

Prayer points – July 2023



Connecting with God outdoors

(from a reflection by Alison Morgan for BRF- please do read the whole, which is stunning!)

We tend to think of words as marks printed on a page, or sounds produced in the air. But God's words are far more than that: they are real, tangible and visible – they are the physical manifestation of his thoughts, and they are all around us, tugging at the sleeves of our minds. As Paul points out: 'Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made.' ... For me, the best way of making prayer a way of life, whatever my circumstances, is simply to go for a walk.

Feeling the heat

Record [highs and sudden floods in China](#). At least [112 people dead of heat-related causes in Mexico](#). [Heat indices of over 100°F across the US's South and West](#). [Temperatures of 47°C \(116F\) in India's Uttar Pradesh](#). An unprecedented [marine heatwave off the coast of the UK and Ireland](#). Alarming low sea ice. All around us are the signs of global heating, rendering life increasingly difficult for many and affecting the most vulnerable with the greatest severity. As [average global air surface temperatures topped 1.5°C above pre-industrial norms for several days in June](#), scientists and climate campaigners pointed to warnings that there is a 66% chance that earth will cross the 1.5°C threshold for a full year by 2027. "We are really getting to the moment of truth ... I am hoping that the sheer reality will help us change people's moves and change the politics," [said Li Shuo](#), Greenpeace's senior climate adviser in Beijing. Lord, we pray for every person affected by the current heat, asking for your protection to surround the most vulnerable and your wisdom and compassion to guide those working to help provide them with safe spaces. We pray for all working to protect vulnerable species from the impacts of climate change. And we pray, above all, that this will indeed be a 'moment of truth' when politics move and climate is treated with the necessary urgency.

Helping us see the truth

While people can see climate impacts, it's often harder for them to connect what's happening around them to the invisible emissions they are generating: how do you take seriously what you can't see? A [new set of visualisations from the US National Aeronautics and Space Administration \(NASA\)](#) may be a game-changer. The models show build-ups of carbon emissions over the course of the year – and as the swirling orange clouds of fossil-fuel generated emissions shroud continents and overwhelm carbon sinks, it's hard not to be moved. We pray that these visualisations reach people's hearts and minds and inspire change.

Steps forward and backward

Indicators that countries are moving to a low-carbon economy continue to increase. Last year there was [25% growth in solar generation globally, and 13.5% in wind](#). More than half of Germany's power generation so far this year [came from renewable sources](#). The World Bank recently approved financing of \$1.5 billion to scale up renewable power in [India](#) and financial support of \$500 million to [expand access to clean energy in Indonesia](#). The US [is offering \\$7 billion in grants to its low-income communities for residential solar panels](#). We give thanks for all of these actions and pray that they will bear rich fruit.

And yet the scale of change is not yet fast enough. Emissions [continue to rise – by .8% last year](#) – and a [study by Climate Analytics suggests](#) that meeting the 1.5°C degree target would require renewable capacity to expand 5 times faster than it currently is. Even some countries with strong targets, like the UK, are [lagging on policies to enable net zero](#), and a recent study found that [fossil fuel companies have made almost no progress](#) towards the Paris goals. Indeed, [Shell's head of renewable generation recently resigned](#), as the company scaled back its renewables commitments to focus on currently profitable fossil-fuel production. We pray that people leading businesses, financial institutions, and governments will have a change of heart that leads them to look beyond their own short-term benefit and to make the changes that are needed for the good of all, now and in the future.

Divestment

While [investor pressure to focus on profits](#) was one of the factors driving Shell's recent announcements, the policy changes at Shell and BP have caused the Church of England's [Church Commissioners](#) and [Pensions Board](#) to announce their divestment from oil and gas holdings, as a sign of concern about fossil-fuel companies' inability to transition. The Archbishop of Canterbury [said](#): *"We have long urged companies to take climate change seriously, and specifically to align with the goals of the Paris climate agreement and pursue efforts to limit the rise in temperature to 1.5C above pre-industrial levels. In practical terms that means phasing out fossil fuels, investing in renewables, and plotting a credible path to a net zero world. Some progress has been made, but not nearly enough. The church will follow not just the science, but our faith – both of which call us to work for climate justice."*

The Church of England has been a leading proponent of engagement with fossil-fuel companies. We pray that this action will highlight the seriousness of the issues around the companies' actions and encourage other investors to take actions that are based on ethics, not the desire for profit.

Deforestation

Despite promises made at the Glasgow climate talks, deforestation globally rose in 2022, a [new report has said, explaining](#): *"Tropical primary forest loss in 2022 totaled 4.1 million hectares, the equivalent of losing 11 football (soccer) fields of forest per minute. All this forest loss produced 2.7 gigatonnes (Gt) of carbon dioxide emissions, equivalent to [India's annual fossil fuel emissions](#)."* This is a tragedy, and we lament the destruction of these vital ecosystems. There are, however, some signs that things may improve. Brazil had 43% of all tropical primary forest loss in 2022 – but early indications are that President Lula [is reversing the trends established under his predecessor, Jair Bolsonaro](#). Other areas of encouragement are Indonesia and Malaysia, where forest losses remain low. We give thanks for all who are striving to protect forests and pray for increased protection in the years to come.

Prayers for COP28

As preparations continue for the UN climate talks in Dubai, much prayer is needed. Concerns [about the overlap](#) between the UAE's COP leadership team and its oil industry are serious. More broadly, the failure of developed countries to provide promised levels of climate finance – and the lack of credible climate finance plans for the next stages of climate action – [are holding back progress in other areas](#). A recent climate finance summit, co-chaired by Barbados' Mia Mottley and France's Emmanuel Macron, [made some progress](#), with promises of debt repayment pauses for countries facing climate impacts, increased insurance funding, developed countries offering some of their rights to IMF funds to countries that need emergency climate funding, a commitment to reform the international financial institutions, and first discussions about taxes to raise climate funds. Nonetheless, there is much more work to be done. We pray for progress on climate finance and for the COP28 talks overall.

From impacts to action

We often pray that people will respond to climate impacts by taking action – and this past month, [the Swiss people did](#). Switzerland's glaciers have been melting at a record rate, losing an unprecedented 6% of their volume last year. Following a campaign to 'Save the Glaciers', voters supported a referendum that set a legal net zero target and committed funding to help Swiss households and companies switch to renewables. We give thanks for this clear response to the threat climate change poses and pray that it will inspire others.

Prayer

O God whose love surrounds all that you created,
Comforter, healer, who calls each of us by name,
Help us to perceive your presence with us,
Holding us when we are weak
And strengthening us to care for your beloved world.