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Picture on front cover: Autumn Tree by Judith Allinson

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Prayer guide for the care of creation

Dec 2011

“We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.”

(Romans 8.22-23)

“Be patient then, brothers, until the Lord’s coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord’s coming is near.”

(James 5. 7 & 8)

“If you, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!”

(Matthew 7. 11)



Wednesday 1st December

According to Nick Reeves, director of CIWEM: “While we have been making headway in cleaning up our rivers and beaches, the air we breathe and the water we drink . . . we have created trashy inner city settlements where the poor, the vulnerable, the hopeless and the unhinged have been kettled into urban breezeblock ghettos that have become a breeding ground for disaffection, anger and feral behaviour . . . These rotten environments turn on its head the notion of sustainable development. Sustainability is about much more than water and energy efficiency, insulation and recycling. The human dimension somehow got forgotten. The environment is about the condition in which we all live together, not just the well-connected, the empowered middle class and those with sharp elbows and loud voices.”

Friday 2nd December

Reeves blames governments for promoting “a pernicious form of consumer greed that measures human worth by what we own, how much we have and where we live. The noses of the poor have been rubbed in it. They have seen the widening gap between themselves and the rest, and

the erosion of opportunities that are available to others with money, influence and power. They see a parallel universe peopled by millionaire footballers, over-bloated celebs and craven bone-headed bankers. No wonder we’ve got social problems.” Elsewhere he blames the advertising industry. But perhaps governments and advertisers alike are simply pandering to our own inbuilt avarice and greed. Are we using them as scapegoats for our own guilt?

Saturday 3rd December

Perhaps Advent is a good time to review our priorities. “What is it about Christmas that requires us to consume and waste with such abandon?” asks CEL member Ruth Jarman. If it’s true that a stable is a suitable birthplace for our God, and that even princes only need three gifts, why do we eat, drink and spend as if we were celebrating the birth of the free-market economy? According to Mike Berners-Lee in “How Bad are Bananas? – The Carbon Footprint of Everything” an average adult spends £400 in presents, of which only half will be wanted, and £150 on extra food, of

Saturday 31st December

Father God, as we prepare to enter a 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 re-examine our lives, that each of us may ask ourselves what part we can play in restoring and renewing your creation. This we ask for the sake of your Son who came down to us to redeem this whole world of yours, not just humanity. (John 3.16)

Sources:

- “The End of Growth” by Richard Heinberg
- CIWEM Business News
- Resurgence
- www.edie.net

Additional Prayers

Wednesday 28th December

A paper published in "Nature" for October 20th outlines four ways of meeting the demand for food arising from an ever-growing population and per capita consumption.

1. The expansion of agriculture into sensitive ecosystems must stop. Instead, crop yields must be improved on under-performing landscapes by genetic improvements, adopting lessons from organic systems and precision agriculture, streamlining the distribution of agricultural inputs and improving market infrastructure.

2. Industrialised agriculture is vulnerable to disasters such as climate disturbances, new diseases and economic calamities. Resilience must be increased by halting deforestation, especially in the tropics where deforestation has such harmful effects on biodiversity, carbon storage and other environmental services.

Thursday 29th December

3. Agriculture has both benefits and costs, but methods of evaluating the trade-offs are poorly

developed. We need better tools to improve management decisions, productivity and environmental stewardship.

4. There are many paths to improving the production, food security and environmental performance of agriculture and we should not be locked into any single approach, whether it be conventional agriculture, genetic modification or organic farming.

Friday 30th December

"Donor fatigue" may indeed be happening, but perhaps people just want re-assurance that their support is going to the right organisation, which values not just their money, but their ideas, their time and their suggestions. Better Place (www.betterplace.org) allows anyone to upload a project, and people who know it and its founder can vouch for it as Project Advocates, so creating a web of trust. Others who have visited the project (Project Visitors) can assure potential supporters about its efficacy. So the web of trust grows and more funds are donated.

which one-third will be wasted. His advice:

1. Drop the idea that the cost of your presents has any relation to the value you place on your friendships: be generous to the planet and give thoughtful presents, with the receipt so that they can be returned.
2. Video-Skype your distant relatives and plan to see them properly another time.
3. Make a pact with your friends to keep all gifts below a strict limit of £1 and donate the savings to charity.

Sunday 4th December

Lord, teach us to value our possessions rightly, so that we never think more of them than of the people around us. Make us ready to use them freely for the good of others and to share them generously without grudging. Thank you for the beautiful things that we enjoy possessing. May our enjoyment be wholesome and may we hold lightly to all we own, for the sake of Him who became poor that we might be eternally rich.

Monday 5th December

"It must always have been seen by political economists that the increase in wealth is not boundless, that at the end of what they term the progressive state lies the stationary state." (John Stuart Mill)

And yet modern economic theory holds that Nature is merely a subset of the economy – an endless pile of resources ready to be transformed into wealth. The reality is that the human economy exists within and entirely depends upon Nature. Richard Heinberg in "The End of Growth" points out the absurdity of an economic measurement that describes the destruction of irreplaceable forests as an economic gain.

Tuesday 6th December

Heinberg believes that, while our oil supplies can survive the current political unrest in the Middle East, "it may be only a matter of time before Saudi Arabia is engulfed in sectarian and political turmoil, and when that happens, the world will see the highest oil spike ever, and central banks will be powerless to stop the ensuing economic carnage."

Wednesday 7th December

According to the UN Global Environmental Outlook for 2007: "By 2025 about 1.8 billion people will be living in countries or regions with absolute water scarcity, and two-thirds of the world population would be under conditions of water of water stress – the threshold for meeting the water requirements for agriculture, industry, domestic uses, energy and the environment."

The vast Ogallala aquifer beneath the Great Plains of the USA supplies water to 27% of the country's irrigated lands, but is being depleted at an alarming rate. Pumping water from deep aquifers takes energy, but generating energy itself needs water. This is but one fundamental flaw in the idea of continuous economic growth.

Thursday 8th December

Old agreements allow Egypt to use more than half of the Nile's flow. Without it, Egypt would be a desert. Now those agreements are being challenged by countries such as Ethiopia and Sudan, which are experiencing rapid population growth. Similar tensions exist in the Middle East over rivers, such as the

Euphrates and the Jordan, which cross national boundaries.

Friday 9th December

World grain production during the 20th century increased by 500% thanks partly to the use of irrigation, new crop varieties, fertilisers, pesticides and mechanisation. But the main factor was the availability of cheap and temporarily abundant fossil fuels. Since 1986 world grain stocks have fallen from 130 days' supply to just 70.

Saturday 10th December

The challenges to food production arise from water scarcity, topsoil erosion, declining soil fertility and seed diversity plus rising costs of fossil fuel inputs. So it seems perverse of governments to offer subsidies for turning food crops into fuel crops, so driving up food prices as farmers replace wheat fields with more profitable biofuels such as maize, rapeseed and soya.

Sunday 11th December

Loving Father, we pray for all scientists, that they may combine their energy for research with care for the

Saturday 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, dear Father, our petition hear,
And send the pitying Christ Child very near. Amen.

further details and application forms go to:
<http://www.ciwem.org/competition-and-awards/living-wetlands.aspx> or email: Rosanna@ciwem.org
Closing date: 20th January 2012.

Tuesday 27th December

At meetings entitled "Engineering the Future of Water", Paul Jeffrey of Cranfield University spoke of a deep-rooted reluctance to use recycled 'grey' water, i.e. water not suitable for drinking, but good for flushing toilets and watering plants. "If water re-use is to make a more significant contribution, we have to make sure that public attitudes to recycling are appropriately understood. We know there's an instinctive resistance to recycling – often called the "yuk" factor – but we also know that the source, the use and the tightness of the re-use cycle are important determinants of public attitudes". A further obstacle is the public perception that, because it rains a lot, there is always a surplus of water. But Jenny Bashford of the NFU warned that after three dry winters, one more could lead to an acute water shortage in 2012.

Sunday 25th December

O Child of Bethlehem, grant that we may share with all our hearts in this profound mystery of Christmas. Put into human hearts the peace which they seek so desperately and which you alone can give. Help them to know one another better, and to live as children of the same Father.

(Pope John XXIII)

Monday 26th December

The CIWEM/RSPB Living Wetlands Award recognises projects which demonstrate restoration and enhancement of UK wetland habitats through sustainable development and promotion of recreational use. For

by 2050 and create thousands of new jobs.

By providing a stable investment climate, we can power the costs of renewable technology, encourage companies like Vestas and Siemens to build factories in the UK to mass-produce renewables and to create greater employment opportunities.

Renewables UK estimates that, in the marine and offshore wind sector alone, up to 116,000 new jobs could be created by 2021.

Wednesday 21st December

Aviation is one of the fastest-growing sources of greenhouse gas emissions. Yet the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) has refused to support the inclusion of international flights in the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS). WWF comments: "Everyone wants to see a global deal for aviation but, until this is in place, we need the ETS as the world's first mandatory scheme to tackle aviation emissions. It should be used to speed up progress towards a global deal, not detract from it, so ICAO should be giving it their full support."

Thursday 22nd December

25 UK-based companies have joined many in Europe, Australia and Japan in a commitment to buy only palm oil certified as sustainable. But this is less than half the number of palm oil importers. WWF comments: "We only have a few years left to act. All companies, even some of the top performers, need to move faster. Only then can we get rid of irresponsible palm oil plantations and end the unacceptable impact of the industry on forests, wildlife and communities."

Friday 23rd December

The City of London Corporation has become the first London council to reach zero waste to landfill. All its residual waste and street cleaning debris now goes to the Energy from Waste plant at Belvedere, where it is used to generate 66 MW of electricity – enough to serve around 100,000 homes. The bottom ash is transported by barge further down the Thames where the metals are recovered and the residue recycled into road building material and construction aggregates. The transfer of waste by barge saves 12,000 lorry movements a year, so reducing traffic congestion and the carbon footprint of the operation.

consequences to the world and its creatures;

For all politicians, that they may be free 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 a world that they seem unable to influence.

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

Monday 12th December

Debt crises have occurred throughout history. In the Mosaic Law, every 50th year was a Jubilee Year in which slaves and prisoners were freed and debts were cancelled. In Ancient Athens, Solon kickstarted the Athenian economy by cancelling all debts that led to slavery and serfdom. The Qur'an advises debt forgiveness of those who are unable to pay.

Heinberg advocates a modern form of universal debt jubilee in which one zero was sliced off every debt, so resetting the relationship between money values and real assets. This would cause widespread dislocation and temporary unemployment, but would provide the necessary breathing space to restructure the global

financial system to make it more sustainable and consistent with what the planet can actually provide.

Tuesday 13th December

Peter Victor in "Managing without Growth" writes: "It's possible to develop a 30-year scenario for Canada in which full employment prevails, poverty is essentially eliminated, people enjoy more leisure, greenhouse gas emissions are drastically reduced and the level of government indebtedness declines, all in the context of low and ultimately no economic growth."

Sweden, Denmark, Japan and Germany are already moving towards a steady-state economy. Overtornea in Sweden had 20% unemployment in the early '80s, but now boasts a thriving ecotourism based on organic farming, shepherding, fish farming and drama. Last year it reached its goal of freedom from fossil fuels. Herman Daly suggests these steps towards a steady-state economy:

A cap-and-trade system for extractive rights to basic natural resources;

A shift from taxing income to taxing resource depletion and environmental pollution;

Limits on income inequality;

More flexible workdays;

A new system of tariffs that would allow countries with sustainable policies to compete globally with those without.

Wednesday 14th December

Bhutan has officially adopted the standard of Gross National Happiness (GNH) as a substitute for the normal Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Thailand now releases monthly data for its GNH. The New Economics Foundation has published a Happy Planet Index, while David Cameron has announced an intention to track well-being alongside GDP.

Heinberg comments: "Governments that choose to measure happiness and to increase it in ways that don't involve increased consumption can still show success, while those that stick to GDP as their primary measure of well-being will be forced to find increasingly inventive ways to explain their failure to very unhappy voters."

Thursday 15th December

According to neuroscientist Peter Whybrow, human evolution has equipped us to seek status and novelty and to engage in conspicuous consumption, but today, in a world of

over-consumption, these tendencies keep us locked into behaviour that actually undermines our survival prospects. So, even though the cost of averting climate change would be less than the eventual cost of climate catastrophe, we are unwilling to pay that smaller, immediate cost. Political and commercial bodies both tend to elevate short-term priorities. For corporations, quarterly profits are the prime motivator, while politicians make decisions based on priorities for winning the next election. In addition, there are entrenched interests which profit from the status quo, don't want to give up those profits and have the means to shape policy and public opinion

Friday 16th December

Whybrow acknowledges that selfish behaviours are reward-driven and wired deeply into our survival mechanisms. On the other hand: "The self-restraint and empathy for others that are so important for our physical and mental health are learned behaviours, and so culturally dependent. These social behaviours are fragile and learnt by imitations much as we learn language."

Saturday 17th December

Heinberg asks: "How serious will the crisis have to be to get our collective attention and force us to change our behaviour? Will the crisis be so severe as to destroy the very basis of civilisation? It need not be so, and by working now to ensure that the tools we need to enable the economy and society to adapt to the post-growth era are sharpened and available, we can create the conditions for a rapid response when our collective internal discounting mechanisms finally adjust to the scale of the crisis facing us."

Sunday 18th December

Loving Father, we cannot of our own bring about the change in human behaviour that is now required of us if we are to meet the climate challenge. But help us to start where we are. Make us honest and just in all our dealings, outspoken but wise in all our words and actions. We cannot alter the course of a suffering and unjust world, but help us to light candles in the darkness, in the Name of Jesus Christ, who came to bring light to our darkness.

Monday 19th December

Controversy has erupted over a report from accountants KPMG suggesting that scaling down ambitions for renewable energy could save the UK up to £34 billion by 2020, and blaming the rise in energy prices on the drive for renewables. WWF points out that electricity bills rose by 63% between 2004 and 2009 while gas prices rose by 84% over the same period. "We think that the main culprit is our continued reliance on gas for 46% of our electricity and 80% of our domestic heating."

Tuesday 20th December

The WWF report "Positive Energy" makes these points:
The UK is hugely exposed to international gas prices and it would seem unwise to increase our dependence on gas even further.
Greater reliance on gas is incompatible with the UK's climate change commitment to near-decarbonise our power sector by 2030.
The Energy Research Centre found that ambitious energy-saving measures for homes and transport could reduce the cost of decarbonising the power sector by up to £70 billion