

Dear Eco Congregation friends

Welcome to the May 2016 edition of the Eco Congregation Ireland newsletter.

My name is Karen Nicholson and I am the new Administrative Officer for Eco Congregation Ireland. I am really looking forward to getting to know you all over the coming months and becoming more involved in the Eco Congregation Ireland community! If you need to get in touch with me please don't hesitate to send an email to info@ecocongregationireland.com. I'm looking forward to hearing from you!



In terms of my environmental interests, I am a keen allotment gardener and try to spend as much time on the allotment as possible. I love growing fruit, vegetables and flowers. I am passionate about organic growing and try my best to educate myself about how to grow our produce as organically as possible. I am also very interested in gardening for wildlife and grow many flowers on the allotment that are helpful to the biodiversity of the area. For several years I have been a member of Wildfowl and Wetland Trust Castle Espie, Co Down and enjoy going for walks there to watch the birdlife and observe the changes in landscape and wildlife each season.

I have been an active member of Fitzroy Presbyterian Church on University Street, Belfast for over 30 years. In recent years I have been a member of the Caring for Creation Group and helped the congregation obtain its Eco Congregation Award in 2011. I am a volunteer with the L'Arche community in Belfast and their social enterprise project Root Soup and am the person who updates their websites.

In this newsletter:

- Help us Shine a Light on Climate Justice!
- Christian Aid Week, 15-21 May 2016
- Church of Ireland Begins Divestment from Fossil Fuels
- Ecumenical Bible Week, 15-22 May 2016
- The 11th Assembly of European Christian Environmental Network, 11-15 June 2016
- Glimpses into the Mystery of the Unfolding Universe
- Laudato Si Summer School – Newry, 25-27 June 2016
- Friends of the Earth announces new campaign to end all onshore fossil fuel extraction in Britain and Ireland by 2020
- A Greenest City Strategy – Planning for the 21st Century
- Energy Action Ireland SPIRIT Programme
- Tierra Sagrada (Sacred Earth, Sacred Trust) Global Day of Prayer and Action for Creation - 12 June 2016
- Support the Protest at Woodburn Forest, Co Antrim – Northern Ireland almost Fracked!

Our Climate Justice Candle – the Journey Continues to Bray and Wicklow Town

We invite you to join our [Shine a Light on Climate Justice](#) initiative, which sees our specially commissioned climate justice candle visiting one church each week over the next 12 months. During that time each church is asked to light the candle and to incorporate a climate justice theme into their services. Some churches may choose to use the attached service while others might want to adapt the service in a way that suits them; others may choose to simply include a few environmental prayers in their prayers of intercession.



This initiative was launched at the [National Ecumenical Prayer Service](#) in the presence of President Michael D Higgins that we hosted with Trócaire and Christian Aid in November. Since then the candle has already visited 15 churches in Dublin as well as two schools. The candle is now in the Bray area and heading towards Wicklow town.

If you would like to be part of this initiative, simply let us know at info@ecocongregationireland.com (we ask you to be patient if you're in the west or the north of the country as it may be quite some months before the candle reaches you)!

Christian Aid Week 15-21 May 2016

This year's Christian Aid Week has the theme 'Love Every Neighbour'. It features Morsheda who, with the help of a grant from Christian Aid, was able to transform her fortunes in flood-hit Bangladesh. Christian Aid has made available worship resources including films, powerpoints, an order of service, prayer pack, and a sermon and talk pack for those who would like to support the week in their church. For information and resources for Christian Aid Week, see the CA Week [website](#).



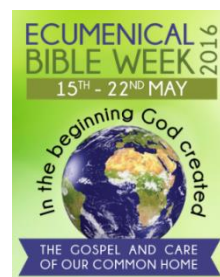
Church of Ireland Begins Divestment from Fossil Fuels

In a report to the Church of Ireland General synod which is being held in Dublin this week, the Investment Committee state that they are committed to "support the transition to a low carbon economy....including reducing demand for fossil fuels". They have joined the Institutional Investors Group on Climate Change, and divested from any company where more than 10% of its turnover is derived from coal mining. Investments have been redeployed into solar, wind, sustainable forestry and energy efficiency.

However, they still have investments in the petroleum industry, and believe that active engagement along with other shareholders in the Church Investment group has been shown to be effective in moving companies towards new technologies and carbon capture.

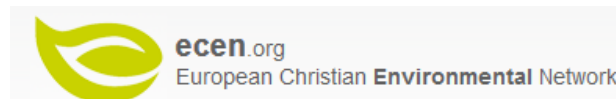
Ecumenical Bible Week 15-22 May 2016

Ecumenical Bible Week is an exciting and successful venture which is now in its third year. It includes parish-based events around Dublin and surrounding areas. For 2016, the topic will be Christian attitudes to the crisis of the environment and global warming - 'In the beginning God created...' (Gen 1:1): The Gospel and Care of our Common Home. There'll be debate, talks, music and lots of participation from all Christian traditions. Learn more [here](#).



The 11th Assembly of European Christian Environmental Network will take place in Helsinki, Finland from 11-15 June 2016.

The theme is 'Water in a sustainable future'. The Assembly will offer a broad ecumenical platform for sharing and strengthening cooperation among representatives from Anglican, Orthodox, Protestant and Roman-Catholic churches. The meeting will take place shortly after the historical agreement on climate change from Paris. Churches were strongly present at the Paris conference. Pilgrimages for climate justice which took place in 2015 raised the importance of the ethical aspects of the climate change agenda in a number of places over the continent and intensified discussion about relationship between justice and climate. Impacts of climate change will be considered in a broader context. The Assembly will pay particular attention to the issue of water, the interrelationship between climate change and the water cycle, as a part of the efforts for sustainable development. Register and learn more [here](#).



Glimpses into the Mystery of the Unfolding Universe

This retreat will take place in Drumalis in Larne, Co Antrim from 23-28 June 2016 and will be facilitated by Anne Harnett CP, Margaret Rose McSparran CP and Team. The retreat will be an inward journey, continuing the process of exploration into the mysteries of the universe as it unfolds. Selected themes will be offered a 'doorways' into the mystery that lies beyond. These will include oneness, emergence, creativity, on-going revelation, interconnectedness, the divine dynamic, the cosmic Christ, the future and the theological challenges they present. Learn more and book a place [here](#).

Laudato Si – Its Theological, Spiritual and Practical Application

This the theme of the SMA Summer School that will take place in Dromantine Retreat and Conference Centre, Newry, from 25-27 June 2016. Among the list of participants will be His Eminence Cardinal Peter Turkson, President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Dr Cathriona Russell (TCD), Donal Dorr SPS and Dr Lorna Gold (Trócaire). The event will consist of lectures and workshops on how to integrate more fully the themes of the Papal encyclical into our lives. Keep an eye on the [SMA website](#) for further details.

Friends of the Earth announces new campaign to end all onshore fossil fuel extraction in Britain and Ireland by 2020



Friends of the Earth Directors from London, Dublin, Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast have launched a campaign to end to all onshore extraction of fossil fuels in Britain and Ireland by 2020. The new common goal was announced at a conference in Dublin on 'Forging a Fossil Free Europe'. Achieving it will involve an end to open cast coal mining in Scotland and Wales, an end to burning peat for electricity in Ireland and a ban on fracking across all the jurisdictions on these islands. The conference was attended by Friends of the Earth Directors from more than 20 European countries and marks the 20th anniversary of the foundation of Friends of the Earth Ireland. Read more [here](#).

A Greenest City Strategy – Planning for the 21st Century

The Irish Planning Institute and the Irish Green Building Council will be hosting Councillor Andrea Reimer of the City of Vancouver at this free event with the kind sponsorship of the Canadian Embassy. Councillor Reimer will be discussing the strategy, vision and planning that helped Vancouver be named one of the World's Greenest Cities. This event will take place on 24 May 2016 in Chartered Accountants Ireland. More information [here](#).



Energy Action Ireland SPIRIT Programme

Energy Action has begun a European energy efficiency programme (SPIRIT) in a partnership comprised of 8 organisations from 8 different member states. The project partners will work in partnership with faith based organisations to develop an energy efficiency programme that will deliver a programme of domestic energy saving advice sessions. SPIRIT is engaging faith based organisations to help their communities change the way they use energy in the home, leading to measurable energy savings and CO2 emissions reduction. Learn more about this programme [here](#).



Tierra Sagrada (Sacred Earth, Sacred Trust) Global Day of Prayer and Action for Creation - 12 June 2016

Tierra Sagrada (Sacred Earth, Sacred Trust) is the name of a global day of prayer and action for creation on 12 June. This date marks six months after the Paris Climate Agreement and joins in the celebration of International Environment Day (June 5) and the first anniversary of the publication of Pope



Francis' Encyclical "Laudato Si'" (June 18). Around the world communities will be joining in an incredible variety of ways. Our diversity is our strongest power. Find out more [here](#). Here are some ideas of ways communities are joining in:

- Say a prayer, make a blessing, sing a song or meditate - on your own, with your family or bring your community together.
- Stage a sit in meditation outside a place that's important locally: a new fracking site, your town hall, a coal mine, or a place that's at risk.
- Hold your service outdoors, to reconnect the community to nature.
- Organise a community project - paint a mural, banners or build a sculpture.
- A march through your town, bring together people from your community and beyond around protecting our planet for the vulnerable.

Support the Protest at Woodburn Forest, Co Antrim – Northern Ireland almost Fracked!

Since 2011 fracking has been looming over Ireland. [The Stop the Drill Campaign](#) is raising awareness about the planned drill in Woodburn Forest, Co Antrim, only 380m uphill from a major drinking water reservoir. At present the first rig in Northern Ireland has arrived and has been transported to Woodburn Forest. Infrastructure are about to start test-drilling. Campaigners are on site and are organising actions. [Fracking Free Ireland](#) and [Don't Drill Antrim Water](#) are encouraging people to turn up and demonstrate massively to stop the drill otherwise Ireland will be no longer fracking free. Friends of the Earth worldwide directors abandoned their AGM in Carlingford on 11 May and visited Woodburn Forest to show their solidarity.



Eco challenge! – [The Marine Conservation Society](#) is running **The Plastic Challenge** from 1-30 June 2016. We use single use plastics for just about everything, from brushing our teeth and showering to buying and storing our food and other products. It's durable and lightweight, but it's these properties that allow it to persist in the environment for hundreds to thousands of years.



Many types of plastic can be recycled, but much of it isn't. The Marine Conservation Society wants us to stop taking it for granted, take responsibility for the resources we are using, and encourage others to do so as well. They want Plastic Challengers to spread the reduce, reuse, recycle message to reduce the amount of plastic entering the environment. They are challenging people to give up their lifestyle of convenience, giving up their pre-packed sandwiches, their ready meals and their drinks on the go during the challenge. They want to change people's attitudes towards single-use-plastics, and to encourage people to just buy what they need. Do the Plastic Challenge and you'll never look at your shopping in the same way again! Are you ready to take up the challenge? Learn more [here](#).

Prayer for the Earth

Lord, grant us Wisdom to Care for the Earth.

Lord, grant us the wisdom to care for the earth and till it.

Help us to act now for the good of future generations and all your creatures.

Help us to become instruments of a new creation, founded on the covenant of your love.

Amen.

With kindest regards

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