

Prayer points – July 2021



A stark and vital warning

A leaked draft of a new report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) presents a sobering picture of how climate impacts could fundamentally reshape life over the coming decades, showing how important immediate action is.

The draft report focuses on [climate impacts, adaptation and vulnerability to climate change](#). It [makes four key points](#). Firstly, what the AFP, which received the leak, [calls](#) 'earth-altering' climate change could occur far earlier than expected. The World Meteorological Organization has said that by 2026, there is a 40% chance of a year in which warming exceeds 1.5 degrees. Prolonged warming of over 1.5 degrees, the draft report [warns](#), could have "progressively serious, centuries' long and, in some cases, irreversible consequences".

Secondly, planning for adaptation is nowhere near adequate: within decades, coastal cities could see hundreds of millions at risk, and if warming hits two degrees, 410 million city-dwellers could face water scarcity because of drought. The risks for hunger will also increase. We are not yet ready for these changes – and we must start preparing now, especially ensuring protection for the most vulnerable.

Thirdly, scientists are increasingly concerned that global heating will trigger tipping points in Earth's natural systems, when a small change pushes one of earth's systems over a threshold, leading to a cascade of larger changes. Climate scientist Simon Lewis [noted](#): "the stark message from the IPCC is that increasingly severe heatwaves, fires, floods and droughts are coming our way with dire impacts for many countries. On top of this are some irreversible changes, often called tipping points, such as where high temperatures and droughts mean parts of the Amazon rainforest can't persist. These tipping points may then link, like toppling dominoes."

The fourth point is the call to us. Having [noted the threat to humanity](#) - "Life on Earth can recover from a drastic climate shift by evolving into new species and creating new ecosystems ... humans cannot" – the draft calls for transformational change. The problem at present is not that our societies *can't* make those changes – it's that they *don't*. The changes themselves are possible, given political will. Pray that we, as individuals, undertake all the actions that we can take ourselves. And pray that God will guide people around the world to demand action from governments and businesses, to avert some of the threats that the draft report outlines.

The Heat Dome

"It's warmer in parts of western Canada than in Dubai. I mean, it's just not something that seems Canadian," a senior climatologist [said](#), amidst a startling heatwave on the Pacific Coast. Temperatures haven't simply been breaking records; they've [been](#) "shattering and pulverizing them". Canada hit a new national high of 49.6C/121.3F - an extraordinary 4.6C/8.3F above previous records. Seattle, where the normal temperature for this time of year is 75-75 degrees Fahrenheit, hit 108 degrees. Portland, Oregon had to close its streetcar system, as [cables were melting](#).

Is this related to climate change? Scientists [say it is](#), though the precise extent of the contribution will need study. Overall, though, [rising baseline temperatures](#) make heatwaves more likely. On top of this came a 'heat dome' phenomenon, that was caused by [atmospheric patterns](#) that may be [related to climate change](#) and was exacerbated by [the dryness of land](#) affected by [ongoing drought](#). It's the kind of climate impact models have predicted – but people like Washington State's climatologist [said](#) they would have not expected to see until "the middle of the century, in the latter part of the century."

Heat like this is deeply dangerous; Canada [has been reporting unusually high numbers of deaths](#). As ever, people who are less well off are likely to be particularly affected. The impact on animals and plants is also bound to be significant. Nor is this just an isolated phenomenon: new records [were set in part of the Russian Arctic](#) this month, and a heatwave in the Middle East [posed dangers to human health](#). Please pray for all who are suffering because of the heat, especially those with no way of escaping it. Pray, too, that these events [lead to a willingness to take action today to avert worse impacts in future](#).

Calling upon the Lord

Stir up your mighty strength and come to our salvation.

Turn us again, O God; show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved. (Ps 80:3-4)

Making change happen

If you want people to do something, make it as simple as possible. When countries' rules favour low-carbon solutions – making electric vehicles and public transport more viable, for example – the combination of supportive frameworks and individual commitment can enable sustainability to flourish. That's why we're praying for government action worldwide. This month, our prayers focus on two pieces of legislation. First, we're praying for successful implementation – and ultimately further strengthening - of the European Union's [new climate law](#), which creates an obligation to cut emissions 55% by 2030 and reach net zero by 2050. Second, we're praying for progress on US infrastructure legislation. The Biden administration put forward ambitious climate infrastructure proposals. Members of Congress, some perhaps influenced by [lobbyists](#), have stripped from a first bill many of the climate initiatives, though a few [remain](#). Democrats [hope to put forward a second bill which will include more, establishing a clean electricity standard](#) and supporting green energy. Their [strategy](#), however, [faces major obstacles](#). There is so much potential if governments show leadership. Pray that in both the EU and the US, legislation will be effective in creating a path to positive change.

End of Keystone XL

After a decade of controversy, the developer of the Keystone XL Pipeline, TC Energy, has announced it is pulling out of the project. This followed President Biden's [executive order revoking construction permission given by former President Trump](#). [Representatives of the oil industry](#) and [local employees](#) expressed disappointment at the loss of jobs and economic opportunities. Environmental campaigners, [who had worried](#) about the emissions from tar sands oil and damage to fragile ecosystems, were delighted. "After more than 10 years of organizing we have finally defeated an oil giant, Keystone XL is dead!" the Indigenous Environmental Network [stated](#). Give thanks that in this instance, the US Government is taking concrete action to protect the environment; pray for local communities as they seek alternative sources of income.

Plenty! New resource from Green Christians

Green Christian's Joy in Enough programme have just launched a [new resource – Plenty!](#) This discussion course for small groups helps Christians to examine topics such as inequality, consumerism, economic justice, the climate emergency and sustainability, facing the challenges they pose and recognising that as individuals and churches we are not powerless and not alone. We pray that many churches may find the course helpful – and may use it to play a role in shaping a fairer and greener economy.

What is 'Rewilding'?

The term 'rewilding' is often used (somewhat like Net Zero) to imply positive action on biodiversity without the need for engaging in specifics. As a concept it has brought new energy into nature conservation. But while for some the term implies a warm sense of returning to 'how things used to be', for others it can prove divisive. The idea of removing all human intervention and allowing nature to take control, is often too simplistic. Many of the world's well managed and sustainable farming ecosystems - such as hay meadows, field margins and fens - support a huge range of biodiversity, much of which would be lost if all external inputs were removed. A [thoughtful paper in British Wildlife](#) suggests that when decisions are made about land use, especially priority habitats, it may be helpful to view a spectrum of options, ranging from pure 'rewilding' to total intervention. A complementary mixture will often provide the best strategy to maintain biodiversity and to provide buffers against the impacts of climate change. Pray that people who have responsibility for land use will examine options and choose wisely, for the good of all creation.

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