



The river of prayer

A prayer resource on climate justice

Introduction

Thank you for downloading this prayer resource. We hope it inspires you and your church to pray for climate justice, together with communities living in poverty around the world.

This prayer resource is inspired by the words from Amos 5:24 'Let justice roll on like a river, and righteousness like a never-failing stream.' It could be made available as a prayer installation for individuals to engage with over a set period of time or used as part of a prayer gathering (when church or government guidelines permit.)

It could also be used as part of your church engagement with the Christian Aid prayer chain. Read more at caid.org.uk/prayerchain or caid.ie/prayerchain if you're in Northern Ireland.

How to set up your prayer gathering

Lay a large piece of blue fabric creating a 'river' flowing from the altar or pulpit (if in a church sanctuary) through the space toward the door.

Supplies

You'll need to prepare the following supplies for each stage on the river or prayer journey.

All stages: Provide antiseptic wipes or antiseptic spray and cloths at each station for users to wipe pens before using. You could also provide disposable gloves for participants to use throughout and a bin for discarding at the end.

Source: Papers, pens, a Bible open at the book of Amos 5:24 and a glass jar or bottle large enough to hold pieces of paper.

Upper course: Enough 'New Deal for Climate Justice' prayer and action cards for everyone in your group (available to order online at caid.org.uk/climate-justice-resources) and pens.

Middle course: Stones.

Lower course: The outline of a tree trunk and branches drawn on a large piece of paper.

Mouth: A large page and marker.

Top tip

A great way to build in a sense of unity is to sing together. You could sing a verse of *Down to the River to Pray* in between each stage as you journey in prayer together.



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Source

Stand at the source of your imagined river and look downstream.

The symbol of a river flows throughout this time of prayer and is inspired by the words from the prophet Amos in the Bible:

'Let justice roll on like a river, and righteousness like a never-failing stream.' (Amos 5:24)

Amos spoke out against the suffering and oppression caused by injustice.

We follow in his footsteps when we choose to raise our voices against the climate crisis. Every day, people living in poverty are battling a crisis they did not create. This is unjust.

People like Rose in Kenya who, in her elderly years, has to walk further than ever before to get water in the drought. Every day, Rose walks for hours and carries heavy water jars on her return. She feels wearied by the journey and hungry from a lack of food. Rose, whose feet are worn by walking, has barely a carbon footprint to speak of. This is climate injustice.

The source of the river motivates, sustains and inspires us to raise our prophetic voices for climate justice with Rose. We come to the source of the water of life, to dwell in the presence of God in prayer.



Rose, 67, is doing all she can to help her family survive the drought in Kenya.

Prayer points

Ask God to refresh you if you are weary of the suffering in the world.

Ask God to replenish you with whatever you need to live faithfully with creation.

Ask God to renew your resolve to take action in the face of climate breakdown.

Prayer

God of all creation,
we come, together or alone,
longing to meet with you
to be refreshed and restored,
by the spring of living water,
by the source of all life.
In your mercy, meet with us here.
Amen.

Action

Write what you most need from God on a piece of paper and put it in the bottle.



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Upper course

The river flows fast in the upper stages of its journey. It is full of vigour. Waterfalls cascade, rapids rumble over rocks, valleys are sculpted by erosion.



There is so much energy to be harnessed.

This is the energy with which we hear the fervent words of Amos: **'Let justice roll on like a river, and righteousness like a never-failing stream' (Amos 5:24).**

How does righteousness flow like a never-failing stream? What does it mean to do the right thing?

The power of water leads us to consider renewable solutions to the climate crisis. Hydropower could be a good alternative to carbon-emitting fossil fuels, if done in the right way.

Yet, large hydro dams can often come at the cost of indigenous communities, and the sacred land that they have lived on for generations.



Upper course

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Large hydro dams can demand the sacrifice of large swathes of ancient forests and lead to the devastation of fragile ecosystems.

In Guatemala, Central America, indigenous communities have resisted the construction of large hydro dams which have been built on their land without their consent.

Christian Aid's partner Madreselva has not only supported this struggle, but, crucially, has also supported the establishment of micro hydro dams in communities in the north of the country.

Micro hydro projects have been widely accepted by the communities as they enable basic energy access without killing rivers or flooding forests.

Let us harness the power of our prayers and stand with communities who are seeking renewable solutions that don't damage the earth.

Prayer points

Pray that the voices of indigenous communities may be heard and heeded as we learn how to live in harmony with nature.

Pray for a rapid and just transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy.

Pray for a New Deal for Climate Justice – where the right thing is done in the right way.

Prayer

Spirit of God
who hovered over the waters,
harness your power in us
to live faithfully and in harmony
with the rhythms of righteousness,
for the restoration of creation
and the glory of your name.
Amen.

Action

Sit with the campaign card, read it, and then sign it if you wish to add your voice to the call for a New Deal for Climate Justice.



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Middle course

The river gets larger as it is joined by tributaries. The streams of water join forces to bring even greater transformation to the landscape. The river becomes an even greater agent of change.

In Kenya, Florence (pictured below with her nephew Kinywa Jacob) has become an agent of change in her community. She has drawn her community together to bring about much-needed transformation.

With help from Christian Aid, Florence and her community have built a different kind of dam from the hydro dams in Guatemala. It is a dam that stores the rain, creating a long-lasting source of water in times of drought. This water supply has transformed their lives.

Now, Florence uses the water to grow tomatoes, onions and chillies on her farm. With this dam, her children can eat healthy, nutritious vegetables. It's her source of life and joy.

Florence also uses the water from the dam to keep honey bees. She sells the rich, golden honey for cash at the market. She is reaping a good life for herself and her family.

'I have been sustained by the earth dam,' she says. 'My life has changed. I am very happy. You can see on my face: my face is shining. I have strength and power.'





Middle course

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The prophet Ezekiel speaks of the radical change made possible by the spirit of God:

'I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them; I will remove their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh, so that they may follow my statutes and keep my ordinances and obey them. Then they shall be my people, and I will be their God.'
(Ezekiel 11:19-20)

Prayer points

Pray for unity between world leaders on the need to take action for climate justice.

Pray that hearts inclined to self-interest and indifference to the suffering of others will be transformed.

Pray for whatever transformation is needed in your heart as you respond to the climate crisis.

Prayer

Our God,
we pray for transformation
of hearts and minds,
for the stones of indifference
to become hearts of compassion,
for the stones of anxiety
to become hearts of hope.
In your name we pray,
Amen.

Action

Pick up a stone.

Stones and rocks are used in Kenya to help communities store water in the dry season. As you hold the stone in your hand, consider how stones have been used to bring positive transformation.

Once you have finished praying, place your stone in the flow of the river and think of Florence and her community who are using natural gifts to transform their lives.



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Lower course

The river is now wide and carries a lot of silt and stones, particularly when in spate from much rainfall. The surrounding land can be very fertile but also prone to flooding.

The rivers of Bangladesh are laced across the country, providing much-needed silt for soil fertility, and yet the silt in it can often lead rivers to flood.

As well as rivers flooding, Bangladesh is vulnerable to tidal surges which can flood entire villages. This is happening more and more frequently as typhoons bombard the coastline.

People are defending themselves by building 'protection dams' to capture the flood water and protect their community. These dams work even better when they're combined with a large, healthy buffer of mangrove forest; plants and trees to stabilise them.

The roots of the trees hold soil together, prevent the silting of rivers and subsequent flooding, and the leaves absorb carbon dioxide.

That is why, in Bangladesh, Kenya, and many Christian Aid programmes around the world, we help people to plant trees.

'When we plant trees, we plant the seeds of peace and hope.'
(Wangari Matthai, a Kenyan climate activist.)

Kokoli catches crabs for a living in Bangladesh.



Michael Junior, four years old, holds a tree sapling outside his home in Kenya.



Lower course

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'On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. (Revelation 22:2)

This is a vision that holds many meanings, but in these days of climate injustice, it invites us to imagine 'God's kingdom is creation healed' (Hans Kung).

We know on the most practical level that the leaves of the trees are for the healing of the nations.

Points for prayer

Pray that the planting of trees would become an international priority and nature would be given space to flourish for the good of all creation.

Pray for protection for the forests of the Earth and for the end to the burning of the Amazon rainforest.

Pray for the vision of creation healed to inspire us all to do what we can to be part of that healing process.

Prayer

Creator God,
from the tree of the garden of Eden,
to the tree in the city in Revelation,
we thank you for your vision
of creation healed.

Help us to be your agents of restoration,
tending to the beauty of the Earth,
and enabling your healing of the nations.
Amen.

Action

Draw the outline of a leaf onto the tree trunk provided and write a short prayer for the healing of creation on your leaf.



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Mouth

As we reach the mouth of the river, it arrives at its destination, flowing into the fullness of lake/loch, estuary and ocean. It lays down the load it has been carrying as its energy is expended.

All around the world, young people are leading communities in the call for climate justice, to speak out and expend their energy for the restoration of creation.

Glory, 19, experienced the terror and fury of Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines. She encourages us all to get involved:

'My message for the world is that we need to be responsible. We should be concerned about protecting our surroundings because they have been created for us. We have the wisdom to know what is right and what is wrong.'

Points for prayer

Pray for courage and wisdom to lift your voice in the cause of climate justice.

Pray for young people to continue to be supported, empowered and listened to as a prophetic voice for climate justice.

Pray for Glory and all those living at the sharp edge of climate injustice to have the resources they need to prepare and be protected from the climate crisis.



Typhoon Haiyan tore through the Philippines in 2013.

Prayer

(Based on Psalm 65:5-8.)

O God of our salvation,
you are the hope of all the ends of the Earth
and of the farthest seas.

By your strength you established the
mountains,

you are girded with might.

You silence the thundering seas,

the roaring of the waves,

the tumult of the peoples.

Those who live at Earth's farthest bounds
are awed by your signs;

you make the gateways of the morning and
the evening shout for joy.

Help us to add our voice

to creation's praise and

to shout for climate justice.

Amen.



Glory and her friend Lanie have fun together in the Philippines.



Mouth

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Action

Write one idea, thought or prayer you have had in response to your experience of journeying from the source to the mouth of the river.

Final blessing

Let justice roll down like a river,
may righteousness flow like a never-ending stream
and may the joy of creation fill you anew
as you pray, act and give for
the restoration of creation
and the flourishing of all people.
In the name of the Creator, Son and Spirit,
Amen.

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