

# Prayer points – December 2018



## Praying for the UN Climate Talks

From Sunday, 2 December, to Friday, 14 December, the [UN climate talks](#) will be taking place in Katowice, Poland. These are widely seen as the most significant talks since Paris in 2015. There are [three main foci](#) – agreeing a ['Rulebook'](#) to implement the [Paris Agreement](#), providing a first sense of how each country plans to [strengthen its nationally determined contribution in 2020](#), and making progress on delivering adequate [climate finance](#).

At a time when reports are showing [how important it is](#) to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees and how [little time is left](#), it's vital that the negotiations are successful. There are many technical issues involved – but the greatest barriers to overcome may be ones of trust. This is especially true as nations consider [what responsibilities developing and developed countries will have](#), how emissions reductions will be verified, and how climate finance will be provided and delivered. Many developing countries are particularly [concerned about finance](#), where promised amounts have not yet materialised. We pray for a genuine commitment by all to the common good and for the necessary steps to be taken to build trust and help meet the Paris ambitions.

## A prayer for negotiators

O God of love, teach us to care for this world, our common home.

Inspire government leaders as they gather .. to listen to and heed the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. Let them be united in heart and mind in responding courageously.

May they seek the common good and protect the beautiful earthly garden you have created for us, for all our brothers and sisters, for all generations to come. Amen

*Adapted from a Prayer for the Earth, from the [Worldwide Appeal to COP21 Negotiating Parties](#)*

## Biodiversity Convention

A [quarter of the world's mammals](#) and one fifth of the world's plants are under threat of extinction. The most recent ['Living Planet Report'](#) says that populations of wild vertebrates (mammals, amphibians etc) have decreased by 60% in just over forty years [and are still decreasing](#). In some parts of the world, the declines are even more extreme. "The numbers are staggering ... I hope we aren't the first species to document our own extinction," [warns](#) the United Nation's biodiversity chief.

To prevent the destruction of habitats and soil and to save species, including humankind, from extinction, it's important that governments implement existing commitments – and agree new, stronger commitments in 2020. This past month's [UN Biodiversity Conference](#) in Egypt saw attendees from among the 195 member states of the Convention on Biological Diversity work towards these ends. We pray that its outcomes will lead to greater care for the diverse creatures with which we share our beautiful planet.

The executive secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity has [emphasised](#) the role we each play. Lord we thank you for this beautiful world with its amazing variety of animals and plants. Please help us to understand your world more and to appreciate its beauty. Encourage us to care for wildlife conservation areas in our churchyards, gardens, parks, farms, reserves and waste spaces. Help us to support wildlife conservation with our money, our words and our actions. May we never forget that each part of your creation is valuable in its own right, and may we strive to live in harmony with all created beings.

## Fires

The past month has seen devastating forest fires in California, including the [Camp Fire](#), which killed at least 88 people and destroyed approximately 18,000 homes and other buildings. An [exceptionally hot](#) start to the Australian summer has also seen bush fires in [drought-stricken Queensland and New South Wales](#). We pray for those affected by these fires and those who have been working to contain them and to assist with rescue and recovery. We lament the [unwillingness of some politicians](#) to acknowledge the [role of climate change](#) as [one](#) of the risk factors for such disasters. And we pray for climate action and other measures to reduce risks for people in fire-prone areas of the [US](#), Australia and around the world.

## Eco Dioceses

The Eco Church programme of A Rocha UK is helping many churches to engage with care for creation as part of their mission – and now, through its [Eco Diocese](#) and [Eco Synod](#) programmes, A Rocha is helping whole denominational areas as well. The Diocese of Salisbury recently became the first Anglican Diocese to be granted an Eco Diocese award, followed closely by the dioceses of [Guildford](#) and [Birmingham](#).

The Bishop of Salisbury, the Rt Revd Nicholas Holtam [said](#): “It shows that as a Diocese we recognise that the care for God’s creation is at the heart of ministry and mission. The recent IPCC report on climate change and the WWF report on the destruction of biodiversity means the care of God’s earth is urgent. I hope that becoming an Eco Diocese will encourage us to do more and better.”

We give thanks for the work of these dioceses and pray that many churches and denominational areas may be inspired in their efforts to encourage care for creation.

## Giving thanks for scientists' work

The US government released the [second volume](#) of the Fourth National Climate Assessment the day after Thanksgiving. The report is a detailed account of potential climate impacts, risks and strategies for mitigation and adaptation, both nationally and in particular US regions. While the President disparaged it, scientists have done a superb job of using the media to communicate the information in the report and the actions it suggests to people. Also this month, as the Scottish Parliament considers its next Climate Change Bill, Professor Kevin Anderson of the Tyndall Centre [has offered](#) a plan for large-scale climate action in Scotland, with a focus on 'industrial-level' structural changes and tackling the highest emitters to address inequality. For the whole UK, the evidence-based work of the [Committee on Climate Change](#) continues to drive debate with vital reports on key areas such as [land use](#) and the [role of hydrogen](#), and to hold the government to account for its carbon budget. France, inspired by the UK's Committee, [has created its own body](#) to advise government.

We give thanks for scientists who dedicate themselves to increasing our knowledge of the natural world and helping us to understand what we need to do to care for our common home. We pray for wisdom and discernment for them as they seek new information, strength for them to continue despite those who would deny the worth of their work, and funding and support for their vital contributions.

## Urgent Action

We have only a few years to keep warming below 1.5 degrees, and while there are many encouraging developments, thus far, action generally isn't rapid or deep enough. In the past few months, several groups - among them [New York State suing Exxon for fraud](#), the government of Vanuatu [considering a lawsuit](#) against oil majors, Australian schoolchildren striking, and the Extinction Rebellion movement in the UK - have pursued ways of showing the urgency of the need and creating political pressure for change. We're beginning to see some significant moves from governments, too – like the [European Commission's new strategy](#) for reaching net zero. We pray that these various actions will have a positive impact.

## Wilding

The recent book on [Wilding](#) (or rewilding) by Isabella Tree is a fascinating read of how a huge estate in Sussex, Knepp, was allowed to ‘return to nature’ with minimal intervention aside from carefully introduced grazing animals. A previously loss-making intensive farm is now in profit and in harmony with wildlife. Knepp estate has become an extensive experiment with many ‘experts’ delighted to observe the changes and the species that have returned or thrived. These include Nightingales, Turtle Doves, myriad insects, and bat species.

In addition, the humble earthworm is thriving in the undisturbed and unfertilised soils, spreading much more rapidly (5 metres a year) into the degraded soils than was thought possible. All kinds of helpful bacteria and fungi live in association with earthworms in healthy soil, together with a substance known as glomalin, discovered only 22yrs ago, with the ability to store huge amounts of carbon.

We give thanks for some really positive developments in understanding how nature can ‘reclaim’ areas of our land if humankind mostly stands back and pray that Knepp and other similar rewilding projects may continue to inspire other areas of the UK and elsewhere for the benefit of nature, humankind and climate change.