



Eco
Congregation
Ireland



Dear Eco-Congregation Friends

Welcome to the Winter/Early Spring 2021 edition of the Eco-Congregation Ireland newsletter. It has been a long and difficult time for us all. Read on for stories of hope!

The natural world is such comfort in these tough times. The photos on the left show the first snowdrop and bird box in the Laudato Si biodiversity garden in Rathgar Parish. Small beacons of hope!

Reminder!

ECI VIRTUAL Climate Justice Candle Continues ...

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 on our website (or write your own) and set it by the candle (but not so it risks catching fire!). Pray when you can. 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.



ECI Holds First Online Meet Up!



On Saturday 16 January 2021 Eco-Congregation Ireland held its first online meet-up! This online event was held for faith communities to share experiences and ideas. Participants were encouraged to bring their questions about any aspect of their ECI journey, whether that was about getting started, working towards an ECI Award, the ECI Awareness and Endeavour Certificates or hosting the ECI Climate Justice Candle. Carolyn Good from Carlow Union of Parishes shared a presentation on God's Welcoming Church and [you can read this here](#). Margo Delaney from Bonnybrook Parish shared their journey to their ECI Award. [You can read more of their journey on their website here](#). [You can read the chat from this event here](#). Thanks to all who took part – we appreciate your support!

Latest News ...

Show the Love Campaign – 1-21 February 2021 – An Alternative St Valentine’s Celebration

[Show the Love](#) is an annual celebration of everything we care about and want to protect from the worst impacts of the climate crisis. Every February, since 2015, people from across the UK use the power of green hearts to join together and ask politicians to put aside their differences and tackle the climate crisis.

The past year has been a year like no other. The devastating impacts of the pandemic have impacted us all and made us value what we love more than ever. Join them between 1st – 21st February and use your voice to ask politicians to commit to building a cleaner, greener world that works for everyone. By taking part you’re joining with hundreds of thousands of people – from musicians to football clubs, community groups to businesses, astronauts to schoolchildren, teachers and faith leaders – to show the love for everything we want to protect from the climate crisis.



[Green Christian](#) states: 2021 is especially important as it’s the year of the big COP26 climate conference in Glasgow. As their contribution to the [2021 Show the Love Campaign](#) Green Christian is asking churches and individuals to use this Show

the Love Prayer and Blessing in worship on Sunday 14th February – Saint Valentine’s Day. Every February since 2015, people from all walks of life have joined the Climate Coalition’s Show the Love Campaign. By taking part you show the love for everything you want to protect from the climate crisis and to create a safer world for future generations.

Show the Love Prayer 2021

O God who is love
Let love empower our compassion
Let love embrace each and everyone
Let love unite humans and non-human
In restorative co-existence.
O Jesus, love come down to earth
May we honour the earth
May we honour all that dwells in the earth
May we be reconciled with the earth
Become what we are, of the earth.
O Spirit of love
Grant us a spirit of humility
Grant us a spirit of carefulness
Grant us a spirit of friendship
For the earth and all that dwells with us here. (Toni Bennett)

Show the Love Blessing 2021

May our loving God, who created the world and all that is in it,
Inspire us to delight in our beautiful home,
And to live in wonder, peace and joy.
May our living God keep our hearts turned to loving our neighbour and to respecting the creation we share.
May our merciful God help us to live this week in goodness and hope,
And fill us with God’s peace. Amen (Ash Vale Chapel Poetry Group)

All the Show the Love prayers submitted by Green Christian members are featured at [this link](#) as a resource for anyone to use.

First-ever Earth Hour 'Virtual Spotlight' – 27 March 2021, 8:30pm

2021 is a special year for [Earth Hour](#). Read on to find out why ... Over the years, the lights-off moment saw entire streets, buildings, landmarks, and city skylines go dark – an unmissable sight that drew public attention to nature loss and the climate crisis. This year – amidst the current global circumstances – [Earth Hour invites you to raise awareness and create the same unmissable sight online](#), so that the world sees our planet, the issues we face, and our place within it, in a new light. How? On the night of Earth Hour, they'll be posting a must-watch video on all their social media pages – and all you have to do is share it. Share it to your stories or to your wall, re-Tweet it, send it via DM, tag friends in the comments. The goal is simple: put the spotlight on our planet and make it the most watched video in the world on March 27 (or beyond!) so that as many people as possible hear the message! Click on the links above for more information.



The Loving Earth Project – Calling all Crafters!

Bronwen Haire from South Belfast Quaker Meeting shared the following invitation with us: [The Loving Earth Project](#), an initiative of the [Quaker Arts Network](#) and [Woodbrooke](#) celebrates people, places, creatures that we love but whose future is threatened by climate change or environmental degradation. Friends and friends are encouraged firstly through a meditation on the theme to respond to 3 questions:

- What do you love in nature, that is threatened by environmental breakdown?
- How might you personally be contributing to that?
- What more could you do, to be part of the solution?
- Quickly draw something that illustrates this.

Then take time to make a textile panel 30x30cm. Try to use/reuse /recycle materials you have at home. The examples below are from the Loving earth gallery:



The one on the right is about microplastics by someone who loves the sea. I first learned about this project at the online meeting of European and Middle East Section Annual Meeting in May 2020. Shortly after this, it was introduced to [South Belfast Quaker Meeting](#) and the Eco Quaker Group in our Meeting via zoom as an all-age Meeting for Worship. About 6 Friends including young Friends have subsequently produced fabulous textile panels and written about how they are changing their lifestyles to minimise their contribution to climate change and protect our planet. These panels are now part of the online gallery of the Loving Earth Project. There have been a number of live exhibitions over the last couple of years and the aim is to bring the exhibition of now 90 panels to the UN Conference on Climate Change in Glasgow in November 2021. Friends are in a unique position as our representatives at QUNO will be there. What an opportunity! I hope we can bring this exhibition to Ireland in the future, maybe coinciding with a Yearly Meeting. Ideally to venues both North and South.



It would be great if more Irish F/friends wanted to get involved and make panels. I am willing to help, run online workshops. One of the aims of the project is to start conversations about climate change through the panels, introduce it to Women's Institutes/Irish Country Women's Association, craft, embroidery, patchwork quilting groups, schools, community groups, Men's sheds etc.

Please get in touch if you are interested - bsmhaire@aol.com or 07707948636. I encourage you to look at the website online gallery and events. There are workshops and discussions you can join online. [Loving Earth Project – Caring for the World we love \(lovingearth-project.uk\)](http://lovingearth-project.uk). [You can also look it up on Facebook.](#)

Tralee calling ...

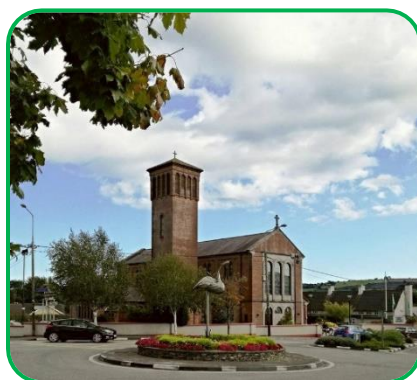
Report from Sylvia Thompson: Life has been busy despite the lockdown with some exciting actions and plans afoot across the Diocese. Remember that the [Diocese of Kerry](#) includes a number of parishes in Co. Cork too. One such activity was the



planting of a native Rowan tree behind the church of St John the Baptist in Tralee at the close of the Season of Creation, on the Feast Day of St Francis. This too marked the setting aside of this area as a biodiversity garden and now the parish Care of Creation group are drawing up plans for plants and more. They have already planted crocus, native bluebell and snowdrops and a few bugles around the base that tree.

That group used zoom to link up and then planed a celebration of St Brigid's Day again on zoom and are now hosting a reading/study group on 'The Art of Encounter: Reflections on Fratelli Tutti' under the wonderful guidance of Dr Suzanne Mulligan of Maynooth (Pontifical University). Various parishes in the diocese are making plans or are already committed in making their grounds havens for biodiversity including Killorglin, Ballymacelligott and Kenmare and the JPIC committee of the diocese plans to support a network of individuals or small groups who want to pursue this. The Eco-Congregation Ireland webinar provided excellent guidance, encouragement and resources at the perfect moment (mile buiochas).

Then of course the was the week-long diocesan mission at the end of January held on Zoom with around 4,000 registered. A highlight was Jane Mellett Laudato Sí officer for Trócaire who was an evening speaker. Be sure to check it out here. <https://www.dioceseofkerry.ie/2021/01/jane-mellett-watch-recording/>



Carrigaline Parish Receives ECI Endeavour Certificate

Carrigaline Parish has been engaged in a process of moving towards becoming a more ecologically engaged church community by taking practical actions. The ECI Endeavour Certificate has been awarded to acknowledge that as a church community they have made good progress, although they acknowledge that a lot remains to be done. Parishioners wanted to share this achievement with everyone [on their Facebook page on St Brigid's Day](#), along with this reflection:

St. Brigid is the second patron saint of Ireland, whose feast day is her birthday – the first day of spring, 1st February (Lá Fhéile Bhríde). Brigid is also known as Muire na nGael or "Mary of the Gael," which means Our Lady of the Irish. As we celebrate the first day of Spring today, let us remember St. Brigid, who always worked for peace. Brigid was wonderfully attuned to the season and cycles of nature. It is no accident that today many groups, like Carrigaline Parish Care of the Earth Group is concerned about the environment and work together on small actions that show respect and reverence to the wonder of creation. We were delighted to receive our Endeavour Award by Eco-Congregation Ireland in the past number of weeks.

Prayer to St. Brigid

Brigid,
You were a woman of peace.
You brought harmony where there was conflict.
You brought light to the darkness.
You brought hope to the downcast.
May the mantle of your peace cover those who are troubled and anxious,
and may peace be firmly rooted in our hearts and in our world.
Inspire us to act justly and to reverence all God has made.
Brigid you were a voice for the wounded and the weary.
Strengthen what is weak within us.
Calm us into a quietness that heals and listens.
May we grow each day into greater wholeness in mind, body and spirit.
Amen.



Lacken Parish Creates an Insect Hotel!

In November, the 6th class pupils together with their class teacher and Carmel O'Neill embarked on a project to design and create an insect hotel in the grounds of Lacken church. The first step was to do an audit of the church grounds and observe where examples of biodiversity already existed-rotting wood, composted leaves and leaf mould, the crack in the gable wall, home to a rare species of bee. They outlined the reasons why insects play an important role in our eco system- primarily as an important source of food for the birds and also for bringing important nutrients to the soil. They discussed why the insect population is declining, because of loss of habitat and the use of sprays and pesticides.



The next step was to list the materials that would create a home for the insects. This brought an enthusiastic response as the children were very familiar with the common insects having observed them in their homes and gardens. They also stressed the importance of keeping the hotel dry and warm. The following week on a bright and sunny November morning, the children arrived with their carefully chosen material from their home and set about assembling the materials in a creative and collaborative way. The caretaker had in the previous week put together the basic hotel structure using old wooden pallets and bricks. The children

really enjoyed this practical lesson, especially with the restrictions brought about by Covid. They are looking forward to seeing which insects have successfully made their home in this new environment. Well done to all! Thanks to Carmel O'Neill for this report.

Latest News from the Corrymeela Community Climate Justice Group

Glenise Morgan updated us on the work of the [Corrymeela Community](#): Our group has not met since before Christmas, but we worked on an update of the environmental messages in our 2021 Community Register and Prayer Guide and several of us attended the recent ECI virtual meeting on 16 January where there were such inspiring talks from Carolyn and Margo on their ecological parish projects in Carlow and Bonnybrook parishes



respectively. We are sharing the slides with churches in our area and, having checked, can confirm that the Ballycastle centre has several swift boxes, with “callers”, installed. We will watch closely for any signs of nesting!

Corrymeela held another Community Weekend in January, attended by over 90 people. With a new head of Council and other new members, there was further invigorating discussion on what our unique contribution to transforming division over the next five years should look like. One of the six major themes addressed was the environment, and our group’s next meeting will discuss the comments and proposals gathered from this and the previous October weekend, in order to provide feedback before Corrymeela’s new Strategic Plan is agreed around Easter.



Bonnybrook Parish – Blessing for the New Year and Tree of Gratitude

[Bonnybrook Parish](#) has created a blessing for the year ahead using nature to guide us through the year. [You can download this resource here](#). You can watch the YouTube video of the Blessing of the New Year here – <https://youtu.be/aJ9tXX-HPwU>. Bonnybrook Parish also created a Gratitude Tree which went live

on the Feast of Epiphany. You can view a YouTube video of the tree here – <https://youtu.be/UuxyzUPLlBc>. [Follow them on Facebook here!](#)

Jubilee Farm Starring in TV series!

Jubilee Farm is one of several farms starring in series 9 of Rare Breed on UTV (the Northern Irish version of ITV), airing from Tuesday 12th January at 19:30. As well as highlighting a year in the life of [Jubilee Farm](#) – covering everything from science festival talks to camera trapping for otters, plus volunteering and care farming with refugees, through to good old fashioned pig/goat/vegetable farming – it’s a great opportunity to highlight the social and community enterprise model in relation to food and farming, and to promote sales via their new click-and-collect [online shop](#) which opened in January 2021. The series runs through to April 2021. There will be a number of environmental angles covered by Jubilee Farm in the series, including biodiversity, climate change, creation care and human ecology.



Dr Jonny Hanson, Managing Director says: *In an era and season of disconnection, community farms provide connection – with ourselves, with our food, with each other and with the world around us. A year in the life of Jubilee Farm shows the ups, downs and significance of the community farming model for addressing the interlinked environmental, social and economic challenges and opportunities of the 21st century. Make sure to tune in!* [Rare Breed cameras capture life on Larne community farm – read this Larne Times article here.](#)

Jubilee Farm is also running a mini-documentary series with live Q&A as part of [the NI Science Festival called ‘The Science Behind the Farm’](#), 15-19 February, 11.00-11.30am. This will cover soil, plants, livestock, wildlife and people.



Westport Eco-Congregation: Faith in the Environment and Interfaith Perspectives with Alastair McIntosh

[Westport Eco-Congregation](#) is delighted to host Alastair McIntosh to share his knowledge and to show us why conventional solutions alone are not enough. He will weave together science, politics, psychology and spirituality, to help us find ways to maintain hope as we care for our environment. All are welcome! “Climate change is the greatest challenge to humankind today. While the

coronavirus sheds a light on the vulnerability of our interconnected world, the effects of global warming will be permanent, indeed catastrophic, without a massive shift in human behaviour.” Taken from *Riders on the Storm: The Climate Crisis and the Survival of Being* by Alastair McIntosh. When: Tuesday, Feb. 16th, 2021 at 7.30pm. Where: Zoom. To register email Mary Manning at suaimhneasmarty@gmail.com.

Orlagh-in-the-City Stays Active Online

Lorcan McDermott sent us this update: Orlagh-in-the-City is continuing its activities with a number of online worship services each week. Our book club is reading and discussing Donal Dorr’s recently published *A Creed for Today: Faith and Commitment for Our New Earth Awareness*. The book attempts to express Christian faith in the form of a creed for today. This is done by exploring key elements of faith understood in light of recent ecological awareness as developed in ‘Laudato si’. These elements are formulated as short statements of faith which taken together form a creed. While only half-way through reading the book at the moment, we have found it challenging and thought provoking, a great starting point for discussion within the group.



Some members of the Laudato Si’ Eco Group are involved in environmental education. Usually we participate in the ‘Fridays for Future’ attendance at the Dail. However, this is not currently permissible because of lockdown conditions. As an alternative, we contribute to online presence in the form of a weekly poster on climate change which also records the number of weeks since the original ‘Strike for Climate’ student protests. This is now week 112. Online presence is facilitated by Jane Mellet, Trocaire’s Laudato Si’ officer. Material can be viewed on twitter at: #fridaysforfuture Dublin supporters.



The Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice Takes Part in Mass Online Lobby

Ciara Murphy, Environmental Policy Advocate with the [Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice](#) sent us their latest news: The Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice was proud to be part of the mass on-line lobby event on December 7th organised by Stop Climate Chaos and One Future Ireland where over 1,000 citizens called for stronger climate legislation and for Ireland to do its fair share. Read about this online event here: [Irish Times](#) and [thejournal.ie](#).

The Church of England Environment Programme

The Church of England’s Environment Programme believes that responding to climate change is an essential part of our responsibility to safeguard God’s creation. Their environmental campaign exists to enable the whole church to address — in faith, practice and mission — the issue of climate change. This programme runs webinars and events, designed to support and equip members to reach the Church’s ambitious “net zero carbon” emissions target. You can find the whole webinar programme [on their website](#), along with recordings of past topics. Topics include electric car charging, solar panels for churches, the effective management of church lighting towards net zero and church heating – to replace or not replace. [You can also sign up for their monthly newsletter to keep up to date with events here.](#)

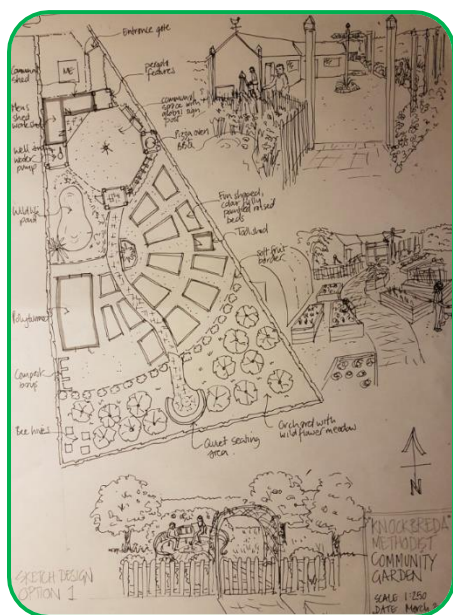


A Date for Your Diary

Fr. Brian Grogan S.J., the best-selling author and former president of Milltown Institute of Theology and Philosophy will give a talk over Zoom on 11 March 2021 titled "Hope for a small blue planet". This is being organised by the Laudato Si



Group in the Parish of the three Patrons Rathgar. Details will soon be available on the parish website: www.rathgarparish.ie.



Knockbreda Methodist Community Garden, Belfast

Ken Orr from Newtownbreda Presbyterian Church sent us this report: Nestled behind suburban streets in Rosetta, South Belfast, and invisible from the road, most people wouldn't realise that there is a substantial triangle of land attached to the back of Knockbreda Methodist church. More than 1200m², it used to be used as allotments, but had become almost derelict in the last ten years. Now the church has an exciting new project to completely re-imagine the area, which is to become a garden, and gardening area, to be used by the whole local community.

A committee was set up in January 2020 and moved quickly to survey the site and begin planning. We engaged a landscape architect to draw up a detailed plan giving substance to our ideas, and began the process of gathering funds, mainly by applying to trust funds for grants. Then of course, coronavirus struck, and everything screeched to halt. We've been able to progress at times

when the restrictions have eased, and enough has been done to keep the momentum going. With substantial help from squads of people undertaking community service with the Probation Service, the whole area has been cleared of debris and the grass and bramble cleared right back. Now we can see how it used to be terraced, and even a water supply system running to many parts.

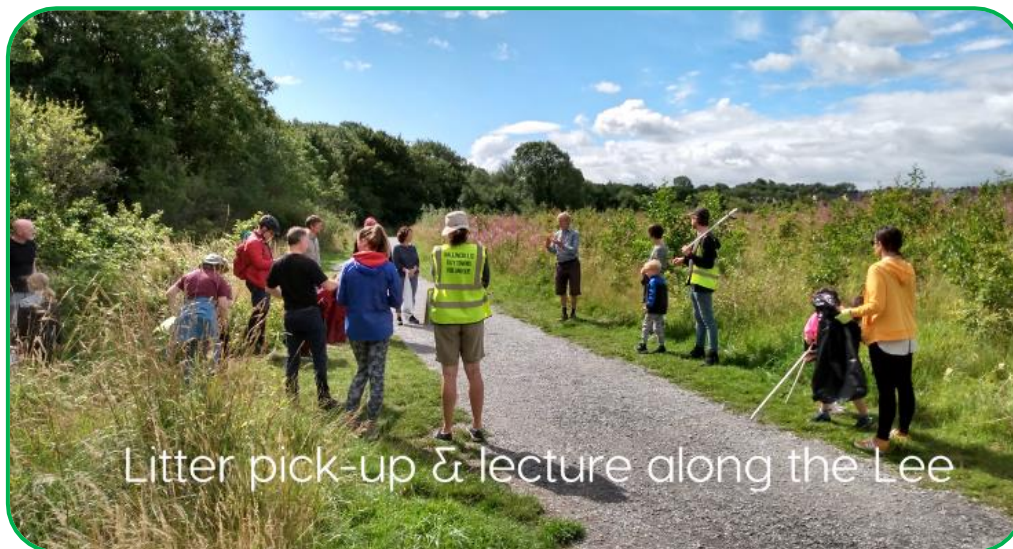
Plans include a Men's Shed with outdoor working area, a large, paved space with a pizza oven, a wildlife pond, a dozen or more raised beds, and a polytunnel. The top end already has a couple of fruit trees and we have just purchased a dozen more for a community orchard with a soft fruit border and a quiet seating area.

Community involvement is central to the plans, and we will have volunteer groups working at the site as soon as the pandemic allows. Young people from the church organisations will help to plant, while Ormeau Churches Together, the local inter-church umbrella group, will also provide people power. The whole site will undergo a transformation in the next two years, and we can't wait to see how it turns out!

Eco-management for Carrigrohane Union of Parishes

Dean Venables sent us this update: Increasingly, Carrigrohane Union of Parishes has been working intentionally towards being a sustainable congregation. The parish has long tried to be environmentally conscious, whether through recycling, selection of cleaning products, installing bike stands, or in improving the energy performance of our buildings. Still, growing concerns about land management and energy use prompted parishioners to form an eco-management group in 2019.

The group has been busy over the past two years. It carried out an expert-led policy review of the parish lands, establishing an ecologically sensitive approach to graveyard maintenance. In 2020, we planted over 600 native trees at St. Peter's and Inniscarra churches. We reduced grass mowing frequency and the area being mown to allow wilderness and meadow-land type plant growth to develop and built insect hotels to boost biodiversity. This work has been linked to the national pollinator programme. At the same time, we strive to balance greater biodiversity with a tidy, cared-for appearance around our churches and the newer graves that parishioners and neighbours appreciate. We believe both are possible! In 2020, ecological plans were further developed as part of a heritage conservation project at the Church of the Resurrection, Blarney, which was partly funded through the Cork City Council Built Heritage funding. We have also had fun—combining litter pick-ups along the River Lee with environment and heritage themed talks. These events were well attended by parishioners and community members of all ages.



Communicating and explaining our work has been important. We installed signage highlighting the wildflower meadows, explained our mowing policy, and invited the public to enjoy the grounds. Some of our group also contributed to the organization of a lecture by prominent Christian climate communicator, Katharine Hayhoe, in March. The lecture was well-attended by numerous people from churches and other groups around Cork.



2021 promises to be full of activity: a summertime picnic and BBQ event at the new “Gárran Gail” woodland area near St Peter’s Church, work on the graveyard and an historical survey of the headstones. We’ll continue planting native trees, grasses and meadow species and replacing cherry laurel with holly and other native species. We’re considering planting a heritage fruit orchard near St Peters Church for the community to enjoy. We’re assessing installation of PV panels on parish property and at the rectory, and further deepening the integration of environmental stewardship into our communications, with a particular eye on involving our children in these activities. In all this work, we are mindful of God’s great blessings and find joy in caring for his handiwork.



Established native saplings near St Peters

Carrigaline Union of Parishes Get Building!

John Andrew sent us this update: [Carrigaline Union of Parishes Eco Group](#) has been looking at the importance of bird nesting boxes. With that in mind we have just completed a bird box prototype. We plan on putting up bird boxes in the grounds of St Mary’s Church Carrigaline, St John’s Monkstown and the Rectory. *Why do we need bird nesting boxes?* With naturally occurring spaces on the decline, bird houses – or nest boxes as they are also known – are crucial to the survival of birds, providing them with a place to rest and raise their young. *How do bird boxes help the environment?* Indeed, even when boxes are not being used for nesting, egg laying and as a home for fledglings, they can provide somewhere for birds to roost. They provide shelter from bad weather – rain, snow, wind and cold. We are really looking forward to seeing them in place in time for the nesting season!

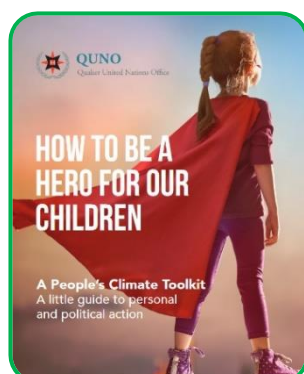


Interesting Publications ...

Two New Publications from the Quaker United Nations Office

People’s Climate Empowerment Series

QUNO’s *People’s Climate Empowerment Series* by Detmer Kremer is helpful resource to connect people with international efforts that can strengthen climate action at all levels. Their Human Impacts of Climate Change programme has been working on the international climate negotiations since 2011 in support of fair, ambitious and inclusive climate action. Climate change raises profound questions about how we live on the planet. The *People’s Climate Empowerment Series* offers 7 concise “2-siders”, which cover different aspects of international climate action, why they matter, and how to get involved. [Learn more and download here.](#)



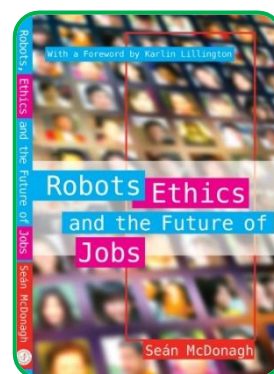
How to Be A Hero for Our Children: A People’s Climate Toolkit

How to be a Hero for Our Children: A People’s Climate Toolkit by Lindsey Fielder Cook is a guide to personal and political climate action. The toolkit offers scientific information on the effects of global temperature rise as well as steps people can take in their daily lives to make a difference. It is intended for everyone, but especially for those living in unsustainable societies. Featuring recent scientific findings relayed to our governments by the International Panel on Climate Change, alongside suggestions for personal action and questions for

engaging with decision makers, *The People's Climate Toolkit* is a resource to support climate action at the individual and local level. [Learn more and download here.](#)

'Robots, Ethics and the Future of Jobs' – New Publication from Sean Mc Donagh

Well-known author and environmentalist Séan McDonagh demonstrates that the same tools that we use to connect, protect and support us can also be put to use in ways that have a huge negative impact on our privacy, our freedom and our life choices. McDonagh argues that we need to understand and address the potential repercussions of developing technology in an ethical vacuum. Our digital future is fast approaching with little regulation and few institutional policies and protections. Respect for human rights must be at the heart of these new technologies. [You can purchase this book on the Messenger website here.](#)



Eco Challenge!

Rev Trevor Sargent's Ecological Notes for February 2021: Get out in Nature – a Safe Escape from Covid-19

Health authorities advise spending more time outdoors for our general health and well-being, especially during the current pandemic. Now around this time of St Brigid's Day, spring is beckoning us to get out in nature, as the days get longer and the weather milder. The poem, 'Cill Aodáin', by Antaine Ó Raifteirí (1779-1835), is more expressive:

*Anois teacht an earraigh, beidh 'n lá dul chun síneadh
'S tar éis na Féil' Bríde, ardóidh mé mo sheol.*

(Now, with the coming of spring, the days will be getting longer and after the Festival of Bríd, I will raise my sail.)

The crisp quiet month of February, the shortest month, when hibernation is coming to an end, spring slowly starts to herald in the promise of the new. Breathe in deep, revive the body and nourish the mind while walking, cycling or pushing the wheelchair around the safer lanes, by the sea, or in mature woodland pathways that abound in many parts of Ireland. We can still see the shape of the trees without their cloak of leaves, with fluffy lichen and moss covering their branches. New growth is beginning to bud and bulge.

Heralds of Spring to Notice on a Walk – all are beautiful, many are edible!

Many wild plants are edible, but not all. We wouldn't eat ivy, or yew, or deadly-night-shade, for example. If foraging is not your thing, then just take pleasure in what is around, appreciate the delicate scent of snow drop, crocus and hazel catkins. Like the rest of nature, it does us good to be patient, observant and self-aware. As winter begins to show signs of coming to an end, there are quite a few tender edible plants out there which are interesting to taste. Here is a list of 20 wild plants which are recommended in Robin Harford's book, '*Edible and Medicinal Wild Plants of Britain and Ireland*', published in 2019.

Bittercress – *Cardamine* spp. – the leaf can be eaten raw or cooked.

Burdock – *Arctium* spp. – the root can be eaten raw or cooked.

Cleavers – *Galium aparine* – the shoots can be eaten raw or cooked.

Creeping Thistle – *Cirsium arvense* – the root can be eaten cooked.

Dandelion – *Taraxacum officinale* agg. – the leaf can be eaten raw or cooked.

Fennel – *Foeniculum vulgare* – the root can be eaten raw or cooked.

Ground Elder – *Aegopodium podagraria* – the leaf can be eaten raw or cooked

Horseradish – *Armoracia rusticana* – the root can be eaten raw or cooked.

Lesser Celandine – *Ficaria verna* – the leaf can be eaten cooked.

Mahonia – *Mahonia aquifolium* – the flowers can be eaten raw.

Nipplewort – *Lapsana communis* – the leaf can be eaten raw or cooked.

Pink Purslane – *Claytonia sibirica* – the leaf can be eaten raw or cooked.

Red Valerian – *Centranthus ruber* – the leaf can be eaten raw or cooked, but root must be cooked.

Rough Hawkbit – *Leontodon hispidus* – the root can be roasted as a coffee substitute.

Saxifrage – *Chrysosplenium* spp. – the leaves can be eaten cooked.

Smooth Sowthistle – *Sonchus oleraceus* – the leaf can be eaten raw or cooked.

Three Cornered Leek – *Allium triquetrum* – the leaf can be eaten raw or cooked.

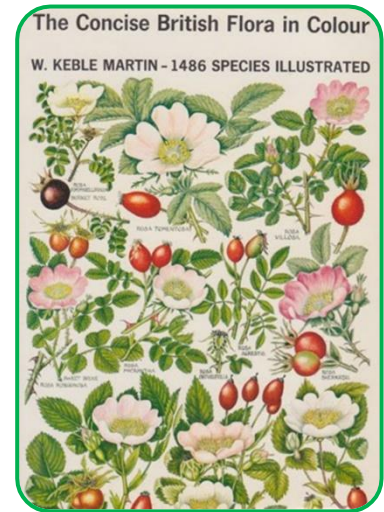
Violet – *Viola* spp. – the leaf can be eaten raw or cooked.

White Dead Nettle – *Lamium album* – the leaf and shoots can be eaten raw or cooked.

Wood Avens – *Geum urbanum* – the root can be eaten raw or cooked.

How Walks in Nature led to a PhD in Botany!

Rev. William Keble Martin (1877-1969) was an Anglican priest in England who took a serious interest in botany. He turned his walks in nature into works of art, drawing interesting flowers he saw on his travels. In 1896 he went to Christ Church, Oxford, to read Greek Philosophy, Church History and Botany. After qualifying, he felt called by God to life as a priest. Meanwhile, he earned a living as a tutor in Castletownroche, near Fermoy in County Cork, while waiting for a place at Cuddesdon Theology College.



Ministry and botany defined Rev. Keble Martin's life. He amassed botanical illustrations of 1486 species recorded among the various parishes in which he served in Britain and during his time as chaplain in France during the First World War. After more than 60 years of writing and illustrating, he was encouraged to publish his work as a botanical companion guide for other people who enjoy a walk in nature. When his book, the '*The Concise British Flora*' hit the shelves on 10 May 1965, it was an instant best seller selling over 100,000 copies that year. Indeed, the Rev. Keble Martin became the best-selling author of 1965 - at the age of 89. The Post Office issued a set of stamps using his drawings. In 1966 the University of Exeter awarded Rev. Keble Martin an honorary PhD for his lifetime's work on botany.

So whether you are a budding botanist, a curious forager, or a casual stroller, may the great outdoors help you connect with creation and with the Creator – and ultimately with yourself.

Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.

See if there is any offensive way in me
and lead me in the way everlasting.

(Psalm 139: 23-24)

Prayers/Reflections for the Earth

Donnybrook Biblical Garden – One Thing Leads to Another ...

Rev Andrew Kingston, Methodist Minister send us this reflection: Readers may recall a previous article on planting a Biblical Garden. Since then, there have been many new additions. For example, the Italian Cypress. The Prophet Isaiah received a message of hope from God through a vision of this very beautiful slender tree growing in a desert. A common sight around Jerusalem, I now also see them in many gardens in South Dublin. God called on Adam and Eve to name the plants and animals in their garden, and knowing names helps us to value and care for His Creation. It also makes lockdown walks more interesting. One thing leads to another and every plant is like a new window shedding light not just on scripture, but also on our own native Irish plants. As I read the Bible I highlight in green references to plants, and you would be surprised how green the Bible is. God cares for His creation and calls us to do likewise. Isaiah, Jeremiah and Jesus all reveal The Father as a Gardener.



Along with other Biblical trees like acacia, apple, bay, broom, olive, mulberry, myrtle, fig, balm (Liquid amber), pomegranate, and almond, I have been planting Biblical herbs like mint, dill, cumin, fennel, wormwood, coriander, rue, sage, parsley and mustard. Again, one thing leads to another. An awareness of herbs like thyme, abundant in the Holy Land, caused me to notice our own wild thyme, pointed out by

wonderful local guide Tony Kirby when walking in the Burren this Summer. It was growing close to Lady's bedstraw. Tony explained the name. This plant is good for the skin and was used to stuff mattresses. Also plentiful in the Holy Land, tradition suggests that Mary used it to line the manger.

One thing leads to another. Among Biblical crops I have planted or will be planting are vines, wheat, flax, millet, barley and spelt *Triticum spelta*, a grain strongly related to wheat. During the seventh plague of massive hailstones in Egypt "the flax and barley were destroyed, since the barley was in ear and the flax was in bloom. The wheat and the spelt, however, were not destroyed, because they ripen later" Exodus 9:31. There is another reference to spelt in Isaiah 28. "Listen and hear my voice; pay attention and hear what I say. When a farmer ploughs for planting, does he plough continually? Does he keep on breaking up and working the soil? When he has levelled the surface, does he not sow caraway and scatter cummin? Does he not plant wheat in its place, barley in its plot, and spelt in its field? His God instructs him and teaches him the right way". Spelt would grow on poorer ground than wheat and it was also in the diet of Ezekiel as he acted out what the people of Jerusalem could expect in exile.

One thing leads to another and my wife Jean arrived home from Tesco's with a bag of spelt flour. It makes delicious and healthy bread when eaten fresh, and on subsequent days I have found that it is nicer toasted. I have been pleased to turn this modest investment in seeds and plants into a fundraiser for Methodist World Development and Relief (the Dabane water project in Zimbabwe). About €2,000 was raised through garden visits and the sale of a brochure explaining the Biblical references, stories and benefits of each plant. 11 Arranmore Road, Donnybrook, Dublin 4 will be open for visitors again this year, God willing. Contact andrew.kingston@irishmethodist.org

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. He shares the following reflection with us, entitled 'Frankie':

My friend, Paddy Griffin, has sent me a forty second video of his two week old grandson. I realise it is the eve of the Feast of the Epiphany, the twelfth day of Christmas by which time the wise ones will have arrived at a manger in Bethlehem. It strikes me now that these travellers were not necessarily wise to start with but wisened-up as they made their journey; 'and such a long journey: the ways deep and the weather sharp, the very dead of winter' as T.S. Eliot imagined it. It seems more likely that they came into true wisdom upon seeing the baby in a derelict place among animals and animal smells.



For it is the baby who is wise in his wonder, coming to terms with being outside his mother's cosy body with a first knowing that puts to shame what we call wise, a frailty that humbles what we consider strong. To realise your kinship with a baby is to become wise; is to be made blind by unconditional love as the baby looks at you with the eyes of God and you are restored to your first innocence as the beloved child you are. When moments of infancy are revealed to us in creation – sunrise, snowdrop, larva or lamb -are we not also returned to a forgotten way of seeing, our eyes refreshed as when we emerge from time spent in an art gallery to a world of vibrant colour, a world washed clean of all our craving.

A New Dawn: Corona Challenge – A Reflection by Sr Nellie McLaughlin

*I gaze half-dazed out of sleepy eyes wondering
When will the new dawn break?
The sky shimmers with morning freshness
While I search for the dawning –
Restlessly, fearfully, resolutely, wholeheartedly -
How could I have missed it? Again?*

A new year begins with renewed vigour from Covid-19 and added restrictions.
There is fresh optimism too with the early emergence of vaccines.
Dedicated scientists are tirelessly creating glimmers of relief for all,
as a tentative sense of emerging light at the end of this long tunnel dawns.
*'Nothing ever goes away until it has taught us
what we need to know'* (Pema Chodron)

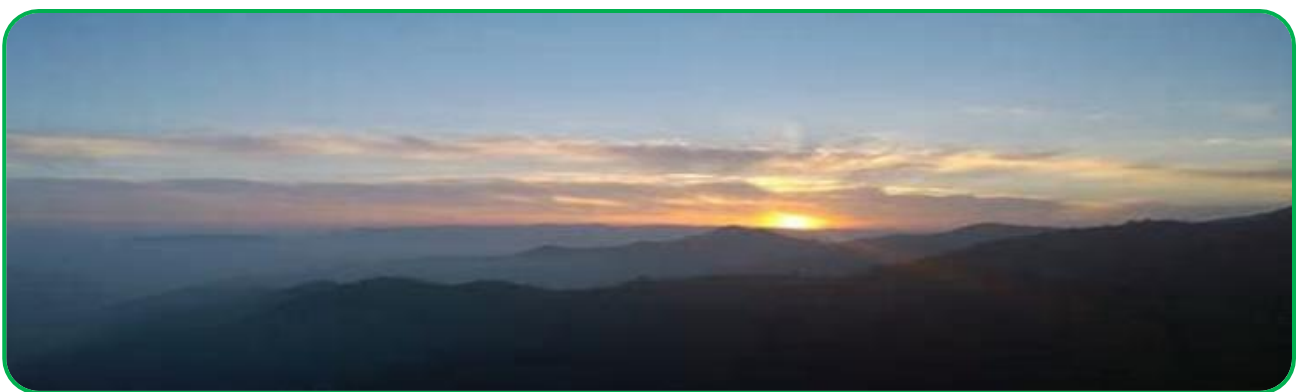
Deep within Earth's sacred cradle of wisdom I sense rumblings:
We-humanity- may eventually control the virus and with vaccines overcome it
BUT
What if only then - and too late -
We realise that we have silenced the messenger
But missed the message?

Earth, our Common Home, is undoubtedly trying to communicate with us
but our collective amnesia is alive and well.
Covid-19 may be gone this year or next but there will undoubtedly be others.
We don't have to look far with the twin viruses of climate emergency and biodiversity depletion breathing
too close for comfort. We ARE in crisis!

Science, which is guiding us through this darkness, tells us that our planet is a living organism, a sentient
being, with 4.5 billion years of evolutionary experience. Among others, our young people, have intuited
this as they caution us in our global climate emergency – there is no Planet B. There is no time for delay:
unwavering political will and concerted action by all of us is more urgent than ever before. We need to
wake up to this fact and listen to Earth before we destroy our common home and all therein. There is NO
vaccine for this crisis.

The corona virus is surely challenging our provocative intrusion into the habitats of others in the
community of creation for monetary gain and will continue to do so until we change our ways. The
challenge is to collectively wake up to the mystery that we are part of the awesome community of life,
interdependent and kin with all. There is room for all, our early ancestors respected this as do indigenous
peoples and a growing nucleus of others today.

In this epiphany moment let us pause and reflect:



What if we were to dream of a hitherto unattained planetary awakening and feel that visceral excitement
that it is possible?

What if we were to acknowledge our vulnerability and need for companionship within the community of all
creation?

What if we collectively were to put our hands up and admit that we have strayed from our kin-consciousness and commit to living more sustainably within the earth economy of abundant but finite resources to be shared with all?

What if we could cherish the mysterious gift of togetherness creating that resilience needed to courageously weave enduring tapestries of healing, hope, equality, justice, love, peace and wellbeing for all in our Common Home?

What if a profound acknowledgement of our innate goodness and fresh sense of the oneness of all life were to shape our future post-Covid; thereby respecting inclusion for all and that basic right to be and to flourish in the community of creation?

HOWEVER

What if we fail to learn emerging lessons?

Will we persist in gazing half-dazed

Out of sleepy eyes wondering,

When will the new dawn break?

The sky shimmers with morning freshness

While we search for the dawning-

Restlessly, fearfully, resolutely, wholeheartedly-

WE SIMPLY CANNOT AFFORD TO MISS IT EVER AGAIN

Nellie Mc Laughlin, January 2021



Earthrise by Amanda Gorman

Watch this poem performed here -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xwOvBv8RLmo&t=6s>



With kindest regards,

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