

Prayer points – December 2020



Waiting ... and staying awake!

Waiting for the coming of Christ – and staying awake, following Christ, while we wait – are themes of the Advent season. This year, we are also very conscious of other forms of waiting and watchfulness. We await effective vaccines against coronavirus – and take precautions until they arrive. And, on the climate front, we're waiting for the postponed UN conference where countries will be asked to make vital commitments to limit global warming – and at the same time, we're continuing to move forward on climate action so that the delay doesn't lead to loss of momentum.

As part of that action, the UN has hosted '[Race to Zero Dialogues](#)' bringing climate champions together online to highlight the urgent need for action and to share news about how different sectors can move towards a net zero, while protecting our waters and land. These have been followed by '[Climate Dialogues](#)', which are taking forward the 'rule book' on the Paris Agreement. And on the 12 of December a '[Climate Ambition Summit](#)', co-hosted by the UN, UK and France, and marking the 5th anniversary of the Paris Agreement, will offer countries [a chance to declare new ambitions](#) in cutting their emissions, setting net zero targets, offering climate finance and promoting adaptation. We give thanks for announcements of ambition that these dialogues have already inspired -and pray they will lead to genuine progress.

Nor is activity limited to the UN! Young people from around the world have decided to hold their own online [Mock COP](#). From 19th November to the 1st December, more than 350 young environmental activists from 150 countries [have held expert presentations and discussions framed around five conference themes](#): climate justice; education; health and mental health; green jobs; and carbon reduction targets. The event, which aimed to be fully inclusive of voices from all countries, will produce a final statement of demands to world leaders from the youth of the world, raising the ambition for COP26. Delegates will then be supported in engaging their domestic politicians in the build up to COP26. We give thanks for all the young activists who have brought this event together and pray that their discussions, actions and in particular their statement of demands will bring great impact and encouragements.

Powering up in Australia

A recent '[State of Climate Action](#)' report highlighted how vital it is to move faster in increasing the share of renewables in electricity generation and phasing out coal. Such moves are possible, the report noted; they just take commitment and investment. It is therefore extremely encouraging that two Australian states, Victoria and New South Wales, recently approved massive investment in renewables. [The Guardian reports](#) that "*the New South Wales parliament passed laws to build 12 gigawatts of clean energy – roughly equivalent to the country's entire existing large-scale renewable capacity – and 2GW of energy storage in the state over the next decade*" and Victoria has made a commitment of 1.6 billion Australian dollars. We give thanks for these signs of hope and pray they will inspire change in other parts of Australia and the world.

UK Climate Recovery Plan

The UK government have just announced their 10-point [Climate Recovery Plan](#). It focuses on more impetus for renewable and alternative energy, ending the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2030, promoting greener travel including ships and planes and the opportunity to create thousands of new jobs partly through a London green finance hub and retrofitting homes and buildings. [Critics of the recovery plan say](#) that it does not go far enough, primarily notes work that is already being done, and has little detail. The Financial Times reported that the plan is a "far cry" from what will be needed to reach net-zero emissions, and will only result in half the savings in carbon emissions that are needed to meet the Government's own net-zero ambitions. On the positive side, some felt that bringing forward bans on petrol and diesel cars could inspire the change needed to shift the UK's transport sector. Protecting nature was also a somewhat surprising and welcome addition to the list, including plans to expand protected environments. We pray for all involved with shaping the details of and implementing the plan.

Indigenous Voices in Advent

"Indigenous communities around the world are the frontline communities facing climate change and biodiversity loss," say the [Anglican Indigenous Network and Anglican Communion Environment Network](#). "However, not only are indigenous communities at the forefront of environmental disasters, they hold the key to protecting the Earth. For they are protectors of the land ... they manage or hold tenure over 25 percent of the world's land surface and support about 80 percent of global biodiversity. Forty percent of environmental protectors who have been murdered are from indigenous communities. Not only do they protect some of the most pristine areas on the planet, they offer a worldview which counteracts the raging consumerism that has plunged the planet into this tragedy." Throughout Advent, the two networks will host a series of webinars bringing people together in conversation with indigenous Anglican communities from Asia Pacific, Africa, the Amazon and the Arctic. We give thanks for the work of indigenous communities protecting the earth, and pray that these conversations will bring understanding and inspiration to all who participate.

New Ways of Collaborating

Many of the things for which we are giving thanks, involve online collaborations that would have been unthinkable even a year ago. For example, Josh Tregale, one of the organisers of the Mock COP [pointed out](#) that a "normal" summit uses almost 1,300 times as much carbon as their online one: "At a normal COP summit, delegates fly in from around the world. They can emit more than 50,000 tonnes of CO2 - whereas ours will emit around 39 tonnes of CO2." We give thanks for the way technology has helped to bring people together and pray that it will continue to do so, safely and well.

Even the leaves from the trees

The Atlantic hurricane season normally tapers off in November – but this November saw a succession of powerful, rapidly-intensifying storms that caused devastation in Central America. Hurricane Eta turned from a tropical storm to a category 4 major hurricane in under two days and lingered in Central America for days, affecting millions of people and killing more than 200. Shortly thereafter, Hurricane Iota rapidly intensified to a Category 5 storm: its force was so great when it hit the island of Providencia, that it destroyed 98% of the island's infrastructure, even stripping the leaves from the trees. While the news has moved on, millions of people who were already in challenging circumstances will be mourning lives lost and trying to rebuild homes and livelihoods. We pray for them and all working alongside them. And we pray that their voices will be heard as they call for action to slow down global heating, which raises the likelihood of such disasters.

Change in the United States

While President Trump removed the US from the Paris Agreement on 4 November, the victory of President-Elect Joe Biden on 3 November has raised hopes of a new dawn for climate action in the United States. President Biden has put forward a strong [climate action plan](#), and one of his first actions was to appoint [former Secretary of State John Kerry](#), who led the US at the Paris negotiations, as a climate-change envoy reporting directly to the White House. The new direction in Washington also shows the potential to inspire change throughout the country: General Motors [withdrew its support from a lawsuit](#) fighting emissions limits on cars. We pray that the Biden Administration will be able to work with Congress, states, cities, the private sector and people of good will to undertake a green shift in the US.

Light up our lives

Christ, come into our world of darkness
Light up our lives with your coming.
Fulfil all our longings with the joy of your birth
Strengthen our resolve to work for change in our world
And to share the hope of your birth that each Advent brings. Amen.

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