returning to Buddhist-majority Myanmar (Burma), where they risk discrimination and military attack. The status change is a result of a policy revision by the UNHCR, which has stated that 'the conditions that would normally produce refugees no longer exist' in Chin province. Most Christians in Myanmar come from ethnic minorities. Kachin Christians in northern Myanmar are already facing a genocidal campaign of ethnic cleansing by the military. The thousands of Chin Christian refugees now face a terrible choice: risk returning to a place of conflict and persecution, or remain as illegal immigrants facing a life of poverty or potential imprisonment. To understand the situation better, see <https://missionsbox.org/news/making-sense-myanmar-chin-kachin-shan-wa-states-uwsa/>

Pray: for these refugees, as they have a great decision to make, that it will be the right one for them. Pray also that God will enable peaceful living for those who return to their homeland. (Isaiah 49:13b)

More: barnabasfund.org/en/news/chin-christians-stripped-of-refugee-status-may-be-forced-to-return-to-face-persecution-in

Yemen: 85,000 children have starved to death

Save the Children (SCF), using UN data, have found that huge numbers of children under 5 perished from severe hunger. Some 84,701 children may have died between April 2015 and October 2018 because of a lack of food. Parents had to witness their children wasting away, unable to do anything about it. Since the Saudi-Emirati military intervention in March 2015, commercial imports of food through the vital Hodeidah port have been reduced by more than 55,000 tonnes a month, enough to meet the needs of 4.4 million people, half of whom are children, SCF said. The World Food Programme says that up to 14 million Yemenis are now at risk of starvation as fighting rages on in Hodeidah. 'Any further decline in imports could well lead directly to famine,' it warned. Multiple past attempts to hold negotiations between the government alliance and Houthis have failed.

Pray: for all civilian families caught up in the war in Yemen. Pray that the port of Hodeidah will be allowed to receive and distribute enough food for all to stay alive. Pray also for an early meeting to discuss a peaceful settlement. (Isaiah 2:4)

More: www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/11/yemen-85000-children-died-starvation-181121041742347.html

Guatemala: thousands flee as volcano erupts

Almost 4,000 people have been evacuated from the slopes of the Fuego volcano after it began erupting on 18 November, with ash and lava spewing from its crater. This comes five months after almost 200 people were buried by volcanic ash and mud during a violent eruption. That eruption generated pyroclastic flows - fast-moving mixtures of very hot gas and volcanic matter - which engulfed whole communities. Volcanologists say that this time, lava is rising 500m above the volcano's crater. The ash cloud towers one kilometre above the 3,763-metre tall volcano. Fuego is one of Latin America's most active volcanoes.

Pray: for those affected, that they will be accommodated until it is safe to return home or other long-term alternatives are provided. (Rev 6:12b-13)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-46261168

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