

# Prayer Alert

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When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. (Matthew 2:10-11)

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

### Prince Charles praises Middle East Christians

Just days after the Archbishop of Canterbury called on the Government to do more to aid Christian communities in regions facing 'imminent extinction' (see <https://news.sky.com/story/christians-in-middle-east-face-extinction-archbishop-warns-11570298>), Prince Charles has praised their 'extraordinary grace and capacity for forgiveness'. Speaking at a special Advent service for persecuted Christians at Westminster Abbey, he said he had been 'deeply humbled' by meeting Christians from the Middle East 'who, with such inspiring faith and courage, are battling oppression and persecution'. He said, 'Extremism and division are by no means inevitable. In this season of Advent, as we celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, who himself knew exile, injustice and suffering, I can only assure you of our steadfast support and most heartfelt prayers as you take forward your works of restoration, justice and healing, so that God's will might be done on earth as it is in heaven.'

Praise: God for declarations from church and royals regarding Middle East Christians. (Matthew 6:14)

More: [barnabasfund.org/en/news/prince-charles-praises-extraordinary-grace-and-capacity-for-forgiveness](http://barnabasfund.org/en/news/prince-charles-praises-extraordinary-grace-and-capacity-for-forgiveness)

### Rapper's 'sabbatical' to study the Bible

US artist Chance the Rapper has revealed he is taking a 'sabbatical' to 'learn the word of God'. He said he made the decision in order to set a good example to his newborn nephew. In an Instagram post liked by over 1.3 million people, the *I'm the One* hit maker said, 'I'm on a plane headed out of the country on my first sabbatical. I'm going away to learn the Word of God, which I am admittedly very unfamiliar with. I've been brought up by my family to know Christ, but I haven't taken it upon myself to really just take a couple of days and read my Bible. We all quote scripture and tell each other what God likes and doesn't like, but how much time do we spend as followers of Jesus to really just read and KNOW his Word?' Earlier this year he won three Grammy awards, and when accepting one of them he said, 'Glory be to God. I claim this victory in the name of the Lord.'

Praise: God for Chance's openness about his faith in interviews and on stage during performances. (Romans 1:16)

More: [www.premierchristianradio.com/News/World/Chance-the-Rapper-starts-sabbatical-to-study-the-Bible](http://www.premierchristianradio.com/News/World/Chance-the-Rapper-starts-sabbatical-to-study-the-Bible)

## British Isles & Ireland

### Brexit - what might happen?

On 12 December, a majority of Conservative MPs declared their confidence in Theresa May as party leader. The next day she went to Brussels to talk to EU leaders, who have told her that there could be clarifications but no major renegotiation. The crucial vote in Parliament on the Brexit deal has now been postponed until January 2019. What might happen if it is rejected? Some believe a no-deal Brexit would be an act of national self-harm: others think a Norway-style deal would make the UK a rule-taker,

not a rule-maker. Some believe a general election would risk another hung parliament and continued paralysis: others that a second referendum would intensify social divisions and further undermine parliamentary sovereignty. Britain might have to choose one of these courses of action. See <https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/uk/2018/12/conservative-mps-can-remove-theresa-may-they-have-no-route-harder-brexit>

Pray: for the best possible outcome to emerge from this uncertainty. (Proverbs 16:9)

More: [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-46560807](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-46560807)

### The Nolan principles and our leaders

The Government website states, 'The Nolan principles are the basis of the ethical standards expected of public office holders'. Let's pray for our leaders to conform to these seven principles as they walk the Brexit tightrope. 1) Selflessness: acting solely in terms of the public interest, not in order to gain financial or other benefits for themselves, family or friends. 2) Integrity: must not place themselves under any obligation to outside individuals or organisations seeking to influence them in their official duties. 3) Objectivity: in public business, appointments, awarding contracts, and recommendations should be made on merit. 4) Accountability: be accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and submit to scrutiny appropriate to their office. 5) Openness: be as open as possible about all decisions and actions they take, giving reasons for their decisions, and restrict information only when the wider public interest demands. 6) Honesty: must declare any private interests relating to their duties and resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest. 7) Leadership: must promote and support these principles by leadership and example. See also <https://www.leadinggovernance.com/blog/nolan-principles-20-years>

Pray: for the Government's behaviour in public life to adhere to these principles. (Psalm 31:3)

More: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life)

### UK cyber-security

Recently, questions were raised around UK complacency regarding cyber-security. Australia and New Zealand have refused to allow the Chinese firm Huawei to supply mobile networks with 5G equipment, saying it posed 'significant security risks' - a polite way of saying that Beijing might use 5G to disrupt communications in a future dispute. Canada recently arrested the Huawei founder's daughter. America wants her extradited, stating that China is aggressively engaged in undermining US national security interests. The UK could be the only country allowing Huawei to play a key role in delivering the data on which everything from self-driving cars to smart city sensors will rely. Many believe that if Huawei is banned, China might refuse to do business with us in other fields post-Brexit. See also world article 2, and <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-46462858>

Pray: for the Government to have great wisdom about which technology to use for 5G equipment. (Proverbs 2:10)

More: [www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-46370014?intlink_from_url=https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/topics/cjnw18q4z2t/huawei&link_location=live-reporting-story)

[46370014?intlink\\_from\\_url=https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/topics/cjnw18q4z2t/huawei&link\\_location=live-reporting-story](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/topics/cjnw18q4z2t/huawei&link_location=live-reporting-story)

### Homelessness at Christmas

Solicitors working on legal aid housing contracts have to turn people away every day, but there is nowhere to send them, so many become homeless (see <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-46357169>). In Scotland on 8 December, Sleep in the Park saw 12,000 people sleeping rough, to raise money for the homeless. Although homelessness legislation in Britain means children should never have to sleep rough, it happens. A video of a child sobbing after being told she must spend her third Christmas in a hostel ([watch https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6467647/Video-Irish-girl-four-crying-told-spend-Christmas-homeless.html](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6467647/Video-Irish-girl-four-crying-told-spend-Christmas-homeless.html)) has highlighted the plight of young victims of Ireland's housing crisis. Please pray for the work of Crisis, the Salvation Army, Shelter, the Big Issue Foundation, Centrepoint, St Mungo's, Emmaus UK, Homeless Link, and all churches and agencies who work tirelessly to help the homeless.

Pray: for God to provide finance and manpower for all working to change people's lives. (Proverbs 24:3,4)

More: [www.salvationarmy.org.uk/christmas-present-appeal](http://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/christmas-present-appeal)

### UK courts' 'medieval mindset' on assisted dying

Assisted dying is once again being discussed in the media and could be discussed again in Parliament, after terminally-ill Shropshire man Noel Conway told his local paper that the UK courts have a medieval mindset over assisted dying. Mr Conway, 68, who has motor neurone disease, lost a Court of Appeal challenge in June against an earlier High Court rejection of his case that the ban on assisted dying was an unjustified interference with his human rights. He sought to challenge that at a Supreme Court hearing, but Lady Hale, Lord Reed and Lord Kerr declined permission for an appeal. Now he wants MPs to step in to overturn that decision. He wants a legal assisted death even though he has less than six months to live.

Pray: for Mr Conway to have peace of mind, and for MPs not to challenge UK laws. (Psalm 16:11)

More: [www.shropshirestar.com/news/health/2018/12/08/uk-has-medieval-mindset-says-noel/](http://www.shropshirestar.com/news/health/2018/12/08/uk-has-medieval-mindset-says-noel/)

### Grenfell Tower at Christmas

MP Emma Dent Coad's seat includes Grenfell Tower. She has urged the government to delay the launch of Universal Credit in the area, as it could leave many of her constituents without money over Christmas. The scheme should come to North Kensington thirteen days before Christmas. A constituent assessed monthly and paid £60 for each Friday in that month would receive £300 in November, a month with five Fridays, but receive £240 in December which has four Fridays. Also they may have to wait the estimated five weeks for benefits to come through. A DWP spokesperson said there were special measures in place in preparation for Universal Credit roll-out in North Kensington. Last Christmas extra money promised to Grenfell Tower survivors and evacuees to help cover the cost of Christmas did not arrive in time for 18 households. Pray this will not be repeated in 2018.

Pray: for Grenfell survivors to receive fitting help and support at Christmas. (Leviticus 25:35)

More: [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-46484217](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-46484217)

## Europe

### Raising awareness of climate change

An artwork was unveiled in London on 11 December, to coincide with the climate change conference taking place in Poland. Centuries-old Greenland icebergs weighing between 1.5 and 6 tonnes keep melting. This installation seeks to bring the effects of climate change closer to home, putting people in direct contact with its effects. The icebergs remind us we have only twelve years to limit the worst effects of climate change, and they also represent another 10,000 blocks of ice which are falling from the same ice sheet in Greenland every single second. 'People need to face the tangible consequences of their actions', states the artist on his website. Meanwhile NASA has detected new signs of large glaciers in East Antarctica losing ice. This area has long been considered more stable than West Antarctica.

Pray: for this artwork to help people to understand the quantities of melting water; and for raised awareness of the urgent need to reduce greenhouse emissions. (Mark 8:18)

More: [www.livingit.euronews.com/2018/12/12/our-future-is-melting-away-and-this-artist-wants-us-to-see-it](http://www.livingit.euronews.com/2018/12/12/our-future-is-melting-away-and-this-artist-wants-us-to-see-it)

### Importance of the family

In addition to all Europe's other problems, falling birth rates pose a huge threat to family and national life. At present there is no EU member state that has a birth rate high enough to enable the renewal of the population that is ageing. The demographers and political decision-makers need to pay attention to this situation and find solutions through policy-making. Last year, more deaths than births were recorded across the EU, meaning that the natural change of population was negative. Pray for a political and social environment that favours marriage and family. The Gospel is the profound response to change people's hearts and convert corrupt systems in our societies.

Pray: for God to secure the elderly, the rights of youth, and the future of children. (Psalm 124:8)

More: [gallery.mailchimp.com/ffd99da83edd4244458b59317/files/98bc153f-dc30-4cd4-8f13-116da34a6497/Canopy\\_55\\_English.pdf](http://gallery.mailchimp.com/ffd99da83edd4244458b59317/files/98bc153f-dc30-4cd4-8f13-116da34a6497/Canopy_55_English.pdf)

## Worldwide

### China: unreported persecution

A recent gathering of Chinese believers at IHOP, Kansas City told harrowing tales of persecution. An intercessor writes, 'One particular Chinese brother greatly impacted us with his story. He had been in prison for many years, multiple times because of his faith, and was forced to watch his wife being tortured in front of his very eyes. He refused to denounce his faith [trust] in Jesus Christ in the midst of these unthinkable circumstances. Our perspective on God's goodness can be greatly challenged by these types of story. The truth is that Jesus has already told us that if we lived for Him that we would suffer persecution, as He did. He told us, "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven!" (Matthew 5:10-12)' The event's theme, 'Resetting our focus back on the first and second commandments of Jesus', had a strong sense of Philippians 1:8: 'God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.'

Pray: for awareness to be raised of unreported outrages against Chinese believers. (Psalm 5:9)

More: [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLgLSA1gHCqC\\_wqOFvR27br8s7U1D2KhnH](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLgLSA1gHCqC_wqOFvR27br8s7U1D2KhnH)

### Indonesia: United Prayer Rising 2019

A World Generation Gathering is about to see the Holy Spirit poured out in Jakarta between 23 and 26 January 2019. A similar event in South Korea in 2016 saw a wonderful move of God inspire and anoint all who attended and the ministries and the countries they represented. For an exciting report on that event, click the 'More' button. Please pray for all who will be in Jakarta's prayer and worship celebration to hear God's wake-up call on their lives. May every follower of Jesus have a heart prepared by the Holy Spirit, so that they share all that God is doing in their life boldly and powerfully in a way that millions more will be inspired to be Christ-followers. Pray for the anointing of intercession to fall on every speaker, musician, and delegate. Pray for all technology to be trouble-free, and for the funding and travel arrangements of all involved.

See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3xrEI4UdsTE&feature=youtu.be>

Pray: for the Body of Christ to intercede for His Kingdom and His glory to infuse nations. May more young people from around the world be inspired to attend. (Matthew 6:10)

More: [www.unitedprayerrising.com](http://www.unitedprayerrising.com)

### Geopolitics of 5G

Although Donald Trump and President Xi recently announced a trade agreement between the US and China, some believe 5G mobile networks might yet spark a further 'trade war'. These mobile data networks will be rolled out commercially over the next decade, preparing the way for driverless cars and smart cities. Some say 5G technology, 100 times faster than today's connections, could be a bigger leap forward than the original internet, and countries using it successfully will dominate 21st-century trade and commerce. Whoever builds and controls the new networks will take on huge political and economic importance. The US now wants to stop Chinese technology companies from taking a lead in this field. China is racing to gain a head start in these new technologies, and views 5G as potentially the key to 21st-century superpower status. See also UK article 3.

Pray: for nations to work together to make 5G politically and economically helpful. (3 John 8)

More: [mailchi.mp/eurasiagroup/signal-geopolitics-of-5g-political-ftbol-in-argentina-us-climate-change-pressure-cooker?e=2b376728db](http://mailchi.mp/eurasiagroup/signal-geopolitics-of-5g-political-ftbol-in-argentina-us-climate-change-pressure-cooker?e=2b376728db)

### Christmas: a dangerous season for some

In France the security alert system is at its highest level, after an extremist gunman opened fire at a Christmas market in Strasbourg, killing two people and injuring at least twelve. Christmas can be a dangerous season for many. Last year suicide

bombers killed nine and wounded over 50 people attending pre-Christmas church services in Pakistan. In Nigeria, Boko Haram have often carried out Christmas attacks. In the West, Christmas can mean financial strain, pressures, loneliness or simply a time with relatives where old tensions come to the fore and explode, sometimes with devastating results. For example, last year in Canada a father who had custody of his daughters (aged six and four) on Christmas Day killed them both and attempted suicide. Pray for peace to replace turmoil, restraint to replace violence, and harmony to replace disagreement wherever it threatens. Pray that police and other agencies can detect and remove danger from vulnerable community spaces.

Pray: for all affected by the Strasbourg attack to have comfort and support. (2 Corinthians 1:4)

More: [www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/strasbourg-terror-manhunt-live-update-cherif-chekatt-shooting-christmas-market-police-france-a8679036.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/strasbourg-terror-manhunt-live-update-cherif-chekatt-shooting-christmas-market-police-france-a8679036.html)

### **China: church leaders and churchgoers detained**

In Beijing, police have detained dozens of churchgoers and leaders of Early Rain Church in Chengdu, one of China's most prominent Protestant 'house' churches, in the latest government action against unregistered religious groups. Members of the church have been unable to contact pastor Wang Yi, the church's founder, or his wife, and church groups on the instant messaging platform WeChat have also been blocked. China's constitution guarantees religious freedom, but since President Xi Jinping took office six years ago, the government has tightened restrictions on religions seen as a challenge to the authority of the ruling Communist Party. The law requires that all places of worship register and submit to government oversight, but some churches have declined to register, for various reasons.

Pray: for the release of these and all other believers being detained, and for religious freedoms to be restored in China. (Matthew 5:44)

More: [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLgLSA1gHCqC\\_wqOFvR27br8s7U1D2KhnH](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLgLSA1gHCqC_wqOFvR27br8s7U1D2KhnH)

### **Egypt: extremist attacks church workers**

Wielding an iron bar in one hand and holding a Quran in the other, a 22-year-old Muslim extremist shouting 'Allahu Akbar - death to the apostates' broke into an eastern Cairo church in an early morning attack on 11 November. He assaulted staff preparing bread for morning communion. After injuring two people with his weapon, he was overpowered by church members who restrained him until police arrived. He showed no remorse in police custody, shouting, 'Give me your gun so I may kill them. If you don't, you'd be an infidel like them.' Egyptian churches are becoming targeted more frequently. On Palm Sunday 2017, suicide attacks on churches in Tanta and Alexandria claimed the lives of 50 and injured 90. Pray for the protection of all Christians from such attacks, especially at Christmas.

Pray: for 'peace and joy' to replace hate and anger in the atmosphere over Egypt. (Psalm 34:14)

More: [barnabasfund.org/en/news/extremist-with-iron-rod-attacks-church-workers-in-cairo-egypt](http://barnabasfund.org/en/news/extremist-with-iron-rod-attacks-church-workers-in-cairo-egypt)

### **Kenya: end police abuse of power**

Hundreds of millions of the poorest people in the developing world are abused by police who extort bribes and brutalise innocent citizens, or are held in abusive pre-trial detention. In many countries, parents teach their children to run from the police to stay safe from harm, rather than running to them for help. Recently IJM received a prayer request from the Kenya team which facilitates dialogues with the family members of victims of extrajudicial killings. These dialogues create an opportunity for communities to share the realities of police abuse, bringing attention to the issue and creating an opportunity for leaders to recognise the need for change and improved policing. Please pray that the stories of these families will inspire leaders to take the necessary steps to ensure that corrupt police no longer abuse their power, but protect the citizens of Kenya.

Pray: for the police to be seen as protectors of justice, not as agents of oppression and corruption. (James 2:15-16)

More: [www.ijm.org/our-work/police-abuse-of-power/](http://www.ijm.org/our-work/police-abuse-of-power/)

### **Pakistan expels Christian charities**

After a two-year battle to re-register their work, World Vision has been expelled from Pakistan, along with Catholic Relief Services and 16 other organisations, for 'deliberately spreading disinformation' and 'non-compliance'. World Vision has handed over responsibility for poverty-reduction and health programmes to the state and has complied with a 60-day deadline to leave. They regret the effect that the cessation of their work will have on the vulnerable communities where they worked, but respect the Government's decision as to who may work in the country. They have worked in Pakistan for thirteen years, helping 800,000 youngsters. They are currently discussing the possibility of re-starting work under new legal frameworks which the government may introduce at a later date. Catholic Relief Services, a charitable arm of the US Catholic Church, had been helping provide food, education and clean water in Pakistan since 1954.

Pray: for God to intervene and make it possible for Christian work to continue in 2019. (Psalm 2: 8b)

More: [www.premierchristianradio.com/News/World/Pakistan-expels-World-Vision-and-Catholic-Relief-Services](http://www.premierchristianradio.com/News/World/Pakistan-expels-World-Vision-and-Catholic-Relief-Services)

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