

Prayer points – November 2020



All Saints Day

In many churches, the 1st of November – All Saints - is a time for thinking about the way Christians have witnessed to God's love in their lives throughout the centuries. We can draw inspiration from 'the saints' - both famous and unsung – who have cared for God's creation as part of their witness to God's love. We remember St Columba, who lived simply as a monk, delighting in such things as the way the ocean waves "chant music to their Father upon the world's course." He offered hospitality to wounded animals and forbade the cutting down of trees. The abbess Hildegard of Bingen sought a balanced life of prayer, work, learning and rest. Fascinated by the way in which creation reflects the goodness and energising love of the Creator, she wrote: "All living creatures are, so to speak, sparks from the radiation of God's brilliance, and these sparks emerge from God like the rays of the sun." Conscious of the complex interrelationship between humanity and the rest of creation, she wrote: "All of creation God gives to humankind to use. If this privilege is misused, God's justice permits creation to punish humanity." We give thanks for the inspiring and challenging witness of these and so many others.

US Elections

On November 3rd, the United States holds elections for the presidency, House of Representatives, and one third of the Senate – as well as for state and local offices. Climate change has been a topic of discussion throughout the campaigns. At the presidential level, the two candidates [offer very different visions](#). One proposes to remove the US definitively from the Paris Agreement; the other to rejoin it. One lauds America's fossil fuel industries and celebrates action against environmental regulations; the other proposes [a goal](#) of 100% clean electricity by 2035 and a 2050 net zero target. These opinions matter. As a recent [BBC report stated](#); "Whoever occupies the White House for the next four years could play a critical role in the fight against dangerous climate change."

But as Shane Tomlinson of E3G recently pointed out: "it's .. not just about the President. What happens in the Senate and the House of Representatives is also really important: ... will there be a majority overall to enable federal climate legislation to move forward?" The Supreme Court also has a role to play in deciding whether plans are constitutional, which is why many were concerned about new Justice Amy Coney Barrett's description of climate science as "*a very contentious matter of public debate*." State and local elections also matter: over recent years, despite a hostile federal environment, officials in states and cities have formed bipartisan alliances to cut emissions, working with businesses and civil society to make real gains.

We pray for the US as it goes into elections, asking God to give each voter and each candidate wisdom and discernment. We pray that whoever is elected will work for climate justice and the protection and restoration of God's wonderful creation.

The gift of insight

Lord, you gave us the gift of insight to understand
The meaning of your creation and our responsibility to care for it.
You gave us eyes to see the beauty of the world
The gift of empathy to understand others and their needs.
Lord, forgive us for not caring for your creation
Forgive us that we seek to become masters of your work
Forgive our inner blindness and deafness to the needs of our neighbour
Jacqueline Ryle

A time of fruitfulness and thanksgiving

If you are in the UK, you might have noticed an abundance of acorns this year. I keep skidding on them as there are so many piling up on the paths. And oaks aren't the only trees producing fruit in abundance – so are beech, apples, pears, holly, hawthorn, rowan and many others. The plural noun for this abundance of fruit and nuts is 'mast'. Mast years happen every 5 to 10 years and no one is quite sure exactly why, though it's linked to the timing of warmth and rainfall in the spring. It means there are likely to be a lot more young trees growing next year. It's also great for small mammals and birds that feed on the nuts and fruit and for creatures like jays and squirrels that hide them away for winter feed. You might see our winter visitors, the Redwings and Fieldfares, who are particularly appreciative of all the extra berries this year.

At a time when so many of us are experiencing difficulties, we marvel at the signs of God's goodness and providence, wherever we are. And as we give thanks – individually or in celebrating thanksgiving with others – we pray for wisdom to use God's gifts well, so that all may rejoice in His abundance.

Can our money make a difference?

When we think about how we can take climate action, we often think about how we use energy or what we eat. But what we do with our money can also have a huge impact. "Do we invest money into the practices that take us deeper into this crisis," David Attenborough asks in the new [film 'Our Planet – Too Big To Fail'](#), "or in the solutions that could get us out of it?" The film poses this as a pressing question for the finance industry – but also for each one of us.

What kinds of choices can we make that will help to protect and restore the planet? Some involve choices about the goods on which we do – or don't – spend our money. Where we can afford to buy sustainable products, do we do so? For those of us who have the means to buy more than we need, how good are we at exercising restraint and sharing with those of us who have less? Some involve how we save: if we have a bank account, do we seek to know what our bank's lending policies are? As campaigns like [The Big Shift](#) have shown, some banks are still financing fossil fuel projects that could contribute to rising emissions. Similarly, if we have investments and pensions, do we know where the profits in them come from? And if we're not happy about the answers, could we press for change, or shift to a more sustainable option? [Make My Money Matter](#) estimates that switching to a sustainable pension is one of the most significant contributions we can make to fighting climate change. It may feel as if we can't possibly affect financial institutions – but we have more power than we think. Pray that Christians everywhere will recognize the power of our choices – and use that power wisely.

Praying for the UN Climate Talks

The next Conference of Parties (COP 26) was due to take place this month in Glasgow. The pandemic has forced its postponement to November 2021 – but there is still much to pray about. Four key things were due to happen at COP 26. Firstly, countries that signed the Paris Agreement were due to provide ambitious five-year climate pledges. Secondly, they were due to present their commitments to the Paris Agreement's long-term goal of reaching net zero by 2050. Thirdly, to forge an agreement on climate finance. And fourthly, to finalise the Paris Agreement 'rule book' which will guide the way in which countries measure, report and verify their emissions cuts. All are crucial.

While the main meeting itself isn't happening, other talks are – and on 12 December, the UK, co-host of COP 26, and the UN are holding an [online summit](#) designed to kickstart the sharing of ambitious targets and plans. This could, if it goes well, be the beginning of a year of action culminating in next November's talks.

We pray for the preparations for this summit and for all the meetings leading to COP 26. We pray for all planning the next COP – which it is hoped will be held in person, but for which there's also the possibility that parts will need to be online. We pray above all for those formulating national policies: Lord, grant them vision and ambition.