

## Prayer points – July 2020



### Sobering developments in the Arctic

News of Covid-19 continues to almost completely dominate the media. But recent weeks have brought shocking news from the Arctic, which while it has been hardly reported, may have devastating long-term consequences.

Last winter was the [hottest in Siberia since temperatures were first recorded 130 years ago](#), notes the World Economic Forum. And now within the Arctic circle, [temperatures recently reached 38°C in Siberia, with land surface temperatures hitting 45°C](#). These temperatures would be high almost anywhere in the world, but within the Arctic Circle, normally one of the coldest places on earth, they are quite exceptional - around 10°C higher than normal for June. Overall, scientists [say the Arctic is warming twice as fast as the rest of earth](#). The high temperatures are causing [a rapid melt of old ice](#), with the likelihood of the Arctic becoming ice-free in summer within decades. The heat also causes the collapse of permafrost and release of the greenhouse gases it contains.

The media regularly highlight climate change impacts reflecting gradual changes caused by a steadily warming climate. Scientists [have estimated](#), for example, that for every tonne of CO2 emitted into the atmosphere, summer sea ice cover in the Arctic shrinks by 3m<sup>2</sup>. However, parts of the Earth system have the potential to change abruptly in response to warming. These systems have 'tipping points', [explains Prof Tim Lenton from the University of Exeter](#): "A **climate tipping point** ..... is where a small change makes a big difference and changes the state or the fate of a system". Carbon Brief [compares tipping points](#) to a child pushing themselves from the top of a playground slide. There is a point beyond which it is too late for the child to stop themselves sliding down. Pass this threshold and the child continues inevitably towards the bottom of the slide.

The melting of Arctic sea ice and land ice, and an abrupt increase in emissions of CO2 and methane through the thawing of permafrost, [are among the tipping points Professor Lenton identified](#). Events indicate we are in danger of very soon reaching this first point. This shows starkly the need for urgent action. Pray for the most urgent of responses by governments, companies, individuals and groups, and for all of us to make others aware of this situation.

### Psalm 96: 10-13

Say among the nations, 'The LORD is king!' The world is firmly established; it shall never be moved. He will judge the peoples with equity.' Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it; let the field exult, and everything in it. Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy before the LORD; for he is coming, for he is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with his truth.

### Climate Sunday

Seeking to inspire action, the United Kingdom's inter-denominational Environmental Issues Network has launched a new initiative, Climate Sunday, which aims to encourage thousands more churches across the UK to engage with climate issues. Participating churches will plan a service this autumn to help refocus people's attention on the need for climate action. Andy Atkins, Chief Executive of A Rocha UK, and chair of the coalition, says: 'Our vision is to leave a lasting legacy of thousands of UK churches better equipped to address this critical issue as part of their normal discipleship and mission; and to make a very significant contribution to civil society efforts to secure adequate national and international action at the COP26 conference.'

Climate Sunday isn't just a single event. Each month up until the November 2021 COP, the website and email updates to participating churches, will focus encouragement and opportunities to act on a different aspect of climate change, including topics such as transport, campaigning and prayer. We pray for the success of this movement in bringing Christians of all denominations together, encouraging Churches new to environmental action, and focusing commitment and attention for the already engaged. We pray for the coordinator and all involved in the organisation, as they prepare materials and videos for use by churches from September.

## Green Recovery

The calls for a green recovery are growing – and more detailed suggestions for how to enable one are now coming from a variety of sources. The International Energy Agency (IEA) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) [have offered a ‘sustainable recovery plan’](#) designed “to revitalise economies and boost employment while making energy systems cleaner and more resilient”. The plan focuses on investment in renewables and on using existing technologies to improve efficiency in a variety of sectors; it would, the IEA claims, result in significant declines in emissions.

The Corporate Leaders Group [has proposed guidelines](#) for work by the EU and its constituent national governments. In the UK, it helped to coordinate an open letter from over 200 businesses and investors. That [letter called](#) for a plan that would increase low-carbon investment, focus support on sectors and activities that would deliver both decarbonisation and job growth, and ensure that if companies receive financial support, their strategies are “science based and aligned with national climate goals.” [Greenpeace](#) and [the Committee on Climate Change](#) have also put forward detailed suggestions. The [EU](#) and [many national governments](#), including Germany and [South Korea](#), are already offering official rebuilding plans with a green focus. We pray that all governments will promote green policies so that the recovery will lead towards a just transition.

## A Just Recovery – Church perspectives

It is, however, still far from a foregone conclusion that we will get a recovery that reflects our calling to love our neighbour and care for God’s creation. So how can we help to promote one? In [‘The World Rebooted’](#) British agency Tearfund suggests that the crisis invites us as individual Christians and churches “to be part of a conversation about how [key] values can be embedded in the way the economy works and how we relate to each other locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.” “The church,” it says, “can demonstrate that a different way forward is not only possible, but a better option for everyone. And together we can call on governments and businesses to reflect this in the ways that they reboot our economy and society.”

As we ponder these issues and look at proposed plans, we can draw on many resources from churches and agencies which include a focus on equity and creation care. The Vatican has released a [book on implementing Laudato Si](#), which offers a range of recommendations for individuals and governments; it’s [been called](#) “a road map for the post-Covid-19 world.” Tearfund’s [‘Restoring Societies’](#) talks about such things as aligning recovery plans with net zero and 1.5 degree commitments, transitioning from fossil fuels, supporting international investment in green stimulus packages, and creating strong carbon budgets and green jobs. Canada’s Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ) [has several suggestions](#), including a national decarbonization policy, financial transfers to assist a just transition, and a climate accountability act. We pray that all Christians will take up the invitation to be part of the conversation, seek God’s guidance and engage well with the recovery process.

## Forests under threat ... and progress in preserving them

A new report shows that throughout 2019, every six seconds – about the time it took to type this phrase - [the earth lost a football pitch’s worth of primary forest cover](#). The emissions associated with the total loss of 3.8 million hectares would be the equivalent of running 400 million cars for a year. And that’s not the only impact: forest losses also affect ecosystems and biodiversity. We lament the destruction of primary forests and pray for all initiatives to reduce forest losses – including [investor initiatives](#) and [new efforts by Brazilian states](#) to protect the Amazon despite a lack of national support. We also give thanks for work by countries such as [Indonesia, where policy improvements are leading to positive change](#).

## A prayer

Dear Lord, when you walked on earth  
You gathered disciples to journey alongside you.  
And still you call – eternal way, and truth and life -  
Inviting us to follow, showing us the path.  
Gracious Lord, in these perilous times,  
We pray that you will help us journey well,  
Treasuring each day the world that is your handiwork,  
Caring for it and each other, sustained by your love and strength.

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