



**Dear Friends of Eco-Congregation Ireland**

**Welcome to the Spring 2021 edition of the Eco-Congregation Ireland newsletter! Read on for stories of hope and encouragement! The ECI committee hopes that everyone is keeping well and safe. If you have any information or stories you would like to share in our future newsletters, we would love to hear from you! Send them to [info@ecocongregationireland.com](mailto:info@ecocongregationireland.com).**

## **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/HRculK7YgJc>.

### **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? Contact [info@ecocongregationireland.com](mailto:info@ecocongregationireland.com) for more information.**

# ECI Annual Review 2020 now online!

[The Eco-Congregation Ireland Annual Review 2020 is now online – read it here!](#) It includes ECI's highlights for 2020, including presenting an ECI Award to St Joseph the Artisan Church, Bonnybrook Parish, the journey of our Climate Justice Candles – physical and virtual, all the ECI Awareness and Endeavour Certificates awarded in 2020, the introduction of the ECI Gold Awards and ECI's first online conference!



## 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](mailto:info@ecocongregationireland.com). Don't forget to let us know where you are based.



## Latest News ...

### Christian Aid's Year of Climate Justice

Helen Newell shared this news: Our theme for 2021 is climate justice, working on the ground to help vulnerable communities adapt to a changing climate and calling on governments to commit to action on climate change. We invite you, as individuals and churches in Ireland, to engage your church with global eco issues:

**Christian Aid Week 10-16 May:** we are telling the story of Rose (pictured right) whose family in Kenya struggle to get enough food and water every day. Could you get your church hold a virtual event or collection to help a community like Rose's build an earth dam so when the rains do come they can harvest every last drop? You'll find resources to run a quiz or set up a 'Walk for Water' sponsored walk, alongside worship resources to use in your services at [caweek.ie](http://caweek.ie)



**Host a film watch party:** 'Thank You for the Rain' tells the story of Kisilu, a smallholder farmer in Kenya who has used his camera to capture the life of his family, and the human costs of climate change. For more information, including a guide to hosting your own watch party and discussion visit [this webpage](#).

**Join our climate justice prayer chain:** This year is crucial in the struggle for climate justice. To make it a reality we must underpin it in prayer. Leading up to the crucial UN climate talks in the Autumn, we need to pray and act for climate justice. Will you join us? Find out more and sign up online at [caid.ie/prayerchain](https://caid.ie/prayerchain) and find creative resources [here](#).

### Latest News from Orlagh-in-the-City

Lorcan McDermott sent ECI this update: Orlagh-in-the-City again scheduled online Zoom worship services for Holy Week. We might all be getting tired of Zoom but it does mean that more people can participate in services and that's got to be a good thing. Our online book club reading of Dorr's 'A Creed for Today: Faith and Commitment for Our New Earth Awareness' has introduced us to the process of 'ecological conversion' challenging us with the need to move beyond just thinking about nature/the environment to actually putting 'conversion' into practice.

One approach is in terms of tactics: practical things like recycling, cutting down energy use, conserving water. Another approach is in terms of long-term strategies like education at all levels from primary schools to universities and maybe even beyond that to the university of life! One attempt at environmental education in which we have been taking part can be seen in the accompanying photo of a 'Fridays for Future' poster. Some of the contributions to the poster were made by Orlagh-in-the-City Laudato Si' Eco Group members. The weekly poster is circulated on social media as Covid restrictions mean it is no longer possible to be present on Fridays outside the Dáil building. Another idea we have had is to share favourite walks online using smartphone/iPad photos. Hopefully we will not be confined to 5km for too much longer!



### Westport Eco-Congregation supports #WeChooseReuse

Westport as a town has the fantastic opportunity to become the lead town in Mayo in addressing climate change. As part of the national Climate Action Plan, every local authority in the country has to nominate a Decarbonising Zone (DZ). This DZ will work to reduce CO2 emissions by 50% by 2030. Westport Eco-Congregation is hoping Westport can win this designation and the supports that come with it. The biggest benefit, as we all know, will be securing our future, and that of our children. Their committee is involved with a large collaborative approach in this application to Mayo County Council.



Westport Eco-Congregation will be supporting #WeChooseReuse campaign, once restrictions lift. VOICE Ireland, need your help! There are so many brilliant businesses all around Ireland offering Refill and Reuse and they want to celebrate them. A refill or reuse business is a shop or café, or any business, which allows people to bring their own refillable containers. That can be:

- A reusable coffee cup (cafes are allowed to accept reusable again).
- A shop that has items and goods on sale which are packaging-free (no plastic). For example, nuts, lentils, pulses are sold without packaging and customers are encouraged to bring their own.
- A fruit and veg shop that sells their produce packaging free.
- A business that will let you bring a lunch box to refill: butcher/fishmonger.

To get involved – 1) Email: [wechoosereuse@gmail.com](mailto:wechoosereuse@gmail.com) 2) Poster posted to you 3) take it to the store for a photo 4) Let VOICE know what shops are in your town that participated.



## Latest News from the Parish of Our Lady and St. John in Carrigaline

Janet Twomey sent ECI this update: Despite the restrictions, our Care of the Earth Parish group has kept busy these past few months. We stayed connected with each other through Zoom. Our group has grown from four to six members. We have started to post on our Parish Facebook pages a Weekend Eco Project for people to try out at home. Our first project was to make a plastic soda bottle hanging planter from <https://www.thriftyfun.com/Making-a-Plastic-Soda-Bottle-Hanging-Planter.html>. A hanging bottle pot is the perfect way to recycle an empty plastic bottle into something useful and creative! Not only does it prevent bottles from ending up in the bin, but it is also an easy DIY project that can help us hang plants all around inside and outside your house.



Other ideas we have shared are how to make your own birdfeeder and the [All Ireland Pollinator Plan video](#). The local newspaper, The Carrigdhoun, published an article on the Parish's work on caring for our local shared environment and our link with ECI. Inspired by Pope Francis messages in his encyclical, Laudato Si', our group also made a submission to the [Cork County Council's Carrigaline Transportation and Public Realm Enhancement Plan](#).

## St Joseph's Parish, Bonnybrook Acts of Love for Lent

Margo Delaney sent ECI this update: At the beginning of Lent, [St Joseph's Parish Bonnybrook](#) issued an invitation to all to join with us in following the 'Acts of Love' for the Lenten season. Each act called us to take a concrete step that would directly affect the way we live in committing ourselves to caring for our common home.

The acts followed a specific focus: Week 1 challenged us to be conscious in our use of energy; Week 2 called us to be aware in our purchase and use of food; Week 3 alerted us to ways we can be careful in our use of water; Week 4 reminded us of the harm done to the environment in a careless use of plastics; Week 5 invited us to be more diligent in recycling; Holy Week acts will lead us to be aware of the bountiful goodness of God in the paschal mystery of love in the life and death of Jesus and our need for conversion. Each day, at the beginning of the liturgy, an act was/is placed on our Care for the Earth Tree and a larger copy posted at the entrance of the church so that all who come to pray there might read it and be motivated to act. Each act challenges us to refuse the habits of convenience that add to a toxic environment or that, by careless use, depletes the natural resources on which life depends. Our hope is that by living these acts of love in our lives, we will become more aware of the need to treasure the gift of creation and be ever more conscious of how our actions can help save our planet for future generations.



## Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice Develops a Comprehensive Ecological Policy

The [Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice](#) is embarking in the development of a [comprehensive ecological policy](#) for the Irish Jesuit Province as part of their response to the UAPs. A Province wide dialogue will guide the development of this policy and to find out more you can listen to this [podcast](#).



## Global Healing

Global Healing is a film-based resource to help us to respond to the damage being done to our planet – our common home. It's for parishes, groups and individuals and aims to inform, challenge and equip people to engage with Pope Francis' vital call to Care for Our Common Home. [Learn more here.](#)



## Conversations in An Tairseach: From Past Dreams to Future Visions

**Dates:** Thursday 15th April, Saturday 24th April, Thursday 29th April, Thursday 6th May, Thursday 13th May, Thursday 20th May. **Time:** 3pm to 4.30pm. Booking closes at 12pm midday the day before each event. Cost: €30 per session or €150 for all 6. Over six weeks participants will engage in a series of conversations with inspiring people who, following in the footsteps of Thomas Berry, have animated expressions of the 'dream of the earth'. From embryonic beginnings of An Tairseach, you will hear from Miriam Therese MacGillis OP, founder of Genesis Farm and Marian O Sullivan OP co-founder of An Tairseach and others. More information about each individual conversation can be found on the booking page on their website. [To book your place and learn more click here.](#) All participants will receive a zoom link for the event in the afternoon of the day before it takes place.



## Kirkinriola Parish, Ballymena Creates an Eco Garden

Donna McCormick sent ECI this update: The new eco-garden and trees planted at Crebilly Church in the parish of Kirkinriola in Ballymena was plain lawn before but has been for the past year developed (as much as Covid-19 restrictions allowed) in response to Laudato Si and Eco-Congregation Ireland. The bulbs and saplings that were planted last year as part of the parish eco group's work to help with conservation and biodiversity within the parish, are now starting to bloom. Pussy willow buds are growing, an important early source of pollen and nectar for many insects. The new bulbs and saplings that were planted last autumn by a small parish eco group for wildlife; have started to bloom. The grounds of the former Kenbann House, are now an oasis for birds and small wildlife within the town of Ballymena. [You can view some more of their photos on the ECI website here.](#)



## Latest News from St Michael's Faith Community, Inchicore

Pádraigín Clancy sent ECI an update which includes news of their receiving funding to plant trees in the front of St Michaels, their Lenten reflection sessions which used 'Catching Slivers of Light', highlighting Irish native trees, two webinars with over 300 in attendance about the new housing development proposed at what was St Michael's estate now known as Emmet Road Urban Quarter, creating an Easter garden at the church, and the development of a course on Celtic Spirituality - all are welcome. There is no fee, but registration is necessary – contact Pádraigín at [pclancystmichaels@gmail.com](mailto:pclancystmichaels@gmail.com). [You can read Pádraigín's update in full on the ECI website here.](#)





## National Holy Wells Day Celebration 2021

Mark your diaries! [Loving Sister Earth](#) with Solas Bhride are planning a Virtual National Holy Wells Day Celebration for 13 June 2021, at 14.00. There are around 3,000 Holy Wells in Ireland. Since early Christian times these have been seen as places of prayer and healing. [Visit the Loving Sister Earth website for more details.](#)



## Dublin Unitarian Church Green Tips

Tony Brady, Committee Member, Unitarian Church, St. Stephen's Green sent ECI this update: to help fulfil their commitment to preserving the environment, Dublin Unitarian Church have begun a practice of including an idea each week in the green dot section of their weekly newsletter. The message for week ending 28th February 2021, highlighted Glenisk, who are working in partnership with [www.selfhelpafrica.org](http://www.selfhelpafrica.org) to plant more than 1 million trees. Glenisk Organic Milk are using recyclable packaging for their milk. Having reduced their carbon emissions in milk packaging by more than half, they endeavour to offset the remainder by supporting a series of emission reduction projects with [www.elopak.com](http://www.elopak.com). These include protecting rain forests and promoting biodiversity in Indonesia to provide shelter for indigenous animals, including orangutans. Another project is the reduction of greenhouse gases and the support of Kenyan communities through provision of safe sustainable stoves. Further details can be seen on the [Glenisk](#) milk cartons. Forests are one of our best lines of defence against climate change and restoring them is crucial. Though the measure alone would not be a substitute for reducing carbon emissions directly, it is very encouraging that Glenisk have made deliberate efforts to reduce their emissions and to be responsible and sustainable.



## St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Blackrock Creates a Garden

Cherry Poynton Sent ECI this update: The flower border which was planted in front of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Blackrock has been maturing nicely and has been full of Spring colour provided mostly by species which attract bees and other insects. This year we have hung birdfeeders with seeds and fatballs on some of the mature trees in the grounds. Despite the busy thoroughfare on which the church is located these feeders had to be refilled in a short space of time as the birds have obviously appreciated the food. Our neighbours have been able to enjoy the maturing border but sadly most of our members have not since we are still not able to worship in our building. We have more plans for planting shrubs, trees and other plants but this is on hold until restrictions are either lifted or eased.



## Latest News from Church of St Therese, Mount Merrion

Clodagh O'Reilly-Boyles sent ECI this update: The images show our Lenten altar and 'Faith Space' installations, which – following our Season of Creation and Climate Justice Candle focus – continued the creation-caring theme, this time with a spotlight on our own relationship with nature as a source of spiritual nourishment.



In addition to the Parish's own excellent series of Lenten Zoom talks, and also Donal Dorr's 'Continuing the Conversation' literary exchanges, our parishioners learnt more about Pope Francis' Laudato Si with Trócaire's Jane Mellett, hosted by the Theresian Association's 'Culture of Care' initiative.

Members of the Parish will be commencing (April) the Global Catholic Climate Movement's Laudato Si training initiative and are considering setting up a parish 'audato Si Circle to co-ordinate caring for creation activities. This may also offer opportunity to contribute to Laudato Si's '7 YEAR JOURNEY', which is being launched during the final week of Laudato Si Year (2020-21) in May.



### The Celtic Alphabet Tree Planting Project

At many of their regular events, such as Féile Bríde, their Famine Walks and Hedge Schools, Afri has planted a tree to reflect their commitment to living in peace and justice with our species and our planet. In 2021 they plan 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. For more information about the project and how to get involved, please see their [Alphabet Avenue brochure here](#).



### Elizabeth Prout Bicentenary Lecture Series at Drumalis

Drumalis has been running a lecture series via Zoom since last October. The next lecture is on Thursday, 29 April at 7pm with Sr Nellie McLaughlin rsm and the theme is 'A Message of Hope and Challenge in a Planetary Emergency.' All are welcome. All details here >>

**The Elizabeth Prout Bicentenary Lecture Series**

**Elizabeth Prout**  
1820 200 YEARS 2020  
*fulfilling the dream*

To mark the 200th anniversary of the birth of Elizabeth Prout, who founded the Congregation of the Sisters of the Cross and Passion, Drumalis is pleased to host this series via zoom. The next topic is:

**A Message of Hope and Challenge in a Planetary Emergency**  
**Sr Nellie McLaughlin rsm**  
**29th April 2021 7pm**

Nellie McLaughlin BA, M. Divinity, is a native of County Donegal and a member of the Sisters of Mercy, Northern Province, Ireland. She currently works in the areas of Cosmology, Creation Spirituality, Ecology and Sustainable Living.

Nellie is a founding member and a director of Green Sod Land Trust Ireland and author of "Out of Wonder" – the evolving story of the universe, and "Life's Delicate Balance" – a response to 'Laudato Si'.

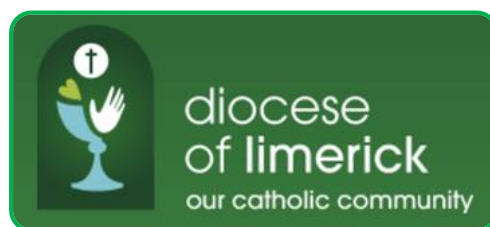
Next lecture (date TBC): Professor Francis Campbell, Vice Chancellor of Notre Dame University, Australia, former British ambassador to the Holy See

suggested donation per person: £10  
contact: [katrina@drumalis.co.uk](mailto:katrina@drumalis.co.uk)  
[www.drumalis.co.uk](http://www.drumalis.co.uk)  
02828-276455

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## Diocese of Limerick Book Clubs

Rose O'Connor sent ECI this latest news: The [Diocese of Limerick](#), working in partnership with the Salesian Cosmology Group have engaged with people across the Diocese and beyond about caring for our common home through two book clubs, each of which ran over four nights. From the 26th of January to the 16th of February, we ran a 4-week Laudato Si' book club with four different speakers addressing different themes of Laudato Si'. Jane Mellett from Trócaire presented an 'Introduction to Laudato Si' – Looking at the Ecological Crisis through the lens of faith'. Niamh Brennan spoke of our 'Emerging spirituality in light of our cosmic story – a way of entering into Laudato Si'. Niamh Brennan is a writer and lecturer in the area of cosmology, ecology and spirituality. She is the author of 'The Human in the Universe' and co-author of 'The Universe Story in Science and Myth'. Betty Baker, a Salesian Sister spoke about 'What kind of world are we leaving to future generations?' drawing inspiration from Laudato Si'. Donal Dorr spoke about 'Ecological conversion – putting Laudato Si into practice'. Donal is a missionary priest and theologian who has spent many years facilitating workshops on justice and ecology issues both in Ireland and in Africa. He is the author of The Pope Francis Agenda which includes a long commentary on Laudato Si, and also A Creed for Today.



From the 9th to the 30th of March, we ran another 4-week book club on Fratelli Tutti. This book club was facilitated by Dr Suzanne Mulligan, over the 4 evenings we examined Pope Francis' latest encyclical, taking a step-by-step journey through his rich and compelling document. In Fratelli Tutti Pope Francis examines many urgent issues concerning identity, belonging, social inclusion, human rights, politics, conflict and violence, and reconciliation. Dr Suzanne Mulligan is a Lecturer in Moral Theology at the Pontifical University, Maynooth.

## Blessington and Lacken Parish Update

Carmel O'Neill sent this latest news: During the months of Feb/Mar, Fr Richard, Pastoral worker Aine and Carmel led a weekly prayer service on the webcam for children preparing for First Holy Communion. The topics covered were Baptism, Grandparents day and the lives of Saints Brigid, Bernadette, Patrick, and Joseph. At each prayer service, intercessory prayer was included for protection of the earth and climate justice.

On Feb 19th, as part of the Trócaire Lenten campaign, Carmel and Aine highlighted the important work that Trócaire do in helping those countries most impacted by climate change. We asked the children to consider funding a project called Seeds for Sudan which is being led by the Sisters of the Sacred Heart in South Sudan. These sisters not only teach families how to grow and care for their seeds but have also raised funds to build water towers, thus providing much needed irrigation in the growing season. We look forward to making a contribution to this worthy project. Every Friday during Lent the Stations of the Cross were led by Aine, Carmel and Deacon Gerry. On Fri Mar 12th we did the Trocaire Stations of the Cross which provided much reflection and prayer for climate Justice.



As lockdown continued longer than anticipated, Lacken Tidy Village group did a Sustainable Gardening course over 5 weeks with Aoife Munn. Blessington Tidy Towns did a Biodiversity course with Mairead Stack with a plan to developing a bee trail in the town. Both courses were excellent and informative, providing a welcome boost for all the participants.



## Clogher Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation Group Update

Fr Joe McVeigh sent ECI this update: CJPIC published 'An Environment Policy for the Clogher Diocese' on March 17th. At our last meeting, James McLoughlin from Clogher don Oige spoke to the CJPIC about reaching out to schools with ideas and suggested family 'litter pick-up' days. A Diocesan Schools Poster Competition is to be held after Easter to tie in with the 6th anniversary of Laudato Si in June. Fermanagh & Omagh District Council invited us to speak to their environment group. Two members of CJPIC- Anne Marie Russell and Nellie McLaughlin- will represent our group. To mark Earth Day 2021 it is proposed that a service be held on the shore of Lough Derg, Co Donegal. This depends on the lifting of restrictions in the coming weeks. Save Our Trees; Anne Marie Russell is involved in a campaign to preserve the trees and hedges in the Enniskillen town and district.



## Let's get planting Prosperous!

Alice Carew sent ECI this news: Free Trees! Our Eco Parish Group in Prosperous, Co Kildare has distributed 600 free saplings for National Tree Week of Birch, Oak, Alder and Willow to give away to anyone within 5km of Prosperous. Sports organisations, resident associations and households were interested. These native varieties will be a huge benefit to wildlife. Our motto was "Let's get planting Prosperous!" On the right is a photo of Bríd óg Norbby member of our Eco-Parish group, who was contacted through our eco friends in the Greens, with trees from the charity <https://www.easytreesie.com/>



## Let's Imagine a 'New Normal' with South Belfast EcoQuaker Group

Let's Imagine a 'New Normal'! This was the title for an online discussion set up and organised by South Belfast EcoQuaker group as part of the Imagine Belfast festival in late March. Since September 2020, several members of the South Belfast EcoQuaker Group have been organising and hosting a series of civic conversations related to the challenges of the ecological and climatic emergencies. These 'EcoQuaker Conversations' have brought together citizens from within and beyond communities of Quakers across the island of Ireland and beyond. The gatherings have been an expression of a shared commitment to values such as simplicity, stewardship, equity and peace – commitment that requires serious engagement with complex and difficult issues and wise action, individually and collectively.



The intention is that the conversations are both educative and helpful to the search for ways to enact constructive responses for the common good. Let's Imagine a 'New Normal'! was an opportunity to explore and share aspirations for an alternative to 'getting back to normal' post-pandemic. They explored what a 'new normal' should look like. The Covid-19 pandemic has shone a light on the inadequacies of the status quo – economically, ecologically, politically... This is not the normal that we need to get back to! So ...what should a 'new normal' be like? Are there aspirations for a better normal that we share and can articulate? And what does this mean for our ways of being and doing? This conversational seminar explored answers to these questions. The session was hosted and facilitated by members of the South Belfast EcoQuaker Group. It included short provocations from several creative citizens and closing reflections from John Barry, Professor of Green Political Economy at QUB. (<https://imaginebelfast.com/events/lets-imagine-a-new-normal/>).

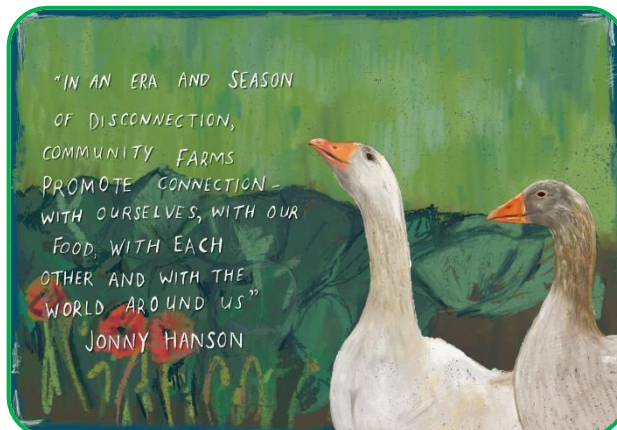
South Belfast Quakers also hosted an online discussion event on Wednesday 7th April as part of Irish Quakers annual conference (IYM) on the theme 'The Climate Emergency: what does our commitment to social justice require of us?'. There are 3 speakers speaking from a global, community/local and individual

perspectives and there will be discussion opportunities in between. We will be hoping to ask and find answers to the question: 'To what extent do we as Quakers sign up to social justice as a core value, and how can we put this into practice at all levels in connection with the current global climate emergency?'

## Latest news from Jubilee Farm in Co Antrim

With Cooperative Alternatives, and with funding from the Co-op Foundation, [Jubilee Farm](#) is running a 6 part course on 'An Introduction to Community Farming' in April/May. The course, 5 parts of which are online, plus an in-person visit to Jubilee Farm, is for community groups interested in farming and for farmers interested in community.

The course animation is here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OKa1VsvkXAE>.



Jubilee Farm also recently did a series of videos for the NI Science Festival called 'The Science Behind The Farm' which may also be of interest, covering [soil](#), [plants](#), [livestock](#), [wildlife](#) and [people](#). Lastly, above is a bit of quote art, by supporter Anna Burcombe, to coincide with their appearance in Series 9 of 'Rare Breed'. Viewers across the UK and Ireland can access it via: <https://www.itv.com/utvprogrammes/tags/rare-breed>.

## UN Environment Programme's Faith for Earth Initiative

The Faith for Earth initiative is uniting religions around the world to focus on environmental issues. Learn more and subscribe here >> <https://bit.ly/39OWX8K> The latest newsletter from the UN Environment Programme's Faith for Earth initiative is available to read here <https://bit.ly/3dOCxzk>.



## Interesting Publications ...

### Trócaire Resources Available

Two resources available from Trócaire 🙌🙌 [100 Ways for Parishes to implement Laudato Si](#) and [Penitential Service in Thanksgiving for the Gift of the Earth](#)



### Articles Available from Messenger Publications

April Messenger: *COVID -19 and the Environment* by Sean McDonagh and *Flowers of Ireland: Cowslip* by John Feehan.



May Messenger: *The Fate of the Oceans* by Sean McDonagh, *The Labyrinth* by Caroline Lundy and *Flowers of Ireland: Hawthorn* by John Feehan.

June Messenger: *The Fate of the Oceans* by Sean McDonagh and *Flowers of Ireland: Dog Rose* by John Feehan. Visit <https://www.messenger.ie/> to learn more and subscribe.

## All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021-2025 Launched!

The new version of [the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan for 2021-2025](#) was launched on Friday 26th March. [You can read about it in more detail here.](#) **Share with your contacts!!**



## Eco Challenge!

### Rev Trevor Sargent's Ecological Notes for Spring 2021: Gairdín nua i mBun Clóidí – Using the 'No-Dig' Method

March/April, especially in a lockdown, is a good time to begin new kitchen garden. Having moved to 'pastures new', as rector of Bunclody Union, it's time to get to know new people – and new soil. When I first had a chance to design a garden, I was in my twenties. Now, having turned sixty, the prospect of double digging a number of raised beds is not a task my redoubtable back looks forward to. A very kind local parishioner has offered to plough up a patch with his trusty Massey-Ferguson. However, there are good reasons to employ the no-dig method to establish vegetable beds in St Mary's Rectory garden, Bunclody, but on a slightly larger scale than the productive no-dig garden begun, during my curacy, in the loamy soil of Tramore Rectory in Waterford Union of Parishes.



*'When you send forth your spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth. May the glory of the Lord endure for ever; may the Lord rejoice in his works.'* Psalm 104 v.32.

**How do I begin a no-dig garden?** If you have a veg patch already, then what is recommended is to remove any visible weeds and veg plants that are finished, spread well-rotted compost and stop digging. Well-rotted cow or horse manure, or spent mushroom compost, have also worked well for us in the past. If you are starting with a very weedy plot or area which has not been used for growing before (a lawn, weedy pasture etc.), first of all cut, mow or strim the weeds to ground level, rake up and compost. It is best not to leave the cut weeds in situ as they can provide a cosy habitat for slugs and other pests. Remove woody weeds, brambles, docks, etc., by hand with a spade or trowel. Then cover with a good layer of cardboard



and then at least 4 inches/ 10 cm of well-rotted compost. Worms love cardboard and happily incorporate it into the soil. A way to speed up the process is mulching with polythene or membrane. Always put this on the top, not underneath the compost! If you want, you can make holes in this in March to grow potatoes, or in May or June and grow squash, courgettes or similar large plants, making that area productive whilst the plastic kills off the weeds. (Try to source previously used plastic, to save resources).

**What about perennial weeds, scutch, bindweed, creeping buttercup?** Once weeds are deprived of light, and the conditions in which they thrive change, they die over time. During the first year it is important to regularly check for any stray weeds that pop up through the mulch and remove these with a hand fork or trowel.

**Do I need to dig first to loosen the soil?** No, it is better to preserve the existing structure and soil life. The surface mulch of organic matter (compost or manure) soon encourages soil organisms (worms and other soil flora and fauna) whose activity creates a good structure for growth.

**How do I make low-cost paths?** A mulch of two layers of good strong cardboard, weighed down with stones or timber, kills off any weeds underneath usually over 9-12 months. You may need to replace the cardboard once or twice, just add more to the surface. The following year, spread some compost or wood shavings onto the paths, to create a surface that is weed free and easy to hoe.

**How do I keep the plot weed free?** No dig = fewer weeds! Turning the soil over exposes annual weed seeds which encourages germination. Think of the flush of weed seedlings that usually appear a few weeks after a plot is dug over. In no dig, we are not doing this and so those weeds remain dormant. However, to help keep your plot weed free, hoe it all regularly (weekly is good) and fork out any perennial or larger weeds that escape hoeing.

**How do I maintain fertility?** An annual mulch of an inch or two (2.5 – 5 cm) of well-rotted compost provides food for the soil and plants for a whole year, even hungry feeders. Outside beds are mulched during the winter, and if you have a polytunnel, or greenhouse, then in the spring just before tomatoes etc. go in.

**How do I grow potatoes in a no-dig garden?** Use a trowel to make a hole in the ground, place the potato in and earth up with the surrounding compost on the bed as necessary. Harvest using a trowel. I often find that the compost is loose enough to allow me rummage for the potatoes with gloved hands. [Learn more from Charles Dowding here](#). The above photo shows No-dig gardener, Charles Dowding, making a new veg bed, layering rotted manure on cardboard.

## Prayers/Reflections for the Earth

### ‘Emergence’ – A Poem by John Deane

After the long sorrows and the upset, when  
the rains have stopped and the storms eased, you will  
walk out again, the roads still lustrous wet,  
you will breast the rise, and pause; listen a while

to the burble of excess rainwater along hidden drains  
and the welcoming scold of the wren and chaffinch;  
half-hidden at the base of the blackthorn hedge,  
a fox-run leads towards the secrecy of a dark wood

and you find, by a solitary ash, where the new grasses  
are disentangling from the old on the cramped  
ditch-top, an early purple orchid, rising lone  
towards pyramidal grandeur and enigma. Stand



for a while in mid-morning silence, to savour  
the presence of the world as you knew it, maternal  
though strict, embracing and aloof, till you feel part  
of the insistent and discreet stirring of new life,

your part being to be yourself, attentive, open  
and quietly expectant, aware of the simple desire  
to be one with the presence, the stillness, to hold  
in acceptance the long sorrows and the loss.

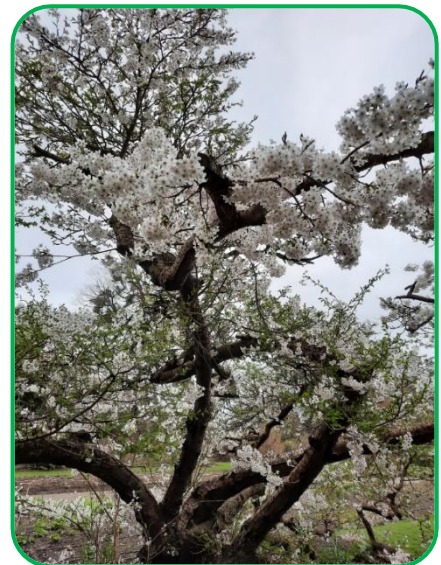
### **A Reflection by Fr Hugh O'Donnell – 'Words in their Jackets'**

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 'Words in their Jackets':

How amazing is that; our ability to take experience, find its register then see it metamorphose as language squirming across the page? How is it done? Today there is neuroscience to lend a hand but it doesn't seem to capture the magic of that seamless flow from outside to in and from inside to out again dawning as insight, wonder, pain or loss.

Perhaps you remember the shock of hearing the first words your child uttered, linking the word 'apple' with the shiny green sphere on the table or the word 'sweet' with that tasty delight hiding in a wrapper. Or how she responded to 'here take my hand' as two hands fell in together.

Later we learn what can't be said, only pointed at – over there, beyond, further. Words going all shy, doubling back on themselves into a whisper before all that can't find expression – geese flying, the perfection of a spider's web, love light, the sound of a horse drawn hearse... Or when you emerge some morning to discover that the sky has peeled off to reveal an exquisite blue and the world looks lit up from within; early blossom a reason to cheer and children running ahead of their buggies. At such moments the tired words all fall down. They're not up to it. Just let it be, you find yourself saying, let it speak for itself as you drop your guard and hand yourself over to whatever it is that makes it so. (Fr Hugh shared the above photo of spring blossom).



### **Feminists in the Forest: African Story by Fr Michael O'Shea, Mpima Seminary, Zambia**

[The story so far: After Kolwe and Ko (the male monkeys in Mpima Forest, Zambia) had drunk their fill, solved the world's problems, and one by one fallen asleep, the ladies of the troop took over led by Conniecubina, consort of Chief Kolwe.]

"Girls," she called, "we've heard our menfolk lauding themselves and speaking of equality with the Hominits (humans). "Now, I say, we don't want 'equality' with them, we are 'superior'! Remember they descended from us, we've been around much longer, are more ecologically sensitive and far better behaved. And, it's not just equality with hominits we want but with our own he-species too."

At this, unease registered in the group, many recalled being severely scolded and even beaten by the monks for entertaining such mutinous ideas. Connie raised her blonde hair paw (she had lovely skin colour) and continued, "Look at them, sleeping off their beer. And when they wake they'll call on us to provide nuts and fruit and tell us to stop the kids annoying them, as if we're not good mothers."



"O we are, we are" piped up deaf Granny Kolwe, who'd heard only "... not good mothers". She was the eldest doyen of the troop and was herself mother of dozens. "I remember watching over my first kids, gambolling and jumping over one another, without a cross word out of them, good as gold they were. But then two nit-kids came along, chased off mine and began to play in our sand-patch – rather noisily and the noisier they got the higher their tempers rose. Then to my horror one of them picked up a fistful of sand and threw it in his brother's face! Ours would never do that, now would they?" "O no, no never, ever" chorused all the mothers genuinely shocked at such behaviour.

Ruby Rub took a break from looking at her cell phone, "Dearies we have another human friend, a Celeb, female of course, Ashley Judd by name, who recently broke her leg, 'catastrophically' she said, in the Congo where she was trying to help the survival of apes in the rain forest." Lively commendations rang out: "Good for her!" "Ape-solutely!" "Bravo-Bravess!" "You see," continued Ruby, "Some hominesses (female humans) are on our side. Now wasn't it a pity that Ms Judd didn't have a long tail like us. It would have improved her balance, helped her catch on to something and even break her fall instead of her leg." "By the way," Ruby continued, "Ashley said those Congolese apes are matriarchal, peaceful, and live together in social stability." How about that!

Phil O' Sophy, arguably the deepest thinker of the troop, (of Irish background high up in the family tree), coughed for attention, and got it. "We need a consensus on our greatest needs and grievances. Let's share on what each one wants." After a pregnant pause she said, "What I want is 'That women be heard'". "Next. Meda, what do you want?" Meda, the troop's overworked midwife, without a second's hesitation declaimed passionately, 'An end to schoolgirl pregnancies'. "Aye, aye" agreed many, especially the very young with bulging waist lines.

For me it's 'wife beating' sobbed Aba loudly who, poor thing, not for the first time was sporting double black eyes. "Empowerment for women" cried an entrepreneurial quartet of marketeers who were always chased from the best vending spots by males. Breaking in with strident outrage, Dolly O'Bese, a branch manager of MBB (Monkey Business Bank), yelled "Equal pay for equal work". The O' in her name didn't indicate Irish descent but a fun name she'd earned for her XXL figure. "Equal pay!" screamed a score of outraged mother monks, "What about us, NO PAY for 24/7 care of kids, home and husbands."

By now all were noisily vociferating grievances. Climbing to the topmost branch Conniecubina, pushed her sleeping consort aside, and announced, "We'll hear just one more, Sr Bess if you please." (Bess was the much-respected abbess of the local monastery, quite a mystic it was said). She began in a soft dignified manner but, "Louder," squealed Granny Kolwe, can't hear you". "Bless me," said Bess, "you're so noisy. "I said the hominits, and I think even some monks emphasise too much that 'God became 'MAN'. I'd prefer to say, 'He became one of US'. Silence broke out while the import of her little speech was being taken in, then cheers erupted. "One of US," they clamoured, "Yes Yes" and the pithy line was repeated many times till the forest reverberated with it. Finally, the ecstatic choirsters calmed down and concluded with "One of US, Alleluia, Amen." "No, not A-men" shrieked some of the bolder ones, "Not A-men, but A-women!" At this Chief Kolbe began to wake up.

With kindest regards,

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