

Dear Eco-Congregation friends



Welcome to the November 2018 edition of the Eco-Congregation Ireland newsletter. We are journeying towards Christmas! The Eco-Congregation Ireland Committee wishes you all a very merry Christmas and an eco-centred 2019!



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 and at the above link.

Do 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.

Would you like to start your journey towards an Eco-Congregation Ireland Award? A good way to get started is by completing our [Environmental Check Up for Your Church!](#) Send us your completed Checklist and one of our committee will be in touch to help you move towards an application for an Eco-Congregation Ireland award.

Don't forget! ECI will award two certificates in the earlier stages of your journey towards the final Eco-Congregation Ireland Award to mark stages on the way - the Awareness Certificate and the Endeavour Certificate. [Learn more on the ECI website here.](#)



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Our Climate Justice Candle – The Journey Continues!

The Eco-Congregation Ireland [Climate Justice Candle](#) has been weaving its ecumenical and climate justice journey around Ireland since the launch of the project in 2015. Our new candle has headed off on its ecumenical and climate justice journey again!

For the next few months the ECI Climate Justice Candle will be travelling around Northern Ireland! Would your church or parish like to host the candle?

If you would like to be part of this initiative and use the new candle in a future event, simply drop us an email to info@ecocongregationireland.com. We look forward to hearing from YOU!

ECI Climate Justice Candle visits Tuam Parish

The Eco-Congregation Ireland Climate Justice Candle visited [Tuam Parish](#) as part of their Creation Time events. It provided the focus of a beautiful Children's Mass on Saturday evening. Fr. Pat Farragher's homily on Care for Creation was inspirational. Focusing again on the Candle at 12.30 mass Fr. Francis Mitchell pointed out that caring about climate justice was not an aspiration but a Christian duty, echoing Pope Francis' message in Laudato Si. After mass some of the congregation then accompanied the Climate Justice Candle to St. Mary's Cathedral and joined their congregation in a short ecumenical event. You can read the Tuam Parish report [in full on the ECI website](#) and view more of their photos.



ECI Climate Justice Candle visits Ards Friary, Co Donegal

On Saturday 29 September [Ards Friary](#) held the opening day of a two week programme to celebrate the Season of Creation: 'Tread Lightly on the Earth'. Over 100 people attended an exhibition during day one and many more during the coming days. Twenty five Syrian refugees joined the retreat for the day, adults and children. Bishop John Kirby on seeing the mix of nationalities and religions remarked: "Ni neart go cur le cheile": unity is strength! Presence and neart



were the two main points of Rev Grace Clunie's talk, as she drew out how Celtic culture and spirituality contributes to a new ethical perspective on our changing climate chaos. Her talk was preceded by the lighting of the Eco-Congregation Ireland Climate Justice Candle. Rose of JPIC, lit the candle. She had just recently returned from Rwanda and Sierra Leone. [Read more on the ECI website.](#)

Hillsborough Presbyterian Church, Co Down hosts the ECI Climate Justice Candle

Grace Davin, Eco Convener and Minister Rev Dr Allen Sleith, sent ECI a report on the candle's visit to Hillsborough. The Climate Justice Candle was delivered to [Hillsborough Presbyterian Church](#) in time for their Harvest Services on 21st October. The Church had been decorated by a team of willing flower arrangers to display the variety and abundance of the harvest we have enjoyed this year with flowers, fruit and vegetables. The evening service was attended by friends from the neighbouring Church of Ireland parish and the candle was centrally placed in the Sanctuary throughout.



The following week the Climate Justice Candle remained in its central position within the Sanctuary during the All Age Service, and later in the week it was taken to the church's Resource Area for a short Prayer and Reflection Time, using some of the resources from the ECI pack. It was again brought back to the Vestibule for the Communion Service, along with some books from the library about Climate Change. It is hoped that this level of exposure to the congregation will have raised awareness of the urgency of addressing climate change and injustice. Joe Furphy, Presbyterian representative on the ECI committee also presented this congregation with an ECI Awareness certificate. You can read this report [in full on the ECI website here](#) and view all the photos.

Awards! Awards! Newtownbreda Presbyterian Church, Belfast receives ECI Award and hosts the ECI Climate Justice Candle all in one week!

The Climate Justice Candle was set on the communion table of [Newtownbreda Presbyterian Church](#) for their ECI Award Service on Sunday 18th November 2018 where Joe Furphy, Presbyterian representative on the ECI committee presented this congregation with their Eco-Congregation Ireland award. At the start of the service Ken Orr, a member of our church's eco committee, introduced the candle to the congregation. He talked about how the candle is travelling round Ireland and being hosted by various churches and groups who are concerned about climate justice issues and care for God's creation.



The bible readings, hymns and anthem were chosen to fit with the theme of caring for creation, while the prayers of intercession were split into three parts representing land, sea and sky, praying for healing for the damage done to the natural cycles in each domain. A tea light was lit after each prayer, and then a final light on the Climate Justice Candle as a symbol of the Holy Spirit helping us to care for the earth and all creation. The Rev Tolland's sermon used the words of Psalm 8, and her recent experiences of the biodiversity of Namibia, to bring out a deep lesson on the significance of our stewardship of the earth's resources. In the following days, the candle made appearances at meetings of the Squirrels and Beavers youth organisations, and at the Root Soup Community Lunch which is held in the halls each week. [Read this story in full here and view more photos.](#)

Awards! Awards! SMA Parish, Wilton, Cork receives ECI Award!

Sunday, November 3, 2018, was a momentous and historic day for the SMA parish at Wilton, Cork. After years of community collaboration and creativity, inspired by Pope Francis' great environmental encyclical Laudato Si', [the parish was presented with their Eco-Congregation Ireland Award](#). This was recognised as a significant development both by the Diocese of Cork and Ross and by the City of Cork, evidenced by the presence of Bishop Buckley and by Cllr. Fergal Denney, representing the Lord Mayor of Cork. The award was presented by Sr. Catherine Brennan, Catholic representative on the ECI committee, who travelled from Dublin on behalf of Eco-Congregation Ireland to make the presentation. To mark the occasion a leaflet was produced. It outlines the efforts made by the Wilton parish community over the past two years to achieve the Award. [To view the leaflet please click here](#). You can read this story in full [on the ECI website](#).



Parish of The Three Patrons, Rathgar receives an ECI Endeavour Certificate!

The Laudato Si group in the [Parish of The Three Patrons, Rathgar](#) received an Endeavour Certificate from Eco-Congregation Ireland in recognition of their on-going commitment to the care of "our common home". It was presented at all three Masses on September 30th 2018 when the final hymn was the appropriate "All creatures of our God and King" ending with the rousing "O praise Him, O praise Him! Alleluia, alleluia." Later two members of the Laudato Si group proudly carried aloft the framed Endeavour Award which they then placed on the decorated altar beside a basket of harvest fruits and vegetables. The communion reflection was Pope Francis' Prayer for Our Earth from "Laudato Si". You can view their photos [on the ECI website here](#).



Gardiner Street Parish, Dublin receives ECI Awareness Certificate!

[Gardiner Street Parish](#) in north inner city Dublin was delighted to receive an Awareness Certificate from Eco-Congregation Ireland this summer. The Certificate marks the formal beginning of Gardiner



Street's eco-journey in response to Pope Francis' invitation to communities to value our common home. Over recent years, the parish has implemented a number of changes to improve its eco-footprint. These include installing energy saving light-bulbs in the church to boost energy efficiency, introducing Fair-Trade

products, minimising waste and improving recycling in the church building, and, with the support of Dublin City Council and Sunflower Recycling, planting pollinator-friendly plants at the front of the church building. The parish has hosted street clean-ups and presentations on caring for our common home, regularly provides eco-tips, and has handed out sunflower seeds to parishioners. Gardiner Street Parish now looks forward to progressing its eco-journey, hopefully towards an Eco Congregation Ireland Award. If you would like to get involved, especially with the parish's gardening ministry, please contact the parish office (01) 8363411.

Please see page one of this newsletter to learn how your faith community can work towards ECI's Awareness and Endeavour certificates or [follow this link for more information on the ECI website](#).

Catherine Devitt from Gardiner Street Parish, Dublin is asking for our advice! Can you help? *The flowers we buy for our church buildings are often grown in areas of the world where there is poverty, conflict, and water shortage. This presents an ethical dilemma for parishes on their eco-journey. We are a new eco-congregation based in north-inner city Dublin, and unfortunately, we do not have convenient access to foliage and greenery to decorate our church. We would like to know what other parishes do to overcome this dilemma to help make our planet a greener, fairer place. Feel free to email suggestions to Catherine at cdevitt@jcfj.ie.*

Westport Eco-Congregation launches Christmas Post-Card Project 2018

[Westport Eco-Congregation](#) is delighted to launch their Green Christmas initiative for 2018: The Christmas Postcard Project. As part of its efforts to promote awareness for our environment, Westport Eco-Congregation wants to reduce the amount of waste that is created at this time of year, especially the amount of paper used on Christmas Cards. This is achieved by producing a high-quality Christmas postcard to be used as an alternative to the traditional envelope-contained card. This Christmas Post-Card uses half the card of a normal card; it also avoids the need of an envelope. This, therefore, reduces the amount of waste. It aims to continue the conversation around our consumer habits and the waste each of us discards every day, but more so for the festive season. Submissions were made over the summer to seek local wintery photos in Mayo. This local product is on sale now, for €5.00 for ten cards. All funds raised will be for the 2019 programme of environmental awareness campaigns in Westport and Mayo. [Read more on this story and view their photos here](#). The postcards are available by contacting 086 857 6425 or westportecocongregation@gmail.com and are on sale at:



- The Presbytery, St. Mary's Church, The Mall (10-4pm Mon-Fri)
- The Wellness Room, Shop Street, (10-6pm Mon-Sat)
- Christy's Harvest, Shop Street (10-6pm Mon-Sat)
- The Westport Country Market, on Thursdays
- Books@One, Bridge Street, Louisburg (7 days)

An Tairseach's Latest News

An Tairseach is delighted to announce that they have now launched their new website! [Click here to have a browse!](#) Information about An Tairseach's Ecology Centre and Organic Farm and Shop can be found here, as well as the facility to book online for upcoming courses and workshops.



If you are at a loss to know what to give as a Christmas gift to someone who already has everything or who just isn't interested in more things why not contribute to the well-being of the planet and thus to the future of humanity by sponsoring a woodland with its potential to support birds, bees, insects and other forms of wildlife? An Tairseach has a lovely card, designed by Sr Pauline McGrath, which reads: 'As a Christmas Gift to you, a tree has been planted at the Dominican Farm overlooking Wicklow Bay.' Cost of Sponsorship: €30. This covers card and postage as well as maintenance of the woodland. To arrange for sponsorship please contact: Sr Marian O'Sullivan, An Tairseach, Bayview Road, Wicklow Town, e-mail: marian@antairseach.ie

Diocese of Kerry takes up the challenge of plastic pollution for Season of Creation 2018

The Diocese of Kerry took up the challenge of plastic pollution for the 'Season of Creation' 2018 using the catch phrase 'Be part of the solution to plastic pollution.' The various events were organised by Diocese's JPIC Committee. The Season opened in Kerry on September 1st with a prayer event in Tralee Town Park at 11, an ideal opportunity for all Christian churches and all people of good will to come together as "we all know of the huge



challenges facing our common home, that home for all creation." All parishes across the diocese received copies of [the leaflet explaining the theme](#) and giving suggestions of practical actions to be taken. You read about all the events organised by the Diocese of Kerry for Season of Creation [on the ECI website here](#).

Update from Cabra West Parish

Sr Philomena from the Church of the Most Precious Blood, [Cabra West Parish](#) sent ECI their update. The photo to the right shows the parish display inside the Church during Creation Time 2018.

During the year the parishioners continue to be conscious of God's creation and highlight awareness of caring for the earth. This includes care of creation in the Prayer of the Faithful on Sundays, weekdays and when celebrating First Holy Communion and Confirmation and School Masses.



During the month of September each year they create a Sacred Space in the Church. They have an item in the Parish Newsletter each week and they try to have a 'creation' hymn during Sunday Masses. The parish holds the blessing of pets on the last Sunday of September after Mass. This year the Parish 'Cell' groups held a harvest thanksgiving service during their September meeting. [You can visit the ecology/creation page of the Cabra West Parish website here](#). View their photos [on the ECI website here](#).

Laudato Sí Working Group News

The Eco-Congregation Ireland newsletter will now host a regular column from the Laudato Sí Working Group. This group was established in 2016 to promote action on Laudato Sí in the Catholic Church in Ireland. The group is composed of a range of experts from different fields such as theology, ecology, pastoral work, development, climatology and education. Their vision is a vibrant church in Ireland which is true to its vocation to care for the earth, rooted in a deep eco-spirituality. Amongst other things, the group led efforts to bring ecology into the World Meeting of Families through Our Common Home project, promoted the Season of Creation and supported the divestment of the Irish Bishops Conference from fossil fuels. It also provides in-service trainings for church groups. The group can be reached on social media by @LaudatoSi_IRE or by contacting Lorna Gold in Trócaire lorna.gold@trocaire.org.

The Laudato Sí Working Group met in November to discuss progress and agree key priorities for the coming year. Here is a short summary of what is in the pipeline:

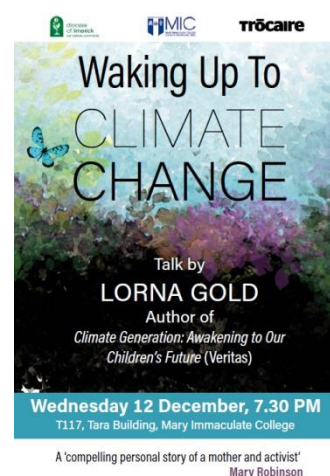
- New parish resource on Implementing Laudato Sí. Building on the success of the Trócaire Glás resource and the Eco-Congregation Ireland resources, the plan is to partner with Veritas in the spring to produce a new, easy to use resource for parishes and communities. Suggestions of materials, reflections and ideas are welcome. Please contact Vivek in Veritas.
- Collaborate with the Irish Council for Justice and Peace in 2019 to roll out a series of regional meetings on Laudato Sí implementation. The first of these will take place in Dromantine in April. More details to follow.
- Work to ensure Laudato Sí is incorporated within the primary and senior curriculum for RE. Continue to work with those developing the senior cycle RE curriculum and the Grow in Love programme for 6th Class. Engage with the roll out of the curriculum to make sure an integral ecology is prominent.
- Work to ensure work happening on adult faith development and adult catechesis in parishes includes Laudato Sí as an integral part of the Christian vocation.
- Participate in relevant citizen actions to promote climate justice policies, including the citizens' lobby of TDs organised by Stop Climate Chaos. Seek a meeting with the Minister for Climate Action to present the work of faith-based organisations in this area.
- Ensure parishes and groups receive information on Season of Creation 2019 in good time and are encouraged to participate in events.
- Support efforts to increase the number of faith-based organisations divesting from fossil fuels, including individual dioceses.

Other news: Jane Mellett from the Laudato Sí Working Group is currently participating on a Climate Pilgrimage from Assisi to Katowice where the COP will take place in a few weeks. Follow her pilgrimage and [send your intentions for climate justice here](#). [Follow Jane's blog here](#).



Members of the Laudato Sí Working Group of the Irish Bishops Conference currently are: Prof John Sweeney, Emeritus Professor of Geography, Maynooth University; Dr. Lorna Gold, Laudato Sí Project, Trócaire; Vivek Da Silva, Veritas Publications; Fr. Dermott Lane, Parish Priest Ballaly and theologian; Sylvia Thompson, Kerry Diocese JCIP; Fr. Sean McDonagh, Columban Missionary and eco-theologian; Sr. Patricia Lynott, Diocesan Advisor to Primary Schools, Diocese of Kilalla; Jane Mellett, Pastoral Worker, Dublin Diocese; Anna Keegan, Church Officer, Trócaire; Kate Liffey, Director of Catechetics, Irish Episcopal Conference; Emer Crooke, Research Coordinator, Council for Justice and Peace, Irish Episcopal Conference; Catherine Brennan SSL, Eco-Congregation Ireland.

Dr Lorna Gold of Trócaire and the Laudato Si Working Group is giving a talk on 'Waking Up to Climate Change' on Wednesday 12 December 2018 at 7.30pm in T117, Tara Building, Mary Immaculate College. All welcome.



Raising our Voices for Climate Action – Join the Laudato Sí Group at the Citizens' Lobby on 5th December!

The Laudato Sí Working Group will be participating in the forthcoming Citizens' Lobby Day Climate Change on Wednesday 5th December in Buswells Hotel, Molesworth Street, Dublin. The day is organised by [Stop](#)



[Climate Chaos Coalition](#) on behalf of a wide group of concerned citizens. The group will have a table for faith-based groups attending, with information and advice to help you prepare to meet your TD. They will also be inviting TDs to sign the Laudato Sí pledge and presenting them with a copy of Laudato Sí as a gift. If you would like to come to this day, please follow the instructions on the ECI website and register. [Click on this link to the ECI website for registration and all information on this event](#). **You absolutely don't need to be an expert in any of the policy detail – there will be many people from Trócaire, Friends of the Earth and others available to support you!**

Latest news from Eco-Congregation Scotland

Our friends at Eco-Congregation Scotland have a new website! [Have a browse!](#) Rev David Coleman, Eco-Congregation Scotland's new Environmental Chaplain is now writing a new Chaplain's blog on their website. [Check it out here!](#)



David is also launching on Advent Sunday: 'Advent with the Eco Chaplain', an alternative online Advent Calendar, based on lectionary readings for Advent, with something visual, (photo or video) and a short reflection each day. [You can find this on Facebook here](#). Give it a like!

New Caring for Creation Video from the Church of Ireland

There are many ways in which we can care for the environment which God has given us. The Rev Andrew Orr, Chairperson of Eco-Congregation Ireland, and Lydia Monds, from the Bishops' Appeal for World Aid and Development, share how the [Church of Ireland's Environmental Charter](#) can help us to think globally and act locally [in this new video](#).



European Christian Environmental Network 12th Assembly in Katowice October 2018

The 12th Assembly of the [European Christian Environmental Network](#) met from 6-10 October 2018 under the heading 'On the way to economic and ecological justice' in Katowice in Poland, hosting 85 participants from 22 countries of Europe and overseas. Discussions of the Assembly were guided by the biblical words of the prophet Jeremiah 29:11 "I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope."

Participants gathered to share joy in God's creation, to remind each other that everywhere it is under threat and that churches across Europe as well as in other parts of the world have a duty to care for creation; in worship, in action and in advocacy. The focus of the Assembly discussions was the relationship between economy and ecology; ways to achieve a just distribution of available resources while respecting the principles of economic and ecological justice. [The report of the ECEN Assembly is now available on their website here](#).



Update from Northern Ireland Creation Care Network

Northern Ireland Creation Care Network held met on Saturday 20 October 2018 in Ballynure Presbyterian Church, Ballynure, Co Antrim. The meeting proceeded



with each representative providing details of what they and their respective churches and organisations were working towards or had achieved environmentally since the last meeting. Darren Houston, a member of the group provided ECI with a summary of the subjects and topics that were discussed and you can read them [on the ECI website here](#). The next meeting of the Northern Ireland Creation Care Network will take place on Saturday 23rd March 2019, 10.00am to 1.00pm in Moyallon Centre, the Grange Christian Retreat Ltd, 123 Stramore Road, Craigavon, Co. Armagh, BT63 5JZ.

The 4th Ballynature Day – Saturday 23 February 2019

The 4th Ballynature Day will take place on Saturday 23 February 2019 from 11.30am to 4.30pm in Ballynure Village, near Ballyclare, Co. Antrim. If you are involved with any conservation, community or environmental groups who would like to come along and have a stand, please let Darren Houston know - darren.houston21@yahoo.com. There is no charge for tables and all the exhibitors will receive free tea/coffee and buns! [You can view the event flyer on the ECI website here](#). All the exhibitors from 2018 are returning along with a few others. Jo Scott, from BBC Home Ground will be a guest visitor!



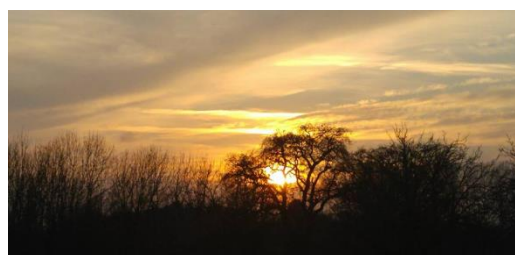
Belfast Repair Cafe is one year old!

[Belfast Repair Cafe](#) is one year old! They have had a whole year of fabulous fixes, wonderful volunteers and community built! The Repair Cafe volunteers invite everyone to come and celebrate with them at their next Repair Cafe, 8 December 2018 at South Belfast Quaker Meeting House. As well as the usual repairs and cake, they will have festive recycled crafts and inspiration for a high fun, low waste Christmas! You are all very welcome, whether you've something to mend or not.



Reflection on the Shortest Day by Fr Hugh O'Donnell

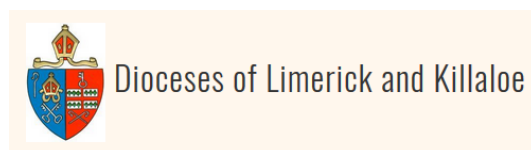
Fr Hugh O'Donnell is a poet and ministers with the Salesian community in the parish of Sean McDermott Street in Dublin. He completed the MA course in Religion and Ecology in 2004 at the Columban Ecological Centre at Dalgan. Out of that experience came his written reflection on the intimate relationship between worship and the earth, namely, [Eucharist and the Living Earth](#) (Columba), which was revised in 2012.



Fr Hugh has shared a reflection on the shortest day with us. You can read his reflection in full [on the ECI website here](#).

Ecumenical Mission Evening in Diocese of Limerick & Killaloe – Stewardship of God's Creation

Rev Andrew Orr, Chairperson of Eco-Congregation Ireland, was invited by the Diocesan Council for Mission to speak on this theme at their ecumenical mission evening on Tuesday 16th October in Adare. Andrew



began by identifying the environmental issues facing us, including air and water pollution, climate change, habitat loss, soil destruction and desertification. He pointed to passages of scripture which call us to care for creation, not abuse it. Andrew also turned to the many things that can be done in parishes to be better stewards of creation. You can read a full report of this interesting event [on the ECI website](#).

The Scourge of Plastics – A Day Event at the Columban Ecological Institute, Dalgan

This event is taking place at the Columban Ecological Institute, St Columban's, Dalgan on Saturday 1st December 2018 from 9.30am – 3.30pm. The programme is available [on the ECI website](#) and speakers include Dr Paul Connolly, Marine Institute, Mindy O'Brien, VOICE Ireland and Sylvia Thompson, Diocese of Kerry. Please book with Elizabeth Mc Ardle, devofficemail@gmail.com. Cost €30 (includes full lunch and morning tea/coffee). Students €10. All welcome!



'Caring for the Earth, Our Common Home' – Service in the Unitarian Church, St Stephens Green Dublin

The [Unitarian Church in St. Stephens Green Dublin](#) is working to encourage the congregation and their contacts to seriously play their part in working to secure a sustainable world for the generations that follow us. Tony Brady, a member of the congregation, will lead a service in the Unitarian Church on Sunday 9th December on the theme "Caring for the Earth, our common home". People of all faiths and none are warmly welcome to attend this service.



The Minister Rev. Bridget Spain has for years encouraged the now growing campaign to reduce our use of plastic and repeatedly emphasises the damage to our marine life caused by the accumulation of plastic particles in the oceans. Her article "[We are poisoning Earth with the plastic we manufacture](#)" based on a sermon given in the church was published in the Irish Times on the 8th August 2017.

World Council of Churches' Statement on COP 24 and Just Transition to Sustainable Economy

The [World Council of Churches](#) has issued a statement on COP 24 where it appeals to WCC member churches and ecumenical partners urgently to intensify their advocacy and action for climate justice and transition to sustainable economy in local, national and international arenas, as well as to promote the necessary lifestyle changes. [You can read this statement in full here](#).



Latest News from Jubilee

[Jubilee, the creation care organisation](#), is raising £310,000 to purchase a small farm outside Larne, Co Antrim, where they can bring ambitious plans for Jubilee Farm to fruition, with organic pigs, poultry, goats and vegetables, plus an internship programme, and even "glamping" in due course. Already, they've raised £165,000 from existing supporters to purchase the farmhouse. Now, they need to raise £145,000 to buy the 13.5 acres of land, as well as polytunnels and other equipment, by Christmas.



As a Community Benefit Society – a form of cooperative social enterprise – they're raising this money via a community share offer, making this the first community-owned farm in Northern Ireland. Launched in Belfast on 20th October, the minimum investment in the project starts from only £50, making it the perfect Christmas present (but hurry, the share offer closes on the 5th of December)! Managing Director Dr Jonny Hanson said, "Becoming a member of Jubilee Farm is the perfect opportunity for individuals, families, schools, churches, and community groups to come together and invest in a community enterprise that works for the benefit of everyone".

Mass of Harvest Thanksgiving held in Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Lacken, Blessington, Co Wicklow

Carmel O'Neill, one of the parishioners sent ECI this report: The annual mass of Harvest Thanksgiving was held on Saturday October 27th in the [Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Lacken, Blessington](#). This event in Lacken Church attracted a large attendance from the farming community and neighbouring parishes.

The children from the local school brought up harvest gifts in the opening procession, read the prayer of the faithful and sang in the choir. Fr Richard Behan gave a special blessing to the farming community while Deacon Gerry Malone blessed the congregation with holy water. The need to offer thanksgiving was made all the more relevant after a very difficult growing season. Parishioners donated cakes, preserves and plants which were sold after Mass with the proceeds going towards the maintenance of Lacken Church.

This Blessing Prayer was used during worship: Bless all here present as we gather to celebrate this Mass of thanksgiving. Bless all who work the land and all who receive a livelihood in our community. Bless all the faith initiatives of our community. May all our work enrich the lives of all they touch. We ask this through Christ our Lord, Amen.



Salesian Cosmology Group hosts conference on Lifestyle and Consumerism

On November 17th 2018 the Salesian Cosmology Group hosted a morning conference in Milford, Limerick. The theme of the conference was *Lifestyle and Consumerism* and the presenter was Dr Cathriona Russell from TCD. Sixty-five people attended and appreciated the topic and engaged fully in the lively presentation.



The Salesian Cosmology Group shared that participants felt that they have a long way to go, but as it was pointed out by Cathriona, we must not lose hope! It is a crucial time in our history. What is needed just now is the awareness of Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation. The market is promoted always under the banner of economic growth, but we need to be aware that while the market is necessary, it is not always sustainable without justice.

Reflection from Fr Dan McCauley SMA, Dromantine Eco Spirituality Group

Fr Dan McCauley SMA, from [Dromantine Retreat & Conference Centre](#), Newry, Co Down shared with ECI his



reflection from the meeting of their Eco Spirituality Group on November 14th 2018. The title of his

reflection was Silence. You can read Fr Dan's reflection [in full on the ECI website here](#). However, something beautiful he says in it is:

'Autumn has almost gone. Already the cold hand of Winter reached through the veil that separates the seasons and caressed the land with her icy breath and palm on frosty mornings at the start of November. All around us nature is settling down to its seasonal slumber. One by one the last of the leaves are falling from the trees, the unpicked apples lie decaying on the ground providing food for the diverse forms of life under the trees, nature's recycling process. Soon the lights will be turned off and the long dark, silent vigil will be under way. All seems lifeless ... but ...

'every gardener knows that under the cloak of winter lies a miracle
A seed waiting to sprout, a bulb opening to the light
A bud straining to unfurl. And the anticipation nurtures our dream'. Barbara Winkler

While spring is my favourite time of year, I now realise that without winter the spring would not be the wonderful season it is.'

Eco Challenge!

Rev Trevor Sargent's Ecological Notes for December 2018 - Preparing the way for the Lord with more joy and less 'stuff'

Rev Trevor Sargent is one of the Church of Ireland representatives on the ECI committee. Trevor shared his Ecological Notes with us for the month of December.

There is no shortage of guides in the media telling us how to prepare for Christmas. These include guides to a greener Christmas, advocating support for local producers and re-using decorations etc.

Turning to the Bible for some guidelines, the Gospel of Luke (Luke 3: 1- 18) takes up the call in Isaiah to, 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight'. On hearing all this, the people ask John the Baptist, 'What should we do?' John answers, 'whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise' (Luke 3:10). In essence, John the Baptist is saying quite directly to his audience, to get rid of 'stuff' and be content with what you have. The challenge for the modern Christian surrounded by a culture of consumerism is to ponder the possibility that there is more joy in owning less than we can ever find in owning more. So how does a minimalist celebrate Christmas? The focus is generally on exchanging experiences rather than giving things as gifts. You can read Trevor's very helpful reflection in full [on the ECI website here](#).

Whatever you do in preparing the way of the Lord, this Advent, may it bring true happiness, for you, your family and friends, including planet Earth, which we hold in trust for our children's children. Our hope is that they might enjoy many a Happy Christmas too. **Nollaig shona dhaoibh go léir agus Athbhliain faoi mhaise!**

On the ECI website you will also find Trevor's [Ecological Notes for November reflecting on Africa's Response to Climate Change 'Build a Wall' – of Trees 15km wide & 8000km long!](#) Lord, help us to see a Role for Trees in the Healing of the Nations!



Prayer for the Earth

ECI Reflection – Advent and Ecological Conversion

In the Gospel reading for the second Sunday of Advent, John the Baptist calls us to repentance: "Prepare a way for the Lord, make his path straight". We are called to conversion, to a change of heart, in preparation for Christmas. Part of that conversion includes a change of heart in our relationships with the earth, in our relationships with the creatures of the world, and of course in our relationships with each other and the enduring presence of the Creator-Spirit within creation.

Pope Francis is very clear that we cannot save the planet without conversion (LS 216-221). He talks explicitly about the call to interior conversion and communal conversion. The conversion required during Advent in preparation for Christmas must include an ecological conversion that calls each one of us to protect and nurture the integrity of God's Creation. Being a Christian in the 21st century carries with it a commitment to care for God's creation, not as optional, but as something essential to Christian faith to day.

Prayer - (After Bruce Sanguin)

O Holy One
we are a sleepy lot,
slow to stir to the calling of the cosmos,
deaf to the cries of the Earth
and the forgotten ones,
human and other-than- human.
"O that you would tear open the heavens and come down,"
cries the prophet,
and end this slumber that blocks out pain,
and with it, wonder.
Our hope, O Holy One, is found in eyes wide open,
in small gestures of compassion,
and in alertness to your coming,
again and again.
So we await to be set on fire
with hope, and gospel passion
for the earth.

With kindest regards,

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