

Thought for the Day: 25-31 October 2021 by Andrew Goodman

Monday 25th October



Sunday 31st October 2021 marks the start of the two-week-long UN Climate Change Conference COP26, which is being held in Glasgow. (It was postponed from 2020 because of the Covid-19 pandemic.) Each Thought for the Day this week will focus on something to look out for at COP26. We will “stand at the crossroads and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way lies,” and look for agreement that we will “walk in it,” as Jeremiah urged the people of God 2,600 years ago (Jeremiah 6:16 NRSVA).

Why COP26 matters

“Your wrongdoing has upset nature’s order and your sins have kept away her bounty.”

(Based on Jeremiah 5:25)

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report released in August gave the starkest warning yet that we are facing a climate emergency and are on course for catastrophic global temperature rises that put our world of wonders at risk, with impacts accelerating. COP26 will be the first time that countries have to set out concrete* plans for reaching emission reduction targets set at the COP21 summit held in Paris in December 2015.

In 2003, John Bell of the Iona Community wrote:

"[Jeremiah's] prophecy has hardly begun when he begins to identify a serious disruption in society. He points out that the failure to respect God as the Maker of the world, the bountiful giver of the created order, the failure to value the limits that God has put on the land and the sea, and the failure to be grateful for the fixed seasons of the year all contribute to a denial of respect for the earth and a senseless exploitation, which in turn leads to the earth's being unable to provide for humanity."

(‘Hard Words for Interesting Times’ Wild Goose Publications 2003)

Watch and pray that climate-related disasters will be so deeply felt by global leaders and negotiators as to translate into action.

* Ironically, after transport and energy generation, the production and use of concrete has one of the highest environmental impacts of any human activity. Concrete plans to use less concrete are required.

Tuesday 26th October



A matter of life and death

"But your eyes and heart are only on your dishonest gain, for shedding innocent blood, and for practising oppression and violence."

(Jeremiah 22:17 NRSVA)

We live in a world that has become increasingly unsafe and threatening. We are well aware of illness and death, social disruption and personal loss brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic. This has come on top of the threat to life globally from extreme weather events, unprecedented wildfires, the worst flooding events on record and record-breaking heatwaves.

Furthermore, there is a group of people whose lives and safety are particularly at risk. During the last few years there has been a marked increase in the number of environmental activists killed throughout the world, people working in the defence of land and environmental rights, and the rights of indigenous peoples. In particular, of the 331 murders registered globally in 2020, 177 were in Colombia (53% of the total).

Watch and pray for:

- * those representing and advocating for persecuted campaigners;
- * a change in attitude and respect from perpetrators;
- * Governments to show care and ensure protection; and
- * corporate interests to respect communities, the environment and activists.

Wednesday 27th October



Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)

*"Stand at the crossroads and look,
and ask for the ancient paths,
where the good way lies and walk in it"*
(Jeremiah 6:16 NRSVA)

Mitigation is the reduction of carbon in the atmosphere both by emissions reductions and carbon sinks (the way carbon can be stored).

Under the Paris Agreement, nations agree to keep the increase in global average temperature well below 2°C and pursue efforts to limit the increase to 1.5°C. Each country is supposed to bring its proposed emission reduction target, the NDC, to the table. These NDCs are to be re-evaluated and submitted every five years and are to be more ambitious every time.

How does the NDC work and why does it matter?

It's what a country plans to do next, rather than in the distant future. The earlier we can cut emissions, the less drastic will be the emissions cut later on; or the less nightmarish will be the climate response. The NDC says what a country is going to do near term - i.e. how they intend to cut rapidly and soon.

The nations are supposed to submit their second, and supposedly more ambitious, NDCs at COP26, hence its importance. As of now, some very important countries have not yet submitted their up-to-date NDCs.

Watch and pray that:

- * the aggregate NDCs will match what the science says about a 1.5°C warming - emissions to be cut in half by 2030 and carbon neutrality by 2050; and
- * Brazil, Australia, China and Russia would show leadership in moving away from fossil fuels.

Thursday 28th October



Loss and damage

".....they have grown fat and sleek. They know no limits in deeds of wickedness; they do not judge with justice the cause of the orphan, to make it prosper, and they do not defend the rights of the needy." (Jeremiah 5:28 NRSVA)

Climate change isn't just a future threat. It's already destroying homes, land and livelihoods around the world. We need to rapidly cut emissions to zero and put money into adapting to global climate impacts. However, there are some impacts to which no one can adapt, which are known as 'loss and damage'. They include slow-onset events like sea level rises, as well as sudden-onset events such as climate disasters e.g. cyclones. Loss and damage also includes 'non-economic losses' such as biodiversity, sacred lands, cultural monuments or local traditions.

Adaptation is severely underfunded, and greater investment in both adaptation and mitigation is vital to help minimise future loss and damage. However, since loss and damage is a present reality and will continue to escalate for some time to come, it is imperative to establish a separate fund to pay for the costs of loss and damage.

In the throes of a global pandemic and ahead of hosting COP26, the UK Government has slashed overseas aid by almost 30% from £14bn in 2020 to £10bn in 2021 (from 0.7% of gross national income (GNI) to 0.5% of GNI).

The Bible does not define our neighbour by geography. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus urges us to help out whoever is in need (Luke 10:2-27). Slashing the UK's foreign aid budget means turning our back on our global neighbours who need our support more than ever.

Watch and pray for NGO's such as [Tearfund](#) who will be advocating for the world's most vulnerable people and supporting them as they lift themselves out of poverty.

Friday 29th October



Young people

*"Blessed are those who trust in the Lord,
whose trust is the Lord.*

*They shall be like a tree planted by water,
sending out its roots by the stream.*

*It shall not fear when heat comes,
and its leaves shall stay green;*

*in the year of drought it is not anxious,
and it does not cease to bear fruit."*

(Jeremiah 17:7-8 NRSVA)

New research led by Bath University has revealed the depth of eco-anxiety and depression among young people. Key findings include: 75% of those questioned say that

they thought the future was frightening; over half (56%) of those surveyed thought that humanity was doomed largely due to governments failing to respond adequately to the threat of climate change, with two-thirds reported as feeling sadness, fear, anger, powerlessness, despair and grief.

Other findings reveal that chronic stress over worsening severe weather events is increasing the risk of mental and physical problems in young people. The fear for their own family's security and anxiety is affecting their ability to sleep, study, eat or play. Eco-anxiety has arisen not just from environmental destruction alone, but is inextricably linked to government inaction on climate change. The survey reports that young people feel betrayed, ignored and abandoned by politicians and adults despite the availability of solutions to climate change.

Jeremiah's call and commission came when he was "only a boy" (see Jeremiah 1:4-end), but God knew that he could speak without fear, and that national and religious leaders would not prevail against him.

Watch and pray for young people, especially those from the Young Christian Climate Network who:

- * will be connecting with climate justice, taking and facilitating action motivated by faith, and seeking to grow in passion and understanding; and
- * need resilience as they live through the climate crisis, courage to speak up and challenge those in power, and to know the peace of God with them as they pursue justice.

Saturday 30th October



Truth matters

*"How long must the country lie parched,
and its green grass wither?
No birds and beasts are left
because its people are wicked,
because they say,
'God does not see what we are doing.'"
(based on Jeremiah 12:4)*

Just as cigarette manufacturers concealed research on the harm caused by smoking, the fossil-fuel industry has been aware of the damage caused by burning fossil fuels for decades and has sought to undermine those raising it as a concern. Building material manufacturers falsified combustion test results before their products were used to

clad tall buildings such as the Grenfell Tower. The MP who raised the question of government ministers lying to Parliament was sanctioned, rather than the MPs who told the lies. Politicians around the world frequently now have to have their pronouncements 'fact-checked', such is their assault on truth.

In 1985, Canadian songwriter Bruce Cockburn wrote:

"You've got anti-matter language
Contrived to conceal
You've been lying so long
You don't know what's real
You're a figment of your own imagination
And people see through you"

('People see through you' * - on 'World of Wonders'; True North Records; 1986)

Watch and pray that greenwashing detector antennae are well-tuned over the next two weeks.

* Originally aimed straight at Ronald Reagan, the complete song is well worth a listen.

Sunday 31st October



Sacrifice

*"God proves to be good to the man who passionately waits,
to the woman who diligently seeks.
It's a good thing to quietly hope,
quietly hope for help from God.
It's a good thing when you're young*

*to stick it out through hard times.
When life is heavy and hard to take,
go off by yourself. Enter the silence.
Bow in prayer. Don't ask questions:
Wait for hope to appear.
Don't run from trouble. Take it full-face.
The 'worst' is never the worst."*

(Jeremiah's words in Lamentations 3:25-30, according to The Message)

The Commission of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York on Housing, Church and Community published their report 'Coming Home - Tackling the housing crisis together' in February 2021. It noted that:

"In Christian faith, resurrection and salvation only come after, and not without, the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross... Lasting change does not come without sacrifice - the sacrifice of privilege, of power, and of potential profit." (p.33)

The need for sacrifice identified in the report to solve the housing crisis could equally be applied to solving the climate crisis. And the same question arises:

"... are we content to allow the pain to continue to be borne largely by those who have little voice and power... or whether all parties involved... should bear their share of sacrifice to ensure a better future for all. Loving our neighbours demands nothing less." (p.33)

Watch and pray for (admittedly difficult) decisions and actions that demonstrate love for our neighbours.

*Holy God,
earth and air and water are your creation,
and every living thing belongs to you:
have mercy on us
as climate change confronts us.*

*Give us the will and the courage
to simplify the way we live,
to reduce the energy we use,
to share the resources you provide,
and to bear the cost of change.*

*Forgive our past mistakes
and send us your Spirit,
with wisdom in present controversies
and vision for the future to which you call us.*

In Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen

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(Source:

<https://acen.anglicancommunion.org/media/61486/Climate-Change-prayer.pdf>)