

Prayer points – April 2018



Love is come again as wheat that springeth green ...

Alleluia! The Lord is risen!

With Easter falling on this 1st of April, we'll be greeting the day with the age-old Easter acclamation – a reminder of the joy the first Christians felt at the Resurrection, and our proclamation of rejoicing in all that God has done for us.

The wonderful hymn “Now the green blade riseth” reminds us that Christ's saving work seemed at the time of his death to have been ended by those who killed him: “In the grave they laid Him, Love who had been slain, Thinking that He never would awake again ...” But God's loving power raised Christ from the dead in triumph. What seemed impossible became reality. “Quick from the dead the risen One is seen: Love is come again like wheat that springeth green.”

In a time of unrest and uncertainty, when we are conscious of the issues facing our world and of our own limitations, we may sometimes feel despair. How can we play a part in solving what seem like intractable problems? But we hope in Christ – through whom all things were made, who loves us and the whole world, and longs to reconcile all things. And Christ has been raised from the dead.

So we give thanks for the Resurrection and for the hope it gives us.

When our hearts are wintry, grieving, or in pain,
Jesus' touch can call us back to life again,
Fields of our hearts that dead and bare have been:
Love is come again like wheat that springeth green.

He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Plastic pollution ... and people seeking solutions

The 'Blue Planet' programme on the BBC and recent reports of plastics polluting our waterways have led to a massive increase in awareness of the damage that plastics are doing to ecosystems worldwide. But there's still much more to do both in terms of raising awareness and in finding ways to remove waste.

Research by [The Ocean Cleanup](#), a Dutch non-profit organisation founded by Boyan Slat (aged 18 when he founded it) has revealed the build up of plastic pollution in the Pacific. The size of the mass of floating plastic waste is more than twice the size of France and is up to 16 times larger than previously estimated.

Larger pieces of plastic pollution can entangle and kill marine creatures, while tiny fragments are eaten by small fish and find their way up the food chain. The amount of waste has provided a sobering challenge to plans to try and clean up this pollution using an innovative approach using solar powered booms that Slat invented.

A friend of Isabel's was walking by the river in Bridgnorth recently and came across a paddle boarder obviously equipped for a long voyage. The friend writes: “I had an interesting chat with the owner called Sian Sykes, who told me she was paddling solo around Wales to draw attention to the amount of discarded plastics in waterways. She'd started at the Dee estuary and reached the River Severn via various canals and was heading for the Severn estuary. Her return route is along the Welsh coast (1000 miles in total). She's had some good press coverage. Have a look at [what she's doing](#) and support her!”

We give thanks for those who are raising awareness of the issues around plastics pollution and helping us to see its consequences. We pray that those who are seeking to remove waste will have the funding and support that they need to research and implement solutions.

Psalm 19:1-4

“How clearly the sky reveals God’s glory!
How plainly it shows what he has done!
Each day announces it to the following day;
each night repeats it to the next.
No speech or words are used, no sound is heard;
yet their message goes out to all the world
and is heard to the ends of the earth.”

Climate science denial

Recent revelations about Cambridge Analytica's use of personal Facebook data to influence voters have shocked many people. [Robert Mercer](#) and his daughter [Rebekah Mercer, who invested approximately \\$5 million](#) in Cambridge Analytica, are also well known for funding non-profit groups that are seeking to shape the ideological and media environment around what they perceive as key issues. Among other things, their Mercer Family Foundation has directly funded groups [opposing climate change action](#) including [The Heartland Institute](#), [Manhattan Institute](#), [Media Research Center](#), and [Oregon Institute of Science and Medicine \(OISM\)](#). The Mercers have also been linked to other major funders of climate science denial including the [Koch brothers](#). In 2014, Robert Mercer made [a \\$2.5 million contribution](#) into the Koch's [Freedom Partners Action Fund](#).

Funding for groups that oppose climate action has helped to reduce the amount of public pressure for changes in government policy where those groups operate, creating serious delays in implementing the major changes in carbon emissions that are crucial to our long-term wellbeing.

We pray for a world in which science and politics are presented, discussed and debated in ways that further the common good. We pray for those who have power and wealth, that they may seek to live -and to help others to live – truthfully. We pray that God will guide and protect all who seek the truth and will help all people to resist manipulation.

New innovations

It's [widely acknowledged](#) that in addition to emissions reductions, the Paris goals are most likely going to require 'negative emissions' – the capture and storage of carbon from the air. Negative emissions [technologies](#) are in their infancy, and scientists rightly urge caution as they may carry [environmental and social risks](#). However, some initiatives may offer steps in a positive direction.

A new industrial sized device is taking shape near Squamish, Canada which aims to extract carbon dioxide from the air, using giant fans and chemical processes and to use the gas to make clean, carbon-neutral synthetic diesel and petrol. If this process could be scaled up on a global scale, it could make a significant impact both on carbon emissions and on producing fossil free fuels. The process, known as '[Air to Fuels](#)' is being developed by Carbon Engineering, with some significant funding from Bill Gates and others.

In the UK, near Sheffield, the UK Carbon Capture and Storage Research Centre ([UKCCSRC](#)) is experimenting with other ways to produce [negative emissions](#). The Sheffield laboratory is funded by £2.7m of government money and run by Sheffield University. It is researching different fuels, temperatures, solvents and heating speeds to best capture the CO₂ released largely from biomass plants and is capturing 50 tonnes of CO₂ a year. They aim to work out how best system to capture carbon emissions from major industries, such as refineries and steelworks in places like Teesside.

A prize of \$25m put up by Richard Branson in 2007 to challenge innovators to find a commercially viable way to remove at least 1billion tonnes of atmospheric CO₂ a year for 10 years [has still not been claimed!](#) We pray for the scientists working on these and other innovative ideas. However, cutting emissions from existing sources to stop the CO₂ getting into the air in the first place, is overwhelmingly humankind's first priority.