



**2020 was a year like no other.** Like all organisations Eco-Congregation Ireland had to think creatively about how to continue its work during the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic has disrupted all of our lives and many of our creation-centred activities. Despite the disruption, Eco-Congregation Ireland and its members responded creatively to this challenge—moving their endeavours online.

## Eco-Congregation Ireland Launches **GOLD** Awards

The Eco-Congregation Ireland **Gold** Award is for those churches who have already received their initial Eco-Congregation Ireland Award. In order to receive an ECI Gold Award, churches have to show continuing work in all four areas of their initial ECI Award, and mentor another parish/community on their Award journey. So far, Westport Eco-Congregation, Co Mayo; SAGE - Shankill Action for a Green Earth, St Anne's Parish, Co Dublin; and Faith in Action Group, Ballineaspig Parish, Co Cork; have been awarded a Gold Award.

### Westport Eco-Congregation, Co Mayo

Westport Eco-Congregation's main event every year is Earth Hour. In 2020 'Earth Hour - At Home' was their first online event, joining in with the global effort to power down, they took the opportunity to focus on the power down within their own homes. Westport Eco-Congregation launched their first online YouTube video, inviting people to join them in powering down but also to meditate in stillness, with the focus on connection to the Earth. For this, there was a guided meditation, some prayers, and a beautiful song 'A Message from Mother Earth'. This has received over 700 views! While it was shared to mark Earth Hour 2020, this video is relevant every day. <https://youtu.be/HRCuIK7YgJc>



### SAGE - Shankill Action for A Green Earth

SAGE strongly believes that only radical political initiatives will deliver the levels of change necessary to meet our obligations as a community and country to tackle climate change. Mindful of Pope Francis' exhortation to vote for politicians 'who do not shrink from the problems of climate change but show real leadership and responsibility for future generations', they have engaged with politicians, both locally and nationally.



### Ballineaspig Parish, Co Cork

The Faith in Action group in Ballineaspig Parish has ongoing links with Turkwel Parish in Kenya, which includes supporting them financially, digging wells, developing irrigation schemes, building a health clinic, including a new maternity unit. The people of Ballineaspig raised all the funds needed to build this unit and it was completed and fully equipped by October 2020. The news of the new maternity unit has spread throughout the district, which in turn has led to greatly increased attendances.



**Congratulations to all those who have worked so hard to get this far! Would your congregation be ready to take this next step?**

## ECI Holds First Online Conference - **Planetary Emergency: How to Have Hope**

On Saturday 3 October 2020 Eco-Congregation Ireland held its first ever online conference. 120 participants took part in this event. The speakers were:

**Prof John Barry**, Professor of Green Political Economy at Queen's University Belfast. John's interest includes post-growth economics, sustainability, resilience and low carbon energy transitions.



**Sr Nellie McLaughlin**, member of the Sisters of Mercy, Northern Province, Ireland. Nellie currently works in the areas of Creation Spirituality, Cosmology, Ecology and Sustainable Living through conferences, seminars and retreats nationally and internationally. She is chairperson of Clogher Diocesan Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Group.



**Denise Gabuzda**, Clerk of Ireland Yearly Meeting and a member of Cork Quaker Meeting. Denise teaches physics and astronomy at University College Cork. Her scientific and spiritual lives converge on learning to live sustainably as the key task of our time.



For more info visit:

[www.ecocongregationireland.com](http://www.ecocongregationireland.com)



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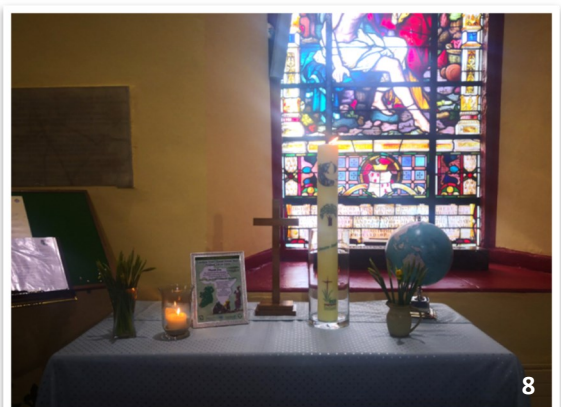
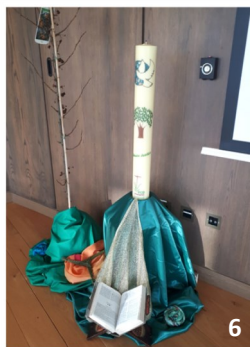


# Climate Justice Candles 2020

The four Eco-Congregation Ireland Climate Justice Candles covering each of the four provinces of Ireland, have been weaving their ecumenical and climate justice journeys around Ireland in 2020. Both the physical and the virtual Climate Justice Candles proved to be a popular focus for worship amongst Christians of all traditions and a resource for awareness-raising of climate change and its impact on our world.

Inspirational stories of churches that hosted the Climate Justice Candles in 2020, in many different and creative ways include:

1. Lowe Presbyterian Church, Belfast
2. South Belfast Quaker Meeting
3. St Canice's Parish, Finglas
4. Cathedral of St Mary and St Anne, Cork
5. Northern Ireland Caring for Creation Network
6. Margaret Aylward Centre for Faith & Dialogue, Glasnevin
7. Church of St Thérèse, Mount Merrion, Dublin
8. St Anne's Church, Shandon
9. Blessington Parish





# Virtual Climate Justice Candles 2020

1. Carrigaline Union of Parishes
2. Westport Eco-Congregation
3. Prosperous Eco Parish
4. Parish of Sean McDermott Street, Dublin
5. Fran Brady, Quaker Representative, ECI Committee Member
6. St Joseph's Church, Wilton, Cork
7. Holy Rosary Community, Cavan
8. Holy Faith Sisters
9. Blessington Parish, Wicklow
10. Sekeeta Crowley, a volunteer with the ECI Climate Justice Candle Project in Munster
11. Cathedral of St Mary & St Anne in Cork
12. St Catherine Senior School, Cabra West
13. Bonnybrook Parish
14. Drumalis Retreat Centre
15. Dundrum Methodist Church
16. St Michael's Church, Enniskillen



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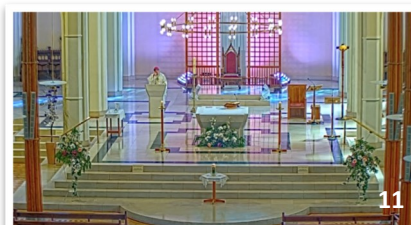
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Please note that some of the photographs featured in this Annual Review were taken prior to social distancing restrictions coming into effect.



## Eco-Congregation Ireland 2020 Award

In 2020 St Joseph the Artisan Church, Bonnybrook Parish received their Eco-Congregation Ireland Award. Their journey to becoming an Eco-Congregation began on a simple, practical level - action to save the many wild cowslips that push up through the grassy area in front of St Joseph's Family Centre. Parishioners then created a wildflower garden guided by the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan. These were their first steps on their journey to becoming an Eco-Congregation.

However, parishioners needed an overall inspiration and framework to give shape to the many small steps that evolved. The inspiration came from Laudato Si', quotations from which they placed each week in their parish newsletter. Guided by ECI's four areas, spiritual, practical, community and global, the Care for the Earth Ministry Group, in collaboration with the support of the Parish Pastoral Council, worked steadily over the following months, receiving in succession their Awareness and Endeavour Certificates. Recording all their activities, even the smallest, and having a photographic record of many of them, parishioners received their Award.

Their journey continues with the creation of their Gratitude Tree which was to become their Lenten Awareness Tree. Each day, at the start of the liturgy, Fr Joe takes one card that outlines one of the Acts of Love for Lent, acts that inspire us to care for each other and for the Earth, our Common Home. Due to COVID 19 restrictions the award will not be presented to the parish for a few months.



Leanne Tate & Eóin Fowler who were married on New Year's Eve 2020 in Bonnybrook Church with the Tree of Gratitude in the background

## FINANCES

Opening Balance €9,074.90

### INCOME:

Church subscriptions €6,900.00

Donations €1,783.00

Total: €8,683.00

+ €9,074.90

= €17,757.90

### EXPENDITURE:

Staff, office & IT expenses €6,274.39

Printing €263.00

Climate Justice Candle €354.01

Bank charges €67.10

Conference expenses €445.00

Publicity €173.81

Total: €7,577.31

Closing balance at the end of 2020: €10,180.59

## Chairperson's Remarks

Rev Andrew Orr



When I look back at what I wrote for last year's annual report, it seems like a different world. No mention of the pandemic which was only a cloud on the horizon, and no sense that soon we would be living under a series of lockdowns, watching as all too many people became ill and died when governments were unprepared for what was happening.

But of course the environmental crisis has not gone away, climate change is still the real danger and governments all too often still seem unprepared to face up to the magnitude of what is coming. There is little doubt that habitat destruction and loss of biodiversity have been causes of the Covid virus, making the leap from animals to humans: and that is just one of the many effects that we will have to deal with in years to come.

But in this report you can read of the ways in which communities, congregations and parishes are facing up to the challenges, looking after their local area, praying together, working with local community groups and having a global perspective. The seminar we hosted on 'How to have Hope' gave us all food for thought and ideas for action. I hope this report will inspire and challenge you in all you do.

Thank you to our supporting churches and to all of you for your help.

## Certificates Awarded by Eco-Congregation Ireland in 2020

The ECI Committee issues two certificates in the earlier stages of the journey towards the final Eco-Congregation Ireland Award marking stages on the way - the **Awareness Certificate** and the **Endeavour Certificate**. For more information please get in touch with ECI at [info@ecocongregationireland.com](mailto:info@ecocongregationireland.com).

In 2020 the following churches were awarded certificates:

### Awareness Certificate:

- Our Lady of Good Counsel, Johnstown, Killiney
- Church of Our Lady, Blessington; St Joseph's Valleymount; Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Lacken
- Stormont Presbyterian Church
- St Columba's & St Patrick's, Douglas, Cork
- Springfield, Fettercairn, Brookefield, Jobstown Parish, Tallaght, Co Dublin
- Church of St Thérèse, Mount Merrion, Dublin
- Kirkinriola Parish, Ballymena

### Endeavour Certificate:

- Endeavour Certificate:
- An Domhan Glas Environmental Group, Holy Cross
- St Joseph's Parish, Bonnybrook
- Our Lady & St John, Carrigaline, Co Cork
- St John the Baptist Church, Clontarf

