**Climate Intercessors**

**Group Prayer (April 9, 2024)**

**[Slide 1]**

**1. Welcome, Introduction, and Liturgy (15 min)**

* Note: be profuse in your welcome.
* Ground rules: stay muted until you are ready to pray; we will have an opportunity for you to type local and personal prayer requests in the chat; we’ll be praying together for these in break-out rooms later;

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* Type in your location: city, state, region, or nation.  How can we pray for YOUR local situation?  (and/or)
* What else is on your “climate change heart” this month?  Type in one prayer request.

**[Slide 3]**

Here’s a couple announcements to repeat from last month. Tobias Adam is a seminary student in Zurich, Switzerland. For his thesis, Tobias is researching prayer and climate change. He would like to interview some of us about our experience of praying about climate change. If you would be willing to volunteer and help him out, please type your full name and your e-mail address into the chat line now, and Tobias will get back in touch with you. He has offered to keep his interviews anonymous, if you prefer. He’s also offered to share his research results with us when he’s done, which is exciting.

**[Slide 4]**

And here is a reminder about what we call “Scripts”—the written content of our prayer meetings. We know some of you have been asking about this for a couple years, but we are going to start posting the scripts on the website. If you want to revisit some content, use the liturgy again, or track down some links, they will all be in the scripts and we’ll make sure they are posted by the end of the day of our prayer meetings. Sorry, we won’t be posting the slides. And we do want to avoid the recording of our meetings, including by AI transcribing services, please—especially the prayers that people are praying publicly and vulnerably.

**[Slide 5]**

Our liturgy this month is provided this week by Anna Whitehouse who found this prayer of confession with the Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness. This photo is of the Drakensberg mountain range near Pietermaritzburg.

For our unwillingness to feel the suffering of others,

and our readiness to live comfortably with injustice.

**Forgive us, O God.**

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For our self-righteousness that denies guilt,

and our self-interest that strangles compassion.

**Forgive us, O God.**

**[Slide 7]**

For our abuse of this planet

and our exploitation of its resources.

**Forgive us, O God.**

**[Slide 8]**

For our failings in community

and our reticence to become involved.

**Forgive us, O God.**

**[Slide 9]**

For the times we were too eager to be better than others,

when we were too rushed to care,

when we were too tired to bother,

when we were too preoccupied to listen,

when we were too quick to act out of motives other than love.

**Forgive us, O God.**

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**May God forgive us, Christ renew us,**

**and the Spirit enable us to grow in love. Amen.**

**[Slide 11] Headline Prayers (15 minutes):**

**Drought in Afghanistan (and other hidden regions)**

Sometimes climate impacts hit countries which don’t get the attention of the world, but other times there are regions in those obscure countries which seem doubly hidden. For example, when we think about the country of Afghanistan we might hear about Kabul or Kandahar, or might hear about the Taliban or the war. Last month, the New York Times however ran a story entitled “Barren Fields and Empty Stomachs:: Afghanistan’s Long, Punishing Drought” that focused on southwestern Afghanistan right on the Iranian border. The stories of the drought there are heartbreaking.

The region used to grow wheat, cantaloupe, and livestock. But now with no rain and dried-up wells, whole villages are empty as people have had to flee to the cities or across the border into Iran. Some people however are too poor to move. Here is a portion of the article:

“Rahmatullah Anwari, 30, who used to grow rain-dependent wheat, left his home in Badghis Province in the country’s north for an encampment that has sprung up on the outskirts of Herat, the capital of an adjacent province. He borrowed money to feed his family of eight and to pay for his father’s medical treatment. One of the villagers who had lent him money demanded his 8-year-old daughter in exchange for part of the loan.

“I have a hole in my heart when I think of them coming and taking my daughter,” he said.

Mohammed Khan Musazai, 40, had bought cattle on loan, but they were swept away in a flood — when rain comes, it comes erratically, and it has caused catastrophic flooding. The lenders took his land and also wanted his daughter, who was just 4 at the time.

Nazdana, a 25-year-old who is one of his two wives and is the girl’s mother, offered to sell her own kidney instead — an illegal practice that has become so common that some have taken to referring to the Herat encampment as the “one-kidney village.”

She has a fresh scar on her stomach from the kidney extraction, but the family’s debt is still only half paid. “They asked me for this daughter, and I’m not going to give her,” she said. “My daughter is still very young. She still has a lot of hopes and dreams that she should realize.”

<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/03/19/world/asia/afghanistan-drought-photos-climate-change.html>

As we pray for Southwestern Afghanistan, let’s also remember other obscure regions. For instance, let’s also pray for Zimbabwe. Last week on Wednesday, Zimbabwe declared a state of disaster over a drought, exacerbated by the El Nino weather effect, that has cut grain production by over 50 percent. Eighty percent of the population live in rural areas, dependent on subsistence agriculture not only for their own nourishment but also for the extra cash to pay for school fees, etc. Zimbabwe is one of the most food insecure regions in the world now.

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/zimbabwe-el-nino-africa-drought-disaster-humanitarian-aid-rcna146347>

Now from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe—from A to Z—let’s pray for the obscure regions of the world suffering from climate impacts.

**[Slide 12] New Carbon Tax in Canada**

**(and response to any climate legislation)**

As of April 1, a federal carbon tax in Canada that applies in nine provinces and two territories rose from $65 a tonne to $80 a tonne. The fuel charge is added to the price of more than 20 different fuel sources that produce greenhouse gas emissions when burned for energy, including gasoline, propane, diesel and natural gas. As a levy passed on to consumers, for example: someone who fills up a 50 litre tank from empty will paying $8.80 in carbon price, about $1.65 more than before.

But consumers, of course, are never fond of price increases. The funny thing in Canada is that the government’s plan also includes a rebate program. Four times a year, the federal government sends out a rebate check that returns 90 percent of the revenue received from the carbon tax back to individual families. Rural residents, who tend to drive longer distances than city dwellers, will receive 20 percent more. BUT people don’t connect the dots from the taxes to the rebates. They just react to the price increases. Protests broke out, and opposition parties are rallying to unseat the government of Justin Trudeau.

But here’s the thing: this is one of only the first incremental steps that the Canadian government is doing to lower their greenhouse emissions, to meet their NDCS, under the Paris Agreement. Maybe they could do a better job explaining their plan, but this highlights something we need to pray about for every country trying to be faithful to the Paris Agreement. Implementation of even the BEST plan is going to have to overcome populist opposition. It’s hard to keep focussed on the big picture, when your petrol bill or grocery bill or heating bill is there in front of you in black-and-white.

**[Slide 13] Negotiations this month in Ottawa for the Plastics Treaty**

Finally, let’s remind ourselves of what we prayed about extensively last month. The next round of negotiations for a Global Treaty on Plastics pollution is convening on April 23 in Ottawa, Canada. If you want to read specifics, please read last month’s script posted on our website. Meanwhile, let’s pray for success at these negotiations. Much has stalled, but we still hope to see a plastics treaty by the end of the year.

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So let’s pray for Afghanistan. Let’s pray for Zimbabwe and other places where the add-on effect of El Nino is hurting people. Let’s pray for Canada and other governments as they try to implement their carbon reduction plans despite opposition. And’s pray for the Plastics negotiation going on this month.

**[Slide 15] Theme Prayers: CARBON CAPUTRE AND STORAGE: CCS**

Our theme prayers this month are devoted to the technology of Carbon Capture and Sequestration (or CCS). The reason to feature this issue for prayer this month is that there’s so much deceit around this issue and it’s being used to delay the cheapest and most immediate way to reduce emissions – burning less fossil fuels.

The language in the UN negotiations could not even mention the main cause of climate change, fossil fuels, until very recently. But almost as soon as resistant countries started to allow them into the text, they pushed for it to have the qualifier: “unabated” – so you find in the final COP28 agreement: “accelerate efforts towards the phasedown of unabated coal power” .

What does this mean? “Unabated” fossil fuels are what we all know- you burn them in your car or power plant and the resulting gases are vented to the atmosphere- whereas the idea of **abating** these is that you capture the gases and prevent them from getting to the atmosphere – usually by CCS. So you find Saudi Arabia arguing last year that “the problem is not fossil fuels, it is the emissions, so we can carry on with fossil fuels but find a way to deal with the emissions”.

 Here's a quote from the New York Times at the time of COP28: **“Saudi Arabia and a number of oil companies have tried to focus the talks on emissions, instead of fossil fuels themselves**, arguing that technologies such as carbon capture and storage, or CCS, could trap and bury greenhouse gases from oil and gas and allow their continued use”

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The Oil industry has actually been doing carbon capture for years on a fairly small scale- they capture CO2 from burning oil near an oil well. Guess what they do with it?

[slide of Enhanced Oil Recovery from USA govt site <https://www.energy.gov/fecm/enhanced-oil-recovery> }

They pump it back into the oil well under pressure in order to push more oil out of the well- it’s called enhanced oil recovery. CO2 is suitable because has no explosion risk and it’s dense- it does this job fairly well. There’s no particular efforts to make sure the CO2 stays underground.

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CCS – carbon capture AND STORAGE is the next level – capture the carbon from a coal or gas fired power station and process it so it can be stored some way that it should stay there out of the atmosphere for a long time. Ideas include liquifying it and putting it back into the voids in the rocks where oil and gas have been removed- they could even use the same pipelines that pumped the extracted oil when the oil field was still producing oil- seems elegant doesn’t it, you can imagine why some engineers love this. There are other methods- react the CO2 with another chemical and store that for example.

The thing is- it’s really expensive - and energy-consuming to do this. If installed on a coal electricity power station, (though it has not yet been done *anywhere*), the extra energy needed (ie coal burned) to run the CCS is around 25% more energy needed.

And you can’t really do it for cars and trucks- or aircraft for that matter. It does not allow for continued fossil fuel use in all sectors.

So, CCS is realistically only going to feasible and arguably economic in a few applications, not a way to develop more fossil fuels in all their historic uses. There will be some CCS in a net zero world but not very much! And certainly not enough to remove the 37 Billion tonnes of CO2 equivalent we add to the atmosphere each year.

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It’s just worth mentioning the “cousin” of CCS, Carbon dioxide removal “CDR”

For example, “Direct Air Capture” DAC. This technology uses machines to remove CO2 from the air around them. This is a very different level of effort compared to CCS because the air has 430ppm CO2 whereas the chimney of a coal fired power station will be emitting mostly CO2. The machine pictured here can pull 4 tonnes per year out of the atmosphere which is similar to the annual emissions from around 870 cars (World resources institute <https://www.wri.org/insights/direct-air-capture-resource-considerations-and-costs-carbon-removal> We would need 4 billion of these and the electricity to power them in order to match the annual emissions we add each year, let alone reduce atmospheric co2 levels to safer amounts than we currently have.

**[Slide 19]**

This is a photo that our colleague Lowell Bliss took at the Saskatchewan pavilion at COP28. Here the premier of the Canadian province of Saskatchewan is interviewing three Canadian oil executives who are enthusiastically participating in the climate summit because they are touting promises about carbon capture and sequestration that their companies can’t keep.

So, as often here in climate intercessors, we are faced with some claims which are dubious to say the least, but which seem to be forming the basis of serious policy planning by governments and businesses. The claim that this type of engineering can rescue us from serious climate change and thus we can carry on burning our inefficient fossil fuels for much longer and not “bother” with switching to cheaper cleaner fuels.

How can we pray? Back to Paul’s first letter to Timothy: 1Tim 2:2 “pray first of all for those in authority” . lets pray for wisdom and the right advice to reach the ears of decision makers.

**4. Breakout Rooms and Conclusion (15 minutes)**

**[Slide 20]**

* Announcements: next meeting (second Tuesday of May) May 14
* Look for newsletters and new Bible reflections on the first of each month.
* Go to the website for a means of making a donation to Climate Intercessors
* Profuse thanks for coming and praying with us.