

Prayer points – March 2022



War - a disaster for people and planet

Our hearts are heavy right now as we look at the pictures from Ukraine, and we pray for peace. We lift before God all who are suffering – remembering all who are displaced or mourning or wounded. We lift before God, too, the sufferings of the land itself. As we write this, the Vasilkov oil depot is in flames, pouring smoke and fumes into the air. War, as a Syrian colleague often reminds us, is a disaster for the earth as well as for its people.

Dear Lord,

We bring before you all who are suffering because of conflict

Remembering especially the people of Ukraine.

We pray for peace, for healing of wounded hearts and souls, minds and bodies

And for a healing of the earth, which is not spared war's pain.

Emmanuel, God with us, wounded Saviour,

We trust in your love and reconciling power

And we raise our prayers in your Holy Name. Amen.

More production ... or a rapid transition to clean energy?

The need to respond to Russia's invasion of Ukraine has highlighted [many European countries' dependence on Russia for oil and gas](#). One immediate impact of the conflict is rising energy prices worldwide, and we pray for all for whom this brings hardship. In the longer term, the question is [what governments globally will do to reduce such dependence](#) ... and where Russian gas may go if they are successful.

The question of energy security is most pointed for countries like Germany, which just [suspended certification of a controversial gas pipeline from Russia](#) but was relying on Russian gas to be a bridge in its transition. Most countries are affected, however. Some analysts and politicians are suggesting a response focused on increased local production of fossil fuels: [some countries are increasing coal outputs](#), and fracking and new oil wells may now seem more viable economically. The other main proposal is an accelerated transition to a low-carbon world: the UK's Committee on Climate Change and many others [have](#) argued that it is better to cut fossil fuel demand and develop more renewable power sources. Carbon Brief [reports](#) that the EU is, in fact, going to propose huge increases in efficiency, and both the UK and Germany say they will try to decarbonise power by 2035. Pray that overall, governments seeking better energy security will opt for a faster transition. Finally, it looks as if Russian gas that is not going to Europe may be diverted to China: [Russia and China have just signed energy pacts](#). Pray that China's access to Russian gas doesn't divert it from climate ambition.

Climate Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability

"Climate change is a grave and mounting threat to our wellbeing and a healthy planet," Hoesung Lee, Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) [said](#) as the organisation released its [new report on impacts, adaptation and vulnerability](#).

The report details how "increased heatwaves, droughts and floods are already exceeding plants' and animals' tolerance thresholds, driving mass mortalities in species such as trees and corals," the IPCC [says](#). "Weather extremes are occurring simultaneously, causing cascading impacts that are increasingly difficult to manage. They have exposed millions of people to acute food and water insecurity." The report [states](#) that 3.3 to 3.6 billion people are living in contexts that are highly vulnerable to climate change – and that the burden of risk is falling disproportionately on the most vulnerable people and ecosystems. Noting the intersection of climate change, biodiversity loss and social and economic issues, the report "emphasizes the urgency of immediate and ambitious action," Lee [said](#). "Half measures are no longer an option ... Our actions today will shape how people adapt and nature responds to increasing climate risks." We pray that as the costs of inaction and half measures become ever more apparent, people will respond to this clarion call to preserve our planet.

Jeremiah 29: 11-13

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me, and come and pray to me, and I will hear. You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. Lord, help us to seek you with all our heart, that we may find you and be restored by your grace.

UN Environment Assembly: a chance to act on plastic pollution

The UN Environment Assembly takes place in Nairobi from 28 February to 2 March. [The assembly](#) “highlights the pivotal role nature plays in our lives and in social, economic and environmental sustainable development.” Delegates will consider draft resolutions on biodiversity and health, the green economy, and circularity. The single most significant item, however, is a possible global binding agreement on plastic pollution.

Delegates will consider the resolution in the closing plenary on 2 March. Negotiations have been taking place to get an agreement [that will](#) “track the lifespan of plastic products – from source to sea” and to ensure it’s “legally binding, accompanied by support to developing countries, backed by financing mechanisms, tracked by strong monitoring mechanisms” and involves all sectors. But manufacturers have been lobbying to weaken the agreement. While no single treaty will be a solution, this could be an important step. We [join UK charity Tearfund in praying](#) that it will be effective, address both ocean and land pollution, and ensure that the rights of those in the informal waste sector globally are protected, and their incomes for the work they do improved.

Reflection from David Golding

Well-known campaigner and a frequent participant in our times of prayer, David Golding recently shared two reflections – one on [‘Seedtime and Harvest’](#) and the other on [Christian Climate Action and Extinction Rebellion](#). Here is an extract from the first.

Billy Graham was spot on when he said, ‘The growing possibility of destroying ourselves and the world with our neglect and excess is tragic and very real. We cannot simply mourn the fate of the earth. We must do what we can’. It’s also worth noting that the Bible provides us with several examples when it is appropriate and necessary to ‘Sound an alarm’ (eg Joel 2:1, Jeremiah 4.5) In my experience, the objection to the stark warnings about the climate crisis most frequently cited by believers involves God’s promise to Noah in Genesis 9 that ‘As long as the earth endures seedtime and harvest ... will never cease.’ But ... it goes without saying that there can be no harvest unless we sow and reap for example. This assumed condition reminds us that we’re required to play our part in the fulfilment of God’s promise....[If climate change leads to large-scale failures], the fault will lie not in any lack of faithfulness on the Lord’s part, but in the way humanity has wantonly pillaged his creation.

Climate impacts – praying for people affected

As we close our prayers, we remember people who, as the IPCC has highlighted, are already suffering the impacts of a changing climate. We bear in mind, among others, those affected recently by storms, including:

- People in [Eastern Australia](#). A deep low-pressure trough brought intense rains at the end of February: some areas received up to two months of rainfall within just 24 hours. Several major rivers broke their banks, and record-breaking floods have killed at least 8 people and caused extensive damage.
- People in Madagascar. Madagascar has now experienced four tropical cyclones in the space of a month. The storms follow a serious drought, meaning that people have few, if any, resources to cope with yet more disaster.
- People in Brazil. Excessive rainfall has caused landslides in much of the country. In February, torrential rain fell in the mountains north of Rio de Janeiro, causing major landslides and flooding [in the area around Petropolis](#). At least 176 people have been killed, alongside widespread damage to property.
- People in the United Kingdom. The last week in February brought three named storms in rapid succession. Tidal surges, heavy rains, and strong winds – up to 105 mph gusts at the coast and up to 70 mph inland – caused significant disruption.

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