



Dear Friends of Eco-Congregation Ireland

Welcome to the Winter/Early Spring 2022 edition of the Eco-Congregation Ireland newsletter! Signs of spring are appearing! 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.

ECI Leinster Online Gathering – 12 February 2022

On Saturday 12 February 2022 Eco-Congregation Ireland held its second regional online gathering. This second gathering brought together friends from across the Leinster region. You can now watch this online event on the [ECI YouTube channel here](#). The speakers included Sr Margo Delaney from St Joseph the Artisan Church, Bonnybrook, Rev Nicola Halford from Enniscorthy and Monart Union of Parishes, Brian O'Suilleabhain from EcoQuakers Ireland and Canon Andrew Orr shared beautiful photos of Whitechurch Parish's planting for pollinators in South Dublin.

WATCH THIS SPACE! ECI plans to hold similar gatherings for the Munster and Connacht regions in the future!



ECI Climate Justice Candle is on the Move Again!!

The ECI Climate Justice Candle is on the move again! If your church or faith community would like to host the candle all you have to do is drop a line to info@ecocongregationireland.com and we will arrange to get the candle safely to you. We are looking forward to seeing the candle in different locations around the country and hearing about how you use it to raise awareness of climate justice!

ECI Climate Justice Candle Visits ...

St Joseph the Artisan Church, Bonnybrook



Margo Delaney sent ECI this update: On Saturday, December 6th, we welcomed the ECI Climate Justice Candle to our parish. The stately candle, with its rich symbolism, was given pride of place beside our Advent Pledging Tree. At each liturgy Fr Joe linked the lighting of the second candle on the Advent wreath with the lighting of the ECI Climate Justice flame. The mellow light of the candles signified the kindling of hope in each heart as we prayed *A Prayer for Our Earth* together. The wholehearted participation of each congregation in joining in this prayer was wonderfully encouraging to all of us who believe that care for our earth is a matter of justice for our struggling sisters and brothers. The presence of the ECI Climate Justice Candle increased our awareness of the

necessity for each one of us to work individually and as a community to lessen our carbon footprint. Our Advent Pledging Tree, highlighting the four Rs – Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Repair, proposes a practical and concrete pathway to reducing our carbon footprint. [Visit the ECI website to see more photos.](#)

Church of St Thérèse, Mount Merrion, Co Dublin

The Climate Justice Candle was in situ for their COP26 Prayer Vigil, to coincide with the opening day of the Summit.



Christ Church Presbyterian, Rathgar



Rev Purvis Campbell sent ECI this report: The ECI Climate Justice Candle visited Christ Church Presbyterian for their service on December 12th 2021. A group of three young people took part in an interactive reading about Creation, and one of our members read the poem *For weavers everywhere*. It was moving – and the whole congregation was silent throughout. We used the Creation Hymn, and then followed the lectionary reading for the Third Sunday of Advent. We considered that caring for creation will involve us all and is a challenge to corruption and the abuse of power in society. The journey to social justice will be a long and demanding road. Afterwards we had a social event in the village square in front of the church, with Christmas music and snacks. A memorable day! The photo on left shows the candle with Clerk of Session, Paul Fry.

Moviddy Union of Parishes, Co Cork

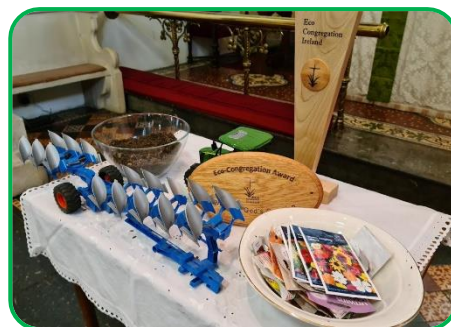
Rev David Bowles Sent ECI this update: On Sunday 31st October 2021 Canon Andrew Orr visited Moviddy Union of Parishes, west of Cork for their Sunday Services to mark Climate Sunday. He brought the Eco-Congregation Climate Justice Candle with him. There he talked about Climate Change, the COP26 Conference, which was about to commence and its importance and also what churches and people in general can do to make a difference, no matter how small it seems. Rev David Bowles thanked Canon Orr for accepting his invite and speaking so inspirationally and wisely. In the following weeks, the candle visited all the classes in Bandonbridge primary school in Bandon, Cork, where Rev Bowles discussed to importance of taking care of God's wonderful world with all the pupils.



Awards! Awards!

Awards! Awards! Carlow Union of Parishes Receives ECI Award and Gold Award!

Following an assessment by Eco Congregation Ireland, Carlow Union of Parishes were delighted to receive two awards for their environmental work: the ECI Award and the ECI Gold Award! This is in recognition of all the work that has happened in the grounds of their three places of worship to make them welcoming to all God's creatures. The presentation of the awards by the chairperson of ECI, Canon Andrew Orr, took place on Sunday 6 February, Plough Sunday in St. Mary's Church, Carlow. **Well done to all!** Read more here >> Rev David White – [Gold Award for Carlow Union](#); Shirley Becker, Carolyn Good, Wendy Tucker and Revd. David White – [The Time is Now: Becoming a Welcoming Parish to All God's Creation](#)



Since our last newsletter the following ECI Awareness and Endeavour Certificates have been awarded: **Lowes Presbyterian, Belfast, St Malachy's Church, Coleraine and Holy Trinity Parish, Killiney** have received their ECI Awareness Certificates and **St Francis Xavier Church, Gardiner Street, Dublin, and Parish of Maghera, Newcastle, Co Down** have received their Endeavour Certificates! Well done everyone!

Latest News ...

Irish Churches Creation Care Conference – 8 April 2022

The Irish Churches Creation Care Conference will explore the theology and mission response to the climate and nature emergency. Explore the theology and mission of creation care with leading theologians, mission practitioners and senior church leaders. Speakers:

- Rev Dr. Chris Wright, Theologian
- Prof Katharine Hayhoe, Distinguished Climate Scientist
- Dr Ruth Valerio, Director of Global Advocacy and Influencing at Tearfund,
- Rev Bob Kikuyu, Global Advisor for Theology and Church Partnerships, Christian Aid
- Archbishop John McDowell, Primate of All Ireland
- Rev Dr. David Bruce, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland



- Rev Dr. Sehr Yambasu, President of the Methodist Church in Ireland
- Bishop Martin Hayes, Laudato Si' coordinating bishop for the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference
- Hannah Malcolm, Anglican ordinand and Radio 4 Thought for the Day contributor
- Justin Kilcullen

This one day conference on 8th April 2022 starts at 10:00 am and runs until 4:00 pm. Lunch is included in the conference fee of £20. A limited number of Bed and Breakfast rooms are available in the conference centre. Please contact us if you would like to book B&B the night before the conference. [Book via eventbrite here.](#)

Latest News from the Corrymeela Community



Glenise Morgan sent ECI this update: The Corrymeela Climate Justice Group continues to meet by Zoom. We recently heard from a new Provisional Member, Stéphanie Heckman, who had attended Cop26 in Glasgow, carrying out some work there as a visual artist. She gave an excellent presentation on her report that provided an insightful overview of the conference area, inside and out.

The divisions between environmental activists loudly protesting outside and those with vested economic or political interests within were stark, but there was another side. People from all over the world were playing music and getting to know each other at other venues throughout the city. The human element was to the fore, despite the suffering of those poorer countries currently experiencing the consequences of climate change, without the means to deal with them. The importance of building relationships for resolution of conflict was apparent.

Stéphanie noted the promise of technical solutions and the new appearance of biodiversity at this COP event. Our economic, environmental and biodiversity systems are inter-linked and we should be working with each other – and with nature – to address the climate crisis. Investment in community-led projects can be replicated elsewhere. Our group is inspired to take this challenge further at Corrymeela. It aligns with our principles, policies and strategies. Climate change brings new divisions in Northern Ireland; rural and urban, economics versus environment, the views of young and old – but also one common goal: to protect our planet.

Walk of Leaf – Forest Immersion Walks by Rosalinde Schut

My name is Rosalinde Schut and I have got a great love for God's creation/the environment. I am a certified life coach in nature and qualified forest bathing guide. I lead monthly forest bathing walks in counties Wicklow and Dublin. My home church is Adelaide Road Church.



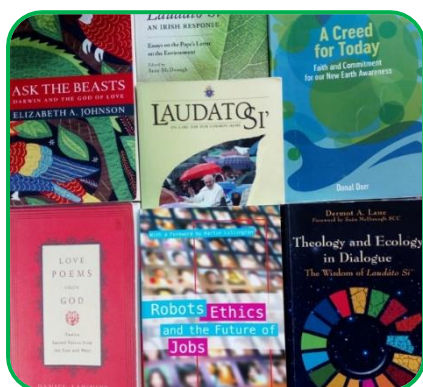
You may know that forest bathing/forest immersion is a health and well-being practice that originated in Japan in the 1980s. During a forest bathing/immersion walk you will go into the forest with a small group of people with the aim of slowing down and getting out of your head and into your body. The walk, which usually takes about 2-2.5 hours covers a short distance and includes a few optional nature-based activities. Participants have got the opportunity to (re)connect with nature, with themselves and with each other. Studies have shown that participants' health

significantly benefits from forest bathing. Many people have reported a reduction in stress, a lower blood pressure and a boost to the immune system. In addition, it improves people's mood, increases their concentration and it enhances their creativity.

I believe that Christians would particularly benefit from a forest bathing/forest immersion as it enhances one's appreciation of creation. Perhaps you would like to come on one of my walks and share your experience with others? I would be delighted to see more people being blessed by being outdoors and protecting that which they love. **Contact Walk of Leaf:** Mobile: 085 728 4556, Website: www.walkofleaf.ie, Facebook: [@walkofleaf](https://www.facebook.com/@walkofleaf), LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/company/walk-of-leaf](https://www.linkedin.com/company/walk-of-leaf)



Orlagh-In-The-City Laudato Si' Book Club



Lorcan McDermott sent ECI this update: The photo on the left shows what the Orlagh-In-The-City Laudato Si' book club has been reading. *Robots Ethics and the Future of Jobs* by Sean Mc Donagh, describes the many positive effects of Artificial Intelligence and robots. It also gives a detailed overview of the potential negative impact on jobs in farming, construction, manufacturing and a range of service industries. In responding to this dilemma, taking an ethical approach, the book considers Universal Basic Income and the need for high-tech companies to pay a just tax. The book is a very good introduction to a topic of increasing concern. The Laudato Si' Ecology Group also organises nature walks and is about to restart them. A visit is being planned to An Tairseach Ecology Centre in Wicklow town. This will

include an organic farm walk later in the spring. In the meantime, there are many great walks to do in Dublin and Wicklow.

An Eco-Tip from Carrigaline Union of Parishes Eco Group

John Andrew shared this eco-tip: A relatively inexpensive Eco-Tip for unused chimneys. A Chimney Sheep® chimney draught excluder that plugs into the bottom of your chimney and helps to keep heat in and cold draughts out. The Chimney Sheep® reduces your heating bills, reduces wind noise in your chimney and reduces your carbon footprint as well! The Eco Group will soon be fitting one to the Rectory chimney. [More information here.](#)



December/January Update from Blessington



Carmel O'Neill sent ECI this latest news from Blessington: During the month of December it was decided to put some Green Tips in the Parish Newsletter that were relevant for the Christmas season. These included suggestions on how to reuse old Christmas cards, recycling wrapping paper and minimising food waste by using leftovers creatively. Prayers were said at the Christmas masses for an end to the pandemic and that Third World countries would be allocated an equal share of the Covid vaccine.

In January we focussed on the theme of energy as fuel and home heating costs continue to rise. We printed 3 Acts of Love from Bonnybrook parish and placed them on the eco notice board in the Church of Our Lady Blessington. While these reminders are very simple measures that we can all do, nevertheless they will reduce the carbon footprint of every household when followed through consistently. In late January Carmel O'Neill adapted the

story of Creation for a group of children preparing for their First Holy Communion. She used the excellent resources of Brid Mulhall to explain how the "Big Bang theory" marked the beginning of the Universe 14 billion years ago. The children showed a keen interest in this presentation. Following on from this, we read some psalms on the theme of creation. They particularly liked Psalm 104. We then asked the children to

compose a line of their own in praise of God's Creation. Each child added their own sentence to a poster which is now on display in the porch of Blessington Church.

The Road to Earth Hour 2022 Begins!

Mark your diaries for Earth Hour 26 March 2022! What's new this year?

2022 presents an incredible once-in-a-decade opportunity to push world leaders into action. Later this year, world leaders and representatives from all over the globe will be attending a crucial United Nations conference for nature and biodiversity – the UN CBD COP 15 (United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity 15th Conference of the Parties) – Kunming, China. The state of nature and biodiversity will be the focus for this conference, and global plans will be made for the next 10 years – decisions that will affect not only the next decade, but our future and well-being for many years to come. [All information here.](#)



Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful: Carbon Literacy for Community Leaders

Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful, an environmental charity in NI, is excited to announce a new, no-cost training programme for community leaders and community groups. This training, funded by the Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs, aims to raise knowledge, awareness and confidence about Climate Change issues and supports community members with accessible ways to take action to reduce the impacts of Climate Change. The training is called Carbon Literacy for Community Leaders and is delivered in three, short modules with a mix of self-study and online meetings – in total approx. 8-10 hours of learning. The training covers the following topics:



- Climate Change science
- Global and local impacts of Climate Change
- Climate justice and equity
- Climate policy – global and local
- Carbon Footprints
- Solutions and the way ahead – ways to get involved as an individual and a community
- Carbon Pledge – a commitment to take action

If you are interested and would like to discuss the course further, or find out more, get in contact by emailing Scott Howes at scott.howes@keepnorthernirelandbeautiful.org. [More information from their website here.](#)

'Spirituality and the Earth' talk by James Nelson of South Belfast Quaker Meeting



James Nelson of the South Belfast Quaker Meeting gave a talk on "Spirituality and the Earth: A View from the Quaker Tradition" on January 19, 2022, as part of an ongoing series of talks by people of different faiths organised by SHEP Earth Aware. Many who attended this event feel this was an excellent talk, particularly in the clarity with which it explains the spiritual basis of Quaker Earth Care for those who may not be familiar with Quaker beliefs. Those

who missed it on the day or who would like to watch it again can view it online at the link: <https://youtu.be/6cK03VwKgKg>.

Action Renewables Solar PV Programme in Northern Ireland

Are you a Community Group, Social Enterprise, Charity or non-profit organisation? If so, you may be eligible for the Action Renewables Solar PV Programme. In 2021/22 they will fund up to 12 projects to reduce the carbon footprint of the recipients and make a financial impact through generation/cost savings. Once identified, they will provide funding for small scale energy generation, initially through solar pv installations. The receivers will either own or have a long-term lease (5+ years) on their building. Action Renewables will retain full ownership of the solar system and they will cover all installation and maintenance costs. Action Renewables will invoice the customer pro-rata for electricity generated from the solar panels at a reduced cost compared to grid electricity.



If you wish to apply you will need to have a baseload demand greater than 12kW. Action Renewables will require visibility of 12 months electricity bills or half hourly data if your property has a half hourly meter installed. To find out more information about the programme, [visit their website here](#) and complete the online registration form. The Action Renewables Team can also be contacted on 028 9072 7760. The above photo shows Roger Dane, Manager of Belvoir Players Studio, with William Deane and Terry Waugh of Action Renewables at the installation of the Belvoir Studio solar panel system, as part of the Solar PV Programme.

Laudato Si Group, Rathgar Parish Lenten Reflection

The Laudato Si Group in Rathgar Parish in Dublin, have arranged for a reflection during Lent to be given by Vivek Da Silva on 23 March at 7.30 pm via Zoom. The theme will be "Earth as the body of Christ/the presence of God in everything". Details nearer the time on the parish website <http://www.rathgarparish.ie/>.



A Tribute to Sister Catherine Gibbons RIP



Fr Joe McVeigh sent ECI this tribute to Sr Catherine Gibbons: Sr Catherine, who was a valued member of Clogher JPIC group died last July. She belonged to the Sisters of Mercy Enniskillen for the last number of years. Before that she spent many years teaching in the National school in Ballyshannon. In her memory the Clogher JPIC group organised a Christmas collection to help build a well in South Sudan. The actual amount raised came to £1,550 plus Euro 50. This is much more than we expected. We set out to try to raise £1000 -enough to fix a well in South Sudan. So we will now also be able to buy another valuable Trocaire gift with the extra money. The most generous response of so many in Enniskillen to our Appeal is a wonderful tribute to Sr Catherine who was a great supporter of Trocaire and who was deeply concerned about the poor and about the Earth. We, are confident that this money will help some poor people in our world to enjoy a better quality of life.

Cultivating Community Farming Project

Following on from their very successful 'Introduction to Community Farming' course last Spring, co-delivered between Jubilee and Co-operative Alternatives, and funded by the Co-op Foundation, Jubilee Farm is now welcoming applications to the Cultivating Community Farming Project. Co-delivered by Jonny Hanson and Tiziana O'Hara of Co-operative Alternatives:



Cultivating Community Farming is an exciting new project funded by the Co-op Foundation. This £100,000 investment over 2 years will accelerate the growth and capacity of community farming projects across Northern Ireland through networking, mentoring, skills development and capacity building. Working with 10 early-stage community farming projects, the CCF project will contribute to a flourishing community farming sector in NI, at a time when both the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change have highlighted the importance of community access to and involvement with food, farming and nature. Also included is seed funding of £2500 per project. The deadline for applications is Monday 7th March at 12 noon. To find out more about the project and request an application form, please contact tiziana@coopalternatives.coop or phone 00 44 (0)7858 317 634.



An Tairseach Spring 2022 Renewal Programmes



An Tairseach is introducing a new hybrid selection of courses for their Spring Renewal Programme. They are delighted to include you online from anywhere in the World via their state of the art video conferencing suite. They also continue to welcome you in person to enjoy the holistic experience of An Tairseach. Join them for a unique learning experience at the beautiful Ecology Centre [An Tairseach](#) in Wicklow the Garden of Ireland. [Click here to view their upcoming Spring programmes.](#) [Read their latest newsletter here.](#)

Latest News from Trócaire

Laudato Si' Book Clubs continue ... Over 500 people have taken part in the Laudato Si' Book Club from various parish communities across Ireland in the past two years. Trócaire is delighted that there is still demand for the course and over the next few months it will run twice:



- The Diocese of Kerry JPIC committee will run the book club beginning on Tuesday 15th February at 7.30pm, facilitated by Jane Mellett. Everyone is welcome to attend and to register you can fill out this form [HERE](#) or email desbailey@dioceseofkerry.ie
- Trócaire is also very excited to say that Laudato Si' - On Care for Our Common Home will also feature at this year's Ennis Book Club Festival. There will be online webinars in the run up to the festival and an in-person session at the festival itself. The festival is also running Joanna Macy's book "Active Hope – How to Face the Mess we're in without Going Crazy". For details on both courses email info@ennisbookclubfestival.com or see details on Facebook [HERE](#)

Trócaire Lent Lecture 2022: This year's Trócaire Lent Lecture: How women of faith are responding to the call of Laudato Si' will be given by Dr. Carmody Grey, (Associate Professor of theology at Durham University & research fellow at the Laudato Si' Institute) & Lucy Vokhiwa, (Chairperson of the Catholic Women's Association of Malawi). This lecture will take place online only on International Women's Day, March 8th, 2022. Details for registration will be released shortly.

Responding to the Cost of Living Crisis



Sources of support for families and individuals facing rising inflation and pressures from the cost of living are listed in a one-page guide provided by the Church of Ireland's Church and Society Commission. This includes key contacts for support and advice from public services and Christian charities working to respond to need, in both jurisdictions, at this time and going forward. The Commission is asking parishes to take a pro-active approach by:

- encouraging anyone to ask for help when they sense that they are in need;
- being more aware of neighbours who may be struggling with finances;
- knowledge of and supporting local foodbanks; and
- an awareness of the impact of these pressures on family relationships.

The resource is available at www.ireland.anglican.org/cost-of-living and can be shared with anyone who may find it helpful. The Word version of the guide can be downloaded and adapted for sharing with members of local churches and their neighbours, in print or online.

Climate Justice Group of the Cathedral of St Mary and St Anne Family of Parishes Cork – Update

Ann Harnedy sent ECI this update: The Cork Cathedral Family of Parishes Climate Justice Group is delighted to report that the assessors from ECI have recommended that our work merits an ECI AWARD. We are delighted with this good news, as we have worked solidly over the past four years in the spirit of ECI. Our walk began using the Eco-Congregation "How Can I Green my Church".



We were inspired to start our Eco-Congregation Journey by our participation in the Blue Planet Course conducted by SMA Wilton Climate Justice group in 2018. Our vision is the celebration of God's creation, the care for it in the life and mission of the parish and in members' personal lifestyle. With the recent lifting of the Covid Restrictions we hope to celebrate this stage on our eco journey in early Spring. We thank ECI for their wonderful support and look forward to progressing our work with ECI in 2022.

Update from Our Lady and St John in Carrigaline

Janet Twomey sent ECI this update: Our parish has started on the journey of looking at how we could use more green energy solutions such as solar panels in our church building. We are at the early stages of exploring an energy audit and understanding the possibilities for grants available that might enable us to become more energy efficient. We are currently gathering information and meeting with people who have the skills to support us in our endeavours.



"Every leaf speaks
bliss to me /
Fluttering from
the autumn tree."

Emily Brontë

We are very excited by this work because we know "Creation is in desperate need of our love....our sisters and brothers are crying out for help. The most vulnerable among us are experiencing the worst effects of the climate crisis, despite having little to do with the heat-trapping greenhouse gases that scientists say are causing warmer global temperatures...and taking care of the earth is a human right." (from Pope Francis' TED talk on divestment from fossil fuels, October 2020). The photo above right shows a sprinkling of God's gifts - leaves on a Carrigaline roadside in December.

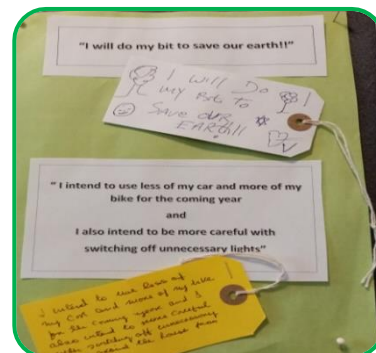
Save the Dates! Earth Day and World Water Day 2022

Please note in your diaries the following dates! [World Water Day](#) – Tuesday 22 March 2022 – theme Groundwater – Making the Invisible Visible. [Earth Day](#) – Friday 22 April 2022 – theme Investing In Our Planet



Latest News from Bonnybrook

Margo Delaney Sent ECI this latest news: The darkest days are almost over, and through the brown earth, the pearly snowdrops appear. In Bonnybrook we have been focusing on four issues: pledges, pollinators, plastics and three simple ways to reduce our carbon footprints. **Pledges** - our pledging tree continues to bear fruit; above are samples from it. **Pollinators** - as the soil becomes warmer, food for the pollinators will begin to appear. On our eco aware notice board in the church, we have posted the list of foods most suitable for bees, listed in the All Ireland Pollinator Plan. **Plastics** - Care for the Earth members signed the petition “END PLASTIC POLLUTION” campaign, organised by EARTHDAY.ORG, urging action of the reduction of plastic pollution in our seas. Earth Day is changing human attitudes about and behaviour toward plastics and reducing plastic pollution. The End Plastic Pollution Campaign



helps people understand the impacts of plastic pollution on human and ecosystem health and how everyday actions can lessen the problem. The campaign draws attention to the harmful effects of plastic in our environment — harming marine and human health, littering beaches and landscapes, clogging waste streams and landfills — and empowers people to make a difference. **Three Simple Ways to Reduce our Carbon Footprint** - among a plethora of suggestions on how to reduce our carbon footprint, the poster on the left on our eco aware church notice board, suggests three ways, two very simple and one more costly.

Holy Wells Enthusiasts from St Therese's Mount Merrion Visit St Broc's Well

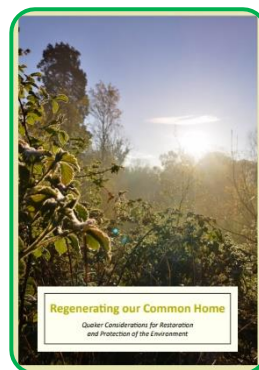
Holy Wells enthusiasts from St Therese's Mount Merrion Laudato Si Circle with Father Brian Grogan and members of the former Loving Sister Earth Group on a New Year visit to St Broc's Well, at the Poor Clare Monastery, Donnybrook.



Publications of Interest ...

Regenerating Our Common Home – Quaker Considerations for Restoration and Protection of the Environment

EcoQuakers Ireland have produced an insightful new booklet '[Regenerating Our Common Home – Quaker Considerations for Restoration and Protection of the Environment](#)'. They hope this publication will encourage Meetings to return to their sustainability plans and update them with more ambitious goals and targets e.g. examining the insulation and sustainable energy potential of their meeting houses. Suggestions included in the booklet include examining the insulation and sustainable energy potential of their Meeting Houses. They are also encouraged to examine their personal carbon footprints, e.g. from travel, and modes of transport. [Read more here.](#)



All-Ireland Pollinator Plan Year One Review Published



The AIPP Year One Review December 2021 has been published. [You can read it online here.](#) This report was compiled by Dr Úna FitzPatrick. Eco-Congregation Ireland gets mention on page 64!

Greening Ireland's Second Century: How Environmental Policy Has Emerged as Central to Irish Life by Kevin Hargaden and Ciara Murphy

Dr Kevin Hargaden and Dr Ciara Murphy both work at the at the Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice, where Kevin serves as the Director and Social Theologian and Ciara is the Environmental Policy Advocate. Their forthcoming book is entitled *The Parish as Oasis* and will be published by Messenger Publications in summer 2022. [Read this article in full here.](#)



Eco Challenge!

Is Cheap Fashion Really So Cheap? by Ciara Feehely, Vita

Now we all love a bargain, and we all love to look our best – especially now when we are finally able to embrace socially again! Oftentimes looking our best involves buying something new to wear – be it a top or new shoes or some gloves to ward off the winter chills. And who doesn't love to get a bargain? So we trek to the shops and buy some inexpensive products from a big brand retailer. These products usually fall into the category of "fast Fashion". Fast fashion is defined as "inexpensive clothing produced rapidly by mass-market retailers in response to the latest trend. " Fast fashion is usually cheap and not intended for use beyond one or two seasons – but is it really that cheap if it comes at a huge cost to the environment?

There are reasons why we need to consider far more carefully the clothes we buy and how we dispose of them after use. 40% of the world's arable land is given over to growing cotton. Not only is this land necessary for growing food for the current population of the planet, but it is also vital to feed the additional two billion population growth expected by 2050. The natural resources of the earth are already under huge stress- over production of cotton is adding significantly to this. The plant uses a lot of water at both the production and dyeing stages – water that is needed elsewhere for health and wellbeing.



Huge quantities of unsold and unwanted clothing is often dumped in developing countries, undermining the indigenous cotton and clothing industry in these regions. Very little responsibility is taken by the retailer or us, the customer, for the working conditions of those involved in the production of the garment, or whether or not farmers are getting a fair price for their investment and labour. In fact fast fashion retailers put unsustainable pressure on the supply chain to produce as cheaply as possible, which encourages suppliers to cut corners and drive hard negotiations down the line.

We have all seen the images of appalling working conditions of garment factory workers in Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, China, etc. Every time we buy an unnecessary piece of clothing we are supporting this unjust and unsustainable system. Clothes production is a greedy water and energy user too – all those sewing machines running 24 / 7 to satisfy western demands for ever cheaper, ever faster fashion is having a massively detrimental impact on the environment. Pakistan and India are heavily dependent on oil and coal while Bangladesh depends mostly on methane-rich natural gas.

Some countries are very dependent of their cotton and garment exports – around two thirds of Pakistan's exports are made up of cotton textile products, so diversifying to other crops will be complicated and require investment. It is not easy to change direction after years of investing in the cotton industry. However, all markets are ultimately driven by customers. If we stop buying as many clothes as we currently buy, the system will adapt to our changing needs and start to produce something else that the market needs, such as more food.

So – is there a hole in your jumper? Try darning it – there are lots of videos on YouTube to show you how. Feel like buying something new? Try online



market places, charity shops or swap shops. Giving clothes a second life has a double positive impact for the environment – you are not funding the production of a new piece of clothing and you are saving on landfill.

Fairtrade Fortnight: 21 February – 6 March 2022

For two weeks each year at the end of February and start of March, thousands of individuals, companies and groups across the UK come together to share the stories of the people who grow our food and drinks, mine our gold and who grow the cotton in our clothes, people who are often exploited and underpaid. **Is your faith community committed to using fairtrade products?** Choosing Fairtrade fights for improvements in producers' livelihoods with collective strength through co-ops and their bargaining power, the protection of a Minimum Price and Fairtrade Premiums. [Read more here](#).



Love me, but love the Lord's Planet also!

Valentine's Day is over, however Rev Trevor Sargent, Church of Ireland representative on the ECI committee gives us some advice about Valentine's Day flowers or cut flowers for any occasion! If I want to buy cut flowers, what should I look out for? [Read Trevor's Ecological Notes for St Valentine's Day here](#).



Prayers/Reflections for the Earth

Euphrates Poplar – A Reflection by Rev Andrew Kingston

My attention was grabbed from the outset, as it normally is, by the excellent David Attenborough series, "The Green Planet". The film crew was in the Taklamakan desert in northern China. The camera panned across shifting sands and barren dunes to what appeared to be a solitary tree. The tree was a Euphrates Poplar and it seemed to defy logic by growing in such an arid location. In scripture we associate this tree as growing by water. "By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion. There on the poplars we hung our harps".



I only came upon this tree once in the Holy Land. It was deep in the Negev desert close to water in the oasis of Ein Avdat. Our guide, Michael Even Esh, explained that it is not native to Israel, and was thought to have been brought to this spectacular gorge in Byzantine times by monks in the fifth century. The monastery was attacked and the community slaughtered during the Persian invasion of 614AD but the tree continued to grow and is now a forest. Michael told us that all the trees are probably one interconnected entity.

Amazing as this seemed, his theory is confirmed by David Attenborough. Temperatures swing from -20 to +40 degrees centigrade in an area almost entirely without rain, yet as the camera zoomed out, that

Euphrates Poplar tree in the Taklamakan desert was not alone. He said “Some of these trees have lived here for a thousand years. They have exceptionally long roots with which to collect water. And what is more, those roots are connected to neighbouring trees, so that if one strikes water – others can share it.” The remnant in exile found a similar resilience in hostile Babylon. They turned again to ancient scriptures, repented of idolatry, heeded their prophets and rediscovered hope. Biblical scholars tell us that it was in exile that the canon of scripture began to take shape. Strengthened by God, they would return to the Promised Land where a shoot would come from the stump of Jesse.

Perhaps the best application that we can learn from the Euphrates Poplar is verbalised by the Apostle Paul when he wrote to stressed believers deep in the interior of hostile Asia Minor, “Carry each other’s burdens, for in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ”. (The above photo shows Euphrates poplar trees in Ein Avdat in the Negev Desert).

A Reflection by Fr Hugh O’Donnell – Taking the World Seriously

We don’t take the world seriously enough. We doze through dawn and dusk and wonder little about the gift of sleep or a breakfast of cereal, milk, toast and marmalade. No, we make things too thingy! We dilute them and conspire to say – ‘they’re not really that magical and amazing and way beyond us’. So we agree, without a word, to take the music out of it all in exchange for a corporate or supermarket reality where everything has its price!

Meanwhile the beginners, our children, instinctively go for the real thing – a twig on the grass, a pigeon feather, walking along low walls – until, in a fit of distraction, they shed their original version of the world for something less touchy-feely, something useful for getting on in life, something on the syllabus.



Human knowing happens in two complementary ways. One side of our brain targets the prey, so to speak, while the other scans the area. Or, better, one highlights clarity and precision while the other stands back and appreciates everything else – making art, music, dance, falling in love, the wisdom of not knowing. We need both sides of course but as a society we privilege a purely rational take on life above knowing the sublime singing of things.

Whatever happened to the embodied world we knew as children? Let us go back to the smell of autumn leaves becoming mulch; that earth smell that no perfume can match, no chemistry explain away. Let us have again the smell of ourselves. The phot above right is by Fr Hugh - luxuriant alga trentepohlia on a limestone wall of church in Kinlough, Co Leitrim.

Drumalis: A Place of Healing by Bertie Stirling

We believe that Drumalis is a place where the healing from the impoverishment through pollution and industrialisation, can happen. It is a sacred place for those who visit it or participate in its activities. We are trying to make our environment not only healing to us humans but to many other species who co-exist on this planet with us. To this end we have a few programmes to enhance our grounds for the good of other species.



The heronry in the tall trees gives an added dimension to the area as the birds float in and out giving their sharp calls. This feature is monitored as the herons return each year. We also hope to increase the number of nest boxes to facilitate some of the smaller birds including the endangered swift population. Boxes will be placed throughout the wood and under eaves of the building.

There are also a small population of red squirrels nearby. These are under pressure from an expanding grey population. The proposal is to reduce and control the grey population to allow the reds to expand into the Drumalis wooded area. Surveys of macro-moths and other pollinators are planned and an extended survey of the bats.

We don't only care for the animal population, so there is a scheme to plant 2000 more trees, some replacing storm damage or diseased trees and also expanding the extensive woodland already present. A small exploratory investigation to find out what wildflowers might be surviving in some of the grassy areas is to be carried out. Although this will be a limited exploration it should give us an indication of the plant life that could be present and indeed the animal life that might thus be attracted. Signage will be posted so the area could be used for demonstration as well as exploration.

The proposed exploration is to be in a small strip 20m long by 3m wide, alongside the fence running down to the field on the east side. This rectangular area will be divided into four, 1/4 mowed, 1/4 mowed twice annually 1/4 not mowed at all and 1/4 having the turf removed. The areas will be monitored for different species. Also a small section (about 2 m) of the bank on the north side of the path above the Rose Garden will be left uncut. This area would seem to exhibit good plant diversity at present. The rest of the bank would be mowed as usual. With these programmes underway it is hoped that the environment will be enhanced for the pleasure and wellbeing of all species including humans.

A Poem by Fr Hugh O'Donnell – So to the Snowdrops

Ah yes – of course –
the snowdrops – this year
they were here – overnight –
as always mouth-watering,
so beyond us in every sense
that to comment sounds
like the applicant who believes
it is he who is interviewing
for the position. Better not
crowd their reclaimed space
with an air of 'let's see'
but glance shyly in passing.



Fr Hugh's photo above right shows snowdrops at the Botanic Gardens.

With kindest regards,

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