

Prayer points – November 2018



New IPCC Report

A few weeks ago, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published [a report](#) on what 1.5 degrees of global warming would look like, and what is necessary to keep to that level. It's a hard-hitting report in which hundreds of climate scientists [lay out clearly what's on the line](#) - even 1.5 degrees of warming has serious consequences, but going beyond 1.5 degrees leads to much, much worse. At 1.5 degrees for example, coral reefs are likely to decline by 70% to 90%; at 2 degrees, they would, quite literally, be almost completely lost to the world. Exceeding 1.5 degrees [would also lead to](#) even more people [being exposed to intense heatwaves](#); even more severe impacts to some fisheries and forests; even heavier precipitation from tropical cyclones – and even more people being exposed to risk of floods, storms and droughts.

Hopeless? No. The report is also clear that we can still keep within the 1.5 degree limit. But the changes needed will be huge, and we have to make them rapidly: we need to achieve a 45% reduction in emissions by 2030 and 'net zero' emissions by 2050. This implies massive changes.

So what do we do now? Take action ourselves, of course. And scale up – pressing governments and businesses to make large-scale change happen. Many are making the right noises: the UK government [has asked for advice](#) on a net zero goal, and the EU Parliament has [suggested higher targets for emissions cuts](#). But their planned actions to enable the transition to a low-carbon economy are a long way short of matching the words of this report – and much more is needed, urgently. This has to go from being a priority to being a top priority for everyone. And, of course, pray. Pray that response to climate change is no longer seen as a long-term response with other short-term issues taking priority. Pray that instead the deadly seriousness of our situation as a global community hits home to all, individuals, industries, the church, communities and in particular our political leaders.

Plastic decomposition; new developments

A team of scientists at Kew Gardens have compiled a paper showing how different organisms can decompose plastics. Last year [Chinese scientists found a fungus](#) called *Aspergus tubingensis* on a rubbish dump in Pakistan which breaks down bonds between plastic molecules and then splits them using its mycelia. The process takes weeks rather than decades. Dr Ilia Leitch of Kew Gardens said: *"We are in the early days of research, but I would hope to see the benefits of fungi that can eat plastics in 5-10 years."*

Adapting to our changing world

A new [high level global commission](#) aims to rebuild political will for climate action – and to help make sure funding for adaptation includes the poorest countries and communities. The [Global Commission on Adaptation](#) is being led by Ban Ki-Moon, Bill Gates and Kristalina Georgieva, CEO of the World Bank. It involves 17 countries, including those with large economies such as Canada, China, Germany, India and the UK and those with lower emissions but urgent adaptation needs, such as Bangladesh and the Marshall Islands. It will focus on the provision of more funding and research into adaptation measures to safeguard people's homes, food, water and energy supplies. *"Our climate has already changed. Dramatic weather events and volatile seasons are the new normal,"* said Georgieva. *"We face a choice: business as usual and hope for the best. Or we act now and build for a resilient future."* We pray that this new commission can bring new energy and support innovative approaches to effective adaptation.

Psalm 119: 33-36

Teach me, Lord, the way of your decrees, that I may follow it to the end.
Give me understanding, so that I may keep your law and obey it with all my heart.
Direct me in the path of your commands, for there I find delight.
Turn my heart toward your statutes and not toward selfish gain.

What does 'just travel' look like?

Travel is all about getting from here to there ... but in many places around the world, the way it's organised is leaving some people – especially those who are older, poorer or outside cities – behind. In the UK, for example, [fewer and fewer](#) people in rural areas have good access to local public transport, leaving rural residents tied to their cars or, if they can't afford a car, forced to walk long distances...or unable to get out.

Does God go at the pace of the fastest or those left behind? How could we travel more sensitively? Some places have a model where public transport is seen as a vital common good and is frequent and low-cost (or even [free](#)): travel in Amsterdam can be a revelation – buses every few minutes, and no traffic jams! And in some communities, people make their own solutions, operating low-cost shared taxis on popular routes, clubbing together [to share cars](#) or [organising community buses](#). Pray that we may all think about the wider impact of how we travel, and how we and our societies can organise travel in a way that shows care for creation and promotes justice for all.

Fracking concerns in the UK

On the 22nd of October Cuadrilla began drilling for shale gas again near Preston, Lancashire UK after first Lancashire county council and then campaigners lost their legal challenges. Following two earthquakes in 2011, fracking was stopped at the site. Massive public opposition has been maintained over the intervening 7 years with the site acting as a focus. Three protesters were jailed for an anti-fracking protest in the UK, but last week a judge ruled that their one year sentences were “manifestly excessive” and released them (they [promptly returned to the Preston site](#) to continue their protest).

Days after fracking resumed; however, it was again temporarily halted after the British Geological Survey recorded several minor earthquakes near the site – [one measured 0.8](#), above the level at which fracking should only continue with caution. Pray for communities and campaigners at this and other sites to continue to make clear their views in peaceful protest, and for Government ministers to be willing to listen.

Climate finance ... a matter of justice

“Climate finance is not a handout ... Developed countries are responsible for the vast majority of historic emissions, and many became remarkably wealthy burning fossil fuels. Small islands, by contrast, have contributed an almost immeasurably small fraction of global emissions. Yet, we face devastating climate impacts and some of us could be lost forever to rising seas.” Amjad Abdulla, chief negotiator for the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)

Climate finance is widely expected to be a critical issue at the December COP24 meetings. Developing countries are asking, as a matter of justice, for funds to deal with the climate crisis many have done little to cause. Many feel, however, that commitments to assistance are not being taken seriously enough: preparatory talks this year didn't reach agreement on [longstanding areas of concern](#) such as what counts as climate finance and how to balance money from governments and private investment, leaving considerable uncertainty about how much money will really be available and on what terms. Some [progress was made](#) at a recent meeting of the Green Climate Fund, but even with this, challenges remain in replenishing the fund so that it can respond to the many proposals submitted to it. Please pray, as the preparations for the COP24 talks in Poland continue, that a just solution may emerge and be embraced by all parties.

Pilgrims on the way ...

“To those who walked, to those who prayed;” began Christiana Figueres' [open letter of gratitude](#) after the Paris climate talks, eloquent witness to the powerful impact of prayer and pilgrimage. This year, Yeb Saño, who started the Fast for the Climate, is leading [a climate pilgrimage from the Vatican to the COP 24 talks](#), carrying a message of climate justice and of encouragement for all to *“set out on the long path to renewal.”* Pray for safety for the pilgrims, and for their messages of love and care for creation to inspire many along the way they tread, as well as at the conference itself. You can also [send a brief prayer](#) for them to carry with them.

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