
Prayer guide for the care of creation



February 2013

“I will lead the blind by ways they have not known,
Along unfamiliar paths I will guide them;
I will turn the darkness into light before them
And make the rough places smooth.
These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them.
But those who trust in idols, who say to images,
'You are our gods' will be turned back in utter shame.”

(Isaiah 42.16-17)

“Dear children, keep yourselves from idols”.

(1 John 5.21)

“If you see God as a despot or a tyrant, how can you give yourself to him?
You cannot surrender to a monstrosity.”

(J.B. Phillips in “Your God is Too Small”)

“The way we see God, deep down in our hearts, is the way we relate to him, to
ourselves and to others.”

(Selwyn Hughes)



Friday 1st February

Since the 1992 Earth Summit, the world's politicians have met each year to try to secure agreements to limit climate-changing emissions to a safe level.

Last December, in the face of scientific evidence endorsed by the World Bank and International Energy Agency that global temperatures were likely to rise by 4 degrees C. above pre-industrial levels by 2100, the world's leaders decided to postpone any binding agreement until 2015. Meanwhile climate disasters occur with ever-increasing frequency.

Though there is much that individuals can do, it is essential that political and business leaders take effective action now.

Saturday 2nd February

International lawyer Polly Higgins believes that part of the problem lies in the legal requirement for companies everywhere to make a profit for their shareholders above all other considerations, such as care for the earth, its people and other living creatures.

Crimes against the earth are not recognised by the International Criminal Court with the exception of environmental War Crimes (Article 8 (2) (b)). So companies and individuals are free to trash the environment without fear of prosecution, though national regulations can make this illegal. What is needed therefore is an over-riding obligation not to damage the environment.

Sunday 3rd February

Father God, give us a deeper understanding of your purposes, that we may be steadfast amid the turmoil of our times. May our faith never fail, nor our love grow cold, nor our hope become faint. Help us to fix our eyes on Jesus, who for the joy set before him was not afraid to endure the cross, scorning its shame. Amen.

Monday 4th February

The International Criminal Court recognises as "Crimes Against Peace" Genocide, Crimes Against Humanity, War Crimes and Crimes

Sources:

"Earth is Our Business"
by Polly Higgins

"What Has Nature Ever Done For Us?"
by Tony Juniper

CIWEM News

www.edie.net

www.scidev.net

Additional Prayers

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

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Picture on front cover: Ducks in Finsbury Park by Poppy Pickard

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“Financing of ecocide projects will then become the exception, not the norm, and finance will then flow readily into environmentally-benign projects instead.”

Tuesday 26th February

Canada contains half the world’s boreal forests and 11% of global terrestrial carbon sinks. But extracting oil from the Alberta tar sands is a hugely expensive and destructive process. Vast amounts of water from the Athabasca River are being used and lakes containing the toxic tailings waste already cover 130 sq. kilometres and are projected to grow to 220 sq. kms. The traditions and health of Canada’s First Nation communities are threatened. The rising levels of toxins found in local fish are blamed for increased and unusual incidences of cancers reported throughout indigenous communities.

Wednesday 27th February

Polly Higgins believes that a UN-sponsored Law of Ecocide could not only disrupt the asset-stripping which now goes on under the guise of

development, but would create a new wave of innovation and new solutions that do not destroy ecosystems or cause extensive CO2 emissions. “Cities and countries will benefit from a surge in jobs, investment and money.”

Thursday 28th February

The Sustainable Restaurants

Association (SRA) has found that restaurants waste five times as much food as the average UK household – the average being half a kilo per diner. SRA director Mark Linehan comments: “Diners and restaurants need to work together and start equating value with quality rather than quantity. Restaurants should also make diners feel more comfortable about asking to take home leftovers for which they have paid.”

The Mexican restaurant group Wahaca has reduced the amount of food waste from diners’ plates by 20% since it started offering customers doggy boxes.

of Aggression. A crime that is so far missing is the crime of Ecocide.

This is defined in a draft Act as:

“The extensive damage to, destruction of or loss of the ecosystem(s) of a given territory, whether by human agency or other causes, to such an extent that:

- (1) Peaceful enjoyment by the inhabitants has been seriously diminished, and/or
- (2) Peaceful enjoyment by the inhabitants of another territory has been severely diminished.”

This would place on heads of state, ministers, CEOs, directors etc. a pre-emptive obligation to ensure that their actions do not give rise to the risk of damage to or destruction or loss of an ecosystem.

Tuesday 5th February

Would such a reform be “anti-business”?

200 years ago it was urged that to abolish slavery would be uneconomic and would bring business to a halt. As it turned out, those businesses that profited from slavery reinvented their wheels and not one went out of business as a result of the abolition of slavery.

Partly this was because subsidies for the slave trade were replaced by subsidies for loss of business and to facilitate new businesses not based on slavery. But the main factor was public pressure, mass petitions and recognition of the rights of slaves. The ethical imperative trumped the economic imperative.

Wednesday 6th February

The UN-recognised crime of genocide is a crime of intent. Ecocide would be a crime of consequence – one that arises out of the pursuit of profit without regard for any duty of care. Current corporate law dictates that profit determines activity, regardless of consequences to others in the earth community. If ecocide is left to flourish, the 21st century will become a century of “resource wars” as nations compete for diminishing natural resources. Therefore ecocide is classified as a Crime Against Peace.

Thursday 7th February

Carbon trading and offsetting is based on the idea that the earth is a commodity capable of being traded

in a market. But our climate is not up for negotiation as a commodity. The health and well-being of all life depends on the health of the planet. Stop the ecocide at source, and carbon trading becomes redundant. We are then no longer leaving a toxic legacy for future generations to clear up.

Friday 8th February

The Alliance for Future Generations (www.allianceforfuturegenerations.org) has teamed up with over 40 organisations and individuals to call for specific reforms to ensure that the needs of future generations are brought into the heart of UK democracy and policies in order to safeguard the earth and secure intergenerational justice. "We act as we do because we can get away with it. Future generations do not vote. They have no political or financial power. They cannot challenge our decisions." (World Commission on Environment & Development)

Saturday 9th February

Today a seminar called "Inspiring Churches: Practical resources to develop your church projects" takes place at St. George's Centre, Great George Street, Leeds LS1 3BR from 10 to 4. Representatives from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Livability, the Trussell Trust and the Church Buildings Council will be hosting workshops. The £10 ticket includes lunch. To register, email: Alice.Ullathorne@riponleeds-diocese.org.uk or ring 0113 2000540.

Sunday 10th February

Father, forgive us for the folly, blindness and greed with which we have pursued material gains at the expense of future generations, oblivious to the grievous cost to your creation. Help us to pursue a vision of your world which husbands all its resources, so that humankind, both living and still to come, can live together in peace without damaging the world that you have given us to enjoy.

conserve wild animals and plants and has so far avoided the release of 3.2 million tonnes of CO₂.

Saturday 23rd February

Coastal mangroves and coral reefs cover only 0.5% of our oceans, but absorb huge amounts of CO₂ from the atmosphere. Yet they are being removed at a rate of up to 7% a year, mainly to set up shrimp farms or seaports, or simply to provide fuel. The oxygen we breathe not only comes from land-based plants. Tiny marine plankton also absorb CO₂ from the atmosphere and release oxygen as a by-product. Some estimate that 50-85% of the oxygen in the air is put there by oceanic plankton. The health of the oceans affects us all, and its progressive acidification as a result of increasing concentrations of CO₂ in the air is a major concern.

Sunday 25th February

Look mercifully, loving Father, on your world and heal the sorrows and suffering of so many of your creatures. Save the nations d from the lust for money and power, from

racial hatred and jealousy, and from the worship of material things. Grant that in every land the rule of oppression may be broken and the cause of justice may triumph, so that people and all living things may learn to serve you in the peace and freedom of your kingdom. (Frank Colquhoun – adapted)

Monday 25th February

The World Bank, the world's biggest and most powerful bank, has clear rules for assessing projects with an environmental impact. Projects likely to have significant adverse environmental impacts that are sensitive, diverse or unprecedented are illegal (Category A) Projects that have potentially adverse impacts on human populations or environmentally-important areas including wetlands, forests and grasslands (Category B) are cases where the Bank can recommend measures to minimise, mitigate or compensate for any adverse impacts. Polly Higgins suggests that these rules should become a benchmark for all banks throughout the world, so providing a level playing field.

government catering services will come from environmentally-friendly sources. Palm oil is used in everyday products such as soap, biscuits and cosmetics. The government, supermarkets, manufacturers, charities and WWF are working together to ensure that palm oil is responsibly produced and no longer contributes to deforestation.

Wednesday 20th February

I Love Amazon Week is an initiative to enable schoolchildren aged 7 to 11 to learn more about the Amazon and to enter a competition to write a 200-word account, or a 2-minute video, on a topic related to the Amazon. Closing date: 28th June 2013. To obtain a teacher resource pack, photo cards and a rainforest poster, go to:

bskyb.education.co.uk/ILoveAmazon/

Any questions to:

iloveamazonweek@wwf.org.uk

Thursday 21st February

Brazil's government has begun to appreciate the economic value of rainforest in:

- (a) generating the rain needed to grow its huge sugar cane and soya plantations, and
- (b) generating the flow of water required for hydro-electric power, which supplies 80% of Brazil's electricity.

However, further dams and roads are planned for the Amazon region and there is pressure from landowners to allow farmers to expand production of soya even further. Incentives offered by the international community, especially the Norwegian government, are helping to protect many of the rainforests on which our global climate depends.

Friday 22nd February

In Mexico since 2003, landowners have been able to receive payments to protect forests, provided they forego activities such as agriculture and cattle grazing. The scheme has been adopted by about 3,000 landowners and is estimated to have reduced deforestation by about 1,800 sq. kilometres, more than halving Mexico's rate of forest loss from 1.6% to 0.6%. The scheme protects water supplies, helps

Monday 11th February

"What Has Nature Ever Done For Us?" is the title of a challenging new book by Tony Juniper, in which he reviews the multitude of services which nature provides for us freely. He describes nature as the source of essential services, a controller of disease, a water recycler, a water utility, a controller of pests, a massive carbon capture and storage system and the ultimate converter of solar energy. "Is there any debate as to the extent that we need nature to provide all this?" he asks. "But all too many of the people who run our world – finance ministers, presidents, bankers, CEOs of global corporations – behave as if this is some kind of mythology, not real economics at all. Better, they argue, to promote growth and development, and our problems will be solved . . . Despite such myopia, there is a growing realisation of the vital economic value of nature."

Tuesday 12th February

In 1993 India had a population of 43 million vultures, the country's natural scavengers. By 2007 that population

had declined by over 90% following the widespread use of an anti-inflammatory drug used on livestock called diclofenac. Other scavengers, notably feral dogs, took the place of the vultures and the dog population went up by 7 million. A research team led by Anil Markandya estimated that during that time nearly 40 million additional dog bites led to around 48,000 additional human deaths compared with the numbers of deaths before 1993. They estimated that the loss of vultures cost India about \$34 billion between 1993 and 2006, completely dwarfing the economic gains from improvements to cattle health resulting from the use of diclofenac.

Wednesday 13th February

Since 1913, most nitrogen fertiliser used on farmland has been manufactured, but when dissolved in water it leaks into rivers, lakes and oceans, causing explosions of algae, which in turn leads to depletion of oxygen. The 2011 European Nitrogen Assessment found that the cost of nitrogen pollution in European waters is about double the economic

value of the increased food output achieved with nitrogen fertilisers.

Thursday 14th February

Oysters, besides their value as food, provide a home for hundreds of other species and, crucially, eat single-celled organisms such as algae. Their waste products sink to the seafloor where bacteria convert the nitrogen back into a harmless gas. 85% of our wild oyster beds have been destroyed, but new offshore wind farms could provide ideal sites for establishing new oyster reefs. Aside from cleaning the water, the restoration of oyster beds would also help the recovery of highly-depleted fish stocks.

Friday 15th February

Phosphorus, another key element in food production, is currently mined from rocks, but supplies of rock phosphate are finite and may even run out this century, though it is abundant in our sewage. Thames Water now produces 120 tonnes a year of phosphate fertiliser from its sewage treatment plant near Slough which it markets as Crystal Green™. The technology is widespread in the

US and Canada. According to the developers, “The fertiliser is produced with a fraction of the carbon footprint of phosphate mined from rock thousands of kilometres from where it is needed.”

Saturday 16th February

As land-based mineral resources become depleted, prospectors are turning increasingly to the deep sea for mining opportunities. Canadian firm Nautilus was given a 20-year licence to mine gold and copper at a depth of 1,600 metres in the Bismarck Sea off Papua New Guinea (PNG), using the latest remote-operated underwater vehicles (ROVs). Rock collected from the seafloor would be pumped to the surface and shipped to China for processing. But the new PNG government has held up payment of an \$80 million subsidy with worries that mining might affect local fisheries. Scientists say that there is insufficient data on the impact of deep-sea mining. Richard Steiner, a US consultant, warns that the suspended sediment from mining operations and the disposal of waste would contaminate the sea, while the

project would generate underwater noise that could disrupt the behaviour of marine animals. “To justify the destruction of deep-sea hydrothermal vent systems, as the Nautilus project will do, one would need to convince us that this is absolutely necessary for the world and the local economy. It isn’t. Gold mining is perhaps the most useless and damaging industrial activity ever invented. And the other minerals are all readily available in landfills.”

Sunday 17th February

Loving Father, we thank you for the yearly miracle of Spring. The snowdrops and daffodils tell us that Spring is coming, and the brave green spikes of other flowers cheer us with their messages of promise. May we never cease to wonder that your power is endless and your loving care never fails. And if our hearts are fast bound in a winter of depression or sin, unhappiness or sorrow, may the signs of Spring around us save us from despair. Speak the word of healing and we shall be made whole. Speak the word of joy and our hearts will sing. Speak the word of peace and all our

fretting and care and worry will pass away. So grant us new faith in all your promises and new courage to face each day. (Leslie Weatherhead – adapted)

Monday 18th February

A Manchester University report entitled “Has US shale gas reduced CO2 emissions?” commissioned by the Co-Operative Bank finds that, while the US is burning less coal due to shale gas production, millions of tonnes of unused coal are being exported to the UK, Europe and Asia. Chris Shearlock of the Co-Op comments: “The proponents of shale gas have always claimed that it is a low carbon alternative to coal. However, this is only true if the coal it displaces remains in the ground and isn’t just burnt elsewhere. Without a cap on global carbon emissions, shale gas is burnt in addition to other fossil fuels, so increasing total emissions.”

Tuesday 19th February

Environment minister Richard Benyon has announced that by the end of 2015 all palm oil used in