

# ECO-CONGREGATION IRELAND

Annual Review 2015

**Vision:** To see churches celebrate the gift of God's Creation, recognise the inter-dependence of all Creation and care for it in their life and mission

**Mission:** To encourage churches to adopt an eco-friendly approach to worship, lifestyle, property and finance management, youth and children's work, community outreach and contact with the developing world

We encourage parishes, faith communities and dioceses to take action in four areas of church life—practical, spiritual, community and global. When a parish or community has been working consistently for two years or more on introducing an environmental aspect to these four areas, we encourage them to apply for an award. We then arrange a visit to be made by two of our independent assessors.

**We were delighted to present awards to two parishes in 2015 ...**

## Cabra West Parish, Dublin

Cabra West has included 'Care for the Earth' in sermons, prayers, liturgy, hymns and communion reflections since 2008. The children create posters on an environmental theme each year during Creation Time (1st Sept to 4th October).

Visiting speakers have addressed topics like 'Be the Change', 'Finding the Presence of God in all Creation' and 'Sustainable Farming' and eco news items and tips are included in the parish newsletter.

An area of church wasteland has been transformed into a beautiful garden and vegetable patch and many parishioners grow their own fruit and vegetables, which they share after the annual Harvest service.



## Ballineaspig Parish, Cork

Since holding a discussion forum on Fr Seán McDonagh's book, *To Care for the Earth*, in 2006, Ballineaspig's Faith in Action group has spearheaded a number of initiatives aimed at promoting environmental awareness.

These have included holding outdoor Masses, a 'Creation Matters' Lenten series, marking Earth Hour, World Environment Day and Harvest, and inviting guest speakers to address issues like sustainable living. Acorns, bulbs and seeds have been distributed to parishioners and pupils in local schools.

Ballineaspig was the first church in Ireland to become a Fairtrade Parish and continues to promote Fairtrade.



## A message from our Chairperson

- welcoming Pope's encyclical and stressing importance of eco
- congregations post COP21 ...



## Eco measures can be incorporated into all aspects of church life:

### 1) Spiritual ~

- Include a prayer for the environment in every Mass/service
- Make regular references in services to the need to care for God's Creation
- Celebrate Creation Time from 1st Sept to 4th October every year

### 2) Practical ~

- Reduce, reuse, recycle & compost
- Use eco-friendly light bulbs & cleaning materials
- Support and promote Fairtrade

### 3) Community ~

Invite members of your local community to a talk/film/discussion with an environmental theme, or to litter picks, nature walks, tree/bulb-planting etc.

### 4) Global ~

Support the work of a development agency working in countries where people are already impacted by climate change e.g. Trócaire, Christian Aid, VITA

## 'We need to climate-proof society' ~ Prof John Sweeney

It is imperative that steps are taken to "climate-proof" society, Prof John Sweeney said at a climate justice event we co-hosted with Raphoe Justice and Peace Group in Letterkenny in February. "We have to climate change-proof society for the years ahead .... It won't cost the earth to do it; it will cost the earth not to do it."

Widely acknowledged as Ireland's leading climate scientist, Prof Sweeney of NUI Maynooth said the clock was ticking when it came to climate change: "We should be taking the responsibility of tackling the issue of climate change seriously," he said. "We have to act now with each country playing its part by adopting energy-saving strategies and reducing consumption of fossil fuels .... There are approximately two decades left to achieve the large-scale decarbonisation necessary to avoid dangerous climate change."



## Prayer and action for Climate Justice

It is always encouraging to see parishes, faith communities and dioceses incorporating Care for God's Creation into their everyday lives—as churches and as individuals.

More and more parishes are marking Creation Time (1st Sept—4th October) each year with special Masses/services and environmental talks, walks and other events.

As well as incorporating environmental care into church life, we also encourage working together with the local community and connecting with other churches and environmental organisations.

It was encouraging to see people *Praying in the Sea* again—a way of literally standing in solidarity with people impacted by flooding and rising sea-levels.

As members of *Stop Climate Chaos*, we again took part in their events and campaigns, including a Heads in the Sand photo stunt and a Global Day of Action.

We initiated a National Day of Prayer for the COP21 UN Climate Summit, which was endorsed by the Irish Council of Churches. We sent a specially-written prayer for this purpose to clergy of all denominations for them to use during Masses/services.

We were delighted that President Michael D Higgins and his wife, Sabina, were able to join us for a National Ecumenical Prayer Service for COP21 that we organised with Trócaire and Christian Aid in St Teresa's Church, Clarendon Street, in Dublin. Representatives of many churches were present.

We encouraged people to turn their prayer into action by taking part in the People's Climate Marches that took place all over the country in the run up to the COP21 climate talks in Paris. We were pleased to see our supporters turn out in Dublin, Cork and Belfast to let politicians know that they wanted a strong deal to be reached in Paris.



## Shine a Light on Climate Justice

At the Ecumenical Prayer Service in November we launched our *Shine a Light on Climate Justice* initiative, which sees a specially-commissioned climate candle travelling around Ireland, visiting a different church each week. While hosting the candle, parishes are asked to incorporate a climate justice theme into their Masses/services; a pack that accompanies the candle includes a service of prayer and reflection and intercessory prayers that may be adapted to suit.

It is hoped that, by hosting the candle, more churches and faith communities will get involved in praying and taking action for climate justice. The project has already been enthusiastically received by people from many denominations and we have been greatly encouraged by the level of interest there has been from parishes wanting to learn more about how to become an eco-congregation. Anyone who would like to host the candle should send an email to [info@ecocongregationireland.com](mailto:info@ecocongregationireland.com).



## Finances and Funding 2015

<b>Income:</b>	Church subs	€2,077
	Trócaire grant	4,500
	Church of Ireland Priorities Fund grant	3,000
	Irish Quaker Faith in Action grant	1,000
	World Day of Prayer grant	500
	Donations	1447
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>€12,524</b>
<b>Expenditure:</b>	Staff, office & IT expenses	€11,531
	Volunteers' expenses (travel & subsistence)	389
	Events & awards	770
	Shine a Light on Climate Justice project	228
	Stop Climate Chaos sub	200
	Donation to Refugee Fund	113
	Bank charges	37
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>€13,268</b>
<b>Operational deficit for 2015:</b>		<b>€744</b>
<b>Closing balance at the end of 2016:</b>		<b>€8,603</b>

## Find out more!

We're always happy to answer questions, hear your eco news and accept invitations to speak. To get in touch, simply send an email to [info@ecocongregationireland.com](mailto:info@ecocongregationireland.com) or contact one of our committee members (each one is officially appointed by their denomination):

Church of Ireland—Ven Andrew Orr [andreworr1234@gmail.com](mailto:andreworr1234@gmail.com)

Catholic—Catherine Brennan SSL [catherinebrennanssl38@gmail.com](mailto:catherinebrennanssl38@gmail.com)

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## Donations

We are reliant on donations from churches and individuals in order to keep our work going.

### Our bank details are:

Ulster Bank, Ranelagh, Dublin 6

Sort code: 98-50-50

Account name: Eco-Congregation Ireland

Account no: 10373901

IBAN: IE68 ULSB 9850 5010 3739 01

BIC: ULSBIE2D

Cheques (euro and sterling are both acceptable) should be made payable to 'Eco-Congregation Ireland' and sent to: Gillian Armstrong, ECI Treasurer, 10 Upper Beechwood Avenue, Dublin 6.

Euro standing orders welcome (unfortunately sterling standing orders are not possible)

See [ecocongregationireland.com](http://ecocongregationireland.com) for:

Prayers, Bible studies, liturgy, ideas for children's and youth work, property and finance management, community action, and resources for thinking (and acting) globally

