

Canopy of Prayer

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Author

Ian Jeal

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Dear Prayer Partners in Europe

Psalm 127:1, 'Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labour in vain.' This verse is inscribed in the central lobby of the Palace of Westminster, home of the United Kingdom parliament. It is a daily reminder to those called to serve as leaders of the nation of their responsibilities and also from whom they should seek guidance. It should also be a reminder to us, as those called to pray to uphold the leaders of our

nations, so that, as St Paul urges us, 'First of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people, for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness' (1 Timothy 2:1-2). This must be even more important in these days of global unease.

What are British values today?

As in much of western societies, the UK has faced an increasing move towards secularism over the past few decades. How has this shaped the UK and what sort of country will we be in the future?

Our history as a sea-faring island nation gave us the ability to look beyond our borders and discover new lands and continents. What came with that was an increasing sense of power and perhaps superiority that built an empire, on which our pride led us to believe that the 'sun would never set'. Much of this was also based on a firm belief that God was with us because of our faith built on Christian values. Indeed much good has come from the UK but, as the recent argument over whether a nationalist song 'Rule Britannia' should be sung at the Last night of the Proms concert shows, these beliefs are being challenged.

The church in the UK is having to face the reality that we can no longer say that British values are Christian values. We can not link our Britishness to our Christian beliefs; to be British is no longer to be Christian. The leaders of our nation increasingly move us further away from the biblical values that once underpinned both our democratic and legal systems, which were envied by much of the world.

Still today many believe that we should be at the top table of leading nations. In fact, as we have continued to move away from the very biblical commands that have formed our democracy and helped shape society, we are losing the right to be heard in the world. I paint a rather gloomy picture of the nation I love, but it reflects a reality that we cannot ignore if we are to pray effectively for the UK.

In the current situation of a worldwide pandemic, every nation, I believe, should be looking at itself and questioning its values and morals. Do we, as Jesus directed us to do, firstly love God and secondly love our neighbour as ourselves? Chiara Lubich, founder of the 'Focolare' movement, said "Love the other person as yourself... Imagine how the world would be if the golden rule were put into practice not only between individuals, but also between ethnic groups, peoples and nations, if everyone loved the other country as their own."

For the last few decades we Brits have had our focus on our individual rights and to some extent lost our ability to be contributors to society. John F Kennedy once said "ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country." Perhaps as a nation we should be asking "not what our continent/world can do for us but ask what our nation can do for the continent/world".

What the UK will look like in the future will depend on the next few months, as the outcome of the Brexit trade negotiations will have a profound effect on all our lives. We live in an increasingly interdependent world, and what coronavirus should have taught us is that we need to work together more than ever. Yet ironically individualism continues to raise its ugly head. An equitable solution for the UK and the rest of the continent needs to be found. I thank God that the foundations of both the UK and the rest of Europe are found in our shared Christian heritage. Let us look to Him for all our futures.

Let us pray for

- A national day of prayer being proposed at the moment
- The ongoing Brexit trade negotiations; that compromises can be found.
- That the increased hunger for seeking God brought about by the virus would continue to grow and lead to a turning back to God at all levels of society.



European Union of Prayer, London 26th - 30th October

Preparing for the EUoP meeting in London has been a challenge with the current Covid 19 restrictions.

However, we in the leadership team feel we should go ahead in faith, albeit with a reduced number of participants. Please pray that God continues to make a way for us!

Additional Prayer Points:-

1. Pray for a ceasefire and a longer term solution to be found for the region of Nagorno Karabakh, an area of dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan.
2. Pray for the leaders of the EU as they seek to address breaches of the rule of law and common European values in several member states, with the idea of linking access to EU funds to the respect of the rule of law.

CONTACT Canopy of Prayer,
Ortwin Schweitzer, Ian Jeal,
Corrie Oosterhuis
info@canopyofprayer.eu
www.canopyofprayer.eu

DONATION Waechterruf e.V.,
IBAN DE73 6129 0120 0464 0500 06
BIC GENODE31NUE
Use "Project 2100", Name and
Address