



Eco
Congregation
Ireland



Dear Eco-Congregation Friends

Welcome to the Advent 2020 edition of the Eco-Congregation Ireland newsletter. We are journeying towards Christmas! The Eco-Congregation Ireland Committee wishes you all a very peaceful and healthy Christmas and an eco-centred 2021!

Reminder!

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.
O God of the poor,
help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this

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 all that is a risk-for neighbours near and far and for those that come after us. Give us the

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.

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:**

St Catherine's Senior School, Cabra West

During November fifth class students in St. Catherine's Primary School reflected on the creation story in Genesis and watched an animated version of *Laudato Si'* as a springboard to compose a prayer service for the whole school to highlight the arrival of the Climate Justice Candle in the school. The girls wrote a reflection and some short prayers, which were then passed from class to class with the Climate Justice Candle, so that each class heard their thoughts on our Common Home. As one student wrote *'We want to make the world a better and healthier place for future generations to live in. We need to try harder and do our best to protect the animals and nature that God has created'*.



Our Common Home

The Earth is our common home.
It is our responsibility to look after and care for it.
Unfortunately, we are neglecting to care for our Earth,
and we can't live anywhere else.
God gave us the Earth and wants us to look after it,
so, we need to try harder.
It made us sad and angry to hear that people are littering
and throwing waste into the oceans and lakes.
This is very harmful to all sea creatures.
We need to try harder and do our best to protect the animals,
creatures and nature that God has created.
Pope Francis wrote in his letter *'Laudato Si'* that the world belongs to
everyone,
including animals, but we need to act now before it is too late.
We want to make the world a better and healthier place
to live in for future generations.
We only have one life on this planet, let's make it right.
Ms Kealey's 5th class.



Holy Rosary Community, Cavan

In the Holy Rosary Community chapel, a very original Laudato Si Candle was created from a long lamp that came from Killeshandra and richly decorated on the outside with computer-sourced images of the Cosmos. Holy Rosary Sister, Mel Greene sent ECI a wonderful reflection on their activities and meditations during Season of Creation 2020. [You can read her update in full on the ECI website here](#). The sisters 'committed to healing injustice and poverty and to love and protect all God's Creation. With gratitude that their eyes and ears had been opened during this Season, they pledged to listen to the music of the universe'.



St Michael's Church, Enniskillen



St Joseph the Artisan Church, Bonnybrook Parish Will Receive an Eco-Congregation Ireland Award!

Fr Joe Jones reports: There was great rejoicing when St Joseph's PPC gathered for its November meeting via zoom. That evening Catherine Brennan SSL informed the parish that they are now recognised by Eco-Congregation Ireland as an Eco-Congregation parish. The idea of becoming an eco-aware parish began very simply with two Cs – cowslips and conviction. Saving the cowslips from the blades of the lawnmower led to cordoning off a small area in front of St Joseph's Family Centre. The conviction that the loss of biodiversity is one of the greatest threats to our natural environment inspired parishioners to plant a wildflower garden and seek advice on how to establish a sensory garden in the long-neglected space at the back of the Centre.

Then the question arose: How do we go about becoming an Eco-Congregation? Fortunately, some members were already familiar with the framework and encouragement of ECI in pursuing this goal. Having presented the idea to the PPC, Care for the Earth was embraced as a parish ministry. A small group of interested people came together, and the journey began. As the work progressed, the parish submitted reports to Eco-Congregation Ireland as a



result of which the ECI Awareness and Endeavour Certificates were achieved. Next, the parish began to work towards the final goal, that of receiving the Eco-Congregation Ireland Award. A report, detailing all efforts, was finally submitted for assessment, the happy outcome of which is that St Joseph the Artisan Parish has now received their Eco-Congregation Ireland Award!

It was with great joy and gratitude that parishioners listened to the first three sentences of their citation being read aloud, "Heartiest congratulations to each of you on the amazing work you have done in the parish in a very short time. The assessors recommend your parish very highly for the Eco Congregation Award". In a sense, this is only the beginning of the journey. All that has been achieved so far needs to be maintained and developed. This parish is committed to making this happen, despite COVID 19 lockdowns. They will continue to take small significant steps, seeking to become ever more aware of suffering humanity and our suffering earth. Due to COVID 19 restrictions the award will not be presented in the parish for a few months, probably well into 2021. You can watch the Advent Service in Bonnybrook here >> <https://www.bonnybrookparish.ie/tv/> where they adapted the prayer suggestions from the Laudato Si Working Group of the Council for Catechetics below for use in the blessing of their parish advent wreath. **Congratulations to all!**

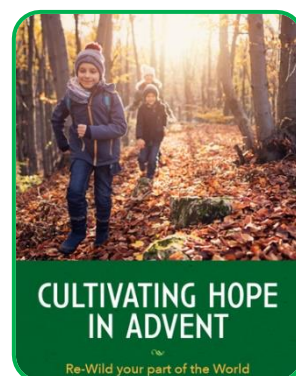
SAVE THE DATE!! ECI Online Meet Up!!

ECI is planning to hold an online meet up on **Saturday 16 January 2021 at 11.00am**. More details to follow! This online event will be for congregations to share experience and ideas.

Latest News ...

Cultivating Hope in Advent 2020 – New Resource

A new resource has been prepared by the Laudato Si Working Group of the Council for Catechetics for use during the Advent season. [You can download this beautiful resource here](#). Don't forget! In the section 'Advent Wreath Prayers' you might use a Virtual ECI Climate Justice Candle. You can learn how to do this on the Eco-Congregation Ireland website here >> <https://bit.ly/2JaqtLX>.



Rathgar Parish Creates Biodiversity Garden

Miriam Mooney sent ECI this update: The Laudato Si Group in Rathgar Parish was originally formed to read and reflect on Pope Francis's Encyclical Laudato Si. Arising from Francis's exhortation to take action to protect Our Common Home the group undertook many educational, environmental and spiritual initiatives in the Parish. In recent times an opportunity arose in the grounds at the rear of the Church. Following upgrading of the Parish Centre the Laudato Si group put forward the idea of developing a Biodiversity Garden, with only pollinator plants, which was accepted by the Parish. The ground was rotavated and had topsoil (peat free compost was included in this topsoil) applied thanks to generous funding from our Parish. Covid-19 has delayed the progress of this project however we have already planted some plants and bulbs! The Biodiversity Garden is our community response to Pope Francis's call for action to protect and enhance our precious, declining biodiversity. Many of our beautiful pollinator species are vulnerable and require support to survive. We are clear that all plants and shrubs must be excellent pollinators and we will be using the [All Ireland Pollinator Plan](#) as a guide. Should any Eco-Congregation Ireland reader wish to know more or link with us we have set up an email address for this purpose. pollinatorgarden1@gmail.com and would be happy to receive your advice or plants! We hope to be sharing photos of the Biodiversity Garden in 2021 with our Eco-Congregation friends!



Mercy Global Presence

Sisters of Mercy worldwide has developed a programme called *Mercy Global Presence*. Mercy Global Presence links congregations/institutes, individual Sisters of Mercy and Associates, partners in Mercy, and Mercy International Association in creative and energising ways. Sheila Curran is the Coordinator of this programme for the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy in Ireland. The programme has Three Segments: Segment one was on Global, Segment two was on Mercy and Segment three is on Presence. Their materials are all [on their website here](#). Whilst the focus is directed to Mercy Sisters, their partners in Mission and Associates, the materials are freely available to anyone who is interested in the themes of degradation of Earth and displacement of peoples. All are welcome to visit their website!



Corrymeela Community Update

Glenise Morgan sent ECI this update: The [Corrymeela Climate Justice Group](#) meets regularly to discuss issues relating to climate change, the environment and their impact on social justice. A brief update is submitted monthly to the Corrymeela Community Newsletter. Below are details of some of our recent activities. We see tackling the challenge of Climate Change as a key channel for engagement and reconciliation in our local and global community.



A number of us took part in June in "The Time is Now" Climate Coalition UK campaign, where people were asked nationwide to "meet up" with their constituency MP via Zoom. We were to emphasise the need to promote green initiatives in the context of our economic recovery following the Covid-19 pandemic, seeking an undertaking that the MP would contact the Prime Minister on this matter. Over 260 MPs attended "meetings" and in N Ireland, Sir Jeffrey Donaldson wrote to the PM and received a detailed response from the Minister of State for Business, Energy and Clean Growth. The Minister says that the Government is putting "a green recovery at the heart of its response to COVID-19" through further investment in low carbon infrastructure. The UK is hosting the COP26 global climate summit in November 2021 and the Minister says "they are determined to use this platform to raise global climate ambitions to achieve the transformational change required by the Paris Agreement." A number of specific measures and funding commitments were outlined, and our group intend to keep up momentum by following up, with our elected representatives, what progress is being made on the proposed actions.

A number of us attended the Eco-Congregation Ireland's Zoom conference "Planetary Emergency: How to have Hope" in October. We were very impressed with the speakers and subsequently invited Prof John Barry, Queen's University, to give a Zoom presentation to the wider Corrymeela membership. This was equally stimulating and Prof Barry was very generous with his time in answering questions. We all remember his slogan: "Educate, agitate, organise"! We hope to have more such events. This talk, like those at the Eco-Congregation Ireland conference, was recorded and is available to anyone interested. The theme at Corrymeela's October Community Weekend, attended, via Zoom, by some 100 people, including the Dublin cell group, was: reviewing Corrymeela's values with a view to producing a new Strategy Plan. Our group took this opportunity to emphasise the importance of prioritising Care for Creation and Climate Justice. Following the feedback, the senior team will identify priority issues in January with the aim of publishing the Strategic Plan around Easter. We would welcome feedback/comments from any Eco-Congregation Ireland members and if anyone would like more information on any of the above, please let us know (glenise.morgan@gmail.com).

Faith in the Environment - Interfaith Perspectives

This joint meeting hosted by the [Green Party Northern Ireland](#) and the [Northern Ireland Interfaith Forum](#) took place online on Saturday 14th November. The Chair was Professor John Barry QUB and the



keynote speaker was Alastair McIntosh – activist, writer and academic who spoke about the Climate Crisis, a faith-based understanding of the environment and our relationship with it. His most recent publication is 'Riders on the Storm - The Climate Crisis and the Survival of Being' (Birlinn 2020). www.alastairmcintosh.com. Alastair's presentation was followed by responses from Gasser Abdelal - Belfast Islamic Centre, Vicky Heslop - Jampa Ling Buddhist Community, Raj Puri - Indian Community Centre, Boyd Sleator - NI Humanist Association and ECI's Chair - Rev Andrew Orr. [You can watch this online meeting on YouTube here](#).

Caring for Our Common Home at Cabra West Parish

Philomena Neary RSC sent ECI their latest news: There was a large site belonging to the parish, backing on the priests' houses, which had been neglected over the years, this area was cleared, and an eco-garden was developed. The parish was given an Eco-Congregation Ireland award in 2015. Over the years, a section of this garden has been providing, blackberries, raspberries, potatoes and vegetables. The garden has been given a time of rest (jubilee year) and now has given us some wildflowers which encourage natural habitat for bees, butterflies and common insects.



In spite of Covid-19 restrictions we were able to highlight our desire in promoting Laudato Si and care of the earth awareness through the daily prayer of the faithful and our sacred space within the parish church. To end the Season of Creation this year, Fr. John Joe Spring gifted us with a rowan tree, and it was planted in our Eco Garden. As we walked or drove around our parish, it was wonderful to see how many private houses had taken to growing wildflowers in their gardens and indeed the green areas around our neighbourhoods and that Dublin City Council had sectioned off some green spaces for wildflowers. Congratulations to the local communities for all their work in creating wildflower gardens and for protecting them!

Latest News from Vita

Irish development partner Vita has released a review of its Green Impact Fund, www.vita.ie/vgif highlighting the potential for building a sustainable financing platform for delivering low-carbon, high-impact work in Africa. Vita started out in the 1980s as Refugee Trust International under the patronage of Mother Teresa, pivoting to work on sustainable livelihoods in Ethiopia and Eritrea in recent years. Vita's Green Impact Fund has just completed a "proof-of-concept" stage, raising €2 million in investments and grants, much of it from the religious sector who are proving to be pioneers when it comes to social impact investment – especially around climate mitigation. The funding has facilitated equitable partnerships with communities to develop sustainable clean water and improved household cooking technology to over 300,000 people in Eritrea and Ethiopia.



In Southern Ethiopia, mother of four Hundene Huka now cooks for her family on a fuel-efficient stove. They have reduced their wood use by half, thanks to the stove. "The kids are healthier," Hundene tells Vita. "I'm not getting sick anymore and the trees are growing back." Vita's hallmark is innovation and the €2 million generated over two million tonnes of carbon emissions reductions; these offsets were accredited and registered with the internationally recognised verification agency The Gold Standard with profits re-invested in communities, creating a circular model.

The next stage will involve scaling up to a regulated Independent Fund with capital of €20 million aiming to generate over four million tonnes of carbon emissions savings. Investors will benefit from a triple bottom line, with an expected return on investment of 10%, alongside verified outcomes aligned to the SDGs and climate action. Vita was invited by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation & Development (OECD) to present the Fund at their Private Financing for Development Week in Paris in early 2020, recognition of the Green Impact Fund as an example of Irish leadership blending innovative finance with development funding.

Blessington, Vallemount and Lacken Parish – Latest News

Carmel O'Neill sent this update: To mark the Season of Creation, Pope Francis' prayer on Care of the Earth was printed in the weekly parish newsletter and read as a reflection at the weekend masses in Blessington. A prayer for Creation was included and the cantor sang hymns on the theme of Creation including "All creatures of Our God and King" which got a very appreciative response. During the month of Oct, Carmel O'Neill and the Pastoral worker Aine Egan did a video presentation on the Life of St Francis of Assisi and Pope Francis Laudatio Si for the children preparing for the sacraments this year. This can be viewed on blessingtonparishes.com. The children composed prayers for Creation and Care of the Earth. They were encouraged to set up a sacred space at home and include their own prayer in it.

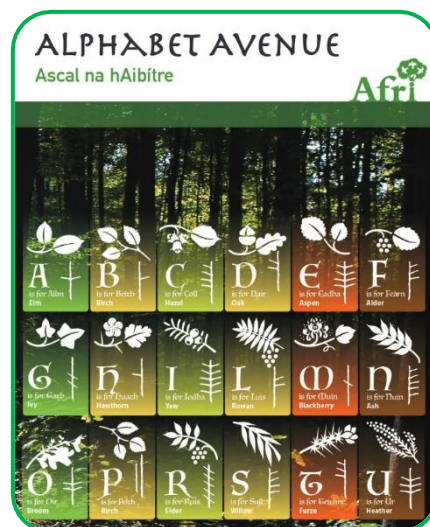


In Vallemount Parish, a group of volunteers came together to plant Spring bulbs in the large border adjacent to the church of St Joseph. Planter boxes with winter bedding were placed at the main door. There was a major clean-up of Our Lady's grotto and hedging cut back. Our Lady's statue is now visible from the main road. An area of waste ground behind the grotto was cleared of weeds and overgrown climbers. Plans are in place to devise a bio-diverse planting scheme in the Spring with the help of our parish priest Fr Richard who is a keen gardener. In Lacken Church, a strip of ground was dug, and weeds cleared to make way for a wildflower strip next summer. During Science Week Nov 8th-15th, the 6th class pupils designed and chose materials for an insect hotel at the rear of Lacken church. The children hope this home will be a safe place for insects to hibernate in the winter months.

18 Trees for 18 Letters

At many of [Afri's regular events](#), such as Féile Bríde, their Famine Walks and Hedge Schools, they have planted a tree to reflect their commitment to living in peace and justice with our species and our planet. In 2021 Afri plans an exciting new chapter in this decades-long tradition. This will involve planting 18 trees or plants, corresponding with the 18 letters of the ancient Irish alphabet. Uniquely, each letter in that Gaelic/Celtic alphabet is named for a tree or a plant: Ailm (Elm), Beith (Birch), Coll (Hazel), Dair (Oak) and so on. When it comes to preserving our ancient forests, Ireland has fared particularly poorly: a decline from an initial forest cover of around 80% to the lowest forest cover of all European countries: approximately 11%, compared to a current European average of well over 30%.

This Afri project will evolve along many lines. They plan to invite partners to join them in hosting a complete 'forest' of 18 trees/plants, or perhaps each to host one tree among 18 dotted around the island. This project will provide a way of looking forward to a more hopeful future – when we will have a greater appreciation of the splendour of our Planet and when we will again



have broad leaf forests flourishing throughout our island. For more information, contact admin@afri.ie or joe@afri.ie

Advent in the Parish of Our Lady and St John in Carrigaline

Janet Twomey sent ECI this update: During the lockdown months, the only flowers that were available for the church and funerals were ones which were grown in the parish garden, which is always carefully tended to by Fran.

In Laudato Si', 40, we read that St. Francis asked that part of the friary garden always be left untouched, so that wildflowers and herbs could grow there, and those who saw them could raise their minds to God, the Creator of such beauty. As we start the Advent Season and raise our minds to God in a very special way, we lit the first candle of our Advent wreath at Mass. We prayed the Prayer of Hope from the 'Cultivating Hope' Resource booklet. As we wait in joyful hope at this time, we maintain hope too that we will continue to sow seeds of love and care for our precious earth and all of God's children who benefit from its riches and beauty. The above photos show Fran in the parish garden and the Advent altar and wreath in our church.



First Sunday of Advent: As the earth turns away from the sun and enters the season of darkness, a darkness which is necessary for the bulbs and seeds to ready themselves for the burst of growth in Spring, so do we enter the time of waiting that is Advent. We pray that we may use this time as wisely as the earth does, preparing our hearts and spirits for the celebration of the wonder that is the incarnation, God becoming flesh and living among us. We light this candle for Hope.

Peace Forest Ireland Project Plan 2020 - 2030

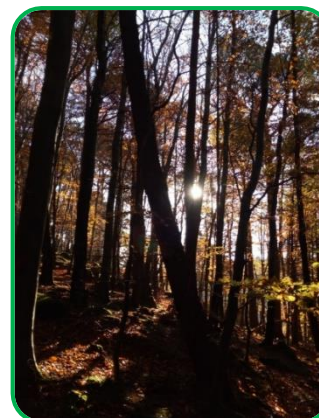
Forest Friends Ireland/Cáirde na Coille have now a complete plan for their 'Forest Friends Ireland Cross Border Peace Forest'. They are now recruiting those who would like to be partners in the implementation of the plan, those who wish to provide financial assistance or land for the trees that will be planted, those who would like to help administratively and those who would like to be involved in any aspect(s) of the plan. Contact details are forestfriends.ie@gmail.com

or John Haughton Facilitator 085 2536 650. Or you can address your query to the secretary of Forest Friends Ireland, 40 Lower Drumcondra Road, Dublin 9, D09 V5R9. Office phone number is (01) 830 7236. www.forestfriends.ie; www.facebook.com/peaceforestireland; www.facebook.com/forestfriendsireland.



Orlagh-in-the-City Members Explore their Local Area

Lorcan McDermott sent ECI this latest news: Covid 5km restrictions have given the opportunity to explore local areas as never before. While Laudato Si' group walks in nature have been postponed, individuals have been out observing the autumn landscape. The photograph on the right was taken on the Dublin Wicklow 'borderline'. At the same time, the Laudato Si' book club has been meeting fortnightly on zoom and has just finished reading and discussing Elizabeth Johnson's *Ask the Beasts: Darwin and the God of Love*. *Ask the Beasts* is an opportunity to open up the dialogue between science and religion on the topic of evolution and natural selection. In formulating an innovative theology



of creation, Johnson challenges traditional assumptions and helps the reader engage with Darwin's analysis of evolutionary processes in a very positive way.

St Michael's Parish, Inchicore Keep Active!

Pádraigín Clancy is the Parish Pastoral Worker at St Michael's Parish Inchicore and she has sent us this update: we have an active and committed Inchicore Environmental Group which has its genesis in the old Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation Group formed under the auspices of the Oblate Pastoral Area in Inchicore. The Environmental Group convenes twice a month (in normal times) and divides its time between a Grand Canal clean up and an Inchicore Village clean up. The group also plants bulbs and wildflowers in any waste ground of the area. During Covid times the group has continued to operate but in reduced numbers. We have a Parish Book Club affectionately called St Michael's Mystics! We spent the Autumn reading and reflecting on Brian Grogan's *Finding God in a Leaf* (by Zoom - most of us were first time Zoomers). It was a rewarding experience for all. It kept us in touch with creation and one another at a soul level during a difficult time. Our Club is now reading parts of *Fratelli Tutti* for Advent which is the sister book of *Laudato Si* - already one can see how much care for the earth is linked with our care for the poor.



We were disappointed as a faith community because we had some very creative liturgies in the pipeline for the Season of Creation in September/October and it was all cut short by Level 3-5. But this will come about again. However, we began Advent with speaker Jane Mellett from Trócaire. Jane spoke of the Advent theme of 'Staying Awake' and tied this in with our need to remain awake and vigilant as to what is happening in creation. She recommended we mind how much paper we use when wrapping gifts for Christmas etc. She also emphasised the parallel between our 'waiting' on Christ to come again at Christmas, with nature's quiet waiting as the earth's soil rejuvenates itself. Parishioners watching on our webcam found Jane's words very helpful. The parish has recommended that as much green space as possible is included in the new build at St Michael's Estate (which has been sanctioned for 500 housing units - much against the wishes of the local community).

Finally, myself as Parish Pastoral Worker and Dublin City Council, local historian, Cathy Scuffil, have proposed to DCC a Pilgrim Path for Dublin 8 as part of their [Mapping Green Dublin' Project](#). This proposal would include the natural and built heritage. The pathway would offer spaces for moments of recollection and rejuvenation amid the busyness of city life. Places suggested include; Religious buildings (interfaith), outdoor grottos/holy wells, and places along the banks of the Camac river and the Grand Canal. We are also seeking to rebuild our Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation Group for the whole Oblate Pastoral Area in Inchicore (including the Parishes of Our Lady of the Wayside, Bluebell, Mary Immaculate Tyrconnell Road, and St Michael's Parish, Bulfin Road). We would be delighted if any ECI supporters living in the area or connected to the Inchicore area would care to join us in our endeavours!

St Joseph's Parish Wilton, Cork – Latest News

Fr Fergus Tuohy from the Wilton Justice group sent us this update: St. Joseph's Parish Wilton, Cork, was delighted to host the climate justice candle for the season of creation. The candle was lit at the opening service, which had "Cultivating Hope" as its theme. During this service, we took time to reflect on, our beautiful planet earth, our relationship with it, ways we may cease from exploiting it and sow seeds of life-giving hope for its healing and restoration. Throughout the season, our Liturgies echoed the theme of creation, evident in our liturgical music, our readings, our prayers of the faithful, and our communion



reflections. Inspiring images with corresponding texts, from Laudato Si. were displayed in our church, awakening us to not only the beauty of creation, but inviting us to respond wholeheartedly to the effects of climate change and to stand with the poor and vulnerable. We committed to small practical actions to care for and protect our common home. Also, we chose to pray for and donate to a vulnerable community in Lodwar, Turkana, impacted negatively by the pandemic. This parish is served by SMA priests and native catechists. To help them combat its impact, our offering will enable them to source PPE equipment.

Our weekly newsletter had short reflections on creation and a call to action. We were challenged to examine our lifestyle, which may be impacting negatively on our environment, and were invited to take practical steps to live more sustainably. Events connected to the season of Creation, were also advertised, among them being, meditations on creation lead by Ber Mulcahy, a video on Pope Francis, and a service on the Harvest Festival. Our SMA priests in the parish, were involved in raising awareness round the Season of Creation, and in initiating the many programmes held, to celebrate it. Members of the parish and Wilton Justice Group participated in these programmes.

On Oct.4th, the Feast day of St. Frances a Harvest Thanksgiving Mass, was celebrated, with participation by an international community, offering gifts of the earth, native to their own country. The donation for Lodwar, was presented to the retired Bishop Harrington, who ministered for many years in Turkana, and who graced us with his presence, telling us something of the lives of the people there, as well as thanking the people of Wilton parish for their generosity. The closing of the programme was marked, later in the day with the Harvest Festival celebration and went out on webcam. Laudate Omnes Gentes, laudate Dominum, was a recurring chant throughout the service, expressing our awe, wonder and appreciation for a creative, provident and bountiful God, manifested in the abundant harvest of both earth and soul. [Here is a link to this service](#). Our hope is that we will continue that which we began by engaging positively and creatively with Mother Earth.

Church of St Thérèse, Mount Merrion Parish Shines a Light on Creation in their Parish Newsletter

The Eco-Parish Co-ordinating Group on behalf of Mount Merrion Parish Pastoral Council have provided a write up of their activities [in this edition of the Parish Newsletter](#), including the ECI Climate Justice Candle and their social justice project in Haiti.



Shankill Celebrates Season of Creation

Latest news from Kathie Davey: An informal group in Shankill, Co. Dublin, decided to mark the Season of Creation this year by focussing on the beauty and fragility of nature rather than the doom and gloom of much of the conversation around climate justice and the loss of biodiversity. We would do this on the last weekend of the Season, calling it "Shankill Celebrates our World, Let's protect it." We informed local bodies such as the Guards,



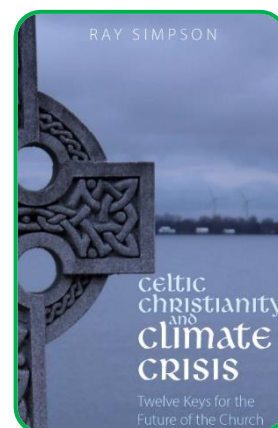
the County Council, local political representatives and our Tidy Towns committee of our plans and tried to encourage participation as widely as possible. We made numerous posters and placards (see photo top right) which we hung around the public spaces such as on the main street and at the roundabouts at either end of the village as well as mounting a large one on the wall of the St Anne's parish resource centre which fronts on to the main road at a bus stop.

We also gave out strips of green ribbon inviting people to take them and tie them on to their gatepost or a tree near them over the weekend 3-5th October, ending the season. This was particularly effective with the schoolchildren returning from school on the Friday afternoon who were, mostly, glad to take them. Throughout the exercise we were extremely aware of the need to observe Covid-19 restrictions. Unfortunately, that was the weekend of Storm Aiden! We managed to mount all of the posters during Saturday morning but by the afternoon the weather closed in. By the time we collected up all the material on Sunday evening, much of it had torn free and was a soggy mess on the pavement. All in all, it was a good idea thwarted by the elements. The greatest spin-off was our interaction with members of the public when we gave out the green ribbons and also when we were putting up the posters and able to explain to people what we were doing and why. SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL!

Interesting Publications ...

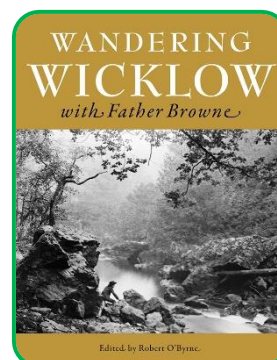
Sacristy Press – Celtic Christianity and Climate Crisis

Faced with the impending climate crisis and significant and irreparable damage being done to the earth, and climate campaigners who believe Christianity is not earth-friendly, [Celtic Christianity and Climate Crisis](https://bit.ly/2JuKq0i) offers a Christian spirituality of creation. Ray Simpson, Founding Guardian of the Community of Aidan and Hilda, explores Celtic Christianity through some of its key concepts—and some of the criticisms raised against it. He shows how the Celtic affirmation of creation and of equality and love among human beings holds the key not only for the future of the Church but of the whole planet. For more information and to order the book, go to <https://bit.ly/2JuKq0i>.



Messenger Publications - Wandering Wicklow with Father Browne

As editor of *Wandering Wicklow with Father Browne*, O'Byrne chooses a selection of Ireland's finest photographer of the 20th century, Fr Frank Browne SJ's work to present some exceptional pictures of the exceptionally beautiful 'Garden of Ireland'. Long sea coasts, picturesque towns and renowned beauty spots portray both the enduring beauty of Wicklow as well as key moments in the development of a newly independent Ireland. [Read more about this publication here](https://www.messenger.ie/).



Upcoming Messenger publications: *Ecological Sin* by Jane Mellett; *Valuing Biodiversity* by Seán McDonagh; *Flowers of Ireland* (monthly series) by John Feehan; *Park Walks as Spiritual Exercise* by Andrea Hayes. More information here - <https://www.messenger.ie/>.

Calling All Faith Communities to Help Save Our Bees - All-Ireland Pollinator Plan and the Faith Community Guidelines

Pollinators, especially bees, make up an important part of Ireland's biodiversity. Unfortunately, Irish pollinators are in decline, with one third of our 98 wild bee species threatened with extinction. Without pollinators it would be impossible for farmers or gardeners to affordably produce many of the fruits and vegetables we need for a healthy diet. Pollinators



are also vital for a healthy environment and landscape. In September 2015, Ireland joined a small number of countries who have developed a strategy to address pollinator decline and protect pollination services. More than 100 governmental and non-governmental organisations have come together to form a shared plan of action, to help pollinators and improve biodiversity across the island. Implementation of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan is coordinated by the National Biodiversity Data Centre. It involves everyone from farmers, to councils, schools, gardeners, local communities and businesses doing their bit. We also call on Faith Communities to play an active role.

Bees are reliant on pollen and nectar for food, with hunger being one of the biggest causes of decline. If you're a pollinator, finding enough food is the greatest challenge you face. Ground around Centres of Worship, presbyteries, convents, graveyards as well as gardens of those in the congregation can play a crucial role if they are managed as safe places where our wild bees and other insects can find food and shelter. The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan is a call to action to all of us. Bees are declining, but we know exactly what we need to do to reverse these declines, and the actions needed are very doable and will show results almost immediately.

In 2018, we published multi-denominational guidelines suggesting 24 practical actions that any Faith Community can take to help. They are based on scientific research and are the measures that are most likely to benefit Irish pollinators. Visit <https://pollinators.ie/communities/faith-communities/> to view or download the document. The photo above shows Garrison Chapel in Co Fermanagh.

Do We Really Feel Fine? Towards an Irish Green New Deal

[The Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice](#) produces original research in each of their focus areas: Economic Justice, Environmental Justice, The Housing Crisis, Penal Policy and Theological Reflection. This publication is a Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice collaboration between Keith Adams, Social Policy Advocate; Kevin Hargaden, Director and Social Theologian; Martina Madden, Communications Coordinator and Ciara Murphy, Environmental Policy Advocate. [You can download the PDF of this publication here.](#)



Westport Eco-Congregation Tips for a Greener Christmas and Book Recommendations

Westport Eco-Congregation is encouraging their community to shop local to reduce our carbon footprint this December and support local business and employment. Their top tips are: use charity shops, give gifts that have a low impact on the environment – reusable – items such as keep cups, water bottles etc. Why not give a book this year? Here are their recommendations:

- ***Climate Justice* by Mary Robinson**, the former Irish president's lucid manifesto argues that grassroots activists offer hope in the face of climate change.
- ***No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference* by Greta Thunberg** climate activist, It was published on 30 May 2019. It consists of a collection of eleven speeches which she has written and presented about global warming and the climate crisis.
- ***A Creed for Today: Faith and Commitment for a New Earth Awareness* by Donal Dorr**. The Foxford Native new work explores the interplay between ecological theology and spirituality at this critical juncture in the twenty-first century. Dore's 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.
- ***A life on our Planet* by David Attenborough**, looks at how we have reached this moment of climate emergency and urges us to act now.
- ***On Fire: The Burning Case for a Green New Deal* by Naomi Klein**, the authors seventh book, is a collection of essays focusing on climate change and the urgent actions needed to preserve the world.



- **How to Save Your Planet – One Object at a Time** by Dr Tara Shine. This thoughtful guide is packed with all the information you need to make greener decisions in your day to day life. Kilkenny born Tara Shine spent twenty years as an international climate change negotiator and adviser to government and world leaders on environmental policy before setting up Change by Degrees, a social enterprise that inspires people at home and at work to live more sustainably.

Eco Challenge!

Rev Trevor Sargent's Ecological Notes for Advent 2020 – Taking Care of the Garden of Eden

The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it. (Psalm 24: 1)

The Irish Times (9th Oct 2020) favourably reviewed, 'David Attenborough; A Life on our Planet', giving this new Netflix documentary four stars. Sir David is 93 years of age. To me, he is something of a modern day 'Old Testament prophet'. Mind you, his task of prophecy should be easier than it was for Moses and Jeremiah. After all, Attenborough has the stark peer reviewed facts of scientific evidence to back up his thesis.



In summary, there have been five mass extinctions in Earth's four billion year history. The last one occurred 65 million years ago, during which the dinosaurs died out along with 75% of all species at that time. After the last ice age, about 11,000 years ago, the climate stabilized and a finely tuned life support system developed. This period, known as the **Holocene**, has been the most stable of geological epochs, when the planet's overall temperature has varied by no more than one degree centigrade up or down. Question: What ensured the Earth's optimum stable conditions for life? Answer: In a word – biodiversity.

To quote Attenborough, the Holocene has been our '**Garden of Eden**'. This is the period which allowed farming to develop over the last 10,000 years. Crucially, in this period, there have been thriving wilderness areas of forest, soil and sea which locked up the atmospheric carbon dioxide and helpfully kept our climate just right – not too hot, or too cold, like Goldilock's porridge! The polar ice and white snow also helped maintain a stable climate by reflecting away the sun's rays back into space.

Wilderness makes Civilization possible

David Attenborough, in his documentary, makes a powerful case. To restore ecological stability for the sake of our lives and livelihoods, humanity needs to restore the Earth's biodiversity. To restore biodiversity requires setting aside more areas as wilderness. Since David Attenborough was a boy, the remaining wilderness areas on Earth have reduced by almost a third:

	Remaining % of the Earth which is still Wilderness	Parts per million of CO2 in the atmosphere	Global Human Population
1937	66%	280 ppm	2.3 billion
1954	64%	310 ppm	2.7 billion
1960	62%	315 ppm	3.0 billion
1978	55%	335 ppm	4.3 billion
1997	46%	360 ppm	5.9 billion
2020	35%	415 ppm	7.8 billion

© 'David Attenborough: A Life on our Planet', a Netflix documentary, 2020.

The loss of wilderness areas is partly due to human encroachment, but increasingly global warming is also destroying wildlife habitats, such as melting of polar ice caps, forest fires and loss of coral reefs as seas become too warm. Loss of habitat has also brought humans into closer contact with other wild species –

and their natural pathogens such as **coronavirus**! Nature has ways of reminding us that all life is interconnected.

Attenborough and Prince William Launch a Fund to Fix the Earth

Taking inspiration from the Nobel Peace Prize, as well as President Kennedy's 'Moonshot' grand plan to land an American on the moon, and maybe even, our own **Eco-Congregation Awards**, a large fund is now in place to reward environmental innovations. The winners will receive an '**Earthshot Prize**'. Five, one million-pound sterling prizes will be awarded each year for the next ten years, providing at least 50 solutions to the world's greatest environmental problems by 2030. The world is "*at a tipping point*", explained Prince William in an interview with the BBC. The Prince said the **Earthshot Prize** is his and Sir David Attenborough's effort to ensure we hand the planet on to our children and grandchildren "*in a better state than we found it.*"

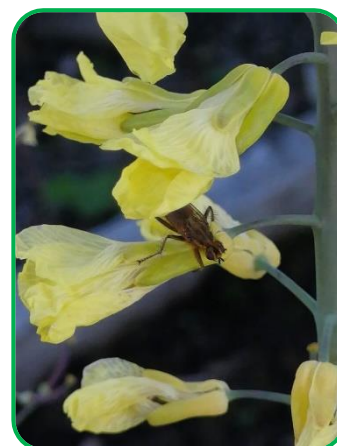
If any readers want to make a pitch for an **Earthshot Prize**, it would be great to hear about your environmental innovation. Of course, there is always a chance to win a **Diocesan Environmental Award** or an Eco-Congregation Ireland Award locally. Meanwhile, let us pray, by word and action for more of our former wilderness places to be made like the **Garden of Eden** once more – so that the next generation may have life, and have it abundantly. *For the Lord will comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places, and will make her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy & gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song.* (Isaiah 51: 3)

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 next year.** He shares the following reflection with us, entitled 'All Sleeping Things':

Though I mark out a territory and call it 'mine' there are other creatures who also call it home and raise their families there. They know the local scene and have a favourite place from which to view the world; hence all the nest building, burrowing and looking for a hideout to winter in. Take a hedgehog, for instance, who can ramble up to two kilometres a night, the one Peter found inside his back door recently. His first thought was that it had snuck in for a little warmth as the door was open; then climbed onto the dog's sofa, curled up and went to sleep. Later he had to concede it had to be Mack who had carried in the spiky ball from the garden and placed it there. Generally, we are ignorant of the lives of other creatures despite being one extended family. So even a fly in a room can lead to consternation and imaginings of plague or simply 'disease'. Or a wasp in autumn who has reasons for drawing attention to itself; being homeless, hungry and 'all over the place'. It seems we are biodiverse-averse and find it difficult to believe that a Creator could make a buzzing sound or wear a crown of thorns. When God introduces himself in the shape of another creature it's as if he invites us to replace the word 'mine' with 'ours'. 'All sleeping things are children' writes Jenny George in 'The Sleeping Pig' – the hedgehog, the refugee and the pig.



A Reflection by Carmel Bracken RSM, Northern Province of the Sisters of Mercy

Presence to Earth: A 2020 Vision

Earth has been sending us
Alarming distress signals
For many years now
Calling us to awaken
And change our ways.



For a multitude of reasons
We looked away
Unable or unwilling
To halt business as usual
Though knowing deep within
That we had disrupted nature's capacity
To create conditions conducive
To all of life.

What if 2020 is truly offering us
The gift of clearer vision?
What if the invisible Covid-19 virus
Is making visible
The invisible viruses
Held within an outdated worldview
Viruses that are the root causes
Of global problems and catastrophes.

The virus of thinking we are separate from nature
The virus of believing we can control her
The virus of believing she is a machine
That we can manipulate.
The virus of thinking she is a dead thing
We can mine and frack at will?

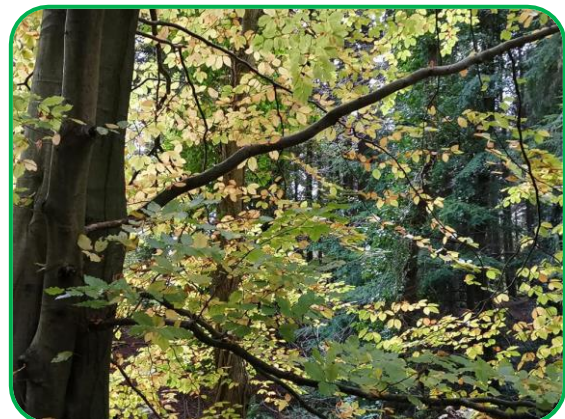
What if the coronavirus pandemic
Is apocalyptic in its deeper meaning?
A revelation and unveiling.
A lifting of the veil
Of all that has been hidden
A lens bringing into focus
What we need to let go of
So a better world can emerge
A world that enables the flourishing
Of the whole community of life.

Our 14 billion year evolutionary journey
Has always been punctuated by jump times
When crises have been drivers for
Extraordinary change and creativity
Pushing life toward greater complexity
Increased diversity and connectivity
And deeper levels of consciousness.

NOW is our jump time.

As we emerge from this strangely surreal time
The quality of our presence to earth
May well determine whether we earthlings
Make it through this jump time.

May we know her
As our teacher and mentor



Valuing what we can learn from her
Not what we can extract from her.

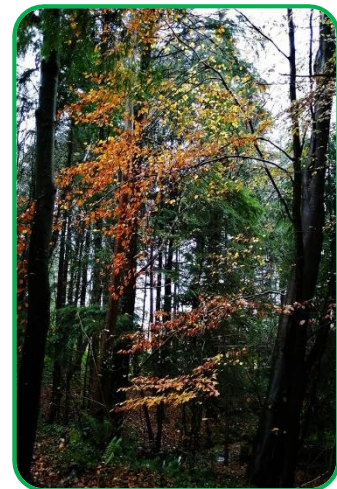
May we look to her as Source
Not resource
Knowing she is the sacred matrix
In which we are all embedded
And upon whom we profoundly depend.

May we become re-enchanted with nature
Knowing earth as a living spiritual being
Trusting the Divine intelligence
That is in everything
Opening to her alchemical powers
Of transformation and healing.

As we become present to her energies
Pulsing through us
May we discover that the
Light in our own depths is
A spark of the world soul
The Anima mundi

As we deepen our ability
To be present to earth
May we know that everything
Is an expression
Of a Oneness that is dynamically alive.

May we learn to communicate with
The consciousness of Earth
And all sentient beings.
Truly sensing that
we are cosmic stuff
embedded in the ecology
of the Whole
Thus, becoming a gateway
for the presencing of the Whole
allowing the fire of creation to burn
and enter the world through us
Enabling the next step of evolution.



Kolwe and Koan: African Eco-Story by Fr Michael O'Shea, Mpima Seminary, Zambia

When I first came to Mpima Seminary forty years ago the hinterland was clothed with thick healthy forest. Now most of the trees have gone but a troop of monkeys, bereft of their natural habitat, have moved into the shelter of our surviving tree-clad grounds. "Kolwe and Ko" is a story inspired by the monkeys outside my window (*kolwe* is vernacular for monkey).

High in a green *mukuyu* tree Kolwe and Ko thirstily watched the men below squatting in a circle about a big yellow gourd sucking millet beer from it through long straws. 'Hominits', or 'nits' they called the humans and referred to themselves as 'monks'. From their vantage point they also saw a ruffianly group of armed hominits approach – thieves, poachers or kidnappers. One of the ruffians tripped



on a root and his gun went off. The boozers fled in panic into the bush with the intruders hot in pursuit. Quick as lightning the monks dropped to the ground, grabbed the straws and drained the beer pot. Then back up with them to their accustomed perches on high where each one carefully wound his tail round a stout branch – even a monk can fall when alcohol kicks in.

Drink made them garrulous but, Simio the eldest, was always allowed to speak first. Tucking his left paw inside the rubber belt around his waist (the remains of a tether when farm workers caught him) he burped twice and began: “The ‘nits think they’re superior to us! Imagine! And we here long, long, long before them. *They* descended from us, not *we* from them. We adapted properly to our environment and kept it safe, they didn’t. Believe me brothers when, with foolish conceit, the nits stood on their back legs they lost more than their tails, they lost their brains too.” “Hair Hair!” cried the troop. Pleased, Simio continued, “Not only have they destroyed *our* home, they’ve destroyed much of their own too. Dear Monks, our common home, the Earth, can’t take much more of such behaviour. A decade or so is all we’ve left before, to use a nit phrase, “All hell breaks loose”.

Chief Kolwe, a reconciler at heart, felt it was time to calm the rhetoric, “Surely there are some good nits?” Babu a handsome big fellow, broke in, “Yes, my Granda told me about the lovely Doctor Jennie Goodall who admired us and said she preferred chimps to men!” Capo, a well-read Capuchin from the nearby monastery, added, “There are some good groups too, “Eco Warriors, Greens, Environmentalists, and Eco-Irelanders ...”

Displeased to lose the limelight, Simio raised his voice, “Brother Apes, it’s true at times we fought and even used sticks and stones against invaders, but we knew when enough was enough. Not so the nits, they developed a taste for meat, speed, and other creatures’ living quarters. They’ve wiped out so many species and, incredibly, they’ve hung, drawn and quartered millions of their own. Now they’re so clever they’ve developed a bomb that could annihilate all their enemies with one blast, unfortunately it would wipe out themselves too *and* this whole beautiful Earth!” “Oh Woe, Woe, Woe” wailed the troop wringing their paws.

“Is there anything we can do?” asked Kolwe. “We can pray,” said Capo. “We’ve been doing that all the time,” said Simio unimpressed, “We need action, radical action: we need to **re-verse evolution** get back to simplicity, **re-tailing**, and eco-farming.” “Yes, Yes,” chorused the troop, “Down with guns, fossil fuels, and corporate businesses. Up with trees, organic farming, and solar energy.” “May we all be One,” intoned Kolwe raising a paw in blessing, “and let us monks take a small lead in **re-conciliation** by re-fraining from calling them ‘nits’ and mocking their tail-less bottoms.” “Amen, alleluia, alleluia!” sang the monks, ‘**Re-forestation, re-verse-evolution, Earth for all, for ever**’.

With kindest regards,

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