

REPORT ON CREATION CARE MEETING

SATURDAY 12TH OCTOBER 2019

On Saturday 12th October 2019 the 14th meeting of the Creation Care Network took place in Regent Street Presbyterian Church in Newtownards. Bertie Stirling convened the meeting and after opening the meeting with a prayer there was the usual round of introductions.

A lively and wide ranging discussion followed, started off by Joe Furphy giving a brief history of Eco-congregation Ireland from its beginnings in 2005 and restating its aims. One Church spoke of their struggles with waste management and raised the question of how the congregation's funds were invested and whether these were invested in companies which were not damaging to the environment. Another told of the energy saving features incorporated in their new suite of halls, their banning of plastic cups, litter picks by the young people and the replacement of single use plastic bags for deliveries to the congregation by multi-use hessian ones. They also mentioned their financing of the drilling of a well through Fields of Life in Uganda. Reference was made to Christian Aid who hosted a conference discussing Climate Change.

There followed further discussion on single use plastic containers. This ranged from events where participants were invited to supply their own water or drinks containers rather than use plastic ones to discussion of a shop which had just opened in Whitehead which dispensed commodities such as cereal, shampoo etc. into multi-use containers supplied by the customer. A novel way of policing a policy of non-use of plastic water bottles was mentioned where a minister was in the habit of carrying plastic water bottles into the pulpit until it was pointed out to him by children in the congregation. In reply he agreed to pay £1 every time to any child who caught him with a plastic bottle!

There was some discussion of Saoi O'Connor an Irish "Greta Thunberg" who has given up her schooling to travel around Europe speaking on environmental issues. This led on to further debate about Extinction Rebellion demonstrations, on the need to balance demonstration with extremism and what methods would be likely to influence government policy.

Drumalis who had received an ECI award 2 years ago told how they incorporate Creation Care into their retreat programme. Their Jubilee Farm project, a community farm was also mentioned. Also a graduate in environmental studies from Stirling University, working as an intern with A Rocha was introduced. A partnership is being proposed which involves Drumalis, Corrymeela and A Rocha and she hopes to be involved in this.

The psychology of reaction to the disappearance of species and the damage to the environment and how these can precipitate feelings of despair and bereavement akin to a bereavement was discussed. Mention was made of Lynn Finnegan (who was one of three speakers at the Quaker conference on 19th October) who talks of Active Hope in this respect. The following Dates for your Diary were noted:

"Love and Despair: Actions and Responses to Climate Breakdown" 19th October at Quaker Meeting House 22 Marlborough Park North BT96HJ.

Drumalis Conference 14th-16th February 2020

Ballynature Day, Saturday 29th February 2020, Ballynure.

The meeting concluded with a reflection on Psalm 148 by Joe Furphy and a tour of the new Eco-friendly premises.