

Dear Eco Congregation friends

Welcome to the November 2016 edition of the Eco Congregation Ireland newsletter. The weather is getting colder and the nights are longer but winter is just as beautiful and inspirational as the other seasons! We are on the road to Christmas.



If you have any information or stories from your congregation, parish, meeting or Eco Congregation we would love to hear from you! Please forward your news to us at info@ecocongregationireland.com. Don't forget, if you hold an event or meeting, please take some photos and we can include them on our website and our bi-monthly newsletter. If you want your event promoted in our bi-monthly newsletter, please email us about 3 weeks before the next newsletter is due out to ensure inclusion. Our next newsletters will be sent out at the end of January, March and May.

Are you interested in learning more about Eco-Congregation Ireland? Perhaps your congregation or parish has an interest in the environment and has thought about becoming an eco-congregation? The Eco-Congregation Committee has Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist, Church of Ireland and Quaker representatives on it and they are happy to come to speak to your group no matter how small! The contact details are listed at the end of this newsletter.

Did you know we are on Facebook? You can access the Eco-Congregation Ireland Facebook profile [here](#) or just go to facebook.com and search 'Eco-Congregation Ireland'. It's a great place to keep up to date with ECI's activities and access current news and information from other NGOs and faith organisations.

In this newsletter:

- ECI Climate Justice Candle – the journey continues!
- Creation Time 2016 – Eco-Congregations share their news!
- Farewell to Gillian, Our Quaker ECI Representative ... and Welcome to Fran Brady our new Quaker Representative!
- Creation Care Network in Northern Ireland – Report of Gathering 15 October 2016
- 'Enough is Plenty – Reclaiming the Common Good' organised by South Belfast Quakers and Methodists – *Final Report*
- 'Laudato Si' and the Path to COP 22 – Fr Seán McDonagh, SSC
- An Tairseach Dominican Farm and Ecology Centre, Co Wicklow: Upcoming Events
- The Buzzing of the Bees ... Why Bees are so Important – Report by Sylvia Thompson, Diocese of Kerry
- South Belfast Quaker Meeting holds discussion on developing sustainability plan
- Two events coming up in 2017 at Drumalis!
- Be 'Food Smart' and pledge for your pocket and the planet!
- Eco Challenge!
- Prayer for the Earth

Our Climate Justice Candle – the journey continues!

Since our last newsletter, ECI's Climate Justice Candle has visited **Wicklow Town Church of Ireland, Killiskey Church of Ireland, Ashford Catholic Church, An Tairseach, Rathdrum Church of Ireland** and **Gorey Church of Ireland**. It is still making its ecumenical journey through Co Wicklow and on to Co Wexford. If you would like to be part of this initiative, simply drop us an email to info@ecocongregationireland.com.

If you have hosted our Climate Justice Candle we would love to hear from you! Let us know how you used the candle and what impact it had on the members of your congregation. Maybe even send us a photo or two! We can then spread the good news through our bi-monthly newsletter. An example of this is

members of **Nun's Cross Church, Killiskey Parish** enjoyed their service on Sunday 16 October by attending 'Songs of Praise' and also lighting the Eco-Congregation Ireland Climate Justice Candle.



An Tairseach, Co Wicklow hosts the Climate Justice Candle

[An Tairseach](#), the Dominican ecology centre in Co Wicklow hosted the ECI Climate Justice Candle during the months of October and November. It was used during the community Morning and Evening Prayers during the last weekend in October and the Sabbatical Students celebrated the Eucharist with the candle in their midst.

Sr Colette Kane used the candle when she spoke to 80 students from 12 different Dominican Post Primary Secondary Schools, North and South. Their theme this year is Climate Justice. This day also marked the Jubilee 800 of the Dominican Order. The event took place in the Resource Centre, beside St. Dominic's College Cabra Dublin 7 and the students received small candles with climate justice on them and the OP Jubilee logo/reference.



Creation Time 2016 – Eco-Congregations share their news!

Our friends in Eco-Congregations around the country celebrated Creation Time 2016 by holding various inspiring worship and social events. Here is summary of what has been happening. Click on the links to learn more and view more photographs!

Ballineaspig Parish in Cork held a special Harvest Thanksgiving and Sharing Celebration on Sunday 25 September. At the 10.30 Mass, they celebrated the gifts of creation through specially selected prayers, music and a shrine symbolizing the abundance of the earth. They distributed free vegetable and flower seeds after the Masses on 8th May. Parishioners were invited to share the fruits of the harvest from those seeds (or from other local sources), or their home baking, with their neighbours Cork and, by making a donation or by buying produce, to share with their Kenyan brothers and sisters in Turkwel, who are not blessed with our bounty.



Ballineaspig Parish has been linked with Turkwel parish since 2000. Read more of Ballineaspig Parish's activities and view their photos [here](#).

Westport Eco-Congregation hosted an array of events for 'Creation Time' with focus on the Harvest festival in Holy Trinity Church and a number of events on the weekend of the 23rd – 25th September 2016. Irish Columban and eco-theologian, Fr. Sean McDonagh spoke at all masses in St. Mary's Church over the weekend. The Tree Trail was led by members where the names and features of the different tree species were identified along The Mall. The pilot Westport project 'The Good Shepherd' was held in the entrance to The Fairways on the Golf Course road in Westport. The aim was to present an alternative concept to mowing grass with fossil fuel based machines. Read more of Westport Eco-Congregation's activities [here](#).



Creation Time Prayer Service in Balally Parish, Dublin

To mark Creationtide this autumn, 'A Celebration of God's Creation' was organised in the [Church of the Ascension of the Lord, Balally](#), on September 29th. A Prayer Service was preceded by a colourful procession of people carrying baskets of fruit, vegetables, plants and flowers to the altar, to the accompaniment of celebratory music by Vivaldi. The prayers of praise, selected psalms, poems, hymns, readings from 'Laudato Si' and the communal recital of a litany of repentance, all combined to remind the congregation very movingly of our responsibility to care for the earth, God's beautiful Creation.



St. Michael's Parish, Inchicore celebrated Creation Time with a special 'Creation Liturgy'. They invited a local woman, a member of their environmental group, who spent some years in Africa to address the congregation. She spoke to them on sustainable living. After each Mass parishioners sold cards supporting a tree replanting project in Madagascar, and finished with a celebratory cup of tea.

Tuam Parish cares for the earth

The [parishioners of Tuam](#) have been working to care for the earth: Sr Agnes Curley wrote a [song](#) about climate change which she has sung at parties to spread the environmental message and it has recently been published in the Sisters of Mercy newsletter. She is going to meet up with Leo Moran of the Saw Doctors and see if they can develop it more.



Students from the four local secondary schools in Tuam planted trees reminding us of their value to the environment and to encourage parishioners to care for the earth. These trees are laden with blossoms and now have a profusion of berries for the birds. The schools involved were Mercy Presentation, St Jarlath's and Archbishop McKale College. The local primary school children presented 'fruits of the earth' at their special children's Harvest Mass (see photo). A special Prayer for Creation was recited before Mass each day for the month of October During Creation Time.

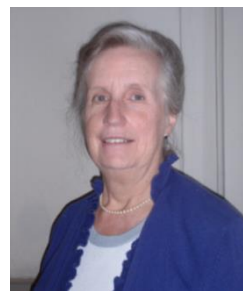
Harvest Thanksgiving in the Church of Ireland Theological Institute, Dublin

On Thursday 13th October the Church of Ireland Theological Institute held a Harvest Thanksgiving Service. CITI produced [A Service of Prayer, Reflection and Thanksgiving for Creation](#) and [A Time of Reflection based on Genesis 1 and 2](#) for this event. This photograph is courtesy Revd Canon Patrick Comerford.



Farewell to Gillian, Our ECI Quaker Representative

Gillian Armstrong has been the Religious Society of Friends representative on Eco-Congregation Ireland's committee since 2011. She has been a very diligent and hard-working member, very committed to promoting the environment among all the churches. Thanks to her work, a number of Quaker meetings across Ireland have become Eco-Congregations, and she was instrumental in setting up the Eco-Quakers group. Even more, she has been a very organised and effective Treasurer, ensuring that we keep within our budget and not a single cent is wasted! She has also been a very effective in sourcing new funding for us. We will miss her hard work, sense of humour and friendliness at our meetings. In retirement she will continue to be very busy! Thank you so much Gillian for all you have contributed!



.... and Welcome to Fran Brady our new Quaker Representative!

For more than thirty years Fran has been interested in environmental, social justice and food security issues. As a mature student she studied for a Diploma in Environmental Resource Management and for an MA in Development Studies.



During her years working in the Development Education Department of Concern Worldwide she wrote modules on Desertification, Climate Change and other related environmental and geography subjects for Transition Year and Leaving Certificate Students. She enjoys writing, particularly writing reflections, prayers and travel memoirs of places of interest in Ireland. Welcome to ECI Fran!

Creation Care Network in Northern Ireland – Report of Gathering 15 October 2016

The Creation Care Network in Northern Ireland held a meeting on Saturday 15 October 2016 at 10.00am in Abbey Presbyterian Church, Monkstown Road, Newtownabbey, Co Antrim. Participants came from: St John's Presbyterian Church (Newtownbreda), St Michael the Archangel, Butterfly Conservation NI, Whiteabbey Presbyterian, Hillsborough Presbyterian, Eco-Congregation Ireland, Kilbride Presbyterian, Christian Aid, Drumalis Retreat Centre, A Rocha UK, First Donegore Presbyterian, Belfast Bible College, Northern Ireland Community Energy and the Northern Ireland Assembly.

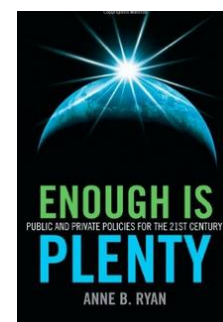


The gathering is an opportunity to share thoughts and ideas on how each church is progressing on their environmental journey. Read the report from this meeting [here](#). Their next meeting will be in March 2017, venue and time to be decided. The group is very keen for other individuals, groups or churches who may be interested in promoting eco/care of creation issues in their churches/church groups to come along. Please email Bertie Stirling on spectre747@btopenworld.com to get added to the email list and to receive more information about the next meeting.

'Enough is Plenty – Reclaiming the Common Good' organised by South Belfast Quakers and Methodists – Final Report

On Saturday 24th September, a conference took place that explored what makes for a society where 'enough is plenty' – addressing contemporary moral, economic and theological issues in our affluent and waste-prone society.

The presenters, Anne Ryan (author of the book *Enough is Plenty*), Tony Weekes ([South Belfast Quaker Meeting](#) and [Basic Income Ireland](#)) and James Orr ([Friends of the Earth NI](#)), are well-informed social and economic commentators, who opened up general discussion on our contemporary society, including the environment, economy and the common good.



Double the number of people expected, attended the afternoon conference. The event was sponsored jointly by South Belfast Quaker Meeting (an Eco-Congregation Ireland award winner) and [Belfast South Methodist Church](#) who were hosting this at their centre on the Lisburn Road as part of a weekend of Harvest Celebrations. A full report of this event is now available on the Eco-Congregation Ireland [website](#).



‘Laudato Si’ and the Path to COP 22 – Fr Seán McDonagh, SSC

On 28 September 2016, Fr Seán McDonagh attended a Joint Consultation on ‘Laudato Si’ and the Path to COP 22’ organised by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and the Pontifical Academy of the Sciences. The meeting took place at the Casina Pio IV in the Vatican. One of the speakers was Prof. Ramanathan Veerabhadran, the Professor of Applied Ocean Sciences and director of the Center for Atmospheric Sciences at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, University of California, San Diego. Fr Seán McDonagh has written a report on this Joint Consultation. You can read it in full [here](#).



An Tairseach Dominican Farm and Ecology Centre, Co Wicklow: Upcoming Events



An Tairseach is the Irish word for threshold and it suggests a new beginning, an alternative and more sustainable way of working with the land as well as a renewed relationship with the whole community of life, human and non-human. Three main aspects of An Tairseach are: a centre for ecology and spirituality; an organic farm and farm shop; a conservation area suitable for field studies.

An Tairseach offers a variety of conferences/courses/retreats including the New Cosmology and its effect on our understanding of ourselves as participants in the community of life on Planet Earth as well as ‘Exploring Theological Implications of the Pope’s Encyclical ‘Laudato Si’ – Care for Our Common Home’, ‘Ecological Footprints’, ‘Creation, Evolution, Faith’ – all in March 2017 – and many more. Visit the An Tairseach [website](#) for more information. They are also planning a celebration of the Winter Solstice in January. Keep an eye on their website for details.

The Buzzing of the Bees ... Why Bees are so Important – Report by Sylvia Thompson, Diocese of Kerry



Diocese of Kerry

Sylvia Thompson, a member of the Diocese of Kerry Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation Committee recently attended an event in Siamsa Tíre, Tralee which showcased [biodiversity projects](#) happening in Co Kerry. Ecologist Una Fitzpatrick of [Biodiversity Ireland](#) who was instrumental in producing the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan, was also in attendance. This plan is downloadable from this [link](#). You can read Sylvia’s report in full in the Eco-Congregation Ireland [website](#). In her report Sylvia encourages us - if you want to respond to the challenge of Pope Francis in Laudato Si ‘Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or secondary aspect of our Christian experience’ LS#21, here is a practical way to get involved.

South Belfast Quaker Meeting holds discussion on developing sustainability plan

On Sunday 13th November South Belfast Quaker Meeting held a discussion about how to respond to Ireland Yearly Meeting's request that all meetings should commit to being as sustainable as possible through the development of a sustainability plan. Over 30 people attended the event where discussion ranged from installing recycling bins in rooms, to installing solar panels. The meeting used the recent document issued by IYM called 'Responding to IYM 2016 - living sustainably and fairly on this earth'. It can be downloaded from:

<https://quakersireland.files.wordpress.com/2016/07/responding-to-iy-2016-final-pdf-for-web.pdf>.



Members explored areas including what ways the meeting house could cut down on its use of gas for the planet's resources for heating and lighting, and whether they should install photovoltaic panels on the roof; how to encourage members to get to the meeting using more sustainable means of transport; encouraging the use of more Fairtrade, organic and locally-sourced food; ideas for developing the garden area for bees; reviewing where the meeting's and members' money is located and if there are more ethical alternatives; how to build community, and support the plight of refugees; and ways to speak truth to power in relation to sustainability. The gathering ended with a pot-luck lunch using the LOAF principles - Locally-sourced, Organic, Animal-friendly, Fairtrade - leek & potato soup, beetroot soup, homemade bread and Irish cheese, homemade apple strudel and apple crumble were served!

Two events coming up in 2017 at Drumalis!

The community at Drumalis has two very interesting events coming up in 2017.



The first is the annual [Re-inhabiting the Earth Spring Conference](#) which will take place from 10-12 February. The theme will be 'One Family ... One Common Home' and the keynote speaker is Dr Lorna Gold, Head of Policy and Advocacy from Trócaire. This weekend will develop themes from previous Spring Conferences - Caring for our Common Home, Be the Change, Climate Change, Enough is Plenty, etc. It will connect with the publication of a new papal document on the family, Amoris Laetitia, look forward to the World Gathering on the Family in Ireland in 2018, and address some fundamental questions around these themes.

In July, Sr Margaret Rose and Sr Anne Harnett will be leading a retreat from 10 – 16 July. It will be a follow-up in their series '[Glimpses into the Mystery of the Unfolding Universe](#)'. This retreat will be an inward journey, continuing the process of exploration into the mysteries of the universe as it unfolds. The focus will be on EMERGING CONSCIOUSNESS and how this sheds light on our spirituality and belief systems. Themes to be developed will include story, relationality, possibility and abundance.

Be 'Food Smart' and pledge for your pocket and the planet!

Food Smart is a campaign initiated by [Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council](#) in association with the [Love Food Hate Waste](#) campaign. Their aim is to reduce food waste in the Council area



by helping everyone to reconnect with and value their food. The Council has tried to come at this from a slightly different angle and are trying to help people look at the value of their food rather than simply

encouraging people to recycle it. The Council believes there is a clear opportunity for churches to engage with them on this issue and would be delighted to chat to or work with churches within this Council area about the possibilities. If you are interested in learning more, Declan Donnelly the Council's Recycling and Education Officer can be contacted on 028 2766 0257 or declan.donnelly@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk.

Eco challenge!

In our Eco Challenge last time we shared about a Scottish company called [Vegware](#). Their award winning catering disposables are low carbon, made from renewable or recycled materials, and all can be recycled along with food waste.



Some Eco-Congregation Ireland friends got in touch and recommended an Irish company [down2earthmaterials](#). They are the sustainable food service packaging specialists in Ireland (based in Cork). Working alongside Vegware, they supply Ireland's largest range of certified compostable products and packaging. . Perhaps we could consider using this type of compostable/ biodegradable cups, plates and dishes for catering in our church functions to reduce waste?

Prayer for the Earth

When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron
feeds.

I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

Wendell Berry



With kindest regards and blessings of this Advent season,

Karen Nicholson
Administrative Officer

info@ecocongregationireland.com
+353 (0) 89 974 0744

Rev Andrew Orr
Chair and Church of Ireland representative

andreworr1234@gmail.com
+353 (0) 87 419 6051

Catherine Brennan SSL
Roman Catholic representative

catherinebrennanssl38@gmail.com
+353 (0) 87 259 9071

Rev John Corrie
Methodist representative

jscmethodist@gmail.com
+44 (0) 28 9209 1559

Joe Furphy
Presbyterian representative

jfurphy@aol.com
+44 (0) 28 9061 2311

Fran Brady
Religious Society of Friends representative

wastenot@eircom.net