

# Prayer points – December 2019



## Madrid Climate Talks

As Advent begins, so do the next [UN climate talks](#), which take place from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> of December in Madrid. We give thanks for the Spanish government's rapid action to provide a location for the conference and pray for all who have been working to ensure that arrangements flow as smoothly as possible.

## We cannot delay

Countries [must radically and rapidly cut emissions](#) if the world is to avoid warming by more than 1.5C, the latest emissions gap report from the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) says. The report shows that even if countries meet all their current Paris Agreement promises, the world will warm by more than 3 degrees C by 2100 – and seven of the G20 still aren't on track to do even that.

The report [notes](#), however, that it is still possible to keep warming to 1.5 degrees: "Collectively, if commitments, policies and action can deliver a 7.6% emissions reduction every year between 2020 and 2030, we CAN limit global warming to 1.5°C." This is a challenging task, however. Emissions aren't currently slowing, and a report on atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, recently released by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), [shows](#) that such concentrations reached new highs in 2018: concentrations of CO2 reached 407.8 parts per million, up from 405.5ppm in 2017. Methane is now at 259% above pre-industrial levels, and nitrous oxide is now at 123% of the levels that existed in 1750.

*"Our collective failure to act early and hard on climate change means we now must deliver deep cuts to emissions" [said Inger Andersen](#), UNEP's executive director. It puts negotiators gearing up to meet in Madrid next week at COP25 under pressure to increase their ambitions. "This is a new and stark reminder from UNEP that we cannot delay climate action any longer," [said Teresa Ribera](#), Spain's minister for the ecological transition. "We need it at every level, by every national and subnational government, and by the rest of the economic and civil society actors. We urgently need to align with the Paris Agreement objectives and elevate climate ambition".*

We pray that the shocking findings of both these recent reports will help inform delegates meeting in Madrid next week for COP25 – and will inspire them to go beyond what is planned in order to meet the need for radical action.

## Church Calls to Action

The 'Synod for the Amazon' held at the Vatican in October produced [calls](#) for the church to hear the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor and to link sustainable living with the protection of human rights and dignity. *"It is urgent to face the unlimited exploitation of our 'common home' and its inhabitants," its [final document said](#). "We are called to an individual and communal ecological conversion that safeguards an integral ecology and a model of development in which commercial criteria are not above environmental and human rights criteria."*

In the UK, the Church of England's Environmental Working Group has [published a statement](#) recognising the climate emergency and calling for immediate action to reduce the Church of England's carbon footprint, as well as to manage its churchyards and agricultural land to improve biodiversity. The Rt Revd Nicholas Holtam, the group's chair, [said](#) that the climate crisis was *"of such urgency that the whole Church needs to make it a priority"* and added *"We ought to work to ensure every church is an eco-church, and that in every congregation every Christian is asking questions about how we can live more lightly."* One Church of England diocese, Bristol, has just [passed its own resolution](#), which includes a goal to reach net zero by 2030.

We give thanks for these and other statements from churches. We pray that Christians will show Christ's love through turning away from all that harms creation and diminishes human dignity, and by turning towards clear and concrete action that heals and restores relationships among God, our fellow humans and all the earth.

## Sea level rise

According to [new analysis from Climate Central](#), 150 million people are now living on land that will be below the high tide line by 2050 - and this is assuming that warming is held to levels consistent with the Paris Agreement and that the ice sheets don't collapse in the near future. The study finds that 70% of the people currently at risk are in eight Asian countries: China, Bangladesh, India, Vietnam, Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, and Japan. As early as 2050, [most of Southern Vietnam](#) could disappear at high tide, putting an area currently home to 20 million people underwater. We pray that this study inspires action both to cut emissions and to create flood defences to help reduce the risks for vulnerable communities.

## Reflection

"Although the increasing risks of runaway climate breakdown are being regularly publicised, the actions of Government are nowhere near to making an adequate response..... It seems that the utter danger and urgency of the situation is as yet a long way from generally being understood and faced. The likely loss of security and well-being of my grandchildren and their generation across the world is more acute than it has ever been. The suffering and death of so many in the tropics and elsewhere is daily being exposed by new extremes of weather. And God's creation continues to be depleted and extinguished at an increasing rate. The debate about the relationship between the global economy and the destruction of the Earth remains as suppressed as ever, with the idol of more economic growth still being the mantra of almost all major political parties. Greta's reference to '*Fairy tales of eternal economic growth*' couldn't be more timely" *Phil Kingston*

We pray that politicians in all countries will be willing to address the questions that underlie the climate crisis, and will take actions to enable an adequate response. We pray, too, that all Christians who are seeking positive action will be open to the Holy Spirit as they discern how best to work for the vital changes needed.

## We pray especially for politicians in...

- New Zealand, giving thanks for their recent [adoption of a legally binding net zero target](#)
- Australia, praying that those who [continue to deny the links](#) between climate and extreme events will have a change of heart and be prepared to acknowledge climate realities and take climate action
- The US, where the national government [announced its intention to withdraw from the Paris Agreement](#), but state and local governments continue to take significant climate action.
- China, which has been a leader in renewables, but [whose commitments to clean energy have been slowing](#) and need to be strengthened

## European Investment Bank to end fossil fuel funding

The [European Investment Bank \(EIB\), the world's largest multilateral financial institution](#) which funded 2 billion euros worth of fossil-fuel related projects last year, announced in November that from the end of 2021, it would no longer consider funding unabated fossil fuel projects. "Under the new policy," the [BBC explains](#), "energy projects applying for EIB funding will need to show they can produce one kilowatt hour of energy while emitting less than 250 grams of carbon dioxide." This rules out not only coal and oil, but also traditional natural gas-burning power plants. We give thanks for this change, pray for it to be implemented well and [without exemptions](#), and pray that it inspires other institutions to end support for fossil-fuel projects.

## Church environmental leaders

As churches around the world seek to turn calls into concrete action, we give thanks for all the people – employed and volunteers - who have the responsibility for leading on care for creation at local, regional, national and international level. We join with prayer partner Peter Wilcox, who has written this prayer:

*"Father, we give you thanks for all those who have taken responsibility for encouraging and coordinating churches in the activities of those churches towards 'Caring for God's Good Creation'. We ask you to empower them with wisdom and energy. May their work lead to an explosion of understanding and action and passion among churches and congregations, so that all Christians understand that working to mitigate the Climate Emergency, biodiversity collapse, and pollution from waste, is a Gospel imperative. For the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, who died and rose to redeem all of Creation"*

[www.prayandfastfortheclimate.org.uk](http://www.prayandfastfortheclimate.org.uk)