

Prayer points – June 2021



G7 Meeting in June

How will the next G7 meeting of the world's most powerful countries, show their response to the growing climate crisis? At their June meeting in the UK, they will have an opportunity to signal clear commitments that can build a better post-pandemic world and prepare the way for a successful COP26 in November. One key thing they could do would be to follow up their [announcement ending funding for carbon-intensive fuel projects overseas](#) with a [commitment to end their own fossil fuel subsidies](#). Another would be to make a [major commitment to climate finance](#), including debt cancellation and funding to help countries cope with 'loss and damage' caused by climate-related disasters. Pray there is real progress in these areas.

Emphasising the link between the G7 and the UN Climate talks, the recently formed [Young Christian Climate Network will be holding a relay](#), walking from Truro to Glasgow. It's an amazing venture, which is really capturing the imagination of people around the country. Pray for all involved with planning the relay – and that it will be successful in inspiring conversations and action everywhere it goes.

Moving to Action, not 'Greenwash'

Whatever promises are made by governments and businesses require careful scrutiny. What too often happens is that governments and companies make effective sounding promises of future change – 'greenwash' - which do not translate into action; certainly urgent action. As a result, we are currently on track for a [0.5% cut in global emissions](#) from 2010 levels by 2030, when we actually need a 45% cut.

How can we be alert for 'greenwash'? The real test is whether the promised action actually significantly cuts carbon emissions in the short term. The UK recently pledged a world-beating [emissions cut of 78% by 2035](#). Some UK policies, however, are pushing emissions up rather than down: slashed incentives for electric cars, closure of schemes for decarbonisation of homes and public buildings, support for road building and new oil and gas exploration, and a failure to halt airport expansions among them. Similarly, Canada's premier Justin Trudeau says climate change is an "*existential threat*", yet the [country's emissions have actually increased](#) since the 2015 Paris deal, thanks to its tar sands exploitation.

Caution is particularly in order with 'Net Zero' targets. Getting to 'Net Zero' – the point where any emissions put into the air are balanced by those taken out - is vital. But the emphasis has to be on creating Net Zero plans that focus on the 'Zero' – which involves progress in reducing emissions - not the 'Net' – which involves somehow removing emissions from the air. Instead, as a recent [article](#) by three prominent scientists highlights, many Net Zero models and plans allow unsustainable emissions to continue and put their trust in as-yet-undiscovered technologies somehow to remove the products of our current activity at an undetermined time in the future. This allows governments, companies - and all of us - to delay climate action. We can't afford delay. Pray for promises that are accompanied by policies and plans for real action now.

Change is coming

Three new developments could force a major shift in oil companies' ways of working. First, in a [move that shocked the industry](#), an activist hedge fund contested the Exxon Mobil board elections and galvanised shareholders to elect at least two directors who hold an [explicit commitment to 'bend the trajectory' of the company](#) towards a post-oil future. Second, Chevron shareholders [voted to make the company 'substantially' cut its Scope 3 emissions, which include those associated with end use](#) of its products. Third, a Dutch court ruled that Royal Dutch Shell should be compelled to cut its emissions, starting immediately, with a target of 45% cuts by 2030, in order to be Paris compliant. This ruling sets significant precedents. The court [rejected the company's existing net zero plans](#) as "*rather intangible*" "not concrete" and "not enough". It [held that Paris Agreement obligations could be invoked with respect to non-state actors](#) – reasonable given that Shell's emissions [are roughly the same as Russia's](#). And it [accepted the argument](#) that the damage Shell's emissions does violates human rights – and is the company's responsibility. Shell will appeal – but this ruling is huge and will encourage other cases. Give thanks for the activist shareholders and campaigners who have forced these actions. Pray that they lead to real and significant change for the good of all creation.

Stark warnings from the polar regions

Why do we need such victories? Why continue to pray and act? Because of warnings like these:

- The world's largest ever iceberg – named A-76 after the quadrant where it was first seen - [has calved](#) from the Weddell Sea area of Antarctica. It is around 170 Km by 25Km, around the size of Majorca.
- Early May temperatures in Russia in the Arctic circle [reached 86 degrees Fahrenheit – a shocking 36 to 43 degrees \(Fahrenheit\) hotter](#) than the usual average temperature.
- In [a new study](#), scientists report that the Greenland ice sheet is melting at an unprecedented rate. A significant part of the ice sheet, they say, is on the brink of a tipping point – after which melting will continue even if global heating was stopped. Large-scale melting of the Greenland ice sheet would have massive global consequences - such as disrupting the [Gulf Stream ocean current](#), with potential knock-on effects on weather around the world.

These are all warning signs that *“Our climate is sick and needs urgent care,”* as Prof Andrew Shepherd, at the University of Leeds, UK, recently [said](#). They force us to lament what is already harmed or lost – but also impel us to overcome obstacles in our desire to protect what remains. Pray that they inspire many others as well.

Eco anxiety in children

Caroline Hickman, a psychotherapist from Bath University says that ‘eco-anxiety’ is affecting increasing numbers of children and young people as the climate destabilises. Her [research](#) is based on talking to children in the UK and in the Maldives. She also facilitates workshops in schools with the [Climate Psychology Alliance](#) in the UK where young people can share their concerns about the climate and ecological emergency.

Caroline explains: *“Talking to children about climate change gives a fresh perspective on the absurdity of doing so little about the climate emergency and also highlights the troubling disconnect between what politicians say - and what they do.... Broken promises and inaction coupled with the enormity of the climate crisis are all beginning to take their toll on children’s mental health....”*

She adds: *“We all need to do more to listen to young people when they talk about climate change. Through their experiences we’ll all learn more about how we should take responsibility for the mess, apologise and start to act.”* She argues that young voices pressing for urgent change could act as a rallying cry to politicians around the world. We pray for a greater sensitivity to the burdens so many youngsters feel about climate change and for their concerns to be an impetus for real, positive change.

Young People’s Victory in Australia

We prayed earlier this year about a key case in Australia. Eight teens argued that the country’s Environment Minister has a duty of care to protect young people from harm related to climate change and should therefore not allow an extension of the Vickery coal mine. A judge [has ruled](#), and while not making a determination on the mine, [did agree](#) that climate change threatens injury to young people and that the government has a duty of care not to act in a way that will cause them future harm from climate impacts. This [sets a hugely important precedent](#). Give thanks for all involved in the case and ruling. Pray for wisdom as [both sides follow up with submissions](#) on how the newly defined duty of care affects decisions on the mine.

Compassionate God

Compassionate God, you know our hearts and share our sorrows.

We are hurt by the despoiling of the living Earth, which we love.

We are angry at the loss we contemplate. We long for words of comfort, yet find them hard to hear.

Turn our grief to active love

Turn our anger to energy for repair of the world

Turn our guilt to solidarity

and by your forgiveness make us whole with all creation.

Andii Bowsher