

Prayer points – August 2023



Preparing for the Season of Creation

'Let Justice and Peace flow' is the theme of this year's Season of Creation, which will start next month. The [guide for the Season](#) invites us "to make visible peace with Earth and on Earth" and "to repentance and a change of attitude and actions." We pray for all Christians and churches preparing Season of Creation celebrations and ask God to inspire them to use this time well, so that "as we join the river of justice and peace with others...hope is created instead of despair [and] streams can rise in the desert."

Global Boiling

There's wide agreement that 'global warming' is too gentle a term to describe climate change's impacts. 'Global heating' has gained adherents. But looking at the extreme events taking place worldwide, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has coined a new phrase that will resonate with many: '[global boiling](#)'.

June 2023 was the [hottest June on record](#). July [looks likely to have been the hottest July](#).

On land, extreme heat has affected many parts of the Northern Hemisphere. Physicians in Phoenix, Arizona, where the high was above 110F (43.3C) [for 31 consecutive days](#), were treating [burns caused by contact with pavements](#). [Wildfires around the Mediterranean](#) have killed dozens of people and devastated homes, businesses, farms, and the tourist trade. China [broke its all-time heat record](#) with a temperature of 52.2C (126F).

[Marine heat has also been extreme](#). In June, [sea surface temperatures were the highest on record](#); sea ice extent the lowest ever for June, and Antarctic sea ice extent the lowest on record. By July, the [average sea surface temperature in the Mediterranean had reached 28.4C \(83.1F\)](#), and some waters around Florida were measured at [temperatures approaching – maybe even reaching – 38C \(100F\)](#).

Around the world, the imprint of climate change is clear. Scientists at the [World Weather Attribution Service have said](#) that the July heatwaves in the Southwestern US and Southern Europe "would have been virtually impossible ... if humans had not warmed the planet by burning fossil fuels." Moreover, they warn, "unless the world rapidly stops burning fossil fuels...the world will experience heatwaves that are even hotter and longer-lasting. A heatwave like the recent ones would occur every 2-5 years in a world that is 2°C warmer than the preindustrial climate."

These extremes - and less-reported issues with long-term heat and water scarcity in places like [Iran](#) and [Iraq](#) – are devastating families and communities now. In addition, [scientists fear](#) that they may be signs that we are approaching [tipping points, when an accumulation of small changes catapult earth's systems into abrupt or irreversible change](#). Lord, we lament the harm human activities are causing our brothers, sisters, and all of creation. We ask your forgiveness. We pray that all who are suffering because of heat extremes may find compassion, healing and justice. And we pray that you will inspire each person, community, business, and nation - "[to turn a year of burning heat into a year of burning ambition](#)" and action.

Shipping Emissions

One sector that has needed ambition and action is international shipping – and negotiations this July on a strategy to reduce emissions from ships [did lead to signs of progress](#). Balancing a range of views - from Pacific Island nations calling for major cuts to major developing-country exporters and oil producers seeking less - the final agreement sets the sector a target of attaining net zero 'by or around 2050' with interim checkpoints at 2030 and 2040. It also promises increased use of low-carbon technologies by 2030. While the [declaration is likely not compatible](#) with a 1.5 degree climate goal, it is probably compatible with the Paris goal of 'well below 2 degrees' - and there will be opportunities to strengthen it in the future. We give thanks for steps taken and pray for stronger ones to come.

Isaiah 35: 1-2a, 3-4 – The promise of God's coming salvation (ESV)

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 ... They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God. Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who have an anxious heart, "Be strong; fear not!"

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Praying for COP 28: The global stocktake

As the November climate talks approach, some of the key areas for prayer are already emerging. Firstly, this year's COP will include the first ['global stocktake'](#), in which parties to the conference assess where they have made progress towards the Paris goals and where they see gaps and shortfalls. The hosts have [emphasised the need for the stocktake to be 'brutally honest'](#), and we pray that the process will indeed be honest, transparent, and constructive. Equally importantly, at the suggestion of our [friends at Climate Intercessors](#), we pray that in addition to looking at the overall picture, individual countries, businesses, communities and other key stakeholders will look at their own contributions and be convicted about where they need to change.

Climate finance

Climate finance remains a sticking point in all negotiations. While July saw [progress in agreeing a strategy for the Green Climate Fund](#) (GCF), levels of trust continue to be low, given the persistent failure of developed countries to provide promised funding. The GCF meetings [also highlighted](#) differences of opinion around the relative importance of public and private finance, whether major economies such as China and India should contribute to multilateral climate funds, and the extent to which the funds should prioritise the most climate-vulnerable countries. We pray that developed countries' leaders will honour their commitments, and that their citizens will understand why meeting climate finance promises needs to be a priority. More broadly, we pray that God will inspire talks around finance with a spirit of generosity and justice, in which all parties prioritise the common good.

Progress towards a just transition

A positive outcome at this year's COP would involve commitments to scale up renewable energy, to reduce energy demand and emissions, and to phase out fossil fuels. Unfortunately, the recent G20 meetings [showed significant divisions and made worryingly little progress](#) in all these areas. There was disagreement on [timing for developed countries' net zero targets](#) and targets for [scaling up renewable energy](#). China, backed by Saudi Arabia, [refused to discuss emissions reductions](#). [Saudi Arabia led a group opposing commitments on fossil-fuel cutbacks](#). The fossil-fuel phaseout question will be particularly fraught at the COP. The COP President, who is also the President of state-owned oil company ADNOC, has clear conflicts of interest and still has not used language about 'phasing out'. Moreover decisions by countries like [Norway](#), Australia, the US and the [UK](#) to grant new licenses for fossil-fuel exploration and production threaten dangerous emissions increases, set a poor precedent, and make finding consensus on a phase-out harder.

We mourn wasted time and the short-term self-interest that impedes progress. We pray that the COP talks themselves will be more productive. We pray, too, for the bilateral talks that the US climate envoy John Kerry is holding with [India](#) and [China](#). As we saw in Paris in 2015, agreement between the world's largest emitters is vital for overall progress. We give thanks that talks have re-started and pray that all involved will be open to God's guidance.

Progress, not polarisation, needed

A recent [survey shows](#) that 69% of Americans support the US becoming carbon neutral by 2050. Despite this, US climate discussions are polarised by party, with many Republican politicians deriding climate science and seeking to resist climate legislation. The UK, by contrast, has historically had a level of political consensus around climate, enabling landmark legislation to be passed by both Conservative and Labour governments. Recent byelection results, however, have led some media groups and Conservative politicians to ask the Government to jettison key elements of its net zero planning and, in effect, to fight the next election with [climate as a 'culture war' issue](#). [Many within the Conservative Party oppose this](#), with the co-author of the party's 2019 manifesto noting "majority support for net zero across every voter group." Lord, we pray that you will give politicians wisdom and courage so that they may resist the temptation to allow partisanship to derail climate discussions and instead unite to find solutions to the climate threat which affects us all.

Sending prayer

Fill us, we pray, Lord, with your love for all that you have made.
Inspire us with the Spirit that breathed over the waters
And grant that in all we do, we may further your Kingdom
And manifest in our lives Christ's reconciling work.

<https://www.prayandfastfortheclimate.org.uk>