



The pandemic continued throughout 2021 and once again Eco-Congregation Ireland had to think creatively about how to continue its work during this difficult time. The pandemic continued to disrupt our lives and many of our creation-centred activities. We were able to continue our activities online and re-start our Climate Justice Candle Project and some communities were able to hold their ECI award ceremonies safely face to face.

## ECI GOLD Award 2021

### Whitechurch Parish



Whitechurch Parish in Dublin has become one of just a handful of parishes in Ireland to be presented with an Eco-Congregation Ireland Gold Award. The award, which recognises the parish's great efforts to improve biodiversity as well as mentoring another parish, was presented by Eco-Congregation Ireland chairperson, Canon Andrew Orr.

Whitechurch was the first Church of Ireland parish in the Republic to win an Eco-Congregation award in 2010. Since then the church grounds have been transformed into a pollinator friendly area for bees and butterflies and bat boxes have been installed in some trees.

Part of the conditions to be met to achieve the Gold Award include that a parish mentor another parish as members embark on their Eco-Congregation journey. Whitechurch is mentoring Nun's Cross, Killiskey, as they take their first steps to improve biodiversity in their church grounds.



## ECI Awards 2021

### Presentation Sisters

In 2021 the North Eastern and South Western provinces of the Presentation Sisters celebrated the reception of their ECI awards via zoom. The entire report on the work of the Presentation family could stand as a template for other larger organisations seeking a model to follow. It is wide ranging in its concerns, many of these concerns the Sisters and the Presentation family have been articulating for a long time. In the past two decades however, these concerns have been brought into sharper focus for them by the setting of the Millennium Development goals and more recently by Laudato Si' and by the Sustainable Development Goals. The report on their work records how the entire international Presentation family has been involved, differently in different settings.



The 'bog' story at Lixnaw is a unique expression of that. It is remarkable because it stands as a symbol of what must be done by allowing the land to rest. But it also stands as an action that will mean and continue to mean an increase in biodiversity for the area and act as an important contribution to help mitigate the effects of climate change. Its symbolic value, however, is not to be underestimated because it is a landmark in the charismatic story and a point of reference for all Presentation environmental activities.

### Prosperous Parish, Kildare

Bishop Denis Nulty presented Prosperous Parish, Kildare with an Award on behalf of Eco-Congregation Ireland and planted a hawthorn tree in their eco-garden for the Season of Creation. It is an excellent plant for biodiversity, with lovely, scented flowers in May important for pollinators, and in Autumn red haws to feed the birds. Sr Maureen O'Connor gave a Communion Reflection on the environment. The Eco-parish team were then presented with their ECI award plaque. They also had beautiful singing of Seán Ó Riada's repertoire during Mass.





# Climate Justice Candles 2021

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 2021. After a break due to the pandemic, the physical Climate Justice Candles started their journey again and 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 2021, in many different and creative ways include:





## ECI Gold Awards Ceremony

In June 2021 ECI held its first Gold Awards ceremony online. Westport Eco-Congregation, Co Mayo, SAGE -Shankill Action for A Green Earth and Ballineaspig Parish, Co Cork all attended and were presented virtually with their awards.



## ECI Northern Online Gathering

In December 2021 Eco-Congregation Ireland held its first regional online gathering. This first gathering brought together friends from across the northern part of the country. The speakers included Ken Orr from Newtownbreda Presbyterian Church Belfast, Kerry Nicholson from South Belfast Quaker Meeting and Sr Margaret Rose McSparran from Drumalis Retreat and Conference Centre, Larne, Co Antrim. ECI plans three online gatherings in the coming year for Leinster, Munster and Connacht.



## ECI committee welcomes second Presbyterian Representative



Rev Dr Allen Sleith is the minister of Hillsborough Presbyterian Church and is the Stewardship of Creation Agent for the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. You can contact Allen on 07801273354 and [allen.sleith@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:allen.sleith@tiscali.co.uk). *Welcome Allen!*

### Key to Photos on left:

1. Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Sean McDermott Street, Dublin
2. St Laurence's Parish, Kilmacud
3. St Anne's Church, Shandon
4. Hillsborough Presbyterian Church
5. Galway Diocese
6. Church of St Thérèse, Mount Merrion
7. Moviddy Union of Parishes, Co Cork
8. Christ Church Presbyterian, Rathgar
9. Lowe Presbyterian Church, Belfast
10. Church of Ireland Theological Institute
11. St Joseph the Artisan Bonnybrook
12. Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish, Johnstown, Killiney



## ECI First Online Meet Up



In January 2021 Eco-Congregation Ireland held its first online meet-up. This online event was held for faith communities to share experiences and ideas. Participants were encouraged to bring their questions about any aspect of their ECI journey, whether that is about getting started, working towards an ECI Award, the ECI Awareness and Endeavour Certificates or hosting the ECI Climate Justice Candle. Carolyn Good from Carlow Union of Parishes shared a presentation on God's Welcoming Church and Margo Delaney from Bonnybrook Parish shared a presentation on their journey to their ECI Award.



## Certificates Awarded by Eco-Congregation Ireland in 2021

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**.

In 2021 the following churches were awarded certificates:

### Awareness Certificate:

- Methodist Centenary Church, Dublin
- Nun's Cross Church, Killiskey Parish,
- St George's Parish Church, Belfast
- Lowe Presbyterian Church, Belfast



### Endeavour Certificate:

- Orlagh-in-the-City LS/ECI Eco Group
- Kirkinriola Parish. Ballymena
- St Francis Xavier Church, Gardiner Street, Dublin



For more information please get in touch with ECI at [info@ecocongregationireland.com](mailto:info@ecocongregationireland.com)



## Climate Sunday

One of the most important and exciting initiatives of 2021 was the Climate Sunday campaign. Launched by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI), the campaign encouraged churches to do 3 things: host a Climate Sunday Service using the resources provided; get involved with a church greening scheme; and write to local politicians in order to press for significant progress at the COP26 talks which were held in Glasgow in November. Eco-Congregation Ireland, along with Eco-Congregation Scotland and Eco Church (England and Wales), was one of the greening schemes that churches were encouraged to join.

The campaign was a huge success with over 2,200 churches across Britain and Ireland registering with the campaign, and anecdotally, we know that many more got involved. For many churches, Climate Sunday represented the first time taking action and we believe that through climate focused services in their churches, beginning their journey with the greening schemes and using their voice to speak up, that we have left a legacy of churches ready to continue and build upon this work to safeguard our common home. One of the interesting results was the involvement of churches and denominations who signed up for the first time, making a truly diverse range of Christians. The culmination of the campaign was a huge nations Climate Sunday service held in Glasgow Cathedral just before the start of the COP26 and watched by thousands online.



The climate Sunday website ([climatesunday.org](http://climatesunday.org)) will remain a legacy website sitting with CTBI and churches will be invited to continue to use the service resources and also to use the list of actions compiled by the supporting organisations to continue their campaigning journey.

Among the churches that got involved were St. John's Presbyterian Church, Newtownbreda, Belfast who combined Climate Sunday with a Harvest Festival. The congregation heard from projects that they were supporting across the developing world, including the "Send a Cow Project", supporting farmers and local markets in Uganda, and a literacy project in Senegal. Everyone attending was then to support a letter-writing campaign to their local members of the Northern Ireland Assembly. This urged the Assembly to finally pass a Climate Action Bill, which became law in January 2022, the last part of the UK to do so. Church members have also been developing a wonderful community project on waste ground near the church, including tree planting, a wild flower meadow and a pond.



## Chairperson's Remarks

### Canon Andrew Orr

The year 2021 was of course another year dominated by the Pandemic, with the global rollout of the vaccines showing both the strengths and weaknesses of global cooperation. Vaccine inequity was clear for all to see, with much of the developing world still left behind.



The same strengths and weaknesses were all too evident in the Glasgow COP26 talks which started off with high hopes of a real breakthrough in reducing carbon emissions, but in the end much of what was agreed was heavily watered down. Similarly, legislation passed in both the Dáil and the Northern Ireland Assembly represented progress to some degree, but there were missed opportunities too.

Here in Eco-Congregation Ireland, we continue to be a focus for those who want to make a real difference in their local area and among their own congregation: grass roots movements for change. You will read stories of hope in this report, and we have heard those stories shared in our wonderful national and regional zoom meetings held throughout 2021. The diversity of ideas, plans and practical actions in so many churches is inspiring. Thank you to all those of you working away in your own corners of our island. Thank you too to our hard working committee for all they do in encouraging the member churches of their own denominations, and beyond.

We try not to forget that this is God's world, where we live alongside and depend on Sister Earth and all the living things. Once again, may we always "abound in hope" (Romans 15:13).

## FINANCES

Opening Balance	€10,180.59
<b>INCOME:</b>	
<b>Church subscriptions</b>	
Church of Ireland	€5,000.00
Roman Catholic	€2,000.00
Presbyterian	€2,094.48
Quaker	€600.00
Talks	€80.00
Individual Congregations	<u>€1,640.00</u>
<b>Total:</b>	<b>€11,414.48</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE:</b>	
Salary	€7,200.00
Printing	€125.00
Awards	€1,314.97
Bank charges	<u>€63.90</u>
<b>Total:</b>	<b>€8,703.87</b>
<b>SURPLUS</b>	<b>€2,710.61</b>
<b>Closing balance at the end of 2021:</b>	<b>€12,891.20</b>

For more info visit:

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