



UN CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE UK 2021

#TogetherForOurPlanet
#ForNature
#COP26
1-12 November in Glasgow

TOGETHER FOR OUR PLANET

“We cannot afford to wait to act against the threat of climate change. We must work together to protect our planet and people and ensure a greener, more resilient future for us all.”
(<https://ukcop26.org/>)

In November, the UK will be hosting the 26th Conference of the Parties on Climate Change, COP26, in Glasgow. How can we equip our churches and congregations to support this important initiative through our prayer and worship as well as practical action? How does our understanding of God in creation inform the changes we need to make, both as individuals, communities and internationally?

If we are working “Together for our Planet”, the first thing we can do is to draw together those who share our concern, to reach out in our local communities to others who work to protect the environment and to counter climate change. Local environmental groups, wildlife and conservation groups, Churches Together and other faith communities may all be willing to work together for our planet.

For Christians, it will be important to root our concern in our understanding of God’s care for creation and to express our support for this initiative in our worship and by our prayers. We believe that prayer changes things. When we pray for the COP26 meeting, we can underpin the meeting of world leaders who may make significant commitments to carbon reduction. We can pray for hearts to be moved, for perspectives to change; and, of course, as we pray we will find we are caught up in that change. The words we pray, the music and lyrics we sing will also move us to make some of the changes – at personal level and beyond - that will be necessary.

There are some key campaign themes of the conference that we can weave through our worship planning. Can we draw on these in our liturgy, hymnody and in our prayer? In each of the sections below I have offered a bible reading, reflection, hymn and song suggestions and prayer resources that may be included in a regular service or combined into a special service.

ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE

Adaptation and resilience form one of the key campaign themes for the COP26 conference in Glasgow in November. This theme is explained more fully:

“We must help communities adapt to the impacts of climate change by delivering a step-change in the support and expertise devoted to improving climate adaptation and building resilience, particularly for those most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.”

Bible Reading

Genesis 41 29-36

Joseph interprets Pharaoh’s dream of seven fat and seven thin cows

“There will come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt. After them there will arise seven years of famine, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt; the famine will consume the land. The plenty will no longer be known in the land because of the famine that will follow, for it will be very grievous. And the doubling of Pharaoh’s dream means that the thing is fixed

by God, and God will shortly bring it about. Now therefore let Pharaoh select a man who is discerning and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh proceed to appoint overseers over the land, and take one-fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt during the seven plenteous years. Let them gather all the food of these good years that are coming, and lay up grain under the authority of Pharaoh for food in the cities, and let them keep it. That food shall be a reserve for the land against the seven years of famine that are to befall the land of Egypt, so that the land may not perish through the famine."

Reflection

How can Pharaoh prepare the people of Egypt for feast and famine? It is beyond Pharaoh to interpret his dream, or to see his way through the problem to a solution. Joseph has shown himself to be a visionary and is chosen to lead this work. The Egyptians set aside 20% of their produce to prepare for the coming years of famine. Like the Egyptians, we have been living through a time of great plenty, but climate change brings failed crops, flooding and hunger for the most vulnerable nations. Can we adjust our ways, making provision now for those who will suffer most, sharing available resources so that all are fed? Global realignment to achieve this will demand a dedicated focus and cooperation between nations. It requires us to make provision that may seem costly now but will be essential for long term sustainability. What can we do to adapt to climate change locally? Who are most vulnerable, and how can we support them? Can we develop the necessary resilience? Andrew Pratt's hymn picks up these themes, recognising our role as stewards, with a responsibility to future generations. As we sing together, let's use this hymn as a sign of commitment, affirming our willingness to change, recognising the task of restoring the earth and protecting the most vulnerable.

Hymn

The care of our planet, the threat of extinction,
alerts us to need to be stewards of the earth:
this place of great beauty, our God given tenure,
the place of our nurture, the globe of our birth.

This place we must guard for each new generation,
to leave as we found it or, better, restored;
to share each resource without greed or pretension,
not barring the needy, not plunder, nor hoard.

The banquet of God is for all of God's people,
communion companions are both rich and poor,
our ultimate end will remove all distinctions,
no birthright or creed can obstruct heaven's door.

God's common wealth love can encompass all nations,
but here in this place we must all make a start:
a life of acceptance of sister and brother,
the practice of loving, a God given art.

Andrew Pratt 1/5/2019

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Written for the 140th Anniversary of St John's Methodist Church Whitchurch, Shropshire.

Tunes: STREETS OF LAREDO; ST CATHERINES COURT

Prayer

Creator God,
in sorrow we turn to you,
as we face a damaged creation,
its delicate balance distorted by our careless destruction.
Give us resilience to weather the storms,
generosity to care for global neighbours,
and determination to change our ways and learn from our mistakes.
May we find ways to use your gift of imagination and creativity,
to repair the damage we have done,
to provide for those whose lives will be changed,
to adapt to new patterns in our climate.
We pray in Jesus name, who brings healing and new life for our world.
Amen.

NATURE

Nature forms one of the key campaign themes for the COP26 conference in Glasgow in November. This theme is explained more fully: "Humanity faces the twin threats of climate change and biodiversity loss which, together, are undermining nature's capacity to sustain healthy life, nutritious diets and national economies. The two are inextricably linked and need to be tackled together urgently, with equal ambition."

Bible Reading

Genesis 1 20-25

In the creation story that opens the book of Genesis, on fifth and sixth days God creates animals and birds, for the land, sea and air.

And God said, “Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.” So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.” And it was so. God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

Reflection

From the very beginning, God has called us to be stewards of this planet, teeming with life in such abundance and diversity. But we have taken biodiversity for granted and failed in our stewardship. According to the 2018 Living Planet Report, there has been a 60% decline in global wildlife populations in the fifty years since 1970. In Genesis we see a creation in balance with itself: God saw it and said “it is good”. That same balance is needed to sustain every strand of the complex web of life of which we are a part. How can we act now to protect and repair the biodiversity of nature? Where can we plant trees? How can we improve our farming practices to sustain wildlife? John Bell and Graham Maule’s hymn Dance and Sing captures this amazing diversity. As we sing together, let’s use this hymn as a sign of commitment, affirming the wonderful diversity of life on our planet and affirming our willingness to change, in order to respect and restore the natural world.

Hymn

Dance and Sing all the Earth.

Song Title : Dance and Sing
First Line : Dance and Sing, all the earth
Tune Name : Pulling Bracken (trad)
Published in : Heaven shall not wait
Author : John L Bell and Graham Maule
Composer : Scottish traditional
Copyright Ack: Words : Words © 1987 WGRG, Iona Community, Glasgow G2 3DH, Scotland
Copyright Ack: Music : Scottish traditional

Prayer

God of all diversity and growth,
you bless us with the complex web of life,
each part depending on all others.
Every plant and fungus, every animal, insect, and bacterium,
and every human being depend on you,
and on the wonderful world you are creating.
Give us grace to see you in creation,
to honour you in our care for the world around us,
and to sustain the lifegiving environment of the earth.
We pray in Jesus name, who brings healing and new life for our world.
Amen.

ENERGY AND TRANSPORT TRANSITION

Energy and transportation transition forms one of the key campaign themes for the COP26 conference in Glasgow in November. This theme is explained more fully: "To meet the Paris Agreement's goals, we need the global transition to clean power to be at least four times faster than it is at present. Global emissions from road transport are rising faster than in any other sector."

Bible Reading

Numbers 11 4-9

After leaving the captivity of Egypt, the people of Israel are journeying through the wilderness, before they reach the Promised Land. But through the challenges of this transitional time, they turn to moaning, looking back to their time in Egypt.

The rabble among them had a strong craving; and the Israelites also wept again, and said, “If only we had meat to eat! We remember the fish we used to eat in Egypt for nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; but now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at.”

Now the manna was like coriander seed, and its colour was like the colour of gum resin. The people went around and gathered it, ground it in mills or beat it in mortars, then boiled it in pots and made cakes of it; and the taste of it was like the taste of cakes baked with oil. When the dew fell on the camp in the night, the manna would fall with it.

Reflection

The people of Israel had fled into the wilderness, set free from slavery to the Egyptians; but the transition to a different lifestyle and diet was hard to manage. They looked back to the good old days of meat and flavoursome food but forgot the harsh conditions of forced labour. Transitions are hard times to manage - and we are facing many transitions, if we are to reduce our carbon footprint and move to a zero-carbon economy. We are in a kind of bondage - to petrochemicals, to international travel, and to a high meat diet! We need to find freedom by moving towards a zero carbon Promised Land. Even in Moses' time the "rabble", the populist voice, was powerful, just as it is today. We need to pray for our leaders to have the courage to make long term decisions and to hold to them, despite the protests of short-term interest groups. The second verse of Ally Barrett's powerful hymn is especially helpful as we pray wisdom for all those who "bear the future in their hand." As we sing together, let us use this hymn as a sign of commitment both to pray for world leaders who need to make courageous, collaborative decisions and also to play our part in embracing the change needed to move to zero-carbon living.

Hymn

Hope for the world's despair:

we feel the nations' pain;

can anything repair

this broken earth again?

For this we pray:

in every place

a spark of grace

to light the way.

Wisdom for all who bear
the future in their hand,
entrusted with the care
of this and every land.

When comes the hour,

O Lord, we pray,

inspire the way

we spend our power.

Honour for all who've paid
war's painful, bitter price,
when duty called they made
the greatest sacrifice.

Their memory

will never cease

to cry for peace

and harmony.

Ease for the troubled mind
in endless conflict caught,
each soul that cannot find
the peace beyond all thought.

May they be blessed

with healing balm

for inner calm

and perfect rest.

Love for the human heart:
when hate grows from our fears
and inwardly we start
to turn our ploughs to spears.
Help us to sow
love's precious seed
in word and deed,
that peace may grow.

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Prayer

God of all wisdom,
guide the leaders of the nations,
who "bear the future in their hand"
to make decisions for the common good.
Lord of time and eternity,
give us grace to see beyond our short-term desires,
to perceive the longer horizons of our true needs.
We pray in Jesus name, who brings healing and new life for our world.
Amen.

Blessing

Creator God, you hold all nature in being,
help us to honour you in our care for our planet.
Lord Jesus, you are making all things new,
walk with us as we navigate these unknown paths.
Holy Spirit, sparking innovation and new possibilities,
enable us to respond creatively to the challenges we face.
Holy Trinity of love, bless us now at this moment for change,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

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