



Dear Friends of Eco-Congregation Ireland

Welcome to the Early Summer 2022 edition of the Eco-Congregation Ireland newsletter! The Eco-Congregation Ireland committee wishes everyone a peaceful and joyous summertime! If you have any information or stories you would like to share in our future newsletters, we would love to hear from YOU!

Please send them to info@ecocongregationireland.com.

Shankill Parish wins European Environmental Award!

Shankill Action for a Green Earth (SAGE), an initiative of Shankill Parish in South Co. Dublin, has won a prestigious European Churches Environmental Award for its work. SAGE has been an Eco-Congregation for many years and has recently been awarded our Gold Award.

At the recent virtual meeting of the European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN), SAGE was the joint winner of the Roman Juriga award for the best Christian environmental project across the entire continent. ECEN consists of hundreds of churches with millions of members from Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox traditions, and the Roman Juriga award is presented at the assembly every two years.



The judges were impressed by SAGE's actions in a wide range of areas, promoting bio diversity, reducing their carbon footprint in the church buildings, and engaging politically by holding debates with local politicians on Climate change and environmental protection. They also highlighted the way in which environmental concerns were included in the liturgy, especially around the Season of Creation. The award is named in memory of Roman Juriga, one of the founding members of ECEN and a Christian leader who worked tirelessly with his church and with partners across Europe to develop new and exciting green initiatives.

Justin Kilcullen, one of the leaders of SAGE said "We thank Catherine Brennan from Eco-Congregation Ireland, who knew Roman well, for all her mentoring and support to us over the years".

Canon Andrew Orr from ECI said "we are delighted that the hard work of SAGE has been recognised in becoming the first Irish winner of this prestigious award. We in ECI are delighted to have supported them along their journey".

The Archbishop of Dublin will present both the ECI Gold Award and the Roman Juriga award in person on Sunday 19th June.

Awards! Awards!

The Cathedral of St Mary and St Anne Family of Parishes, Cork Receives ECI Award!

At the Palm Sunday Vigil Mass on Saturday, April 9th, the Cathedral Family of Parishes Climate Justice Group celebrated the reception of the Eco-Congregation Ireland Award from Bishop Fintan. The Climate Justice Group was established by the Parish Assembly to help better understand the many issues and challenges raised by Pope Francis in his letter *Laudato Si*. The ECI Award was given to the group in recognition of the impressive work done by them over the past four years since they were established in 2018.



Presenting the award, Bishop Fintan congratulated the team in the Cathedral and acknowledged the work done in all areas, environmental, spiritual, practical, community and global. Catherine Brennan SSL, Catholic Representative on the ECI Committee, praised the good work of the group and singled out the renewable energy work in the churches as one of the best in the country and a model for all parishes.

In terms of practical work done in the use of sustainable energy in historic buildings, the Cathedral Family of Parishes is indeed a leader in this country. The Cathedral building itself, which dates from 1808, is the first Cathedral in the country to have so many energy upgrades installed. The work is ongoing since 2016 when the Cathedral Church began installing sustainable energy measures, which include an LED lighting upgrade, photovoltaic panels, an air-to-air heat pump, including heaters both front and back of the building, and attic insulation. Two temperature & humidity sensors have been installed. These are placed in the seating area of the Cathedral, and help to make the heating as efficient as possible. Conscious of the need to use energy wisely an energy monitoring system called Wattrics is also installed which monitors the use of electricity in different areas of the Cathedral. There are two Electric Car chargers available for use in the Cathedral car park.

Similar upgrades have been installed in Blackpool Church, along with the heat pump, LED lighting and attic insulation. Led lighting is also installed in St Oliver's & St Brendan's. The Administrator and Parish Priest of the Cathedral Canon John O Donovan has been involved in this work since the start and is also a member of the Climate Justice Group.

The ceremony was attended by Eileen and Frank Dorr who facilitated the development of the group, Eco-Congregation groups from the city and county, Rev Andrew Orr, chairperson of Eco-Congregation Ireland and Jer O Sullivan and members of St. Anne's Shandon ECI.

The presentation was followed by the planting of a native Irish Rowan tree in the grounds of the Cathedral to mark the occasion.



The presentation plaque was made at the Grassmarket Community Project in Edinburgh. The project takes an innovative approach to creating community and providing sanctuary and support to participants, many of whom are the most vulnerable of their citizens. They learn skills which enable them to develop their full potential and move away from cycles of failure. The wood is sourced from recycled church seats and kneelers throughout Scotland. It carries the prayer of worshippers

for possibly hundreds of years and will continue to carry the prayer of the people of this cathedral in Cork for years to come.

Parish of Our Lady and St John, Carrigaline Receives ECI Award!

Janet Twomey sent ECI this latest news: At our last parish support group meeting, we prayed together for creation using this lovely prayer on the right from Trócaire's Glás Parish resource. We are still exploring options which would make our church more energy efficient. We held another 'No Mow May' on the parish grounds. Our Laudato Si' Parish Tree, planted October on the Feast Day of St. Francis of Assisi last year is coming along nicely as can be seen from the photograph on the left. We were delighted with the arrival of our wooden Eco-Congregation Ireland Award Plaque. We shared the news with the wider parish group and will plan a celebratory event during this year's Season of Creation. Watch this space



*Let us pray
Loving God, help us to find ways
to live the wisdom of St Francis
of Assisi. Give us the gift of
simplicity that we may be able
to concentrate on you above all
else. Teach us humility in our
relationships with the earth and
its beings.
Help us to understand poverty
as the emptying of ourselves for
the sake of love for our
neighbour. Let the joy of St
Francis transform our own way
of seeing the world.
We ask this through Christ our
Lord.
Amen.*

ECI Climate Justice Candles are on the Move Again!!

Did you know that ECI has four Climate Justice Candles? One for each historic province of Ireland – Ulster, Munster, Connacht and Leinster! This means that we can get a candle to your church or parish when you need it. 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 Malachy's, Coleraine

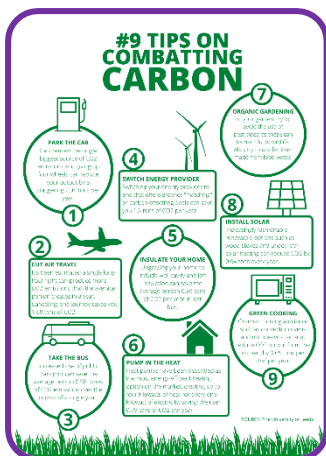
John Boyle sent us this update: On the 13th April, parishioners in St Malachy's Coleraine co-founded an ecological group with members of other nearby parishes. We named the group Anam Glas, which is Irish for 'Green Soul'. The group was set up so that our environmental projects might also incorporate other parishes, thus having a broader effect, and also with the hope of expanding the membership of Eco-Congregation Ireland in the North.

On Sunday 15th May, we displayed the ECI Climate Justice Candle in our church during Mass. This coincided with us, as a parish, taking part in the Big Plastic Count by Greenpeace & Everyday Plastic. The Big Plastic Count ran from 16th-22nd May with participants recording the number of various types



of plastics they used during that week. Participation in the count seems to have been fairly high, and the candle was highly appreciated by the parishioners of St Malachy's. We are grateful to Eco-Congregation Ireland for granting us the honour of hosting the candle in our church.

On Sunday 22nd May we launched a flyer with 9 tips to cut carbon emissions which we distributed among parishioners as they left the church after Mass. We intend to follow this project up with weekly/monthly bulletin notices which will expand on each tip with additional ideas. Going forward, we intend on growing the membership of Anam Glas, planting a woodland on a portion of unused land within the parish grounds, and encouraging neighbouring parishes to get involved with Eco-Congregation Ireland.



Tullamore Union of Parishes

An ecumenical service led by Reverend Isaac Delamere, Reverend Yvonne Hutchinson and Father Joe Deegan was held on Rogation Sunday 22 May 2022, reflecting on and promoting the cause of Climate Justice. The Climate Justice Candle was lit by Kellyann Henry to commence the service. Following the service, before refreshments were served Mr. Barry Cowen TD & Minister Pippa Hackett, led a procession to the Bull Ring on Clara's magnificent Fair Green, which stands majestically between the two beautiful churches. There Mr. Cowen raised the National Flag in celebration of International Biodiversity Day, which fell on Sunday 22 May 2022.



St Francis Xavier Church, Gardiner Street Parish, Dublin

Maura Dee sent ECI this report: Candle light and sunlight and the light of faith: we were delighted to host the Climate Justice Candle at Gardiner Street in April. It was a visible sign of the connection between the various faith communities who understand that it is the poorest who will suffer when

climate disasters strike. There have been several references to climate change in the news recently and it was good to raise awareness among parishioners that we have an Eco Parish team. The candle was delivered to Gardiner Street by Fran who travelled on the bus from Rathmines with it. When

Maura went to return it, she was delighted with the opportunity to meet Fran and learn first-hand of her and her husband's experience using solar power in their car and home. We were very proud to display the Climate Justice Candle in St Francis Xavier's Church. As Members of the Eco Parish Team it was a tangible link with other faith-based groups who are embracing the importance of taking action for

this precious earth that we all share.



St Kieran's, Cloughjordan

St Kieran's, Cloughjordan hosted the Climate Justice Candle on the 5th June. The theme of Climate Justice was fitting for Pentecost Sunday and its emphasis on the outpouring of the Holy Spirit-the same Spirit that moved over the face of the earth when the world was created. They also heard about their responsibility to care for all of God's Creation and were honoured to host the candle as it spreads its light across the country.



Since our last newsletter the following ECI Endeavour Certificate has been awarded: **Springfield Cluster of Parishes: Springfield, Fettercairn, Brookfield and Jobstown**. Well done to all!

Latest News ...

Knockbreda Belfast Community Garden Update

Latest news from Ken Orr: We had a gloriously sunny day for the first event at the new Community Garden at Rosetta, Belfast – our plant sale at the end of April. We had pulled out the all the stops to get as ready as possible, including finishing the decking around the wood-working shed to allow a local ukulele band to perform there. Bedding plants were obtained from a local nursery on a sale or return basis, refreshments were available, and the children were able to go pond-dipping and explore the garden. A great way to introduce ourselves to the neighbourhood as an inter-church, cross-community project.



Work is on-going as we look forward to our official Grand Opening on 25 June, complete with local representatives. We hope to complete the entrance pathway by then, and of course complete the planting of all the seedlings raised in the polytunnel – courgettes, peppers, sprouts, cabbages and so on. The strawberries are just ready for harvesting, and it's looking like a good crop in the orchard. We are set up to be a nature-friendly garden so it was very exciting to find a swarm of thousands of bees in a cherry tree last week – these are native Irish black bees, which are now resident in our fifth bee hive on-site. All the work is carried out by enthusiastic volunteers from the local community, including representatives from all the local churches, and aided by workers from the Community Service Division of the Probation Service. You can get more detail about our Opening Day from Ken Orr at <mailto:lkorr@fastmail.fm>

Diocese of Kerry ... 'Playing Our Part'

Sylvia Thompson sent ECI this update: The Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Committee hosted an exciting online event to mark Laudato Si' Week on 24 May. Parishioners and priests from across the diocese were invited to join a conversation about how we can play our part at parish level in responding to the call of Pope Francis to listen and respond to both the 'Cry of the Poor and the Earth'. Bishop Martin Hayes of Kilmore joined the event and took part in a question and answer session with two members of the Committee. Bishop Martin is the bishop tasked with helping and supporting the response of the Irish church to this urgent call by Pope Francis in Laudato Si'.



The participants heard about initiatives in two parishes in the Dingle pastoral area. In Camp 6 apple trees were planted and changes made to the grass mowing regime and in the other a biodiversity audit was completed and again changes made to the mowing regime allowing wonderful orchids and other wild flowers to bloom. Those present were also offered support and resources as needed by contacting desbailey@dioceseofkerry.ie and Bishop Ray Browne of the Diocese of Kerry offered the final words of encouragement and thanks. [You can watch a recording of the hour long event at this link.](#)

Creation Spirituality Retreat at Drumalis – Dying to Live

This creation spirituality retreat at Drumalis from 24-28 July, will be led by Srs Margaret Rose McSparran, Anne Harnett, Nellie McLaughlin and Coirle McCarthy. All information and registration details are on [the retreat flyer here](#).



Whitechurch Church of Ireland Parish, Dublin: Transformation of Church Grounds for Pollinators

Last year, Whitechurch Parish received their ECI Gold Award. Whitechurch Parish has shared a document outlining the transformation of the church grounds for pollinators and biodiversity. [You can read this document here.](#)



SAGE, Shankill Action for a Green Earth Biodiversity Borders

Beautiful biodiversity borders at Shankill! Can you spot the bees?



SMA Summer School 2022 – Sufficiency, Not Growth: Towards a Safe and Sustainable Future

You are cordially invited to attend the SMA Summer School. The SMA Summer School provides high-quality, evidence-based knowledge and insight on matters of social and environmental justice within a faith context, with a view to supporting those committed to advocating for more just and sustainable policies in Ireland. Since 1984, the Society of African Missions (SMA) has hosted an annual Summer School. Originally established for SMA Fathers on holiday from mission, since then the Summer School has been opened to the wider public.



**SMA Summer School 2022**
In collaboration with
The Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles

Sufficiency, Not Growth: Towards a Safe and Sustainable Future

The current system of constant growth, profit and consumption is ecocidal and socially destructive. Is there another way for us to live together on this planet, and to use its resources more justly, wisely and sustainably?

[Online Event](#)

Date: Saturday 18th and Sunday morning 19th June 2022

Speakers

Prof John Barry (QUB), Dr Anne B Ryan (MU), Dr Seán Healy SMA (Social Justice Ireland), Prof Sathbh O'Neill (DCU), Sr Colette Kane OP (An Tairseach), Dr Tom McDonnell (NERI), with Colette Bennett (Social Justice Ireland) as Chair.

[Book via www.sma.ie](http://www.sma.ie)

SMA Justice Office Email: justice@sma.ie

The focus for 2022 will be on the current ecocidal and socially destructive system of unconstrained growth, profit and consumption. We ask is there another way for us to live together on this planet, and to use its resources more justly, wisely and sustainably? The Summer School will take place on Saturday 18th and the morning of Sunday 19th of June 2022 via Zoom. We invite you to join us, and would be grateful if you would also pass this information on to others you think would be interested. This year's theme is: Sufficiency, Not Growth: Towards a Safe and Sustainable Future.

Speakers: Prof John Barry (QUB), Dr Seán Healy SMA (Social Justice Ireland), Dr Anne Ryan (MU), Prof Sathbh O'Neill (DCU), Dr Tom McDonnell (NERI), Sr Colette Kane OP (An Tairseach – Organic Farm and Ecology Centre) and Rachel Power (The Climate Reality Project). Chaired by Colette Bennett (Social Justice Ireland). To view full programme [CLICK HERE](#). To Book a place go to www.sma.ie and click on the Summer School 2022 icon on the top of the homepage.

Latest News from Carrigaline Union of Parishes

John Andrew sent ECI this update: On Rogation Sunday sunflower seeds were distributed to the children which they will plant and care for during the next few months. Hopefully they will have a beautiful tall sunflower in late summer! At harvest there will be prizes for the tallest sunflowers. Our Eco Group is embarking on a series of projects to enhance biodiversity in the church grounds at St Mary's, Carrigaline. All pesticides, herbicides and weed killers are banned from the church grounds which gives us a very good advantage. Our first step has been to enlarge and reseed the wild flower area to encourage pollinators, particularly bees. We are eagerly awaiting flowering!



Christian Aid Climate Change Loss and Damage Petition

Christian Aid Ireland have launched a petition calling for an International Fund for Loss and Damage. Climate-related flooding, storms, drought and sea level rise are causing huge financial losses and damages to nations that have done little to cause the climate crisis. Therefore, Christian Aid is calling for world leaders to back the setting up of an international fund to help those hardest hit by the climate crisis. You can sign and download copies of the petition on Christian Aid's website. Please sign and also circulate amongst your networks. caid.ie/lossanddamage



Among the Trees – Laudato Si' Week Celebrated by the Little Company of Mary Sisters, Salesian Cosmology Group and Limerick Diocese

To mark Laudato Si' week, the Little Company of Mary Sisters, the Salesian Cosmology Group, and Limerick Diocese collaborated to offer an opportunity of exploring the healing power of nature. 'Among the trees' was held on Sunday 29th May at the new 'Infinity Woodland Pathway' which has been created by the Little Company of Mary sisters on their own land, adjacent to Milford Care Centre. The experience included walking the pathway whilst pausing for reflective moments through poetry and learning about the trees and their attributes. People were invited to walk silently, in solidarity with indigenous people at risk of losing their land, for part of the walk. The group were invited for hospitality and further conversation afterwards. The Little Company of Mary sisters have planted more than 5,000 native trees providing a wonderful oasis for people to spend some peaceful, healing time among trees. The objective of their initiative is to enhance and protect biodiversity and native woodland habitat and to leave a legacy that will promote healing, spirituality, and education.



Latest News from Westport Eco-Congregation

Caroline Goucher sent ECI this update: Westport Eco-Congregation participated in a dynamic event on May 30th. Mayo County Council in partnership with the Mary Robinson Centre hosted a hybrid event to bring together Mayo people from around the world who are working to protect our planet. The event showcased Mayo people at home and abroad who are leading climate action at a local and global scale, and those involved in research, innovation and in developing solutions for the climate and biodiversity crisis. The Kenyan ambassador to Ireland addressed the event and spoke of the effects of climate change on his country. As part of the one-day event groups who are working at the grassroots were asked to create a two-minute video on their work – these videos were shown at intervals during the event. Westport Eco-Congregation produced a short video – all the videos are available on the Mary Robinson Centre website: <http://www.maryrobinsoncentre.ie/mayo-changemaker-showcase.html>



Westport Eco-Congregation continues to produce short pieces on climate action and climate justice weekly for the local newspaper and parish newsletter. Issues we have covered recently include Laudato Si' Week 2022, May 22-29, and protecting our beaches. [Follow us on our social media](#) to keep up to date on our efforts.

NI Creation Care Network Holds 18th Meeting

Bertie Stirling sent ECI this report: Creation Care Network had their 18th meeting in Monkstown Village Initiative on Saturday 23rd April. The meeting was opened with a Bible reading, prayer and reflection from Peter Harris's book 'Under Bright Wings'. Stephen gave us all a warm welcome with some tea and biscuits. Stephen outlined the structure of the faith based organisation 'Monkstown Village Initiative' and how it is reaching out to the local community. Folks then reported on what was happening where they were. We had stories of planting Jubilee woods at Ballylinney, a church fair at Knock Presbyterian, and explorations with wild flowers and swifts and ongoing eco retreats at Drumalis. As the farm aspect of Jubilee has now well established they are able to turn to the biodiversity side with the appointment of a 'Wildlife and Wellbeing Project Co-ordinator'. The community garden at Knockbreda Methodist & St John's coming to their first real harvest and still more recycling, planting and eco-tips at St. John's. An eco-service for all the community was held at Lowe Memorial Presbyterian and later a Easter 'LOAF' breakfast. The conservation reserves of Springmount and Hugh's Meadow N.R. are progressing, having had surveys of plants and birds done. A pond was dug, nest boxes positioned and various native trees planted, thanks to the local schools.

We had a very enjoyable and educational tour of the MVI community garden thanks to Margaret the gardener. This is an excellent recreational, educational, food producing space. It is not only friendly to humans but also to the other species which live around us. It supports and reaches out to various groups, churches, clubs and individuals in the local community.

We also had discussions about how government is going to implement its new Climate Strategy Bill and the growth of many Laudato Si animators. It was also good to hear about the various Repair Cafes popping up around the area. Next meeting to be at St John's Knockbreda in September/October. Reflection: How can we support our young Christian Eco-activists? If you would like to learn more and attend a meeting, contact bertie.stirling@arocha.org.



Latest News from Church of St Thérèse, Mount Merrion

Clodagh O'Reilly sent ECI this update: A group of about 12 parishioners gathered in the garden to mark World Biodiversity Week and Laudato Si Week 2022. After the Blessing parishioners read together the "Common Prayer for the 7th Anniversary of Laudato Si". This inspiring photo of Father Michael blessing the meadow garden adjacent to the church in Mount Merrion was taken by Kate Boylan.



Holy Family Church, Kill O'Grange Creates Care of the Environment Shrine

Nora Mary sent ECI this news: We, in Holy Family Church, Kill O' Grange have recently set up a special shrine dedicated to Care of the Environment. We are very aware that this is the seventh anniversary of the publication of Pope Francis' landmark encyclical – Laudato Si and also Laudato Si week. The shrine was blessed after Sunday Mass, so the whole congregation was involved. We are so happy to have this permanent special shrine so that all who come to the Church will be reminded of the 'Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor.'



During the week we also had the Ecological Way of the Cross which many in attendance found very meaningful. In addition, we have a St Francis Wild Flower Garden just outside the church. We are also ready for hosting the Eco-Congregation Special Climate candle during the Season of Creation. The framed posters behind the shrine can be read here: [Ethical Principles in the Cry of the Earth](#) and [Who is Under Our Carbon Footprint](#).

Orlagh-in-the-City Laudato Si' Eco Group Walk through the Woodlands

Lorcan McDermott sent ECI this latest news: Our recent walk through the woodlands in the An Tairseach Ecology Centre was fascinating. An Tairseach translates as The Threshold. It certainly seemed like we were walking into a very special place, a haven for biodiversity. Along the tracks there were hedgerows and shoulder high vegetation which, if elsewhere, might not have survived. On this mixed organic farm we also saw a wide range of vegetables being grown, the small suckler herd and a number of pigs. The produce is sold in Dublin and Bray markets as well as in the farm shop. Another aspect of An Tairseach's work was apparent during the recent Laudato Si' week in May. The centre hosted an online event on Faith Consistent Investing making the case for a more ecological economics.



Bonnybrook Care for the Earth Ministry – Latest Activities

Margo Delaney sent ECI this latest news. St Joseph the Artisan Parish in Bonnybrook Care for the Earth activities include:

1. Earth Day.
2. Built Dry Stone Cairn to coax solitary bees as tenants in the dry soil between the stones.
3. Issued invitation to celebrate Laudato Si' Week, May 22 – 29.
4. Joined in events to celebrate Laudato Si' Week. Joined in panel discussion on "What is happening to Laudato Si' ? held in the Margaret Aylward Centre for Faith and Dialogue.

Participated in events organised by Laudato Si' Movement:



May 23rd: No More Biodiversity Collapse: Rebalancing Social Systems with Nature

May 27th: Faith Consistent Investing -Living Laudato Si'

May 28th: Sneak Peek: Feature Documentary on Laudato Si'

5. Eucharist to conclude Laudato Si Week, adapting content from Laudato Si' prayer book to liturgy, and created sacred space to represent the richness of God's gift of creation that surrounds us in everyday life – mammals, pollinators, flowers.

6. Clean-up Day: Some parishioners, including members of the Care for the Earth group cleaned up the linear park, using materials supplied by the local council.



Photographic Exhibition – Caring for Our Common Home

"Caring for Our Common Home" is a photographic exhibition inspired by Human Rights Defenders and Laudato Si'. It includes portraits of people who are standing up to big business in defence of the environment and human rights in the countries where Trocaire works. This beautiful exhibition is on display in St. Laurence's Church, TUD Grangegorman Campus, Dublin. It will be open Monday – Friday, 10am – 4pm, from 1 June to 29 July 2022. Everyone is welcome!



Sonass Christ Community Garden

Sr Margaret has come to live in the Sonass Christ Community, Newbridge, Co. Kildare with the Holy Family Sisters of Bordeaux and they are conscious of the need to make their contribution to protecting the earth. They grow all kinds of vegetables to pansies and marigolds, with added attractions for the butterflies and bees!



Eco Quaker Munster Gathering – 23rd April 2022

Fran Brady, Quaker representative on the ECI committee, provided this report: On 23rd April 2022 the Eco Quaker Munster Gathering was held in Cork Meeting House, against the backdrop of the Loving Earth Project, an exhibition of textile panels created by Quakers to celebrate the earth and to highlight how the earth is endangered by climate change. Thirty-seven people attended. The objective of the Gathering was to encourage those present to be active on issues of climate justice, loss of biodiversity and other environmental concerns within their Quaker Meetings or Churches as well as in their everyday lives.



The Gathering opened with a period of reflection, when attendees could briefly share something about their environmental story. One nurse spoke of 80,000 trees planted by a County Cork nurse to offset the huge environmental footprint of health services. A Sabbath for the land every seven years and a Jubilee year after forty-nine years to give the land a rest was lauded.

The many and varied contributions set the tone for an inspiring Gathering, where three excellent speakers spoke on the topic: “From Disappointment to Hope: Actions and Responses to Climate Breakdown”.

Brian O Suilleabhan, Actor and Convenor of Eco Quaker Ireland Committee, charted the work of Eco-Quakers since the World Quaker Gathering in Peru called on Quakers to live out the changes needed to sustain the Earth as home to humans and the natural world. Following on this call, Ireland Yearly Meeting 2016 asked Meetings to develop sustainability plans no matter how simple. Twenty Quaker Meetings, two-thirds of all Meetings or Worship Groups, prepared plans. A booklet entitled Responding to IYM 2016: Living sustainably and fairly on this earth was published then by Eco Quakers and in 2020 Quakers and Ethical Investment was published. A survey of Meetings, early in lockdown, showed a willingness to be sustainable but a need for a blueprint. This revelation led to the researching, compiling and publishing, during 2021, of Regenerating our Common Home: Quaker Considerations for Restoration and Protection of the Environment. This book shows how our everyday activities can contribute to pollution, desertification, bio-diversity loss, extraction of fossil fuel and climate change. A step by step guide as to how to make a difference within and outside our Meetings, the book provides definitions and calculations for sustainability, carbon zero, carbon neutral and many other concepts. The final chapter is a case study of the eco-refurbishment of Cork Meeting House, which provided Eco-Quakers with a wonderful space for the Gathering.

Andrew Orr, Anglican Priest-in-Charge of Youghal Union, Chaplain to Midleton College and Chair of Eco-Congregation Ireland spoke about Eco-Congregation Ireland, founded in 2005, to encourage and mentor churches and congregations along their sustainable journeys. ECI's affiliated congregations are Roman Catholic, Church of Ireland, Presbyterian and Methodist Churches and the Society of Friends (Quakers). Environmental measures can be incorporated into all aspects of life: Spiritual, Practical, Community and Global. It's under these headings that congregations are assessed for an ECO Award. A Gold Award has been initiated for congregations who accomplish exceptional environmental work after their initial award and who mentor another congregation. The gift of God's creation is celebrated especially at the Season of Creation and Harvest Time while Climate Justice Candles raise awareness of environmental justice in churches and congregations. Andrew spoke about the challenges, and opportunities, of endeavouring to make buildings and land as sustainable as possible. Climate Stewards, a web-based tool, enables churches

to measure the carbon footprint of different activities; energy, travel, food, waste, water and other expenditure. <https://360carbon.org/en-gb/> The All Ireland Pollinator Plan, an initiative to aid bio-diversity and sustainable land use, is ideal for churchyards and burial grounds.

Farmer, Caroline Robinson, who has been growing food without chemicals for nearly quarter of a century, said it is humbling to work with nature and iterated that if chemicals are avoided land gets better and better. Her belief is that healthy soil results in healthy vegetables, rather than trying to feed vegetables planted in impoverished soil. There is freedom and independence attached to growing food especially in the current world situation. Caroline and her husband produce local food for local people, making their food available at local Farmers' Markets. In the small group discussions, and the plenary session which followed, food sovereignty, including indigenous food sovereignty, featured strongly. Indigenous crops grown over many years regenerated land rather than depleting it. Indigenous people have much to teach us about food and farming. Though climate scientists often overlook traditional knowledge, conglomerate farmers are devoid of the innate knowledge and wisdom gained over generations, which keep small farming systems in balance. Food conglomerates tend to homogenise food systems, reduce variety of crops and ignore natural harmony.

Andrew finished his talk with a quote from the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople: *The real crisis lies not in the environment – which suffers the consequences of our actions – but in the human heart. The fundamental problem is to be found not outside but inside ourselves, not in the ecosystem but in the way we think about, perceive, and treat this ecosystem.*

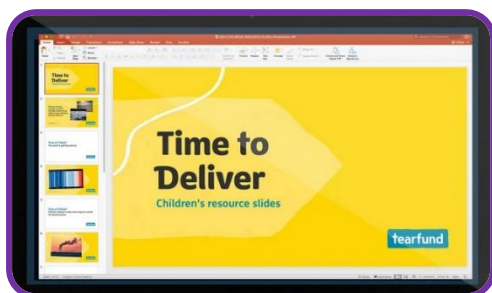
Act For Nature at Hugh's Meadow, Parkgate, Co Antrim

Join A Rocha's Act for Nature day at Hugh's Meadow to encounter nature up close and learn about how you can help nature on your doorstep – 23 July 2022 at 10am. Learn how to care for nature at one of A Rocha UK's Partners in Action, Hugh's Meadow nature reserve. Come along to receive training on specific areas of conservation and enjoy nature up close! During the event there will be opportunities to meet A Rocha UK staff and volunteers, and to ask questions. All info

here: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/act-for-nature-at-hughs-meadow-tickets-320540614607>



Helpful Resources



Time to Deliver Church Resources from Tearfund!

Do you want to help people understand the climate emergency and put their love for God and our global neighbours into action? To help you do this, Tearfund has written an example talk that you can use or adapt for your church, along with a children's talk, activity sheets and extra resources. You can download these here <https://tinyurl.com/47np9wy3>. If you have any questions, or if there's anything else Tearfund can support you with, do get in touch at campaigns@tearfund.org.

Build in Hope, Plant in Faith Retreat

Rosalinde Schut from [Walk of Leaf](#), will be co-facilitating this retreat at Manresa, the Jesuit Centre of Spirituality in Dublin on Sunday 26 June 2022. Participants will get the chance to pray, reflect, engage with nature and each other. More information about the day and how to book can be found here: <https://www.manresa.ie/day-retreats/build-in-hope-plant-in-faith>. All welcome!



Upcoming forest bathing walk - Sunday 10 July in the beautiful grounds of Castletown House, Celbridge, Co. Kildare. Morning walk, 10.30am-1pm.

For more info and booking: <https://www.eventbrite.ie/e/329577985627>.

Eco Challenge!

Using Faith for Transformative Change

The planet is crying out for urgent, decisive action to halt climate breakdown, biodiversity collapse, and unsustainable development. The world's major faith traditions can play a crucial role in helping to ensure a safe and sustainable planet for all.

Inspiring movement and positive change is key to assuring that the world passed onto future generations will be one that, not just survives, but thrives. The faiths are often described as ocean liners: they take a while to turn and shift, but once they do, the carrying capacity for change is incredibly large. It is this capacity that the Faith Plans programme harnesses to bring about universal and transformative change.



The [Faith Plans](#), a programme organised by FaithInvest, are commitments by the world's major faiths to develop real-world, long-term environmental action plans on key issues including climate change, the biodiversity crisis and sustainable development. They involve faiths aligning how they use and manage their assets and resources with caring for people and planet – from investments, buildings, education systems, youth centres, to land, purchasing power, influence, advocacy, and wisdom.

The Faith Plans provide a timely opportunity for communities and organisations across the world to use the richness of their faith as a catalyst for transformation. Today, [commitments have been made](#) from a wide range of traditions including Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Daoist, Hindu, Islamic, Jewish, and Sikh faiths. From individual grass-roots communities to national level organisations, faith communities are driving action that will collectively inspire and motivate others to do the same.

Would you like to join this growing Movement at this crucial time in the planet's history? Visit www.faithplans.org where you can [register your interest and commitment](#) in the programme, read [exciting and inspiring stories](#), and discover [past and upcoming events](#). The importance of faith in environmental action was a key focus during events co-hosted by FaithInvest and other communities at COP26 in Glasgow, Nov 2021.

Prayers/Reflections for the Earth

'Living for a Change' by Revd. David White

(These notes are for Session Two of the online event 'Irish Writers Centre Climate Writing Group: Writing for a Change').

As a child I was blessed by growing up in the countryside. The green fields of my youth were to be a gift which has never ceased to bless how I experience the world. While back then I took being surrounded by nature for granted, I look back now and see that I was being formed in ways that continue to bear fruit. This evening as we think about climate and writing and our place in all of that, I offer you the title 'Living for a Change'. The past couple of years have been tough and sometimes, like all of us, I



felt that I wasn't living at all. Then came release and freedom and the realisation that something had to change, I had to change.

Wonder

But going back to the fields of North County Dublin. At the heart of my childhood experience was a sense of wonder which has never really left me. And when I first read a poem by Mary Oliver – the great poet of wonder – it resonated with me deeply. Here it is:

I Wake Close To Morning (Mary Oliver, Felicity)

Why do people keep asking to see
 God's identity papers
when the darkness opening into morning
 is more than enough?
Certainly any god might turn away in disgust.
Think of Sheba approaching
 the kingdom of Solomon.
Do you think she had to ask,
 "Is this the place?"

Creation & Incarnation

That sense of God's presence and vitality in the world led me to study theology and later to become ordained in the Church of Ireland. In my studies I learned that biblical doctrines, far from stifling the spiritual life, have the potential to give depth to things we might already know intuitively. The biblical doctrines that come to mind this evening are Creation and Incarnation.

Creation is the beginning and the foundation of all God's works. In the first words of our Bible we read, 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.' It was Saint Augustine who wrote that 'the world began when God's word drew it out of nothingness; all existent beings, all of nature, and all human history are rooted in this primordial event, the very genesis by which the world was constituted, and time begun.' When we look at the order and harmony of the created world, we must remember that this is from the diversity of beings and from the relationships which exist among them.

Incarnation reminds us that God becoming a human being, means that all creation is imbued with a dignity and esteem which is beyond human language and conceptualisation. This sense of mystery is reflected in our sacramental worship when we seek to commune with the Creator. In our liturgy we use water, bread wine, human touch, oil, wood, incense, flowers, human words in order to deepen and broaden our life in the Divine. This sense of mystery engenders respect, a sense of responsibility and then concern for the created order as we face up to what is happening on our planet and all that lives on it.

Five Marks of Mission

One way in which Anglicans try to make sense of their identity, and understand our place in the world, is through our use of the Five Marks of Mission. These were developed over the period 1984 to 2012 and continue to be reviewed up to the present time. The Fifth mark of mission is: To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

Climate change, irresponsible use of natural resources, pollution, loss of biodiversity are just some of the challenges facing the natural world. When we face challenges which appear to be overwhelming it can be difficult to know where to begin. However, as we all know the best way to make a difference is to model the change that we want to see. Rather than shirk our responsibility we step up and step out.

The most helpful resource which I came across was the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan. It's simple, straightforward, and full of ideas for getting started. It can be accessed at: www.pollinators.ie

The other place of course to find encouragement is Eco Congregation Ireland. Their four-strand approach - Practical, Spiritual, Global and Local – reflects the holistic work of being good tenants on the earth. More at: www.ecocongregationireland.com

‘Living for a Change’

Finally, for my own spiritual nourishment I’ve been reading an inspirational book by Robin Wall Kimmerer who describes herself as ‘a mother, scientist, decorated professor, and enrolled member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation.’ She lives in Syracuse, New York, and has, I think, the mind of a botanist and the heart of a poet. I’ll give her the final word this evening as we think a little about what it means to be ‘Living for a Change’.

‘Let us hold a giveaway from Mother Earth, spread our blankets out for her and pile them high with gifts of her own making. Imagine the books, the paintings, the poems, the clever machines, the compassionate acts, the transcendent ideas, the perfect tools. The fierce defence of all that has been given. Gifts of mind, hands, heart, voice, and vision all offered up on behalf of the earth. Whatever our gift, we are called to give it and to dance for the renewal of the world. In return for the privilege of breath.’

(Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teaching of Plants* (Penguin, 2013) p. 384)

Writing for a Change is a series of information and writing sessions for a disparate group of writers. The overall theme is awareness of the planet and encouraging writers to promote positive climate solutions in their work. Six sessions of 2 hours’ duration will take place throughout 2022 and will be open to writers of every genre, not just those who write about climate change. More information at: irishwriterscentre.ie

A Reflection by Fr Hugh O’Donnell – Slow Lane Apple Blossom

This reflection is dedicated to Catherine Brennan SSL for her embodiment of the vision of Eco-Congregation Ireland.

In early summer I looked out the window to see the apple tree crowned in blossom. What came to me then was the assurance of the mystics that God reveals God’s self in the tree as tree, in the blossom as blossom.

So as we recognise in the apple tree a sister or mother made with the same loving care as we are, we are also somehow aware that in this encounter we are in the presence of the God of creation.

Though everything is woven into everything else, more often than not, our seeing can be destructive and dismissive as we look upon the natural world, in Tom Berry’s phrase, not as ‘a communion of subjects but as a collection of objects.’ In other words, when we don’t applaud the tree for its very being which is beyond our comprehension.

Of course we can buy apples in a plastic bag in any supermarket but that they connect to the apple tree in flower escapes us. We are mostly consumers and less often celebrants of creation attending to the voices and multi-presences of God.

The Irish poet, Joseph Mary Plunkett, was not being sentimental when he wrote; ‘I see his face in every flower. The thunder and the singing of the birds are but his voice’. It might take us longer to appreciate that ‘rocks are his written words’ until, with the help of a geologist like John Feehan, we learn to recognise in them the living text of ‘God’s old diaries’!



'The Bright Field' by R S Thomas

This poem, 'The Bright Field', was read at a recent ECI committee meeting. R S Thomas served in the Church of St Hywyn in Aberdaron on the western tip of the Llŷn Peninsula in the Welsh county of Gwynedd.

I have seen the sun break through
to illuminate a small field
for a while, and gone my way
and forgotten it. But that was the
pearl of great price, the one field that had
treasure in it. I realise now
that I must give all that I have
to possess it. Life is not hurrying

on to a receding future, nor hankering after
an imagined past. It is the turning
aside like Moses to the miracle
of the lit bush, to a brightness
that seemed as transitory as your youth
once, but is the eternity that awaits you.



With kindest regards,

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