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Picture on front cover: Winter Ash Tree by Judith Allinson

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Prayer guide for the care of creation



December 2012

“The creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.”
(Romans 8.19-21)

“In him (Christ) all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.”
(Colossians 1.19-20)

“Anyone who believes in indefinite growth on a physically finite planet is either mad or an economist.”
(Sir David Attenborough)

“When animals breed out of control, it’s called overpopulation. When humans breed out of control, it’s called economic growth.”
(Anon.)



Saturday 1st December

As thousands of delegates meet in Doha to try to agree a successor to the Kyoto Protocol, which expires in 30 days' time, a Climate Vulnerability Monitor report concludes that the impact of climate change is costing the global economy 1% of GDP a year and causing 5 million extra deaths a year – mainly in poor countries. Greenhouse gas emissions have increased by one-third over the last 10 years and last month was the 322nd month in succession when global temperatures exceeded the average for the 20th century.

Christian Ecology Link is holding a climate service today at 11 am in the Grosvenor Chapel, South Audley Street, London W1K 2PA prior to a demonstration organised by the Campaign Against Climate Change.

Sunday 2nd December

Lord God, who has made this planet to sustain a myriad forms of life, give us the wisdom and perseverance to stand up publicly against all abuse of your earth for wrongful gain, all exploitation for selfish greed and all casual indifference to the dangers now so clearly visible. Make us

responsible, caring guardians of our inheritance and give us wisdom to find the right means to protect it in the face of what, humanly speaking, is a desperate situation. This we ask in the Name of your dear Son, who gave his life to redeem your world.

Monday 3rd December

The European Environment Agency reports that the last decade was the warmest on record in Europe, with temperatures 1.3 degrees C. warmer than the pre-industrial average. The UNEP Emissions Gap Report finds that greenhouse gas emissions are 14% above where they need to be by 2020 if global temperatures are to be kept at 2 degrees C. above pre-industrial levels. The World Bank's analysis "Turn Down the Heat" finds that the current mean temperature of 0.8 degrees C. above pre-industrial levels could rise to 4 degrees by 2100 if countries fulfil current targets. If they don't, the 4 degree rise could be reached by 2060. The International Energy Authority Outlook 2012 declares that two-thirds of proven fossil fuel reserves must remain unused if global temperatures are to be kept within 2 degrees above pre-industrial levels.

Sunday 30th December

Father, whose patient ways with us and whose unfailing love surprise and humble us, go with us along the unknown paths of this New Year. Forgive the sins of the year that is nearly past. Help us to live more worthily and to serve you more faithfully, so that our lives may show forth a new beauty and a deeper harmony, so that your holy Name may be glorified. Amen.

Monday 31st December

New Year's Eve

God our Father, who changes not with the passing years, we, the creatures of Time, look back along the road we have come. We thank you for all your loving kindness and tender mercies along the way. When the road has been dark, you have not failed us, though we have often failed you.

We look forward, knowing not what may befall in the year soon beginning. Help us to live each day at a time, to trust you as much in the shadow as in the sunshine, and to find our way by the light of your will. Go with us, we pray, into this New Year and bring us through it safe in the knowledge that we have been faithful followers of your

Son, who is the Way, the Truth and the Light. Amen. (Leslie Weatherhead)

Sources: CIWEM News
Resurgence
www.edie.net
www.scidev.net

Additional Prayers

flooding in urban areas: the invisible hazard” highlights the increased risk of urban flooding as the impacts of a growing population and climate change collide. By 2050 the urban population is predicted to increase by 45% compared to 1991 levels. 2 million people are already at risk in urban areas and by 2050 and additional 1.2 million will be at risk. Existing agreements between the government and the insurance industry are due to end next year and there is concern that, as flooding risks increase, those who have the resources will move out, leaving more vulnerable households with the least choices and lowest incomes to deal with the consequences of flooding.

The report is available at:

www.jrf.org.uk/publications/pluvial-flooding-invisible-hazard

Friday 28th December

With a population of 1.2 billion and steadily growing, India is set to overtake China as the world’s most populous nation by 2030. The government is promoting a procedure called “No Scalpel Vasectomy” as it seeks to slow population growth. Although the number of men agreeing to the procedure doubled between

2006 and 2008, it still only represents 0.8% of the male population. The big incentive is the rise in living standards that follows a reduction in family size. According to the UN Population Fund, the mean birth rate has declined from six children for every woman in 1950 to 2.63 today. Experts say this is due to rising literacy and efforts to promote birth control. But challenges remain. While women for economic reasons may want to stop at two children, the husband and mother-in-law often insist on more births until a boy is born. Also, Muslims feel it is against their religion to use any method that acts as an intervention in childbirth.

Saturday 29th December

An analysis of death rates from the US Centers for Disease Control for the 14 weeks after the fallout from the 2011 Fukushima disaster reached the US has found that death rates were 4.46% higher than in the same period of 2010 and 2.34% higher than in the 14 weeks prior to the fallout reaching the US. The researchers project an additional 13,983 deaths (including 822 infants) in the parts of USA contaminated by the Fukushima fallout.

Nevertheless, the UK Government has refused to set a 2030 target for decarbonising our energy supply, and instead is promoting new gas-fired power stations, which make any such target harder to achieve.

Tuesday 4th December

Responding to the IEA report, WWF commented:

“The IEA have delivered yet another sober assessment of our failure to put the world’s energy systems onto a sustainable path. Many governments and businesses are clearly in denial over the threat posed by climate change and need to accept that we have to start leaving fossil fuels in the ground rather than dashing to develop new reserves. . . This is not only about stopping all new large fossil fuel developments such as in the Arctic; this is about surrendering existing assets as well, and it is the price we have to pay to avoid global disaster.”

Wednesday 5th December

The Green Deal cashback scheme, which will operate from January 28th, offers up to £1,000 cash for making homes more energy-efficient, but the

Minister Greg Barker warns that it is a “two-decade” project. “We want steady growth through 2013 as the market gains confidence, systems are tested and new entrants roll out their models at scale.” However, the Insulation Independent Forum warns of the loss of thousands of jobs if demand for Green Deal improvements falls short of expectations.

Thursday 6th December

Britain’s first commercial gas-to-grid anaerobic digester has been opened by Prince Charles in a joint venture between local farmers and the Duchy of Cornwall. Biomethane is formed from the decomposition of organic matter under anaerobic conditions and is injected directly into the gas grid. The Anaerobic Digestion & Biogas Association (ABDA) claims that biomethane – one of the few sources of low-carbon gas – could generate £2-3 billions-worth of green gas, more than 19% of our domestic gas demand, supporting 35,000 new jobs. “Capable of scaling up fast and cheaply, it can fill much of the gap left when existing energy sources are taken offline, helping to keep the lights on and meet climate change targets. UK technology and expertise will be

able to lead world export markets as global interest in biomethane grows.” Ten more plants are scheduled to open in 2013, though there are regulatory hurdles still to be overcome.

Friday 7th December

A study from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation & Development (OECD) finds that 20% of natural resources extracted for human use end up as waste. On average, nearly 10 tonnes per person of minerals, wood, metals, fossil and biomass fuels are extracted from the earth each year, of which nearly 2 tonnes end up as waste. Actions recommended to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation include:

- Governments working with industry to encourage co-operation, innovation and cost savings;
- Industry driving change through better designs that reduce products’ negative health and environmental impacts;
- Consumers making better choices by reducing the use of unnecessary materials, re-using, recycling and taking advantage of advanced technologies to limit waste.

Saturday 8th December

Hampshire will become the first county to achieve zero waste to landfill following the opening of a solid recovery fuel facility at Warren Farm near Fareham. The county’s recycling rate is already more than 37%, while the remaining 53% of non-recyclable waste is used to generate electricity at its three energy recovery facilities. 4% of bulky waste will now go to the SRF facility, leaving just 6% going to landfill.

Sunday 9th December

Lord Jesus, the carpenter, help us not to be afraid to get our hands dirty as we work in your Name. Challenge us every day to care for your world and to work gently in it.

Monday 10th December

The Recycling Minister recently said: “Landfill should be the last resort for biodegradable waste. The landfill tax remains the key driver to divert waste from landfill . . . There are interventions under way to divert disposable nappies from landfill: the first nappy recycling facility opened last year in the West Midlands.”

Monday 24th December

Gracious heavenly Father, our Creator and Sustainer, we thank you today for that little Child who would make us all your children. As we remember his lowly, humble birth, take away our pride. As we remember his pure life, take away our sins. As we remember how he came, not to be ministered unto but to minister, help us to strive more unselfishly, to give more generously and to love more devotedly. Amen.

(Leslie Weatherhead)

Tuesday 25th December

Christmas Day

Loving Father, as we ponder the coming of the Child of Bethlehem, we rejoice that you, the Almighty, the Creator, the Infinite, whose being is utterly beyond our loftiest thought and most daring imagination, can speak to us in a little Child. Save us from being impressed too much by the impressive. Help us to see you in simple things: a child’s love, birdsong, the quiet loveliness of dawn, human friendship and the peace of our homes. We bow in worship before the majesty of heaven revealed in a human life. Accept our worship and

make us more like your dear Son, who gave of himself, not counting the cost. Amen. (Leslie Weatherhead)

Wednesday 26th December

Last month, fishermen from nine European countries, representing the small-scale, low-impact sector of the industry, met in Brussels to present a loud, united voice to EU decision-makers, demanding a reform of EU fishing laws, including:

The right for those who fish sustainably to continue doing so;

A reduction in fleet overcapacity where it exists, while preserving jobs in artisanal, low-impact fisheries;

An end to harmful subsidies and unsustainable, destructive practices;

Restoration of the health of our seas around Europe and the world.

The declaration will be presented to Europe’s politicians and bureaucrats. It’s now up to us as citizens to decide how we want our seas treated and what sort of fishing industry we want.

Thursday 27th December

A report published by the Joseph Rowntree foundation called “Pluvial

vegetables and fruit. The government buys the land on the private market and gives the rights to each family, lifting them out of poverty in a way that is cost-effective in the long term. So far, land rights have been secured for over 430,000 families.

Friday 21st December

Why are so many children ignorant as to where their food comes from? Bridgwater College in Somerset has pioneered the spread of Forest Schools where children as young as 5 or 6 learn outdoor skills, building and cooking on open fires, climbing trees, whittling sticks and discovering the plants and animals around them. There are now 4,000 Forest Schools in the UK and 10,000 qualified FS leaders. Annie Davy, founder of The Nature Effect (www.thenatureeffect.co.uk) tells how again and again teachers told her that at Forest Schools children listened more, were calmer, asked questions and became physically and emotionally more confident. www.forestschools.com

Saturday 22nd December

Farmers face multiple challenges as climate change begins to bite and markets are increasingly dominated by giant corporations. Community farms are one way to meet the challenges. A 22-acre farm in the Chew Valley near Bristol is a Community Benefit Society owned by its 400 members, who have a say in how it operates and can learn the skills of growing and farming. Members get a 10% discount on the farm's veggie boxes with their voting rights. Organic and sustainable, the farm is a blueprint for similar projects. www.thecommunityfarm.co.uk

Sunday 23rd December

Christ our Lord and Saviour, who yourself was once a homeless refugee, we pray for the millions who are homeless and refugees, for all who are working to provide them with food, water and shelter, and for all who are striving to remove the root causes of displacement – war, poverty, racial violence and environmental disorder. Help us never to forget their plight, but to work actively to support relief organisations and the many individuals who devote their lives to helping refugees.

DEFRA is calling for evidence to inform a new Waste Prevention Programme for England, due out next year.

Tuesday 11th December

The Waste Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) has identified four areas for widening the use of anaerobic digestion including heat recovery options. Meanwhile, Tamar Energy has taken over four existing AD sites in the South East and East Anglia (three with planning permission) and work has begun on Biogen's food waste AD plant at Gwyn Isaf near Caernarfon. This will have a capacity of 11,000 tonnes a year and will process food waste collected by Gwynedd County Council from homes and businesses. It is expected to start generating electricity by the end of 2013.

Wednesday 12th December

According Amanda Sourry, chairman of Unilever UK, nearly 70% of its environmental impact can be traced to consumer use of its products, meaning that changing behaviour is one of the biggest hurdles to be overcome. The average family throws

away around £700-worth of food each year, despite current economic stringency. Unilever's Sustainability Challenge aims to help families reduce their monthly food bills by 15% and household rubbish by 25%. The main barriers to reducing food waste are:

- Food going off too quickly;
- Throwing away leftovers;
- Preparing too much food.

"There is also a need for retailers to be seen to be setting an example. Research has shown that if government and business are perceived to be doing their bit, people are more inclined to do theirs."

Thursday 13th December

Marks & Spencer's head of Sustainable Business has warned that a "circular economy" will happen "whether we like it or not", owing to the rise of social media and public cynicism over how multi-nationals operate. "Within the next decade there will be a rise in microbusinesses where goods and services will be shared on a person-to-person basis, allowing consumers to become less dependent on large corporations. If

retailers like M & S are to react effectively, they will have to change their business models.

Friday 14th December

The M & S “Shwopping” initiative has resulted in its customers recycling 2.2 million used and unwanted pieces of clothing in M & S and Oxfam shops since April, so diverting over 865 tonnes of clothing from landfill. At its Castle Donington warehouse, Europe’s largest solar wall – the size of 16 tennis courts – helps to heat and ventilate the building, so providing energy savings of 1.1 GWh and saving over 250 tonnes of CO2 a year.

Saturday 15th December

Aviation has till now been a notable absentee from the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS), but the UN International Civil Aviation Organisation now supports a worldwide application of the scheme. However the US House of Representatives has passed a EU-ETS Prohibition Act which will make it illegal for US airlines to comply with the ETS. WWF comments: “This Act is fundamentally flawed. It presumes that the US can disregard other countries’

laws and effectively calls for a trade war. It is a slap in the face for the EU, which has responded by suspending the ETS for the US alone. This hardly seems an appropriate response.”

Sunday 16th December

Grant us, loving Lord, a new vision of your world:

A world of justice, where none shall prey on others,

A world of plenty, where poverty shall cease to fester,

A world of brotherhood, where success shall be founded on service, and honour given to integrity alone,

A world of peace, where order shall not rest on force, but on the love of all for the land and oceans which you created.

Monday 17th December

Harvard University scientists have decided to release hundreds of sun-reflecting chemical particles 15 miles up in the skies above Fort Sumner, Texas, in order to:

- Assess the feasibility of such actions to shade the earth from an increasingly hot sun

- Establish the best size of these particles
- Measure their impacts on the chemistry of the ozone layer.

Opponents suggest that this aim could be better achieved by measuring the impact on the ozone layer of sulphuric dust emitted from volcanoes, without adding further pollution to the atmosphere.

Nobody can be sure that such experiments will not cause irreparable damage to the earth’s stratosphere.

Tuesday 18th December

Washington State University scientists writing in “Nature” report that the planting of nitrogen-fixing trees such as Acacia albida among food crops can more than double yields for maize and millet, which are among Africa’s staple foods. “Planting deep-rooted trees in crop fields would be a better and more sustainable option than expensive chemical fertilisers and often inadequate organic manures. . . These trees could significantly fortify soils with nitrogen and potassium, elements critical to soil health. It could cost millions of dollars to plant trees in most crop fields across Africa, but the raised yields and reduced costs of

buying synthetic fertilisers could add up to billions of dollars in a few years.”

Wednesday 19th December

Cotton occupies just 2.5% of agricultural land area, yet it uses 16% of all insecticides. It is one of the thirstiest of crops, using 11,000 litres of water for every kilogram of cotton produced. Non-organic farming, with its high input costs, low returns and short growing season, takes farmers through boom-and-bust cycles, undermining their ability to buy food for their families round the year. Organic cotton, by eliminating hazardous pesticides, offers a healthy and sustainable solution and the freedom to produce cotton without gambling their livelihoods on GM seeds and the fertilisers and sprays that go with them. For more details, go to: www.soilassociation.org/cotton

Thursday 20th December

Most of the world’s rural poor have no legal rights to the land on which they depend for survival. Landesa (www.landesa.org) is working with the Indian government to give each family a microplot the size of a tennis court – enough for a home, small animals,