

Praying for the Earth

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



Background information

This booklet has been produced by the Diocesan Environment Task Group in the Church of England Diocese of Newcastle, and commended by the Diocesan Bishop, in the belief that environmental concerns should be an integral part of the public and private prayers of all Christian people.

The prayers have been written by the members of the Diocesan Environment Group: Peter Dodd, John Harrison, Janis Irvine, Rob Kelsey, Diane Kirkup and Margaret Patterson.

The first edition of the booklet was produced in January 2008. This edition was produced in February 2011. Suggestions for improvements for future editions are welcome.

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If you have trouble reading this full-colour edition of *Praying for the Earth*, a text-only version is available.

The booklets cost £2.00 each, including post and packing. Please make cheques payable to the Newcastle Diocesan Board of Finance.

A downloadable version will be made available on the Diocese of Newcastle's web-site: [**www.newcastle.anglican.org**](http://www.newcastle.anglican.org)

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Why should we pray for the earth?

We pray for the earth:

- in acknowledgement of God's love for all creation.
- because we naturally want to pray for what we care about, and we begin to 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.

A collect for the earth

All creation worships you, O God,
and we your people bless you for the beauty of the earth.
We thank you for making a good world in the beginning,
and for making it better by the Word made flesh,
whose death and resurrection in the body
reveal the promised re-creation of the universe.
May your kingdom come on earth as your will is done in heaven
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Using this booklet

This booklet is intended for the use of:

- Those who lead the intercessions of the Church
- Groups of Christians whenever they pray together
- Individual Christians in their personal prayers

The booklet may be used in a variety of ways:

- As a weekly cycle (starting on page 5, 14, 16, 18 or 20)
- As a monthly cycle (starting on page 13)
- In keeping with the church calendar and at other significant times of the year (pages 24-29)
- As a source of prayers on a particular subject (see pages 6-12 and the heading for each prayer)

The prayers may be used:

- As a supplement to the intercessions of the Church (see pages 30-31). The prayers can be adopted unchanged, adapted to suit, or used as inspiration for praying in one's own words. (Sensitivity might be required, especially at times of natural disaster.)
- As prayers in their own right. When used in this way, the prayers should include an address to God at the beginning and an ascription to our Lord Jesus Christ at the end.

**Daily prayers for the earth
throughout the week**



Sunday

The first day

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

Light and power

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.

Alternative prayers from the monthly cycle

- | | | |
|-----|-------------------|------|
| 1. | Times and seasons | p.14 |
| 8. | Nuclear power | p.16 |
| 15. | Light pollution | p.18 |
| 22. | Renewable energy | p.20 |

Monday

The second day



God said, 'Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters... God called the dome Sky.'

Genesis 1.6, 8

Air and climate

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.

Alternative prayers from the monthly cycle

- | | | |
|-----|------------------|------|
| 2. | Climate change | p.14 |
| 9. | Weather patterns | p.16 |
| 16. | Air pollution | p.18 |
| 23. | Wind energy | p.20 |

Tuesday

The third day



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

Genesis 1.9

Water

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 waterfall.

Alternative prayers from the monthly cycle

- | | | |
|-----|---------------------------|------|
| 3. | The oceans | p.14 |
| 10. | Lakes, rivers and streams | p.16 |
| 17. | Water pollution | p.18 |
| 24. | Drinking water | p.20 |

Wednesday

The fourth day



God said, 'Let the dry land appear... Let the earth put forth vegetation.'

Genesis 1.9, 11

Land and vegetation

We give unbounded thanks for the land that 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.

Alternative prayers from the monthly cycle

- | | | |
|-----|--------------------|------|
| 4. | Landscape and soil | p.14 |
| 11. | Trees and plants | p.16 |
| 18. | The rainforests | p.18 |
| 25. | Biofuels | p.20 |

Thursday

The fifth day



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

Sea, air and land creatures

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.

Alternative prayers from the monthly cycle

- | | | |
|-----|---|------|
| 5. | Sea creatures and all that live in the waters | p.15 |
| 12. | Birds and insects | p.17 |
| 19. | Animals | p.19 |
| 26. | Biodiversity | p.21 |

Friday

The sixth day



God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image.'

Genesis 1.26

Human beings and the environment

As you created humankind according to your likeness, so help us, like you, to see the goodness of creation. May we see ourselves as part of a greater whole, and remember our duty of care towards the earth. Help us to live in balance rather than conflict, to treat the material world with gentleness, and to nurture the things around us.

Alternative prayers from the monthly cycle

6.	Farms and Farmers	p.15	27.	Organic farming	p.21
8.	Nuclear power	p.16	29.	Natural disasters	p.22
13.	The built environment	p.17	30.	Transport and food miles	p.22
20.	Globalization and fair trade	p.19	31.	Tourism	p.22

Saturday

The seventh day



God... rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done.

Genesis 2.2

The need for restraint

We thank you for the gift of moments 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.

Alternative prayers from the monthly cycle

7.	Reduction, re-use and recycling	p.15
14.	Sustainable development	p.17
21.	Waste production and litter	p.19
28.	Genetic modification	p.21

Daily prayers for the earth throughout the month



Week one

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.

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.

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.

4. Landscape and soil

We thank you for the landscapes that surround us. As the environment forms us, so help us to form an environment that is beneficial to all creatures. 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.



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.

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.

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.





Week two

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.

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.

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.

11. Trees and plants

The Bible tells us that the leaves of 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.



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.

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.

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.

Week three

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.

16. Air pollution

We give thanks for the air that we breathe, in which we live and move and have our being. Help us to see the atmosphere as a precious resource, and forgive us when we pollute its purity. 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.

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. Help us to nurture the springs of clear water in our lives and in the world.

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.



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.

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 that we enjoy. Help us to support the principles of fair trade, and to practise it in our daily lives.

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.

Week four



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.

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.

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 the engineers and development agencies who seek to make a difference.

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.



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.

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 free and open market for those who produce organic food.

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 not be blinded either by science or by prejudice.

Additional prayers

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.

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.

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.

Prayers for the earth throughout the Church's Year



The Church calendar

Advent

Give us the expectant hope that this damaged earth will be healed of its pain and restored to wholeness. Come among us to judge the world with righteousness and to change both hearts and minds. Refine our priorities, so that we turn away from exploitation towards the nurture of creation.

Christmas

We praise you for the Word made flesh, for heaven come down to earth and earth raised up to heaven. Being found in human form, Christ embodied his love for the material world. Help us, like him, to care for the earth of which we are part and to give substance to our concern for the environment.

Epiphany

In the manifestation of Christ, you use the things of the earth to reveal your glory. As we take gold from the ground, make frankincense and myrrh from the gums of trees, and turn grapes and water into wine, grant us wisdom to use the resources of the earth for the good of all creation.

The Presentation of Christ in the Temple (Candlemas)

Purify our hearts and pierce them with the knowledge of the ill we have done to your precious creation. Give us the light of understanding, to see your salvation in the well-being of all things. Bless the work of scientists as they bring enlightenment to the world, and direct their efforts towards healing, not exploiting, the earth.

Lent

In this time of abstinence and reflection, help us to confront our weaknesses in the wilderness and to play our part in your great universe. We give thanks for the green shoots of your presence in the waste places of the world. May we learn new habits of holy living in our relationship with the earth.

Holy Week (or Holy Cross Day)

We give thanks for the gift of life from the dust of the ground, and for the new life that rises from the dust of death. As all things hold together in Christ, who died on the cross and rose to new life, may we and all creation be released from decay and renewed in his image.

Easter

At this time of new life, we praise you for the power of your creation. The bodily resurrection of Christ proclaims the promised re-creation of the universe. In the blossom of trees and the birth of animals, help us to celebrate your many gifts of springing hope and fresh beginnings.

The Ascension

The bodily ascension of Christ reveals the significance of the material world. As he was exalted to heaven, may we in heart and mind also ascend, so as to view the environment from a kingdom perspective. Help us to see the world as you see it and care for the earth because you love it.

Pentecost

We ask for the wisdom of the Holy Spirit to know our place in the universe and to play our part in the work of creation. May the Spirit of truth inspire us to speak the truth about the earth and its creatures. Help those who work in environmental education to foster a deeper engagement with the living world.



The Holy Trinity

We praise you for the diversity and harmony of all that you have made. The myriad forms of life on earth are knit together and depend upon each other. The particles and planets of the universe have a singular coherence. As we ponder the mystery of the Trinity in Unity, may we play our part in the integrity of creation.

All Saints (or any saint)

Your saints in every age proclaim your glory in the highest heavens and see your beauty in the smallest of your creatures. May we, inspired by the depth of their devotion, see the world in a grain of sand and heaven in a wild flower, and offer you our lives in praise and service.

All Souls

You sustain the fabric of the universe and preserve all souls in life. Help us so to reverence all living things that we come to a deeper knowledge of your care for all creation. As you encompass heaven and earth, so we, in life and death, are united with those who have died and with everything you have made.

Christ the King

We remember with shame that we have sometimes exercised the high dominion of humankind with contempt and cruelty, so that the song of the earth has been a groan of travail. Help us to follow the humble example of Christ our King and bring us, with our fellow creatures and the whole created order, to worship at his feet.

Saints and angels

Any saint

See the prayer for All Saints on page 26.

The Northern Saints

We give thanks for the Northern Saints and their Celtic origins. As we see how they lived in harmony with their environment, may we also discern your presence in the natural world. Open our eyes to the boundless wonders of your creation, and help us to delight in the rhythm of life.

The Blessed Virgin Mary

In her obedience to your will, the Blessed Virgin Mary gave substance to your plan for the salvation of the universe. May we, like Mary, offer you our souls and bodies as a living sacrifice. Help us to realize your presence in the way we live our lives, and may your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Saint Francis

We give thanks for those who, following the example of St Francis, care for the earth and all its creatures. We acknowledge with remorse that we belong to a people who have played a part in the extinction of many species. Help us to respect the natural world and to protect all living things, for they are valuable in your sight.

Angels

We praise you for the creation of all things in heaven and on earth, whether visible or invisible. As we contemplate the hidden mystery of your holy angels, may we recognise our place in the universal order of things. May the angels help us to defend the integrity of creation and to sustain and renew the earth.

The rural Church calendar

Plough Sunday

As we mark another turning in the agricultural year, help us to turn over a new leaf in our dealings with the earth. Bless the plough and the soil, the farmer and the consumer. Make us mindful of our interdependence and ready to give a fair return for all that we receive. May we sustain the land that gives us sustenance.

Rogationtide

We ask for your blessing on the land and on our local environment. We ask for your blessing on the plough and the fishing net, and on those who work with the earth to bring forth its fruits in due season. Grant us wisdom in conserving the earth's resources, that the earth may continue to provide for our needs.

Lammas

We acknowledge with gratitude the gift of ripened grain and the goodness of a loaf of bread. We give thanks for the seed, the soil, the rain and the sun, and for the joyful hope of a bountiful harvest. May all people receive a just reward for their labours and earthly and heavenly nourishment of their souls and bodies.

Harvest

We give thanks for the fruit of the earth that sustains human life. May we be good stewards of the resources you give us and resist the temptation to take everything for ourselves. Give us the grace to live wisely and generously, by nurturing the world we occupy and by sharing the bounty we enjoy.

Other significant times of the year

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

As we rejoice in the rich diversity of your creation, may we also rejoice in the varieties of gifts and services within the Christian faith. Help us to remember our essential unity in the living body of Christ, and our interdependence within the unity of all creation.

Christian Aid Week

As changing weather patterns and rising sea levels affect the poorest peoples of the world, we acknowledge our contribution to the threat of climate change. Bless the work of Christian Aid, guide the leaders of the world into the ways that make for justice, and help us to help others by treading lighter on the earth.

Sea Sunday

We remember those who go down to the sea in the ships and do business in great waters. May they see your works and wonders in the deep, and praise you for your goodness. Bless those in peril, and bring them safely home. Strengthen the work of those who guard our coasts from loss of life and ecological disasters.

Using this booklet as a supplement to other forms of intercession

The choice of specific prayers

Specific prayers may be chosen:

- according to personal preference, adapted as necessary or as desired by the person leading the intercessions.
- with a particular subject in mind, from either the weekly cycle (p. 5) or the monthly cycle (p. 13)
- according to the day of the month, from the monthly cycle (p. 13). (For a weekly service, this would ensure a variety of subject matter from week to week.)

Integrating specific prayers within the intercessions of the Church

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 prayer

[Taken from one of the prayer cycles in this booklet.]

'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 prayer

[Taken from one of the prayer cycles in this booklet.]

'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.]

Some additional prayer resources

Celebrating Earth Holy Days – A Resource Guide for Faith Communities, Susan J. Clark, The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1992.

Common Worship: Times and Seasons, Church House Publishing, 2006

Earth Prayers from Around the World – 365 Prayers, Poems, and Invocations for Honouring the Earth, edited by Elizabeth Roberts and Elias Amidon, Harper Collins, 1991.

Enriching the Christian Year, compiled by Michael Perham with Trevor Lloyd, David Silk, David Stancliffe and Michael Vasey, SPCK/Alcuin Club, 1993.

Seasonal Worship from the Countryside, The Staffordshire Seven (Michael Ayden, Tony Hodgson, Nicky Hoskin-Stone, John Lovatt, Noel Lovatt, Linda J. Probyn and John Whitehead), SPCK, 2003.

For children

Caring for Planet Earth – Stories and Prayers for Children, Ian M. Fraser, Saint Andrew Press, 2000.

The Lion Treasury of Children's Prayers, compiled by Susan Cuthbert, Lion Children's Books, 1999.

Additional sources of seasonal prayers

The Church of England's resources for the Seasons and Festivals of the Agricultural Year, in *Common Worship: Times and Seasons*: <http://www.churchofengland.org/media/41161/tsagyear.pdf>

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2nd EDITION

"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."

The Rt Revd Martin Wharton, Bishop of Newcastle

"These simple, brief and heartfelt biddings cover a wide range of environmental themes. They are to the point without being 'preachy', and will help intercessors find the words which will lead congregations week by week to pray intentionally for the whole of God's earth."

Janet Morley, Author

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