

# Prayer points – January 2020



*As the New Year begins, we give thanks to God for creation and for God's gifts of love that inspire people around the world to prayer and action on care for the earth and each other. We pray that God blesses you in the coming year – and give thanks for the inspiration you provide.*

## Looking back, looking forward

Think back to the middle of 2018. Greta Thunberg hadn't started [her school strikes](#). Net zero was a concept understood by scientists and climate negotiators but relatively unknown to most people. The scientific case for trying to limit global heating to 1.5 degrees and the pathways for doing so hadn't yet been fully set out.

Since then, it feels as if significant change has occurred in many areas. In the context of increasingly visible extreme weather, we saw the rise of the global youth climate movement and new forms of climate protest; the shift from talking about 'climate change' to recognising the 'climate emergency'; the adoption of net-zero targets by governments and businesses around the world; and the [1.5 degrees report from the IPCC](#), making ever clearer the need for urgent action and potential consequences of inaction. We give thanks for the courage of those who have helped us to see the reality of our world's peril and have empowered people to respond.

But, at the same time, emissions are not declining as they need to if we are to meet the goals of limiting climate change to well below 2 degrees, let alone 1.5. For 2020, the challenge is to help governments, businesses and people move from recognising what the issues are to planning and undertaking the transformational change needed to tackle them. We pray that in 2020 those who deny the need for change will come to recognise its importance, and that governments, businesses, communities and individuals everywhere will take appropriate climate action. We pray also that Christians in their daily lives and church communities will witness to Christ's love in the way they care for creation and seek climate justice.

## Looking back, looking forward – the UN climate talks

The UN climate meetings in December, moved at the last minute from Chile to Madrid, reached a belated and disappointing conclusion, [agreeing relatively little and pushing key decisions into 2020](#). [Many participants commented on the gap](#) between the public's calls for action and [the negotiations' slow progress](#). Key issues under discussion included the language asking countries to raise the ambitions of their national commitments next year; [rules to govern carbon markets](#); [ways of reporting on greenhouse gases other than carbon dioxide](#), and the provision of funding to [help countries deal with loss and damage](#). The language on ambition was weak, and decisions in most of the other areas were deferred – though [many felt](#) this was [preferable](#) to the weak options that had been presented for approval.

The results place considerable pressure on 2020 meetings – both preliminary ones, especially an EU-China summit in September and the COP itself in November. We pray for all who are preparing for the 2020 summit, asking God to give them wisdom and courage, so that the Glasgow summit can deliver the necessary ambition.

## Bush Fires

In recent weeks, Australia has experienced [unprecedented heat](#) and [bushfires](#). As we write, [pictures are emerging](#) of thousands of people in Victoria forced to flee for safety under a glowing red sky, and the [fire services in New South Wales are warning](#) that, in that state alone, 3.6 million hectares – an area equal to more than a quarter of England, all of New Jersey and Connecticut, two Gautengs, or more than six Prince Edward Islands - has burned thus far this summer. [Millions of animals are estimated to have been killed](#) in the Australian fires; homes have been destroyed; and people have lost their lives. We grieve for all the destruction and pray for those affected and for those fighting the fires. Scientists and [Australia's Climate Council have clearly said](#) that while many factors are involved in bushfires, current bushfire conditions have been aggravated by climate impacts. We pray also, therefore, that politicians will acknowledge the climate issues ([some have](#) and [some haven't](#)), and we pray for appropriate climate action, in Australia and globally, to mitigate future risks.

## Philippians 2:4-7

“[Do not look] to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.”

## Praying for Farmers

Southern farmers are in summer; northern hemisphere farmers may be just considering the first sowing of the year. But in south and north, farmers are facing major questions in a changing climate. Can they adapt to new extremes of heat, rain or drought? And if so, how? How do they cope when crops that have been staples for centuries can't flourish in new growing conditions, and harvests fail or [land is less productive](#)? How are they able both to produce enough food for people to eat and to do the work of [reducing emissions](#), adapting to [changing patterns of production and consumption](#), and creating a more sustainable food system? We give thanks for farmers' love of and care for the land and pray that God will give wisdom and support to farmers and all involved with agricultural policy as they tackle these questions.

## Electric vehicle news

Throughout 2019 there were positive developments around electric vehicles, and the trend looks set to continue. Automakers have collectively [committed to investing \\$225 billion](#) on electrification; new models are providing entry points at both the high and low ends of the market; in several countries, [electric cars are now cheaper to own and run than their fossil fuel counterparts](#); electric cars' range per charge is increasing; and governments in many countries are pursuing supportive policies. While globally, electric vehicles [accounted for only 2.2% of the market](#) through October 2019, in some places progress is far quicker – in Norway, around 50% of all new auto sales are now electric vehicles! We give thanks for the progress being made and pray that investment into developing electric and [hydrogen](#) vehicles and infrastructure – alongside investment in public transport and active transport – will rapidly decrease transportation emissions.

## Climate action and human rights

The Supreme Court in the Netherlands has upheld lower court rulings that will require the country's government to cut emissions by 25% by the end of 2020. The decision [came in response to a civil lawsuit brought by campaigning group Urgenda](#), which argued the government was “knowingly exposing its own citizens to danger” by insufficiently acting on climate. This, they said, contravened people's rights under the European Convention on Human Rights. The ruling, named by Urgenda as [the first to “rule on the human rights implications of climate change”](#), is [expected to inspire other cases](#).

## Thanksgivings and prayers

Denmark [has made a legally binding commitment to cut its emission 70% by 2030](#) – we give thanks, and pray for efficient implementation and for others to follow this example ... In 2019 for the first time the UK [generated more of its power from zero carbon sources \(48.5%\) than from fossil fuels \(43%, down from 75% in 1990\)](#) – we give thanks for the rapid decarbonisation of the UK's supply and pray it continues ... Europe [has agreed a net-zero target for 2050](#), though Poland has not committed to implement it. Major European investors [have recommended enshrining it in law](#). The EU will also be reconsidering its 2030 targets – we give thanks for the direction of movement and pray that all members can agree on and implement appropriate targets ... [World demand for coal fell in 2019 – though demand in future years hangs in large part on China's decisions about its next five-year plan](#) – we pray that China's plan will move away from coal.

## Natural gas and methane leakage

A recent [report by researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology](#) has questioned natural gas's viability as a 'bridge' fuel in the transition to clean energy. The report indicated difficulties in estimating the leakage of methane involved in gas's production and use – and hence its utility in reducing emissions. Speaking about the prospect of expanding gas use, one of the study's authors noted: “A certain amount of investment probably makes sense to improve and make use of current infrastructure, but if you're interested in really deep reduction targets, our results make it harder to make a case for that expansion right now.” Pray that this work helps to inform policy decisions on energy infrastructure.

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