

Dear Eco-Congregation friends

Welcome to the January/February 2019 edition of the Eco-Congregation Ireland newsletter. We wish everyone an eco-friendly 2019 as we journey forward in caring for God's creation!



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!

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 Good Shepherd Sisters in Belfast

The ECI Climate Justice Candle visited 'Lys Marie', Good Shepherd Sisters in South Belfast from 23-26 November 2018. The community had a special evening prayer, praising and thanking God for all creation, with hymns, psalms, scripture, prayer for the Earth and a Christian Prayer for all Creation from Laudato Si. Over the weekend the presence of the Candle in their midst kept the sisters in tune with the many gifts of creation - so many we take for granted! You can read their report of the candle's visit to their community [on the ECI website here](#).



ECI Climate Justice Candle visits Clogher Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Group

The ECI Climate Justice Candle was hosted by Clogher Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation group and was installed in St Macartin's Church of Ireland, Enniskillen on 1 December and then in St Michael's Catholic Church across the street on the 8 December. After a week there it was taken to the Catholic Parish Church of Pobal in Tempo, Co Fermanagh.

Fr Joe McVeigh Assistant Priest, Enniskillen, spoke in St Michael's on Saturday 8 December 2018: 'Climate change is in the news every day and we need to be reminded that each of us has to do our bit for climate justice - if it is only with regard to the use of plastic. We have all seen pictures of the damage plastic is doing to sea life. We have a responsibility to care for the creation and the earth God has given us



and to make sure it is safe for future generations. It may be the greatest responsibility we have today as human beings ... ' [Read Fr Joe's sermon in full on the ECI website](#) and view more photos of the candle's visit to the Clogher JPIC Group.

ECI Climate Justice Candle visits South Belfast Quaker Meeting!

The produce of the earth is a gift from our gracious creator to the inhabitants, and to impoverish the earth now to support outward greatness appears to be an injury to the succeeding age." John Woolman, 1772

Members of [South Belfast Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends](#) were delighted to be able to host the Climate Justice Candle on Sunday 27th January 2019. As a meeting of people, they have a number of members very active in various eco and climate justice initiatives at home, in their meeting and in wider society, but the candle was a great reminder to them that they are part of a bigger picture of lots of people working together for a common goal. In the words of Desmond Tutu: "Do your little bit of good where you are; it's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world."



Parish of Our Lady and St John in Carrigaline receives ECI Awareness Certificate!

The [Parish of Our Lady and St. John in Carrigaline](#) has started the journey to become an Eco-Congregation Parish and has received an Awareness Award Certificate from Eco-Congregation Ireland! The topic of Caring for Creation now features as an agenda item at their monthly Pastoral Support Group meeting, of which there are approximately fifteen members. A number of group members met in the local hotel one Saturday morning during November last and completed the ECI Environmental Check Up for Your Church document. The group members found it to be an interesting and affirming exercise to see how they are already playing their part, but it was also a wake-up call for them to do SO much more! [Read their update in full on the ECI website](#).



Latest News from Westport Eco-Congregation

Caroline Goucher, Administration Officer with Westport Eco-Congregation sent ECI this update: Westport Eco-Congregation: **Our Christmas Postcards Project** was a great success in the raising of awareness of waste and excess at Christmas. Sales of Christmas cards seem to be down nationwide. Thanks to Mayo County Council for funding from the Anti-Litter initiative and thank you to all involved in this project.



PAX Whole Foods and Eco Goods: We are delighted to welcome a new package free shop named 'PAX' to the area. It is a minimal waste shop in 9 Market Lane, Westport, Co Mayo offering bulk organic foods, reusable goods, household products, eco-friendly personal care items and gifts. [You can follow them on Facebook](#). Contact them here: paxshopwestport@gmail.com. **Earth Hour:** Our next big event is to promote the big power down countywide on 8:30-9:30pm on Saturday 30th March 2019. In Westport, we are encouraging local businesses to power down and we will host 'Tea and Tunes by Tealight' in local cafes – to celebrate community and unity for the 'Care of Our Common Home'.

New report from Christian Aid – ‘Counting the Cost: A Year of Climate Breakdown’

Christian Aid’s new report ‘Counting the Cost: A Year of Climate Breakdown’ identifies 10 of the most destructive droughts, floods, fires, heat-waves, typhoons and hurricanes of 2018, each of which caused damage of over US\$1 billion. Four of the events cost more than \$7 billion each. These figures are likely to be underestimates - in some cases they include only insured losses and do not take into account the costs of lost productivity and uninsured losses. All of these billion-dollar disasters are linked with human-caused climate change. [Read more and download the report here.](#)



[Christian Aid Ireland](#) has also produced reflections for Lent and Holy Week 2019 entitled ‘Footprints - Journey Through Lent with Christian Aid Ireland’. [Sign up to receive inspiring daily email reflections](#) written by influential Christian leaders and practitioners from Ireland, Brazil, Kenya, Sierra Leone and South Africa.

Update from Dromantine Eco Spirituality Group, Co Down

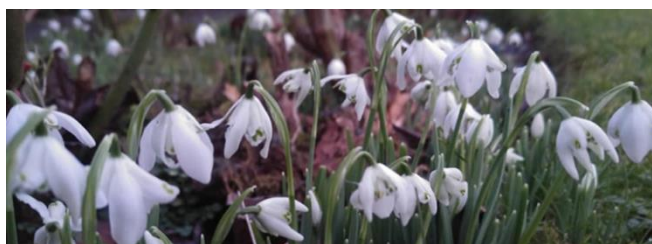
Dympna Mallon, SMA Laity Coordinator sent ECI this update on the Dromantine Eco Spirituality Group: The group had their first meeting of 2019 on 22nd January in [Dromantine Retreat and Conference Centre](#). The meeting opened with Group member Margaret O’Hare sharing a reflection, written by her daughter Ann. [You can read this beautiful reflection on the ECI website here.](#)



A presentation was then given to the Group by Danielle Begley, Biodiversity Officer for Newry and Mourne Council. Danielle highlighted many aspects of the biodiversity and raised our awareness of the many and varied plants and species which exist in the Newry and Mourne area, as well as providing practical suggestions about what each of us can do to better protect and promote those plants and species. In the final part of the meeting, she led the group members in making birdfeeders. Consisting of vegetable lard and birdseed, these will hopefully encourage birds to our gardens and provide the food they need in the colder weather. The photo above shows group members hard at work!

Reflection on St Brigid’s 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 regularly contributes his beautiful reflections to the ECI newsletter and for this edition has shared an inspirational reflection on St Brigid’s Day with us entitled ‘Slow Lane Spring’. [You can read his reflection in full on the ECI website here.](#) In his reflection he says:



‘Imbolg, February 1st, is the day we invite her wise and wholesome presence into our lives. We have not been good to the earth but it is still not too late to find our way back to her arms again in the company of Brigid as we take her hand and go play like children beneath the weeping birch where clumps of snowdrops shed their light.’

Latest News from St Anne's Church Shandon, Cork

Jer O' Sullivan sent ECI this update: [St Anne's Church Shandon](#) has now completed the ECI Environmental Check Up for Your Church document and is moving forward towards an application for an Eco-Congregation Ireland award!



The Select Vestry approved their working towards being an Eco-Congregation parish and they held their first meeting in December. Parishioners plan to join with friends in the North Cathedral who have established a similar group to see how they might work together in the local area and share ideas and resources. A meeting of both working groups was held during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, reinforcing the message that this is an area where Christians can come together as they move in concern and compassion for our world and its people. The group has now published their first parish 'eco' newsletter. The 'eco-Pilgrim' includes some information about the plans and aspirations of the group and shares ideas that they, as individual consumers and households, can put into practice as they seek to respond to climate change. [Read more on the ECI website here.](#)

Latest News from Jubilee

In late 2018 Dr Jonny Hanson of [Jubilee](#) taught a three week evening course on Creation Care at Belfast Bible College. Session one was an overview of the biblical foundations of creation care, session two, on putting creation care into practice and session three on creation care and global poverty, which was delivered by Hannah Elliott of [Tearfund NI](#).



Jubilee has successfully raised the £280,000 to buy their farm in Glynn, outside Larne in County Antrim from more than 110 member-owners, including several churches and religious orders! (View from the farm on the left). They have recently held a volunteer day. Read a recent [BBC NI news article here](#). Also an article in [the Larne Times](#). Their CARE - Care farming for Asylum Seekers, Refugees and the Environment - project began recently, with funding and referrals from various parts of the Irish church. The first four participants are from Ivory Coast, Iran and Syria, and three of them were farmers in their home countries.

Update from VIVAT

Fr. Liam Dunne SVD, Convenor of VIVAT sent ECI an update on their work. Vivat in Ireland is formed of representatives of Missionary Sisters, servants of the Holy Spirit; the Spiritans; the Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary; The Little Sisters of the Assumption; the Divine Word Missionaries, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate and the Combonis. Their group is small but enthusiastic. They meet every two months in each one of their houses. Members use these meetings to share information; to seek ideas about matters of interest to their various Congregations and to draw up plans. Their main activity during the year 2018 was the study of Laudato 'Si. Each group took one Chapter each, to study and presented the results to the group. They then evaluated and added further reflections. Members felt this was a worthy exercise as it stimulated everyone to learn more about the Cry of the Earth and to discover what they could do about it in their communities. [You can read Fr Liam's report in full on the ECI website here.](#)



News from a Friend of ECI from Down Under!

Anne Jennings is a friend of ECI from Australia who is working on her PhD at Nulungu Research Institute, School of Arts & Sciences, The University of Notre Dame Australia, Broome Campus on Laudato Si' and Ecological Conversion, using community development processes. She is a keen reader of the ECI newsletter. In 2017 she presented a paper at an international community development conference in New Zealand, examining the United Nations 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals – SDGs, particularly as they relate to involvement by Australia.



Anne then ventured forward by exploring Pope Francis' Encyclical Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home. Her resultant paper briefly looked back at the SDG paper and then addressed Laudato Si' as another significant global document. The paper provided an overview of Laudato Si', examined differing views of what it presented, and concluded with a review of how and where community development theory and practices fit within its teachings. Her paper is freely available at the following link: [Jennings, A. \(2018, pp. 31-47\). Laudato si' – Establishing Local Approaches for Global Ecological Conversion](#). Anne will be in Ireland in July this year and is keen to visit some of the projects mentioned in our ECI newsletter!

Next Meeting of the Northern Ireland Creation Care Network

The 13th meeting of the Northern Ireland Creation Care Network will take place on Saturday 30 March 2019, 10.00am to 1.00pm in Moyallon Centre, the Grange Christian Retreat Ltd, 123 Stramore Road, Craigavon, Co. Armagh, BT63 5JZ. It is hoped to include a short walk and reflective exercise led by Caroline Sommerville. Members hope to do some car-sharing from Ballymartin P&R and/or Belfast. If Interested please get in touch with Bertie at spectre747@btopenworld.com. All welcome!



Latest News from Loving Sister Earth

[Loving Sister Earth](#) participated in the Citizens' Lobby Day on Climate Change, 5th December in Buswells Hotel, Dublin. They will support UN Water Day on 22 March and UN Earth Day on 22 April. They will also take notice of the events marked in the 2019 Calendar of the GCCM (Global Catholic Climate Movement).

National Holy Wells Day will be celebrated on Sunday 16 June. In Dublin this will be celebrated at St Broc's Well in the car park of St Damien's Poor Clare Convent, Simonscourt Road. Knock Shrine will host a day on Climate Issues on May 18.

With the help of their local LSE contacts there will be dialogue with the 'movers and shakers' of the Province on ways to protect our Planet. Edmond Grace SJ is working with the National Dialogue on Climate Change. The goal is to engage people locally and nationally with the challenge of climate change, to motivate changes in behaviour and to create structures for the generation and implementation of ideas. Brian Grogan SJ provided this report and you can read it [in full on the ECI website](#).



Latest News from St Anne's Parish, Shankill, Dublin



[St Anne's Parish Shankill](#) has several members who are involved with [SAGE \(Shankill Action for a Green Earth\)](#). Last autumn, the parish drafted an application to Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Co. Council for a grant to help develop part of St Anne's grounds into a wildflower meadow to encourage bio-diversity and pollinators. Christmas in the Village was observed with a stall promoting bee-friendly habitats – giving out free 'bee hotels' and bird boxes. Parishioners also drew attention to the newly voiced message of the new minister, Richard Bruton, that a revolution was needed across all areas of life and government if we are to address the urgent question of climate change realistically. An evening is also planned during Lent which will be ecumenical and focused on Climate Justice. [You can read their report in full on the ECI website here.](#)

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!



Earth Hour 2019

[Earth Hour is back again!](#) Every year millions of people, businesses and landmarks set aside an hour to host events, switch off their lights and make noise for the Earth Hour movement. This year, the organisers want to celebrate the diversity of life on Earth, and they want to invite your friends and family to celebrate with them. What better way to celebrate than with the electrifying energy of Earth Hour as it sweeps across the planet? Remember to switch off in solidarity with global efforts to secure nature and our home on 30 March 2019, 8:30pm. It's time to [#Connect2Earth](#).

#CONNECT2EARTH

Quaker United Nations Office – New Publications

The [Quaker United Nations Office](#) has published two new documents. The first, [The Role of Decentralised Renewable Energy in Peacebuilding](#), is a working paper on how renewable energies can have a peacebuilding role. The second, [A Government Official's Toolkit](#), can be used by citizens to engage their decision makers for more urgent action on climate change and other environmental crises. The booklet includes research from the most recent IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5C. Click on the above links to access these documents as PDF versions.



Stop Food Waste!

[Stop Food Waste](#) a state-funded programme that encourages householders and communities to save money and help the environment by reducing food waste and also composting. They offer resources to communities and are available to do talks, workshops and courses where requested. These are free of charge for communities and cover food waste prevention, composting, or both. One of their popular courses is the [Stop Food Waste Challenge](#). This involves participants meeting once per week for 4 consecutive weeks, and working through simple and achievable ways of reducing their food waste and saving money.

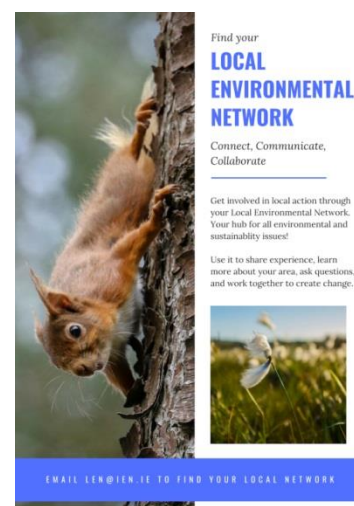


They also run the [Master Composter training course](#), which trains participants to set up and run their own composting projects in their communities, with a view to turning waste into resource as well as educating their neighbours. Browse their [website](#) and email info@stopfoodwaste.ie if you would like more information.

Local Environmental Networks

Local Environmental Networks are set up all around Ireland and invite anyone with an interest in environmental issues to get involved. All around the country LENs are being used to bring people together, create meaningful projects for the local community, and impact the wider surroundings. They provide a space where people can share knowledge and ask questions, and many hold their own local eco-events too. Connect, communicate and collaborate with your LEN. [Find out more info on your local branch here.](#)

Catherine O'Toole, Development Officer with IEN is working to help LENs develop and grow, so there will be lots of training and events coming up regarding climate issues and local action. You can email her on catherine@ien.ie for more information.



Eco Challenge!

Rev Trevor Sargent's Ecological Notes for January 2019 - Anyone can be a 'Citizen Scientist': Will you help with research into soil health?

Rev Trevor Sargent is one of the Church of Ireland representatives on the ECI committee and ministers in the Diocese of Cashel, Ferns and Ossory. Trevor shared his Ecological Notes with us for the month of January.

He says Remember the drought of last summer 2018? The soil moisture levels in the south-east dropped alarmingly. Grass stopped growing. Crops and animals (including my bees) suffered. The reality of climate breakdown hit home as predicted. Unfortunately, climatologists are also predicting that further extreme weather will become increasingly common. How can we help one another to adapt to changes in growing conditions?



Collecting data to map changes in soil moisture content in 2019: Satellites are now able to correlate readings of soil moisture from soil moisture sensors stuck in your soil, as long as they are more than 30m from a road and at least 20m apart.

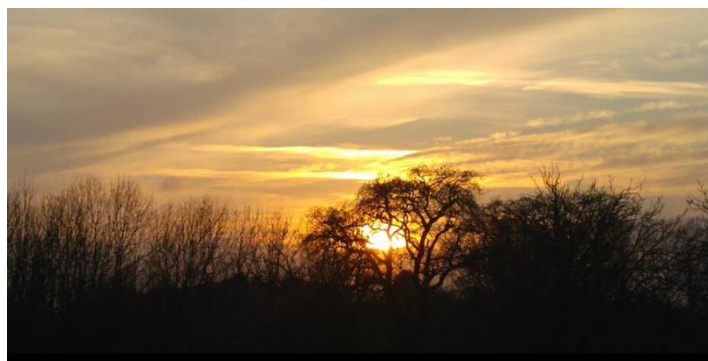
EU wide project needs data from thousands of food growers: '[Grow Observatory](#)' is the name of an EU Commission funded project which provides soil sensors and support for anyone interested in 'adopting' one or more soil sensors, 'planting' them and uploading the data every two weeks. This requires the use of a smart phone.

How can you get involved? Visit this link to the [Grow Observatory website](#) where there is lots of information and a link to a FREE FutureLearn online course entitled [Citizen Science: From Soil to Sky: Learn how to understand your soil and explore global environmental soil issues by becoming a citizen scientist.](#)

Healthy soil is at the heart of a good Harvest Thanksgiving - (Matthew 13:8).

Kathy Merrifield, a nematologist at Oregon State University has said, 'Soil is much more than a prop to hold up our plants, healthy soil is a jungle of voracious creatures eating, defecating and reproducing their way toward glorious soil fertility. A single teaspoon (1 gram) of organically rich soil can hold up to one billion bacteria, several yards of fungal filaments, several thousand protozoa, and scores of nematodes. Soils with more organic matter tend to have more life, are better at retaining moisture and are less likely to flood. Mulching with compost, cover cropping and no-till farming practices tend to increase organic matter that is truly the foundation of life'.

You can also read Trevor's Ecological Notes for February '[Best Practise when it comes to Trees, especially those growing beside Churches](#)' here.



Prayer for the Earth

As we participate in [Earth Hour 2019](#) this Prayer for Climate Change from [Christian Aid](#) may help focus our thoughts:

You spoke into the silence
Light suffusing darkness.
You spoke into the silence
Blowing clean life giving air into the space
You spoke into the silence
Warmth and cold infusing the air
You spoke into the silence
Solid ground formed out of gushing water.
You spoke voice carrying over the sound
People, plants and animals came to life.
You spoke each creation balanced against the next so life would be abundant and sustainable.

You saw everything you had made and declared it to be very good.
You spoke choosing to give us humans stewardship over all that You had made.
We speak and act
Darkness of pollution limits light levels and damages the air we breathe.
We speak and act
Ground poisoned, burnt, stripped bare.
We speak and act
Spoiling, limiting, destroying quality of life and life itself.
We speak and act
Without hearing Your call over the noise of the world to be good stewards.
You speak. You create. You want us to be stewards of Your creation.
We come to You to re-learn how to care for the earth and people you have made. *Katrina Rowland*

With kindest regards,

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

Joe Furphy
Presbyterian representative

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

Fran Brady
Religious Society of Friends representative

wastenot@eircom.net
+353 (0) 1 837 6464