

## Prayer points – May 2021



### Climate Leaders Summit

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> of April, President Joe Biden [convened a 'Leaders Summit on Climate'](#). The virtual meeting was designed to demonstrate America's return to climate action, increase international cooperation and elicit ambitious revisions to countries' plans for emissions cuts and climate finance. Positive developments around the summit included [the announcement](#) that by 2030 the US would reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 50-52% from 2005 levels, would [double public climate finance by 2024](#), and would initiate or participate in a range of net zero endeavours. The UK announced a target of 78% cuts from a 1990 baseline by 2035; and the EU [pledged 55% cuts by 2030](#). South Korea promised to end government support for financing coal in other countries, and China's Xi Jinping [said](#) that he would 'strictly control' construction of new coal-fired plants and 'phase down' coal use from 2025 to 2030. Canada and Japan [also set new emissions reductions targets for 2030](#); Canada is due to cut 40-45% of emissions from its 2005 baseline, and Japan 46% of its emissions from 2013 levels. Brazil promised carbon neutrality by 2050.

Increased ambition is important, and these are major steps in the right direction: Climate Analytics [said](#) the summit results were the 'single biggest reduction' ever in the 2030 emissions gap. There's a lot of detailed planning behind the US proposal, too, and a clear desire to see every aspect of government policy in light of the climate crisis. We can give thanks on these counts. But there are three areas for prayer. Firstly, the need is not simply for *increased* ambition in reducing emissions, but for *enough* ambition – and while the new pledges, if implemented, represent important *progress* towards the goal of keeping warming under 2 degrees Celsius, they [don't yet do enough to attain that goal, let alone to keep warming at 1.5 degrees](#). More is needed – including from major countries such as Russia and India that haven't submitted new plans. Secondly, the pledges on climate finance still fall woefully short of the mark. And thirdly, as Greta Thunberg said in her film ["A Year to Change the World"](#): *"We should be hopeful. But hope doesn't come from words. Hope only comes from actions."* Will countries – especially the [US](#), where climate policy is politically contentious - be able to deliver on their commitments? We pray that God will move hearts and minds so that the answer will be yes, and that greater ambition – and greater delivery – will follow.

### Keeping targets meaningful

Some prominent scientists have been [signalling concerns](#) about the way emissions targets are being formulated. Reaching net zero is vital – if we can get to net zero emissions, where any emissions are balanced by removals, [we can potentially halt global warming](#). Not all net zero targets are equal, however. Some justify high current and near-future emissions by projecting ambitious removals of carbon from the atmosphere at a later stage. But the technologies to do this don't yet exist at scale - and there's a real danger in seeing such projections as giving permission to keep the status quo and forego investments that would lead to a genuine, just transition. We pray that targets will be a means towards real progress in creating a just, sustainable, low-carbon world.

### Wise words from the Duke of Edinburgh

Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, died on 9 April. One less well-known aspect of the Duke's life was the way that his faith informed his desire to care for the earth. He [said](#): *"We desperately need the conviction of religious belief to guide us in the way we live on, and use, the planet. We have got to learn to balance the economic and scientific realities against the religious demands for responsibility and consideration for the created world. It is not going to be easy, but I am sure that belief and conviction are very powerful motives to care for our planet with all its diversity."* We give thanks for all the Duke of Edinburgh did throughout his life to inspire care for creation. We pray that the recollection of his words and actions will continue to inspire others.

## Ending Support for Fossil Fuels

More than 100 Nobel laureates have signed [an open letter](#) urging world leaders “to act now to avoid a climate catastrophe by stopping the expansion of oil, gas and coal.” They were supporting an initiative called the ‘[Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty](#)’ which frames the energy transition in words familiar from the nuclear threat, asking for ‘non-proliferation’ via an end to new fossil fuel exploration and production; ‘disarmament’ via the phasing out existing production of fossil fuels; and a ‘just transition’. Some countries are ceasing government funding for external fossil fuel development – witness South Korea’s recent announcement on coal, along with seven European countries’ [announcements ending public export guarantees for fossil-fuel projects](#). But will more countries join them? And will countries also amend policies and practices that support domestic fossil-fuel industries? Pray for greater movement towards a just transition.

Fossil fuel exploration and production not only have climate impacts, but can also pose a range of environmental and social dangers. Activists in Southern Africa have especially asked us to pray about drilling in the [Kavango Basin](#), sharing concerns about vital wetlands and the rights of the San people, and about gas production in northern Mozambique, where communities’ sense that they are not benefiting from extracted resources [has helped fuel local conflict](#). Please pray for environmental and social justice in these situations.

## Low-Carbon Heat

For many individuals and congregations, heating is one of the largest sources of their emissions. As Christians work towards decarbonising heating in their homes and churches, we are finding both great potential and some challenges. On the positive side, efficient electric heating systems, [lower cost and more efficient renewables](#), an increasingly decarbonised grid, and the possibility in some areas of district heating networks offer huge opportunities. For many churches, solutions are already available that would be lower in cost than oil or gas alternatives! But barriers remain: some in terms of willingness to try new solutions, some in terms of finance, some because larger or more complex buildings that aren’t suited to current solutions. We pray that people will make use of available developments where they are appropriate, that governments will offer funding to help people switch, and that new technologies will enable solutions for all situations.

## Biodiversity

*“How many are your works, LORD! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.”* Psalm 104:24

A recent study shows that climate change [poses a particular threat to species that are primarily found in one region](#): it’s a reminder of how vulnerable parts of God’s creation are. As Dr Ayana Elizabeth Johnson of the Urban Ocean Lab [says](#) in the recent Greta Thunberg programme, *“There are so many species that are already in danger; they are already at the brink. What climate change is doing to biodiversity is putting so much of what’s left at risk.”* Action doesn’t just protect the most vulnerable species, either: care for them is also care for the whole. As Oxford Professor Katherine Willis said in the same [programme](#): *“Nature is all completely interconnected, and so therefore when climate change affects one aspect, it has repercussions on all other aspects.”* We pray for climate action to protect all creation.

## Being faithful to the future

*“The Christian’s duty is to the body of Christ ..... not just to the people who happen to be with you now, people you happen to be involved with here, but to a future community in which all, friends and strangers, have their place... It’s why Christians ought to be passionately and sacrificially concerned about the environment, for the very simple reason that we are called to be faithful to the future, even through we can’t see it, to a future of harmony and reconciliation with the whole creation. Our failure to be loyal to this particular aspect of the future is one of the most crass and troubling forms of injustice that afflicts our world – not to mention our Church today.”* Former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, [Homily for the Feast of St Alban](#)