

Prayer points – January 2023



As the New Year begins, we give thanks to God for creation and for God's gifts of love that inspire people around the world to prayer and action on care for the earth and each other. We pray that God blesses you in the coming year – and give thanks for the inspiration you provide.

Looking back, looking forward

After three tempestuous years for all of us, what will 2023 bring? Aware of the fragility of the best-laid plans, few would want to attempt specific predictions. But whatever may occur in terms of day-to-day events, we know that some truths will remain constant: God's love for the world, God's desire for all things to be reconciled, God's faithfulness to those who seek to do God's will. These are what offer us hope and strength, and enable us to work for the preservation and restoration of the earth.

We can take comfort, too, from the way that God has enabled good to emerge from even the most difficult of recent situations. Amidst the turmoil of the pandemic, conflict, and the energy crisis, we have seen governments, businesses and individuals make positive changes to patterns of activity and thought that had been thought to be unchangeable. We pray that whatever happens this year, God will use it to inspire people to ever greater love of God, neighbours, and the earth. Thy Kingdom come, O Lord!

COP15

After many delays, the UN biodiversity summit in Montreal concluded with a landmark agreement to a new set of goals and targets to "halt and reverse" biodiversity loss by 2030. A Rocha [has summarised the goals](#) of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework as "to (a) preserve and restore ecosystems and halt human induced extinction of known threatened species, (b) sustainably use biodiversity, (c) fairly and equitably share the benefits of genetic resources, and (d) ensure adequate means of implementing these goals for all parties." The targets for 2030 include conserving 30% of the world's land, inland waters, coastal areas and oceans; restoring 30% of degraded ecosystems; and mobilising at least \$30bn a year for biodiversity preservation in developing countries. A Rocha has said that while there are weaknesses in the agreement, "we applaud the ambition of the [framework], and now the challenge is to successfully implement its targets in a way that is fair, inclusive and equitable." We pray that this challenge will be met.

EU Anti-Deforestation Law

The European Council and European Parliament have [agreed the terms for legislation](#) that will prevent certain products associated with deforestation from entering the single market. Companies importing palm oil, cattle, soy, coffee, cocoa, timber and rubber as well as derived products (such as beef or chocolate) will have to certify that they are deforestation free and also provide geolocation coordinates to the places of production; if these prove to be associated with deforestation after 31 December 2020, the goods will be banned. Goods will also be banned if their production is determined to have violated the laws in their country of origin. While the [legislation isn't perfect](#) – its [coverage of both products and definition of forests could be wider, and it needs to be stronger on protecting indigenous rights](#) – it has nonetheless been hailed as a landmark attempt to protect forests that are essential for biodiversity and absorption of emissions.

A year of devastating extremes

For Argentinians, December 2022 [was marked by extreme heat](#), with temperatures of up to 46 degrees Celsius. In North America, meanwhile, a polar vortex and giant 'bomb cyclone' affected much of the continent, bringing extreme cold, snow, and near-hurricane force winds. Argentina's heatwave fits a pattern of increasing heat extremes, and paradoxically North America's weather [may also relate to climate change](#) - as did many other extreme events this past year, including floods in Pakistan and West Africa; droughts in China, Europe, the US and Brazil; the rapid intensification of Hurricane Ian; extreme warming in the Arctic; and drought in the Horn of Africa.

[According to UK charity Christian Aid](#), 2022's ten costliest extreme events impacted by climate change each caused financial damage of over \$3 billion, with untold personal damage alongside. We pray for all affected by extreme weather events, especially those still struggling with their impacts. We pray that people will recognise the imprint of climate change where it is a factor and will see the need for urgent climate action. We pray that the new loss and damage fund established at COP27 will be given adequate resources to help poorer countries deal with the devastation caused by the 'new normal'.

Isaiah 43:1b-3a

Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.

For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour.

Changing the ways we get energy

Renewable energy capacity is increasing so rapidly that the International Energy Association (IEA) has massively [raised its forecast](#) for the sector. In 2020, the IEA thought that 1,092 Gigawatts of additional renewable capacity would be built by 2026. It now estimates that 1,920 will be – and that renewables will surpass coal as the largest source of electricity generation by early 2025. One reason for the increased pace of change is the desire for energy security: countries are seeking to minimise their reliance on imported fossil fuels. Another is the falling cost of renewables – the IEA [states that](#) “utility-scale solar PV and onshore wind are [now] the cheapest options for new electricity generation in a significant majority of countries worldwide.”

The rapid growth in renewables is encouraging – but the IEA notes that to meet net zero goals, even more rapid expansion is needed. This will require changes in how permissions for new projects are granted, investment in better grid infrastructure, and financing for renewables in developing countries. If these conditions are met, growth could be 25% faster again.

We give thanks for the unprecedented progress, and pray that countries will take the necessary steps to enable it to accelerate even further.

Signs of Hope

- HSBC [has announced it will no longer finance new oil and gas fields](#), in a move that was hailed as “a strong signal to fossil fuel giants and governments that banks' appetite for financing new oil and gas fields is diminishing.”
- Countries like Morocco, Eritrea and Papua New Guinea have low carbon footprints – but [they're still taking action](#) – decarbonising electricity, promoting sustainable agriculture, and tackling deforestation.
- In the UK, [green jobs are growing at a rate four times that of the overall jobs market](#). The percentage of green jobs is highest in Scotland, which hosts much of the UK's offshore and onshore wind market.
- The US government [has granted a loan of \\$2.5 billion dollars](#) to create new manufacturing capacity for electric vehicle batteries. Its aim is to kickstart the switch to electric vehicles nationwide.
- While nuclear fusion will not be commercially viable for a long time – and isn't a solution to our short or medium term problems – it's good news that scientists [have shown that it is possible](#).

We give thanks for these and other signs of hope – and pray that each may bear rich fruit.

New Year, New Conversations

Talking about climate change - with our family, friends, colleagues, and government officials – is vital. Conversations offer opportunities to share concerns and solutions, provide inspiration, ask for and offer accountability, and create communities of action. Dialogues with government officials are particularly important, as they help to create political will for positive local and national policies. [Client Earth](#), [Climate Outreach](#), and [Hope for the Future](#) have simple suggestions to help start or continue climate conversations. This year, could you identify one government official with whom you could start a dialogue? We pray that all such conversations may lead to increased understanding and action.

A Blessing

(From Prayers for the Planet at a service at Hinde Street Methodist Church, London, December 2005, [reprinted CTBI](#))

Go forth now to care for God's world.

Use energy wisely. Share your knowledge.

Sacrifice where necessary. Live in harmony with all creation.

Go out into all the world as prophets of a new way of living

and preach the good news to all creation.

And the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

Be with us all now and always.

www.prayandfastfortheclimate.org.uk