



Prayer points – May 2024

Come, Holy Spirit

(from Dave Bookless' [Earth, Wind and Fire: A Pentecostal approach to creation care](#))

*The Holy Spirit's work is not limited to creating and sustaining earth's life-support systems. In the work of Jesus Christ, God's renewal has begun, not just for sinful humanity but for broken creation. It is Jesus, with the Father, who sends the Spirit at Pentecost, a Spirit poured out on all flesh ([Acts 2:17](#)). The Greek word, *sarx*, refers to all animal kind rather than humanity (*anthropos*) alone, and is quoting from [Joel 2:28](#), where the Hebrew, *basar*, is the same word for all the living creatures that Noah was to bring into the ark. Of course, at Pentecost it was Jesus' human disciples who were filled and transformed but Joel's vision reflects the clear biblical message that the Holy Spirit is active in all creation's renewal, redemption and transformation.*

Snow, hail, wind and frost ...

"Snow, hail, wind and frost have swept the countryside – not just a short storm or a mere one degree of frost, but a twenty-four hour blizzard and severe frost ... Ross-on-Wye had fifteen degrees of frost, and Farnborough in Hampshire nineteen degrees." (A G Street, [Country Calendar](#), London, 1935, p.152)

This is novelist A G Street's description of southern England in May 1935. While that month was not typical, a May frost was, at the time, fairly common: [the Met Office noted in 1952](#) that London had seen ground frosts in May in all but seven of the previous seventy-five years.

Since then there has been a change in temperature that doesn't look extreme – an [average rise of 1.21 degrees Celsius](#) between 1961-1990 and 1991-2020 for the Southeast and central South of England. It's translated, however, into quite a significant change in extremes and in lived experience. The average last frost date for London [is now estimated at 11 to 20 March](#). A May blizzard would be quite a shock.

Sometimes, when we speak about '1.5 degrees' or '2 degrees' it can sound inconsequential. Pray that God will help us to see what these apparently small changes really could mean – and to be inspired to action.

Climate impacts – lament, intercession, and action

March 2024 was the [10th month that set records as the warmest ever](#). Extreme heat has been creating health hazards and hardship in [West Africa](#) and [Asia](#). Climate-intensified extreme rains have flooded the [United Arab Emirates](#). Heat and drought are [causing a mass die-off of vegetation in western Australia](#) and overheated seas are [bleaching corals globally](#). We raise hearts and voices in lament and pray for all people affected by these climate-related crises. More broadly, we pray for all people affected by extreme weather, whether climate is a driving factor or not, including the people of [southern](#) and [eastern Africa](#), [China](#), [Pakistan](#), [Central](#) and [South America](#). Where climate is involved, such lament and intercession are, however, not enough: we also continue to pray that God will raise up people with a heart for climate action.

Build back biodiversity

The 22nd of May is the [UN day to celebrate biodiversity](#) – and this year the theme is 'From agreement to action: build back biodiversity'. In December 2022, 196 countries agreed a [framework that](#) "sets goals and concrete measures to stop and reverse the loss of nature by 2050". The framework's interim goals for 2030 include action to protect ecosystems, including work to restore 30% of degraded ecosystems and to conserve 30% of land, sea and inland waters. Such actions will not only preserve and restore biodiversity, but will also [protect natural carbon sinks](#), which help to combat climate change.

The interlinked crises of biodiversity loss and global heating require solutions that address both, so that the astounding variety of God's creation can flourish. We pray that countries will turn the commitments they have agreed into strong action for ecosystems and species.

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Plastics

Plastics are a major pollution issue. They're also a [climate-change issue](#), as their production involves the substantial use of fossil fuel. Over the last week, countries gathered for the penultimate session of negotiations on [an international treaty](#) on plastic pollution. The talks made progress in some areas – but [failed to get agreement on limits to plastic production](#). Around [thirty countries have signed a declaration](#) calling for countries to reduce their plastic production, ensure transparency of production data, and support a global objective to prevent unsustainable production. There has, however, been [major pushback from the fossil-fuel industry and a lack of support from fossil-fuel producing countries](#). We pray that between now and the final [round of negotiations in November](#), the obstacles to a strong treaty will be removed.

Energy Charter Treaty

The Energy Charter Treaty allows companies to sue a country if they feel its policies have adversely impacted their business interests. The treaty was [initially designed to protect Western energy investments in unstable areas](#), but has become a weapon for [businesses to take aim at governments' legitimate climate and environmental policies](#). The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change even [warned of 'regulatory chill'](#) where countries fear to pass necessary climate legislation lest they be the target of lawsuits.

In February, the UK announced [it was pulling out of the agreement](#), and now the [EU Parliament has also voted for the EU as a bloc to leave](#). The [exodus of so many signatories has the potential to weaken the treaty overall](#) – and help to diminish its influence over climate policy. We give thanks for this victory.

Elections

This month several countries are voting in local and national elections: among these, on the 3rd, the UK holds its local elections; [South Africa its national elections on the 29th](#); and [India its national election](#) – the world's largest ever – from the 19th of April to the 1st of June. A fourth country, [Mexico, holds its national elections on the 2nd of June](#). Each election has potentially major climate impacts. We pray for voters and candidates in each of these elections, asking God to guide electors to wise choices for the common good and to grant those elected discernment to act wisely, boldly and responsibly on climate and other questions. We thank God for instances where elections in recent years have resulted in more positive climate policy - including [Australia](#), [Brazil](#), [Colombia](#), and the [US](#) – and pray these will help people see that voting matters.

Business Revolution

The 11th of May is World Fair Trade Day – and the [theme is 'Business Revolution'](#). It's a chance to reflect on the ways that business can work for good – environmentally, economically and socially. We give thanks for the way that the Fair Trade movement has raised awareness of the potential for ethical business, and pray that it will continue to flourish, helping farmers and artisans worldwide [respond to the climate and environmental crises](#).

Historic ruling

In a historic ruling, the [European Court of Human Rights ruled that Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights covered the right to protection](#) “from the serious adverse effects of climate change on lives, health, well-being and quality of life”. We give thanks for the clarity of this ruling. At a time where there is a backlash in Europe against climate policy, we pray that it will convince governments that they are obligated to meet their climate commitments and will not be attacked as an example of judicial overreach.

Trinity Prayer (from Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'*)

Triune Lord, wondrous community of infinite love, teach us to contemplate you in the beauty of the universe, for all things speak of you. Awaken our praise and thankfulness for every being that you have made. Give us the grace to feel profoundly joined to everything that is.

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