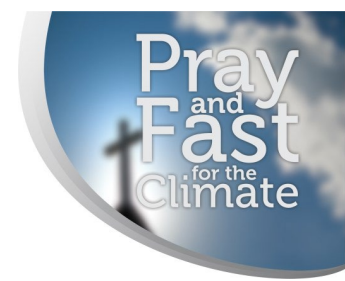


Prayer points – September 2022



Season of Creation Prayer

A [prayer from Season of Creation](#) on the theme: “Listen to the voice of creation”

Creator of All, from your communion of love your Word went forth to create a symphony of life that sings your praise. By your Holy Wisdom you made the Earth to bring forth a diversity of creatures who praise you in their being. You called human beings to till and keep your garden. But we turn in on ourselves and away from our co-creatures.

We fail to listen to the cries of the poor and the needs of the most vulnerable. We silence the voices of those who hold the traditions that teach us to care for the Earth. We close our ears to your creative, reconciling and sustaining Word that calls to us through the Scriptures.

Creation cries out as forests crackle, and animals alike flee the fires of injustice that we have lit by our unwillingness to listen.

In this Season of Creation, we pray that you would call to us, as from the burning bush, with the sustaining fire of your Spirit. Turn us from our inward gaze. Teach us to contemplate your creation, and listen for the voice of each creature declaring your glory.

Give us hearts to listen, enlighten us with your grace, and fill us with the hope to quench the fires of injustice with the light of your healing love that sustains our common home. In the name of the One who came to proclaim good news to all creation, Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Rising Flames

The symbol of Season of Creation this year is [the burning bush, which](#) “contrasts the fire of so many unnatural fires that aggravate the climate crisis, with the sign of fire as the light of the Holy Spirit that unites Christians.” As we enter the Season of Creation, we reflect on a [new report from Global Forest Watch](#) that suggests that about 16 football pitches (fields) worth of trees were lost every minute of 2021 to forest fires, and that the area burned each year has roughly doubled since 2002. In France this year, the area burned [has already been more than six times the yearly average](#). We lament the loss of precious forests – and pray countries will keep their promises to reduce the deforestation and carbon emissions that [provide the conditions](#) for hotter, larger fires. We pray for all who depend on forests for their homes and livelihoods, especially indigenous peoples, and we ask for strength and protection for [those who seek to protect the land](#).

Exceptional Heat and Droughts

Parts of Europe, China, the US, Mexico, and East Africa are experiencing historic heat and drought. Climate historian Maximiliano Herrera [said](#) of the [Chinese situation](#): “This [heatwave] combines the most extreme intensity with the most extreme length with an incredibly huge area all at the same time ... There is nothing in world climatic history which is even minimally comparable.” In Chongqing Province, the average 2022 temperatures [were 7 degrees Celsius higher than](#) even the recent 2011-2021 average. In Europe, too, what may be the [worst drought in 500 years](#) is leaving river beds dry. The Horn of Africa, too, is [experiencing its worst drought for forty years](#). In all these areas, the effects on farming are serious. In Chongqing province alone, [6.9 million hectares of crops are damaged](#). But China has significant grain stores; the problem is more acute for the Horn of Africa. In Somalia, where [some places have seen almost no rain in two years, half the population is at risk of a food crisis](#) – and [2.3 million people are already in emergency or catastrophe situations](#). “We relied on the livestock, but they all died ... all are gone, there is nothing left” the mother of a child admitted to hospital for severe malnutrition [told Channel 4 News](#). We pray for everyone suffering because of heat and droughts, especially those whose lives are at risk. Help us, Lord, to see the human pain behind the figures. Inspire us to take climate action and to support relief for people whose lives are devastated by climate impacts.

Isaiah 35:3-4a,5a (ESV)

“Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who have an anxious heart, ‘Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come’ ... Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy; for waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert.”

One third under water

"We are carrying our own belongings, our house is submerged" [said](#) one of [thirty three million people affected by the catastrophic floods](#) that have left [one third of Pakistan under water](#), as he left with what he could. Villages have been swept away; [162 bridges have been destroyed](#); roads are inaccessible; crops destroyed; and there are fears for the many people who are displaced and at risk of hunger and disease.

Pakistan's Minister of Climate Change [has referred to this](#) as "ground zero of a climate dystopia", and while attribution studies aren't yet complete, and lack of preparedness and deforestation [may also be factors](#), the exceptional temperatures which increased the amount of water air could hold; the [500% increase in rainfall across the country](#); and the contributions from the Himalaya's melting glaciers [point to climate involvement](#) and [mean that some scientists are already prepared](#) to concur. We pray for all the many people affected by the floods and also for people working under very difficult circumstances to help with relief and recovery. We pray, too, that the [UN appeal for funds](#) for Pakistan will meet its targets.

Loss and Damage

Pakistan's Planning Minister has said that the cost of rebuilding after the catastrophic floods [is likely to be more than 10 billion dollars \(£8.5 billion\)](#). But [who will pay](#)? Professor Nida Kirmani at the Lahore School for Management Sciences [was blunt](#): *"Any flood relief that is given should not be seen as 'aid,' but rather as reparations for injustices accumulated over the past few centuries."*

There is a profound moral argument that countries like Pakistan, which have contributed relatively little to climate change but suffer disproportionately from climate impacts, should receive financing to help them with adaptation and with compensation for loss and damage. But that's not happening yet: a new report suggests that Africa [has received only 12% of the funding it needs for adaptation](#), and funding for loss and damage remains elusive, despite the fact that it was a key demand of developing countries at COP26.

This September, in the run-up to COP27, there's a global call to focus on finance for loss and damage. On the 22nd of September, in an international day of solidarity, people around the world will be fasting, [praying](#), showing [a video](#) to explain the issue, and [calling for polluters to help pay](#). We pray for this day of solidarity – and for real progress at the next UN climate talks.

New UNFCCC Chair

Among those who have been most outspoken on emissions reductions, adaptation and loss and damage are representatives of the small island states, including Simon Stiell, Grenada's former environment and climate resilience minister. Stiell [has now been appointed as the head of the UNFCCC](#). An [engineer and businessman](#), politician and climate advocate, he brings an encouraging range of talents and experiences to the post. As he prepares for his new role, we pray that God will give him wisdom, discernment, strength and courage.

How will we respond to crisis?

The current crisis in energy prices is causing global hardship: in the UK, for example, a recent study by the [Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#) showed that the poorest fifth of families could wind up paying 46% of their income on energy; in South Africa, people in the townships are already finding it hard to pay for both energy and food. There's an urgent need for governments, businesses and individuals to work together to find ways to alleviate the immediate impacts on vulnerable households: we pray for all who are already in difficulty or are anxious about the future, and all who are working on ways to support people in these difficult times.

Looking more broadly, we continue to pray that government responses to the crisis will focus on solutions that prioritise a fairer, greener future, rather than turning back, as [some suggest](#), to fossil fuels. This is vital for both climate and energy security: the immediate impetus for the crisis is the invasion of Ukraine and Russia's restrictions on gas – but the longer term causes [also include](#) a refusal to prioritise the development of locally produced renewable energy and to take the necessary steps to reduce demand. We give thanks for the way the new US climate legislation is [giving impetus to a green transition there](#) – and pray for ambitious programmes in all countries.