

The Diocese of Newcastle in the Church of England

Praying for the Earth

**Remembering the environment
in our public and private
prayers of intercession**

“If human beings are the ‘priesthood of creation,’ then we have a duty to pray for the whole earth, not just our fellow human beings. But prayers for the environment are often missing from the intercessions in church on a Sunday morning, perhaps because we struggle to find the right words. The use of this booklet should help us to include environmental concerns in our corporate and personal prayers. I commend it to churches throughout the diocese.”

The Rt Revd Martin Wharton, Bishop of Newcastle

What is this, and where does it come from?

This booklet is intended as a supplement to published books of intercession, which sometimes contain special forms of intercession on an environmental theme, but rarely integrate environmental concerns into all forms of intercession.

It has been produced by the Advisory Group on the Environment in the Newcastle Diocese of the Church of England, in the belief that environmental concerns should be an integral part of the public and private prayers of all Christian people.

The prayers are specifically intended to 'fit in' with the forms of intercession used in church on a Sunday morning. There are prayers on a different theme for each day of the week, and for each day of the month. The prayers can be used as they stand or as a source of inspiration.

More copies may be obtained from the Revd Dr Rob Kelsey, Eglington Vicarage, Alnwick, Northumberland, NE66 2TX, Email Robert@josephkelsey.fsnet.co.uk.

We plan to produce a new edition of the prayer booklet from time to time, taking into account both changes in the environmental scene and suggestions for improvements. Please send suggestions to Rob Kelsey.

*Rob Kelsey, on behalf of
the Advisory Group on the Environment
January 2008*

Why should we pray for the earth?

We pray for the earth:

- in acknowledgement of God's love for all creation.
- because we pray for what we care about, and care about what we pray for.
- because humanity is the 'priesthood' of creation, giving voice to the ceaseless praise that the whole creation offers to its Creator.
- because we need to learn a less self-centred language, in order to re-discover our place within and dependence on the whole of creation.
- in response to an acute environmental crisis affecting all life on earth.

How should we pray for the earth?

This booklet may be used in a variety of ways:

- By those who lead the intercessions of the Church
- By groups of Christians whenever they pray together
- By individual Christians in their personal prayers

- As a weekly cycle (see page 5)
- As a monthly cycle (see page 9)

- As a supplement to other forms of intercession (see the examples on pages 17 and 18)
- As a source of set prayers on particular subjects (see the subject heading for each prayer)
- As a starting point for praying in one's own words

A weekly cycle of prayers for the earth

Day 1. (Sunday) Light and power

God said, ‘Let there be light. ... Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to ... be for signs and for seasons.’ (Genesis 1.3, 14)

We thank you for brother sun, sister moon and the stars. We give thanks for the rhythm of the days, months and years. Help us to value both light and darkness. Grant us wisdom in the use of energy supplies, and inspiration in the development of renewable resources. [We pray for ...]

Alternative prayers: No.s 1, 8, 15, 22 from the monthly cycle.

Day 2. (Monday) Air and climate

God said, ‘Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters.’ ... God called the dome Sky. (Genesis 1.6, 8)

We thank you for the air that we breathe and for the ever-changing skies. We give thanks for the rhythm of the seasons, for the warmth of the summer sun and the sharpness of the winter frost. Help us to feel the freshness of the breeze upon our faces and to discern the rainbow of hope that you give us. [We pray for ...]

Alternative prayers: No.s 2, 9, 16, 23 from the monthly cycle.

Day 3. (Tuesday) Water

God said, 'Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place.' (Genesis 1.9)

We thank you for the life-giving waters of the earth. We give thanks for the rains that bring refreshment to the dry land and succour to living things. Help us to see your peace in the still waters, your power in the flood and the crashing wave, your joy in the babbling brook, and your timeless presence in the cascading waters. [We pray for ...]

Alternative prayers: No.s 3, 10, 17 from the monthly cycle.

Day 4. (Wednesday) Land and vegetation

God said, 'Let the dry land appear. ... Let the earth put forth vegetation.' (Genesis 1.9, 11)

We give unbounded thanks for the land which sustains us, in all its variety and complexity. We thank you for high mountains and deep valleys, for fertile plains and desert places, for tropical forests and meadow grasslands. Help us to value the soil of which we are part, and to be good caretakers of the land on which we all depend. [We pray for ...]

Alternative prayers: No.s 4, 11, 18, 25 from the monthly cycle.

Day 5. (Thursday) Sea, air and land creatures

God said, 'Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth. ... Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind.' (Genesis 1.20, 24)

We thank you for the integrity and diversity of all living creatures. Enlarge within us a sense of fellowship with our brothers and sisters, the animals, with whom we share the earth and who love the sweetness of life. Grant us compassion in our dealings with all creatures great and small. [We pray for ...]

Alternative prayers: No.s 5, 12, 19, 26 from the monthly cycle.

Day 6. (Friday) Human beings and the environment

God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image.' (Genesis 1.26)

We thank you for creating humankind according to your likeness. Help us, like you, to see the goodness of creation. Help us to remember that we are part of a greater whole, and that we have a duty to care for the earth, not just for ourselves. Help us to live in balance rather than conflict, to treat the material world with care and gentleness, and to conserve and nurture the things around us. [We pray for ...]

Alternative prayers: No.s 6, 13, 20, 27, 29-31 from the monthly cycle.

Day 7. (Saturday) The need for restraint

God ... rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. (Genesis 2.2)

We thank you for the gift of sabbath rest amid the busyness of our lives. May we have time to stand and stare, to reflect on the beauty of the created world, and to appreciate the many blessings of this life. Help us to be satisfied with enough, and to live within our means in relation to the earth. [We pray for ...]

Alternative prayers: No.s 7, 14, 21, 28 from the monthly cycle.

A monthly cycle of prayers for the earth

1. Times and seasons

We thank you for the rhythm of times and seasons. Make us more aware of our changing environment, in our parks and gardens, in the countryside and by the sea. Help us to appreciate all that is special about the present time of year, and to live our lives in keeping with the natural order. [We pray in particular for ...]

2. Climate change

Help us to respond with wisdom and foresight to the threat of climate change. We pray for those affected by rising sea levels and extreme weather conditions. Help us, in reducing our own carbon footprint, to play our part in reducing this country's carbon emissions. Grant us the personal and political will to make a difference. [We pray in particular for ...]

3. The oceans

In the beginning your Spirit swept over the face of the waters, and the oceans of the world proclaim your majesty and glory. May the expanse of the seas and the fury of the waves speak to us of your creative power. In your mercy protect all who work and travel on the sea, and preserve the teeming life of coral reef and ocean depth. [We pray in particular for ...]

4. Landscape and soil

We thank you for all that is beautiful in the landscapes that surround us. As the environment forms us, so help us to form an environment that is beneficial to others. We thank you for the soil beneath our feet. As the soil supports and nurtures us, so help us to nourish the soil for the good of all living things. [We pray in particular for ...]

5. Sea creatures and all that live in the waters

We give thanks for the diversity of life in the seas and rivers of the world, for the grandeur of whales, the beauty of fish and the intricacy of coral reefs. Bless those who make their living from the sea, and help us to strike a wise balance between fishing for food and preserving the integrity of the marine environment. [We pray in particular for ...]

6. Farms and farmers

We pray for all who make their living from the land. Help them to contend with the vagaries of the weather and with the variability of the economic climate. Defend them from the threat of disease, and help them to protect the animals in their care. We ask for your blessing on farm shops and farmers' markets, and on all who buy and sell food locally. [We pray in particular for ...]

7. Reduction, re-use and recycling

We thank you for the resources of the world, and for the many goods available to us. Grant us wisdom and restraint in our spending and consumption; grant us inspiration in the re-use and recycling of resources. Bless those who work in the recycling industry, and those who work in charity shops. [We pray in particular for ...]

8. Nuclear power

We pray for wisdom in our response to the apparent promise of nuclear power. Help us to weigh up the benefits and dangers, the security of supply and the problem of waste. Bless those who work in the nuclear industry and those involved in the transport of nuclear material. Bless those who seek renewable alternatives to the use of either fossil or nuclear fuels. [We pray in particular for ...]

9. Weather patterns

We give thanks for the weather in its infinite variety. We thank you for the rain and snow, the winds that blow across the face of the earth and the warmth of the sun upon our faces. As we read the signs of the ever-changing weather, help us also to understand the signs of the times in which we live. [We pray in particular for ...]

10. Lakes, rivers and streams

We thank you for the precious waters of the earth, from the mirror stillness of a lake to the turbulence of a mighty flood, from their crystal clarity to their murky depths. Help us to remember that water is the essence of life itself and that, through the waters of baptism, we rise to new life in union with Christ. [We pray in particular for ...]

11. Trees and plants

We have heard that the leaves of the trees are for the healing of the nations. Draw us ever closer in heart and mind to the trees and plants around us. Inspire us with their beauty, and instruct us in their power to heal the broken bodies, minds and spirits of a fallen humanity. Teach us to protect the trees and plants of the earth, that we might thereby protect ourselves. [We pray in particular for ...]

12. Birds and insects

Help us to find joy in the glorious songs of birds and the immense variety of insects. We praise you for their ability to fly above the earth. We give thanks for the part they play in the spreading of seeds and the fertilization of flowers. [We pray in particular for ...]

13. The built environment

We pray for your blessing on the environment of our own making, for town and countryside, buildings and fields. We give thanks for the ingenuity and artistry of engineers and architects. We give thanks for those who maintain the fabric of our green and pleasant land. [We pray in particular for ...]

14. Sustainable development

We give thanks for all the blessings of this life, and remember those less fortunate than ourselves. Help us, who have more than enough, to live more simply, that others may simply live. As we borrow the earth from our children, may we not take more than we can return. [We pray in particular for ...]

15. Light pollution

We thank you for the lights of the natural world and for the lights of human ingenuity. Help us to appreciate the variety of light and the value of darkness. Grant us wisdom in the use of light, so as not to pollute the awesome beauty of the night sky. May we continue to see the stars, and wonder at our place in the vastness of the universe. [We pray in particular for ...]

16. Air pollution

We give thanks that life depends upon the air that we breathe. Help us to see the atmosphere as a precious resource, and forgive us when we use it as a dumping ground. As the wind blows where it wills, grant all nations wisdom in dealing with the effects of air pollution, for the health and well-being of all your creatures. [We pray in particular for ...]

17. Water pollution

We give thanks for the sustaining power of the waters of the earth. Forgive us when we are wasteful and take clean water for granted. Forgive us when we are careless and contaminate the waters of life. [We pray in particular for ...]

18. The rainforests

In the rainforests of the earth you reveal the diversity of your creation. Help us, in wonder, to care for your forests, and in so doing to protect and strengthen the lungs of the earth. Bless native peoples and forest dwellers, and help us with them to learn the lesson of our shared belonging and interdependence. [We pray in particular for ...]

19. Animals

We give thanks for your promise of salvation, to us and to every living creature. We praise you for the animals of the earth and for all domestic animals. We ask for your blessing on the animals in our care, giving thanks for their simplicity and companionship. Forgive us when we are careless and forgetful of your creatures. [We pray in particular for ...]

20. Globalization and fair trade

We pray for guidance in the global economy. We give thanks for the diversity of foods and the range of products available to us, and remember those who produce the goods which we enjoy. Help us to support the principles of fair trade, and to practise it in our daily lives. [We pray in particular for ...]

21. Waste production and litter

We give thanks for the material things of life. Help us to use them wisely, and to dispose of them thoughtfully. In business and as individuals, help us to reduce what we waste, and to remember that, as the earth is our only home, nothing is altogether thrown away. [We pray in particular for ...]

22. Renewable energy

We give thanks for the power of the sun above us, for the warmth of the ground beneath us, for the freedom of the wind around us, for the strength of waves and the rhythm of tides. We pray for ingenuity and inspiration in the research and development of renewable energy. [We pray in particular for ...]

23. Wind energy

The Holy Spirit, like the wind, sweeps over the face of the earth, giving life to the world. We pray for those who seek to harness the power of the wind, and for those concerned about the siting of wind turbines. Grant wisdom and integrity to the people responsible for forming opinions and making decisions. [We pray in particular for ...]

24. Drinking water

We offer thankful hearts for easy access to safe drinking water, sufficient to meet our needs. We remember those who lack clean water supplies, and those who walk for miles to fetch water for their families. Bless the work of Water Aid and all those who seek to make a difference. [We pray in particular for ...]

25. Biofuels

Teach us wisdom in our use of the earth's resources. Grant us inspiration in our search for alternatives to fossil fuels. Give guidance to those involved in the development of biofuels. Help us to find the right balance between the need for food and the need for fuel. [We pray in particular for ...]

26. Biodiversity

Through the process of evolution you have created a rich diversity of life on earth. Help us to recognize and appreciate the intricacy and variety of life in all its fullness. Bless all teachers and scientists as they reveal to others, young and old alike, the wonders of creation. [We pray in particular for ...]

27. Organic farming

We thank you for the gifts of the land, and pray your blessing upon the farmers who make those gifts available to us. We give thanks for those who respect the earth and seek to maintain its natural balance. We pray for a healthy market for those who produce organic food. [We pray in particular for ...]

28. Genetic modification

From the beginning you have created plants and creatures of every kind. Help us, who have dominion over every living thing, to respect the integrity of each and every species. Enlighten the debate about genetic modification. May we be blinded neither by science nor prejudice. [We pray in particular for ...]

29. Natural disasters

Help us to understand the powers at work in your creation, in the storm and flood, in the earthquake and landslide, in the snow and ice. Grant us wisdom in choosing where to live and work, to build houses and grow crops. Help us to support our neighbours around the world when natural disasters devastate their lives. [We pray in particular for ...]

30. Transport and food miles

We give thanks for the ability to travel widely, in this country and around the world. We give thanks for the rich variety of food available to us, at all times and from all places. Help us to discern the true cost of transport, to travel thoughtfully and to buy locally. [We pray in particular for ...]

31. Tourism

You have granted us the opportunity to explore your world as never before. In our travels, give us peace of mind and relief from stress. Open our eyes to the beauty of the earth, so that our spirits may be renewed by your Spirit. In all our journeying help us to tread lightly, so as to avoid the harsh imprint of humanity upon a fragile ecology. [We pray in particular for ...]

Using this booklet as a supplement to other forms of intercession

Most forms of intercession are divided into paragraphs on particular themes. A typical example may be found on page 281 of *Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England*, in which the themes follow this pattern:

The Church in all the world
The nations of the world
The local community
People in need
Those who have died

Prayers for the earth may be used within this pattern, as shown in Options 1 and 2 below. Other options may be derived as appropriate.

Option 1

The following paragraph could be inserted either before or after the paragraph on the Church in all the world.

Bidding

We pray for the good earth of which we are part.

Specific prayers

[Taken from one of the prayer cycles in this booklet, adapted as necessary or as desired by the person leading the intercessions.]

'Summing-up' prayer

Bless the earth and its creatures. Give us the wisdom and the will to use the resources of the earth to your glory, and for the good of all creation.

Petition and response

[As for each of the other paragraphs.]

Option 2

The paragraph from Option 1 could be combined with the paragraph on the nations of the world.

Bidding

We pray for the earth and for the nations of the world.

Specific prayers

[Taken from one of the prayer cycles in this booklet, adapted as necessary or as desired by the person leading the intercessions.]

'Summing-up' prayer

Bless and guide *Elizabeth our Queen*; give wisdom to all in authority; and direct this and every nation in the ways of justice, peace and the care of creation; that we may honour one another, and seek the good of all that you have made.

Petition and response

[As for each of the other paragraphs.]

The choice of specific prayers

The specific prayers could be chosen:

- with a particular subject in mind, from either the weekly or monthly cycle.
- according to the day of the month, from the monthly cycle. For a weekly service, this would ensure a variety of subject matter from week to week.