



Prayer points – July 2024

Gathering Prayer (taken from [Season of Creation 2024 Ecumenical Service](#))

*Heavenly Triune God and Creator of all, we gather here, made in the image of the Creator,
Who created in love.*

*We gather in the name of the redeemer, our Savior Jesus Christ,
Who reconciles all of Creation.*

*We gather in the presence of the life Giver, your Holy Spirit,
Who inspires new life and instills hope.*

Plastic-Free July

Recent years have seen the growth of '[Plastic-Free July](#)' – a movement that offers resources to help people reduce consumption of single-use plastics at work, at home, and in the community. It's inspired participants in 190 countries with [events planned](#) this year in countries from the Philippines and Malaysia to India, Turkey, the UAE, US, and Guatemala. We give thanks for this initiative, pray that many people will see and use the Plastic-Free July resources, and pray that new patterns of living started this month will continue and inspire further change. We also continue to pray for negotiations on [a global treaty to end plastic pollution](#). May God lead the negotiators and the countries they represent to a strong agreement.

Election results ...

June's elections saw a reduction in support for India's BJP and resurgence of the opposition; a reduction in support for South Africa's ANC that caused formation of a coalition government; and a comprehensive victory for former climate scientist Claudia Sheinbaum and her party in Mexico. It's still too early to see what the impact on climate policy and action of these results will be: we pray for wisdom, a willingness to hear 'the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor', strength, and courage for members of the new governments.

In the elections for the European Parliament, there was a clear shift away from the Greens and towards the right: we pray for all who have been elected and pray that the [new balance of power will not lead to weakening of European climate policy and practical action](#). We pray, too, for the leaders of parties that prioritise environmental issues [as they ponder their response to the elections](#).

And elections this month

The European elections precipitated the calling of French elections, the second round of which will be held on 7 July. The left, right, and centrist blocs have [very different environmental policies](#). The left and centre are committed to upholding or exceeding EU targets; on the right, the Rassemblement National, which has been polling well, [sees the EU plan as 'punitive ecology'](#) and could take action to weaken France's climate commitments. We pray for wisdom for voters as they make their choices.

In the UK, voters go to the polls on Thursday, 4th July. They, too, are choosing between parties [whose climate and environmental policies vary](#) - although all the major traditional parties are committed to net zero targets, the dates and policy commitments vary greatly, and the new Reform party would scrap net zero targets entirely. Concerningly, the vote takes place against a [backdrop of misleading or false statements around the cost of climate action](#), which could have an impact beyond the election. We pray for wisdom and discernment as people make their decisions, and for truthfulness in presenting climate issues.

Finally, on 28 July, Venezuela, a major oil producer, holds its elections. We pray that [they will be free and fair](#), and that voters will choose wisely, seeking resolution of the country's social, political, environmental and economic challenges.

Heat, fires, floods and storms

As is true every month, we bring before God the people affected by extreme weather events, whose frequency and seriousness is being exacerbated by global heating. We pray for people affected by deadly heatwaves in the [Middle East](#), [Greece](#), the United States and Central America (where scientists estimate [the heat was made far more likely by climate change](#)), [South Asia](#), and [East Asia](#). We lift before God all who are fighting [Arctic wildfires](#) and lament the damage done by [increasingly intense and frequent wildfires in recent decades](#). We pray for people affected by floods in central Europe, [Switzerland and Italy](#), [China](#), [Indonesia](#), [Bangladesh](#), the [United States Midwest](#), and [Ivory Coast](#). And we pray for the people in the Caribbean who are threatened by [Hurricane Beryl](#), the first-ever June Category 4 storm, rapidly intensified by exceptionally hot seas.

Lord Jesus, be with all who are suffering, especially people whose vulnerability makes them most likely to be harmed by extreme events; strengthen all who are working to help communities adapt; and grant that the pace of disasters may not inspire hopelessness and lethargy, but be a spur to compassion and effective action.

Challenging agencies' right to regulate

On 28 June, the US Supreme Court [released a ruling](#) which poses a profound threat to climate and environmental action at local, state and national level. The justices [swept aside the 'Chevron' doctrine, which](#) "requires courts to defer to agencies' reasonable interpretations of ambiguous statutes." More than 70 Supreme Court decisions and 17,000 lower court decisions have relied on the Chevron precedent.

Following the ruling, courts will have the power to decide whether or not a government agency's interpretation of regulation – whether on clean air or water, or any number of topics – is valid. This [could mean far more frequent challenges to environmental, health, labour and other regulations](#). We pray that the ruling will not have a chilling effect on future environmental regulation – and will not be used to undermine regulations that already exist.

A key challenge to fossil-fuel projects

A [UK Supreme Court decision](#), by contrast, will provide a powerful precedent for people who wish to challenge new fossil fuel projects in the UK – and [could offer a precedent for other countries also](#).

Projects in the UK (and EU) must undergo an Environmental Impact Assessment before they can receive development consent. The court ruled that Surrey County Council had acted incorrectly in limiting their impact assessment of new oil wells to the emissions that would be involved in extracting the oil and not considering emissions associated with its combustion. In the judgement, Lord Leggatt [stated](#) that emissions from the use of fossil fuels are clearly within the control of those who operator extraction sites as the emissions wouldn't occur if the fuels weren't extracted, that county councils are allowed to consider climate change in their planning decisions, and that decision makers should consider emissions from fuel use, as well as production, when evaluating impact.

Does this block future extractive projects? [Not automatically](#) – but it does mean that it will be harder for them to gain consent, as the magnitude of emissions for which they are ultimately responsible will have to be taken into consideration. We give thanks for this decision and the clarity with which it sets out the need to acknowledge the true impact of extractive projects. We pray that it inspires similar decisions in other countries.

[Being servants of beauty \(Nikhil George Joseph, S.J., Kerala Province\)](#)

There is no real separation between humans and nature. All the seeming boundaries are acquired over years of material and intellectual additions to our personalities. While young, my mom taught me to be overjoyed in experiencing a sapling grow with much care, to spend leisure time with goats and enjoy their company, to feel the thirst of a drooping plant, or the pain of an ant writhing in pain because I accidentally stepped on it. Through all these and many more ways nature evolved to be my own body extending in the other. My seeking to be connected with everything has roots in childhood and it has been quietly growing along. That which we let grow makes us later.

A mystic like St. Francis of Assisi is overwhelmed to hear birds singing as he perceives this as a concert in praise of the love of God ... Commitment to environment cannot be because of an impending climatic Armageddon but rather because one of those first divine mandates was to care for our common home... and because we, as humans, have failed miserably at it. We are to rediscover that mysticality and be servants of that beauty

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