

Prayer guide for the care of creation



December 2010

"The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.

The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul;
The decrees of the Lord are sure, making wise the simple.
More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold;
Sweeter also than honey, and drippings of the honeycomb."

(Psalm 19)

"Let no man think or maintain that a man can search too far or be too well-studied in the book of God's word or in the book of God's works . . . , but rather let men endeavour an endless progress of proficiency in both."

(Francis Bacon)

"Our Christian stewardship demands that we care for the whole of God's creation, and especially for our poorer neighbours wherever they may be, remembering the words of Jesus at the end of his parable about stewardship in Luke 12.48: *From him to whom much is given, much will be required.*"

(Sir John Houghton)



Wednesday 1st December

All this week and next, the UN Climate Change Conference meets at Cancun, Mexico. Last year's Copenhagen Accord included a promise to provide \$30 billion a year in fast-track finance for developing countries from 2010 to 2012, rising to \$100 billion a year by 2020. "This funding will come from a variety of sources, public and private." Unfortunately, even the public funding could be made up of loans as well as grants. The private funding is even less predictable as investments and markets are notoriously unsteady. Clear definitions, verification of projects and their effectiveness are top priorities for Cancun 2010.

Thursday 2nd December

A deal on protecting forests was near completion at Copenhagen when the talks collapsed. Even without the threat of climate change, humankind still needs forests for generating rainfall, preventing erosion, maintaining biodiversity, supporting native cultures and providing sustenance for millions of the world's poorest people. If we add carbon storage to the list, it is clear why conserving forests is so essential to our survival as a species.

Friday 3rd December

A core group of 29 countries has been working on REDD + mechanisms (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation & Degradation plus allowances for conservation and protected areas). Because our concept of wealth is based not on the services we receive from nature but on the goods we extract from it, the natural world is assumed to be both worthless and limitless. This is why forests are still disappearing at a rate of 50 football pitches a minute or 5.5 million hectares a year. Instead of treasuring forests as carbon stores, the global economy requires their conversion to palm oil,

soya and beef, even though burning forests is responsible for 20% of all global CO₂ emissions.

Saturday 4th December

Today, starting at noon from Speakers' Corner, Hyde Park, people from around the country will assemble for a march to Parliament to promote Zero Carbon Britain.

At 11 am a Climate Service, organised by CEL and Operation Noah, takes place at the Church of the Annunciation, Bryanston Street, London W1H 7AH.

At 2.30 there will be a Climate Emergency Rally in Whitehall. For more details, visit www.campaigncc.org/climatemarch2010.

Sunday 5th December

Father, we thank you that out of the sea and from the earth we receive the provision you have made for all our needs.

We thank you for the skills in harvesting the earth's resources that people have passed from one generation to another.

We thank you for those through whose vision and work the products of our harvesting are channelled into areas of need. Amen.

Monday 6th December

Ireland's problems have been much in the news, but Ireland, under the its Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan (now out for consultation) could soon produce over ten times the energy it now consumes, by harnessing the wind, waves and tides along its west coast. Energy Minister Eamonn Ryan said: "Every megawatt of renewable energy that goes into the national grid reduces our €6 billion annual fossil fuel bill, reduces our carbon emissions and creates Irish jobs." Much of the funding comes from the NER 300 programme supported by the European Commission, the European Investment Bank and EU member states.

Ireland has the strongest wind and wave power in Western Europe and, given the grid connections with Britain, much of our future energy resource could come from our neighbour across the Irish Sea. Applications for funding can be accepted on 01 8082100 or emailed to: ner300@dcent.gov.ie

Tuesday 7th December

According to a report from the Global Carbon Project, the growth rate of atmospheric CO₂ in 2009 was 1.6 ppm, so bringing the total figure to 387 ppm – 39% more than the figure at the start of the Industrial Revolution. The present concentration is the highest recorded over at least the last two million years. While most developed countries showed a small reduction in emissions since 2008, China's emissions increased by 8%, India's by 6.2% and South Korea's by 1.4%.

Wednesday 8th December

A report from the Carbon Disclosure Project finds that that 300 of Europe's biggest companies are failing to achieve the target of a 1.9% annual reduction in carbon emissions required under the EU Emissions Trading Scheme. "The current trajectory set by these companies is not sufficient for Europe to meet the ETS emissions cap by 2020." The financial sector has the worst record in both disclosure and performance.

Thursday 9th December

Unilever, whose products include Dove, Knorr and Lipton, has launched a Sustainable Living Plan with over fifty economic and environmental targets, with the aim of halving greenhouse gas emissions, water use and waste generation by 2020. "By halving the total carbon, water and waste impact of our products, primarily through innovation in the way we source, make and

package them, we can help people make a small difference every time they use them."

Friday 10th December

The Sustainable Livestock Bill last month failed to win the support of the necessary 100 MPs (see entry for November 12th) when many MPs left for Armistice Day events in their constituencies. However, the debate showed widespread support for regulating the import of soya for animal feed from Amazonian rainforests. The Bill will be re-introduced on June 10th 2011.

The Public Bodies Sustainable Food Bill, which failed to be debated, will be introduced on January 21st. It covers the food, worth £2 billion, bought annually by the Government for our hospitals, care homes and armed forces. The Bill aims to set ethical and health standards for public food.

Saturday 11th December

A new FoE report called "Nanotechnology, climate and energy" examines claims that nanotechnology can increase energy efficiency and curtail climate change. It concludes that it:

- Offers little in the way of environmental benefits
- Is often more energy-intensive than conventional approaches
- Sometimes creates environmental risks.

"Despite industry claims, nanotechnology will not significantly contribute to energy saving and greenhouse gas reduction."

Sunday 12th December

Father, we pray for all scientists, that they may combine zeal in research with care for its consequences for the world and its creatures: For all politicians, that they may be delivered from self-seeking and the short view, and may recognise that they hold the world in trust:

For all who feel helpless as they see the dangers to our world that they seem unable to influence.

Help each one of us to see more clearly the part that we are called to play.

Monday 13th December

International lawyers are examining the role of legal action in protecting the global environment. Genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and crimes of aggression are already actionable in the International Criminal Court. "Ecocide" defined as "extensive damage to or loss of ecosystems of a given territory to such an extent that peaceful enjoyment by the inhabitants of that territory has been severely diminished" should perhaps be added to the list. Lawyer Polly Higgins explains: "Ecocide leads to resource depletion, and where there is escalation of resource depletion, war comes chasing behind. Where such destruction arises out of the actions of humankind, ecocide can be regarded as a crime against peace." Few countries have laws imposing fines on top of the cost of the damage and cleaning up the mess. "What price," she asks, "should be set on the harm – present and future – to children's health or life expectancy, or the extinction of, or pain inflicted on, local species of wildlife?"

Tuesday 14th December

The Aarhus Convention, which Britain has signed, gives the public the right to information on, inter alia, government decision-making processes on environmental matters and specifies that charges for information must be "reasonable." Unfortunately the cost of access to information is generally prohibitive. However, the Marine Conservation Society believes that a decision in August by the UN Aarhus Compliance Committee "will enable individuals to mount environmental court cases without fear of the cost, and that Government will have to

introduce a clear and consistent framework to implement the Convention, allowing rich and poor alike access to environmental justice."

Wednesday 15th December

Lord Stern of Brentford has publicly stated that Europe and the Far East are forging ahead of the US in controlling emissions and switching to low-carbon energy. "China in particular knows that the green race for the new industrial revolution is on, and they see that as a big source of growth. They would not tolerate having their industries undermined by American competitors that had not paid for their emissions. Nations that are taking strong action on emissions could start imposing restrictions on dirty US exports – such as aircraft, some cars and machine tools."

Thursday 16th December

Following news of Britain's first solar PV farm (see November 24th), some German and Chinese companies are offering British farmers up to £50,000 a year to fill their fields with solar PV arrays, with more than 100 planning applications in the pipeline. The Feed-in Tariff scheme, in operation since April, currently pays 41.3 p. per kWh generated, but in the current economic climate, the scheme looks vulnerable.

Friday 17th December

A WWF/China Council report called "China's Ecological Footprint 2010" finds that a world consuming resources and producing wastes at the level of China in 2007 would need the equivalent of 1.2 planets to support its activities. Half of China's carbon footprint comes from energy demand in buildings, transport, consumption of goods and provision of public services. And yet "China's global influence today is greater than at any time in recent history and, by reducing pressure on natural

resources through better management and increased efficiency, China can play an important role in sustaining the global environment while gaining competitiveness.”

Saturday 18th December

Waste company Sita has unveiled plans to build Britain's first plastic-to-diesel plants, converting mixed plastic waste into vehicle fuel. Ten such plants are planned, processing 60,000 tonnes of mixed waste a year and providing diesel fuel for commercial vehicle fleets and local authorities. Pilot schemes have been tested successfully, based on technology provided by Irish company Cynar.

Sunday 19th December

Dear Father, we cannot bring about justice worldwide, but help us to begin where we are. Make us honest and just in all our dealings, true in our words and actions.

We cannot alter the course of suffering in an unjust world, but help us to light candles in the darkness, in the name of Jesus Christ, who will bring the dawn of righteousness and peace at his glorious day of Justice and Judgement.

Monday 20th December

Research by WRAP (Waste Resources Action Programme) finds that UK households throw away 8.3 million tonnes of food a year and estimates that at least 800,000 tonnes of this is edible and within its sell-by date. This is a huge waste of resources including energy, and as it decomposes it gives off methane, a potent greenhouse gas. Food distribution charity FareShare collects food and drink close to its sell-by date, packs it up in lorries and distributes it to community organisations such as shelters, hostels and breakfast clubs, so helping to feed around 29,000 people each day. Members of the UK Food and Drink Federation aspire to send zero food and packaging waste to landfill

by 2016. Their partnership with FareShare is helping to reach that goal. Nestle has adopted FareShare as a lead charity partner helping them to reduce their waste costs by 90%.

Tuesday 21st December

Biomass, such as wood and organic waste, is an abundant source of fuel for generating electricity. In rural India, energy suppliers install local biomass plants to supply electricity on a pay-as-you-use basis. Husk Power Systems uses rice husks to provide electricity to Indian villages. The technology simply converts what would otherwise be a waste product into a fuel for renewable power.

Wednesday 22nd December

Zero Emissions Research & Initiatives (ZERI) was founded by Gunter Pauli to research the use of one waste system as the resource for another. Father Godfrey Nzamujo at the Songhai Centre in Benin and Paolo Lugari at Las Gaviotas in Colombia use bacteria-inoculated manure to generate biogas in an anaerobic digester. The residue of slurry becomes the nutrient source for algae farming, while the residual water promotes the proliferation of organisms which, in turn, become fish food.

Thursday 23rd December

In Porto Alegre, Brazil, Professor Jorge Alberto Vieira Costa redirects CO₂ from a coal-fired power station to provide nutrient for spirulina algae, which in turn produce protein-rich food supplements and biofuels. The infrastructure needed is already available thanks to the warm water retention basin at the power station. The scheme demonstrates how a waste product such as surplus CO₂ can be converted from a pollutant to a resource. For further information, see: www.zeri.org and www.blueeconomy.de

Friday 24th December

Dear Lord, there sit apart in lonely places,
On this, the gladdest night of all the year,
Some stricken ones, with sad and weary faces
To whom the thought of Christmas brings
no cheer.
For these, O Father, our petition hear,
And send the pitying Christ Child very near.
(Anon.)

Saturday 25th December

Christmas Day

Jesus, new-born child of all time,
We greet your birth with wide-eyed delight.
You are precious beyond words,
For our world needs your presence more than
ever.
Let the angels' promise of your good news
Offering joy and peace to all the world
Be heard by those who lead and guide.
Let the rulers bow down and all creation greet
this holy moment
As we seek to grasp its magnitude.
For you are God's gift
Silently delivered to every human heart.

Sunday 26th December

"The measure of life is not in the heap of goods
or honours nor the length of days one gathers,
but in the overcoming of hate and despair, the
sharing of burdens, the celebrations of joy and
love that each day offers." (Beulah Stotter)
Lord, you told us that a person's life does not
consist of the things he possesses. Help us not
to judge others by what they own. Help us not to
want more and more things for ourselves, but to
spend and be spent in seeking the true riches
that will endure to life everlasting.

Monday 27th December

Energy suppliers have always made more
money by promoting more consumption of

energy – so compromising efforts to reduce
consumption. When suppliers' profits are linked
to reduced demand, they then have an incentive
to promote energy saving.
In California, profits have been decoupled from
sales by agreeing with the state government a
pre-determined rate of profit. Thus, firms profit
by supporting energy-saving initiatives.
Consequently, energy demand has flattened in
California while in other states it has continued
to rise.

Tuesday 28th December

A free social networking website pioneered by
Welectricity in the Caribbean provides a fun and
instructive way to keep track of and reduce
household energy use, without using smart
meters. The site has members in over 40
countries. Users supply information about their
energy bills, appliances and household
numbers, so generating a summary of energy
use. Users create a network of friends and
neighbours to compare each other's energy use
and share energy-saving tips via photos and
videos. See: www.wwf.org.uk/innovation

Wednesday 29th December

Ecuador depends on oil extraction for more than
half its export earnings, yet its government has
pledged not to exploit the estimated 846 barrels
of oil beneath the Yasuni National Park. The
government is issuing certified guarantees in
return for financial contributions to a trust fund
administered by the UN Development
Programme. Sceptics however say that Ecuador
has plenty of oil resources elsewhere which
could be exploited but would be cheaper to
protect. Some \$1.5 billion has already been
offered to the trust fund which will support
reforestation initiatives, development of
renewable energy, social programmes and
scientific research.

Thursday 30th December

Concentrated Solar Power (CSP) is the means of using mirrors to concentrate solar energy on to tubes containing fluid, which then heat up to provide steam to drive turbines. Output from Spain's CSP and photovoltaic systems now equals the output of one nuclear power station and is still growing fast – thanks to incentives provided by feed-in tariffs (FITs).

A new CSP plant in Sicily uses molten salt as its heat transfer fluid, so enabling the heat to be stored and delivered outside peak sunshine hours.

The UK FIT scheme is already encouraging growth in solar PV systems.

PriceWaterhouseCoopers predicts a 30-fold increase in capacity by 2015, amounting to one gigawatt.

Friday 31st December

New Year's Eve

Father God, as we prepare to enter the New Year, we approach your throne of grace in fear and humility. We confess that we have brought your world to the brink of destruction through our blindness and greed. Help us to examine our lives, that each of us may ask ourselves what part we can play in restoring and renewing your creation. This we ask in the Name of your Son, who came to save us from ourselves.

Amen.

Sources:

Green Futures
Green Health Watch Magazine
Resurgence
www.edie.net

Additional Prayers

If you would like to receive the prayer diary each month by [email](#) (free), please email prayer-guide@christian-ecology.org.uk

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Winter Fuschia. by Poppy Pickard

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