

Prayer Alert

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Lift up your heads, you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. (Psalm 24:7)

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

'I can't believe this is happening'

Many thousands of Christians came to Melbourne for 'Awakening Australia', as part of a mission to bring 100,000 Australians to Jesus. Leaders spent the weekend preaching the gospel, leading people to Christ, and commissioning them to share the love of Jesus with others. Participants included Bethel Music, Todd White, Heidi Baker, Jake Hamilton, Daniel Kolenda, and Bill Johnson. 'Hundreds were born of God as they responded to Jesus. There is truly something remarkable happening in Australia! There is an Awakening, a sound in God's people here, that will shake the nation', said Ben Fitzgerald, leader of Awakening Europe. The weekend saw powerful moments of freedom, deliverance and salvation, followed by mass baptisms for those who gave their lives to Christ. Thousands proclaimed the gospel in the streets. 'I can't believe this is happening in Australia,' Fitzgerald said.

Praise: God for the changed spiritual atmosphere in Melbourne; thank Him for breaking strongholds and opening hearts to respond to His truth. (John 8:32)

More: www1.cbn.com/cbnnews/cwn/2018/november/i-cant-believe-this-is-happening-thousands-experience-gospel

Canopy of prayer over Europe

There are men and women who pray in the European Commission, even though it adopts a neutral position towards all religion and any display of it. However, this does not mean that religion and beliefs are banned from Commission buildings. About 175 staff members, from different denominations and nationalities, take part in one of the seven prayer meetings that gather on a weekly basis on Commission premises. Numbers vary as many can only take short breaks because of their heavy workload. Each prayer group in principle is independent of the others, although there have been some joint events in recent years.

Praise: God for informed prayers covering the European Parliament, EU, and Council. (Colossians 1:9b)

More: gallery.mailchimp.com/ffd99da83edd4244458b59317/files/b81b0f7d-47ec-4bc4-ad49-532fdbde51ca/Canopy_54_English.pdf

British Isles & Ireland

Scotland's intercessors: 'united we stand'

'As believers in Almighty God we have the authority to call for divine order in the Government, in Brexit, in the economy, and in every section of society. This is a "Daniel" moment when God's people can come before Him, crying out for His mercy and forgiveness as we confess our sins as a nation and call for His will to be done, in these crucial days. On 30 November Christians across Scotland and the nations will be united in prayer for the Prime Minister, Cabinet, MPs, Scottish First Minister, her Cabinet, and MSPs. We are praying for wisdom, clarity and unity. We can add our voices on that day, and in the coming days pray for our MPs by name. We must avoid being influenced by anger, fear, confusion, criticism or division, and instead lift our eyes to the One with all the answers, confident that as we do so it's not our battle, it's His battle!'

Pray: for God's wisdom to guide MPs' decisions as they consider how to vote in December. May reasoned debate replace angry argument, and may God inspire results. (Heb.12:27)

More: mailchi.mp/09b1f27adcf0/pray-without-ceasing-pfs-newsletter-2198121?e=509d356d4f

Irish church leaders pray together for Brexit

Representatives from the Roman Catholics, Methodists, Presbyterians, and the Church of Ireland met in Belfast on 22 November to discuss the Brexit challenges and pray. In a joint statement, they said that relations between people in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, and between the Republic and the UK, had 'improved and deepened over the past thirty years', and that the message of Jesus to 'love your neighbour' was guiding their response to Brexit. They added. 'We pray at this time that the tensions which the Brexit negotiations entail will not be allowed to undermine the good relationships and mutual understanding which are so important for us to work together for the common good.' They pleaded with people in positions of leadership to 'keep the debate around Brexit civil, to speak with grace, and to weigh their words carefully'.

Pray: for public representatives to respect the integrity of those who differ from them. (1 Peter 2:17)

More: www.christiantoday.com/article/irish-church-leaders-praying-brexit-will-not-undermine-peaceful-relations/131018.htm

Iranian refugees entering UK

Many Iranian families settled in London after fleeing the former Shah and later fleeing his overthrewer, Ayatollah Khomeini. 2001 brought fresh asylum movements of Farsi-speaking refugees, from Western Europe and Eurasia. Now there is a new wave of asylum seekers. In November, 78 of the 100+ refugees rescued in the English Channel were Iranian families. They were rescued by UK and French border force vessels from unsafe dinghies, or when entering the port of Dover on stolen French fishing boats. Some have been apprehended clambering up Folkestone's rocks. The Home Office said, 'We have stepped up deployments of our coastal patrol vessels along the south-east coast. However, this is not an issue that can be resolved by maritime resources alone.' Iranian migrants in northern France said that they are determined to take whatever risks necessary to enter Britain. See <https://www.itv.com/news/2018-11-26/the-iranian-migrants-in-calais-determined-to-enter-britain-at-any-cost/>

Pray: for God to keep desperate families safe, and direct border force and law enforcement agencies to identify and dismantle organised people-smuggling. (Psalm 22:11)

More: www.theguardian.com/world/2018/nov/18/nine-suspected-migrants-intercepted-at-folkestone

Lambeth Conference: proclaiming good news

The Archbishop of Canterbury has set out his vision for the next once-in-a-decade meeting of the bishops of the Anglican Communion, in 2020. He said, 'The world needs the good news of Jesus Christ; it needs to see it in our actions, envy it in our love together, and hear it in confident proclamation of the good news of Jesus.' He acknowledged the ongoing disagreements over sexuality and the interpretation of Scripture. 'We have very important differences, but we must show that we respect each other as sisters and brothers in Christ, and that we learn to disagree in a way that demonstrates that we love and value each other. Whatever views we come with, we come to be under the authority of Scripture, and inspired by the Spirit.' He is currently sending invitations to every active bishop (and spouse) in the Anglican Communion.

Pray: for the scholars preparing Bible studies and reflections for the conference to hear God's Spirit clearly directing them. (Psalm 119:105)

More: www.anglicannews.org/news/2018/11/archbishop-hopes-lambeth-conference-will-be-confident-proclamation-of-good-news-of-jesus.aspx

Trans guidance for Scottish schools 'harmful'

Rev David Robertson, former Moderator of the Free Church of Scotland, said new guidance on transgenderism sent to Scottish schools is 'harmful and totalitarian'. The document, 'Supporting Transgender Young People', was partly funded by the Scottish government and created in partnership with LGBT Youth Scotland and the Scottish Trans Alliance. It says that teachers should not inform parents of a child's desire to change gender unless the child agrees, and allow children to use whichever toilet and changing room facilities they prefer, adding, 'If parents voice concerns about their child sharing toilets and/or changing rooms with a trans learner, they should be reminded of the school's ethos of inclusion, equality and respect'. The guidance also recommends gender-neutral dress code options and allowing students to compete in sports according to their gender identity.

Pray: for this 'guidance' to be challenged and subjected to consultation, evaluation, and risk assessments before being inserted in curricula. (Genesis 1:27)

More: www.christiantoday.com/uk/new-trans-guidance-for-scottish-schools-is-harmful-says-church-minister/131065.htm

Government divorce reform consultation

The Government proposes to entirely remove fault from divorce law and replace it with a notification system. This would mean one spouse could end their marriage, whenever they wanted, by notifying the court and after a short period of time receive the final divorce decree, amounting to 'no reason' divorce. Fault sets out the high aspiration for marriage as a lifelong union. Many believe removing it would increase divorce rates, fundamentally change what marriage means, and increase the number of children living in broken families. Care (Christian Action Research and Education) is concerned that these proposals could fundamentally change what marriage means, leading to unstable situations where individual autonomy is prioritised in the law above children or the marriage. With this in mind Care has produced a short briefing paper with suggested points to make in responding to the consultation using an online form: see 'More' for further details. Submissions must be made before 10 December.

Pray: for irretrievable breakdown to be retained as the only ground for divorce. (Hebrews 13:4a)

More: care.org.uk/sites/default/files/Reform%20of%20the%20legal%20requirements%20for%20divorce%20-%20Supporter%20Briefing.pdf

Extortionate funeral costs

Church treasurer Chris Harvey was shocked when quoted over £4,000 for her mother's funeral, even though people could walk to the church. The £2bn funeral services sector now faces a major investigation. The Competition and Markets Authority said it has 'serious concerns' about above-inflation price rises. Cremation fees have risen by 84% since 2008. Chris had considered using the same funeral director they used when her father died years earlier, but the business had now become part of the Dignity chain, and she was shocked at their quotation. A church treasurer herself, she knew that relatively little of that money went to the church. She found another funeral director, saved £1,400, and donated the savings to the hospice where her mother died. People arranging a funeral could save £1,000+ by shopping around, but distressed families usually don't do so.

Pray: for funeral directors to be made aware of the distress caused by these huge price increases. (Psalm 15:5)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-46384457

Europe

Macedonia: unlawful asylum

Nikola Gruevski, former prime minister of Macedonia, has reportedly been granted asylum by the Hungary, after fleeing his home country in what seems to be an attempt to avoid a two-year prison sentence. He has been convicted for unduly influencing public officials in the purchase of a luxury car during his tenure as prime minister. In 2016, he stepped down from his post following his implication in a wiretapping scandal that led to one of three pending trials against him. Gruevski's supporters claim that he is the victim of a political 'witch-hunt'. By granting him asylum, the Hungarian government is ignoring international judiciary standards and agreements such as the European Convention on Extradition, which applies to both countries. [See also https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-46223909](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-46223909)

Pray: for Gruevski to face corruption charges in a free and fair hearing before a court of law. (Psalm 9:16)

More: www.rferl.org/a/hungary-reportedly-grants-gruevski-asylum-macedonia-files-extradition-request/29611350.html

Spain: clean-up needed

Last year an investigation revealed that the ruling elite of Azerbaijan operated a €2.5 billion slush fund and international money-laundering scheme, known as the Azerbaijani Laundromat. Three Spanish politicians (Pedro Agramunt, Agustín Conde Bajén and Jordi Xuclá), delegates to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), are suspected of benefiting from the Laundromat in return for watering down human rights criticism of the country's repressive authoritarian regime - including vote-rigging in the 2015 election. Later an independent investigation found that Azerbaijan had played a role in Agramunt's appointment as political party leader and PACE president. He had rigged votes at PACE in favour of Azerbaijan, and removed criticism of its authorities in draft reports on Azerbaijan human rights. These Spanish politicians have faced no criminal penalties, and the Council of Europe admits that not enough has been done.

Pray: for national authorities and European countries to launch criminal investigations into Azerbaijani Laundromat. (Proverbs 28:15)

More: www.transparency.org/news/feature/clean_up_spain_justice_for_azerbaijans_reputation_laundering_in_europe

Worldwide

Post-Brexit doubts

President Trump publicly doubted Theresa May's Brexit plan: 'I think we have to take a look seriously whether or not the UK is allowed to trade with us'. The British parliament will vote on the withdrawal agreement on 11 December. Jean-Claude Juncker warned MPs planning to send May back to Brussels by voting down her Brexit deal that it would take the EU just 'seconds' to crush their hopes. President Macron said that the UK will be trapped in a customs union after Brexit, unless Downing Street offers European fishermen full access to British waters during the trade negotiations. However, Iceland's foreign minister said, 'The British could learn from Iceland when it comes to creating a new fisheries policy after Brexit' ([see http://www.ruv.is/frett/iceland-could-help-uk-fishing-after-brexite](http://www.ruv.is/frett/iceland-could-help-uk-fishing-after-brexite)). We can pray for God to ignite political wisdom and accurate insights in all politicians and media commentators. Pray also for inspired visions and purposes to be birthed in captains of commerce and industry.

Pray: for the removal of all plans opposed to God's plans, and for truth, humility and justice to grace every conversation and agreement. (Matthew 6:10)

More: edition.cnn.com/2018/11/27/politics/trump-brexit-deal-claims-gbr-intl/index.html

Iran: poverty rising

The World Bank reported that after sanctions were removed in 2016 there were many positive economic developments in Iran. In November 2018 the US reimposed sanctions and requested India, China and EU countries, to stop working with Iran. Sanctions are major causes of food insecurity, mass suffering, and eventual high poverty rates. Oil is the largest source of income. When there is no oil coming, there are no US dollars. Everything purchased in Iran is with US dollars. 'No dollars' causes the value of the Iranian rial to fall drastically, causing many companies to go bankrupt and having to let a lot of employees go. Sanctions increase the gap between the rich and poor. However there are a number of Christian business and mission initiatives established in Iran, including church-planting via small businesses. [See https://www.globalconnections.org.uk/mission-issues/business-and-mission](https://www.globalconnections.org.uk/mission-issues/business-and-mission)

Pray: for Christian outreach to Iranians who are facing poverty due to sanctions. (Proverbs 16:9)

More: borgenproject.org/tag/poverty-in-iran/

China: Christian growth despite Orwellian pressures

China's planned artificial intelligence-controlled 'social credit' system is bringing a new depth of intervention into the lives of its citizens, including Christians. A vast network of advanced surveillance technology uses monitors individuals' location, records their

facial expressions and body language, and tracks all movements, giving them 'social scores' as they go about their daily lives. The expanding system could severely affect Christians if they are deemed to demonstrate 'dissent'. In September 2018 the largest house church in Beijing was shut down for refusing to have security cameras inside their building, and 344 pastors called on the authorities to allow full religious freedom, adding, 'For the sake of the gospel, we are prepared to bear the loss of our freedom and of our lives.' Meanwhile the Bible Society reported the Bible is China's best-seller, even though there are only 4,600 ordained pastors. On average, every pastor is responsible for 6,700 Christians.

Pray: for God to grow His Chinese family as they face adversity and limited resources. (Mark 16:20)

More: barnabasfund.org/en/news/chinas-dystopian-present-could-social-scoring-surveillance-increase-pressure-on-christians

Ukraine - prayer request

The Baptist Union is asking churches everywhere to pray for Ukraine, where martial law was imposed following a clash with Russia on 25 November in the Kerch Strait (a body of water separating the Black and Azov Seas). Ukraine's navy reported three vessels being seized and sailors injured during the attack. The Ukraine parliament and the UN Security Council agreed to impose martial law, which will affect daily life drastically. At the time of writing President Poroshenko is urging NATO to send ships to the Sea of Azov, 'to assist Ukraine and provide security'. Coincidentally, the UK defence secretary committed troops and the deployment of a Royal Navy ship to the Ukraine two days before this incident. He said it was a direct response to Russian aggression, adding, 'As long as Ukraine faces Russian hostilities, it will find a steadfast partner in the UK'. See <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/ukraine-russia-uk-defence-secretary-gavin-williamson-royal-navy-ship-a8645251.html>

Pray: for God's intervention and direction to all governments involved. Ask Him to calm the troubled waters of the Kerch Strait and the land surrounding it. (Psalm 46:1)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-46381166

DRC: Ebola and militia skirmishes

It is the worst Ebola outbreak to have struck the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) - and the most complex one. Since August the authorities, together with a host of partners, have been trying to contain the disease in the eastern North Kivu and Ituri provinces. By 21 November, there were 373 suspected Ebola cases, 347 confirmed cases, and 217+ deaths. There is still no cure, but it is hoped that a vaccination programme will be the next step towards a more effective management of future outbreaks. Controlling Ebola is dangerous and difficult because of violent attacks in the DRC by ADF militia. On 24 November clashes broke out 'a few metres' from a local emergency centre and the hotels of several response teams. On the same day WHO said 16 staff members had been temporarily evacuated for psychological care, after a shell hit the building they were staying in. UN peacekeepers repelled the offensive: see <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/11/drc-suspends-efforts-fight-ebola-beni-deadly-violence-181118133807306.html>

Pray: for the virus to be contained in spite of the security crisis. (Proverbs 2:8)

More: www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/11/ebola-crisis-drc-181125140426233.html

Yemen: peace talks to resume?

Peace talks between all sides in Yemen's conflict could resume soon in Sweden. The date could still slip, but the aspiration is for Houthi rebels and the Yemeni government to meet early in December. They would be supported by a Saudi-backed coalition. Pray for every person needed for these initial talks to make an appearance in Sweden. A demand for 50 wounded Houthi fighters to be transported to Muscat for treatment must be met before Houthi leaders will attend the talks: this should happen soon. Pray for Britain, the US, and other allies to have clear positive conversations with Mohamed Ali al-Houthi, head of the rebels. Pray for a spirit of mutual trust to be developed. and for communication links to be strengthened. Pray for an increased distribution of UN aid, and for the desperate humanitarian crisis to end.

Pray: for Martin Griffiths, the UN special envoy for Yemen charged with brokering the talks, and for Yemeni president Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi. (1 Timothy 2:1-2)

More: news.sky.com/story/yemen-peace-talks-to-resume-next-week-after-long-delay-11565051

India: persecution and church growth

Persecution is intensifying. Extreme Hindus aim to eradicate every Muslim and Christian from India by 2021. In some places, they seem to have support from the government and the police. Pastors have been killed and their own family accused of the murder, despite eyewitness reports about Hindu extremists. This is also a time of unprecedented church growth with many testimonies of miracles and amazing moves of the Holy Spirit amongst young people. The remarkable children's prayer movement is growing. One district had no Christians 10 years ago and now has 200 churches. Persecution is more likely in traditional rural areas and in the north, but radical Hindus can - and do - arise anywhere.

Pray: for God's Holy Spirit to bring more protection, miracles and blessings. (2 Samuel 5:10)

More: www.worldprayer.org.uk/wpc-world-news/item/11193-three-nations-to-pray-for-right-now

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