

Prayer points – April 2019

Cyclone Idai

Here in Beira, all the churches have collapsed from this cyclone... Oh my dear brothers, please pray for us ... Only God can restore this.” Pastor Luis Semente



Tropical Cyclone Idai, a dangerous high-end category 2 storm, has caused massive devastation in Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe. The storm began as a disturbance that dumped heavy rains on central and northern Mozambique and southern Malawi, before heading to sea and becoming a tropical cyclone. When it came ashore again, winds reportedly of up to about 110 mph and a strong storm surge overwhelmed the port city of Beira in Mozambique, and subsequent rains caused heavy flooding in Mozambique and eastern Zimbabwe. Overall, millions of people are affected, and the death toll across the three countries is over 750 and climbing. Concerns are rising that following the floods, diseases will affect those displaced - and that the destruction of harvests will have an impact on people's ability to access food.

Government, businesses and civil society in the affected countries are working to assist their neighbours, helped by UN and other relief agencies, and personnel and supplies sent by many countries. Help is vital: the three countries involved are among the world's poorest economically, and the relief needs are huge. We pray for all who have lost homes, loved ones and livelihoods, for all in the affected countries working on recovery, and for a generous response from countries around the world. We pray also for those suffering from floods in the US Midwest and Indonesia ... and for more funds to help vulnerable river and coastal communities to adapt to prevent future damage from storms and rising seas.

School climate strikes

Over 1.4 million young people in over 300 cities took part in school climate strikes on March 15th - the biggest day of global climate action ever. It is believed that there were marches in 2083 places in 125 countries. The movement is growing rapidly and now involves young people in all continents - it's hard to believe it began with just one girl sitting outside the Swedish Parliament House.

We give thanks for the response of young people in this growing movement. We pray that world leaders will listen and respond with the urgency that is being demanded – and is so needed. We pray too that school authorities will be sympathetic to their young people and their desire for change, and will work with them on climate solutions in ways that go beyond the strikes themselves.

Autumn Climate Summit

Rapid action is vital, as we have no time to waste: “The window of opportunity is closing – we no longer have the luxury of time, and climate delay is almost as dangerous as climate denial. Despite years of talk, global emissions are reaching record levels and show no sign of peaking.” says António Guterres, Secretary General of the United Nations. He is bringing world leaders together for a climate summit in New York in September - and has asked governments to come “with concrete, realistic plans” to update and strengthen their Paris climate pledges. This is a vital next step in closing the gap between Paris ambitions and what countries have pledged let alone achieved, so far. We pray for the summit's success.

A new life for abandoned spaces?

What if places scarred by resource extraction could become signs of hope? The UK has more than 150,000 abandoned mineshafts and 25 square km of tunnels. Nottingham University has developed a ‘Deep Farm’ project for converting these to support food production, growing crops in hydroponic planters that feed plant roots with nutrient-rich water, or else by aeroponics, growing plants in an air or moist environment, lit by LED lights to illuminate them at wavelengths that maximise photosynthesis with minimum power input. The technology allows year-round production, delivering up to 10 crop cycles a year. One Deep Farm shaft, costing around £200,000, could produce 80 tonnes of food a year, using only as much energy as three UK homes. We pray for those working on this and other efforts to find creative solutions to resource and climate issues.

Easter Hope

Now the green blade riseth from the buried grain,
Wheat that in dark earth many days has lain;
Love lives again, that with the dead has been:
Love is come again, like wheat that springeth green. ([John Macleod Campbell Crum](#))

A scientist's cry

“We scientists sound like a broken record. Every year we present the science & plead for action. Not nearly enough is being done. We can still tackle climate change, but we must act immediately. We have the means to make a difference. We lack only the will.”
Paul Dawson

Lobbying for positive change

Please pray for campaigners who are seeking to persuade HSBC to stop funding coal projects and the World Bank to stop funding fossil fuel production. In the UK, [institutional investors](#) are calling on HSBC not to fund coal-related projects in three developing-country markets, and Christian Aid's [Big Shift campaign](#) is calling on them also to pull out of fossil fuels more generally. On a larger scale, the [Big Shift Global campaign](#) is seeking to persuade the World Bank, which holds its Spring meetings this month, “to align its lending and operations with the 1.5°C target by adopting science-based emissions targets for its lending, ending all investment in fossil fuels, and to increase its financing for distributed renewable energy projects.”

Campaigning can be tough: people seeking positive climate action often find their positions countered by powerful industry lobbies that can spend significant amounts of money and time trying to influence opinion. Mining giant Glencore, for example, funded [a covert global campaign](#) promoting coal and seeking to undermine those who protest its use, and oil firms have poured money into fighting climate action initiatives.

But campaigning on climate has won many victories. Pray that the Big Shift campaigners and all encouraging care for creation may be given wisdom and courage – and may create the impetus for genuine, lasting change.

Toll the Bells

Climate Keys are asking places of worship to join in a response to the climate emergency by sounding out twelve bell rings to symbolise the twelve-year timeline we have left in which to make changes regarding climate change. This event will take place on Monday 15th April. We pray it will raise awareness of the urgency of climate action.

Air pollution in Mongolia

Air pollution in Ulaanbaatar, the capital of Mongolia, is a major issue. The levels of dangerous particulates there are quite literally off the scale of many monitors. “And the problem,” the BBC piece notes, “is intrinsically linked to climate change.”

Traditionally nomadic herders on the Mongolian steppe have made their living raising herds of livestock. But in recent years, the seasons haven't been normal. The country has warmed by 2.2 degrees. Winters with no snow follow winters with very heavy snow. Dry summers, harsh winters, wet summers with flooding – nothing follows a pattern any longer and animals are dying. Thousands of people have been forced to abandon the countryside and their traditional herding lifestyle and head for the smog-choked city. Half of the population now live in the capital and many burn raw coal as it is the cheapest source of fuel. 90% of children breathe toxic air every day and as a consequence, hundreds of children are struggling to breathe. The government wants to bring change but processed coal is expensive.

We pray for the people of Mongolia who are suffering so badly. We pray for wisdom for policy makers there, for alternative fuels and for the companies seeking to make cheaper air filters available for homes. And we pray for a worldwide response to address the issues of fuel use, urbanisation, and climate change.