

Prayer points – November 2023



Laudate Deum

From the [recent exhortation by Pope Francis](#), following on from Laudato Si'

“Jesus ‘was able to invite others to be attentive to the beauty that there is in the world because he himself was in constant touch with nature, lending it an attraction full of fondness and wonder. As he made his way throughout the land, he often stopped to contemplate the beauty sown by his Father, and invited his disciples to perceive a divine message in things’... ‘The very flowers of the field and the birds which his human eyes contemplated and admired are now imbued with his radiant presence’. If ‘the universe unfolds in God, who fills it completely... there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person’s face’. The world sings of an infinite Love: how can we fail to care for it?”

“War is quite literally toxic”

Though we are called to love, conflict dominates the news. As we pray for people suffering because of wars in the Middle East, Ukraine, and other parts of the world, we lament not only the immediate harms they face, but also the [long-term effects on the environment](#), which can continue the trauma for them and for the wider creation.

Following an assessment in Ukraine earlier this year, the UN Environment Programme’s Executive Director, Inger Andersen, [said](#): *“The mapping and initial screening of environmental hazards only serves to confirm that war is quite literally toxic ... The first priority is for this senseless destruction to end now.”*

Lord, we pray for your justice and peace to transform situations of conflict in the Middle East, Ukraine and around the world. We pray healing both for all people affected by war and for all your wounded creation.

Accelerating extremes

“Staggering. Unnerving. Mind-boggling. Absolutely gobsmackingly bananas.” Climate scientist Zeke Hausfather has [used these words](#) to describe recent temperatures. From June to September, [every month was the hottest on record](#); September surpassed its previous record by a massive 0.5 degrees Celsius; and, as of October 10th, the [daily average Northern Hemisphere temperature had hit a record high 100 days in a row](#).

Is global heating accelerating? [Scientists are debating this](#). Hausfather feels that it is, and [points out](#) that models had predicted such an acceleration and that current increases are within their predictions. The reasons for this particular spike may relate to several factors: El Nino, an unusual volcanic explosion, reductions in pollutants, and changes in the solar cycle [are all likely to have contributed](#). But the largest factor by far is global heating.

The increased heat is upping the risk of extreme weather events. South America’s August/September heatwave was made at least 100 times more likely by climate change, the [World Weather Attribution project said](#). The heat has exacerbated the [drought parching the Amazon Basin](#). In Southern Africa, [Malawi experienced unheard of temperatures 20 degrees Celsius above the norm](#). Towards the end of October, the Hurricane Otis in the Eastern Pacific underwent extraordinarily rapid intensification that [no models had anticipated](#), going from a Tropical Storm to a Category 5 hurricane in under 24 hours. Making landfall with 165 mph winds, it [devastated the Mexican city of Acapulco](#) and [surrounding communities](#), killing at least 39 people and leaving over 220,000 homes damaged. Almost simultaneously, an [exceptionally early Category 5 cyclone, Lola](#), formed in the South Pacific and hit Vanuatu.

[Scientists](#) – and insurers – are sounding alarm bells, with [Lloyds of London warning](#) that extreme weather could cause five trillion dollars of damage over five years. But having warned about acceleration and the risks it poses, Hausfather reminds his readers: *“If we reduce emissions quickly, we can switch from a world in which warming is accelerating to one in which it’s slowing. Eventually, we can stop it entirely.”* Lord, we pray that the acceleration in warming will lead to an acceleration in efforts to reduce emissions. We pray, too, for relief for people who have lost homes, loved ones, and livelihoods because of climate impacts.

Ecclesiasticus 35: 21-22 (NRSV)

The prayer of the humble pierces the clouds, and it will not rest until it reaches its goal; it will not desist until the Most High responds and does justice to the righteous, and executes judgement.

COP28: Praying for action on loss and damage

One area of progress at COP27 was the agreement that there should be a fund to compensate vulnerable countries for the climate-related loss and damage they suffer. If COP28 is to succeed, that fund must progress towards implementation. Meetings of the 'transitional committee' delegated to find a way forward on loss and damage have, however, collapsed because of disagreements between developed and developing countries. One key point of difference is over [who runs the fund](#) – developed countries favour the World Bank, arguing that it will be more efficient to send funds through an established institution; developing countries, who have often had poor experiences with an institution they see as controlled by the West, favour an independent body with its own secretariat. There are also disagreements on the scale of funding needed: [according to Third World Network](#), developing countries have been pushing for references to \$100 billion a year by 2030, which developed countries refused. And there are disagreements around who should contribute – developed countries? Or “those in a position to do so” (which would include emerging economies such as China)?

The transitional committee will hold an emergency meeting from 3 to 5 November. We pray that this meeting will enable breakthroughs so that a positive proposal can come to COP28.

COP28: Praying for action on emissions

Chances of keeping global warming to 1.5 degrees are less than one half to one third what they were in 2021, [according to the new head of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#), highlighting the importance of immediate action.

At COP28, there will be the [final stage of a 'global stocktake' evaluating progress on reducing emissions](#). Countries will have opportunities to increase their national commitments, which, while they have improved, are as yet inadequate to hold global heating to 2 degrees, let alone 1.5. There will be an [opportunity clearly to call for a phase-out of fossil fuels](#) – something many [businesses](#), [global leaders](#), international organisations, and [countries](#) feel is vital, though there is disagreement on whether to call for a full phase-out or a phase-out of 'unabated' fuels. And there will need to be agreement on ways of monitoring how commitments are honoured.

We pray for negotiators preparing positions in all these areas, mindful of Pope Francis' words in *Laudate Deum*: *We must move beyond the mentality of appearing to be concerned but not having the courage needed to produce substantial changes ... May those taking part in the Conference be strategists capable of considering the common good and the future of their children, more than the short-term interests of certain countries or businesses ... To the powerful, I can only repeat this question: 'What would induce anyone, at this stage, to hold on to power, only to be remembered for their inability to take action when it was urgent and necessary to do so'"*

Praying for climate leadership within nations

For the COP28 negotiations to succeed, there must be trust, built through each country's actions outside the conference, as well as the words of their representatives within it. We pray for governments around the world, asking God to give their leaders a desire for justice, wisdom in assessing possibilities for action, and courage to take forward plans for the common good. Where elected officials are showing positive leadership, we pray for renewed strength, remembering especially [the newly elected government of Poland](#) as it seeks to create climate-friendly policies. Where leaders are unwilling to take bold action, remain in denial about the seriousness of the situation, or are unwilling to act because of political considerations, we pray that God will inspire them with a change of heart. Where countries have national interests that are allied to fossil-fuel production, we pray for a willingness to sacrifice short-term self-interest and wisdom and courage to end fossil-fuel licensing and exploration and to lead their nations in a just transition. Where tensions among countries threaten climate progress, we pray for a willingness to find new ways of working that will enable progress.

A sending blessing

Praise God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer.

Praise God, giver of hope and of the peace that surpasses all understanding.

Praise God who sends us out this month, once again, to marvel, to lament, to speak out, and to serve.

www.prayandfastfortheclimate.org.uk