

# Prayer points – February 2023



## Lent

Lent begins this year on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February. *“This Lent ... let us open our ears and our hearts and listen ... let us turn our attention to the testimony of creation. By slowing down and walking in the wisdom of creation, we will open our hearts to hearing the good news of peace as we travel with Jesus to the city of Peace. As we listen to the stones, the rivers, the trees and all the other voices of creation that bear witness to the Good News, we will hear the ways in which injustice and systems of oppression and unsustainable consumption threaten to silence the cries of hope and peace... We are called to join this choir of witnesses and work in opposition to ecological destruction, global warming, and policies of hurt and harm that threaten the voices of peace; the very rocks of the Earth that cry out in praise of the Holy One of creation.”* Joanna Hipp, [Presbyterians for Earth Care, 2019 Lenten Devotional](#)

## 1<sup>st</sup> Anniversary of the Invasion of Ukraine

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of February, it will be a year since Russia invaded Ukraine.

*“You Lord are the great provider, you see the needs of those impacted by war and you love them and weep with them. Comfort them Lord as they struggle and nourish their souls with renewed hope each morning.”* [Lament for War Zones, Anglican Church of Central Queensland, Australia](#) We pray for all who have suffered and are suffering because of the violence – and we ask God to bring about a just and lasting peace.

*“[Wars]..., not only destroy human life and social structures, but also damage the land, ruining crops and vegetation as well as poisoning the soil and water. The survivors of war are forced to begin a new life in very difficult environmental conditions ...”* Pope John Paul II, [Message for World Day of Peace, 1990](#) We lament the environmental destruction the war has caused in Ukraine and pray for all who have returned to damaged lands and are seeking to restore the earth.

*“The Lord ... lifts up all those who are bowed down...”* Psalm 145 We continue to pray, too, for all who are suffering hardship because of the indirect impacts of the war, especially the global rises in energy and food prices. Loving God, you hear the cry of all who are in need: inspire a greater sharing of the earth’s resources, so that, in these difficult times, all people may have enough.

Finally, we continue to pray for governments seeking greater energy security as a result of the war. The International Energy Association [has said](#) that the global energy crisis has “turbo-charged” the shift away from fossil fuels – but alongside the push to renewables, some nations, including major emitters such as [China](#), the [UK](#), [US](#), [Australia](#), and the EU, are [also seeking](#) to increase their production of coal, oil, and gas. We pray that God will inspire those forming energy policy not to lock in production of more fossil fuels, but to accelerate even further the switch to clean energy.

## Fair Trade Fighting Climate Change

February is a time for Fairtrade! Fairtrade International is promoting the month as [Fairbruary](#), and in the UK, Fairtrade Fortnight will begin on the 27th. This year the focus is on the relationship between Fairtrade and Climate Justice. At present, there is profound injustice. Many small producers contribute little to climate change, yet are suffering some of the worst impacts, as smaller yields and crop losses affect their livelihoods. The Fairtrade Foundation [is asking us](#) to contact our politicians to ask for proper funding for climate action in low income countries, ideally with a focus on helping farmers.

The Fairtrade movement is also directly helping farmers to develop climate resilience. For instance, [at Fairtrade-funded ‘climate academies’ farmers can share new techniques](#) – in India, for example, they learn to gather climate-relevant data so they can adjust water for their crops; in Kenya, the focus is on planting shade trees and growing climate-resilient varieties. We pray for climate justice, especially for farmers; give thanks for all that Fairtrade does to promote human and environmental flourishing; and ask God to inspire support for Fairtrade.

## Isaiah 55: 6-7 (Revised Standard Version)

*“Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”*

## Atmospheric Rivers

In recent years, California has been in the news because of its forest fires: this year, however, has started with epic rains and floods. A sequence of storms, [known as 'atmospheric rivers'](#) because they originate from long currents of exceptionally moist air, has left [more than half the state's counties as disaster areas](#). In some places, flood risk [was exacerbated](#) because previous fires had left the earth bare - one climate risk compounded another.

Scientists have long predicted that global warming [could create supercharged currents](#) because warm air holds more moisture; one expert [emphasised](#) the need is now *"to adapt to the climate change we've already set in motion."* We pray for all affected by the storms and for nature-friendly adaptation to improve local resilience.

## In Hot Water

A new study showed that last year's ocean heat content was the highest in recorded history. Over one year, the amount of heat added [was the equivalent of 100 times](#) the total global production of electricity. This is not only causing more extreme storms, but also leading to changes in ocean currents and composition. The Arctic and Antarctic [are heating particularly rapidly](#), which is causing [record ice melts](#): at present, [global sea ice is at its lowest level on record](#).

These are immensely significant changes: warming oceans and melting ice [have the potential to lead to tipping points](#), when small changes trigger larger ones "that can be abrupt, irreversible, and lead to cascading effects." Seeing what is happening in the polar regions, in particular, has the potential to [galvanise even skeptics](#), but it is hidden from most people. Pray for greater awareness of what is happening – greater climate action.

## Capturing Carbon

To avoid the worst impacts of climate change, we must massively reduce our emissions. But that alone isn't enough according to most projections: we are also going to need to capture some of the carbon that is already in the air. The first ever [State of Carbon Dioxide Removal report](#) recently offered a snapshot of the current state of carbon dioxide removal. It estimates that roughly two billion tonnes of carbon dioxide are being removed from the atmosphere annually, most of it through forests. This is a huge figure - but nowhere near enough. The report [suggests](#) that to keep warming below 1.5 degrees Celsius, in addition to emissions reductions, land-based carbon dioxide removals would have to double by 2050; deforestation would need to decrease; and there would have to be a massive scaling up of new ways of carbon removal ... on the scale of up to 1,300 times the current, very low amount.

New methodologies for carbon capture [are emerging](#) at a very small scale, and new programmes for reforestation are, too. We pray for wisdom and discernment for all who are researching, implementing, or finding funding for forms of carbon dioxide removal. We pray, too, in light of the [revelations about the issues around some forest-related programmes](#), for transparency and clear methodologies to ensure that programmes undertaken are genuinely reducing carbon.

## Faith into action

A recently published study investigated how Christians who read Ruth Valerio's "Saying Yes to Life" were inspired to take environmental action. The authors [identified](#) three key steps: *"revealing, where the nature of environmental problems and pre-existing theological beliefs ... are illuminated to the individual,"* reflecting, in which people *"consider how their own beliefs and lifestyles might need to be reconsidered according to new theological ideas or scientific information"* and redirecting or reinforcing, in which people work out how to reconcile their lifestyles with what they believe. We give thanks for this work and pray that our churches can help people with each of these steps, offering theological and practical information, space for reflection, and pathways to action.

## Blessing

*(From Eco-Congregation Module 2, reprinted CTBI)*

May God who established the dance of creation,  
who marvelled at the lilies of the field,  
who transforms chaos to order,  
lead us to transform our lives and the Church  
to reflect God's glory in creation.