

## Prayer points – April 2024



### Now the green blade riseth ...

*Now the green blade riseth, from the buried grain,  
Wheat that in dark earth many days has lain;  
Love lives again, that with the dead has been:  
Love is come again like wheat that springeth green. (J M C Crum)*

### Protecting the Amazon ... and all forests

The Presidents of France and Brazil recently agreed a [roadmap](#) on the bioeconomy and protection of tropical forests. The plan recognises that conservation and development need to coexist. It has five key points: calling for global investment in developing sustainable bioeconomies, [mobilising 1 billion Euros of investment in the Amazon bioeconomy](#), launching a 'High Standards Coalition' to encourage social and environmentally responsible voluntary carbon markets, creating innovative partnerships to finance conservation of forests and biodiversity, and placing indigenous people at the heart of decision making. Climate impacts are threatening to bring the Amazon to a tipping point, so urgent action is needed. A recent study [showed](#) that it would indeed be possible to preserve the Amazon, protect indigenous communities and have a flourishing economy for the region. Pray that the proposed plans move in this positive direction.

### Climate and Health

April 7<sup>th</sup> is World Health Day – and the [theme this year centres on health as a human right](#). Among the factors that imperil this right is climate change, which is, among other impacts, [reducing access to safe water](#), [facilitating the spread of diseases](#) such as [dengue fever](#), creating displacement, and [harming crops](#), which [contributes to high levels of malnutrition](#). We pray for people suffering health crises because of climate impacts. We pray also for people [developing climate-resilient health practices](#) and seeking to ensure that [vulnerable workers](#) and communities receive protection.

### Extreme Heat

A [new UN report](#) reemphasised that 2023 was the hottest year on record – and proclaimed afresh a 'red alert' for earth. A leading NASA scientist has called for research, as [the increases were far above what scientists had predicted or could explain](#).

What is the heat looking like on the ground? In February, as part of the [hottest February in recorded history](#), coastal West Africa suffered an exceptional wave of heat and humidity which [led, in some places, to Heat Index values in the 'extreme danger' range of up to 60 degrees Celsius. The World Weather Attribution group estimated that such weather was made 10 times more likely by global heating](#). In mid-March, the government of South Sudan [ordered all schools to close](#), due to an [exceptionally early and intense heat wave](#) with daily highs between 41 and 45 degrees Celsius.

Please pray for all people who are suffering because of extreme heat, for everyone who is working to assist those most at risk, for proper funding for humanitarian relief where it is needed, and for climate action.

### Corals and Glaciers

It's not just land that is hot; [during 2023, 90% of ocean waters experienced a heatwave at some point](#). The high temperatures have already caused mass bleaching of corals in the Caribbean and [on the Great Barrier Reef](#); NOAA has [warned](#) that "we are ... on the cusp of the worst bleaching event in the history of the planet." In the polar regions, warming is contributing to increased loss of sea ice and a [risk that massive Antarctic glaciers will thaw more rapidly than anticipated](#), causing hugely disruptive sea-level rise. We pray for people working [to protect coral reefs under stress](#) – and for people studying sea ice. We pray that politicians and business leaders will hear their warning about the consequences of increased global heating.

## Whose future?

At the March CERA meeting for the energy industry, the head of Saudi Aramco [proclaimed](#) that the energy transition was “visibly failing” and that “we should abandon the fantasy of phasing out oil and gas.” [The room applauded](#). While the International Energy Association (IEA) has predicted [peak fossil-fuel demand by 2030](#), many fossil-fuel producers are betting on a scenario in which [rising industrialisation in Asia and Africa leads to increased demand for their products well into the 2030s or even 2040s](#). On this basis, they are scaling back their emissions reduction targets – [the latest to do so is Shell](#) – and investing in exploration and development, even though the [IEA has said](#) there can be no investment in new long-lead-time oil and gas projects if the Paris goals are to be met.

Whose future will win? As we know, for it to be the IEA’s, there will have to be a confluence of changes: reductions in demand, an end to fossil-fuel subsidies, consistent policy around the green transition, pressure on the financial infrastructure that underpins fossil-fuel companies, improvements in renewable technology, and climate finance to allow developing countries to leapfrog older technologies. Challenging – but we cannot afford the alternative that the fossil-fuel producers are so clearly pushing. We pray that hearing them press openly for a dangerous future will, instead, inspire renewed action for a full and fair transition. We pray, too, that the hearts of those who run such companies will be turned towards using their assets for that transition, rather than for maximising short-term profits.

## Methane

A recent [study of US energy sector emissions states](#) that methane leaks from oil and gas production are higher than estimated – but also that because a high proportion of the leaked gas comes from a relatively few sites, it would be easy to make significant reductions. Indeed, the IEA [suggests](#) that 40% of global methane emissions from the fossil-fuel sector could have been avoided at no cost. We give thanks for [new satellites that make monitoring easier](#), and pray that every opportunity will be taken to minimise methane leakage.

## Life

Can lifestyle changes – underpinned by large-scale action that enables them to be made relatively easily – make a significant difference? A possible ‘scenario’ for lowering EU emissions suggests that they can. Carbon Brief [has looked at](#) the ‘LIFE’ scenario evaluated as part of the EU’s emissions target-setting. This scenario focuses on lifestyle changes such as lowering heating and water temperatures, changing transport patterns to more sustainable options, creating more circularity in the economy, and increasing climate-friendly food choices. The EU modelling suggests that relatively small changes would provide multiple benefits including better health, reduced energy demand, and annual savings of 129 billion euros in the level of investment needed for a green transition. We give thanks for this testimony to the power of small actions set within a wider framework and pray it will inspire governments and individuals to make the necessary changes happen.

## Science based targets for Faith Based Organizations

How do churches and other Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) play their part in reducing demand? We’ve seen a plethora of net zero targets – and some very impressive work by denominations, such as the [Church of England](#), towards achieving them. There hasn’t, however, been an international standard or guide ... until now. The World Resources Institute’s new ‘[Science-Based Targets for Faith](#)’ offers a blueprint for evaluating and reducing FBOs’ emissions. We give thanks for its creation and pray it will be widely used, and a blessing.

## Blessing Prayer

O Lord, you “mark out our journeys and our resting places and are acquainted with all our ways.” Inspire us with the vision of your Kingdom, help us to see the paths you would have us follow, grant us strength for the journey and places of refreshment along the way, and bring us ever nearer to your Son, who died and rose again that in Him and through Him all things might be reconciled.

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