

The Path of Hope

Worship Resources for the COP

Let us not take the path of surrender, and realize too late that we
have sleepwalked past the point of no return.
Let us instead take the path of hope.

United Nations Secretary General António Guterres

Created by Faith Leaders at COP25,
the United Nations Climate Conference
Madrid, Spain
December 2-13, 2019



Interfaith Power & Light
A Religious Response to Global Warming

Texas Interfaith Center
for Public Policy

★ TEXAS IMPACT

Holding Fast to What is Good

Faith Participation in the United Nations Climate Negotiations

This week, representatives of US faith communities, together with faith leaders from around the world, are in Madrid, Spain, participating in the annual United Nations climate negotiations known as “COP.” COP stands for “Conference of the Parties.” The “parties” are the 197 nations that have agreed to work together to address climate change. The US is a party; even if the US completely withdraws from the Paris Agreement, it will still be a party in the COP, because the Paris Agreement is just one of many climate-related agreements.

This is the twenty-fifth COP. As climate change manifests, nations are under increased pressure to take decisive action to reduce carbon emissions to reduce global warming; find ways to adapt to extreme environmental changes; and provide effective remedies for individuals and communities that suffer irreparable trauma.

At the COP, non-governmental organizations from around the world, including faith communities, have the opportunity to participate in discussion with government leaders—elected officials and diplomats—about their particular concerns and hopes for global climate policy. For people of faith, these concerns often relate to “the least of these”: vulnerable and marginalized people in our local contexts and throughout the world.

Climate policy often is described in ways that are technical, arcane, and un-relatable, but concerns for our human family can be stated plainly:

We are called to care for each other. This means when members of the human family suffer from impacts of climate change, such as loss of property and health impacts of disasters, the rest of us should provide remedies including financial resources. Our faith traditions teach us that those with power and privilege should contribute more, to help those who have less. In “climate-speak,” this concept is described as *loss and damage*.

We are called to welcome each other. Climate and environmental change are driving human migration, through sudden catastrophes, “slow-onset events” like desertification and sea-level rise, and social disruption including armed conflicts. As individuals and entire populations find that they must leave their homes, our faith traditions teach us that we should welcome sojourners and provide hospitality. In “climate-speak,” this idea is reflected in policies regarding *displacement*.

We are called to honor each other. As impacts of climate change create instability and anxiety, it is easy to focus on our own tribe. We find ourselves willing to sacrifice the health, safety, and prosperity of people we don’t know at all for the sake of those we know deeply. Our faith traditions teach us that every person is a child of God, and that our policymaking must empower every person with agency, equip every person with tools to exercise their agency. In “climate-speak” this concept demands attention to *human rights*.

We are called to leave no one behind. Some climate solutions seem straightforward—until we see how they would disrupt the lives of people whose livelihoods are tied to current systems. Addressing climate change must not create new vulnerabilities or make new victims, but instead must be accomplished with attention to the needs of all, including labor. In “climate-speak,” this process is referred to as *just transition*.

How can you support US faith leaders at the COP?

1. **Get social:** Follow and respond to denominational and other faith social media posts.
2. **Pray:** Texas Impact is posting a prayer of the day each day of the COP on our Facebook page, which you can find on our website at texasimpact.org
3. **Speak out:** Call or tweet at your member of Congress and say you stand with your faith reps in Madrid and urge them to make a statement supporting strong climate action now.

Prayers

Litany of Recommitment to Human Rights

By Minister Danielle Ayers, Minister of Justice
Friendship West Baptist Church, Dallas, TX

Leader: God of Creation, the psalmist declare that the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof and all that dwell within. We are grateful for the earth you have bequeathed us with! An earth to be shared by all people. We recognize the "inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world..."

Community: We renew our commitment to care for what God left in our hands.

Leader: God of Love, you declare your love for the most vulnerable and all who seek to live a good and finite life. "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of personhood."

Community: We renew our commitment to stand in solidarity with those who are the most vulnerable among us just as Jesus did. They are God's beautiful creation!

Leader: God of Justice, you call upon us to love our neighbor and to welcome the stranger. All of God's children have the right to fresh food and water and clean air. "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond their control."

Community: We renew our commitment to do justice, love mercy, and to walk humbly with God.

All: The spirit of the Lord is upon us all; God has anointed us to free people from the bad news of poverty and exploitation, to heal those who are heartbroken hearted, to release those who are under oppression, set the prisoner free, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. We recommit our lives, ministries, and work to acts of solidarity with those who Jesus walk among and ministered to during his life.

(Universal Declaration of Human Rights Preamble; Genesis 1:28-30; Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 1; Micah 6:8; Matthew 25:32; Matthew 22:39; Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 25; Luke 4:18-19)

Responsive Reading: Adaptation of Isaiah 11:1-10

Composed by Reverend Susan Hendershot
President of Interfaith Power & Light

One: A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

All: They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

One: The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of the knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

All: They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

One: His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear;

All: They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

One: but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.

All: They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

One: Righteousness shall be the best around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins.

All: They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

One: The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them.

All: They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

One: The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

All: They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

One: The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den.

All: They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

One: On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious.

All: They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

Unison prayer:

Gracious One,

As we come to you this day, we know that we have been complicit in the pain and destruction to your holy Creation. We have consumed more than our fair share, and we have been indifferent to the cries of the earth and the cries of the poor. Give us the ability to envision a world where all are interconnected: where the wolf lives with the lamb, where the leopard lies with the kid, and where the needs of the poor are addressed with equity. Give us the hope and the courage to take action to heal the earth for current and future generations.

Amen.

Collect for the COP

Regina Q. Banks

Director, Lutheran Office of Public Policy of California

God our creator, God our provider, God our nurturer and our sustainer and our guide, we have failed you. In love you have given us a home and we have fouled it. Your children now gather in Madrid at the COP 25 climate change meeting to deliberate about how to mend what we have so callously broken. Strengthen them Lord. Pour out your spirit on the hearts of the participants. Instill in the delegates hearts that are humble and minds that are fixed on justice. Empower the parties and the observers to spread the word about all that is happening

in the discussions and the enormity of the tasks ahead. Steel their resolve. Fortify the heads of state, and ministers, and diplomats, and scientists, and teachers, and activists, and advocates for the duties ahead. Be in their midst. Continue to have mercy on your creation, O Lord. We come to you meekly asking mercy for their work and ours. And in the accomplishment of the goal be glorified and praised. Amen.

Collect for a Just Transition

Regina Q. Banks

Director, Lutheran Office of Public Policy of California

O Lord, we thank and praise you today for those who work; those who farm the land, those that fish the seas, the teachers, the doctors, the lawyers the garbage collectors, those who fret in anonymous cubicles in ugly office parks, the ministers of your Word. We thank you for your presence in vocation. As we begin to center our hearts and minds on the ways that life—all our lives—must change for life on this planet to long endure we ask you to remind us that you are in the midst of all who work. You too love the coal miner and the logger, the truck driver and the plastics manufacturer. Lord we know that their children must eat, too. Rent must be paid. This transition will be hard for many. Renew in us a commitment to your people; our siblings who will see uncertainty in the days ahead. Let us not forget that it is systems of oppression that must be broken, not people. It is injustice that must be brought low not those who must work. We know you are alive in our struggle and real in our travail. So we thank you dear Lord. Amen.

Responsive Reading – Psalm 24:1-6

By Reverend Mel Caraway

Board Member, Texas Impact

The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it;
The world, and those who live in it;

For he has founded it on the seas,
and established it on the rivers.

Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord?
And who shall stand in his holy place?

Those who have clean hands and pure hearts,
who do not lift up their souls to what is false,
and do not swear deceitfully.

They will receive blessing from the Lord,
and vindication from the God of their salvation.

Such is the company of those who seek him,
who seek the face of the God of Jacob.

Prayer of Confession

By Reverend Mel Caraway

Board Member, Texas Impact

We have forgotten who we are
We have alienated ourselves from the unfolding of the cosmos
We have become estranged from the movements of the earth
We have turned our backs on the cycles of life.

We have forgotten who we are.

We have sought only our own security
We have exploited simply for our own ends
We have distorted our knowledge
We have abused our power.

We have forgotten who we are.

Now the land is barren
The waters are poisoned
And the air is polluted.

We have forgotten who we are.

Now the forests are dying
The creatures are disappearing
And humans are despairing.

We have forgotten who we are.

We ask forgiveness
We ask for the gift of remembering
We ask for the strength to change.

We have forgotten who we are.

Let us now enter into a time of personal confession.

Silent Meditation

Words of Assurance

In the name of the Holy One, Creator of the Universe and all that is in it, you are forgiven.

In the name of the Holy One you are forgiven. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Offertory Prayer

By Reverend Mel Caraway
Board Member, Texas Impact

God of all creation, as John Wesley wrote: "We are now God's stewards. We are indebted to him for all 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 any of these things but barely entrusted with them by another... now this is exactly the case of everyone with relation to God. We are not at liberty to use what God has lodged in our hands as we please, but as God pleases." May we be good stewards of these gifts as we use them in your service, in the service of all humanity, and in service to your creation, this Earth on which we live. AMEN.

Call To Worship

By Reverend Mel Caraway
Board Member, Texas Impact

Young and old and everyone in between -- we envision a world where all live in harmony with each other and with God's wonderful creation. We look forward to a time when the love of God permeates all that we say and all that we do. Today, we renew our commitment together, with God's grace, to respect the gifts that have been given to us and to use those gifts for the good of the poor and vulnerable both human and non-human of this earth. We gather for worship today in unity to pledge ourselves to caring for creation and fighting to bring an end to climate change which is threatening creation now and for generations to come.

Sermon Starters

Theological Reflections & Sermon Starter on Climate Emergency

Rev. Melanie Mullen, Director of Reconciliation, Justice and Creation Care,
The Episcopal Church

ADVENT 2 - Isaiah 35:1-10

³⁵The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus ²it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God. ³Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. ⁴Say to those who are of a fearful heart, “Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you.” ⁴Say to those who are of a fearful heart, “Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you.”

Dread companions our vision as we think about the immanence of a global climate emergency. We see more clearly than ever, that rising seas, fires, and raging storms create havoc on lives of people around the world. We see how climate change “loads the dice” against the poor and the vulnerable as devastating effects on our environment and communities surround us. But the prophet Isaiah offers us an alternative vision, one determined to drag us away from a focus on dread, and towards a dream of God’s awe-inspiring salvation. Prophets like Isaiah often speak of such divine work with great ambition, “make the crooked straight...the high mountains low”, but such ambitious work can’t be done when the people of God are focused on dread, instead of on proclaiming.

In this era of climate emergency, there is prophetic work for all of us re-imagining– with ambition. Isaiah might argue that “climate ambition”, or working hard to save our planet, starts with kindling the holy imagination. The kind of imagining that expands our theological vision by reminding us to see what God sees. How are we called to ambition in the face of global climate dread? Are we ready to receive a new vision before a God with moral grandeur, spiritual audacity, and resilience to save us all?

Psalm 72: 1-7, 18-19 – Human Rights

By Erica Nelson, M.Div.
Texas Impact

This psalm asks God to give God’s justice and righteousness to the king and to a king’s son, referring here to David and Solomon. This psalm champions for the poor and the needy, while also calling for submission of the earth. This goes along with the current call for Human Rights at COP25. As negotiations are happening around the implementation of the Paris Agreement, advocates are demanding that human rights be at the foreground of considerations.

1. Historically, our interpretation of texts like this leads to the exploitation of the earth, often in damaging ways. How do we balance that centuries held view of the earth as a tool to subjugate with the fact that if we keep doing so, we will move past a point of possible healing?
2. This psalm calls for justice for the poor and righteousness for the needy. This should also inform our work in climate change to ensure that those that are already vulnerable are not further taken advantage of by our efforts to renew the earth. Who are the vulnerable in your community? How are they impacted by climate change?

3. Consider your elected officials; your mayor and city council, your governor, state representative, and state senator, your congressional senators and representative, your president. Are they working with God's justice and righteousness? Are they 'defending the cause of the poor of the people, giving deliverance to the needy, and crushing the oppressor?' Do they care for the earth and work towards our current climate emergency? Where in your communities are there needs and how are they being met?

Romans 15: 4-13 – Global Cooperation

By Erica Nelson, M.Div.

Texas Impact

In this passage, Paul is encouraging the church in Rome to live in harmony with one another, in accordance to the teachings of Christ Jesus.

1. This passage calls on us to work and live in harmony with the people in our communities. How might this translate to the land of our communities? In what ways can/do you live in harmony with the earth and with nature around you?
 2. At the COP, 196 countries come together to negotiate climate action, understanding that some countries have a bigger contribution to climate change than others and therefore should contribute more to climate action that seeks to stop warming and begin to heal the planet. In what ways is the United States working in harmony with our global partners? In what ways are they not?
-

Isaiah 11:1-10 – Climate Justice

By Erica Nelson, M.Div.

Texas Impact

This passage of the prophet Isaiah foretells the coming of the promised one of God, one who springs from the line of Jesse. This person shall have all the wisdom, knowledge, and spirit of the Lord God. With that person's arrival will be peace on earth, where predator and prey lie together in harmony, person and animal have no fear of each other, and "They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain."

1. How are ecosystems hurt or destroyed by climate change? How do sea levels rising affect human communities and animal habitats? How does an increase in the number and severity of storms affect communities and habitats?
 2. What will it take to reach a place where there might be harmony in the world? Between nations, between predators, between oppressor and the oppressed, between humanity and nature?
 3. To ensure the ultimate vision of God's future, nothing is to be destroyed on God's holy mountain. What actions can you take in your community to begin the work of reducing climate change, in the hope that we might restore God's holy mountain and commit to no longer destroying it?
-

Also Suggested:

Light for Madrid, A Devotional

Created by Green Shepherd Lisa Brenskelle of Christ the King Lutheran Church in Houston, TX.

<https://lutheransrestoringcreation.org/light-for-madrid>