



Dear Eco-Congregation Friends

Welcome to the Autumn 2020 edition of the Eco-Congregation Ireland newsletter! We hope you all had an inspiring and blessed Season of Creation! Some stories and reflections to encourage us in this strange and difficult time. The photo on the left was sent to us by Fr Hugh O'Donnell – a beautiful red squirrel caught in the act of stealing nuts from a bird feeder in Co Leitrim!

ECI VIRTUAL Climate Justice Candle to Continue ...



Due to the current Covid-19 crisis, we have decided to continue to promote our Virtual Climate Justice Candle Project. All information on how to get involved below – we would love to hear from YOU! >>

ECI invites you to designate one of your own candles as your very own Climate Justice Candle. It can be any size – simply make it look special and put it in a prominent safe place in your home. Print out one of the prayers given below (or write your own) and set it by the candle (but

not so it risks catching fire!). What you then do is up to you. Involve the family in setting it up. Start a discussion with the children as to why you are doing it and why it is needed. Pray when you can. Perhaps choose a day and a time. Prayerfully consider actions you can take to reduce your own impact on the Earth.

Post a photo of your candle on Facebook with Shine a Light on Climate Justice as a title and the link to the Eco-Congregation Ireland website – <https://www.ecocongregationireland.com/>. Please also email your photo to Eco-Congregation Ireland so that we can share it on the ECI website and Facebook page – send to info@ecocongregationireland.com. Don't forget, to let us know where you are based. Sekeeta, one of our volunteers has created a prayer card for use with your candle which you can print off, fold length-ways and put a piece of card inside to stiffen it so you can prop it up against something, should you so wish. Prayers front and back.

A Prayer for Our Earth (Laudato Si)

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures.
You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.
Pour out upon us the power of your love,
that we may protect life and beauty.
Fill us with peace, that we may live
as brothers and sisters, harming no one.

Give us your love for the whole of Creation

Creator God, we confess that the way we are using fossil fuels and other destructive forms of energy today is destroying the forests, changing the climate, the seas, the soils, the biodiversity and the balance of life on our fragile planet, dispossessing the poor and future generations. Help us to choose life for

O God of the poor,
help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this
earth,
so precious in your eyes.
Bring healing to our lives,
that we may protect the world and not prey on it,
that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.
Touch the hearts
of those who look only for gain
at the expense of the poor and the earth.
Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognize that we are profoundly united
with every creature
as we journey towards your infinite light.
We thank you for being with us each day.
Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle
for justice, love and peace.

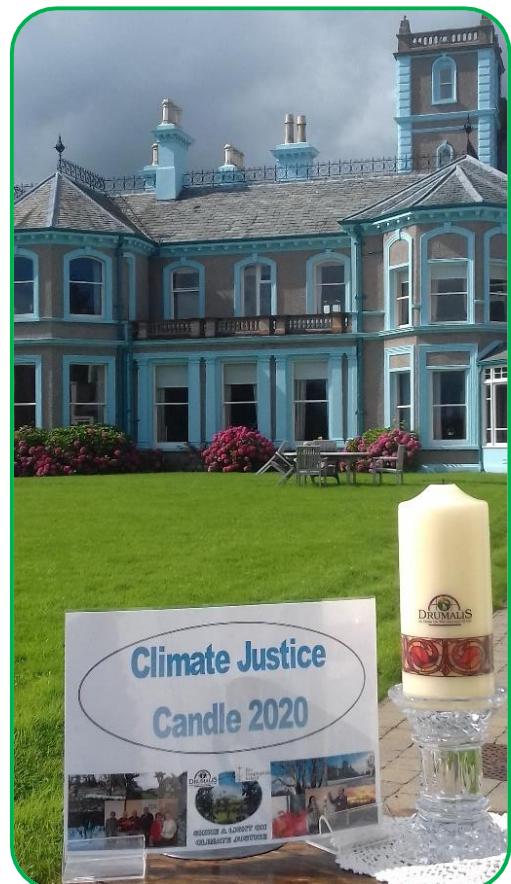
all that is a risk-for neighbours near and far
and for those that come after us. Give us the
knowledge to learn what we do not know but
long to understand, so that we may honour
and nurture all that makes us one with you.
We ask this through Christ Our Lord.

**Thank you to all who have hosted an ECI VIRTUAL climate justice candle so far!
Since the last ECI newsletter the following virtual candles have been lit:**

Carrigaline Union of Parishes



Drumalis, Co Antrim



Westport Eco-Congregation



St Joseph's Church, Wilton, Cork



Westport Eco-Congregation hosted an Eco-Congregation Ireland Climate Justice VIRTUAL Candle as part of their Virtual Interfaith Gathering in Nature to celebrate the beauty of our world. [View the video of this event here](#). Above photo - Canon Jen McWhirter welcomes the Climate Justice Candle to Holy Trinity Church, Westport for Season of Creation.

Bonnybrook Parish



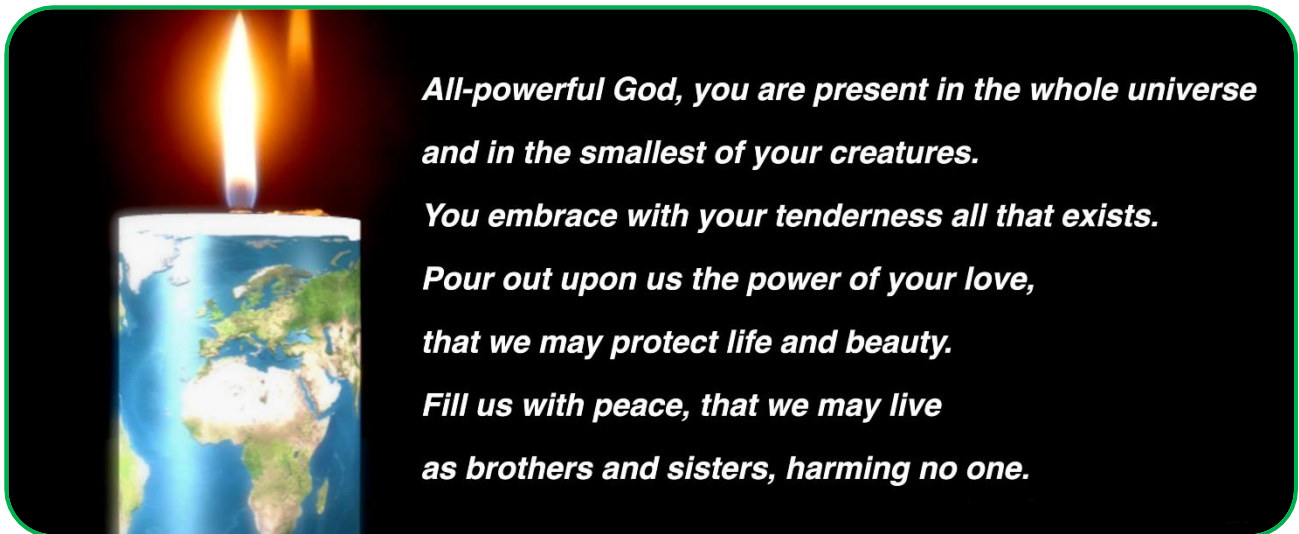
Dundrum Methodist Church



Prosperous EcoParish



This candle was shared by Rev David Coleman, Chaplain at [Eco-Congregation Scotland](#)



Volunteer with the ECI VIRTUAL Climate Justice Candle Project!

Would you like to volunteer some time with this ECI project? Would you like to promote it in your wider area?

What would this involve?

We would ask that you make contact with as many churches/parishes/groups in your area by phone or email telling them about the Virtual Climate Justice Candle Project, sending them information and collecting photos and short reports on how they took part in this project. These would be forwarded to ECI for inclusion in the ECI newsletter and website. By doing this we would continue to raise awareness in the faith community of climate justice issues and build our Eco-Congregation Ireland community whilst staying safe. All information on the project is above. On the ECI website you can also read of other churches who have already hosted a virtual candle (scroll down) - <https://www.ecocongregationireland.com/shine-a-light-on-climate-justice/>. Please send us an email to info@ecocongregationireland.com if you would like to get involved. We would love to hear from you!

The Real ECI Climate Justice Candle visits ...

St Canice's Parish, Finglas

Brian O'Toole sent ECI this update: St. Canice's Parish in Finglas was privileged to host the Eco-Congregation Ireland Climate Justice Candle at the beginning of this special Season of Creation. It's presence offered us a chance to explain the candle, the journal and it's interfaith journey that shines a much needed spotlight on the detrimental affects of human behaviour on our delicate environment. We showed a creation video to all Mass attendees during the first Sunday of this wonderful season. We posted to our Facebook Page daily explaining the teachings of Laudato Si, what Jubilee for the Earth means and entails whilst at the same time encouraging all to action.



The actions were as simple as a behaviour change, attending a webinar, watching a video, reading and sharing a post or perhaps thinking about making a more obvious stand by joining an organisation that promotes the protection of our common home and our role as stewards of our planet for future generations. We posted in our newsletter and we raised a banner as we were supported in all by the Parish Clergy who took every opportunity to alert and inform on all matters "Season of Creation". We look now to work how best to capitalise on this good start as we look to next steps and new steps.

Church of St Thérèse, Mount Merrion, Dublin

Clodagh O'Reilly sent ECI this update: Our church was delighted to host the Climate Justice Candle for the month of the "Season of Creation". The Candle was duly lit on September 1st, Pope Francis' World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation". The church's expansive altar easily accommodated the Candle, affording to all a contemplative view of it either in person or online via webcam. Due to Covid-19 restrictions advising against large congregational or small group gatherings and events, we instead celebrated Creation prayerfully. The Candle provided an inspiring focus for quiet, individual reflection on the beauty and care of our shared Common Home.



Throughout the month a series of "Season of Creation" images and references were to be found in our parish's weekly newsletter, with additional insights related by our Prayers of the Faithful, music ministry, the grounds and meadow, and in our library. In our popular "Faith Space" a display was mounted, which merged visuals with text from Laudato Si's powerful "A Prayer for Our Earth". The presence of the Candle, a "Season" of reflection, and the task of completing an "Environmental Check-up" of our church have together helped to lead the way in shaping our parish's contribution to ensuring "our planet's resources are shared in a just and respectful manner" (Pope Francis).

ECI Holds First Online Conference!

On Saturday 3 October 2020 Eco-Congregation Ireland held its first online conference. 120 participants took part in this event. The conference title was *Planetary Emergency How to Have Hope*. You can watch the conference on the [Eco-Congregation Ireland website here](#). The speakers were:



Prof John Barry is Professor of Green Political Economy at Queen's University Belfast and is interested in post-growth economics, sustainability, resilience and low carbon energy transitions. His presentation 'Radical Hope in Turbulent Times: Imagination, Activism and the Planetary Emergency' [can be viewed here](#).

Denise Gabuzda is Clerk of Ireland Yearly Meeting and a member of Cork Quaker Meeting. She teaches physics and astronomy at University College Cork. Her scientific and spiritual lives converge on learning to live sustainably as the key task of our time. Her presentation 'Looking to the Future with Hope' [can be viewed here](#).





Sr Nellie McLaughlin BA MDiv is a native of Co Donegal and a member of the Sisters of Mercy, Northern Province, Ireland. She currently works in the areas of Creation Spirituality, Cosmology, Ecology and Sustainable Living through conferences, seminars and retreats nationally and internationally. Nellie is a founding member and a director of Green Sod Land Trust, Ireland (2007) and author of 'Out of Wonder, the Evolving Story of the Universe' (2004) and 'Life's Delicate Balance' – A Response to Laudato Si' (2015). She is chairperson of Clogher Diocesan Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Group. Her presentation 'Life's Delicate Balance: Challenge to Promote and Protect' [can be viewed here](#). [Fran Brady, Quaker representative on the ECI committee wrote this article on the conference.](#)

Eco-Congregation Ireland Certificates

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](#).

Since our last newsletter **Stormont Presbyterian Belfast; St Columba's & St Patrick's, Douglas, Cork; Springfield, Fettercairn, Brookefield, Jobstown Parish, Tallaght, Co Dublin; Kirkinriola Parish, Ballymena and Church of St Thérèse, Mount Merrion, Dublin** received their Awareness Certificates. Well done to all!



Latest News ...

Announcing a New Series by Brian Grogan SJ – Fresh Images of God in Laudato Si

Brian Grogan SJ reports: Fresh Images of God from Laudato Si is a 12-part series currently running on our website. We offer it as a response to the challenge posed by the fact that ecological issues are at root deeply spiritual. In short paragraphs it helps viewers to see God rightly, and can be used for personal or group prayer, for catechesis, parish newsletters etc. A similar series is in preparation on Christian Hope for an Anxious World. [Learn more here on the Loving Sister Earth website here](#).



Dundrum Methodist Church celebrates Season of Creation

Helen Shiel sent ECI this update: Dundrum Methodist Church has been celebrating the Season of Creation each week with prayers, reflections



and, of course, the lighting of the Eco Justice Candle. Four year old Matthew O'Donoghue was happy to oblige (with the help of his mother Rachel) at the last physically attended service for the foreseeable future (see photo above). The following week the service took place on Zoom with the candle to the fore. The weekly Vision programme on Dublin South Community Radio, (hosted by churches in south Dublin), has aired two programmes on the environment during this season. Rev Andrew Orr was interviewed by Rev Martin O'Connor (Church of Ireland presenter) on Sept 20th and Dr Kirstie McAdoo, head of Research and Education in the Airfield Estate (an urban farm in south Dublin) shared her thoughts and reflections about sustainability and our role in caring for God's creation in a conversation with the Methodist presenter, Helen Shiel, the following week. Both Kirstie and Helen are members of the eco team in Dundrum Methodist Church.

Creation Time 2020 at Drumalis

Although [Drumalis](#) is regrettably closed at present to in-house guests due to Covid-19 restrictions, Creation Time has nonetheless been marked in a number of ways over the past month – both virtually through online prayer and practically by the planting of new trees in the grounds.

Drumalis was delighted to take part in Eco-Congregation Ireland's Virtual Climate Justice Candle Project for the Season of Creation by designating a candle at Drumalis. They shared various images of this candle along with prayers on their Facebook page over the past weeks. They also used it as the centrepiece for their online Sunday Evening Prayer by Zoom. Pictured above right are Sisters Margaret Rose and Anna with groundsmen Michael and Ian. To mark the 200th anniversary of the birth of the foundress of the order of the Sisters and the Cross and Passion, Elizabeth Prout, the Sisters felt that it particularly fitting in this Season of Creation, that weeping willow trees be planted in the grounds. The Sisters prayed that these trees would call to mind "our weeping planet, our weeping human community, ravaged globally by Covid-19 and their own community of Sisters in scattered parts of the world".



Sr Margaret Rose has also successfully qualified as a Laudato Si animator through the Global Catholic Climate Movement. The aim of this in-depth online training course is "to inspire your community to care for creation." Sr Margaret Rose is already putting this training into practice as, together with Sr Anne Harnett CP, she will deliver Zoom workshops to participants on the Pathways Adult Faith Development course.

The Dublin Bay Biosphere

Dean Eaton, Biosphere Coordinator sent ECI this update: We're so fortunate to have a UNESCO designated biosphere on the doorstep of our capital city, especially during these challenging times. Biospheres are places where nature and culture connect. They are internationally recognised for their biological diversity yet actively managed to promote a balanced relationship between people and nature. The Dublin Bay Biosphere is part of an international network of 702 biospheres, all of which have three primary objectives; conservation, education and sustainable development. It is actively managed by 6 partner organisations, who work alongside a range of NGO's, communities, businesses, voluntary groups and individuals to safeguard the wonderful wildlife and habitats found within the bay.



Although conservation is our primary objective, we want people to visit and enjoy the bay. By connecting with nature we can develop a deeper understanding of God's creation and an appreciation of the splendour and majesty of our natural world, which we in turn will lead to positive actions to help safeguard God's wonderful creations long into the future. To learn more about the biosphere you can check out our website here <https://www.dublinbaybiosphere.ie/> and sign up to our E-zine here <http://eepurl.com/g3eR6n>.

Church of Ireland Harvest News

Harvest Videos from Down and Dromore - The Church of Ireland Diocese of Down and Dromore produced three films to mark Harvest and express thanksgiving to God for his goodness. Each video is presented by Bishop David McClay. Harvest of the Land was filmed in the farmlands of Dromore Diocese and at Saul Church. Harvest of the Sea was filmed at Kilkeel Harbour and in Ardglass. Harvest of the City reflects that Harvest thanksgiving is an important occasion for city dwellers – a time to remember the provenance of our food and its abundance and to share with others who are in need. This was filmed in Newry, Belfast and Craigavon. All three films are available on the diocese's YouTube channel at <https://bit.ly/3hV0JhS>



Bishops' Appeal Harvest Newsletter - The Church of Ireland Bishops' Appeal Harvest Newsletter shared stories of how giving is making a difference in sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and South Asia. This includes support for maize farming cooperatives in Burundi, and training and equipment for farmers in Nepal who were formerly bonded labourers – both projects are facilitated by Christian Aid partners. A Harvest reflection from Bishops' Appeal highlighted the Great Green Wall initiative, which was endorsed by the Archbishops of Armagh in their Christmas broadcast last year, and Tearfund Ireland's all-age Harvest service pack based on their work in Ethiopia, which is partly funded by Bishops' Appeal. The newsletter is available at <https://bit.ly/3cpEbol>.

Parish of St John the Baptist, Clontarf celebrates Season of Creation

Fr Martin Hogan sent ECI this update: In the Parish of St John the Baptist, Clontarf, we took a number of initiatives to mark the Season of Creation: Sr Bernadette from the Justice and Peace Group put together a lovely display for the front porch of the church; we planted a rose tree in our rose garden after 10.00am Mass one morning; at a weekday Mass and at our three Sunday Masses, we invited those present to take a bulb from the front porch of the church and to plant it in their garden or in an indoor pot and we also prayed the common prayer for the 5th anniversary of Laudato Si at Mass every morning.



St Pappin's Parish Cultivates Hope and Pride in a Better Ballymun

Sr Lena Deevy, LSA sent ECI this update which includes news of the Ballymun Tidy Towns Recycling Project. It is a pilot project sponsored by Repak Ireland. Special bags are provided by Repak with instructions for collecting and separating cans and plastic bottles. Among the groups involved in this great project are a team of parishioners from the three churches in Ballymun's St Pappin's Parish: Virgin Mary, Holy Spirit, St Joseph's. This project is an opportunity for parishioners to highlight the importance of continuing to learn about recycling, protecting their environment and having pride in their Ballymun home.



Pauline Hannon IJS, a member of Ballymun Tidy Towns, shares a reflection on her involvement in this project: 'I never feel alone in my care for the environment. The birds accompany me day after day, singing

out joyously and sweetly. The cooing of the wood pigeon reminds me of other times and other places. I feel uplifted and encouraged by the beauty of their song even in the midst of grim dumping. In fact, this whole experience has led me to feel more deeply what it is like to be part of an Earth Community'. [Read this story in full on the ECI website here.](#)

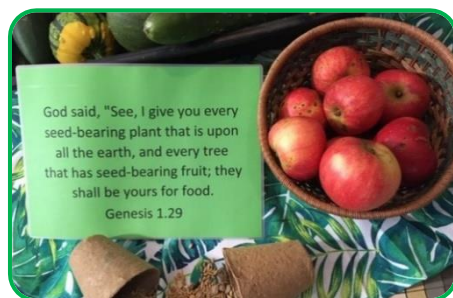
Dr Tara Shine event – 13 October 2020

'Climate Injustice: Transforming Many Small Actions into a Collective Response' – Tuesday 13th October 2020 from 7pm. Free online event! CADANI and the University of Ulster host Dr Tara Shine as part of One World Festival NI. More info and to book <https://bit.ly/3jz9eAP>. Read about Dr Tara Shine's appointment to senior UN role in the Irish Times <https://bit.ly/3nrRV7p>



Parish of Our Lady and St John in Carrigaline Celebrates Season of Creation

Parishioners in [Our Lady and St John in Carrigaline](#), set up a space in the sanctuary to mark the Season of Creation 2020. It stayed there until the Feast Day of St. Francis of Assisi on 4 October. All the flowers, fruit and vegetables are locally grown. Below and on the right are some pictures of the space along with some prayers and pieces they promoted on the Parish website. The people pictured below are Fran Deasy in the garden and Joanne O'Sullivan who form part of the Parish's Care of the Earth Group. Well done to all!



Call for an Immediate Ban on Fracking in Northern Ireland – Petition

Communities right across Northern Ireland—from the North Coast to the East, across to the West and to the South—communities that have already clearly demonstrated their opposition to any such industry taking place near their homes and families, are calling for an immediate ban to any further exploration and extraction of petroleum oil and gas in Northern Ireland, particularly from shale rock, tight sands and coal seams. [You can read more on this petition and sign here.](#)



Holy Faith Sisters join in the Celebration of Creation Time

Sr. Margo Delaney sent ECI this update: To celebrate Creation Time and to unite our prayer and practical activities with all who observe this time, Sr. Evelyn Greene, Regional Leader, prepared the Creation Time display below right. The elements of earth, wind, fire and water image the prayer of St. Francis in praising the creator for the bounty and beauty of life. To celebrate our heritage, an image of St. Francis and a remnant of our Foundress, Margaret Aylward's cloak hold pride of place in the arrangement. As a reminder

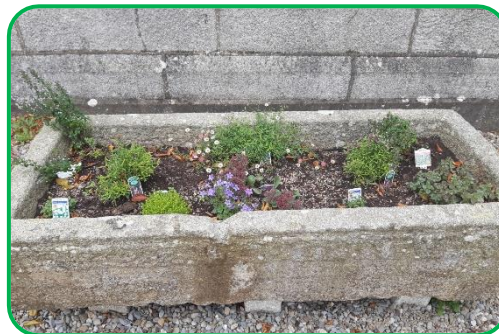
to take practical steps to save our “common home”, a “promise card” was sent to each member of our Region and an adapted version of Pope Francis’s prayer for Creation Time.

*Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Mother Earth,
who sustains and governs us,
and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs.
Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Wind,
and through the air, cloudy and serene, and every kind of weather,
through whom You give sustenance to Your creatures.
Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Fire,
through whom You light the night,
and he is beautiful and playful and robust and strong.
Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Water,
who is very useful and humble and precious and chaste.*



Lacken Church Creates a Bio-Diverse Garden

Carmel O'Neill sent ECI this update: Some progress has been achieved on the creation of a bio diverse garden in the grounds of Lacken Church. The granite trough, a replica of the original trough from St Boden's well, was moved from the side of the church and placed under the front window where it was filled with bee pollinating alpinines. A patch of ground was dug nearby and the soil prepared for a new rose bed. We planted 8 floribunda roses in August, and they have now started to produce flowers. At the end of July, we had the unveiling of an interpretative panel detailing aspects of our Christian and cultural heritage. It also includes species of our wildlife. The panel is located beside the Mass path and is a focal point of interest for the many hillwalkers who regularly visit the area.

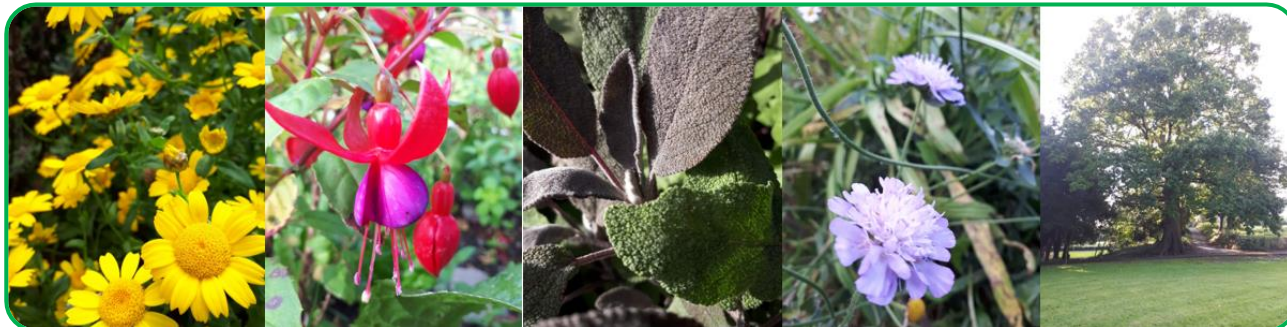


Latest News from the Margaret Aylward Centre, Glasnevin

The Centre has hosted a number of events on zoom in conjunction with Trocaire and the Laudato Si working group. Firstly, they hosted a book club in June where participants read Laudato Si. Jane Mellet delivered an excellent presentation each week with plenty of time for discussion. Her resources are now available for interested parishes or local groups who might be interested. Then they were thrilled to be involved with the 'Love Letter to the Earth' – a one hour concert to celebrate the 5th anniversary of Laudato Si (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FEWWdl-2ghI>). In recent weeks, they have been blessed to

host Fr Dermot Lane as he opens up his new book with us, chapter by chapter. 'Theology and Ecology in Dialogue: The Wisdom of Laudato Si' is a challenging and inspiring read, that is all the more accessible when read as a group one chapter at a time. Over 140 people have now registered from across the whole island and are finding the weekly gathering very helpful.

The Centre is grateful to the whole team involved in connecting so many interested people together so that all can learn more about how to live Laudato Si in our lives! They are very much looking forward to the next steps that emerge on this new journey we are all making together. The photos below shows some plants from the biodiversity garden at the Margaret Aylward Centre.



Clogher Justice Peace & Integrity of Creation Group celebrates Season of Creation

Fr Joseph McVeigh sent ECI this update: On 15 August, the Clogher JPIC group held a socially distanced picnic at Drommoney Falls near Kesh, Co. Fermanagh. Because of Covid 19 our activities have had to be curtailed. We have not been able to meet since last March. We are pleased that our Bishop led the way in publishing his [Pastoral Letter for the Season of Creation](#). It was sent out to all the priests of the Diocese and received good media attention. The Irish News devoted a whole page to it. Bishop Larry Duffy's letter got recognition and publicity from the [Vatican News \(Spanish language\) service](#). [Fermanagh and Omagh achieves Fairtrade District status](#) – this initiative was taken by representatives from different churches in the area who form the steering group.



10th Annual Desmond Tutu Peace Lecture Will Focus on Climate Justice

The 10th Annual Desmond Tutu Peace Lecture, titled "Climate Justice Globally: Now and for the Future," will take place on 10 October online. Featured speakers will include 23-year-old Vanessa Nakate, a climate activist from Uganda who has been leading a drive for justice related to race, media representation and climate justice; and internationally-known Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg. Learn more and register >> <https://bit.ly/36TCIWR>.



News from Rev John Purdy, Bishop Auckland Methodist Church, Co Durham

Inspired by Ireland's first Eco-Congregation Award to Clonakilty Methodist Church, Rev John Purdy who transferred to the Methodist Church in Britain has led the congregation in [Bishop Auckland, Co. Durham](#) to gain the equivalent Eco-Church bronze award. Part of the work included creating a prayer labyrinth by reducing the mowing of the church lawn and allowing meadow flowers to grow there.



Interesting Publications ...

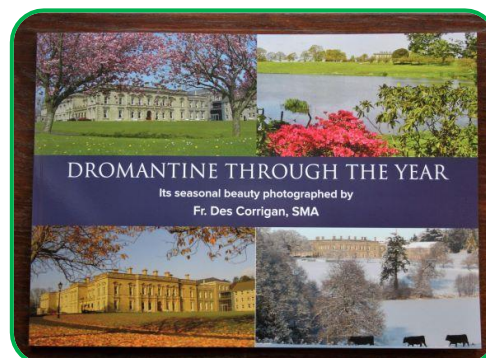
Messenger Publications – Building Bridges Between Theology and Ecology

We have recently celebrated the Season of Creation, marked throughout the Christian world which runs from 1 September – 4 October each year, the Feast Day of St Francis of Assisi. This is a time to celebrate our natural world and to join together in prayer and action to protect our environment, our 'common home' to quote Pope Francis. At Messenger Publications they have a range of titles that explore or celebrate the world around us, building bridges between theology and ecology. Why not take a look at what's on offer: <https://www.messenger.ie>



The Beauty of Dromantine in Pictures

With time on his hands, Fr Des Corrigan, SMA took the opportunity to go through his vast photographic library and he has just published a book of his photos illustrating the beauty of Dromantine, Co Down throughout the seasons. This book presents us with that beauty, with a great selection of photographs taken during the four seasons of the year. Each season has its own special introduction, laced with apt quotations that give us all food for thought. Other features of the book include a pictorial history of Dromantine, the swans on the lake and a wonderful selection of African Art that is housed in Dromantine. This book will be a constant reminder to us of God's wonderful gift of nature in its different seasons and particularly in Dromantine. [More information here.](#)



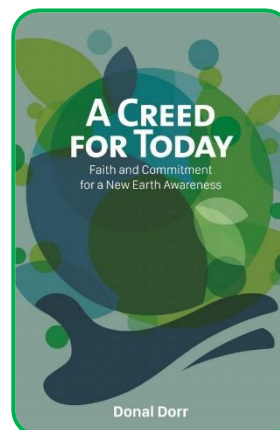
Christian Aid Report Warns of Covid-19 Global Catastrophe

In this new report, 'Building Back with Justice: Dismantling Inequalities after Covid-19', Christian Aid says 'the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated deep and often hidden inequalities across the world, and could tip over into "catastrophe" unless there is a recovery plan that addresses these inequalities.' The report also looks at the impact of Covid-19 on gender justice, international cooperation, black and minority ethnic communities and green recovery. Read it here >> <https://bit.ly/3gHAX0d>



A Creed for Today: Faith and Commitment for a New Earth Awareness by Donal Dorr

Donal Dorr has written this topical new work that explores the interplay between ecological theology and spirituality at this critical juncture in the twenty-first century. Rather than seeing ecological theology as an adjunct to Christian doctrine, Donal Dorr views it as central to our understanding of Catholicism today and integral to understanding our relationship with the natural world. Espousing what he dubs a 'new earth awareness', the author lays out a compelling vision for how we should live at both a spiritual and practical level in terms of our Christian faith and the attendant responsibility to care for our planet. To learn more and purchase visit the [Veritas website here.](#)

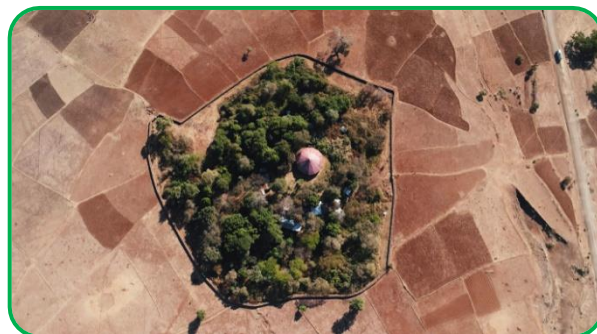


Eco Challenge!

Rev Trevor Sargent's Ecological Notes for Autumn 2020 – Plant a tiny forest to boost biodiversity and fight climate change

[You can read Trevor's Ecological Notes in full on the ECI website here.](#)

The idea is simple – take brownfield sites, plant them densely with a wide variety of native seedlings and let them grow with minimal intervention. In his Ecological Notes at the above link, Trevor teaches us about the popularity of what are called 'Miyawaki forests' in India, Brazil and Europe. Projects such as 'Urban Forests' in Belgium and France, and 'Tiny Forests' in the Netherlands, are bringing together parishes and various community groups to plant up grassy corners and neglected patches in their own localities. He also informs us about grants for growing mini-woodlands in Ireland under the Government's 'Neighbourwood Scheme'.



Imagine if churches in Ireland became famous for being 'green oases' like the 35,000 Orthodox churches of Ethiopia, each surrounded by a church forest (see above photo). In this Covid-19 period, there is much to be said for being active outdoors. Planning and planting a mini woodland, near a church, or wherever possible, is a healthy way to enhance the lives of this and future generations, to the glory of God. *All good gifts around us, are sent from heaven above; then thank the Lord, O thank the Lord for all his love.* [Learn more about this topic here.](#)

Prayers/Reflections for the Earth

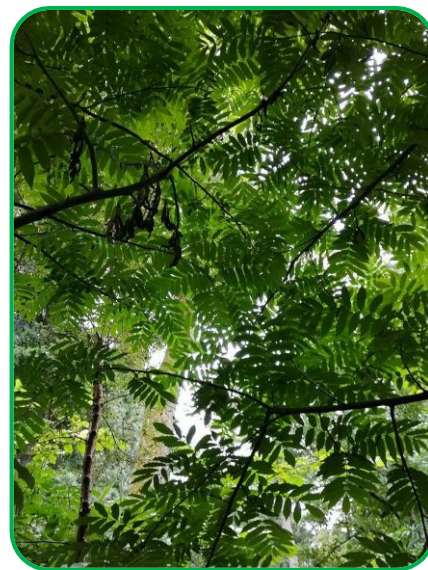
A Reflection by Fr Hugh O'Donnell

Fr Hugh O'Donnell is a poet and ministers with the Salesian community in the parish of Sean McDermott Street in Dublin. **A collection of these reflections on our separation from the natural world will be published as 'Time to Call Home' by Veritas in November.** He shares the following reflection with us, entitled 'Among Trees':

Today the trees welcomed me back. I had been away a long time from their sheltering presence. Now they reached out as though they had been waiting for me. The great oaks shuffled around, the community of yew trees rubbed shoulders together, pines stood tall, imperious, the lime said, 'come closer'.

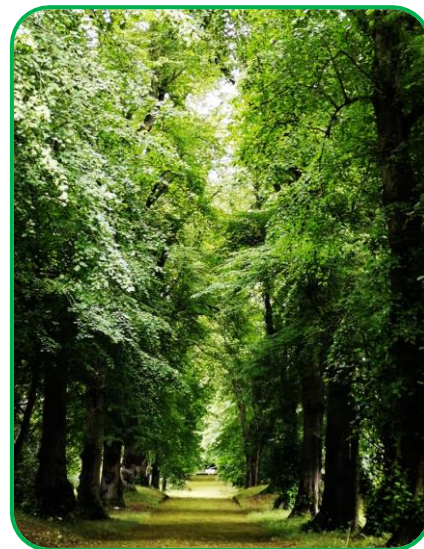
To the non-practising tree person, this sounds sentimental. So be it. But when you are among trees a small bit of attention will lift the latch for you. Trees are not scenery or background but living beings; eminently sociable and learned, almost virtuous as they go about their business deep down and out of sight. We would be mesmerised if we had an inkling of all that goes on at root level as they interact with their companionable fungi. There are good friends in low places!

This morning, however, is more about gladness and peace; a peace that links us in again to the pulse of life, a gladness that invites us to stay. No need for now to name these cousins of ours: it's enough to be with them and realise that they notice our appreciative dalliance. It does them good. It does us good. Sadly, we have lost that connection and live quite unaware that we have been tree people from the beginning with that early memory still alive in our genes. That's what's so good about being among trees; they remind us of who we are and where we have come from; that we belong together.



When I Am Among the Trees by Mary Oliver

When I am among the trees,
especially the willows and the honey locust,
equally the beech, the oaks and the pines,
they give off such hints of gladness.
I would almost say that they save me, and daily.
I am so distant from the hope of myself,
in which I have goodness, and discernment,
and never hurry through the world
but walk slowly, and bow often.
Around me the trees stir in their leaves
and call out, "Stay awhile."
The light flows from their branches.
And they call again, "It's simple," they say,
"and you too have come into the world to do this,
to go easy, to be filled with light, and to shine."



An African Eco-Story – The Story Behind 'Umululu' by Fr Michael O'Shea SMA

In the summer 2020 edition of the Eco-Congregation Ireland newsletter Fr Michael O'Shea SMA wrote a reflection entitled [Umululu, The Big One – A Story About a Tree](#). Fr Michael now writes of the story behind Umululu:

The first African priest of the vast Luangwa Valley in Eastern Zambia, Fr John Kalale was a quiet holy man and an ecologist at heart though that term wasn't in use then. After his ordination in 1952 he was appointed to the new Jesuit Minor Seminary of Mpima. He brought with him a rare species of tree which he planted behind the Father's house. The tree prospered, eventually becoming 'King of the Forest' and recognised as sacred by the villagers.



After half a century of friendship and helpfulness to man and fellow creatures, the King was assaulted one night by an unnatural violent wind which broke one of its mighty limbs. Tearing away from the trunk, the limb came crashing down narrowly missing the old mission house, then occupied by a seminary worker and family, but smashing its water tank and tower. The rector at the time, not noted for tree preservation, deemed it necessary to bring the whole tree down for fear of further accidents.

The axe men sharpened their weapons and attacking from all sides after a few hours had nearly cut the tree through. It stood balancing precariously on its almost severed base. Tractor, ropes and more men were then employed to pull it down. But still it stood, defeating their best efforts. Now the knowing men worried. It couldn't be left like that, which way would it fall? On the house? On those who were chopping it? Or even on innocent passers-by. Tempers rose, opinions differed, no one really knew. Stumped! Then a gentle breeze blew up. As if responding to it, the King sighed, shuddered and unhurriedly, majestically came down westwards to land on a clear space, sparing all and doing no damage.

Later this author, engaged in writing a history of the seminary, remembered he'd seen a photograph of the old mission house; the tree should be behind it. He searched and found it but to his consternation there was no really big tree in the picture. On showing the remains of Umululu to a Zambian priest, he was informed that a sacred tree might not like to be photographed by a foreigner and could hide itself. Wishing to show the photograph which he'd stowed safely in his room, he rushed to find it. He searched every file and folder, nook and cranny, high and low, but nowhere could he find it. It had vanished!

Orlagh-in-the-City Laudato Si' Group's Season of Creation Reflection

Orlagh-in-the-City Laudato Si' Group's Season of Creation walk explored the river Dodder from Donnybrook to Ringsend. As the river is tidal up to Ballsbridge there is a range of biodiversity, especially birdlife visible. Members also saw the engineering works which have been completed along the riverbanks, a response to

the increasing risk of flooding, another effect of climate change. One of their Season of Creation zoom worships included Patrick Kavanagh's *Canal Bank Walk*. In the poem he gives a challenging image of relating to nature:

*O unworn world enrapture me, enrapture me in a web
Of fabulous grass and eternal voices by a beech,
Feed the gaping need of my senses, give me ad lib
To pray unselfconsciously with overflowing speech
For this soul needs to be honoured with a new dress woven
From green and blue things and arguments that cannot be
proven.*



With kindest regards,

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