

ECI GOLD Award

The Faith in Action Group, Ballineaspiga Parish, Cork



The Faith in Action Group, Ballineaspiga Parish 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. 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. Sr Catherine was a great inspiration and said "It is my privilege as the Catholic representative with ECI to congratulate the Faith in Action Group in Ballineaspiga Parish on the ministry they have done and continue to do in healing, protecting and developing God's creation, our common home."

Certificates Awarded in 2023

The ECI Committee issues two certificates in the earlier stages of the journey towards the final Eco-Congregation Ireland Award marking stages on the way - the Awareness Certificate and the Endeavour Certificate. In 2023 the following were awarded certificates:

Awareness Certificate:

- First Portadown Presbyterian Church
- Greystones Presbyterian Church
- Tullamore Union of Parishes
- Monkstown Quaker Meeting, Dublin

Endeavour Certificate:

- Tullamore Union of Parishes



ECI Awards

Parish of Our Lady and St John, Carrigaline



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.

Blessington Parish



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. 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.

Holy Trinity, Killiney



Members were delighted to receive their ECI Award on the occasion of their Harvest Thanksgiving on Sunday 15th October. Rev Gary Hastings received the award from Fine Gael TD Jennifer Carroll Macneill. There was a terrific turnout with local celebrities also in attendance. The Green Team will endeavour to keep combating climate change and encouraging biodiversity for as long as possible.

Maghera Parish



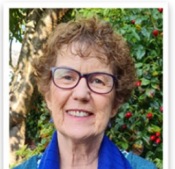
The Parish of Maghera in Newcastle, Co Down was presented with their ECI Award at a mass in the Sacred Garden, Bryansford during the summer. The garden was designed by Angela Drayne and created by parish gardening volunteers and is maintained by the Parish Care for Creation gardening group. Laudato Si Animator Finbarr Keaveney led the music.

New Representatives on the ECI committee



Anna Byrne has been nominated by AMRI to be a Catholic representative. Anna is a Daughter of Charity of St Vincent de Paul.

Maureen Rowan has been nominated by the Council on Social Responsibility of the Methodist Church in Ireland. She is a member of Methodist Centenary Church, Dublin.



Climate Justice Candles 2023

The four Eco-Congregation Ireland Climate Justice Candles covering each of the four provinces of Ireland, have continued weaving their ecumenical and climate justice journeys around Ireland in 2023. The candles proved to be a popular focus for worship amongst Christians of all traditions and a resource for awareness-raising of climate change and its impact on our world. Inspirational stories of churches that hosted the Climate Justice Candles in 2023, in many different and creative ways include:



Christ Church, Bray



Gorey Methodist Church



Wexford & Kilsoran Union of Parishes



St Anne's Parish, Shankill



St George's Church, Belfast



Knock Presbyterian Church, Belfast



Knock Shrine



Carrigrohane Union of Parishes



Bride Street Church, Wexford



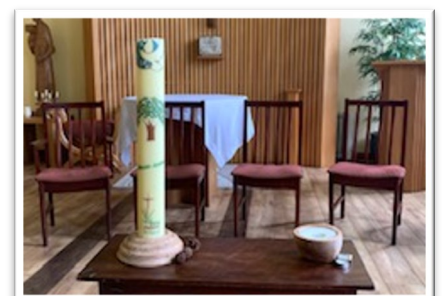
Ecumenical St Brigid's Day Service in Kildare



Churchtown Quaker Meeting, Dublin



All Saint's Church Ballycarney, Ferns Union of Parishes



Ireland Yearly Meeting of Quakers



Wilton Justice Group, Co Cork



The Congregation of Dominican Sisters, Cabra



St Pappin's Parish, Ballymun



Saints Patrick & Felim Cathedral, Cavan



St Joseph's Bonnybrook



Church of St Therese, Mount Merrion



Methodist Centenary Church, Dublin



NI Creation Care Network, Belfast



Parishes Caring for Creation Conference in the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Blanchardstown



Teresian Association



Lowe Presbyterian Church, Belfast



Newbridge Parish



African Missions SMA, Blackrock Road, Cork



Holy Trinity Westport, St Thomas Dugort Achill, Christ Church Castlebar and Turlough Church



Parish of Listowel



Solas, the Walk of Light, Dublin



Catherine Brennan SSL

In 2023 all friends of ECI were saddened to hear of the death of one of the founding members of ECI, Catherine Brennan SSL. Andrew Orr, Chair of ECI shared this tribute to SR Catherine: She had been the Catholic representative on the ECI committee since our foundation in 2005, and she was the driving force in so many of our activities. Her enthusiasm was unbounded, as was her persistence and drive to care for the environment. She was a constant source of encouragement, keeping in touch with so many parishes and places across Ireland. She recognised from early days the need for the churches to work together, and that care for God’s creation was an ecumenical and intergenerational activity.

She was an inspirational educator for many years, in a number of the schools run by her order, the sisters of Saint Louis, and this inspiration continued in her retirement with young and old alike. Despite constant bouts of ill health, she seemed to work indefatigably, and each one of our committee meetings brought news of parishes beginning their journey or receiving awards. In many ways, Eco-Congregation Ireland is her legacy. All of us who worked with her will cherish happy memories of her enjoyable company and companionship and constant smile. May she rest in peace and rise in glory.



Steven Johnston

During 2023, we also heard of the death of Steven Johnston, who was the Methodist Church representative on the ECI Committee from 2016 to 2022. Steven was an active member of Gorey Methodist Church and a leader in the Boys’ Brigade for many years. During his time in ECI he kept in touch with the Methodist churches across the island of Ireland who were part of ECI and he also lobbied at both local and national level for better support for solar power, and it is partly owing to his work that householders can sell excess solar energy back to the national grid. We in

ECI will miss his cheerful and friendly smile and enthusiasm for our work. May he rest in peace.

In 2023 ECI committee members attended:

- The Green Summit – a network of creation care groups in the UK and Ireland including EcoChurch England and Wales, Eco-Congregation Scotland and Live Simply (CAFOD).
- European Churches Environmental Network Assembly in Roskilde, Denmark on the theme ‘Every part of creation matters’.
- Environmental Issues Network - Membership of EIN is drawn from the churches of Britain and Ireland along with agencies and associated bodies which have responsibility for advising on environmental and ecological issues, both national and global.
- ECI Leinster Online Gathering.
- ‘Let’s Join the Dots Together’ conference in Ulster University with Lorna Gold.
- Parishes Caring for Creation Laudato Si’ conference in the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Blanchardstown.



Finances

Opening Balance €11,826.70

INCOME:

Church subscriptions	
Church of Ireland	€5,000.00
Roman Catholic	€500.00
Presbyterian	€685.50
Quaker	€1,200.00
Talks	€0.00
Donations	€870.00
Interest	€0.00
Compensation	€500.00
Total Income:	€8,755.50

EXPENDITURE:

Salary	€6,000.00
Printing & Banners	€394.00
Website maintenance	€200.00
Bank charges	€24.22
MailChimp subscription	€44.00
Expenses	€300.28
Total Expenditure:	€6,962.50
Surplus/Loss	€1,793.00
Closing Balance:	€13,619.70

Chairperson’s Remarks

Archdeacon Andrew

Orr

It was great to see congregations up and down Ireland continue to focus on creation care and the environment through



participation in our awards scheme. You will read here stories of hope in this report, and we have heard those stories shared in our regional zoom meetings held throughout 2023. There are so many plans and ideas to inspire you all over the island!

This year was also a sad time for us, as we said our earthly farewells to Catherine Brennan SSL, one of the founder members and a previous chair of ECI. Few people have done as much to further the cause of eco justice in Ireland. May she rest in peace.

We welcomed two new members to our committee: Anna Byrne as one of our new Catholic representatives and Maureen Rowan representing the Methodist Church and trust they will have a fruitful and enjoyable time with us.

On the international front, there was mixed news. Although it seems as if global greenhouse gas emissions may have peaked, they are still not coming down fast enough. More action is needed from governments and the best way for that to happen, is for local communities to bring up the subject with their politicians.

Here in Eco-Congregation Ireland, we continue to be a focus for those who want to make a real difference in their local area and among their own congregations: grass roots movements for change. Thank you to all who have been working hard.

Thank you too to our great committee for all they do in encouraging the member churches of their own denominations, and beyond.

As St. Francis said “Praise be to you our God, for our sister Earth”.



Eco Congregation Ireland

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