



Dear Friends of Eco-Congregation Ireland

Welcome to the Early Summer 2023 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.

Awards! Awards!

Ballineaspaig Parish Receives their **ECI GOLD Award!**

The Faith in Action Group, Ballineaspaig Parish sent us this report: The Faith in Action group, Ballineaspaig Parish, Dennehy's Cross Cork first met Sr. Catherine Brennan, the Catholic representative with ECI, in 2014. Sr. Catherine encouraged us to apply for recognition as an eco parish, and under her mentorship we became the first Catholic parish in the diocese to receive an Eco-Congregation Ireland Award in 2015. Sr Catherine presented us with this first Eco-Congregation Ireland Award and kept in constant touch with us thereafter, encouraging and inspiring us to continue our efforts.



In 2021, we successfully applied to ECI for their newly-introduced Gold Award. ([see full application here](#)). In June 2021 a virtual ceremony was held to honour the first recipients of this inaugural Gold Award: Ballineaspaig Parish, Cork; Westport Eco Congregation Co Mayo; and SAGE – Shankill Action for a Green Earth, St Anne's Parish, Co Dublin. At that time, we promised our parishioners that we would invite them to a joyous celebration of this wonderful achievement in due course, as soon as the pandemic's waning would permit.

We arranged to have the presentation of the Gold Award during 11.00am Mass on Sunday, 12th March. Bishop Fintan Gavin was the chief celebrant and the Deputy Lord Mayor, Cllr Colette Finn, was in attendance.

Sr. Catherine had hoped to travel to Cork to present the award on behalf of ECI, but was unable to do so due to ill health. She sent us this message, which Bishop Fintan read on her behalf:

"It is my privilege as the catholic representative with ECI to congratulate the Faith in Action Group in Ballineaspaig parish on the ministry they have done and continue to do in healing, protecting and developing Gods creation, our common home. Hope for the planet is never dead while this group continues

its annual “stunning” work in all 4 areas of ECI programmes while continuing to add new activities and new educational opportunities during each year.

“The gifting never ceases” with the annual seedtime and harvest, the fairtrade opportunities and raising money for climate justice, the development of a wildflower garden, social justice projects and raising money for projects in a part of the world suffering from the effects of climate change.”



After Mass, there was a tree-planting ceremony in the wildflower garden, followed by a social gathering where parishioners had plenty of opportunity to meet and chat with the Bishop and Deputy Lord Mayor. You can read an article on [EchoLive.ie on their ceremony and view photos.](https://www.echo.ie/news/2023/05/07/bishop-and-deputy-lord-mayor-visit-eco-congregation-ireland/)

We were very sorry that Sr. Catherine was unable to be with us on the day, and deeply saddened to hear of her death a short time afterwards. She will be sorely missed by all the Eco-Congregation community, but her light will continue to shine in our hearts. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a hanam dílis.

Awards! Awards! **Blessington Parish Receives their ECI Award!**

Carmel O'Neill sent us this update: Archbishop Dermot Farrell presented an Eco-Congregation Ireland Award to Blessington Parish on May 7th on behalf of Eco-Congregation Ireland. This award was the culmination of three years' work carried out by the Care of the Earth ministry team. It involved projects on a spiritual, practical, community and global level in the churches of Blessington, Lacken and Vallemount.



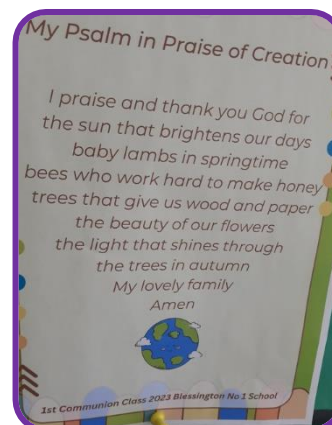
Carmel O'Neill welcomed and thanked the Tidy Town/Village groups and the Green schools members present for their inspirational work on biodiversity in the locality and for raising an awareness on the problems caused by Climate Change.



Archbishop Farrell paid tribute to the immense contribution made by Sr Catherine Brennan RIP who was so supportive and encouraging of all the work being done in parishes throughout the country. May Sr Catherine rest in peace. Following refreshments in the Coimin Centre, Archbishop Farrell blessed a dwarf apple tree to launch our next project- the creation of a sensory garden in the grounds of the parish centre which will be used for the care of our senior citizens. Fiadh Cooney, a pupil

from Blessington junior school read her award winning poem on saving our seas from plastic pollution.

As part of their preparation for First Holy Communion, pupils from Blessington No 1 NS composed their own psalm in praise and thanksgiving for the beauty of God's creation. They were inspired by looking at photographs



taken by the late Fr Kevin Lyon RIP who himself was a keen photographer. During the years following his retirement as parish priest, he enjoyed going out in all weathers capturing the beauty of the lake, woodlands and hills in the Blessington area. He left us a wonderful legacy of hundreds of photographs which are on sale in the parish office.



The children also made a Lenten promise on Care of the Earth as part of the Trocaire Lenten campaign. On Mar 30th, Carmel O Neill joined the pupils of Lacken NS who were taken on a Nature walk by local botanist Patrick Hunt. Patrick identified a number of wildflowers on the lane leading to the lake and alerted the children to the song of the wren, thrush and blue tit en route. He used the Merlin App in the hope of drawing the birds closer to the group but without success. He stressed the importance of maintaining our whitethorn hedgerows as a source of food for early foraging bees. There were a number of healthy Ash trees



on the lane and Patrick alerted them to the signs of ash die back which has decimated many trees around the country.



The principal of Lacken NS invited Carmel O Neill to meet with the student council and set up a school vegetable garden. The school sourced used tractor tyres as planters and had them filled with top soil. Carmel meets with the group on a weekly basis to monitor and give advice on planting. To date we have planted potatoes, strawberries, herbs lettuce beetroot, carrots, onions, spinach and broad beans. It is hoped that this will encourage the children to start growing some fruit or vegetable at home.

ECI Climate Justice Candle Visits ...

Knock Presbyterian, Belfast

Ethel White sent us this update: The ECI Climate Justice Candle was the theme for the monthly Creation Care 'table' organised by the Creation Care Group at Knock Presbyterian Church on the final Sundays of January and February. The congregation had the opportunity of seeing



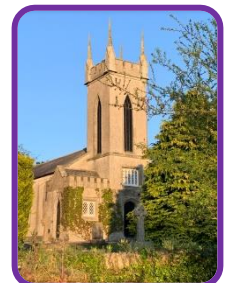
it and chatting to members of the Creation Care Group as they mingled over a cuppa after the morning



service on these two Sundays. Otherwise the Climate Justice Candle has been on view in the church vestibule as people have arrived for services. The introductory leaflet provided by ECI was available. The Creation Care Group was pleased with the interest in, the interaction with and the support for the Candle shown by the congregation.

All Saint's Church Ballycarney, Ferns Union of Parishes

Dillon Beale sent us this report: All Saint's Church Ballycarney in the Ferns Union of Parishes hosted the candle from 6th of May till 13th of May (the eve of Rogation Sunday). Rogation comes from the Latin word rogare meaning to ask, as we ask God for





good weather as the crops are sown and we ask for a plentiful harvest. The Dean of Ferns and Rector of Ballycarney Parish church The Very Rev Paul Mooney reminded us in his sermon that whatever we ask from God in good faith we shall receive, although it may not be directly what we want or asked but it is what God wants for us. The Candle was placed on the altar and provided a focal point for the services especially on Rogation eve when we focused on the candle in the context of evening prayer, which included elements such as the apostles creed, Nunc Dimittis, The Magnificat, psalm 66 (7-18) and we also Sang the hymn All Things Bright and Beautiful All Creatures Great and Small. During the prayers you could hear God's gift of birds chirping in the adjacent churchyard. We looked upon the candle's flame as the Holy Spirit representing God's Presence in our lives.



Quakers Ireland Yearly Meeting 2023

The ECI Climate Justice Candle was in a central position in the oratory at Dominican Retreat Centre, Tallaght during the Quaker Ireland Yearly Meeting from the 13th till the 16th April 2023.



Wilton Justice Group, Co Cork

Kathleen O'Connor sent us this report: To mark the arrival of the ECI Climate Justice Candle the Wilton Justice Group decided with the parish priest to incorporate its arrival in our annual celebration of the anniversary of the publication of Laudato Si.



About sixty people were present at the celebration, a Prayer Service, held in Fr. Tom's garden, part of the grounds of the SMA House and Parish in Wilton, Cork. When Fr. Tom, retired from the missions in Nigeria, he spent his retirement developing a flower garden and vegetable garden in Wilton. Unfortunately, he is no longer with us but a group of volunteers now maintains his garden.

God blessed us with a beautiful evening, so with hymns and readings we celebrated Pope Francis' encyclical, Laudato Si. This year we were blessed with the presence of the parish choir from a neighbouring parish of Curraheen. The choir greatly enhanced our celebration.



We focused on the ECI Climate Justice Candle. The facilitator noted that the Wilton Parish is a member of Eco-Congregation Ireland. The mission of Eco-Congregation Ireland was outlined and how in recent years Eco-Congregation Ireland is focusing their attention on climate justice, and so we have the candle to throw light on climate issues.

In the final part of the service we processed to the church carrying the candle singing, "The light of Christ".

When we got to the church, the candle was placed at the front of the altar beside the pots of wild flowers, which were placed to promote biodiversity. After a few words by Fr. Michael, the parish priest outlining the parish's commitment to biodiversity. He lit the Candle and blessed it with holy water. We then prayed and ended with the hymn "how great thou art". Afterwards all enjoyed a cup of tea and chat in the garden.



During the period that we were hosting the candle we had other events planned: a day trip to Cloughjordan by thirty people to visit the eco village there. We also screened the film, "The Letter- a Message for our Earth" in the Parish Centre. In addition, the ECI Climate Justice Candle was brought to the local school and its meaning explained.

Latest News from ...

The Parish of Our Lady and St John in Carrigaline

Janet Twomey sent us this update: On Pentecost Sunday, 28 May, we had a special Mass to mark the 8th Anniversary of Pope Francis' Encyclical, Laudato Si'. The Mass was celebrated by Father Aidan Cremen. The Care of the Earth Group set up a colourful display on the altar with the colours of Pentecost, red and gold and placed quotes and prayers about creation in the display. Our special Beeswax candle was lighting for the Mass.



Six children who had recently received the Sacrament of Confirmation from the local primary schools read the Prayer of the Faithful. We concluded the Mass with a Prayer for our Earth which was read by students Robin and Charlotte. The prayer cards were distributed at all Masses over the weekend. We printed a thousand cards and all vanished! The card featured a special photograph taken by Father James McSweeney of the nearby Curraghbinny Woods, a place of extreme beauty and a healing location for all those looking for comfort in nature. "Truly, much can be done!". [Take a look at the prayer card here.](#)



Creation Carers Group at Portadown Presbyterian Church

Anna Louise Shepherd sent us this latest news: We wanted to let you know that along with our monthly litter-pick-ups we have got permission from the ABC Council Parks Department to be able to do a trial wildflower border in a little meadow on the street we have adopted. We also suggested that the Parks Dept might leave the little meadow without cutting it to attract butterflies and insects and they have agreed. Photos of a work party preparing the border for wildflowers and showing off the council signs to explain not cutting the area.



We have involved the brownies from church in visiting the meadow for a nature scavenger hunt and also did a session on growing seeds with all the girls planting sunflowers, there is a competition which will be judged in September, so the girls have to remember to continue their care for their plants over the summer. Weather permitting we hope to have a combined litter pick both on shore and by canoe of the river banks along with a local canoeist who does frequent clean ups of the Bann river.



Corrymeela Community Climate Justice Group

Glenise Morgan sent this latest news: On 15 April, people of Ballycastle and beyond were privileged to experience an original performance, Lighten our Darkness, put on by young people from Mullingar parish. Based on a passage in the Book of Numbers, the engaging choreographed sketches, enhanced by sound and light technology, illustrated both the threat to our environment from climate change and their hope for the future.



The Rev Alistair Graham, backed up by a small team of professionals, has been the force behind this venture. The strengths of working in a team were obvious as was the confidence they had gained, as they readily and competently answered the questions put to them by the audience. Their success is such that they have now been invited to perform before the General Synod of the Church of Ireland in Wexford this month, and we warmly congratulate them all.



Corrymeela was delighted to be able to offer the group overnight hospitality, some impromptu entertainment shared by volunteers, members and staff on the Saturday evening, and a short service on the Sunday morning in the Croi. This was followed by a brisk walk down to Ballycastle beach for an even brisker dip in the sea amid much hilarity. The camaraderie was clear to all and we were both humbled and inspired by the dedication of the young people who had given up their time to deliver their message about the urgent need for care of our earth and its creatures.

Termonfechin Parish

James Carroll sent us this latest news: **Going Green and Grounds Improvements:** Over recent months the parish finance committee has been investigating the introduction of solar power in the parish. With completion of these investigations we have employed the services of Lennon Solar to install solar panels, initially, behind the parochial house to supply solar power to the parochial house and the church of the Immaculate Conception. Work will begin in the coming days.



Wild Flower Planting: Sixth class pupils from both parish schools will be involved in a project of planting wild flower seeds on parish grounds as part of “greening” initiative which the Irish bishops have invited parishes to employ. Ground to the side of both parish churches has been set aside for this project and plaques will be placed to identify the area.

Westport Eco-Congregation

Bríd McAuley sent us this latest update: Westport Eco-Congregation continues to bring the public’s attention to issues on climate change and the environment through their weekly column in the local newspaper and parish newsletter. In addition we are very excited to join forces with other groups in Westport that are working on climate change issues. After many months of discussion One Westport has been formed. There are 10 groups represented in One Westport. The overarching aim is to have a quality of Life for Westport under the umbrella of sustainability. This can be achieved with Representation. Scale and Opportunities. We believe we can influence and achieve more if we are a united voice with the other groups working on issues such biodiversity, and travel. Tidy Towns, Coastal communities, Chamber of Commerce, Community Garden and many other groups are represented in One Westport. Individually each group will continue their own projects but will join forces to lobby on issues affecting the environment



Carrigaline Union of Parishes

John Andrew sent us this latest update: We have extended the pollinator garden in the church grounds with seeds saved from last year. Some Borage overwintered and flowered earlier this month, attracting some bumblebees. We have now added more Borage which will hopefully flower later in the year. We have sown Phacelia, which has now germinated and again will flower later in the year. Phacelia is a great source of pollen and nectar for bees.



St Mary's church grounds and the Rectory garden are now officially part of the All-Ireland Pollinator plan. Registered in the Faith Community section, we are pledging to manage both areas to support and enhance pollinators and increase Biodiversity. We submitted detailed data under various headings:

- Protect existing pollinator habitats – Length of dry stone walls, area of existing earth bank to encourage some bees to nest and details of pollinator friendly habitats such as bramble and ivy.
- Pollinator friendly planting – Number of pollinator trees planted and also the area in m2 where pollinator friendly perennials are planted
- Provide nesting habitats – Solitary bees nest in cracks and holes in the dry stone wall around the perimeter of the graveyard.
- Reduce herbicide use – Herbicide use has been completely eliminated in the graveyard.
- Other – We have erected a nesting box in the graveyard. It will probably take a number of years before birds will nest.

The reason Biodiversity Ireland looks for so much data (length of stone walls, how many pollinator friendly trees planted and area of pollinator friendly planting), is because if adjoining gardens and businesses pledge their gardens to "pollinators.biodiversityireland.ie" they will have a fuller and more accurate picture in terms of feeding for pollinator bees and insects as a whole in the area. The All Ireland Pollinator Plan registration is open to everybody by pledging your garden to "pollinators.biodiversityireland.ie"

Methodist Centenary Church, Dublin

Finding Hope on a Summer Evening from Maureen Rowan: At Methodist Centenary, we have a group called The Sky's the Limit who meet monthly to discuss broad social, cultural, political, ethical and economic issues. As part of our Eco-Congregation commitment, we include at least one session on climate change each year. The title for our recent session was *The Climate Crisis: Sustaining Hope and Realism*. Maureen has written a wonderful report on their discussions and this can be read on the ECI website [here](#).



St Joseph's Parish, Bonnybrook

Margo Delaney sent us this report: Laudato Si' Week brought our parish together to celebrate together under the 2023 Laudato Si' theme: "HOPE FOR THE EARTH, HOPE FOR HUMANITY". Recalling the memory of many of our parishioners who died during covid lockdowns, we gathered to plant a flower cherry in the church ground in their memory.



Despite all the devastation and destruction and exploitation of our earth, Easter resurrection triumphs. Our sacred space illustrates this by the symbols of new life -spring flowers, baby rabbit and fluffy ducks at the foot of the resurrection cross. Our parish notice board invites all to participate in taking individual responsibility as well as community responses in creating "Hope for the Earth". It reminds us that no one has to do everything. But everyone can do something.



Bringing an awareness of the need to care for and respect God's gift of creation, the Senior Infants from our local St Joseph's National school helped to begin a wildflower garden along the edge of the school pathway, joining in scattering the seeds, covering them lightly with soil and watering them plentifully to ensure growth during this long dry spell. To open and close the liturgies of Laudato Si' Week, our choir sang the Climate Song: We need to wake up, We need to wise up, We need to build a better future, And do it now, now, now

Prosperous Eco Parish

Bríd óg Norrby sent us this latest news: We were delighted to work with the Tidy Towns, the Community Association and other interested parties in the village to agree on a Biodiversity Plan for Prosperous. This is a very extensive plan which contains advice and suggested projects which will greatly increase biodiversity and promote awareness in the village. We are very happy to have this plan in place which means that the Eco Parish Group and other community groups are now united in protecting and increasing biodiversity. The plan will also give us real focus and direction in the coming years. We are already planning our first action to be taken together.

The hundreds of bee friendly Spring bulbs we planted in the autumn in the Eco Parish garden put on a great show this spring. Crocuses, snowdrops and bluebells brought some welcome colour to the Church grounds.



Another great success we had this Spring was our Tree Give Away. Our event was very well supported and we gave out over 700 trees to the community in a little over an hour. These were mostly (but not all) native Irish saplings which were kindly supplied by Easy Treesie.

This week for National Biodiversity Week we gave our Eco Parish garden some TLC. We mulched around our younger trees and labelled them and also stuck in labels beside some of the wildflowers that have come up. We planted some Meadow Sweet, Ox Eye Daisys and Scabious and some locally saved wildflower seeds. One of our volunteers will do a plant survey on the garden latter in the summer.

One of our members Sr. Maureen has been very busy attending protests around the country taking a stand on environmental destruction. In her own words she is "raising awareness of wounded places in nature especially on pilgrimage along the river Shannon and prayers of lament at the sight of such destruction and pollution of God's Creation.....and raising awareness of the damage to the global south caused by continuing unethical investment in fossil fuels, by banks and asset funds in Ireland".

Orlagh-in-the-City Community

Lorcan McDermott send us this update: The Laudato Si' book club recently finished reading and discussing Iliia Delio's The Hours of the Universe: Reflections on God, Science and the Human Journey. In the context of a wide-ranging discussion, Delio points out that we must begin to find the living God once again by fundamentally changing our understanding of God and returning to the first book of revelation, the 'Book of Nature'. Otherwise, we are sure to face crises on a planetary scale. Francis of Assisi found God in the cathedral of the universe, we too must learn from nature



how to be a part of nature once again. She gives a well-considered assessment of Laudato Si' and maintains that the encyclical highlights the importance of insights from both science and religion in order to move forward into a sustainable future.

We found the series of YouTube podcasts hosted by the Scottish Laity Network on the theme of the Common Good a great basis for discussion. Tom O Loughlin's presentation on Liturgy and the Common Good was particularly informative, it is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3tu5OqJ6e4I>. It was also enlightening to consider the work of Rafael Luciani a Venezuelan theologian. A brief introduction to his work showed that he has some incisive observations to make on the forthcoming synod called by Pope Francis.

NI Creation Care Network & Partners in Action Retreat

Bertie Stirling sent us a report of this event: Members of the Creation Care Network (NI) and Partners in Action (A Rocha UK) arrived on Saturday 1st April at the beautiful house and grounds of Drumalis Retreat Centre. After a quick coffee and greetings of gladness to meet up again, we gathered in the Kintyre room in the main house; a very significant room in the history of Drumalis. The morning began with a few moments of quiet time and a prayer. The Rev. Andrew Orr's tribute to Sister Catherine Brennan was noted. We will all miss the enthusiasm and perseverance of such an eco-warrior. The group were welcomed to the centre and the rhythm of the day outlined, before updates, reports and discussions commenced.



Although most groups had already some involvement with local congregations and communities some felt the need for educating ourselves practically and theologically in Creation Care. Others had felt introverted in this area and were now more confident to meet the needs of local community. Various means were reported and discussed. Some took a particular issue or theme to engage local people. E.g. textiles or food. Some groups were hosting projects, like Repair Café and some teaming up with other projects. E.g. to harvest surplus apples and make apple juice or apple jelly. We had reports from three ongoing ventures and one new one, all of which benefit the land and give people a opportunity to get closer to nature, by employment or by volunteering. Quite a few congregations had run eco-fairs and eco-services, again allowing people to become involved and give thanks for the creation we are part of.

We learned what resources were being developed in NI, e.g. Spatial NI and Earth Hub; and what grants could be available locally. A Rocha UK now support forty+ Partners in Action, six of which are in Northern Ireland. (About 50 projects are in negotiation) A Rocha UK also run an online service called 'Wild Christian', to support families in their Creation Care journey. Eco-Congregation Ireland operate an award scheme and resources to encourage congregations in their Creation Care journey; e.g. The Climate Justice Candle project.

We invite other Creation Care projects and congregations with an Eco-Congregation Ireland Award, especially of the Roman Catholic persuasion, to come and share with us at our meeting on September 9th at South Belfast Quaker meeting.

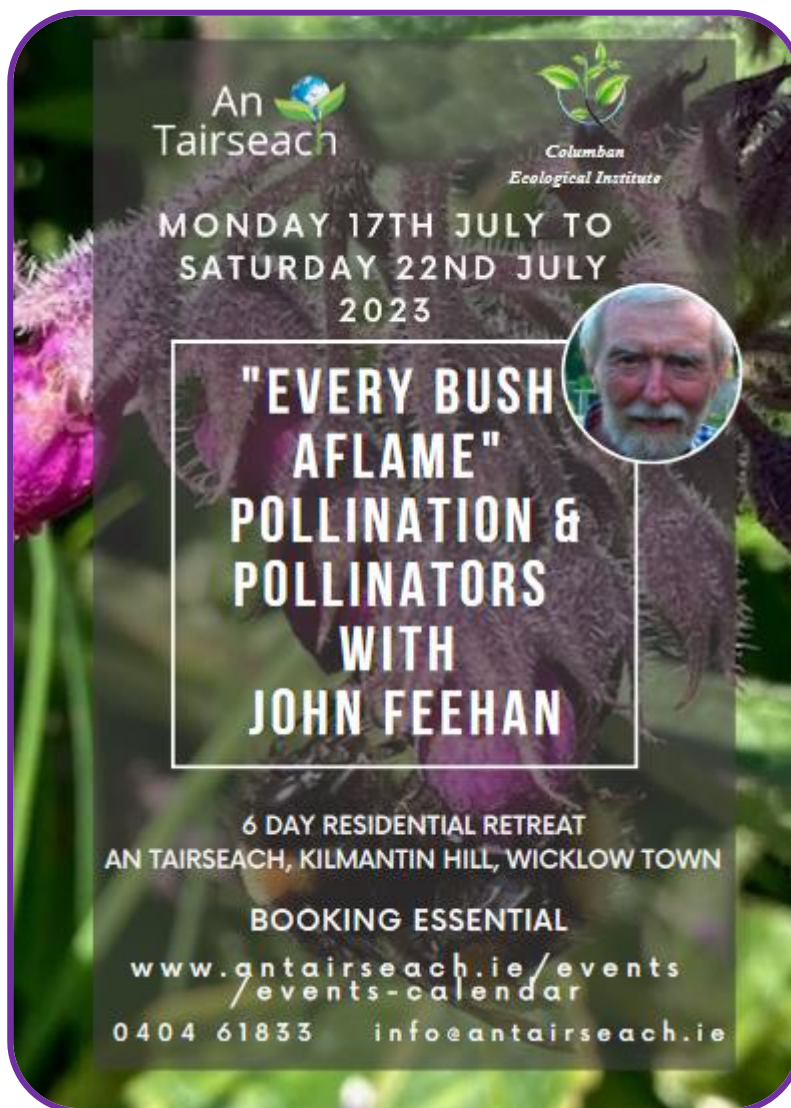
Many more ideas, issues and themes were discussed and contacts and friendships made. Possibly one of the highlights of the day was 'The Threading of the Rope Ceremony', a ritual that takes place in a number of A Rocha projects, in one case to keep elephants out. A big thank you to Chris and Stephen of the 'Larne

Men's Shed 'for processing the posts to hold the rope. The day ended with a cup of tea and a mini-tour of the main house.

Other News ...

Columban Ecological Institute Summer School 2023

The upcoming 2023 Summer School with John Feehan will be held in An Tairseach, Wicklow Town from Monday, 17 Jul 2023 – Saturday, 22 Jul 2023. There is the option of attending the summer school on a non-residential basis. The cost is €360.00, which includes the main lunch, but does not include breakfast or evening meal. All are welcome to attend! [Register here](#).



Spring & Autumn Ten-Week Residential Sabbatical Programme at An Tairseach

An Tairseach's ten-week residential Sabbatical Programme runs every Spring and Autumn: Upcoming dates: **Autumn Sabbatical:** Sunday 3rd September to Friday 10th November 2023. **Spring Sabbatical:** Sunday 3rd March to Friday 10th May 2024.

Exploring Spirituality in the context of an evolving universe, an endangered earth, in the Christian tradition. Applications are welcome from anyone with an interest and commitment to the content of the programme. The programme includes:

- Becoming familiar with our evolution over 14 billion years as discovered by contemporary science.

- Exploring its implications for understanding our place in the universe.
- Exploring the theological implications of this new cosmology.
- Listening to the wisdom of the mystics.
- Reflecting on themes from the Celtic Tradition.
- Examining our images of God.
- Critiquing our present world order and exploring possibilities for a sustainable lifestyle.

The programme is delivered through:

- Lectures and group sessions led by the An Tairseach team and guest lecturers.
- Art, movement, ritual, prayer, nature walks, guided meditation, walking the labyrinth and time alone.
- Visits to sacred places such as Glendalough.
- Study using a specialised library of books, periodicals, DVD's and internet resources.
- Guest lecturers include: Diarmuid O'Murchu, Niamh Brennan, John Feehan and many more.

Some comments from previous participants on the Spring Sabbatical Programme 2023:

"This Sabbatical programme gave me an opportunity to fulfil my desire and longing to deepen and extend my understanding of the story of the Universe and to situate myself in the story. I have gone through an Ecological conversion. My life is renewed, stimulated and feel empowered to play my part for the community of life. I feel more connected than before with the creation at my heart level. I consider that it is the best thing that God had stored for me at this stage of my life."

"It was wonderful to participate in the program. Rooted in the Cosmic Story the input was affirming, challenging and skillfully interconnected. It was not just talk but an experience, a participation in the practice of living out of a cosmological mindset. Its implications are immense for the choices we have to journey into the future with an expanded awareness."

"An Tairseach provided an opportunity for refreshment and enrichment in a beautiful, welcoming environment and group setting. The programme was non-academic, well-paced and resourced and offered the opportunity for both challenge and expanded thinking/consciousness. Input, from excellent presenters was structured in a way that 'built the momentum' towards the key elements in the programme outline. Daily weekday rituals supported that. Time reflecting in the cosmos was a bonus both in group outings and local walks."

For more information please see their website www.antairseach.ie/sabbaticals or email: director@antairseach.ie. [View their events flyer here.](#)



Down and Connor's Ephata Laudato Si' Group's Irish News Article

This article was submitted to the Irish News by Ephata, Laudato Si' group in the Diocese of Down and Connor, to mark Laudato Si' Week. Ephata Laudato Si' was founded in May 2020 as a Catholic faith group who are inspired and challenged by Laudato Si'. The group's shared mission is to promote Pope Francis' key messages



and to witness to his seminal teaching on the members' personal faith journeys. You can read the article in full on the ECI website [here](#).

Prayers/Reflections for the Earth

A Reflection by Fr Hugh O'Donnell

Often in June I find myself on the west coast of Donegal looking out at sunsets and noting how the last flicker can stretch past midnight. Summer with its memories and longing is upon us. Near Kincaslugh I notice the children adding to the growing mound that will be a bonfire on St John's Eve, a feast that coincides with the longest day of the year – the summer solstice.

We know that earlier communities would have lit their fires as a way of calling on Brother Sun at his highest point to make their crops fertile and celebrated with music, singing, games, dancing and leaping through the flames while torches of firelight were held aloft and carried through the fields for protection. Some brought home an ember for their own hearth or a shovelful of red hot sods as foundation for a new house. Even the ashes had curative powers and were spread on the land as a blessing.

Recalling these rituals, brings us down to earth and causes us to wonder. What kind of God uses the elements manufactured in the core of a star then scattered abroad in a supernova explosion to make life and creates in timescales beside which our life span is no more than the single pulse of a firefly?

Making these connections is to recognise that we are part of a dazzling communion; that the providential tilt of the Earth allows us to have seasons; that our remote origins are overlaid with the blessing, 'You are my beloved on whom my favour rests.' And this is my sun! (The photo above right is by Fr Hugh – 'His cross is every tree' taken outside the church on Sean McDermott Street).



Last paragraphs of Laudato Si shared at a Recent ECI Committee Meeting

243. At the end, we will find ourselves face to face with the infinite beauty of God (cf. 1 Cor 13:12), and be able to read with admiration and happiness the mystery of the universe, which with us will share in unending plenitude. Even now we are journeying towards the sabbath of eternity, the new Jerusalem, towards our common home in heaven. Jesus says: "I make all things new" (Rev 21:5). Eternal life will be a shared experience of awe, in which each creature, resplendently transfigured, will take its rightful place and have something to give those poor men and women who will have been liberated once and for all.



244. In the meantime, we come together to take charge of this home which has been entrusted to us, knowing that all the good which exists here will be taken up into the heavenly feast. In union with all creatures, we journey through this land seeking God, for "if the world has a beginning and if it has been created, we must enquire who gave it this beginning, and who was its Creator". [Basil the Great, Hom. in Hexaemeron, I, 2, 6: PG 29, 8] Let us sing as we go. May our struggles and our concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope.

245. God, who calls us to generous commitment and to give him our all, offers us the light and the strength needed to continue on our way. In the heart of this world, the Lord of life, who loves us so much, is always present. He does not abandon us, he does not leave us alone, for he has united himself definitively to our earth, and his love constantly impels us to find new ways forward. Praise be to him!

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

Roman Catholic representative

The Catholic representative position is currently vacant following the death of our friend Catherine Brennan SSL. Until a new rep is appointed, please contact the Chairperson.

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

