

Pray and Fast for the Climate: Autumn Planner



“Jesus links prayer, fasting and giving in the Sermon on the Mount, and urges his disciples, ‘Seek first God’s kingdom, and all else you need will be yours as well.’ “ Rt Revd David Atkinson

Prayer matters; Paris matters

In November 2013, Typhoon Haiyan struck the Philippines just as delegates were preparing for the UN climate talks in Poland. Filipino delegate Yeb Saño, despairing at both the devastation of his country and the slow progress at the talks, announced that he would fast either until the end of the two week conference or until real progress was made. He has continued to fast on the first of every month, and his example has inspired the international '[Fast for the Climate](#)' movement.

Drawing on the long tradition of prayer and fasting, Pray and Fast for the Climate is a Christian prayer initiative that works alongside the international Fast for the Climate movement and aims to resource Christians for regular, informed prayer on climate issues. It grew out of the Faith for the Climate Network and is supported by a wide variety of network members, including major UK denominations and agencies such as A Rocha UK, Christian Aid, Operation Noah, Our Voices and Tearfund. Although begun in the UK, it now resources people in many countries, including Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the US and South Africa.

As the Paris talks approach, our overall theme is 'Prayer Matters; Paris Matters' and our emphasis is on three key time periods: the 1st through the 4th of October, the 1st of November, and the period surrounding the climate talks themselves, from the 29th of November to the 12th of December.

1st through the 4th of October

Throughout this year, countries have been making pledges for the Paris climate talks. The UN will be preparing a report based on all the submissions received by 1 October, to show the total impact of the submissions. It's therefore a key time to pray for the pledging process and for the UN researchers who have to put together the report. Sunday the 4th of October also marks the end of 'Time for Creation' – and is the day when many churches remember St Francis. It is, therefore, a particularly good day to be praying for climate justice. Pray and Fast for the Climate has released a Franciscan-themed resource of prayers and reflections which churches can use to assist their prayer, as well as materials for a whole 'Day of Prayer'.

1st of November

Sunday 1st of November, provides another critical moment. It's the day around which the UN report on pledges will be released. For many churches, it's also a day where the activities of Christians past are remembered. Two services will be available, one focusing on the journey to Paris and one on the Christian calling – as part of 'the saints' - to love God and neighbour through care for creation.

29th of November to the 12th of December

Finally, during the time surrounding the Paris climate talks, we will be partnering with other Christian prayer initiatives to create a 'ring of prayer' around the negotiations. Participants will be invited to sign up for specific prayer and fasting times during the talks and to post their prayers on a website and via social media.

“Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven.” Prayer for the world is at the heart of the Christian life. Climate change has the potential to do immense damage to the whole of creation, and especially to harm the most vulnerable. At this time, where negotiators and politicians are making crucial decisions about climate, we come together before God, lifting up the situation and trusting in God's loving mercy.

What can church leaders do?

- Commit personally to prayer and to some form of fasting (from food, carbon, IT, etc)
- Encourage others to join in prayer and fasting: mention the possibility in your diocesan/synod/district/parish communications and meetings and publicise resources that can help people participate.
- Plan to hold a service during the Paris climate talks – whether a special service or a regular service with a special dedication.
- Incorporate prayer for the climate, where appropriate, in services and meetings that you are organising or at which you are speaking.
- Join in the 'pilgrimage' theme through using the prayer resources from the ['Pilgrimage to Paris'](#) and encouraging local prayer pilgrimages.

What resources are available?

The Pray and Fast for the Climate website (www.prayandfastfortheclimate.org.uk) aims to provide access to a wide variety of resources. Some of these we produce. These include:

- monthly topical prayer points (1 sheet of A4)
- materials for a prayer vigil/Day of Prayer
- special services
- prayers for a 'pilgrimage' around local places that help us to think about climate change, its impacts, and our opportunities to make positive changes
- a piece by Ruth Valerio on why prayer is an essential part of the Christian response to climate change

All of these can be downloaded; we can also send some in hard copy.

We also signpost resources from UK and international agencies and churches – things like the 'Pilgrimage to Paris' prayer resources, 'Time for Creation' materials, and materials produced by groups for the 'Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation.'

Frequently Asked Questions

There's a FAQ sheet you can download from our website, but two questions come up frequently and are probably worth mentioning here. The first is about people who might feel excluded because health issues mean that they can't or shouldn't fast from food. Not a problem! When we talk about fasting, we have the same understanding as the global [Fast for the Climate](#) movement, who say: "Our understanding of fasting is going without something voluntarily. In this case we are mainly talking about going without food. Most of us are fasting on the first of each month, for 24 hours. Some people are skipping a meal together once a month. Some people are fasting from carbon consumption and production. Some people are fasting from food waste. But there is no right or wrong way to do it." We're all different – and people have different health concerns and responsibilities. It's up to each person to determine what he or she chooses to fast from as a sign of prayerful commitment.

The second is whether our praying and fasting should be mentioned publicly, given Jesus' injunctions about avoiding spiritual pride. People will have different views on this: some will hold that all should be private; others say that praying and fasting together removes the activity from our personal sphere and helps us to recognise it as a common activity of the people of God ... and that it's a powerful witness to the world of our prayer and concern. Again, it's a matter for each person's discernment.

Contact Details: For more information, contact us on: info@prayandfastfortheclimate.org.uk