

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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Prayer guide for the care of creation

May 2013



“From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded, and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.”
(Luke 12.48)

“Goodness is stronger than evil;
Love is stronger than hate;
Light is stronger than darkness;
Life is stronger than death;
Victory is ours through Him who loves us.”
(Archbishop Desmond Tutu)

“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.”
(O. Hallesby)

Wednesday 1st May

In response to Government proposals to drop climate change from the geography curriculum for children under 14, 96 people including Sir David Attenborough, Sir Chris Bonington, Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall and Chris Packham have pointed out in a letter that under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Government has a commitment to “nurture our children’s love and respect for nature.” Only a minority of teenagers over 13 study geography anyway, so the subject of climate change would bypass most schoolchildren over 13. The letter continues: “Today’s children are tomorrow’s custodians of nature. There is a duty to ensure that all pupils have the chance to learn about threats to the natural world, to be inspired to care for it and to explore ways to preserve and restore it.” A petition supported by People & Planet has attracted over 65,000 signatures and is still open.

Thursday 2nd May

The March budget incentivised mining of shale gas while turning a blind eye to Britain’s legally-binding carbon

commitments. The decision locks the nation into expensive fossil fuels if shale fails to yield as much as hoped for. Worse, government support for gas energy can only detract from investment in energy efficiency, local combined heat and power and clean renewable energy. CIWEM director Nic Reeves comments: “If the world is to limit global warming to 2 degrees C., it must keep greenhouse gases to under 450 parts per million. We are currently at 392 and rising fast. To have an 80% chance of staying within the 2 degree limit, the world can only emit another 565 gigatonnes of CO₂. But global fossil fuel reserves are much bigger than that – equivalent to 2,795 gigatonnes, or 5 times the safe amount. In other words, we can only avoid devastating climate change if we keep most of the world’s fossil fuels in the ground.”

Friday 3rd May

The CBI has warned the Chancellor that the dash for shale gas would make the UK dependent on fossil fuels, which are highly vulnerable to volatile energy prices. The big advantage of renewables is that, once built, they provide free energy not subject to political uncertainties. The

Wednesday 29th May

Rises in sea levels pose just as stark a threat to world food supplies. Latest projections show sea levels rising by 6 feet this century. Even half that rise would inundate half the ricelands of Bangladesh, a country of 152 million people, and submerge a large part of the Mekong Delta, a region that produces half of Viet Nam’s exports of rice to other Asian countries. It is not immediately obvious that ice melting from Greenland’s ice sheet could shrink the rice harvests in Asia. But it is nevertheless true.

Thursday 30th May

Higher global temperatures inevitably incur more droughts. The US National Center for Atmospheric Research reports that, whereas less than 20% of the earth’s surface experienced very dry conditions from 1950 to the 1980s, the figure has risen in recent years to nearly 25%. In 1988, a heat wave in the US Midwest combined with a drought cut the US grain harvest from an average of 324 million tons to 204 million tons. At the time, the shortfall was made up from ample reserves. Today, when grain stocks are

depleted, such an event would cause panic in the world grain market.

Friday 31st May

Lester Brown urges simultaneous action on four fronts to avert the threat of a breakdown in global food supplies:
Stabilise world population;
Eradicate poverty;
Reduce excessive meat consumption;
Reverse biofuel policies that encourage the wasteful use of land, food and water that could otherwise be used to feed people.

Sources:

“Full Planet, Empty Plates”
by Lester Brown (Norton)
Resurgence
Environment (CIWEM)
www.edie.net

Saturday 25th May

“Seed Freedom: A Global Citizen’s Report” produced by Navdanya, an organisation founded by Vandana Shiva, sets out the case for allowing farmers to save their own seeds without payment to international giants such as Monsanto. It compares the practice of farmers with that of multinational corporations: While farmers breed for diversity, corporations breed for uniformity. While farmers breed for resilience, corporations breed vulnerability. While farmers breed for taste, quality and nutrition, industry breeds for industrial processing and long-distance transport in a globalised food system.

Sunday 26th May

Father, you know that listening is hard for us. We are so action-oriented, so product-driven, that doing is easier for us than being. Help us to be still and listen. We want to learn how to sink into the light of your presence until we can be comfortable in that light. Help us, dear Father, to try now.
(Richard Foster)

Monday 27th May

How will climate change affect crop yields? Work at Ohio State University shows that photosynthetic activity in plants increases up to a temperature of 20 degrees C. It then plateaus until the temperature reaches 35 degrees. It then declines until, at 40 degrees, it ceases altogether. Rice yields at the International Rice Institute in the Philippines dropped by 10% with every 1 degree C. rise in temperature. The scientists concluded that “temperature increases due to global warming will make it increasingly difficult to feed Earth’s growing population.”

Tuesday 28th May

The melting of Himalayan glaciers is having a marked effect on the major rivers of India and China, where irrigated agriculture depends heavily on rivers. The Yangtse River alone provides irrigation for enough rice to feed 586 million people. China’s leading glaciologist Yao Tandong predicts that 2/3rds of China’s glaciers could be gone by 2060. China and India are the world’s biggest wheat producers and they also dominate the rice harvest.

EU has to choose whether to commit to a 2030 renewables target – as recommended by the CBI – or watch while our renewable energy industries are beaten to the ground in global markets. Between now and 2015 we will know if the world’s governments are committed to a low-carbon future of tolerable safety and resilience, or are condemning us to a high-carbon future and to the catastrophic climate changes that nearly all climate scientists now predict.

Saturday 4th May

A report from consultants CE Delft commissioned by WWF, RSPB and HACAN, finds that the economic benefits of increased connectivity by air are less pronounced for developed economies. For well-connected cities like London, new airport runways do not necessarily deliver measurable or substantial economic benefits. The Department of Transport estimated that Heathrow expansion would produce £5 billion in economic benefits. The New Economics Foundation re-ran the figures using different predictions for growth and oil prices, but the same models, and found that Heathrow expansion would result in a £5 billion loss. WWF

commented: “The methods for assessing the benefits and costs of new runways and airports are hopelessly inadequate and open to gross manipulation. CE Delft instilled a sense of reality into the airports debate. We hope that the Airports Commission and the Department of Transport will adopt the better cost/benefit analysis and require development proposals to do the same.”

Sunday 5th May

Help us, loving Father, to be faithful caretakers of your world. May our actions preserve and not destroy. May our scientific advances bring benefits and not disasters. Open our eyes, Lord, to the needs of others. Take away selfishness and greed. May praise and honour and glory be given to you for all your great goodness.
(Women’s World Day of Prayer)

Monday 6th May

The National Trust has announced an investment of nearly £3.5 million over 2 years to provide renewable energy at 43 of its properties. Its energy costs are running at £6 million a year, rising to £7.5 million by 2020 if no action is

taken. 5 pilot projects using hydro, biomass and heat pumps during 2013/14 will lead to further investment designed to halve its fossil fuel consumption by 2020. "By investing in renewable energy we can reduce our energy bills and invest more in vital conservation work around the country. It will put renewable energy at the heart of conservation."

Tuesday 7th May

A report from Carbon Tracker and the Grantham Research Institute called "Unburnable Carbon: Wasted capital and stranded assets" points out that 60-80% of the coal, oil and gas reserves of public companies are "unburnable" if the world is to have a chance of keeping global warming below 2 degrees C. Total reserves listed on the world's stock exchanges equal 762 gigatonnes of CO₂ – roughly 25% of the world's reserves. Applying the same proportion to global carbon budgets to provide an 80% chance of limiting global warming to 2 degrees C. means that only 125-225 gigatonnes of CO₂ can be safely burnt, so leaving a huge volume of "unburnable carbon". Company valuations and credit agencies seldom inform investors of such "unburnable

carbon" which in 2012 was supporting a share value of \$4 trillion. Lord Stern comments: "Smart investors can see that investing in companies that rely heavily on constantly replenishing reserves of fossil fuels is becoming a very risky decision."

Wednesday 8th May

An IMF report called "Energy Subsidy Reform" finds that subsidies for fossil fuels account for almost 9% of annual country budgets – amounting to a staggering \$1.9 trillion – much higher than previously estimated. The report confirms that the poorest 20% of developing countries only marginally benefit from energy subsidies. WWF comments: "Removing these subsidies would reduce carbon pollution by 13%. This would be a major step towards reducing the world's carbon footprint. Maintenance of these subsidies is a global scandal, a crime against the environment and an active instrument against clean energy and technological innovation. We strongly support transforming fossil fuel subsidies into an effective scheme for financing energy efficiency and renewables and making sure that the poor in developing countries

Wednesday 22nd May

In India, where farmers have drilled 21 million irrigation wells, all powered by heavily-subsidised electricity, water tables are falling fast. In Tamil Nadu state, 95% of the wells owned by small farmers have dried up, reducing the irrigated area by half over the last decade. Larger farmers use expensive oil-drilling equipment to reach water as deep as 1,000 feet. Elsewhere, drinking water has to be trucked in at great expense. India controls the headwaters of the Indus, but most of its water is actually used in Pakistan, whose population is projected to rise from 180 million now to 275 million by 2050. John Briscoe of the World Bank writes: "Pakistan is already one of the most water-stressed countries in the world, a situation which is going to degrade into outright water scarcity due to high population growth."

Thursday 23rd May

In the competition between farmers' need for water and the cities and industries on which a modern economy depends, the farmers are often the losers. Countries then have to import grain to offset the loss of

local production. Since it takes 1,000 tons of water to produce 1 ton of grain, importing grain is, in essence, importing another country's water. .More than half the world's people live in countries where food supply depends on overpumping aquifers. For how long can their governments import grain to offset production losses?

Friday 24th May

From today until Sunday a course led by Sir Ghillean Prance FRS and Andy Lester, Conservation Director at A Rocha, will be run at Hilfield Friary, Dorset, on the theme "Hope out of Chaos". The programme includes walks, talks, meditation, exercise and quiet. The weekend is an opportunity to learn from experts in their field, to reflect from a Christian viewpoint on some of the environmental issues faced by our world and to share in the life and prayer of the Friary Community. Recommended donation for the weekend is £100 including meals and accommodation. Booking form obtainable by email from hilfieldssa@franciscans.org or ring 01300 341741.

have planted over 2 million trees in the past 2 years. Last year Hurricanes Isaac and Sandy destroyed 40-70% of Haiti's crops, but income from tree sales enabled SFA members to buy extra seed to replant the damaged fields, and the co-operative took care of each other without turning to government or donors for assistance. www.smallholderfarmersalliance.org

Sunday 19th May

Give us, loving Father, 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. May we look up and lift our heads as we look for the redemption of your world, through the redeeming power of your dear Son, Jesus Christ.

Monday 20th May

Saudi Arabia was self-sufficient in wheat until 2008 when it was announced that its deep aquifers were largely depleted. Between 2007 and 2011 its wheat harvest dropped by nearly half. Its last wheat harvest will be gathered in 2016, after which it will be totally dependent on imported grain

to feed its nearly 30 million people. Unsurprisingly it is investing heavily in foreign land, notably in Ethiopia and Sudan, where it will be using the land and water resources of far poorer countries to feed its own people.

Tuesday 21st May

Neighbouring Yemen, with a population spiralling out of control and steeply falling water tables, now has a grain harvest of half what it was 40 years ago. So Yemenis have to import 80% of their grain. Nearly 60% of its children are physically stunted and chronically undernourished. Further depletion of its aquifers must result in poorer harvest, spreading hunger and a risk of social collapse. Syria and Iraq rely heavily on flow from the rivers Tigris and Euphrates, whose headwaters are controlled by Turkey. Harald Frederiksen, a water consultant to the World Bank, believes that as a result of Turkey's massive dam-building programme, Syria will lose at least 30% of its water supply and Iraq at least 60%. He says "The lower riparians' desperate situation presents the world community with a highly volatile international security situation."

receive clean, affordable and reliable energy."

Thursday 9th May

Steve Thompsett of civil engineers Jacob, addressing the CIWEM annual conference on the use of water in hydraulic fracking for gas, points out that each shale production pad may contain up to 16 wells, each running a series of laterals for up to 2 kms.

"Each lateral may be fracked up to 20 times, with each frack using up to 800 cu. metres of water. "That is a massive industrial level of water usage. In most cases it's drinking water that is used and the water you get contains traces of heavy metals and mild radioactivity, so it must be processed and disposed of at the surface."

Friday 10th May

Given that we cannot live more than a few days without water, it was odd that the UN Declaration of Human Rights made no reference to water. Hitherto, lack of water has been regarded as a misfortune and a suitable of charitable aid. However, aid agencies are unaccountable to the people they serve, so when a 2009 survey of 20 African countries found that more than

a third of hand pumps provided by agencies broke down within 2 years, nobody took any responsibility. However, a 2010 UN resolution finally recognised 'the right to safe and clean drinking and sanitation as a human right', although 41 nations abstained from voting. Now it remains for the water industry to take up the challenge and deliver long-term sustainability of water supply at an affordable price.

Saturday 11th May

A Unilever study has monitored the showering habits of 100 families over 10 days. It finds that: The average UK shower is 8 minutes long and uses nearly as much energy and water as a bath. Showering costs an average family £416 a year. Women tend to multi-task while showering, brushing their teeth, washing their hair and shaving. Young boys are the worst offenders, spending an average of 10 minutes under the shower.

Sunday 12th May

"To clasp the hands in prayer is the beginning of an uprising against the disorder of the world." (Karl Barth)

Dear Lord, how desperately we need to learn to pray. Yet, when we are honest, we know that we do not even want to pray. We are distracted, stubborn, self-centred. In your mercy, dear Lord, help us to love what you desire for us and to desire what you have promised.

Monday 13th May

A Greenpeace report called “Point of No Return” details the world’s 14 most climate-threatening projects which, if allowed to go ahead, would guarantee a 4 degree C. rise in global temperatures from pre-industrial levels and bring us to the point of no return for retaining a life-sustaining planet. Incredibly, the money invested in these projects, if invested in energy efficiency, could save us as much energy as these projects produce. “With intensive energy efficiency and investment in renewables we could power 95% of planetary needs by 2050. We have no need for a dangerous, toxic trade-off with the fossil fuel industry.”

Tuesday 14th May

Barrister Polly Higgins in 2010 proposed to the UN a Law of Ecocide

which would make ecocide the fifth international crime against peace. This January a new initiative was launched in the European Parliament led by citizens of 9 European countries to collect 1 million signatures to a proposal prohibiting ecocide on European territory or committed by a European country or citizen anywhere. The proposal would ban imports of any products, such as palm oil from deforested lands, which caused ecocide during their production. 1 million signatures would trigger a public hearing in the European Parliament and require consideration by the Commission. Polly Higgins comments: “The EU was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize last year. A Law of Ecocide will carry us all forward into a world where business and politics work from the premise of ‘First do no harm’. www.endecocide.eu

Wednesday 15th May

Rainforests in Kalimantan (Borneo), home to the endangered orang-utan, are also the centre of the burgeoning palm oil industry. The Norwegian Government is committed to the REDD process (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation & Forest Degradation), but this process only

applies to new forest concessions. However, 78% of Central Kalimantan is already covered by forest concessions, where deforestation continues apace, largely due to the activities of Wilmar, Asia’s biggest agribusiness. If a Law of Ecocide became part of the Statute of Rome, Wilmar’s activities would become crimes against peace because of conflicts affecting indigenous peoples, natural ecosystems, climate change and its global consequences.

Thursday 16th May

Today a course called “Talk Action” is designed to help facilitators gain the tools and techniques needed to make events engaging and productive. Designed by Chris Church, a consultant with over 25 years’ experience in community and sustainable development issues, the course will help attendees to build working relationships with existing organisations, use appropriate techniques and deal with problems. Venue: TCPA, 17 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AS Time: 10 am – 6 pm Bookings: info@talkaction.org or ring 020 7324 4774

Cost varies from £395 for large businesses to £150 for smaller charities and individuals, with concessions for students, pensioners and the unemployed.

Friday 17th May

Mines to Vines is a charity carrying out mine clearance, replanting and building projects in Croatia, Angola, Iraq, Cambodia and Afghanistan, enabling children and adults in war-ravaged countries to step forward in peace. It is supported by the Roots of Peace Penny Campaign which inspires people to collect spare change for the Mines to Vines programme. So far 50 million pennies have been donated to mines to Vines since it was founded in 2003 by Heidi Kuhn and her student daughter Kyleigh.minestovines.net

Saturday 18th May

Haiti’s Small Farmers Alliance (SFA) was founded in 2010 to enable farmers to form co-operatives to address the problems arising from deforestation. They jointly manage tree nurseries in return for high-yield seeds of sorghum, beans and corn, training in crop management and good-quality tools. Its 2000 members