

Prayer points – March 2023



Beloved Creatures

Extract from '[What Can Lent Teach Us About Creation Care?](#)' by Nate Rauh-Bieri

"Lent is a time to regard ourselves rightly *as God's beloved creatures*. For many Christians, that we are 'God's beloved' is standard knowledge. The 'creature' part is more easily forgotten, thanks in part to historic and cultural interpretations that turn [humans' special Genesis mandate](#) into a warrant for domination, set-apartness, and even superiority to other creaturely life ...

The season of Lent can help us recognize and reclaim our creaturehood. It can help us lament the ways our species has overstepped and failed to bless the rest of creation. It can also be an opportunity to take stock of whether we are living out our identity as God's beloved creatures:

- Are we embracing our creaturehood or striving to rebel against or transcend it?
- Are we choosing interdependence and fellowship or choosing greed and carelessness?
- Are we living within our creaturely limits or transgressing ecosystemic boundaries?
- Are we taking up our vocations as healers and helpers?
- Are we taking joy in being part of this miraculous world?

Reclaiming our creaturehood as good and God-intended can help us live into right relationship with God and the rest of creation. This is not just a Lenten practice; it is a year-round spiritual practice. During these times of ecological and social disorientation, when it can be overwhelming to know what to do, we can start just by asking ourselves: how would a creature that is consciously in relationship to the rest of creation *live*?"

What does a fair path for reducing emissions look like?

Reducing emissions in a way that is fair and equitable is one of the keys to climate justice. But how do we look at what is 'fair' and 'equitable'?

At a country level, one critical issue is how to divide up rights to the remaining amount of carbon that can be placed in the atmosphere without raising global warming above 1.5 degrees. Within the Paris Agreement, each country sets out its own 'nationally determined contribution' of emissions cuts. Countries come up with ambitious-sounding targets, but some start from very high current levels of emissions. If all countries implemented their current pledges, how much carbon would they use? [One analysis suggests](#) that, based on pledges as of November 2021, the US, EU, and China would consume about 45% of the available 'carbon space' for 1.5 degrees by 2030 ... and 91% of it by 2050. Clearly that doesn't leave much space for anyone else. Another also suggests that [regions like South Asia and Africa wouldn't receive anything like their 'fair share'](#). If we are to keep global warming below 1.5 degrees and have greater equity, developed and faster-developing regions need to ramp up the speed and depth of their emissions cuts.

Then there is the question of phasing down fossil fuels. Phasing out unabated coal is a key component of most net zero pathway proposals – and India was condemned for watering down language on coal phase-outs at the Glasgow COP. But while phasing out coal is critical, the burden of doing so falls disproportionately on developing countries. A [recent paper points out](#) that the transitions proposed for these countries are far faster than those developed countries themselves managed. It calls on developed countries to work towards faster phase-downs of their own oil and gas use, in order to give developing countries more space for their transitions from coal.

The world's flourishing depends on our collectively reducing emissions. We pray that all countries can work together to reduce emissions by the necessary amounts, and in a way that fosters climate justice. We pray especially for China, whose decisions are so vital. We pray, too, that individuals will play their part, conscious that that the [top 1% of individual emitters produce 1000 times as much CO2 as the bottom 1%](#).

Micah 6:8 (English Standard Version)

He has told you, O man, what is good;

and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

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Flourishing lands, flourishing people

Around the shores of Lake Bosomtwe, [A Rocha Ghana](#) and [Climate Stewards](#) are working with local farmers and communities on [tree planting projects](#) that will sequester carbon, enhance biodiversity, and provide livelihoods. On smallholder farms, the A Rocha Ghana team helps families to determine how much of their land could be used to plant trees and to put together a mix of ground crops and trees (including mango, avocados, coconuts, and trees with medicinal properties) that enables the farmers to have a steady harvest income as trees mature. On communal land, they're helping community groups to plant trees in a way that both preserves the fragile catchment area closest to the lakeshore and grows produce which can be used or sold for the benefit of the whole community.

All too often, our narratives suggest that biodiversity enhancement, carbon sequestration, community development, and income creation are in opposition. Here, they complement each other. We give thanks for this model of true flourishing and pray that it may inspire similar community-based programmes in other areas.

Storms and floods

"This is for us the storm of the century that followed the downpour of the century just two weeks ago," Maori Bishop Te Kitoi Pikaahu said of Cyclone Gabrielle, which caused [massive damage to infrastructure and homes](#) on the North Island of New Zealand, [killed at least eleven people, and displaced many thousands](#). Days later, Cyclone Freddy killed dozens of people and displaced thousands more in [Madagascar](#) and [Mozambique](#), especially in Mozambique's capital, Maputo. Also in February, the Brazilian state of Sao Paulo [saw heavy rains which caused massive landslides, killing at least 65 people](#); floods in South Africa [threaten homes and food security](#); Australia's Northern Territory [has had to evacuate people from flooded areas](#); and [South Sudan's ongoing floods continued to imperil](#) the food security of millions of vulnerable people.

Warming air holds more water, increasing the likelihood of more intense storms and extreme rain events. We pray for all who are affected by the storms and floods of the past month, asking God to protect them as they mourn and work on recovery. We pray, too, that seeing these stronger storms and floods will motivate people and governments around the world to further action to tackle the causes of climate change.

A challenge for our churches

"Member churches of the Anglican Communion are involved in every part of the story of climate change. We are the people facing devastation in disaster-stricken communities. We are the polluters in wealthy countries. We are people living in poverty and on the margins. We wield power and political influence. We are experiencing loss and damage of our lands, homes and livelihoods. We are investors with financial capital. We are first responders to disasters and those who accompany communities on the journey of recovery and resilience. We contribute to the problem. We contribute to the solution."

At a recent [meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council](#), Dr Elizabeth Perry from the Anglican Alliance gave the statement above. It is true not only for Anglicans, but also for all members of the worldwide Body of Christ. As you read it, pray that each Christian may recognise his or her part in the story and join with others to share in their burdens or rejoicing. Pray that we may all work together as participants in a new story, shaped by God.

The rise of renewables

"Low-emissions sources are set to cover almost all the growth in global electricity demand by 2025." That's the finding of the most recent International Energy Association (IEA) electricity market report, which notes that *"renewables and nuclear energy will dominate the growth of global electricity supply over the next three years, together meeting on average more than 90% of the additional demand. China accounts for more than 45% of the growth in renewable generation in the period 2023-2025, followed by the EU with 15%."* The report adds that *"the substantial growth of renewables will need to be accompanied by accelerated investments in grids and flexibility for their successful integration into the power systems."* Lord, we thank you for the good news about the growth of renewables – and pray for the strengthening of infrastructure that will enable it to continue and succeed.

Maori Prayer (trans Bishop Te Kitoi Pikaahu)

May peace be widespread,
The sea glisten like the green stone,
And may the shimmer of light dance before your path.