

Prayer points – July 2019



Heat and Drought

India has been suffering from extreme heat and drought – parts of the country have seen severe heat for over thirty days, with highs of over 45 C (113 F) in some places lasting for most of three weeks and incidences of highs over 50 C (122 F). During June, the city of Chennai in South India reached a crisis point when its four main reservoirs ran completely dry, forcing city authorities to drill new boreholes and provide water in tanks. People have been queuing for hours to get water, occasionally leading to tensions and fights. Around the city, hotels and restaurants closed and many people were asked to work from home to save water.

As we start July, Europe is in the midst of a severe heatwave. In France, the heat has been unprecedented: the country's all-time temperature record was broken with a temperature of 45.9 C (114.6 F), exceeding even the prior record of 44.1 C, set during the heatwave of 2003.

Impacts of heat and drought fall most severely on those who have the least capacity to insulate themselves – people who have to work outside, don't have houses or don't have access to cool air or clean water. We pray for all who are vulnerable to heat and drought, and all responsible for planning responses that try to save lives and livelihoods during extreme events.

Show your stripes

Professor Ed Hawkins, a scientist at Reading University, has been searching for clear ways to communicate the issues around climate change and to start conversations that might lead to solutions. His 'Warming Stripes' show temperatures for a given place over time, using shades of blue for cooler temperatures and red for warmer: they provide a clear and powerful symbol of the overall warming trend. The stripes seem to have caught people's imagination, so Hawkins has created a new website [#ShowYourStripes](#), where people can download his charts for their country or region. Could you make use of this as a conversation starter? Pray that many people do, and that it helps to start productive conversations.

Moving towards net zero

Scientists are clear that holding global heating to well below 2 degrees requires global carbon emissions to reach net zero by mid-century. This means that emissions are drastically reduced, and any new ones are balanced by absorbing carbon from the atmosphere.

Bhutan and Suriname have already achieved this goal, and Norway and Sweden have had a legal commitment for a while. In June, the House of Commons in the UK passed legislation committing the UK to net zero emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050. France has now done the same. A variety of countries have as yet non-binding commitments or pending legislation. And regions, states, and cities, such as Barcelona and New York, are also getting involved. The EU as a whole is considering it, though an attempt to get an EU-wide commitment recently failed due to some states' opposition.

Making commitments and passing legislation are, however, relatively easy things to do; setting appropriate time frames, ensuring targets don't have loopholes, and meeting the commitments are more challenging. In the UK's case, the time frame could be faster and there are loopholes that need closing. There are also many policies that need changing, as the country is currently likely to go off track for existing carbon budgets, and policies such as support for fracking and airport expansion are inconsistent with the goals. The same is true for other countries. We give thanks for all who have pressed for net zero targets and for the growing number of commitments. We pray for more commitments, and for policies and practices to make targets a reality.

Psalm 111, verses 2 and 10

Great are the works of the LORD; they are pondered by all who delight in them.....

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding.

To him belongs eternal praise.

Citizen Assemblies

How can countries deal effectively with complex issues that affect everyone? For many people, the concept of citizen assemblies is proving appealing. Since 2016, Ireland has had an official 'Citizens Assembly' made up of 99 members "randomly selected to be broadly representative the Irish electorate." The Assembly considers key issues facing the country: in 2017, it looked at climate change. Group members learned about the issues from different perspectives, discussed them, and then made recommendations for action on areas such as renewable energy, transport, and carbon taxes – topics often felt to be divisive, but around which the Assembly showed strong consensus. This in turn had an impact on the formation of Ireland's climate action plan. Similar processes have been used to discuss climate in parts of the US and globally – and this month, six of the UK's Parliamentary Select Committees announced plans for one in the UK, to discuss what the mechanisms for meeting the new net zero target should be. We pray that these and other processes will be helpful wherever they are used, and that their recommendations will enable action.

Increasing ambition, overcoming obstacles

Preparations are continuing for the UN Secretary General's climate summit in September. Some countries have already committed to increasing the ambition of their national climate plans – we give thanks for this! Nine coalitions tasked with looking at innovations across different action areas are meeting on 30 June and 1 July – pray for the meeting and give thanks for such initiatives.

At the same time, there has been increased pressure from some governments to slow climate action both domestically and at the international level. At the recent Bonn climate talks, Saudi Arabia blocked formal deliberations on the IPCC's ground-breaking 1.5 degree report from future negotiations, and Brazil led a group that slowed progress on regulation of carbon credits and fairer carbon accounting. In late June the US, where the government continues to roll back environmental legislation, opposed mention of the Paris goals in the G20 Leaders' Declaration, though a strong push by France, with others' support, kept them in. We pray that all countries will increase their national climate plans' ambition – and that all those countries which are currently blocking progress will have a change in heart and work more constructively with other countries.

Thanksgiving

- Irish scientists have developed new battery technologies that "make batteries more compact, scalable for industry, [and] quicker to charge." We give thanks for this and other innovations that make low-carbon future easier to envisage.
- In 2019, more British power is due to come from renewables than from all fossil fuels. And in April, the US generated more power from renewables than from coal for the first time ever. We give thanks for this progress!
- A Kenyan tribunal has revoked the environmental license of a planned new coal plant, on the grounds that the companies involved hadn't adequately consulted local residents about its impacts. Give thanks for rules that help to protect people and planet: pray for their continued enforcement.
- India is planning to install 500 gigawatts of renewable energy capacity – enough to power 50 billion LED light bulbs - by 2030. Give thanks for these plans; pray for the project's success.

Investor Action

Climate Action 100+, a global coalition of investors with \$33 trillion of assets under management, is pressing companies to align their business models with Paris Agreement targets. In May, members co-sponsored a shareholder resolution at British Petroleum (BP), asking the company to disclose more about its emissions and how its strategy aligns with the Paris goals. The resolution was approved, but a Dutch group's motion mandating emissions cuts failed. Exxon Mobil, meanwhile, blocked consideration of a resolution co-sponsored by the Church of England's Church Commissioners, (a Climate Action 100+ member), arguing that attempts to make it set emissions reduction targets were 'micromanagement'. Faced with such intransigence, the ethical fund at Legal and General decided in June to drop Exxon Mobil and other climate laggards. Groups like the Church of England, whose General Synod voted last year in favour of divestment by 2023 from fossil-fuel companies not prepared to align with the Paris goals, will be watching carefully. Pray that all companies will align their business models with the Paris targets. Ask God to guide investors in deciding when and how to engage and when to divest.

www.prayandfastfortheclimate.org.uk