

Prayer Points – January 2021

Robust Hope

As we considered sources of hope at the start of this new year, we return to the root of our hope – the faithfulness of God – and to this definition of a ‘robust hope’ that can sustain Christians caring for creation. It’s taken from theologian Margot Hodson’s [Introduction to “Hope and the Environment”](#)

“Robust hope’ ... is ... the Christian hope that enables the eschatological future [our trust in God’s promises of ultimate redemption] to sustain hopeful living in the present in a way that leads to realism and not escapism. It is strong in the midst of difficulty and pain precisely because of the resurrection hope of life from death....

Robust hope is earthed in an understanding of the incarnation of Christ, who loved his whole cosmos so much that he came to live among us, suffer, die and rise again. It is based on faith in a risen Christ who ‘holds creation together’ (Col. 1:17), even as it groans waiting for liberation (Rom. 8:18-25). Robust hope has a secure understanding of ultimate hope, when heaven and earth shall be renewed and restored (Rev. 21-22). Robust hope makes ultimate hope visible in real and tangible ways in the present. It is a hope of perseverance. The more severe our present reality becomes, the more robust hope is made visible. ... In our discipleship, we are called back into the world to suffer, persevere, gain character and discover hope.”

Signs of Hope in the Churches

Throughout 2020, we’ve seen increasing numbers of churches seeking to live out love of God and neighbour through climate action. We recently learned that the United Church of Canada is investing \$3 million in helping its churches go carbon neutral. “All of us,” [said its moderator](#), “especially the church, need to be part of healing God’s creation.” Towards the end of the year, forty-seven faith institutions from twenty-one countries [committed to divest from fossil fuels](#). The Revd Bridget Banks, moderator of the Thames North (United Reformed Church) Synod in the UK [said](#): “It is good that we have now brought our investments into line with our commitment to reduce the carbon footprint of the Synod. Many of our local congregations are also exploring how to line up the ways they do things with their belief that this world is God’s world and God calls us to take care of it.” In December, the Scottish Episcopal Church set a net zero target of 2030, [described](#) by a bishop as “a target that will enable us to move from users of creation towards being custodian of all that the Creator has given us.”

We give thanks for the ways in which churches are recognising their calling to care for God’s earth and are taking action in faith and hope. We pray that all churches will see creation care as a vital part of their mission.

International Movements of Prayer and Action

A host of exciting new international movements for prayer and action are launching before the 2021 COP. [Climate Intercessors](#) is a project of A Rocha International, Eden Vigil, Frontier Ventures, and YWAM England. With a leadership from different countries, it’s open to people around the world and aims to provide material and structures for monthly prayer. Christian Aid has also begun a [global prayer chain for climate justice](#), which allows people around the world to sign up to pray at a particular time between now and the end of the UN climate talks.

The Global Catholic Climate Movement provides [monthly Laudato Si’ prayer services](#), hosted by a different continent each month, seeking to inspire and connect Christians as they work for climate justice and an ‘ecological conversion’. [Make COP Count](#), a project of USPG and Hope for the Future, will offer monthly ‘virtual meet-ups’ of UK participants and global partners. Participating churches will be encouraged to take spiritual, practical and political action.

We give thanks for these programmes and ask God to guide and bless all participating in them, and to make them a blessing to others and to our world. May God be glorified in all our prayers and use this wave of prayer from so many sources to further the reconciliation of people with each other, the rest of the created order, and the Creator.

www.prayandfastfortheclimate.org.uk



Renewables – Cheaper and More Popular Than Predicted

As we look around us, we see signs of hope in the wider world. Some involve our recognising that we increasingly have the *means* to switch to a low-carbon future. This year's International Energy Association's *World Energy Outlook* [was one witness to this](#). It not only gave increased prominence to scenarios of energy use that would meet the Paris goals, but also showed that solar energy is already the cheapest form of electricity, and that wind power is far cheaper than the IEA itself had estimated. With this in mind, the IEA has dramatically increased its predictions for renewables' share of the future energy market. We give thanks for the ways in which new technologies are arriving and becoming more affordable, enabling us to make the transition away from fossil fuels. We pray for a continued acceleration of that transition in the days, months, and years to come.

A climate team and laws that mean business

There are encouraging signs that the United States is preparing to play a positive role on climate. President-Elect Biden's [climate team](#) is notable for two reasons. Firstly, it includes people with a genuine desire to address the climate crisis, and expertise to do so effectively. Secondly, the team's structure shows seriousness of intent: members include not only leaders of key departments but [also two senior figures who will have coordinating roles across departments](#). John Kerry has been deputed to link climate and foreign policy, and Gina McCarthy will head a new 'White House Office of Climate Policy', working to ensure policy coherence across domestic activities. There are also positive signs from the Congress: the recent Coronavirus relief bill, passed by both the Democrat-controlled House and the Republican-controlled Senate, [included](#) a commitment to \$35 billion of clean power investment and a law phasing out refrigerant gases. We give thanks for all these encouraging signs, pray for those taking up new roles, and ask that the recent Congressional vote may be a foretaste of increased bipartisan support for care for creation.

Signs of hope from around the world

- Progress isn't just about what countries do 'at home' – it's also about what they support internationally. We give thanks, therefore, for the UK's announcement that it will [no longer fund the fossil-fuel sector overseas](#). Over the past four years, the UK [provided £21 billion of public funding](#) for fossil-fuel projects; this shift will [make it harder for such projects to raise capital](#). We pray the UK's move will inspire others.
- The shift from coal is gathering pace. Pakistan has [announced](#) that it won't approve new coal plants and by 2030 will produce 60% of its energy from renewable sources. Overall, Asia's developing countries are seeing [declining](#) coal investment, as governments switch to clean power and key funders in Singapore. Japan and South Korea have [refused](#) to back coal projects ([including](#) those of Australian company Adani). A new coal plant planned for Limpopo in South Africa [was withdrawn following protests](#); and in Brazil, a public civil action [resulted](#) in the suspension of licensing for a coal mine that would have had massive environmental impacts, as well as climate impacts. We give thanks – and continue to pray for a just transition.
- On a smaller scale, the city of Richmond, Virginia (USA), is seeking to redress years of environmental racism, which meant that largely minority areas, [received little investment](#). This reduced quality of life for people in those areas, not least by ensuring that their homes and streets were hotter in summer than those in areas where the city had invested in greater tree cover. The city is now planning to invest in [greening](#), as well as redesigning buildings and pavements, in the areas it had neglected, enabling their residents to access cooler spaces ... essential in a warming world.

A Vision (Revelation 22: 1-5)

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.