

Prayer points – October 2021

Joint Message for the Protection of Creation



In a [joint message](#) for this 2021 Season of Creation, Pope Francis, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, and Archbishop Justin Welby of Canterbury have come together to stress the importance of cooperation and sustainability as essential parts of our common response to the threat of climate change and environmental degradation. They urge us to choose life and invite everyone to “*decide what kind of world we want to leave to future generations.*”

Their joint message warns of the danger of prioritising our interests at the expense of future generations. We are behaving in ways “*which demonstrate little concern for other people or the limits of the planet.*” They point out that amid the climate crisis, we stand before “*a harsh justice*” marked by biodiversity loss, environmental degradation and climate change – all inevitable consequences of our actions - because we “*have greedily consumed more of the earth’s resources than the planet can endure.*” However, we also face “*a profound injustice,*” as “*the people bearing the most catastrophic consequences of these abuses are the poorest on the planet and have been the least responsible for causing them.*”

“*We serve a God of justice, who delights in creation and creates every person in God’s image, but also hears the cry of people who are poor. Accordingly, there is an innate call within us to respond with anguish when we see such devastating injustice,*” their message reads. “*We repent of our generation’s sins. We stand alongside our younger sisters and brothers throughout the world in committed prayer and dedicated action for a future which corresponds ever more to the promises of God,*” they urge.

Finally they note that this is the first time they have felt compelled to jointly address “*the urgency of sustainability, its impact on persistent poverty, and the importance of global cooperation. Caring for God’s creation is a spiritual commission requiring a response of commitment. This is a critical moment. Our children’s future and the future of our common home depend on it.*” Give thanks for this joint initiative and pray that this unprecedented cooperation and strong message galvanise more action from Christians and others worldwide.

The Crucial Years

In Bill McKibben’s new newsletter he [comments](#): “The years we have wasted haunt me. But there’s only so much crying to do over spilled carbon. We are where we are, and it’s a hard, hot place. We’ve already raised the temperature of the planet more than a degree Celsius, fundamentally disrupting the jet stream, the Gulf Stream, and earth’s hydrological cycle. Stopping global warming is no longer on the menu. Two things are still possible, however

- By rapidly deploying renewable energy on a huge scale, we can start to flatten the carbon curve that will still be miserable, but perhaps our civilizations can survive it.
- we can increase the chances of survival by simultaneously building a fairer, less polarized world—by building solidarity within countries and among them.

.... I make no claim to special insight: truth be told, I don’t think you *need* a great deal of insight to understand the basic situation, which is that we must rapidly overcome inertia and vested interest.... You come with important gifts too, so I hope you’ll join in!

Psalm 36: 5-6a, 9 NIV

Your love, LORD, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies.

Your righteousness is like the highest mountains, your justice like the great deep...

With you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light.

Prayers for COP - Who will be heard?

In a recent article, [Reuters quotes](#) Bhutan's Sonam Phuntsho Wangdi, chair of the Least Developed Countries group, as saying: "We're ... concerned about the possibility of getting our delegates to COP26." The DRC delegation's lead, meanwhile, [has said](#): "The biggest frustration is the feeling that some are trying to organise the summit without the participation of certain countries."

Developing countries often face issues around travel to international conferences; this year, these are compounded by travel restrictions in the form of visas, vaccination requirements, and mandatory quarantine. Some delegates have to travel to another country simply to access a UK visa centre. Access to [vaccines has been a major issue](#). And the UK Government's offer to waive quarantine for COP delegates coming in from the [50+ countries](#) on its 'red list', extended only to ministers and two staff members. Other delegates [need to quarantine](#), albeit with the [UK government covering the costs](#). Civil society representatives and journalists face even more difficulties, as they don't benefit from all the same arrangements as official delegations.

The Climate Action Network asked for the COP to be postponed, [saying that](#) "exclusion poses serious and long-lasting implications for issues that will be under deliberation at this COP and that are extremely important to developing countries, such as climate finance, loss and damage and carbon market rules" Postponement is highly unlikely – but please pray that further actions are taken that will enable more delegates, civil society representatives, and journalists from developing countries to be present at the COP.

China and coal

Progress on phasing out coal is necessary for reducing emissions. On that front, President Xi Jinping made the news when he [announced](#) that in future China "will not build new coal-fired power projects abroad" While this broad statement [left open many questions](#), many felt it was [nonetheless significant](#) – signalling to countries that depend on external finance for new coal-fired stations that they need to think about alternative forms of power. We give thanks for this welcome development and pray it inspires a global turn to clean energy.

At the same time, China [continues itself to use massive amounts of coal](#). Right now it, like many countries, is [experiencing energy shortages](#). There have been restrictions on electricity in many of its provinces, as low coal stocks and a lack of wind energy reduce available power. Pray that this doesn't inspire a backlash against clean energy and calls for increased production of coal for China itself.

Pray for progress on climate finance

"No more empty promises. No more empty summits. No more empty conferences. It's time to show us the money" [said](#) Ugandan climate activist Vanessa Nakate, speaking at the recent Youth4Climate Summit in Italy. COP26 will only be able to make progress if promised climate finance is finally delivered. Before the Paris Conference, a target of \$100 billion a year from 2020 was set. Recently reports [show that present commitments won't suffice](#). The need for finance is urgent. The UK government [has called](#) on others to ensure the goal is met – but is hampered in showing leadership by its own aid cuts. Pray that [new commitments](#) inspire all of the wealthier nations to pull together to reach the promised amounts and finance a just transition

Praying about nations' climate commitments

Commitments alone are never enough – it's too easy for them to be mere words, as Greta Thunberg's [repeated 'Blah, blah, blah'](#) emphasised at the Youth4Climate Summit. But we need strong national plans, as they provide a framework for action and can be used to hold governments to account. At COP26, countries are due to present increasingly ambitious 'nationally determined contributions'. [Some have already done so](#) – but some, including major countries like India, [are still considering what to do](#). Pray for all preparing offers – asking God to guide national leaders to make strong, ambitious pledges and solid plans to implement them.