



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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A place restored and renewed

“The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus; it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing.” (Is 35: 1-2a)

In Isaiah, God’s act of redemption restores both God’s people and the land. Today, Christians around the world, called to creation care as part of their discipleship, are working to act as agents in restoring landscapes and habitats. The A Rocha group of organisations is at the forefront. [A Rocha Ghana has been part of](#) landscape restoration in the Sahel and works with local communities to help people flourish in and also protect Ghana’s forests and savannahs. A Rocha Kenya is helping some coastal communities [conserve and restore mangrove forests](#), which also [provide crucial protection from flooding and moisture retention for land further inland](#). A Rocha India [is encouraging community tree planting](#); A Rocha Canada is helping people steward rivers and the surrounding habitats; and A Rocha UK’s Wolf Fields, an urban greenspace that was once an abandoned industrial site, [is flourishing](#). We give thanks for these programmes and pray for them and for the large-scale work being done in [Africa’s Green Wall](#) and other national or multinational initiatives.

Restoring Land, Restoring Hope

At this month’s meeting in Mongolia, there will be three high-level ministerial dialogues on the themes of [financing healthy land and drought resilience](#), [enhancing instruments proactively to manage drought](#), and [restoring rangelands and ensuring the well-being of pastoralist communities](#). We pray for trust among parties in the negotiations, for [agreement to further new mechanisms like the Drought Resilience Index, which will help countries to plan more effectively](#), and for all voices to be heard – especially those of indigenous people, whose contribution is essential. More broadly, we pray, [using the words of one of the desert fathers](#), for each minister, each delegate to this conference, each negotiator preparing for this November’s UNFCCC Conference of Parties, and all politicians and civil servants preparing national climate and environmental policies:

Lord, cleanse the eyes of my heart. Remove what twists my vision.

Let me see You where You are, and not where I project You.

Give me perception that leads to reverence.

Short points for prayer ...

The WMO released on Friday its [seasonal climate update](#) – predicting a strong El Nino event and noting the potential for droughts, floods, and other extreme events, especially around the Indian Ocean. Please pray for governments to take steps now to prepare for possible impacts.

The consensus around climate change in the UK [is under stress](#) – despite the fact that polls show [a majority of people](#) and an [overwhelming majority of MPs](#) favoured more climate action, even before the current heatwaves. Pray that the new Government will maintain its commitment to climate-friendly policies and Net Zero targets across all its decisions. Pray, too, that in all countries, the glimpse that an [El Nino year is giving us of climate change’s possible impacts](#) will galvanise people to demand concrete, concerted action to tackle emissions.

Pray that people will not move from denial to fatalism, but will understand that every tenth of a degree makes a difference – and that we still have the capacity to reduce climate risks.

Give thanks for the growing green economy ... for the fact that [renewables overtook fossil fuels in Germany’s power generation for the first time](#) ... [that demand for oil is falling](#) ... that the US Congress appears to have [succeeded in halting the decommissioning of the National Science Foundation’s ocean survey system](#).

A closing prayer

“The nature of water is yielding, and that of a stone is hard. Yet, if you hang a bottle filled with water above the stone so that the water drips drop by drop, it will wear a hole in the stone. In the same way, the word of God is tender, and our heart is hard. So when people hear the word of God frequently, their hearts are opened to the fear of God.” [Abba Poemen](#)

For ourselves and our world we pray: Lord, open our hearts.

For the hope of transformation you offer: Lord, we thank you.