

# A fair COP?

**Andii Bowsher** urges action and prayer as COP28 approaches

Another year, another COP! At the end of November and into December, the COP28 is due to be held in Dubai, UAE, chaired by Sultan Al-Jaber. Green Christian readers may already have picked up that Al-Jaber is viewed skeptically because he heads the UAE's state oil company ADNOC. A positive spin on this could be that "his business ties would prove an asset in ensuring the private sector took the necessary action on the climate crisis".<sup>1</sup> Climate Intercessors' website also offers a hopeful reflection on the potential benefits<sup>2</sup>.

Also this year at COP is the first global stock-take (GST) – an inventory of collective progress on Paris Agreement goals. The way the GST is set up does mean there's scope for evasions – hiding responsibilities and relative inaction. When we read that there are huge numbers of oil and gas company PR people going – some estimates have them outnumbering legitimate delegates – then surely there is cause for concern.

Cross-cutting themes of the meetings are to include finance (and a look at mechanisms to enable Majority World economies to benefit from reparative financing) and with this also a consideration of vulnerable peoples and of technological dimensions. Readers will no doubt be alert to the potential for wealthy and influential countries to finagle things to their own advantage while putting a greenwashy, whitewashy spin on it. And we may be concerned that "technological" means greenwashing based on unproven and hyped inventions that are years away from maturity and scalability. All too familiar, but how do we engage others without feeding disabling cynicism?

The opening day of COP28 poignantly coincides with Lost Species day: 30th November. In fact November itself tends towards a month of solemn recollection, holding All Souls day and Remembrance day. The feast of Christ the King on 26th directs our attention to God's just and gentle rule. Considering these, perhaps we might informally keep November as a solemn reflection on the loss of life in the wider creation as well as human lives, that will motivate us to pray for the COP. Maybe considering not only lives lost in warfare, but lives lost



COP28 president Sultan Al-Jaber

Photo credit: climatechangenews.com

in humanly generated environmental changes. Perhaps we might hold Species Remembrance ceremonies on November 30th in which we pray also for COP28.

Maybe now is the time to start planning and considering how we might learn, act, lament and intercede between now and COP28, taking the opportunities of Creationtide in September and the solemn reflections of November. How can we inform and engage other Christians, our churches and those of good will to hear the call of God in the cry of the Earth? Let's consider "A fair COP?" How can we collectively raise awareness, especially foregrounding fairness in relation to indigenous, poor and marginalised majorities; recompense for the loss and damage that "our" historic CO<sub>2</sub> has wrought upon the poor, and upon the living systems of the earth.

Let's make space for the processing of difficult acknowledgements. Around us, denial and bargaining play out individually and culturally. Can we be good neighbours, who listen and support those struggling with a huge shift in their life expectations? Not argumentatively, but compassionately. How do we begin now to equip ourselves to offer care, support, stability and education? There are many Green Christian materials and projects to help support these efforts. Consider encouraging your church groups to follow our Deep Waters course. Look at Green Christian's worship resources and ideas for liturgy and ritual on the Borrowed Time website.

Some have coined the word "hopium" for those responses to the climate and environmental emergency which try to reassure that technology, or the invisible hand, or small actions will make everything right. Hopium keeps people passive and not doing

<sup>1</sup> [theguardian.com/environment/2023/jun/07/uae-oil-firm-cop28-climate-summit-emails-sultan-al-jaber-adnoc](https://theguardian.com/environment/2023/jun/07/uae-oil-firm-cop28-climate-summit-emails-sultan-al-jaber-adnoc)

<sup>2</sup> [mailchi.mp/climateintercessors/march2023newsletter](https://mailchi.mp/climateintercessors/march2023newsletter)

what we can do towards the necessary changes. It is like the “hope” of “hopes and prayers” after a shooting rampage in the USA – a way to appear to care while not doing anything to help. If our take on faith leads us to sit complacently or to give up, it is not Christian hope. If rather, it leads us to work for the wellbeing of others and for the sustaining and healing of the earth, then *“our work is not in vain”* (1 Cor. 15:58) and nor is our hope.

As COP28 approaches, we'll be looking out for others who are planning things in relation to the COP; please help keep us informed and watch out for updates and suggestions. We can be salt and light among active environmentalists as well as in the wider world. ■

## Further reading

[cop28.com/en/](https://cop28.com/en/)  
[lostspeciesday.org/](https://lostspeciesday.org/)  
[Borrowedtime.earth](https://Borrowedtime.earth)

For daily prayer: [ourcommonprayer.org/2022/11/17/the-season-of-holy-reverence/](https://ourcommonprayer.org/2022/11/17/the-season-of-holy-reverence/)



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