

# Prayer Alert

ISSUE 51-2025 | Friday 19 December 2025  
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An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.' (Matthew 1:20-21)

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

Let's cover the presidential, parliamentary and general elections taking place on 28 December in Central African Republic, Guinea, Kosovo and Myanmar. See the Prayer Alert 2025 [Elections Prayer Guide](#).



We invite the Prayer Alert community to join us on the free online Interseed House of Prayer app where we are praying and sharing thoughts on the weekly prayer guide issues and themes.

Interseed is available on the Android and iOS platforms. More info [HERE](#).

This is the final Prayer Alert for 2025! Our dedicated team will be taking a well-earned rest. We give thanks for millions of prayers that are mobilised each year through this initiative and look forward, God willing, to bringing you the next edition on Friday 9 January 2026.

Thank you for partnering with us in praying for the nations.

David Fletcher and the Prayer Alert team.

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## Praise Reports

### Christmas churchgoing: nearly half of Brits plan to attend

A new poll commissioned by Tearfund suggests a significant rise in Christmas church attendance across the UK, with nearly half of adults planning to attend a service or church event this year. The survey of two thousand adults found that 45% intended to go to church at Christmas, up from 40% last year, with Gen Z leading the trend. Six in ten young adults said they planned to attend, pointing to a growing openness to faith and community in their age group. Notably, attendance intentions among non-Christians also increased, with many reporting that church left them feeling joyful, peaceful, and hopeful. Tradition, atmosphere, and spiritual reflection were key motivations, while the poll also highlighted the vital practical role churches play. 42% of respondents said they or someone they knew had received support such as foodbanks, warm spaces, or free meals from a church over Christmas. Tearfund reports similar patterns in other countries: in the Central African Republic, Christmas gatherings draw entire communities together around worship, food, and hope. Churches continue serving faithfully long after the season ends.

Praise: God for stirring hearts this Christmas. May churches welcome seekers, strengthen communities, and lead many to lasting faith. (John 1:14)

More: [premierchristian.news/en/news/article/christmas-churchgoing-surges-as-nearly-half-of-brits-plan-to-attend-says-new-poll](http://premierchristian.news/en/news/article/christmas-churchgoing-surges-as-nearly-half-of-brits-plan-to-attend-says-new-poll)

### Keir Starmer: how the Church represents 'true Britain'

In an interview with Premier Christian News, Keir Starmer has spoken warmly about the importance of Christian values and the vital role churches play across the UK. Speaking after a Downing Street reception honouring about a hundred church volunteers, Starmer described faith as a 'north star' during times of insecurity, conflict, and economic pressure. He highlighted Christian values of compassion, dignity, and care for others as essential foundations in a divided world. Starmer praised church volunteers as representing 'the true Britain' - a nation marked by kindness, generosity, and a willingness to look out for one another. He warned that these qualities are increasingly challenged by voices seeking to divide society, and said the Church's quiet, faithful service tells a powerful story about national identity. From food provision to companionship and community support, he noted that churches step in where government cannot always reach. He also pledged closer partnership between government and churches, emphasising that this service continues year-round, not just at Christmas. Looking ahead to Christmas Day, Starmer said he plans to attend church with his family, welcoming a season of reflection, peace, and gratitude.

Praise: God for church volunteers modelling Christ's compassion, strengthening communities, and shining His light across Britain today. (Matthew 5:14)

More: [premierchristian.news/en/news/article/exclusive-starmer-tells-premier-church-volunteers-represent-true-britain](http://premierchristian.news/en/news/article/exclusive-starmer-tells-premier-church-volunteers-represent-true-britain)

## British Isles

### Bank of England expected to cut interest rates

The Bank of England is widely expected to cut interest rates, reducing the Bank rate from 4% to 3.75% - its lowest level since February 2023. Analysts anticipate a close vote among the nine-member Monetary Policy Committee, with some members still cautious about easing policy too quickly. If agreed, it would be the sixth rate cut since August last year, reflecting growing confidence that inflationary pressures are easing. New data from the Office for National Statistics show inflation falling more sharply than expected, from 3.6% in October to 3.2% in November. Although inflation remains above the Bank's 2% target, signs of rising unemployment and a sluggish economy are increasing pressure for action. Economists suggest cooling price pressures now outweigh previous concerns about cutting too soon. Lower interest rates are expected to bring modest relief to homeowners on tracker or variable-rate mortgages, with small monthly reductions in repayments. However, savers are likely to see reduced returns, as easy-access savings rates continue to decline. The decision highlights the delicate balance between easing household pressures and safeguarding long-term economic stability.

Pray: for economic stability, fairness, and compassion as financial decisions affect households, businesses, savers, and the vulnerable nationwide. (Proverbs 20:18)

More: [www.bbc.com/news/articles/cj01v7z73q1o](http://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cj01v7z73q1o)

### We need more people ready to fight, military chief says

Chief of the Defence Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Richard Knighton, has warned that the nation needs more people prepared to defend the country amid growing global instability and rising threats from Russia. He called for a 'whole-of-society response' to deter conflict, stressing the importance of strengthening regular forces, reserves, cadets, and the defence workforce. While he said the likelihood of a direct Russian attack on the UK remains remote, he highlighted intensifying hybrid threats, including cyber-attacks, suspected sabotage, and hostile surveillance near UK waters. He described Russia's military as increasingly sophisticated, combat-experienced, and expanding in hard power, despite setbacks in Ukraine. The UK, he said, must become a 'harder target' to avoid war rather than provoke it. Building national resilience, he argued, goes beyond military strength and includes universities, industry, energy, healthcare, and manufacturing. With defence spending set to rise sharply, he emphasised the need to inspire young people to pursue careers supporting national security. Recent investments include £50 million for new defence technical colleges to address critical skills gaps.

Pray: for peace, discernment, and restraint among nations, and for leaders to pursue security without drifting toward fear or conflict. (Proverbs 21:31)

More: [www.bbc.com/news/articles/c62vd7dkdpyo](http://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c62vd7dkdpyo)

### Nine-year-old girl murdered in Weston-super-Mare

Weston-super-Mare is in deep shock following the tragic death of nine-year-old Aria Thorpe, who was fatally stabbed at her home on 15 December. The police confirmed that she died at the scene after suffering a single stab wound. Emergency services were called, but despite their efforts, she could not be saved. Police have now released two photographs, which reflect a joyful, much-loved child, whose loss has devastated family, friends, and neighbours. A 15-year-old boy has been charged with Aria's murder and has been remanded into youth detention pending further court proceedings. Specialist police officers continue to support Aria's family, while schools and local agencies are providing care for those affected by this traumatic event. The family has asked for privacy as investigations continue. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cvgj05x91yxo>

Pray: for comfort for Aria's family, healing for the community, justice with mercy, and protection for other children. (Psalm 34:18)

More: [news.sky.com/story/boy-charged-with-murder-of-nine-year-old-girl-as-victim-named-13484630](https://news.sky.com/story/boy-charged-with-murder-of-nine-year-old-girl-as-victim-named-13484630)

### Teachers to be trained to spot early signs of misogyny in boys

The Government has announced new measures aimed at tackling violence against women and girls by addressing harmful attitudes at an early age. As part of a long-awaited strategy, teachers will be trained to recognise early signs of misogyny in boys and intervene before these views take root. Keir Starmer warned that 'toxic ideas' are often forming young and going unchallenged, noting research suggesting more than 40 per cent of young men hold favourable views of online misogynistic influencers. A £20 million package will support the strategy, including specialist teacher training on consent, online behaviour, and the risks of sharing intimate images. All secondary school pupils in England will be taught about healthy relationships, with mandatory lessons expected by 2029 following pilot schemes from 2026. An online helpline will also be launched for teenagers concerned about their own behaviour in relationships. The Government says early intervention is essential to prevent future harm, though critics warn that funding levels may be insufficient and that schools and victim support services are already under significant strain.

Pray: for protection of women and girls, godly character formation in young people, and wisdom for educators shaping hearts and attitudes. (Proverbs 4:23)

More: [news.sky.com/story/schools-will-have-to-teach-about-healthy-relationships-to-tackle-misogyny-13484951](https://news.sky.com/story/schools-will-have-to-teach-about-healthy-relationships-to-tackle-misogyny-13484951)

### Two arrested after police say they will act against intifada chants

Police have arrested two people for racially aggravated public order offences after chants calling for 'intifada' were allegedly shouted at a pro-Palestinian protest in central London. The arrests followed a joint announcement by the Metropolitan Police and Greater Manchester Police that they would take decisive action against placards and chants using the phrase 'globalise the intifada', warning that words can incite violence and cause serious harm. The move comes amid heightened concern following recent attacks on Jewish communities, including a mass shooting in Sydney and a knife attack at a synagogue in Manchester. Police say communities are increasingly anxious and that enhanced measures are needed, including increased patrols and protection around synagogues, schools, and community venues. Jewish leaders have welcomed the decision as a necessary step to challenge hateful rhetoric, while some pro-Palestinian groups have criticised it as an infringement on protest rights. Keir Starmer has announced increased funding for Jewish security and ordered a review of protest and hate crime laws, underscoring the seriousness of rising tensions and antisemitism in the UK.

Pray: for peace, protection for Jewish communities, restraint in public discourse, and justice that upholds truth without inflaming hatred. (Psalm 34:14)

More: [www.bbc.com/news/articles/cde65de81jgo](http://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cde65de81jgo)

## Bishops to take more time over same-sex blessings

Church of England bishops have decided to take more time before finalising proposals on same-sex blessings and clergy marriage rules, following continued disagreement across the Church. Meeting at Lambeth Palace, they did not reject the Living in Love and Faith (LLF) proposals but agreed that further reflection was needed before presenting a final position. The LLF process has been examining questions of identity, sexuality, relationships, and marriage for several years and remains one of the most sensitive issues facing the Church. In a statement, the Church acknowledged the deep hurt felt by many, particularly among LGBTQI+ people, while also recognising the strong convictions held across the Anglican spectrum. Archbishop of York Stephen Cottrell said that although delay may add to frustration, taking proper care and time is necessary given the pastoral and theological weight of the decisions involved. The bishops are expected to revisit the matter in January, with proposals anticipated at General Synod in February. Campaigners seeking greater inclusion have criticised the continued delay as painful, while others believe further discernment is essential to preserve unity, faithfulness to Scripture, and trust across the Church.

Pray: for humility, grace, truth, and unity within the Church as leaders seek Christ's heart amid deep disagreement. (Ephesians 4:15)  
More: [premierchristian.news/en/news/article/bishops-to-take-more-time-over-same-sex-blessings](https://premierchristian.news/en/news/article/bishops-to-take-more-time-over-same-sex-blessings)

## Europe

### Ukraine claims significant gain as European leaders meet

Ukraine has reported a significant battlefield development, with its armed forces reclaiming control over nearly 90% of the strategically important city of Kupiansk in the Kharkiv region. Commander-in-Chief Oleksandr Syrskyi announced the advance during a meeting with international allies, crediting targeted 'search-and-strike' operations and the resilience of his troops. Kupiansk, close to the Russian border, has long been a critical logistical hub and a focal point of intense fighting. Analysts say the Ukrainian gains could ease pressure on nearby frontline areas and disrupt Russian supply routes, though the wider conflict remains volatile, especially as winter conditions worsen. The update shows the fluid and contested nature of the war and the ongoing human and strategic costs of the conflict. Ukraine has also claimed to have destroyed a Russian submarine in the Black Sea: [see \(https://edition.cnn.com/2025/12/15/europe/ukraine-underwater-drone-submarine-novorossiysk-russia-intl\)](https://edition.cnn.com/2025/12/15/europe/ukraine-underwater-drone-submarine-novorossiysk-russia-intl) Meanwhile, in a crucial summit on 18 December, at the time of writing European leaders are deadlocked on the thorny issue of whether to use frozen Russian funds to help Ukraine. [See https://www.politico.eu/article/ukraine-funding-is-coming-down-to-the-wire-thats-the-way-officials-want-it/](https://www.politico.eu/article/ukraine-funding-is-coming-down-to-the-wire-thats-the-way-officials-want-it/)

Pray: for protection and endurance for soldiers and leaders. Pray for wisdom for European leaders considering how best to help Ukraine. (Psalm 144:1)  
More: [united24media.com/latest-news/ukraine-regains-nearly-90-of-kupiansk-syrskyi-reports-major-advance-14348](https://united24media.com/latest-news/ukraine-regains-nearly-90-of-kupiansk-syrskyi-reports-major-advance-14348)

### France seeks delay to EU-Mercosur trade agreement

France is seeking to delay a vote to ratify the long-negotiated EU–Mercosur trade agreement, arguing it threatens farmers and risks inflaming domestic unrest. The deal with Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay was concluded a year ago after talks dating back to 1999. Supporters say it would open South American markets to European cars, machinery, and wines at a time of US tariffs and rising Chinese competition. Opponents, led by France, warn that cheaper agricultural imports produced under looser standards could undercut European farmers and encourage environmental harm. Protests are intensifying: as many as 10,000 farmers are expected to descend on Brussels as leaders meet. Although the European Commission has proposed safeguards, Paris calls them insufficient and is urging a postponement to secure stronger protections. The timing of the vote coincides with efforts by Sebastien Lecornu's minority government to secure parliamentary approval for a budget, including suspending Emmanuel Macron's controversial pension reform, before the end of 2025. Ursula von der Leyen is due to travel to Brazil on Monday next week to sign the agreement and create the world's largest free-trade area.

Pray: for wisdom, unity, justice, and humility as leaders balance trade, livelihoods, environmental care, and social stability. (Micah 6:8)  
More: [www.aljazeera.com/economy/2025/12/16/why-are-french-farmers-objecting-to-eu-mercosur-trade-deal](https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2025/12/16/why-are-french-farmers-objecting-to-eu-mercosur-trade-deal)

## Worldwide

### Christmas traditions around the world

Across the world, Christmas is celebrated through traditions shaped by history, folklore, and local culture. In Sweden, the 43-foot-tall Gävle Goat raised every year traces back to Norse mythology, where goats symbolise strength, provision, and divine power. Venezuela offers a joyful twist by combining faith and festivity as communities roller-skate through the streets towards early-morning Mass. In the Philippines, colourful handmade lanterns light up the season, symbolising hope and the Star of Bethlehem on warm tropical nights. Catalonia's playful Tió de Nadal (a wooden log with four legs which must be looked after so that it 'defecates' presents on Christmas Day) reflects a homely, humorous approach to generosity. In Ukrainian folklore a spider is said to have decorated a poor family's Christmas tree with beautiful cobwebs, so a spider ornament is often found on a tree today. In Italy, a good witch called Le Befana, for ever chasing after Christmas on her broomstick, visits homes on 5 January with gifts. Together, these customs remind us that Christmas traditions often carry layers of meaning - some ancient, some playful, some spiritual - inviting reflection on how the story of Christ has been received, reimaged, and celebrated across cultures and generations.

Pray: that people will enjoy these diverse traditions, but look past them and be impacted by the true message of this joyful season. (Luke 2:10–11)  
More: [www.cntraveler.com/story/fascinating-christmas-traditions-around-the-world](https://www.cntraveler.com/story/fascinating-christmas-traditions-around-the-world)

### Australia: shock and grief after mass shooting on Bondi Beach

Australia is mourning and in shock after a mass shooting at a Hanukkah celebration on Sydney's Bondi Beach on 14 December left 15 people dead and dozens wounded. Police have charged 24-year-old Naveed Akram with 59 offences, including fifteen counts of murder and a terrorism charge; he is said to have carried out the attack alongside his father, Sajid Akram, who was killed at the scene by police. The shooting targeted a Jewish community event on the beach marking the start of Hanukkah. As funerals and vigils were held, grief-stricken families remembered victims, including Rabbi Eli Schlanger, who organised the event, and ten-year-old Matilda, whose name has become a symbol of innocent loss. Authorities say the attackers had recently travelled to Davao City in the Philippines, an area associated with extremist Islamic ideology. The government is under pressure because the men were legally able to acquire the high-powered weapons used in the attack; prime minister Anthony Albanese has vowed to toughen the country's gun laws, and to work with the Jewish community to 'stamp out and eradicate antisemitism'.

Pray: for comfort, strength, and justice for grieving families, wounded survivors, and communities scarred by hatred. (Psalm 147:3)  
More: [www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c98nm1ry38jo](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c98nm1ry38jo)

### **Gaza: infant dies of hypothermia in terrible weather**

A humanitarian tragedy is unfolding in Gaza as a Palestinian infant has died from hypothermia amid severe winter conditions and ongoing restrictions on aid. Local health officials reported that two-week-old Mohammed Khalil Abu al-Khair succumbed to extreme cold after families were left without adequate shelter, heating, clothing, or fuel. Israel's prolonged military campaign has destroyed much of Gaza's infrastructure, forcing hundreds of thousands to live in tents or damaged buildings unable to withstand storms and freezing temperatures. Recent severe weather has flooded shelters, collapsed structures, and caused further deaths. Humanitarian agencies warn that Israeli restrictions on aid deliveries, including limits placed on UNRWA, are preventing lifesaving supplies from reaching civilians at scale. The child's death underscores how the denial of basic necessities has turned winter itself into a lethal threat, particularly for children and other vulnerable civilians.

Pray: for mercy, warmth, protection, justice, and swift aid for Gaza's children, families, and all civilians. Pray that the ceasefire will be fully observed. (Psalm 72:12–13)

More: [www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/12/16/palestinian-infant-freezes-to-death-in-gaza-as-israel-keeps-blocking-aid](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/12/16/palestinian-infant-freezes-to-death-in-gaza-as-israel-keeps-blocking-aid)

### **Afghanistan: hunger crisis deepens as aid funding falls short**

Afghanistan is facing an escalating humanitarian emergency, as the World Food Programme has warned it cannot mount an effective winter response for the first time in decades. International aid has sharply declined since 2021, following the Taliban's return to power, and has been further strained by earthquakes and other natural disasters. As a result, WFP estimates that it needs more than \$460 million extra in order to assist six million of the most vulnerable people. Hunger is rising rapidly, with an estimated 17 million Afghans now food insecure, including millions recently deported from Iran and Pakistan. Children are bearing the heaviest burden: 3.7 million are acutely malnourished, one million severely so, and deaths are expected to increase during the harsh winter months when food access is lowest. Clinics and nutrition programmes are shrinking as funding dries up, leaving families with little support. Aid agencies warn that without urgent international action, preventable suffering and child mortality will continue to worsen.

Pray: for urgent provision, protection, compassion, and renewed generosity for Afghan children, families, and aid workers this winter. (Psalm 146:7a)

More: [www.straitstimes.com/asia/afghan-hunger-crisis-deepens-as-aid-funding-falls-short-un-says?ref=latest](http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/afghan-hunger-crisis-deepens-as-aid-funding-falls-short-un-says?ref=latest)

### **Morocco: response to severe winter emergency**

Authorities in Morocco are confronting a severe winter emergency as freezing temperatures, heavy rainfall, snowfall, and flash floods impact large swathes of the country. In response, they have launched a nationwide relief operation covering 28 provinces, aiming to assist around 73,000 vulnerable households with food supplies, blankets, and essential aid. Red weather alerts warn of as much as 80 cm of snow in the High Atlas mountains, while orange alerts signal intense rainfall across central and northern regions. The extreme conditions have already proved deadly: flash floods in the coastal city of Safi killed at least 37 people, damaged homes, and swept away vehicles. To mitigate further harm, the government has mobilised road clearance teams, emergency monitoring centres, and provincial vigilance committees to maintain access to remote and high-altitude areas: residents are being urged to remain cautious, especially when travelling. The relief efforts reflect Morocco's broader strategy to protect vulnerable communities and mitigate the impacts of what authorities describe as unusually severe winter weather.

Pray: for safety, relief, resilience, and compassion for Moroccan families. Pray for strength for the authorities and aid agencies seeking to respond to this emergency. (Psalm 10:17)

More: [www.africanews.com/2025/12/17/morocco-steps-up-nationwide-response-to-extreme-winter-weather/](http://www.africanews.com/2025/12/17/morocco-steps-up-nationwide-response-to-extreme-winter-weather/)

### **Thailand: life in limbo for Myanmar refugees as aid dries up**

Refugees living in camps along the Thai–Myanmar border are facing a deepening humanitarian crisis as food and medical aid is sharply reduced, even as they gain the long-denied right to work legally outside the camps. Decades-old assistance systems have been disrupted by Donald Trump's major cuts to USAID and other humanitarian funding, leaving more than 100,000 refugees struggling with food shortages, declining education access, and collapsing healthcare services. Monthly food credits have been suspended for most families, forcing many to rely on dwindling savings or informal work, while only the most vulnerable continue receiving limited rations. Clinics once run by international agencies are now barely functioning, with severe shortages of medicines and trained staff. Educators warn hungry children may drop out of school to work illegally. Amid this hardship, Thailand's decision to allow refugees to work legally offers a rare lifeline, restoring dignity and self-reliance: it could fill a migrant labour shortage after the conflict with Cambodia in July triggered an exodus of Cambodian workers. Yet fears of exploitation, family separation, and limited job opportunities remain, underscoring the fragile balance between hope and desperation.

Pray: for provision, dignity, protection, and hope for refugees, aid workers, teachers, and leaders facing severe shortages. (Isaiah 58:10)

More: [www.straitstimes.com/multimedia/graphics/2025/12/myanmar-refugees-thailand-usaid/index.html?shell](http://www.straitstimes.com/multimedia/graphics/2025/12/myanmar-refugees-thailand-usaid/index.html?shell)

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Prayer Alert is produced in partnership with  
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