

COP26 SPECIAL
SUPPLEMENT

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FREE

LIFE AND WORK

THE MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

“OUR LAST BEST CHANCE”

INTRODUCTION

by Scotland's environmental
chaplain



COP is a globally momentous event, on our doorstep. And a prime subject for prayer.

Scotland has the privilege of welcome for an unprecedented number and diversity of visitors to what will certainly be a less than perfect gathering, out of balance between the rich and the poor, though with the dawning realisation that ambition, co-operation and sacrificial generosity on the part of those with power and wealth, is in their own urgent interest too. It is better that it does take place than not.

When disciplined and cautious cohorts of scientists express themselves with the unanimity

and urgency we are now seeing about the harm humanity has done to the planet and the fellow creatures on whom we so completely depend, no Christian should do other than sit up and take notice, determined to pray and act differently in every aspect of our own lives. Covid has taught us we can do so.

There are many events, services and actions planned, where churches can play a prominent and encouraging role.

We will not, by small actions, 'fix' the world. Climate crisis is not one of those short-term issues, but the context in which we now live. And yet prayer itself is a transformative

small action, placed in God's hands alongside our efforts to approach net zero, and model a better, more caring way of life.

We look to our faith as a resource for the resilience we will need for the years ahead. In our responses, visible to the communities in which we live and work, churches can come into their own as beacons of hope, joy, forgiveness, and Good News to every creature ([Mark 16:15](#)). And we need to use this God-given opportunity to be different when COP has come and gone.

The Rev David Coleman,
environmental chaplain,
Eco-Congregation Scotland

COP26: AN INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS COP26?

COP26 is the 26th meeting of the Conference of the Parties, the decision-making body of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

COP has met annually since 1995 (except 2020, when it was postponed due to Covid-19), and brings together representatives of the 197 countries that have ratified the Convention, to review progress so far and agree measures to be taken to prevent damaging man-made climate change.

COP26 will take place at Glasgow SECC from October 31- November 12. It will be the biggest international summit the UK has ever hosted, with over 30,000 delegates including heads of state, diplomats, climate experts and campaigners.

WHAT HAPPENS AT A COP?

Activity takes place in two zones: the Blue Zone, which is accessible only by government ministers, officials and accredited individuals and organisations; and the Green Zone, which is open to the public.

The Blue Zone is where the formal negotiations take place, along with a programme of official fringe events. Each country taking part will have its own pavilion with exhibitions and speakers.

In the Green Zone relevant organisations including youth groups, civil society and academic bodies, artists and businesses will be hosting events, exhibitions, cultural performances, workshops and talks. There are more than 200 events scheduled for the Green Zone at COP26, which will be at the Glasgow Science Centre.

Beyond that, there are a host of

unofficial events throughout Glasgow, and tens or hundreds of thousands of protesters and campaigners are expected to descend on the city.

WHAT WILL BE DISCUSSED?

The aim of the conference is to finalise the Paris 'rule book', setting out how the targets agreed in Paris in 2015 will be achieved.

Countries are being asked to come forward with ambitious targets, backed up by firm plans for achieving carbon neutrality (no more carbon dioxide being added to the atmosphere than is being removed, also known as net zero) by the middle of the century, which is considered necessary in order to keep global heating below 1.5°C compared to pre-industrial levels.

Leaders of the world's richer countries are also being asked to work together to help the countries already most affected by climate change, often poorer countries in the global south, to mitigate the effects.

To realise those ambitions, developed countries are called on to deliver on their Paris promise to raise at least \$100bn in climate finance every year, as well as working with international finance institutions and private and public sector organisations, to finance the switch to a global net zero economy.

WHAT IS AT STAKE?

COP26 has been described as 'humanity's last best chance' to take meaningful action to prevent catastrophic climate change.

The UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)'s latest report, published in August, found that climate change

is 'widespread, rapid and intensifying', with changes observed 'in every region and across the whole climate system'. It warned that 'unless there are immediate, rapid and large-scale reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, limiting warming to close to 1.5°C or even 2°C will be beyond reach', and that 'at 2°C of global warming, heat extremes would more often reach critical tolerance thresholds for agriculture and health'.

However, the report added that while many of the changes set in motion are irreversible over 'centuries to millennia', the effects of climate change can still be limited with 'strong and sustained reductions in emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases'.

WHAT ARE THE CONCERNS?

Discussion in advance of the conference has focused on whether richer countries will commit to the \$100bn climate finance target (recent analysis shows that current commitments fall short); and whether the world's biggest carbon emitters, particularly China, can be persuaded to strengthen their climate targets.

Other than that, a key concern for campaigners in recent months has been that, with many people from poorer countries not yet vaccinated against Covid-19 and unable to afford the quarantine fees, delegates from those countries will not be able to attend.

Others have warned that there is a shortage of affordable hotel rooms and other accommodation, which will price out official delegates from poorer countries, as well as campaigners and groups such as indigenous

peoples. There have also been complaints that the cost of hosting a pavilion is much higher than at previous COPs, again pricing out the poorer countries.

The Climate Action Network (CAN), a global alliance of more than 1500 organisations, warned in September that COP26 could become a 'rich nations stitch-up'.

A CAN spokesperson said that non-governmental organisations (NGOs) were at particular risk of not being able to take part, and without them there could be 'less pressure on polluters to act, less scrutiny on the outcomes, and potentially watered-down climate action, leading to more suffering for people around the world'.

WHAT CAN I DO?

For Christians who want to engage with COP26, the Church of Scotland and many partner organisations have produced

resources and/or will be holding events during the conference.

Christian Aid is urging its supporters to watch the documentary 'Thank You for the Rain', about the struggles of a Kenyan farmer, and to make a paper prayer boat to display in their windows or at church.

The Joint Public Issues Team – bringing together three English churches with the Church of Scotland as an associate partner – suggests you send the boat to your MP, calling on the UK Government to end subsidies for fossil fuels.

Eco-Congregation Scotland is urging church leaders and members to sign the Scottish Churches COP26 Pledge, which commits churches to divesting from fossil fuels, and individuals to holding ethical investments.

Among those holding worship events during the conference will

be the Iona Community (who are holding a big sing outside the Scottish Parliament) and two brothers from the Taize Community who will be in Glasgow. There will be a prayer and meeting space at St George's Tron Church throughout the COP.

If you wish to protest, the largest event will be a mass mobilisation planned in the city on Saturday November 6, when organisers hope to have between fifty and a hundred thousand people in the city. The march will leave from Kelvingrove Park and arrive in Glasgow Green for a rally at 3pm.

If you live in Glasgow or surrounding areas, it's also not too late to offer to host a delegate to COP26 through the Homestay network.

See back page for a list of events and resources.

Thomas Baldwin



Supporting you for COP26 and beyond

In partnership with the Church of Scotland towards Net Zero and a just, green future

Encouraging local parishes to care and act for God's Creation

Join us during COP26 online and at Govan and Linthouse Parish Church for prayer and discussion

Register your church as an eco-congregation and join our growing movement

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eco congregation Scotland

 **Net Zero Scotland**
Scottish Government

 **LET'S DO NET ZERO**
COP26, GLASGOW 2021

COP26 venue Scottish Events Campus header photograph courtesy of Glasgow Convention Bureau
 Eco-Congregation Scotland, 121 George Street, Edinburgh EH2 4YN
 Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) regulated by the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR), Scottish Charity number: SC041287

EVENTS AND WORSHIP

Protest Art: a Lament in Black Paint

Kelvingrove Art Gallery 12-24 October, and various venues during COP26

Three portraits dipped in black paint, highlighting the impact of climate injustice on vulnerable communities.

www.christianaid.org.uk/news/protest-art-lament-black-paint

Pilgrims' March into Glasgow

Saturday October 30

The YCCN climate relay and other climate pilgrimages will come together at 2pm at McLennan Arch, Glasgow Green, for prayers and reflection before completing the pilgrimage. Closing service at St George's Tron Church, 6pm.

There will also be a livestreamed event sharing stories of the pilgrimages in Strathclyde Student Union at 4.30pm on November 3.

www.yccn.uk/glasgow

COP26 Vigil / Launch of Scottish Interfaith Week

Sunday October 31, 2-3pm

Senior religious leaders will read the 'Glasgow Multi-Faith Declaration for COP26', setting out the shared climate commitments of religious leaders across the UK, and lead prayers from a great diversity of religious traditions.

interfaithscotland.org

EcoHighland 2021

October 31-November 12

Opening worship at Hilton Church, Inverness on October 31, followed by Zoom prayer gatherings daily throughout COP.

www.ecocongregationscotland.org/upcomingevents

Cùra – Guardian. An event to mark the start of COP26.

November 1, 1pm - 3pm, Inverness Cathedral

Inverness Cathedral and Heartstone have joined forces for this event which will be involving children from across the city, Eco-Congregation, the Inverness Interfaith Group and NatureScot.

www.ecocongregationscotland.org/upcomingevents

Praying for COP26 and Beyond

Friday November 4, 4pm

Zoom conference hosted by Eco-Congregation Glasgow

www.ecocongregationscotland.org/upcomingevents

Global Day of Action for Climate Justice

Saturday November 6

Kelvingrove Park from 11.30am, marching to Glasgow Green for a rally at 3pm.

cop26coalition.org

Iona Community Big Sing

Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh

Saturday November 6, 2pm

iona.org.uk/2021/08/26/big-sing-for-cop26-saturday-6th-nov-2021-2-00pm-scottish-parliament-2-2/

Tearfund COP26 service

Sunday November 7

With Pete Greig, Carol Ng'ang'a, and Celtic Worship. Your church can get involved by sharing pre-recorded videos, or by joining the livestream.

www.tearfund.org/campaigns/cop26-church-service

Prayers with the Taizé Community

Various venues, November 8-12, 12 noon and 7pm

Taizé has been invited by Glasgow Churches COP26 Co-ordinating Committee to prepare and lead prayers and a vigil for students and young people in Glasgow during COP26.

www.taize.fr/en_article32460.html

The Time is Now

Glasgow Cathedral and online

Monday 8 November 7pm

Join Christian Aid, Dr Rowan Williams, the Kingdom Choir and the Young Christian Climate Network for a night of music, prayer and inspiration at Glasgow Cathedral.

www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved-locally/scotland/cop26

An Ecumenical Service of Solidarity for Climate Justice

Tuesday 9 November 6pm, Sandyford Henderson Memorial Church and online

This event will hear from inspirational people in the Brazilian Amazon rainforest who tackle climate change by working as shields against deforestation and devastation.

www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved-locally/scotland/cop26

Doxecology

Thursday November 11, St George's Tron Church

A night of worship and prayer with Resound Worship on the final night of their Doxecology tour, in partnership with Tearfund, A Rocha UK and the Church of Scotland.

www.resoundworship.org/events/doxecology-concert-glasgow

RESOURCES AND LINKS

Official COP26 site: ukcop26.org

Information on how the Church of Scotland is involved in

COP26, and downloadable banners and posters from www.churchofscotland.org.uk/about-us/our-views/addressing-climate-change/cop26-and-the-church-of-scotland

Find out how to host a delegate to COP26 at

www.humanhotel.com/cop26/

Sign the Scottish Churches COP26 Pledge at

www.ecocongregationscotland.org/scottishchurchespledge/

Find instructions for creating a prayer boat at

www.christianaid.org.uk/pray/prayer-chain

Christian Aid has climate prayer resources at

www.christianaid.org.uk/pray/prayer-chain/resources, and

Tearfund at www.tearfund.org/campaigns/reboot-campaign/prayer-for-the-climate

Glasgow Churches COP Group has a series of videos of Voices from the Global South at vimeo.com/user147467133

*All events subject to change

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