

Prayer points – February 2024



Lent

The 14th of this month is Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent. We pray that we may use this time, when the church recalls Christ's fasting and temptation in the wilderness, to draw closer to God, each other, and all of God's creation. There are [many Lent resources that touch on climate issues available](#): we pray these will be a blessing to all who use them.

Where bread is lacking

While the narrative of Jesus' testing reminds us that we do not live by physical food alone, we cannot live without it. We pray for all who are currently unable to access the food they need to survive, remembering especially this month people in Gaza, Yemen and all places where war is causing hunger, and people in [South Sudan](#), where the combination of conflict, droughts, and flooding (one of the key climate impacts [predicted for the region](#)) [has created a food emergency](#). Lord Jesus, Bread of Heaven, forgive our indifference to their pain, stir us to do what we can to help, and grant, we pray, that humanitarian aid may reach those in greatest need now and that a just peace and climate action may offer people security in years to come.

The Hottest Year

As anticipated, [NOAA](#), [NASA](#), [Berkeley Earth](#), and [Copernicus](#) have confirmed that 2023 was the hottest year on record. But what does that mean? Scientists can tell us [of sea ice loss](#), of [bleached coral](#) and [exceptional droughts](#). But sometimes the most powerful testimonies are people's stories, some of which were recently [shared by the BBC's Future Voices team](#).

Mariama Bangura, in Sierra Leone, [told a reporter](#): *It's the changes in the weather patterns that is troubling us ... Extreme heat during the dry season is a silent killer. You can feel the impact without seeing it.* Reporter Lucy Sherriff in Los Angeles [said](#): *"This year has been a year of extreme weather anomalies. We have had a lot of rain – floods [evacuated communities](#) and washed out roads ... Monumental snowfall resulted [in entire towns being trapped](#) inside their homes for days. An extreme heatwave [saw temperatures reach 53C](#) (127F). The state is grappling with a new normality. And I don't think anyone is ready."* Ana Ionova, writing from Brazil, [said](#): *"In 2023, things felt different. It seemed like there was no respite from climate-induced tragedy here; for the first time, it was everywhere, all at once."*

Lord, we lament the chaos and pain we see around us. Help us not to be overwhelmed, but to do all we can to stand in solidarity with those most affected ... and to take the action we can to make a difference.

Asking questions as we vote

Dozens of countries and the European Union [will hold elections in 2024](#). Some of these could have a profound impact on the potential for climate action – especially in the [UK](#), [US](#), and [Europe](#), where climate action may be an election issue.

As parties ready their manifestos and platforms, it's worth holding the South African newspaper the [The Daily Maverick's](#) advice in mind and in our prayers: *"If dealing with the climate crisis is among your key concerns ..., pick apart as many manifestos as you can. Find out what Party X sees as our energy future or what Party Y intends to do to ensure the biodiversity of this country. What are their plans for water and food security, for pollution? How do they intend to build climate-resilient cities and towns? Do they mention climate change at all? And if you get the opportunity, ask tough questions of those seeking your vote."*

Lord, we pray that parties will put forward manifestos and platforms that prioritise the common good. We pray that Christians will engage with the issues at stake in elections, raise their voices to advocate for climate justice, and seek your guidance as they vote. We also pray that you will grant wisdom to all who are elected.

UK: Thanksgivings and Prayers

A review of 2023 shows that the UK has made progress in some areas: for example, the [amount of electricity generated by fossil fuels has fallen two thirds since 2008](#), and [2023 saw](#) a year-on-year surge in the installation of solar panels and heat pumps. We give thanks for these things!

But there are also areas of concern. Decarbonisation of the grid [needs to move faster](#). [Progress in reducing emissions from housing and agriculture is behind](#): indeed, the [rate of emissions cuts in areas other than power generation needs to quadruple](#). The Government has [rowed back on several climate commitments](#) and is bringing forward a bill on oil and gas exploration which [runs counter to commitments to phase out fossil fuels](#). Former [Government ministers](#), international bodies such as the [IMF](#) and [business leaders](#) have raised concerns. We pray these will be heard, and more climate-friendly policies will follow.

A new generation of climate negotiators

At the heart of the UN climate talks, a new generation is making its voice heard. No longer content to be present only as observers, young people are seeking representation as negotiators within their countries' official delegations. A [Climate Youth Negotiators Programme](#), founded by young people, offers young negotiators six months of training that helps them to network with each other and to participate effectively in the UN talks. We pray for all involved with the programme, asking God to guide and strengthen them.

Renewables and Ambition Rising

The International Energy Association (IEA)'s ['Renewables 2023' report](#) shows record growth in renewable power, led by China, which "commissioned as much solar PV [in 2023] as the entire world did in 2022, while its wind additions also grew by 66% year-on-year." The IEA's new forecast states that if existing policies and market conditions continue, global renewable capacity will reach 2.5 times its current level by 2030 – and countries could, if they addressed a few key challenges, meet the COP28 goal of tripling renewable capacity by 2030. This is astounding progress, and there is hope for its acceleration. China's clean power [is driving growth](#), and the country has [announced more to come](#). Key EU countries [are urging ambitious emissions cuts for 2040 in line with scientific advice](#). India is [seeking to grow its solar industry](#). Government incentives [are increasing solar capacity in the US](#). Projects are coming onstream in other countries, such as [Colombia](#). We give thanks for progress and pray for a rapid and just transition to clean energy for all countries.

Preparing for climate justice

The 2024 climate talks are going to determine the new post-2025 finance goal. Adequate funding for mitigation, adaptation, and loss and damage is vital: without it, there is little hope of progress in other areas. But to get agreement in November, countries [need to begin now to think about how they will find the political space to scale up funding](#). As Mia Mottley, Prime Minister of Barbados and [architect of a key climate finance initiative](#), [recently said](#): *"Those who were not the ones who spawned the current crisis ought not to be forced to accumulate debt or to deny their citizens the right to development because of the immediate exigencies of having to repair the damage of the climate crisis ... This reality is one that requires the majority of the world's population functioning together."* We pray that, recognising this reality, politicians and others will start planning now how they will make the political case for adequate climate finance in the future.

Closing prayer

As we recall your temptation in the wilderness,
Help us, dear Lord, to reject the lure of wealth, the seduction of power,
And the folly of setting ourselves in the place of God.
We ask this trusting in your love and mercy, O Lord of all the earth,
In whom, our needs are met, heaven and earth are reconciled
And in whose service we find redemption and joy.

www.prayandfastfortheclimate.org.uk