



Dear Friends of Eco-Congregation Ireland

Welcome to the Winter/Early Spring 2023 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 Annual Review 2022 Available!

The Eco-Congregation Ireland Annual Review 2022 is now online – [read it here!](#) It includes ECI's highlights for 2022, including presentation of awards in 2022, online gathering, the journey of our Climate Justice Candles and much more!



Awards! Awards!

An Gáirdín, Portumna Receives ECI Award!

Noreen Lyons provided this inspiring report: On Sunday 2nd October An Gáirdín were overjoyed to be presented with the Eco-Congregation Ireland Award! They marked the event by unveiling a Mural of the Universe Story. The mural painted by artist Izabela Campbell illustrates the story from the Great Flaring Forth approximately 13½ billion years ago to the emergence of the human approximately 2½ billion years ago. Izabela worked dedicatedly on the mural during the summer months, grabbing every possible dry spell. The mural covers the unsightly shed walls, once the cow-byres of St. Mary's Rural Domestic Economy School for over 150 years from the late 19th century to the 1980's. The finished work is beautiful and embodies the energy of the great story. They hope it will be an awareness-raising and educational resource into the future. And of course the paints used are natural and do not contain chemicals.



It was afternoon and the weather obliged all on the day. They gathered in the special circle space for introductions and then walked in silence to the mural. Róisín and Breeda, the faithful volunteers narrated the story as Francis gracefully unveiled each section, sometimes accompanied by nonintrusive movement, music or drumming. The narration concluded with Jonathan singing John Seed's 'Evolving Universe'.

Then came the presentation of the Eco-Congregation Ireland Award by Fr. Brian Grogan SJ, author of 'Finding God in a Leaf' and 'Creation Walk'. He congratulated An Gáirdín for their 30 years of journeying towards rediscovering our place in the whole community of life and for our commitment to inviting others into this vision. He quoted inspirational sections from Laudato Si. He spoke about Eco-Congregation Ireland and their work of encouragement and affirmation with parishes and groups. Sr. Anne accepted the award plaque on behalf of An



Gáirdín and on behalf of all the volunteers, individuals, families, and organisations who are being inspired to reconnect with planet Earth.

The origin and background to the plaque was explained. The plaque was made at the Grassmarket Community Project in Edinburgh. This project takes an innovative approach to creating community and providing sanctuary and support to the participants, many of whom are the most vulnerable of their citizens. They learn skills which enable them to develop to their full potential and move away from cycles of failure. The wood is sourced from recycled church seats and kneelers from throughout Scotland. Thereby it carries the prayer of worshippers for possibly hundreds of years and will continue to carry the meditation and reflections of An Gáirdín for years to come.



There was singing and music from local musicians as all moved indoors, and mingled as all partook of the delicious variety of home-baking. All were thanked for helping to make the day special by their attendance and for helping out in the preparation of the event.

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

Sunday, 11th February, was a special day in the Parish of Our Lady and St John in Carrigaline. Bishop Fintan Gavin presented them with the Eco-Congregation Ireland Parish Award at the 11.15am Mass. Symbols were carried to the altar in the entrance procession and placed in the sanctuary by 4 young people. Janet Twomey, chair of the parish eco group, read a commentary.



Conor brought a large globe representing the global family and our common home. Pope Francis reminds us that the earth is God's gift to us but never has it been so mistreated by human activity as it is today. May we always remember how precious it is. Chloe brings a cactus plant, symbol of life, beauty and hope. It grows in the desert in the midst of great challenges. Evan brings a copy of the final report presented to ECI which shows what can be achieved when people work together.



The final symbol was the ECI award itself, a wooden plaque. This plaque is made from recycled church pews in Scotland by a project that supports vulnerable men. The plaque carries the prayers of 1000s of people over 100s of years and will continue to carry prayer for our common home in Carrigaline Parish for many years to come. Catherine Brennan, Catholic representative with ECI praised the efforts made by the Care of the Earth group to make environmental awareness and actions an integral part of parish life, through planting, rewilding, caring, waste management, reusing, signing petitions and forging links with schools and the particular needs of the local community. She noted too, their need to explore ways to use more renewable forms of energy to heat the church and other parish buildings.



The picture above right with Fran Deasy holding her baby Ide is a gentle reminder of the importance of intergenerational justice. Click on this link to read an article about the event – [Carrigaline Parish receives prestigious award for environmental endeavours \(echolive.ie\)](https://www.echolive.ie/carrigaline-parish-receives-prestigious-award-for-environmental-endeavours)

ECI Climate Justice Candle Visits ...



Mercy International Association, Dublin

Máire Hearty sent us this update: We were delighted to have the ECI Climate Justice Candle as part of our remembrance prayer service on November 11th. It was the anniversary of the death of the foundress of the Sisters of Mercy: Catherine McAuley. She died on 11th November, 1841. We combined that commemoration with a prayer service remembering all those who have died in the past year. It was wonderful to have the ECI Climate Justice Candle as another light shining hope in our lives and in our world. Our Advent retreatants were also delighted to share in the light of the Climate Justice Candle, reminding of the star which featured in our retreat: Journeying with the Magi.

St Anne's Parish, Shankill

Kathie and Patrick Davey sent this report: St Anne's Church, Shankill, had the honour of hosting the ECI Climate Justice Candle in the second half of January. We took this opportunity to share it with the three Primary Schools in the village, Rathmichael C of I NS and St. Anne's and Scoil Mhuire Catholic schools. They were all delighted to be offered this chance and used it in their classes and assemblies. The children from St Anne's and Scoil Mhuire



also took part in the Sunday Family Mass, bringing the lighted candle up in procession and reading the prayers of intercession at the Offertory. At the end of Mass Justin Kilcullen, founder member of SAGE (Shankill Action for a Green Earth) and retired CEO of Trocaire, summed up the message of the Candle as "Live simply so others may Simply Live". After the morning Masses, members of SAGE gave out sprigs of rosemary and bay leaves with copies of this pledge : ***I pledge myself to live responsibly and use only my fair share of the Earth's resources. I will try to live simply so that others may simply live, to redress the injustice of climate change.*** There was a good atmosphere of "Buy-in" from the congregation to the meaning of the candle. and an element of "pleased surprise"

to the free herbs!! [Visit the ECI website to view all their photos.](https://www.eci.ie/)

Knock Shrine

Knock Shrine was delighted to host the ECI Climate Justice Candle! They shared the news of the Climate Justice Candle with their email subscribers, over 46,000 people. Fr Richard also announced the details at Mass in the Parish Church. The ECI climate justice candle has been in Knock for the past few months. The candle is a reminder of how crucial it is that action is taken NOW — for the millions of climate refugees already suffering as a direct result of climate change, for future generations and for the whole of Creation.



Christ Church, Bray, Co Wicklow

David Reynolds sent us this news: The ECI Climate Justice Candle visited Christ Church, Bray, Co Wicklow as part of a Climate Justice Service in January. We were delighted to be addressed by Jenny Salmon, one of our own parishioners. Jenny, a law student, has been selected as Concern Worldwide's Youth Climate Ambassador, and attended COP27 in Egypt in that rôle. Jenny walked us through the history of COP meetings, the Paris Agreement, and the largely unfulfilled promises that resulted. She also spoke about the new Loss and Damage Fund for vulnerable countries, and sitting in at the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Foreign Affairs which discussed Ireland's contribution. She reminded us to raise the issue contributions whenever we meet politicians. Jenny went on to talk about some of the personal interactions she had along the way. She spoke about meeting delegates from Tanzania on the flight from Cairo, then later encountering them at a meeting with Colm Brophy, our then Minister for Overseas Development Aid. When she asked them what she should do, they said "God put you on the plane to meet us. Now use your voice".

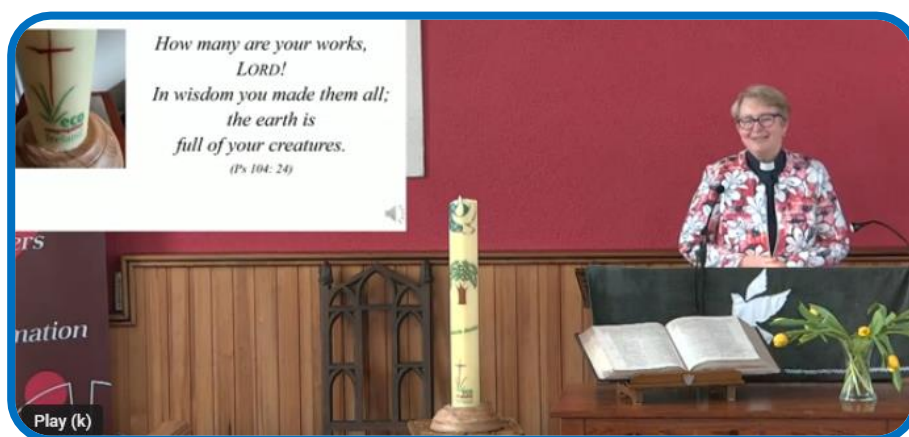


The Ecumenical St Brigid's Day Service in Kildare

Philip McKinley sent us this report: St Brigid of Kildare has experienced a remarkable revival of interest, spurred on by her new Bank Holiday and the 1500th anniversary celebrations of her death in 2023/24. Against this backdrop, St Brigid's Cathedral, Kildare (Church of Ireland) and St Brigid's Parish Church (Roman Catholic) organised a special ecumenical St Brigid's Day service, in the Parish Church which focussed on climate justice, a theme close to St Brigid's heart. The Eco-Congregation Climate Justice Candle made its way from Bray, Co Wicklow to Kildare for the service and a number of other Eco-Congregation worship resources were used as part of the service. Led by Fr Andy Leahy and Rev Philip McKinley, with music from the Kildare Town Community School and the Cathedral Choir, the service encouraged all in attendance to follow in St Brigid's footsteps and guard the resources of creation.

Gorey Methodist Church

Gorey Methodist Church used the ECI Climate Justice Candle as part of their environment and climate awareness service on 5 February 2023. You can view the service on YouTube here – <https://youtube.com/live/r9RV2Mt4HQo>.



St George's Parish, Belfast

Eleanor Maynard sent us this report: The ECI Climate Justice Candle was in a prominent position under the pulpit and lit for every Service. Many prayers were said about the environment and our need to protect God's Creation mentioned in several sermons. One new initiative to encourage less buying of unnecessary gifts, was our Give and Take Table. Items which were new or in excellent condition were donated and if anyone wanted them for themselves or as gifts for others they could take them.



Some people gave a donation to the Bishops Appeal. We encouraged folk to buy Christmas presents from Charity Shops or give alternative gifts or at least buy local handmade gifts. I hope we can continue promoting this in future years. The Vestry may also be considering new larger projects. People were encouraged too to use recycled paper or that which can be recycled and to steer clear of glitter etc. Thank you for the opportunity to have the ECI Climate Justice Candle which I hope has sparked more interest in protecting the environment and will continue to do so.



ECI Awareness Certificates 2023: First Portadown Presbyterian Church has received their Awareness Certificate!

Latest News from ...

Blessington Parish

Carmel O'Neill sent us this latest update: The annual crib exhibition takes place in Blessington Parish Centre from Dec 17th -20th with cribs on display representing places and cultures from around the world. Local parishioners and clergy donate their own unique crib for the exhibition with over 100 cribs on display. This event is of great interest to the local schoolchildren who enjoy the multicultural dimension as well as the variety of materials used in the creation of the Nativity figures. This year the exhibition raised €200 which was sent to Fr Alan Neville who is working with children affected by climate change in Sudan. This was in addition to the €200 raised from the annual mass of Harvest thanksgiving. Fr Alan was most grateful for these contributions which allow him to educate more children in their local school. The children are given one meal a day and this provides an incentive to come to school and receive a good education.



Following a meeting with members of Blessington parish eco ministry, it was decided to mount a collage of photographs in all 3 churches of the events which took place during the Season of Creation. We hope that this will keep the wider parish community informed on the development of this initiative which was established just 3 years ago at the beginning of Covid. We hope that it will also encourage those who have an interest in the environment and care of the earth to partake in upcoming events. We plan to have a guest speaker speak at mass during

lent on Pope Francis encyclical Laudato Si.

Westport Eco-Congregation

Westport Eco-Congregation is honoured to have Martin Palmer, Founding President & Chief Executive of the non-profit network FaithInvest deliver a talk entitled 'FAITH IN THE FUTURE', on Zoom on Monday, March 6th starting at 7.30pm. Martin was a member of the panel at their recent screening of "THE



LETTER” and his views and wisdom on matters environmental and the role faiths can play here, left many of present wanting more.

Martin’s talk will be an optimistic and forward-looking exploration of faith-aligned solutions to climate change and other major issues of our time which, he says is embodied by the quote from the recent Global Joy Summit “Perhaps the best is yet to come!” If we try and live with that notion, then the issues about the future are not just about addressing the crises but about having a vision of what could be rather than just what has to be prevented. This approach – and more – will be addressed to convey how, in a world where we increasingly celebrate and recognise the role of diversity, the diversity of economic models, which the faiths have, could be one of the most important rediscoveries possible. Martin’s talk will last approximately 45 mins, with 30 – 40 mins for Q&A afterwards.

Martin Palmer was the Secretary General of the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC) until June 2019. ARC was founded with HRH Prince Philip in 1995 to help faiths develop environmental and conservation projects based on their own beliefs and practices. Although ARC closed in 2019, having achieved its major goals, its legacy includes FaithInvest and WWF’s International Beliefs and Values Programme. Martin is an international specialist on all major faiths and religious traditions and cultures. He is the author and editor of more than 20 books on religious and environmental topics. He has translated many ancient Chinese texts, is a regular contributor to the BBC, and is a lay preacher in the Church of England. He has been working with the faiths on their investment programmes since 2001.

VENUE: On Zoom

DATE and TIME: Monday, March 6th, 2023, at 7.30pm

BOOKING: Please email westportecocongregation@gmail.com with your name and email address. They will forward the Zoom link to you nearer to the date of the event. **This is an event not to be missed!**

Westport Eco-Congregation also held an event on 21 February at 7.30pm in Westport Town Hall Theatre when Kevin Hargedon and Dr Ciara Murphy travelled to Westport to carry out a workshop based on their recent publication – *Parish as an Oasis*. It was an informative and exciting event.

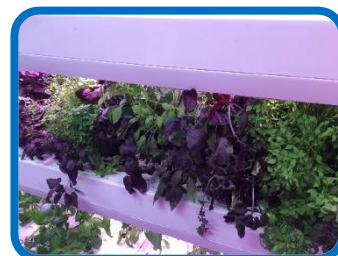
Blessing of the Animals in Newcastle, Co Down

Finbarr Keaveney sent us this news: Here is a link to a 4 minute video of the blessing of the animals in Newcastle, County Down on Sunday 6th November 2022 - https://youtu.be/uUqET_W69Bk and [here is the link to the resource we used](#). We displayed posters at the event to raise awareness that everything is connected in the great web of life.



Corrymeela Climate Justice Group

Glenise Morgan sent us this latest news: Several members of the Corrymeela Climate Justice Group were represented at a weekend in Dublin organised by Pádraig Swan, member of the Dublin Cell Group and teacher at Belvedere



College. Half of the events were centred on the environment and sustainability. Several of us joined boys from Belvedere, other pupils and adults outside Dáil Éireann for the regular “Fridays for Future” gatherings, inspired by Greta Thunberg. The hoots of support from quite a lot of drivers were encouraging!



Next was a fascinating visit to the “Urban Farm” at Belvedere. We went through a Grow Chamber where sustainable crops, such as microgreens, salads and herbs, using an aquaponics system are produced. Fish are bred and live in a tank of water which is filtered and after extraction of the nutrients used to grow the crops, then returns to the tank. Coffee grounds are used to grow mushrooms and there is also a roof-top teaching apiary. The boys are enthusiastically learning about a number of relevant subjects, including circular economies. This is set to be an international innovation hub in the field of project-based learning.

In the evening we saw the film *The Letter*, <https://www.theletterfilm.org/> It tells the story of a journey to Rome of a small diverse group of frontline leaders, to discuss the encyclical letter *Laudato Si'* with Pope Francis. The film contains upsetting stories but places emphasis on the humanity in us all that gives hope for the future. The message is: “Together, we care for our common home, the planet”. Do watch it!

The lively panel discussion that followed, included young activists from Belvedere as well as the Minister for Environment, Climate, Communications and Transport, Eamon Ryan. We were also lucky enough to have the President of the *Laudato Si'* Movement Board of Directors, Dr. Lorna Gold, who appeared in the film. Lorna, originally from Scotland, worked for Trócaire for 20 years, and is now a part-time lecturer in Maynooth University and an independent consultant on climate justice.

It was most encouraging to see the engagement of the boys in both practical activities and philosophical discussions and we were most grateful to Pádraig and the Dublin Cell group for their hospitality.

St Joseph the Artisan Parish, Bonnybrook

Margo Delaney sent us this update: For the Season of Lent, we are focusing on relationships. Pope Francis' letter, *Laudato Si'*, to “all people” tells us that: “a sense of deep communion with the rest of nature cannot be real if our hearts lack tenderness, compassion and concern for our fellow human beings”. To develop that theme, we repurposed our Acts of Love for Lent Tree as our Living Word Tree. Sunday, January 22nd was designated as Living Word Sunday. On that day, parishioners were asked to place a word, phrase, or sentence that for them is a source of wisdom, hope or courage in living their lives on the Living Word Tree. These “living words” will be shared on our Eco aware web page during the Lenten Season.

Bonnybrook Eco Aware Notice Board: The winning sculpture entry in the recent church art competition has been repurposed for our church notice board. Created by Chloe to show a smiling, joyful earth to the right and a sad, smoke threatened, polluted earth to the left. The many colourful hands, cut from the model of the family's children's hands, show children pleading: SAVE OUR WORLD. Significant dates coming up: Season of Lent: February 22nd – April 5th: invite parishioners to participate in any of the following:



SPIRITUAL

Start reading or reread Pope Francis' encyclical letter, *Laudato Si'*.

Pray daily for people and countries affected by climate change and loss of biodiversity.

Spend time with creation, thinking God for this amazing gift.

PRACTICAL

Avoid food waste.

Meatless Monday: Have one day a week that is meatless.

Cut down on your carbon footprint by buying local and in-season produce as far as possible.

Clothes: buy only what you need and donate any item of clothing you haven't worn for a year to a charity shop.

Don't be shy to purchase "preloved clothes" in the interests of sustainability.

COMMUNITY

Set up/ join a reading group on Laudato Si'.

Organise a group to view THE LETTER, a film that explains the inspiration for LS.

Plant sunflower seeds.

GLOBAL

As mentioned above, pray daily for all those who are losing their livelihoods and even their lives due to climate change and loss of biodiversity.

Church of St Thérèse, Mount Merrion

Clodagh O'Reilly sent us this update: On January 26th, we arranged a screening of Pope Francis' climate documentary "The Letter", in Mount Merrion Community Centre. On February 1st we took part in the St Brigid's Feast Day "Pause for Peace" – a global callout for one minute's silence for peace at 12 midday. Initiated by Solas Bhride Centre and the people of Kildare.



Diocese of Kerry and St John's Care of Creation Group

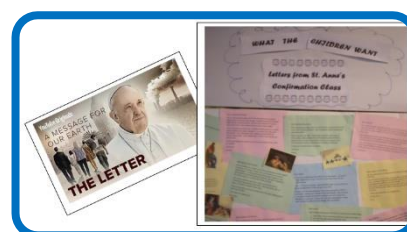
Sylvia Thompson sent us this update: Like other places, promotion of The Letter film-documentary has been top of the agenda recently. Killorglin parish was first on 24th November with both a screening for the parish and later for the senior cycle of three schools, two in Killorglin and one in nearby Miltown. The Parish priest of Miltown, Kevin Sullivan, had in fact attended the Rome launch on October 4th. The parish kindly passed their 2 very large promotional signs to St John's parish Tralee, where the Care of Creation group hosted a screening on 27 January. On both occasions, local Trócaire volunteers were present to highlight Trócaire's work in various countries with eg climate resistant crops, and to distribute the pledge card after the film. In Killarney, St Brendan's Secondary school, also screened it to senior cycle students leading to the setting up of a 'Letter' committee in the school. Now planning is underway for a Killarney parish screening in conjunction with the Trócaire Diocesan representative. It is hoped that other parishes and schools will also show it.



In the interim, the weekly Radio Kerry Religious and Social Affairs magazine programme, 'Horizons' (Sundays 9am-10am, with podcasts available on www.dioceseofkerry.ie) continues to highlight events and issues from climate refugees to local biodiversity walks, from both secular and faith based groups. We all want to care for our common home and need to do it together.

Springfield Parish Cluster in Tallaght

Maureen Ferguson sent us this update: During Advent the children in the Confirmation class in St. Anne's School, Fettercairn viewed the film THE LETTER. As follow-up they wrote letters to the adults in the parish for Christmas. In these letters they listed all the ways in which the adults need to change their everyday habits in order to ensure a habitable planet for them as they grow up. The letters were displayed beside the crib under the title 'What the Children Want'.



Balally Parish

Orla Davin-Carroll sent us this latest news: On January 29th there was a very well attended screening of Pope Francis' Laudato Si film "The Letter – a message for our planet" in our parish church, the Church of the Ascension of the Lord, Balally, Dublin 16. This powerful and moving film was introduced by Rev. Dermot Lane, retired PP of Balally, who has written and spoken prophetically for many years on ecological concern. Enthusiastic presentations of their environmental school projects by four children from the two parish primary schools, preceded the screening of the film.



After the very attentive audience had seen the film, the initial response was a stunned silence, followed by heartfelt applause. Then, over a cup of tea in the parish pastoral centre, there was much discussion of the urgent climate justice and biodiversity issues raised by the film and everyone went home with some suggestions of the actions we all need to take to fight further climate damage, to support those whose lives are already being devastated by climate change and to preserve the earth for future generations.

Other News ...

Mercy & Vita: Delivering Ecological Responsibility in East Africa

It is difficult to imagine a clean and sanitary environment without water. However, in rural Ethiopia, many communities lack such access. Reaching a source of water can take several hours on foot in Amhara. Water sources are often shared with livestock, resulting in unsafe and contaminated water. To purify this water, a lot of firewood is needed in boiling it. The daunting task of fetching water is mostly left to women and girls. One such woman is Ateref Amisalu, a 31-year-old mother of four. Her source of water was "Lol Minch", a dirty and open water spring.



"Since the old water point broke seven years ago, I fetched water from unprotected springs. The water was contaminated with worms and germs which caused diseases in the community," says Ateref. This ordeal is now a thing of the past as Vita is repairing all broken water points and securing spare parts for them in Amhara.



"We now have safe and clean water in our community through the newly fixed water points," says Ateref. She adds that since fixing of the water points commenced, diseases at household and community level have drastically reduced.

"I feel highly satisfied with my children's health. My children and those of my friends no longer suffer from water-borne diseases. I am very grateful to Vita and the Sisters of Mercy for providing my community with water," says Ateref.

Vita – with support from Sisters of Mercy- has been fixing broken water points and securing spare parts in Ethiopia through a partnership that spans 14 years. Together we have implemented significant and impactful programmes in Ethiopia which have benefited more 260,000 women and their families, and over one million more people indirectly, through a variety of life-transforming programmes.

The provision of clean and safe water to communities is reducing demand for firewood needed to purify water by boiling for long periods of time. This is saving trees and other forms of life that depend on forests for their survival.

In addition to the water projects, The Sisters of Mercy in Ireland, Northern Ireland, Canada and the USA are supporting Vita in rolling out improved cookstove in Ethiopia. The cookstoves, which are 60% more efficient compared to the traditional three stone open fire, are further reducing the number of trees cut for firewood. This is a practical way of implementing the Mercy values of ecological responsibility that protects the earth, reduces poverty and hardships for women and their families.

The provision of clean water and improved cookstoves is creating sustainable livelihoods for women and improving the quality of life for families in Africa. Women and girls no longer walk long distances to fetch water and firewood. Girls' school attendance has improved, and women now have more time to engage in social, livelihood and religious activities such as catching up with friends, poultry keeping and church meetings. The Sisters of Mercy have made this possible. Their generous support enables us to protect our common home while lifting communities especially women out of poverty.

Climate Stewards' Carbon Fast for Lent

Want to take climate action this Lent? This Lent, why not try a new challenge? The Climate Stewards Carbon Fast is a great opportunity to take small steps to protect the climate, and form habits that could last a lifetime. Together, we will be challenged to live more lightly on the earth, reducing our impact on the natural world and our global neighbours.



Each week will feature a different activity – from travel to eating, and technology and shopping – with challenges to consider how we can reduce our carbon footprint. Check out the Carbon Fast overview and sign-up [here](#). Why not invite your friends, family, prayer group or church to get involved? [Carbon Fast for Lent – Climate Stewards](#)

Lent 2023 Resources from Eco-Congregation Scotland

Rev David Coleman, Chaplain with Eco-Congregation Scotland, has produced a series of 5 Lent reflections (Lectionary-based, to complement or take the place of preaching, or for study/small groups). [They are available on the ECS website here](#).



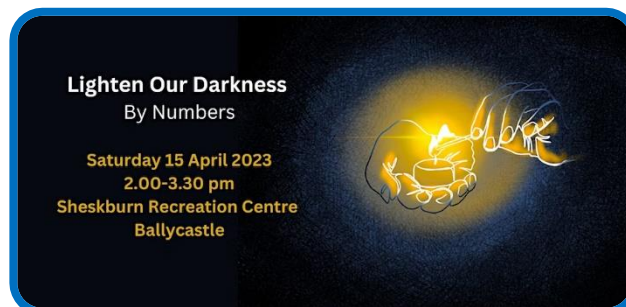
Spring Event Programme at An Tairseach Available

An Tairseach is excited to bring to you their Spring Event Programme. Their Director of Programming, Colette Kane OP and staff member, Dr. Arlene Flaherty OP, have been busy over recent months putting this wonderful programme together. The Spring Event Programme covers an array of themes and thought-provoking subject matter with fascinating speakers from all walks of the academic world. Covering a broad range of subjects including Cosmology, Creation and Evolution, Celtic Spirituality, Ecology and the Environment, Theology, Mysticism and Faith, Gardening and Ayurvedic Cooking & Nutrition to name a few, there is something for everyone in this programme. For more information about all their events, please visit: <https://antairseach.ie/events/events-calendar/>



Invitation to Lighten Our Darkness Event, Ballycastle, Co Antrim

You are invited to an upcoming event in Ballycastle presented by the Corrymeela Community in conjunction with the Mullingar Union of Parishes. This event will be a unique performance of music and readings, written and presented by young people from All Saints Parish Mullingar, which



highlights the urgent need to take action to care for our earth in the face of the devastating impacts of climate change. The performance will take place on April 15 from 2:00-3:30 pm in Sheskburn Recreation Centre and will be followed by a Q&A. This is a wonderful opportunity to come together as a community to reflect, discuss, and act on the greatest challenge facing humanity today. Tickets are free and can be reserved on Eventbrite at <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/520409166827>

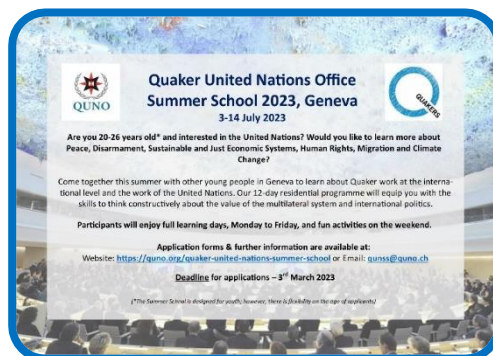
Ballynature Day 2023

Calling all friends of ECI in Northern Ireland! All are welcome to Ballynature Day 2023!



Quaker United Nations Summer School 2023

The 2023 Quaker United Nations Summer School, will be in-person for the first time since 2019, from the 3rd – 14th July 2023. The summer school is open to young people from all over the world. See above announcement for all information and links to the applications are – [Quaker United Nations Summer School | QUNO](https://quaker-united-nations-summer-school.org/). Applications close on the **3rd of March 2023**. The summer school offers a unique opportunity for young people between the ages of 20-26 (approximately), to engage with issues of disarmament, economic justice, human rights, and the human impacts of climate change at the international political level. They seek to bring together a diverse group of young persons to learn more about the United Nations and Quaker work at the multilateral level, build community, and develop new skill sets that will prove useful in later stages in life. There are a small amount of scholarship support for candidates from developing countries.



Mayo Dark Skies: Church and Community Project, Newport

Georgia from Friends of Mayo Dark Skies sent us information on the Church and Community Project happening in Newport in relation to light pollution. They are advocating for as many churches as possible to rethink their lighting at night and remove architectural floodlighting pointing into the sky. Promoting the message to let natural light shine down from the heavens, rather than



directing artificial lighting into them. Whilst their project is not yet complete, it has produced some impressive responses and results from phase 1 and [here is a link to the pictures and conceptual designs so far](#).

Publications and Resources

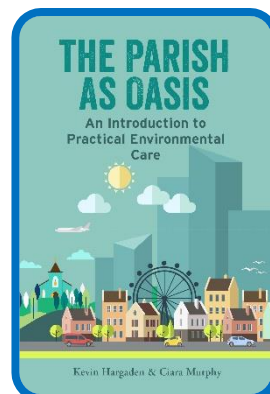
Dig In – There's Plenty of Work for Everyone!

'Every parish in Ireland should become aware of the ideas and suggestions in these pages. It is a book that will prove well worth the investment.' The Irish Catholic

The Parish As Oasis is an introduction to how local churches can contribute to healing the environmental crisis, presenting a range of practical actions that parishes can undertake to make a tangible impact in caring for our common home. If your parish is interested in getting involved, contact the authors to schedule an evening of conversation and inspiration on how you can engage creatively and constructively with the environmental crisis.

Authors Kevin Hargaden and Ciara Murphy from the Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice already have several engagements booked with parishes around the country and would be delighted to receive further invitations! Contact them on the following: (01) 855 6814, info@jcfj.ie.

The Parish As Oasis: An Introduction to Practical Environmental Care by Kevin Hargaden and Ciara Murphy. Published by Messenger Publications. €14.95



Resources from the Quaker United Nations Office

Lindsey Fielder Cook, Representative for Climate Change at the Quaker United Nations Office has shared with ECI some two sided information sheets they recently updated, to help inform/empower people about climate change and environment related efforts at the international level. Click on the links below to access them:

[LCIPP](#)

[Inspiring Actions to Create New Laws on Climate Change](#)

[Human Rights-Based Approaches to Climate Action](#)

[Climate Change & People on the Move](#)

[Climate Change & the Human Rights System](#)

[The Paris Agreement and Nationally Determined Contributions](#)

[International Environmental Law](#)



Prayers/Reflections for the Earth

A Reflection by Fr Hugh O'Donnell – In Memory of Salesian Sister, Mary Doran

For many years, Kerry Hardie suffered from chronic fatigue. In a poem of hers entitled, 'She Replies to Carmel's Letter', she describes going out for a walk with some friends and finding she has not the energy to continue. She sits down 'like a duck in a puddle' and begins to see things 'from down where the hare sits'. Rather than feel sorry for herself, as she might sitting in the mud, she remarks, 'then I would want to praise the ease of low wet things, the song of them, like a child's low drone.'



When a slower pace of life is forced on us by illness, accident or redundancy, the hard questions arise; What value have I now that I can no longer contribute the way I did before? Will people still think well of me? Am I still somebody? And we sigh for those days when we felt in control and had boundless energy. A young Mary of Mornese (later, foundress of the Salesian Sisters), recovered slowly after a bout of typhoid had taken her to death's door. Her former life of working in the fields was over. In a moment of inspiration she decided with her best friend, Petronilla, to learn how to sew. It came to her that if every stitch were a stitch of love, her whole being could blossom; she could live in the presence of Love.



Kerry Hardie concludes her poem observing that 'sometimes even sickness is generous and takes you by the hand and sits you beside things you would otherwise have passed over.' Like the importance of a stitch made in love to a world unravelling: or the song of each different thing. (Photos by Fr Hugh and Ann O'Dea).

Spring in Our Steps by Andrea Hayes – Article in February's Messenger

Andrea Hayes, frequent author on environmental issues, introduces lessons of Springtime.

Spring is a delightful time in nature marking the end of the cold, dark winter and celebrating the return of light. It's a hopeful season with new life emerging; snowdrops are often the first to bravely peep overground leading the way for other blooms to follow.



For me, this transition from darkness into light marks a gentle awakening of nature and is a reminder that despite whatever is going on in the world, the seasons keep moving along to a reassuringly regular beat. Experiencing nature's familiar rhythms and learning from the predictable patterns of the natural world has for many years provided some of my biggest spiritual lessons. I always think the arrival of spring is the perfect time to plant new spiritual seeds which then become daily practices. Entering into the flow of the natural world has helped me become alert to the Divine rhythm in my spiritual life, with each season providing a new opportunity to deepen my relationship to God.

By following nature's cues, we appreciate that it's not only natural to rest, but it's essential to take time in the dark, barren edges to retreat or hibernate before the light shines through. Sometimes we need to press the pause button, spending time alone and resting in stillness, actively awaiting God's wake-up call. This can seem at first counter-intuitive in a world that seems to be always 'switched on'. All too often we're constantly busy in a state of do-ing and we too are always 'on'. Sometimes there's a subtle shift required to consciously move from a 'human-doing' to our more natural state of 'human-being'.

To be fully receptive in awakening to God's unconditional love, we must be in God and rest in the Divine. There's a time and place for each of us to awaken to this special journey. Nature is a great reminder that we can too easily become multi-taskers, doing too many things. Perhaps just as nature hibernates and rests, we may give ourselves permission to rest in God, taking time to pray and ask God where and how we need to take a break in our own life.

Trusting the natural cycles of my own spiritual life has enabled great insights and opportunities to grow and ignite my spirit. Sometimes I feel the need to go into a 'spiritual hibernation', letting go of all expectations, resting simply in my faith and making space to receive. In order to truly awaken we must first take time to

rest: this has been a crucial lesson for me. Trusting this spiritual slumber and knowing that like the certainty of the arrival of spring, God will provide my wake-up call and the perfect time for spiritual transformation and growth awaits me. But in order to fully bloom, one must detach from the busyness of the world, or – as nature reminds us in winter – to practise the art of pause. Creating a daily practice of pausing, allowing space to rest in a receptive state in order to receive the grace of God has been a pure gift. Like the transition from winter to spring, I become alive and alert to allowing the presence of God to bloom in my daily life, gently awakening to the fullness of my faith and my own spiritual spring. When you press pause with purpose you're allowing yourself to be open and alert to "waking up" to God in every aspect of your life. The experience of "intimacy with God" is that sense of involvement that allows the fullness of our being to be in harmony with all of nature and the world.

The evolution of the seasons from winter to spring is as apt a metaphor as we're likely to find for the journey inward. To find total attunement with the Divine, we have to be willing to engage in a reverse process – of undoing and resting. Could you take a cue from nature to practise this pause?

With kindest regards,

Karen Nicholson
Administrative Officer

info@ecocongregationireland.com
+353 (0) 89 974 0744

Canon Andrew Orr
Chair and Church of Ireland representative

andreworr1234@gmail.com
+353 (0) 87 419 6051

Catherine Brennan SSL
Roman Catholic representative

catherinebrennanssl38@gmail.com
+353 (0) 87 259 9071

Rev Allen Sleith
Presbyterian representative

allen.sleith@tiscali.co.uk
+ 44 (0) 7801273354

Fran Brady
Religious Society of Friends representative

franbradywritings@gmail.com
+353 (0) 86 373 0396

Rev Trevor Sargent
Church of Ireland representative

sargentt@tcd.ie
+353 (0) 87 254 7836