

Prayer points – September 2020



Season of Creation

The 1st of September is the Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation – and the opening of the Season of Creation, which runs through the 4th of October. It's [a time for all Christians around the world](#) “to renew our relationship with our Creator and all creation through celebration, conversion, and commitment together”. This year the theme is ‘Jubilee for the Earth’, and [we’re invited](#) to consider what it might mean to have ‘rest for the earth’ after the model of the ‘Jubilee’ proclaimed in the Law of Moses: “can we imagine new, just and sustainable ways of living that give the Earth the rest it requires, that satisfy everyone with enough, that restore habitats and renew biological diversity?” “May Holy Wisdom inspire our imagination” the organisers of Season of Creation [say](#) – and they add: “In the hope born of grace, we pray that the Lord who is our Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer will touch our hearts and that of the human family this Season of Creation.” Amen.

Hunger strikers take climate change message to parliament

In Finland a [small group of Extinction Rebellion protestors are on hunger strike](#) to send a passionate message to their government, asking them to accelerate Finland’s already ambitious target of reaching net zero by 2035 – and to show clearly how they intend to reduce emissions. “*What we’ve seen now is a goal, but no action. Since this government has been in office they’ve continued to allow the burning of peat which is a big issue of carbon emissions in Finland... We feel like the government is just not taking their responsibilities seriously,*” says Sawala, a physicist at the University of Helsinki.

Concern about targets without plans is a common theme in many countries. We pray for the hunger strikers and for all others who are advocating for greater climate action, especially throughout this month, asking that their messages will be peaceful, imaginative, well-informed, clearly communicated and clearly heard ... and will bring a positive response from governments around the world.

Greenland’s melting glaciers sound the alarm

For several decades, scientists have been studying over 200 glaciers in Greenland. [Their work has now shown](#) that in the last twenty years, the glaciers have moved into a new, more intense pattern of ice loss. Rapid retreat where the glaciers meet the sea, means that new ice in the winter is no longer enough to compensate for melting in the spring and summer. As [one scientist says](#), “the ice that’s discharging into the ocean is far surpassing the snow that’s accumulating on the surface of the ice sheet.” This, another adds, has “shifted the dynamics of the whole ice sheet into a constant state of loss,” – so that even if temperatures stabilised and “we were to go back to the old amounts of snow,” the ice would continue “to disintegrate more quickly”.

Temperatures, however, show no sign of stabilising: in fact, the Arctic is warming at twice the rate of the rest of the planet. So the likelihood that the ice sheets could recover is “near zero” a scientist responding to the study [said](#). Instead, our changing climate is likely to trigger less snow, more rain, and other factors that could intensify the decline.

This is alarming. Greenland’s ice sheet holds enough water to [raise the sea level by 7.2 metres](#), and increased melting could mean a rise of over a metre by 2100, enough to imperil many coastal areas. The scientists are calling for urgent action, [noting](#) that while we have reached one point of no return “it’s ... a staircase where we’ve fallen off the first step but there’s many more steps to go down into the pit.” Pray that these warnings cut through the numbness it’s easy to feel in the face of a large-scale threat, and that they inspire action which will slow down the rate of acceleration in melting and buy us time to adapt to sea level rise.

Your word, O Lord, is a light

“Your word, O Lord, is a light; enlighten my darkness, O Lord, my God” (Taize chant: [music](#), [recording](#))

Haggai 1: 2-9

This is what the Lord Almighty says: “These people say, ‘The time has not yet come to rebuild the Lord D’s house.’” Then the word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai: “Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your panelled houses, while this house remains a ruin?” Now this is what the Lord Almighty says: “Give careful thought to your ways. You have planted much, but harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it.” This is what the Lord Almighty says: “Give careful thought to your ways. Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build my house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honoured,” says the Lord. “You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away. Why?” declares the Lord Almighty. Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with your own house”

Good News on UK renewables

The UK government released figures this month [that showed clearly](#) the tumbling cost of energy from renewable sources. Electricity generated from wind and solar, they indicated, is 30-50% cheaper than previously thought. Carbon Brief [notes](#): “Electricity from onshore wind or solar could be supplied in 2025 at half the cost of gas-fired power, the new estimates suggest,” adding “the new report is the government’s first public admission of the dramatic reductions in renewable costs in recent years.” The report also suggests that gas with carbon capture and storage is a viable option. We give thanks for this good news – and pray that it will help focus UK – and other governments’ – policies in favour of clean energy.

Joys and Concerns

- Around the world, we’re seeing pressure to **reduce emissions from transport**. In the UK, the Local Authorities Pension Fund Forum is [asking for a ban on sales of new petrol, diesel and hybrid cars from 2025](#); in the US [major car makers have agreed with California](#) to reduce emissions despite federal weakening of standards. We pray for these initiatives to succeed and to drive further change.
- Mozambique has become the most recent country to [declare](#) that it will **ban plastic bag use**. We give thanks for initiatives like this, which tackle problems of resource use and waste – and pray for more.
- The end of August saw two significant **tropical cyclones**: Laura in the US and [Bavi](#) on the Korean Peninsula. We pray for all affected by these – and all still working to rebuild after previous storms. We pray, too, for protection for all vulnerable people and communities in this exceptionally active Atlantic hurricane season – especially in the Caribbean islands that have suffered so much in recent years.
- We lament the **oil spill** from the [grounded carrier MV Wakashio in Mauritius](#) and the [damage](#) done to [ecosystems and livelihoods](#). We give thanks for and pray for all working to protect wildlife from the spill’s consequences. We pray, too, for all working to prevent an ecological disaster from happening in the waters off of Yemen, where a [tanker with 1.1 million barrels of oil](#) is in danger of breaking up.

Change will come, but on whose terms?

On 20 August, Angela Merkel, the German Chancellor hosted leading Fridays for Future activists in Berlin for talks on the EU’s climate goals. Greta Thunberg, along with fellow campaigners from Belgium and Germany, had [requested the meeting and Merkel said she was “pleased” to meet with them](#). “We asked her to treat the climate crisis like you treat any other crisis ... What we want is leaders, we want people to step up,” Thunberg said afterwards, adding that Merkel “has a huge responsibility but also a huge opportunity.”

Writing before the meeting, the young climate activists noted that the date of the meeting would be “*exactly two years since the first school strike for the climate took place.*” Too little has changed in that time, they said, adding: “*We understand the world is complicated and that what we are asking for may not be easy or may seem unrealistic. But it is much more unrealistic to believe that our societies would be able to survive the global heating we’re heading for – as well as other disastrous ecological consequences of today’s business as usual. We are inevitably going to have to fundamentally change, one way or another. The question is, will the changes be on our terms, or on nature’s terms?*” We pray that their time with the German Chancellor will have had a positive impact – which leads to increased German and EU action for positive change.