

Sources:

“World on the Edge” by Lester Brown
Wells for India newsletter (website :
www.wellsforindia.org)
www.edie.net

Additional Prayers

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Picture on front cover:

Seedpod Sculpture at Kew Gardens by Poppy Pickard

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Prayer guide for the care of creation

September 2011

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”
(Revelation 3.20)

“To pray is nothing more than to open the door, giving Jesus access to our needs and permitting him to exercise his power in dealing with them. It requires no strength. It is only a question of wills. Will we give Jesus access to our needs?”
(Ole Hallesby)

“The work of praying is prerequisite to all other work in the kingdom of God, for the simple reason that it is by prayer that we couple the powers of heaven to our own helplessness.”
(Ole Hallesby)



Thursday 1st September

Today marks the beginning of Creation Time – the time between now and October 4th when churches, groups and individuals acknowledge their dependence on God's generosity for their daily food. Our prayer needs include agriculture, commerce, sharing, trade justice, animal welfare, soil and water conservation and many other aspects. Churches Together in Britain & Ireland provide resources for free download at: www.ctbi.org.uk/542

Friday 2nd September

Water tables are falling fast throughout the Middle East. Saudi Arabia used to be self-sufficient in wheat through tapping an aquifer for irrigation. But the wheat harvest fell from nearly 3 million tons to less than 1 million last year. By next year there will be little or no home-grown wheat and the country will be wholly dependent on imported grain to feed its 3 million people. Syria's grain harvest has fallen by 20% since peaking in 2001. Iraq's has fallen 25% since peaking in 2002. Jordan used to produce 300,000 tons of grain a year: now it produces 60,000 and must import over 90% of its supply. Israel imports 98% of the grain it consumes.

Saturday 3rd September

It takes 1,000 tons of water to produce 1 ton of grain, so countries that import grain are, in effect, importing the water which is already depleting aquifers in the exporting countries. 70% of the world's freshwater use is for irrigation, but the growing cities of the world are increasingly turning to farmers for their water supplies. For example Chennai (formerly Madras) relies on a water transport industry which buys water from farmers and hauls it to the city's thirsty residents.

In California, city authorities representing 19 million people have contracted to buy 137 million tones of water a year from farmers over the next 35 years. The farmers have to agree because they are offered far more for the water than for the crops that would have been irrigated.

Sunday 4th September

Father, forgive us for our short-sightedness, our greed and for the part we have played, however unwittingly, in the destruction of your world. Forgive us that we have exploited the world's resources for ourselves while so many others lack the basic necessities. Create in us a new heart and a new determination, that we may adopt a lifestyle that is gentle to the earth and just to the poor.

Monday 5th September

Wells for India reports that, throughout Rajasthan, extraction of groundwater is running at 137% of the recharge rate. In 2005 the gap between demand and supply was 7.7 cu. metres of water. But department officials estimate that only 60% of the water supply reaches its intended recipients: the rest is stolen.

According to this year's census, only 650 cu. metres of water is available per person per year. Experts are advising the state government to increase water charges so as to curb demand. The water harvesting technology contributed by Wells for India is proving vital for sustaining rural people where the charity operates.

www.wellsforindia.org

Tuesday 6th September

The majority of the extra 3 billion people projected to be on this earth by 2050 will be born in water-stressed countries such as

which is having a devastating effect on people living in poverty around the world. Those people need the government to introduce a robust version of mandatory carbon reporting that will give companies and investors all the information they need to clean up their acts and help solve the climate crisis."

Wednesday 28th September

The draft National Planning Policy Framework announced last month by the Government is, according to WWF, predominantly focussed on short-term challenges such as reducing the economic deficit. "This approach merely reinforces the boom-and-bust cycle by encouraging lots of development now to meet immediate demand, with the environmental fallout and social consequences to be dealt with at some unknown time in the future. The Government's aspirations for a reformed planning system are undermined by a presumption in favour of development which makes it too difficult to prove when a proposal might be unsustainable."

The NPPF is now open to public consultation.

www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/baif/1951811.pdf

Thursday 29th September

A new Government report shows that over the past year road traffic has barely fallen and congestion has worsened despite soaring fuel prices causing many motorists to cut their journeys. Another report, written by environmental consultancy Halcrow finds that only a tiny fraction of the £6 billion fund allocated for Local Transport Plans is being spent on sustainable travel, despite recommendations from the Committee on Climate Change for a roll-out across the UK of the Smarter Travel Choices programme for

greener travel, such as walking, cycling, better public transport and car-sharing. FoE comments: "The Government must heed the advice of its own green adviser and ensure that every local council plays its part by boosting their spending on schemes to get people walking, cycling and using public transport. Smarter Travel Choices are a win-win for councils and people. They are an easy and value-for-money way to cut congestion and emissions and to protect people from rising petrol prices."

Saturday 30th September

New Government figures show that the number of households living in fuel poverty rose by 1 million to 5.5 million in 2009. According to the Chief Medical Officer's 2009 report, the NHS spends £859 million a year treating cold-related illnesses due to poorly-insulated homes.

FoE comments: "It's a national disgrace that millions of people are suffering in cold homes they can't afford to heat. Insulating them properly would help vulnerable households to save money on fuel bills, stay warm and healthy and reduce our dependence on dirty and increasingly expensive fossil fuels. The new Energy Bill should include a plan for a nationwide refurb. The Government must bring forward from 2018 a proposed minimum energy efficiency standard for rented homes, which would lift 150,000 households out of fuel poverty.

The recently-announced carbon tax should be used to pay for better insulation to help people shivering in cold homes."

Thursday 22nd September

Since 2000, annual losses of the world's forests amounting to 32 million acres far exceed the regrowth of 19 million acres. Deforestation in Asia is driven by demand for timber and land for palm oil plantations. In Latin America the driving force is world demand for soya beans and beef. In Africa the culprit is land clearance for agriculture and the demand for fuel wood.

Last September the UN Foundation announced plans to get 100 million efficient stoves into homes by 2020. These use far less wood than traditional stoves and are less polluting.

Friday 23rd September

When the Korean War ended, the mountainous north was largely deforested, as Haiti is today. From 1960 onwards the South Korean government mobilised thousands of people in village co-operatives to dig trenches and create terraces for supporting trees on barren mountains. Today forests cover nearly 65% of the country – an area of more than 15 million acres.

It can be done.

Saturday 24th September

At the Johannesburg Summit in 2002, coastal nations pledged to set up networks of marine reserves and parks that would cover 10% of the world's oceans by 2012. Today some 5,000 marine protected areas cover less than 1% of the world's oceans and fishing is banned in only 12.8% of those areas. Yet no-fishing reserves can restore populations well beyond their boundaries. In the Gulf of Maine, bottom trawling was banned in 3 marine reserves totalling 6,600 square miles. Within two years population densities of scallops increased by 91% and species diversity rose by 20%.

Sunday 25th September

"Lord, you asked for my hands that you might use them for your purposes. I gave them for a moment, then withdrew them, for the work was hard."

Joe Seramane of South Africa

Help us, Lord Jesus the carpenter, to be ready to get our hands dirty in your service. Amen.

Monday 26th September

A Cambridge University research team led by Andrew Balmford has analysed the cost of managing 83 relatively small marine reserves and concluded that managing reserves that covered 30% of the world's oceans would cost \$12-14 billion a year, without taking into account the additional gain from recovering fisheries, which could amount to \$70-80 billion a year. "Our study suggests that we could afford to conserve the seas and their resources in perpetuity, and for less than we are now spending on subsidies to exploit them unsustainably."

This global network of marine reserves would create more than 1 million extra jobs.

Tuesday 27th September

A report commissioned by the Co-Operative Bank, Christian Aid, WWF and the Aldersgate Group finds that mandatory carbon reporting by large businesses would bring benefits amounting to £2,315 million at a cost of £1,150 million. Its findings have shown that, besides being good for business, mandatory carbon reporting would play a vital part in the transition to a low-carbon economy. Paul Brannen of Christian Aid said: "UK companies are responsible for a significant share of global emissions, and are fuelling climate change

Yemen. Its capital, Sana'a, a city of 2 million, finds that even 1,300 foot wells are running dry, so oil drilling equipment has to be used to dig wells up to half a mile deep.

Irrigation can be notoriously inefficient. In India and Pakistan crops can use only 40% of water brought to the surface: in Israel, Japan and Taiwan the figure is 50-60%. China's target of raising water efficiency to 55% by 2030 depends on:

1. Raising the price of water.
2. Providing incentives for irrigation efficient technologies such as drip-irrigation.
3. Developing local institutions to manage the process.

Wednesday 7th September

Other ways of reducing water consumption include:

- Recycling urban water supplies (grey water)
- Shifting from water-hungry coal-fired power stations to wind farms
- Reducing meat consumption. This can also reduce the 35% share of grain production that goes to feed livestock.

Thursday 8th September

Even in the USA only 4% of irrigated land uses drip irrigation. Simple systems involving a raised tank with flexible plastic tubing to distribute the water can both reduce costs and raise yields. Sandra Postel of the Global Water Policy Project estimates that drip technology could profitably irrigate 10 million hectares (that's 10% of India's cropland).

Where farmers join in managing irrigation systems, as happens everywhere in Mexico, the costs of maintenance are also shared.

Friday 9th September

For people living in Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador, the loss of Andean glaciers means the loss of dry-season river flow, and threatens both their food security and electricity supply, since half the region's electricity comes from hydropower. Peru's arid coastal region includes the capital, Lima, with a population of 9 million. Given the coming decline in its water supply, a UN study describes Lima as "a crisis waiting to happen."

Saturday 10th September

Lester Brown in "World on the Edge" estimates the cost of stabilising water tables worldwide at \$10 billion. The total of all programmes to restore the earth's carrying capacity would be \$110 billion. This compares with the annual US military budget of \$661 billion and the total world military budget of \$1,522 billion.

Sunday 11th September

Lord God, we pray that your holy and life-giving Spirit may so move in the hearts of men and women and among those who govern the nations that the barriers of fear, suspicion and hatred which separate us may crumble, and the body of humankind may be healed of its divisions and be united in addressing the serious problems of resource depletion, overpopulation and climate change.

Monday 12th September

Today and tomorrow at the RHS Halls in London, 400 leaders from business, governments, academia and civil society in over 20 countries meet to propose policies on climate change for consideration at this year's COP17 summit meeting in Durban. The theme of the conference is "Reaching for Zero, Innovation, Growth & the Clean Industrial

Revolution". Tony Gourlay, CEO of Global Initiatives, one of the sponsors, said: "The B4E Summit will call for a higher level of collaborative action on climate change; business, government and NGOs will discuss the massive investment, innovation and policy shift required to accelerate transformative change." For more details, go to:

www.wwf.org.uk/what_we_do/press_centre/

Tuesday 13th September

Last summer, from late June to mid-August, Russia experienced searing temperatures of up to 40° C, causing 300-400 forest fires and reducing the grain harvest by 60 million tons below average. If this had happened in America's Mid-West instead of Russia, grain prices throughout the world would have skyrocketed. Food riots would have erupted (as they did in 2008). World stocks of grain would have fallen from 72 days consumption (as now) to about 52 days. According to Lester Brown: "Food price stability now depends on a record or near-record world harvest every year."

Wednesday 14th September

The three causes of growth in world demand for food are:

- Population growth
- Rising affluence leading to increased consumption of meat and dairy products
- Increased use of grain to produce fuel for cars.

World population is increasing by about 80 million a year, but - as Martin Luther King pointed out years ago - "the modern plague of overpopulation is soluble by means we have discovered and with resources we possess." Consumption of meat and dairy products is a matter of human choice. Either we will choose a

less resource-intensive diet or it will be forced on us, whether we like it or not.

In 2009 119 million tons of the US corn harvest went into ethanol distilleries to fuel cars. This amount exceeded the combined grain harvests of China and Australia. This again is the result of human choices. Either we will prioritise food production or it will be forced on us.

Thursday 15th September

In 2009, more cars were sold in China than in the USA. If China were to reach the levels of car ownership in the USA, i.e. 3 cars per 4 people, it would have 1 billion cars - more than the entire world has today - and the land required to accommodate them would cover 2/3rds of the area now used to grow rice. This is one reason why China, like South Korea, Vietnam and Saudi Arabia, is buying up large blocks of land in Ethiopia, Sudan and elsewhere to grow food for their people at home.

Friday 16th September

Acquisitions of land abroad are also, in effect, water acquisitions. Whether the land is irrigated or rain-fed, the acquisitions include water resources in the host country. Egypt could lose much of its essential water from the Nile if land acquisitions in Ethiopia and Sudan reduce the flow. If food prices rise in the host countries, will the hungry people stand by and watch as grain is exported from land that was once theirs? Those acquiring land in hungry countries could be sowing the seeds of conflict. Agricultural equipment is easily sabotaged.

Saturday 17th September

Hurricane Katrina in 2005 forced the evacuation of over a million people. 700,000 eventually returned, the remaining 300,00 have become

climate refugees, in most cases without homes or jobs.

3,000 people from the island nation of Tuvalu, which is threatened by rising sea levels, have been given homes in New Zealand. But there are millions of Bangladeshis equally threatened by climate change. India is building a 10-foot high fence along the border and the USA is also erecting a fence along its border with Mexico. It might be less painful and far cheaper if the root causes were addressed, i.e. working with threatened countries to restore their soils, pastures and forests, to accelerate the shift to smaller families and to help people break out of poverty.

Sunday 18th September

Dear Father, you have given us matchless gifts in the realm of science and technology. Help us to understand that you alone are the source of all truth and understanding. Let us never be blinded by the lure of the market-place or tempted to put at risk the lives and health of fellow-humans. Watch over our motives, loving Father, that we may always seek your Kingdom first and foremost. This we ask for the sake of your Son, who died that we might live.

Monday 19th September

While clever marketing has convinced many that bottled water is safer and healthier than tap water, a WWF study reveals that regulations for the quality of tap water far outnumber those for bottled water. In countries where water is unsafe, it is far cheaper to boil or filter water than to buy it in bottles. To manufacture the 28 billion plastic bottles used each year in the USA requires the equivalent of 17 million barrels of oil. This, with the energy used to refrigerate and transport it, means that the USA bottled water industry consumes 50 million barrels of oil a year - equal to 13% of US oil imports from Saudi Arabia.

Tuesday 20th September

Lester Brown's Plan B energy economy is powered largely electricity, but relies neither on further use of nuclear power nor on the still experimental option of Carbon Capture and Sequestration.

From 2000 to 2010 the world's wind-generated electricity increased from 17,000 MW. to nearly 200,000. Texas alone has 9,700 MW. of wind generating capacity plus a huge amount under development. China and Germany each have 26,000 MW. Since wind turbines occupy only 1% of the land covered by a wind farm, farmers can continue to grow crops and graze cattle there. In effect they double-crop their land, harvesting electricity in addition to wheat, corn or cattle. In the US Great Plains ranchers receive \$3,000 - \$10,000 a year in royalties for each turbine. An acre of land planted with corn can yield \$1,000-worth of ethanol a year. That same acre, used for a wind turbine, can produce \$300,000-worth of electricity a year. This helps to explain why investors find wind farms so attractive.

Wednesday 21st September

In 2009, eleven European firms led by the German insurer Munich Re announced a strategy to develop 6,000 MW. of solar thermal generating capacity using the technology known as Concentrated Solar Power (CSP). The plan is to build a 1,900 mile high-voltage transmission line from Adrar in the Algerian desert to Aachen in Germany.

The USA and Spain are the two leaders in CSP technology and have over 100 plants operating or under development. If such a plant were to be sited in the deserts of North-West India, it could meet most of India's electricity needs.