

Eco-Congregation Ireland



Annual Review 2014

A message from our Chairperson:

I am very pleased to introduce our annual report, which gives all our friends and supporters an overview of what we have been doing over the last year.

We have been delighted by the response to the events we have held, and to see that more and more faith communities are taking on the task, and the opportunity, of becoming eco-congregations. Our aim is to make it as simple and straightforward as possible for local churches to act globally by reducing their carbon footprint, and encouraging individuals and groups to live as sustainably as possible.

We believe that our calling as Christians is to nurture, and live in harmony with, the natural world. The great poem of the story of creation in Genesis

shows us that God cares for every living creature and that human beings should always remember their connection to the soil and the natural world.

2015 will be a crucial year for the global community to tackle climate change. The Paris summit in December represents perhaps the last chance for politicians and leaders to agree the stringent reduction in carbon emissions that will be needed to prevent a global temperature rise of 2 degrees Celsius; a rise above this is likely to be catastrophic in terms of sea-level rise and the expanse of deserts.

But politicians will only act if local communities put pressure on them, by showing them that the environment is an important issue. So when faith communities pray together and



take local action, it makes a real difference on a global scale. We look forward to more churches joining us on an eco-journey in this our 10th year of existence.

Thank you to all our Church sponsors and individual supporters, to Fiona Murdoch our wonderful Communications Officer and the hard-working ECI Committee. Enjoy reading our report, and be inspired to pray and act!

~ Andrew Orr, ECI Chairperson

Vision:

To see churches celebrate the gift of God's Creation, recognise the inter-dependence of all Creation and care for it in their life and mission

Mission:

To encourage churches to adopt an eco-friendly approach to worship, lifestyle, property and finance management, youth and children's work, community outreach and contact with the developing world.

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"Eco-Congregation provides a dynamic that is inspirational, and the sense of community which this ecumenical organisation fosters offers a template for what needs to be done at national and international levels to address the complex problems involved in translating local action to global benefits." ~

*Ireland's leading climate scientist & Nobel Peace Prize-winner,
Emeritus Prof John Sweeney of NUI Maynooth*

Eco-Congregation Ireland



Pictured from left: the Ven Andrew Orr, ECI Chairperson, Rev Steve Stockman, Minister of Fitzroy Presbyterian Church, and Dr Alastair McIntosh



International Day of Prayer for Climate Justice: Gillian Armstrong, ECI's Quaker rep, the Ven Andrew Orr, ECI Chairperson, the Ven Dermot Dunne, Dean of Christ Church Cathedral, and Catherine Brennan SSL, ECI's Catholic rep



Members of six churches at a Praying in the Sea event at Killiney. Similar prayer events took place in Cork & Donegal



GLAS launch: the Ven Andrew Orr, ECI Chairperson, Dr Lorna Gold, Head of Policy, Trócaire, Éamonn Meehan, Director of Trócaire, and Most Rev John McAreavey, Bishop of Dromore

Dr Alastair McIntosh in Belfast

Over 100 people attended ECI's first inter-church event of 2014, which we co-hosted in Belfast with Fitzroy Presbyterian Church's Caring for Creation Group.

The keynote speaker was Dr Alastair McIntosh, Honorary Senior Fellow in the College of Social Sciences at the University of Glasgow and Research Fellow at the School of Divinity, University of Edinburgh.

Taking as his title, "*And the Leaves of the Tree are for the Heal-*

ing" (Ezekiel 47:12), Dr McIntosh talked about how Christians can care for God's Creation and explored how the work of eco-congregations should be understood not just about the environment in any narrow sense, but about life on Earth and the life of the undivided church in the broadest sense that can give life to us all.

"The task before us is to be participants in the healing of the nations, of the Earth and of our churches. These tasks are all one," he said.

"Both Ezekiel and John laid out a vision of the Tree of Life, the leaves of which will be for the healing of the nations. That vision is an ecological vision that implies a restored Earth. It is also a vision of the healing of the churches—that we might be as nations under the shared vision of God's kingdom on Earth ... as it is in Heaven."

Members of two eco-congregations—Fitzroy and the Oblate Parishes of Inchicore—shared how they have taken steps to 'green' their churches.

Praying for the environment

We continued to encourage faith communities to pray for the environment, by including a prayer for Creation in every service and by holding special events during the year e.g. Earth Hour (last Saturday of March) and Environment Sunday (the first Sunday in June).

We also asked clergy and congregations to join Christians throughout the world in cele-

brating *Creation Time* from September 1st to October 4th. The theme for 2014 was *God, Whose Farm is All Creation*, which tied in with 2014 being the UN International Year of Family Farming.

We encouraged people throughout the country to join in other international events, including Our Voices' *Praying in the Sea* to show solidarity with those al-

ready living under threat from climate change.

We also encouraged people to join in the worldwide movement to *Pray and Fast* on the 1st of each month and in particular to join in a global wave of prayer on 1st November as part of an *International Day of Prayer for Climate Justice*. We led midday prayers in Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin, on that day.

Partnerships

ECI believes there is strength in partnership and we have been encouraged to see networks developing where a number of churches in a locality work together to raise environmental awareness.

We also believe it is vital that we partner with other environmental and faith organisations that

are also working to prevent runaway climate change.

As members of the *Stop Climate Chaos* coalition, we encourage our supporters to take part in events and campaigns, including lobbying politicians and the *People's Climate Global Day of Action* that took place in September. We also encouraged

people to take part in Christian Aid's *Hunger for Justice* campaign in October.

We are delighted to be partnering with Trócaire in its new award scheme, as outlined in the GLAS resource, which was produced to accompany the re-launched Catholic Bishops' pastoral, *The Cry of the Earth: A Call to Action for Climate Justice*.

Prof John Sweeney in Cork

Ireland's leading climate scientist, Emeritus Prof John Sweeney of NUI Maynooth, was the keynote speaker at an event ECI co-hosted with Carrigaline Church of Ireland parishes in November.

Prof Sweeney is currently leading a research programme into the impacts of climate change in Ireland and into the production of climate scenarios for Ireland for mid and end century. As one of the contributing authors and a review editor of the Fourth

Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, he shared the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize with several hundred other climatologists.

"Time is running out for taking decisive action to avoid dangerous climate change," he said.

"In Ireland political paralysis and vested interests are preventing us from meeting our agreed international obligations. As individuals and a society our ethical responsibilities demand

we take seriously what is generally agreed to be the major problem of the 21st century."

Following his talk, Prof Sweeney answered a wide range of questions about the impact of climate change in Ireland and overseas.

Members of Carrigaline Union and Clonakilty Methodist shared how they have undertaken an eco-journey in their respective churches and local communities.

New climate change resource

ECI produced a new climate change resource, which can be found in the Resources section of our website.

Climate Change ~ Can I Make a Difference? includes tips for cutting down on carbon consumption, a theological response to climate change and prayers on the theme.

Also included are quotes from Mary Robinson of the Climate

Justice Foundation, environmentalists Gavin Harte and Éanna Ní Lamhna, Columban eco-theologian Fr Seán McDonagh, Monsignor Dermot Lane of the Mater Dei Institute, Anglican vicar and BBC presenter Rev Peter Owen-Jones, and Alex Hill of the Met Office—all of whom have spoken at ECI events in recent years.

Launching the resource at our Carrigaline event, Prof John

Sweeney said: "This resource provides a valuable perspective on the nature and impacts of climate change in an Irish context. On a practical level it highlights the connection between local action and global consequences. It also demonstrates that the problem of climate change can only be tackled if ethical principles are coupled with scientific knowledge to inform and motivate policy-makers."

Awards

Two ECI awards were presented in 2014—one to Carrigaline Union of Parishes and one to South Belfast Quaker Meeting.

The awards were made in recognition of the steps that had been taken to adopt an eco-friendly approach in four areas of their church lives—practical, spiritual, community and global.

Rev Elaine Murray, Rector of Carrigaline Union, said: "We feel that this award is only the beginning. We hope to continue to adjust our individual lives and the life of our congregation.

"We can continue to learn so much from ECI's online resources and from other parishes who are also on this journey.

Tony Weekes of South Belfast Meeting said receiving the award was a reminder to reflect on how all things are connected: the environmental, the social, the economic and the political.

"We hope others will be encouraged to take an interest in the Eco-Congregation movement too," he added.



Pictured from left: Gillian Armstrong, ECI's Quaker rep, the Ven Andrew Orr, ECI Chairperson, Rev Elaine Murray, Rector of Carrigaline Union, Emeritus Prof John Sweeney of NUI Maynooth, Catherine Brennan SSL, ECI's Catholic rep, and Rev John Purdy, ECI's Methodist rep



Emeritus Prof John Sweeney and the Ven Andrew Orr, ECI Chairperson, pictured after the launch of ECI's climate resource



Young Quakers pictured with the 'love tree' they made, depicting things they love that are at risk from climate change



Members of South Belfast Quaker Meeting: Kerry Nicholson, Megan Corrigan and Kate Fletcher pictured with their award

Finances & funding 2014

Income:	Church subs	€2,160.00
	Trócaire grant	4,500.00
	Dublin Monthly Meeting Concerns Fund grant	2,500.00
	Robert & Kezia Stanley Chapman Trust grant	1,200.00
	Irish Quaker Faith in Action grant	1,000.00
	World Day of Prayer grant	500.00
	Donations	850.00
	Total:	€12,710.00
Expenditure:	Staff & office expenses	€9657.00
	Volunteers' expenses (travel & subsistence)	175.00
	Events	1,202.00
	Climate change resource	1,320.00
	Stop Climate Chaos sub	200.00
	Bank charges	10.00
	Total:	€12,616.00
	Closing balance at the end of 2014:	€9,346.00

Who are we?

Eco-Congregation Ireland is a project of the **Irish Inter-Church Meeting** that started in 2005. Most of our work is carried out by a committee of volunteers, each of whom has been officially appointed by their Church. The reps are:

Church of Ireland—Rev Andrew Orr andreworr1234@gmail.com

Roman Catholic—Catherine Brennan SSL catherinebrennanssl@eircom.net

Methodist Church in Ireland—Rev John Purdy john.purdy@irishmethodist.org

Presbyterian Church in Ireland—Joe Furphy jfurphy@aol.com

Religious Society of Friends in Ireland - Gillian Armstrong garmsq@gmail.com

We'd love to hear from you!

Feel free to contact any of the reps above at anytime or contact Fiona Murdoch, Communications Officer, Eco-Congregation Ireland, c/o 18 Hermitage Downs, Grange Road, Dublin 16. Tel: +353(0)86 1706923. We're always happy to answer questions, hear your eco news and to accept invitations to speak. If you'd like to get in touch, or would like to receive our monthly email newsletter, simply send Fiona an email at info@ecocongregationireland.com.

Donations

Our ongoing work is reliant on donations from churches and individuals. For anyone who would like to donate, these are our bank details:

Ulster Bank, Ranelagh, Dublin 6

Sort code: 98-50-50

Account name: Eco-Congregation Ireland

Account no: 10373901

IBAN: IE68 ULSB 9850 5010 3739 01

BIC: ULSBIE2D

Cheques (euro and sterling are both acceptable) should be made payable to 'Eco-Congregation Ireland' and sent to Gillian Armstrong, ECI Treasurer, 10 Upper Beechwood Avenue, Dublin 6.

Euro standing orders would also be welcome (unfortunately sterling standing orders are not possible)

We're on the web!

The wide range of resources on our website includes sections on worship, teaching, Bible studies, children's and youth work, property and finance management, personal lifestyles, climate change, working with the local community and thinking (and acting) globally.

www.ecocongregationireland.com



"This is why Eco-Congregation Ireland is so important: it's about forming a green group in your church, about having a check-up of the environmental issues in your church, getting the authority of your church decision-making body and then working towards a series of steps which, although practical on the outside, on the inside are about a deepening of the spiritual life, about inner transformation and the regeneration of what the church and community is."

~ Dr Alastair McIntosh, Fellow of the Centre for Human Ecology, Glasgow

