



Prayer points – August 2026

Desertification, land degradation and drought

From the 17th to the 28th of this month, the [17th conference of parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification \(UNCCD\) takes place in Mongolia](#). The conference theme is ‘*Restoring Land. Restoring Hope.*’ Delegates will be gathering to “*forge solutions to the interconnected challenges of desertification, land degradation and drought, recognizing that restoring land is also essential to reducing instability, preventing displacement and strengthening human and national security in vulnerable regions.*”

In addition to praying for the conference, we will be taking the desert as our theme throughout our prayers, drawing on the rich imagery of desert lands in the Bible and on the spirituality of the Desert Fathers and Mothers.

A place that expresses brokenness

In the Psalms and the prophets, the terms we translate as desert and wilderness [are closely related](#) – and the bleakness of land described in these terms is sometimes used to reflect the bleakness of humanity’s broken relationships with God, each other, and the land. “*Covenants are broken; cities are despised; there is no regard for man. The land mourns and languishes ... Sharon is like a desert.*” (Isaiah 33: 8b-9a, ESVUK)

Today, much of the desertification, land degradation and drought around the world reflects the consequences of humanity’s heedless use of resources, especially our burning of fossil fuels. The past month’s extreme wildfires in Europe and North America have burned [millions of hectares of land](#), [placing it at risk of degradation](#), displaced hundreds of thousands of people, and caused dangerously poor air quality for millions more ([Americas](#), [Europe](#)). The fires have ‘human fingerprints’ on them [said fire scientist John Abatzaglou](#). A super-rapid attribution study from the [World Weather Attribution scientists said](#) that the conditions that favoured Spain’s wildfires were made 20 times more likely by climate change, and those that favoured the fires in France’s Gironde at least two times more likely. Lord, we pray for all who are suffering because of extreme events made more likely by our broken relationship with You and Your planet: comfort and heal all affected by wildfires, [‘brutal’ heat](#) and drought, stronger typhoons, such as [Super Typhoon Bavi](#), and other extreme rain events, [such as those suffered over the past month by many in Asia](#).

A place of repentance and lament

“*I am like a desert owl of the wilderness, like an owl of the waste places;*” says the Psalmist (Ps 102:7, ESV) Amidst brokenness, God’s people are led to repentance and lament – now as in Biblical times. As we mourn the destruction we see, we pause to consider the ways in which we and those around us have failed to care for God’s earth. And we pray [with the Desert Mother Amma Sarah of Scete](#) for ourselves and all people: *O Lord, You who have measured the heights and the earth In the hollow of your hand and created the six-wing Seraphim to cry out to you with an unceasing voice “Holy, Holy, Holy,” glory to your name. Deliver us from the evil one, O Master. Forget our many evil deeds and through the multitude of your compassions, grant us daily forgiveness and a turning from sin, for you are blessed unto the ages.*” (adapted) Trusting in God’s mercy, we choose one change that we wish, with God’s help, to make in our lives and one change we would like to see our society make, and pray that, if God so wills, both may move forward by God’s grace.

A place of testing and preparation for witness

During August, we remember Christ’s transfiguration, when he appeared on a mountaintop accompanied by Moses, the giver of the law, and Elijah, the prophet. All three had experienced a time of testing in the desert which affirmed both human dependence on God and God’s provision. We pray for people being tested today - young and old climate prophets calling for creation care in the face of an uncertain future; [scientists](#) and [legislators](#) seeking to protect and disseminate critical data sets that are under threat; journalists [facing cuts as they speak scientific truths some do not want to hear](#), politicians working to maintain climate action where polarisation threatens it. May they know God’s guidance and provision and be strengthened to witness truly and effectively.

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