

COP26 - A BUEN prayer guide

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2 Chronicles 7:14 NIV

If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

COP26. Maybe you've heard of it?

The Conference of the Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Well, that's quite a mouthful. So let's stick to COP26.

COP is a yearly gathering of the world's nations to discuss and plan a response as to how together we face the challenge of climate change. COP26, the 26th meeting, takes place the first two weeks of November and is being hosted by the UK Government in Glasgow from Sunday 31 October to Friday 12 November.

Not all COPs are as significant as each other. This coming one is the most significant since COP21 in Paris back in 2015.

In 2015, the nations of the world took a huge step in agreeing to limit climate change caused by human release of Green House Gases (GHGS) to a global warming of 2 degrees centigrade above pre-industrial levels, and hopefully 1.5 degrees. While some degree of climate change and shifting weather patterns is now inevitable due to adding 50 per cent more GHGs than present historically, this lower limit will mitigate against catastrophic impacts upon humanity and the whole community of creation. To do that, we need to see no further in GHGs in the atmosphere after 2050, a point called net zero carbon.

So far, nations have been slow to respond. Actual and promised reductions in GHGs will lead to an expected warning of 3 degrees. To keep the possibility of 1.5 degrees alive, we need to see nations make commitments to deep cuts in emissions by 2030, something that COP26 is aiming to achieve.

COP26 is providing a focal point for campaigning by many faith and non-faith groups, impetus being added by the recently Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report on Climate Change which said warming of the Earth due to human activity was unequivocal.

Over the past year, the Baptist Union Environment Network (BUEN) has been encouraging churches to a deeper engagement with the climate crisis, drawing together networks of churches across regional associations and encouraging churches to hold a Climate Sunday. Beyond this, to become Beacons of Hope by joining such as ARocha's Eco-Church programme with the aim of reducing the environmental footprint of church life.

Several years ago, along with encouraging churches to be Beacons of Hope, Lynn Green our General Secretary, called Baptists Together to be Beacons of Prayer. Along with other Christians, we are a people who believe that God is actively involved in the world. Following Jesus, our regular prayer is "God's kingdom come ... on Earth as it is in Heaven". As we journey towards COP26, we need not only to raise our voice in the public sphere, one of our priorities as a network, but also in heavenly places, asking God to be at work in the life the nations of the world, their peoples, and their leaders.

As well as general prayers, we also need our prayers to be specific, shaped by the aims imagined for the forthcoming COP26;

- **To secure global net zero by 2050 and keep 1.5 degrees within reach** - including the rapid phasing out of coal, curtailing deforestation and switching to renewable sources of energy and away from fossil fuels; and for the world's largest emitters, historically and currently including the UK, to take a lead in reducing GHG emissions;
- **Adapt and protect communities and natural habitats already impacted by climate change** - enabling them to safeguard forests and other ecosystems and to build resilience infrastructure and adopting agricultural practices to cope with and mitigate climate change;
- **Mobilise finance** - for developed countries such as our own to release the 100 billion dollars a year in climate finance promised at the Paris 2015 COP but not yet fully realised, enabling developing countries to adapt and mitigate against climate change; and for those countries that have contributed most to the causes of climate change to contribute funds to compensate for loss and damage upon the least and poorest nations and communities who feel the impacts of climate change the most;
- **To work together to deliver** - to break through the distrust and barriers that have grown between nations over the past decade, seen in the poor global response to Covid19 and rolling out of vaccines across the world, and in the slow response so far to tackling climate change. Only by working together can nations overcome these global problems - as Jesus said, "each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Phil 2v4).

Jesus once commented about people, "Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand." (Matt 13v13). At the release of the IPCC report on Climate Change in August this year, Inger Andersen of the UN Environment Programme said: 'You scientists have been warning about Climate Change for 30

years. The world listened but didn't hear. It listened but did not act strongly enough. As a result, Climate Change is a problem here, now". A problem affecting many people across the world, in the poorest places and increasing in our own part of the world too.

In another 30 years it will be 2050. We cannot afford for another spokesperson to repeat these words when another climate change report is released. As Jesus said to both the crowds and his followers, "Whoever has ears, let them hear." (Matt 13v9). In fact he promised blessing if we do; "blessed are your ... ears because they hear." (Matt 13v16). A blessing for ourselves, for the community of people across the world and the whole community of creation.

So, COP26? Have you heard of it? And are you listening?

Here are some prayer points that will help churches and prayer points that will help churches and individuals seek God for COP26 over the coming couple of months:

COP26 Glasgow

- Pray that the UK government will lead by example and show clearly how we will achieve our own targets for climate action and achieving net zero.
- Pray for justice and fairness to be at the heart of the decisions that are made.
- Pray that representatives from developing countries will not be limited from attending due to COVID19
- Pray for Government ministers and others leading the conference.
- Pray for the voices of young people to be heard in every aspect of the conference.

Limiting global emissions to 1.5 degrees

- 70% of the world's economies have committed to this on paper; pray their plans and actions will make this a reality.
- Pray that richer nations and financial institutions will help finance poorer nations to develop the technologies to provide cleaner energy.
- Pray for Green jobs to be created across our world, bringing hope to millions of lives.
- Pray for end to investment in all forms of fossil fuels.

The stewardship of nature as God intended

- Pray for the protection of threatened habitats across our world, in particular the rain forests.

- Pray for the rewilding and restoring of habitats so that we allow nature to restore eco systems and create sustainable agriculture across the world.
- Pray for Christian organisations engaged in encouraging our stewardship of God's creation, including A Rocha UK, Tear Fund, Operation Noah, Baptist Union Environmental Network and many others.
- Pray for our farmers as they will have to change practices in the coming decades.

Extreme weather events

- Pray for National and local Government leaders as they plan for more extreme weather events.
- Pray for those who determine planning decisions for new developments, that they will plan for extreme weather events.
- Pray for those affected across the world by flooding and forest fires.
- Pray for those parts of the world for whom rising sea levels could be catastrophic.

Climate and Environmental Scientists

- Give thanks for the gift of science that has allowed us to see how our use of fossil fuels is affecting people and nature around the globe in the present and the future.
- Prayer for scientists working on new IPCC reports on the impact of Global Warming and ways to mitigate against its worst effects due to be released next year.
- Pray for scientists and engineers who are using their creativity to develop ideas and technology that will help reduce the intensity of Climate Change and moderate its impact.
- Pray for a new generation of scientists who have an appreciation of the wonder of creation and are motivated to find ways to protect both people and the whole community of creation.

The role of the Christian community

- Pray for the Holy Spirit to awaken the hearts of all Christians to our complicity in harming God's creation and then to see ourselves as those who should lead by example.
- Pray for our church communities to invest in green solutions within our buildings and land, and a willingness to share best practice.
- Pray for Christian voices to speak up against the injustice of climate change as it affects the poorer nations disproportionately, and for richer nations to financially support green solutions across the world.
- Pray for Climate Sunday service in the lead up to COP26.

For more info about BUEN and local regional hubs, email BUEnvNet@outlook.com, see the webpage on the Baptists Together website or follow BUEN on Facebook and Twitter