

Prayer points – March 2024



Do the little things ...

The 1st of March is a day commemorating St David, the patron saint of Wales. Though he was a bishop in the late 6th century, the [words of his final sermon](#) remain relevant today: “Be joyful, keep the faith ... and do the little things that you have seen me do.”

“Do the little things ...” At a time when crises can seem overwhelming, it’s good to be reminded that we’re called to joy and faith, even amidst difficulties, and that steadfastness in doing little things matters. Our small choices about prayer and action add up and are channels for God’s transforming work in the world. As we pray this March, we ask God to show us which ‘little things’ may be our special calling this month. And we join in this prayer, written for Pray and Fast in 2015 by the then Archbishop of Wales, Dr Barry Morgan:

God our Father, you called your servant David to uphold the Christian faith amongst the people of Wales, to encourage them by his observance of fasting and obedience, and to show them compassion through small acts of great love. As light is poured onto the mountain-tops and as fresh rain is sprinkled on the hills, help us to be good carers of one another and of Your great and glorious Creation. Amen.

Working for Nature

“Nature means ... life, being able to live happily, being able to not stress about our future, being safe on our own planet, being...us, and who we’re meant to be.”

[This was a message](#) from Grace, a Year 7 pupil from Ysgol Dinas Brân, Llangollen in Wales, sent as part of the Welsh [‘Nature Positive’ campaign](#). The campaign builds on the Global Biodiversity Framework adopted in December 2022, which [calls for all nations to](#) “halt and reverse the loss of nature by 2030 and achieve recovery so that, by 2050, nature is thriving once more.” It asks the Welsh Government to bring in a ‘Nature Positive Bill’ which would set legally binding targets for nature recovery and [would establish an independent environmental governance body](#) that could offer expert advice, scrutinise progress, and hold the government and public bodies to account if they aren’t meeting targets. The Welsh government has already expressed a commitment to such a Bill, and at the end of January, [released a White Paper with its proposals](#).

On the same topic, the European Parliament recently passed a ‘Nature Restoration Law’, [which](#) “aims to restore at least 20% of the EU’s land and sea areas by 2030” and means that “within this wider goal, countries need to restore 30% of habitats covered by the new law (including forests, rivers and wetlands) that are already degraded by 2030. This increases to 60% by 2040 and at least 90% by 2050.” The law now needs to be approved by the Council of the EU (made up of ministers from EU member states) before it can take effect.

We give thanks that calls made at the global level are being translated into action, and that civil society and government in many places are working towards protecting the diversity of God’s creation. We pray that the Welsh Bill will be brought forward during this legislative term and that the Council of the EU will approve the Nature Restoration Law. We pray these developments will inspire others.

Insure Our Future

Insurance companies are having to pay out claims from climate-related extreme weather events – but they are also, in some cases, contributing to climate risks, both by insuring fossil fuel projects and by investing money in companies that produce fossil fuels. Most major insurance companies now refuse to insure new coal-fired plants, which has restricted such plants’ development in many countries; [fewer, however, have restrictions on insuring oil and gas](#). The [Insure Our Future](#) campaign is calling on all insurance companies [to adopt six key practices](#), which include refusing to insure new fossil-fuel projects, refusing to take on new customers from the fossil-fuel sector whose plans aren’t aligned with a credible 1.5 degree climate pathway, and divesting of all assets in fossil-fuel companies that aren’t aligned with such a pathway. We pray that the companies will listen – and will take steps which, in the long run, bring down the levels of climate risk for them ... and for everyone else.

China

[Recent analysis for Carbon Brief shows](#) that China is in danger of not meeting its 2025 climate targets. The targets focus on reducing energy and carbon intensity, limiting coal consumption growth, controlling new coal power projects, and increasing the share of non-fossil sources in energy production and consumption. The causes of the gap include increased energy demand due to energy and carbon-intensive economic growth, an increased reliance on coal-fired power (due in part to droughts limiting access to hydropower), and a drive to undertake carbon-intensive projects in advance of China's planned peak in emissions.

Can the country get back on track? Lauri Myllyvirta, author of the analysis, estimates that emissions from the power sector would need to fall 4 to 6% by 2025, there would need to be far greater controls on coal use and projects, the rate of renewables installation would need to double, and energy demand growth would need to slow. For China's sake – and the world's – we pray that there may be genuine progress towards these targets.

Cocoa

What is the future of chocolate? Cocoa prices have recently reached [all-time high prices](#); London [futures have doubled in a year](#). The primary cause is [poor harvests in West Africa](#), where El Nino has disrupted rain patterns. The prospect of a significant gap between supply and demand has also caught the attention of speculators, [whose bets on cocoa futures have helped fuel the increases](#).

The current crisis in West African cocoa production takes place against a background of wider issues due to global heating, which [could render parts of the cocoa-growing area less suitable for the crop](#). It also reflects trade injustices: the government-set cocoa prices in Ivory Coast and Ghana [are so low that they don't enable sustainable production or decent livelihoods](#), so that many farmers lack access to high-quality agricultural inputs and techniques and are using [old cocoa trees that are past their prime](#).

At present, farmers in Ghana and the Ivory Coast – unless they participate in a trading relationship that better reflects market prices - [aren't yet benefiting from price increases](#), as this cycle of government prices was fixed before the surge, and new prices won't come in until the Autumn. The combination of low yields and low income will leave them with little money. We pray for all farmers affected by changing weather conditions and trade injustices – and especially for these cocoa farmers. We pray that long term, the prices increases will help them to increase their income and adapt to climate impacts.

A Radical Challenge

The Gospels tell us that Jesus, after he entered Jerusalem, offered a radical challenge to the powers that be. He drove money changers and merchants from the Temple and spoke in parables that called religious leaders and all people to repentance and renewal, lest they face judgement. In our lives and our societies there are so many areas where we are prioritising gain over service and failing to live like followers of Christ. Lord, help us to hear your challenge and give us the grace to turn towards you.

Easter Reflection and Prayer

The promise of the empty tomb is that even when we cannot see it, God's work has already begun. Even when we are asking, "where are You, God?"; God is already ahead of us...we often just do not see it. Our eyes are closed, or we are looking in the wrong direction. And then...the stone rolled away...an empty tomb...God was there all along. ([Matt Erickson](#))

Rise heart; thy Lord is risen. Sing his praise

Without delays,

Who takes thee by the hand, that thou likewise

With him mayst rise:

That, as his death calcined thee to dust,

His life may make thee gold, and much more, just. (*George Herbert*)