

Prayer Guide: COP23 UN Climate Change Conference

Introduction to the Prayer Guide

For the next two weeks, between November 6th and 17th, world leaders will gather in Bonn, Germany, for the 23rd Conference of the Parties (COP23) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. As these leaders continue to engage in the effort to combat global warming and the human activities that contribute to it, representatives from the United Methodist Church will be there to partner in that work and to advocate for the care of God's good creation.

This prayer guide is an invitation for you to join in the United Methodist Church's efforts. During each day of COP23, we will share a short reading that highlights the importance of tending to the world that God gave to us all. Each reading will be followed by a prayer that you're invited to lift up to God throughout the day. We hope that you will join in!

You can also follow along with everything happening at COP23 by visiting the [Conference website](#).

6 November 2017

To mark the beginning of COP23, the General Secretaries of the General Board of Global Ministries, the General Board of Church and Society, United Methodist Women, and Wespath released a new statement reiterating the Church's support of the Paris Climate Agreement and efforts to protect all of God's creation. Here is the statement in its entirety:

We understand climate justice not simply as an environmental or economic concern but rather as a deep ethical and spiritual concern that the Church must address so that abundant life is ensured for our children and future generations.

—2016 *Book of Resolutions*, #1035 Climate Change and the Church's Response

As world leaders gather for the 23rd Conference of the Parties (COP23) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, we bear witness to the urgent need for bold action to protect God's people and God's planet. With a focus on climate vulnerable nations and under the leadership of Fiji as the COP23 President, Parties should seek to strengthen their commitments to mitigation, adaptation and finance to realize the goals of the Paris Agreement.

In 2015, we called for a binding, international agreement with ambition equal to the urgency of the climate crisis. We applaud the swift ratification of the Paris Agreement and the work of those who are acting on their commitments. Since then, we have witnessed government, business and civil society boldly embracing the transition to a just and sustainable future. Yet there are some whose actions risk destabilizing this global pledge to action. We appeal to all world leaders to honor their commitments to implement the Paris Agreement.

The United Methodist Church is contributing to the orderly transition to a low-carbon and sustainable world through our investments, our disaster response and risk reduction work in climate vulnerable nations, and our advocacy supporting emissions reductions, a just transition and adaptation assistance. Our resolve to work for climate justice is rooted in our faith and informed by our presence with communities around the world experiencing extreme weather, rising sea levels, disease, hunger and forced migration. These relationships compel us to align our investments, missions, education and advocacy to build resilient communities and address the interconnected threats of climate change, disease, poverty, discrimination and violence that are likely to multiply absent immediate action.

Along with United Methodists around the world, we pray that courage, wisdom and compassion guide the upcoming negotiations to implement the Paris Agreement. We urge world leaders to listen to the voices and experiences of those most impacted by climate change and strengthen our common commitment to justice, stewardship and sustainability.

Prayer: Creator God, we pray that all those who gather from around the world for COP23 would act with courage, wisdom, and compassion, and that the voices of those who are most vulnerable to the effects of climate change would be heard and respected.

7 November 2017

Throughout the Bible, God makes clear how much God cares for the world and everything that inhabits it. Read the following passage from Psalm 104, paying attention to how the passage reminds us that God ordered the entire world so that all would have enough.

- ⁵ You set the earth on its foundations,
so that it shall never be shaken.
- ⁶ You cover it with the deep as with a garment;
the waters stood above the mountains.
- ⁷ At your rebuke they flee;
at the sound of your thunder they take to flight.
- ⁸ They rose up to the mountains, ran down to the valleys
to the place that you appointed for them.
- ⁹ You set a boundary that they may not pass,
so that they might not again cover the earth.
- ¹⁰ You make springs gush forth in the valleys;
they flow between the hills,
- ¹¹ giving drink to every wild animal;
the wild donkeys quench their thirst.
- ¹² By the streams the birds of the air have their habitation;
they sing among the branches.
- ¹³ From your lofty abode you water the mountains;
the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work.
- ¹⁴ You cause the grass to grow for the cattle,
and plants for people to use,
to bring forth food from the earth,
- ¹⁵ and wine to gladden the human heart,
oil to make the face shine,
and bread to strengthen the human heart.
- ¹⁶ The trees of the Lord are watered abundantly,
the cedars of Lebanon that he planted.
- ¹⁷ In them the birds build their nests;
the stork has its home in the fir trees.
- ¹⁸ The high mountains are for the wild goats;
the rocks are a refuge for the coney.
- ¹⁹ You have made the moon to mark the seasons;

the sun knows its time for setting.

²⁰ You make darkness, and it is night,
when all the animals of the forest come creeping out.

²¹ The young lions roar for their prey,
seeking their food from God.

²² When the sun rises, they withdraw
and lie down in their dens.

²³ People go out to their work
and to their labor until the evening.

²⁴ O Lord, how manifold are your works!
In wisdom you have made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.

²⁵ Yonder is the sea, great and wide,
creeping things innumerable are there,
living things both small and great.

²⁶ There go the ships,
and Leviathan that you formed to sport in it.

²⁷ These all look to you
to give them their food in due season;
²⁸ when you give to them, they gather it up;
when you open your hand, they are filled with good things.

²⁹ When you hide your face, they are dismayed;
when you take away their breath, they die
and return to their dust.

³⁰ When you send forth your spirit, they are created;
and you renew the face of the ground.

³¹ May the glory of the Lord endure forever;
may the Lord rejoice in his works—

³² who looks on the earth and it trembles,
who touches the mountains and they smoke.

³³ I will sing to the Lord as long as I live;
I will sing praise to my God while I have being.

Prayer: God of Abundance, may the beauty and bounty of the earth remind us of your overflowing love for us. Help us to remember that you made enough for all of us, and teach us to share freely with one another out of love for you and for our neighbors.

8 November 2017

A traditional Fijian canoe, or drua, will serve as a powerful symbol of resilience and unity during COP23. Organizers of the Conference say that the drua is “a symbol of how the whole world really is in the same canoe when it comes to climate change.” You can read more about the drua and its role at COP23 [here](#).

The drua also reminds us of the displacement and forced migration of many people groups due to the effects of climate change. The United Methodist Church is calling attention to the nearly 65 million people around the world who are currently displaced, and has set aside 3 December 2017 as [Global](#)

[Migration Sunday](#). A special webinar about migration is happening today, November the 8th, at noon EDT. You can join the webinar [here](#).

Prayer: Our Lord Jesus, today we remember that you were a migrant, displaced by the forces of violence and fear. We pray for all those today who, like you, have been displaced from their homes, particularly those forced to move because of the effects of climate change.

9 November 2017

At the 2004 General Conference of the United Methodist Church, the Council of Bishops were called to draft a new document which articulated the Church's call to work for peace and justice in the world. The resulting document, entitled *God's Renewed Creation: Call to Action and Hope*, reminds us that our faith in God must be not only proclaimed, but enacted and lived out. Read this short excerpt of the document:

We often live as though "being created in God's image" gives us special privilege, but living with that assumption is a grave mistake. Our status as human beings increases our *responsibility*, not our *privilege*. Being created in God's image means that we are charged with caring for this world, not invited to abuse it. Doing justice, building peace, and mending the planet are ways that we take care of what we have been given. However, we are not caretakers for an absentee landlord; rather, God's renewing Spirit works through us and courses around us, breathing new life into the planet and its people.

"We are now God's stewards," says Wesley. "We are indebted to God for all that we have....A steward is not at liberty to use what is lodged in his hands as he pleases, but as his master pleases....He is not the owner of these things but barely entrusted with them by another" (*Works* 2:283). The care of the earth is entrusted to us. We are the "channels of God's blessing to the other creatures and to the earth itself" (*Works* 2:440).

Prayer: Holy Spirit, move through us and out into the world. Remind us that we cannot help the world until we change our own way of being in it.

10 November 2017

The Social Principles of the United Methodist Church represent our denomination's attempt to say what we believe God is already doing in the world and what concrete steps we might take to partner with God in that good work. The document expresses the United Methodist Church's official positions on pressing social, political, economic, and environmental issues, and calls all of us engage in faithful action that helps bring about the Kingdom of God. Please read the following section of the Social Principles, which introduces the Church's approach to caring for the natural world:

All creation is the Lord's, and we are responsible for the ways in which we use and abuse it. Water, air, soil, minerals, energy resources, plants, animal life, and space are to be valued and conserved because they are God's creation and not solely because they are useful to human beings. God has granted us stewardship of creation. We should meet these stewardship duties through acts of loving care and respect. Economic, political, social, and technological developments have increased our human numbers, and lengthened and enriched our lives. However, these developments have led to regional defoliation, dramatic extinction of species, massive human suffering, overpopulation, and misuse and overconsumption of natural and nonrenewable resources, particularly by industrialized societies. This continued course of action jeopardizes the natural heritage that God has entrusted to all generations. Therefore, let us recognize the responsibility of the church and its members to place a high priority on

changes in economic, political, social, and technological lifestyles to support a more ecologically equitable and sustainable world leading to a higher quality of life for all of God's creation.

Prayer: Eternal God, give us the wisdom to care well for all the world, and the courage to act when we see violence being done to the earth and any who inhabit it.

11 November 2017

Together Toward Life is an ecumenical affirmation on mission and evangelism published by the World Council of Churches in 2013. The document articulates the global Christian church's understanding of its role in the world. Please read this short excerpt on the importance of creation care:

We affirm that the mission of God's Spirit is to renew the whole creation. "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it" (Psalm 24:1). The God of life protects, loves, and cares for nature. Humanity is not the master of earth but is responsible to care for the integrity of creation. Excessive greed and unlimited consumption which lead to continuous destruction of nature must end. God's love does not proclaim a human salvation separate from the renewal of the whole creation. We are called to participate in God's mission beyond our human-centered goals. God's mission is to all life and we have to both acknowledge it and serve it in new ways of mission. We pray for repentance and forgiveness, but we also call for action now. Mission has creation at its heart.

Prayer: Redeemer God, remind us that the promise of renewal and new life is made not only to us, your children, but also to the entirety of creation.

12 November 2017

Read the following excerpt from Wendell Berry's essay "Word and Flesh", found in his book *What Are People For?*

All public movements of thought quickly produce a language that works as a code, useless to the extent that it is abstract. It is readily evident, for example, that you can't conduct a relationship with a person in terms of the rhetoric of the civil rights movement or the women's movement – as useful as those rhetorics may initially have been to personal relationships.

The same is true of the environmental movement. The favorite adjective of this movement now seems to be "planetary." This word is used, properly enough, to refer to the interdependence of places, and to the recognition, which is desirable and growing, that no place on the earth can be completely healthy until all places are.

But the word "planetary" also refers to an abstract anxiety or an abstract passion that is desperate and useless exactly to the extent that it is abstract. How, after all, can anybody – any particular body – do anything to heal a planet? The suggestion that anybody can do so is preposterous... What we need, obviously, is a more intelligent – which is to say, a more accurate – description of the problem. The description of a problem as planetary arouses a motivation for which, of necessity, there is no employment. The adjective "planetary" describes a problem in such a way that it cannot be solved...

There are also no national, state, or county problems, and no national, state, or county solutions. That will-o'-the-wisp, the large-scale solution to the large-scale problem, which is so dear to governments, universities, and corporations, serves mostly to distract people from the small, private problems that they may, in fact, have the power to solve.

The problems, if we describe them accurately, are all private and small. Or they are so initially.

The problems are our lives. In the “developed” countries, at least, the large problems occur because all of us are living either partly wrong or entirely wrong. It was not just the greed of corporate shareholders and the hubris of corporate executives that put the fate of Prince William Sound into one ship; it was also our demand that energy be cheap and plentiful...

What can accomplish this reduction? I will say again, without overweening hope but with certainty nonetheless, that only love can do it. Only love can bring intelligence out of the institutions and organizations, where it aggrandizes itself, into the presence of the work that must be done.

Love is never abstract. It does not adhere to the universe or the planet or the nation or the institution or the profession, but to the singular sparrows of the street, the lilies of the field, “the least of these my brethren.” Love is not, by its own desire, heroic. It is heroic only when compelled to be. It exists only by its willingness to be anonymous, humble, and unrewarded.

Prayer: Gracious God, help us each day to live simply, taking small but deliberate steps to preserve the earth’s resources.

13 November 2017

Just before the start of COP23, a group of faith-based organizations from Fiji (the nation which holds the Presidency for the Conference) issued a call for world leaders to redouble their efforts to combat the effects of climate change. Read the Multi-Faith Charter [here](#).

Prayer: Life-giving God, remind us not only of our responsibility, but also our ability to protect the planet. Help us to recommit to this good work which you have entrusted to us.

14 November 2017

Scripture reminds us that all the earth is a gift from God, who tends to it in the same way that a farmer nurtures her fields. Read the following passage from Psalm 65, paying attention to how God delights in the flourishing of creation:

To the leader. A Psalm of David. A Song.

¹ Praise is due to you,

O God, in Zion;

and to you shall vows be performed,

² O you who answer prayer!

To you all flesh shall come.

³ When deeds of iniquity overwhelm us,
you forgive our transgressions.

⁴ Happy are those whom you choose and bring near
to live in your courts.

We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house,
your holy temple.

⁵ By awesome deeds you answer us with deliverance,
O God of our salvation;

you are the hope of all the ends of the earth
and of the farthest seas.

⁶ By your strength you established the mountains;
you are girded with might.

⁷ You silence the roaring of the seas,
the roaring of their waves,
the tumult of the peoples.

⁸ 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.

⁹ You visit the earth and water it,
you greatly enrich it;
the river of God is full of water;
you provide the people with grain,
for so you have prepared it.

¹⁰ You water its furrows abundantly,
settling its ridges,
softening it with showers,
and blessing its growth.

¹¹ You crown the year with your bounty;
your wagon tracks overflow with richness.

¹² The pastures of the wilderness overflow,
the hills gird themselves with joy,

¹³ the meadows clothe themselves with flocks,
the valleys deck themselves with grain,
they shout and sing together for joy.

Prayer: God of Joy, may we delight in the goodness and beauty of your creation.

15 November 2017

Read the following excerpt from the 2016 Book of Resolutions, #1033:

John Wesley taught a holistic view of salvation that included the deliverance of the created world in the creation of a new heaven and a new earth.

In the sermon "The New Creation" (#64) Wesley speaks imaginatively about what the new heavens and the new earth will be like, imagining into the scriptural promises of an end to death and suffering (Revelation 21:1-7), and an end to present environmental catastrophes like storms, polluted water, and animal suffering. This is all part of the promise of God's "greater deliverance" from sin. "And, to crown all, there will be a deep, an intimate, an uninterrupted union with God; a constant communion with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, through the Spirit; a continual enjoyment of the Three—One God, and of all the creatures in him!"

Early Methodists worked toward this hoped-for view by addressing environmental concerns, such as open sewers, impure water, unplanned cities, and smoke-filled air. In response to squalor and filth in the mines and mills, Methodists advocated for a wider knowledge of concepts of basic health. The substantial decline in the death rate in England from 1700 to 1801 can be traced to this work.

Wesley's eschatological vision for the deliverance of all creation led him to respect and care for the created world here and now. "They may encourage us to imitate him whose mercy is over all of his works. They may soften our hearts towards the meaner creatures, knowing that the Lord cares for them. It may enlarge our hearts towards those poor creatures to reflect that, as vile as they appear in our eyes, not one of them is forgotten in the sight of our Father which is in heaven... . Yea, let us habituate ourselves to look forward, beyond this present scene of bondage, to the happy time when they will be delivered therefrom into the liberty of the children of God" (Sermon 60, The Great Deliverance).

Prayer: God of our Ancestors, remind us of the saints who went before us protecting the earth, and let us be encouraged to follow their example on behalf of future generations.

16 November 2017

In June 2015, Pope Francis released his second encyclical, *Laudato si: On Care for Our Common Home*. Please read the following excerpt, particularly noting Pope Francis's emphasis on the importance of hearing every voice, including those on the margins:

13. The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change. The Creator does not abandon us; he never forsakes his loving plan or repents of having created us. Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home. Here I want to recognize, encourage and thank all those striving in countless ways to guarantee the protection of the home which we share. Particular appreciation is owed to those who tirelessly seek to resolve the tragic effects of environmental degradation on the lives of the world's poorest. Young people demand change. They wonder how anyone can claim to be building a better future without thinking of the environmental crisis and the sufferings of the excluded.

14. I urgently appeal, then, for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all. The worldwide ecological movement has already made considerable progress and led to the establishment of numerous organizations committed to raising awareness of these challenges. Regrettably, many efforts to seek concrete solutions to the environmental crisis have proved ineffective, not only because of powerful opposition but also because of a more general lack of interest. Obstructionist attitudes, even on the part of believers, can range from denial of the problem to indifference, nonchalant resignation or blind confidence in technical solutions. We require a new and universal solidarity. As the bishops of Southern Africa have stated: "Everyone's talents and involvement are needed to redress the damage caused by human abuse of God's creation". All of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements and talents.

Prayer: Gracious God, help us discover new ways of working with and alongside one another to care for your creation.

17 November 2017

On this final day of COP23, hear the promise God gives us in Revelation 21, where heaven and earth will be brought together and God will make a home with us:

¹ Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ²And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from

God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'See, the home of God is among mortals.

He will dwell with them;

they will be his peoples,

and God himself will be with them;

⁴ he will wipe every tear from their eyes.

Death will be no more;

mourning and crying and pain will be no more,

for the first things have passed away.'

⁵ And the one who was seated on the throne said, 'See, I am making all things new.' Also he said, 'Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.' ⁶Then he said to me, 'It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life. ⁷Those who conquer will inherit these things, and I will be their God and they will be my children.

Prayer: God of eternity, we put our trust in you, believing that you will make all things new.