

PRAYER



WORSHIP & TEACHING

ECO  **CHURCH**
AN A ROCHA UK PROJECT



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WHY?

Perhaps one of the main purposes of prayer is to align our wills with the will of God, and so we pray, 'Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven'. We might pray for the earth in response to any number of environmental crises. But we should pray for the earth on a regular basis, as a matter of course, for the following reasons:

- **Because we love God, and we naturally want to acknowledge God's love for all creation.** When we pray for the earth, then we share in God's delight and concern for, the whole of creation.
- **Because we naturally pray for what we care about, and care more for what we pray about, in a virtuous circle of praying and caring, reflection and action.** As we align our wills with God's will, then we form within ourselves, or rather God forms in us, a disposition to action.
- **Because we need to learn a less self-centred language, in order to rediscover our place within, and dependence on, the whole of creation.** As we practise praying for the earth, we expand our understanding of the issues, and our ability to act effectively.
- **Because humanity can be thought of as the 'priesthood' of creation, giving voice to the ceaseless praise that the whole creation offers to its Creator.** The words at our disposal are a charism, or gift from God, which enable us to perform God's purpose, for us and all the world.



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HOW?

Eco Church covers a very wide variety of Christian traditions, so we will each want to find our own culture for such prayers:

- We might pray for the earth on special occasions, such as Harvest Thanksgiving, or Creation Sunday.
- Praying for the earth shouldn't be a niche activity for a particular time or place, or for particular kinds of people (e.g., The 'eco-faithful'). It should be an 'ordinary' and everyday part of the public and private prayers of all Christian people.
- A benefit of using a prayer cycle – whether weekly, monthly or annually – is its combination of discipline and variety. It helps us to avoid the inclination to do nothing, because we can't decide what to do; or the temptation to keep returning to our favourite topics, while neglecting others; or the tendency to get stuck in a rut, with too narrow a focus.
- Most forms of intercession in church tend to be divided into paragraphs on particular themes. A prayer for the earth could be inserted as a separate paragraph or integrated with praying for the nations of the world.



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LONGER READS & OTHER RESOURCES

We often feel that prayer should be spontaneous, but it can be difficult to pray when we lack the knowledge of how we should be praying. Here are some resources which may be helpful for you, whether as an individual or as a church:

A Rocha UK has a quarterly prayer diary covering all areas of our work which will help you vary your prayers for the environment: <https://arocha.org.uk/prayer-diary/>

A Rocha International offers 26 prayers for the climate and ecological emergency: <https://atyourservice.arocha.org/en/26-prayers-for-the-climate-and-ecological-emergency/>

Here are some ideas for outdoor prayer stations from the Engage Worship team: <https://engageworship.org/ideas/were-going-prayer-hunt-outdoor-prayer-stations>

Prayer and Fast for the Climate, provide monthly prayer points to keep our focus fresh and up-to-date: <https://prayandfastfortheclimate.org.uk/>

Bramhall Methodist Church frequently invites scientists in as guest speakers who explain how their understanding affects how they pray:

<https://www.bramhallmethodists.org.uk/pfop-programme>

<https://scienceandprayer.bramhallmethodists.org.uk/>

Tearfund and Green Christian both keep prayer for the climate at the heart of their work, and offer resources for us to do the same:

<https://www.tearfund.org/campaigns/reboot-campaign/prayer-for-the-climate>

<https://greenchristian.org.uk/resources/prayer-guide/>



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BOOKS

Praying for the Earth, Rob Kelsey, Sacristy Press, 2021. Rob is kindly donating the net proceeds to Eco Church from this wide-ranging prayer resource for congregations and individuals.

A Time for Creation, Robert Atwell, Christopher Irvine and Sue Moore, Church House Publishing, 2020

The Earth Cries Glory, Steven Shakespeare, Canterbury Press Norwich, 2019

God's Good Earth, Anne Rowthorn, Liturgical Press, 2018

The Healer's Tree, Annie Heppenstall, Wild Goose Publications, 2011

CASE STUDIES

St Mark's Church, Winshill, has created prayer walks to guide people around their community whilst praying for the world. All have great maps, pictures and brief audio prayers to engage walkers:
<https://www.stmarkswinshill.co.uk/prayer-walks>