

ECO-CONGREGATION IRELAND



Annual Review 2016

Eco-Congregation Ireland is Shining a Light on Climate Justice!

Since November 2015 churches throughout Ireland have joined Eco-Congregation Ireland in the 'Shine a Light on Climate Justice' initiative, which was launched at the National Ecumenical Prayer Service for COP21 in the presence of President Michael D Higgins. Before the end of that service Rev Andrew Orr, Chair of the Eco-Congregation Ireland Committee presented the specially commissioned Climate Justice Candle to Pastor Martin Sauter of St Finian's Lutheran Church, Dublin, the first faith community to use it in worship.



By the end of February 2017 the Climate Justice Candle visited almost 60 different churches, parishes and faith communities and it is still weaving its way throughout

the South East of the country. It is proving 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.



Due to the popularity of the Climate Justice Candle, which has been focussed up to now on Dublin City, counties Dublin, Wicklow, Carlow, Wexford, Tipperary and Kilkenny, Eco-Congregation Ireland is beginning to make plans for another candle to travel around Northern Ireland raising awareness of the urgent need for climate justice and to encourage more churches to take eco-friendly steps - spiritual, practical, community and global.

The Eco-Congregation Ireland Committee has developed resources for groups to use when hosting the candle and these are available on the ECI website (www.ecocongregationireland.com). These include a notebook for thoughts and reflections; Prayers for the Environment; A Service of Prayer and Reflection; information and ideas on how to use the candle and resources; and the Eco-Congregation Ireland Environmental Check Up for Your Church which helps groups assess what they have achieved in their eco journey and what work is still to do – encouraging them along the road to their Eco-Congregation Ireland Award. Groups might choose to use the worship resources the way they are, or adapt them to suit their own purposes. *Continued overleaf...*



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 Ireland hopes that, by taking part in this initiative, churches will be encouraged to include prayers for climate justice in every Service/Mass and to take actions to 'green' their churches. We send out the candle in faith and in hope and look forward to receiving updates as it makes its journey around Ireland.



If you are interested in hosting the candle contact Karen Nicholson on info@ecocongregationireland.com or phone +353 (0) 89 974 0744.

Mercy Sisters, Western Province

first ever Religious Congregation to receive Eco-Congregation Ireland Award!

On 26 November 2016 the Sisters of Mercy, Western Province's beautiful book ***Walking Gently on Earth*** was launched by Éanna Ní Lamhna, environmental consultant and broadcaster in Knock House Hotel, Co Mayo.

Their book tells of the Sisters' efforts and commitment to live more sustainably at this time so as to protect "our common home". It was presented as a requirement for their Eco-Congregation Award.



The sisters were

nominated for the award by the Irish NGO Vita, with whom they work in partnership in Ethiopia where they have helped create the 'Gamo Gofa Green Zone' model of development, i.e. a community-led sustainable development project in the Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Region (SNNPR) of Ethiopia.

One speaker at the event was John Weakliam, CEO of Vita, an inspirational leader promoting next generation community-led development and implementing quantifiable climate protection through the 'Vita Green Impact Investment Fund' (VGIIF) in Ethiopia and Eritrea. Another contributor was Professor Emeritus, John Sweeney of NUI Maynooth, noted environmentalist and climatologist.



The award was presented to Sr. Caitlín Conneely, Provincial Leader of the Mercy Sisters by Catherine Brennan SSL, Catholic representative on Eco-Congregation Ireland.



In her acceptance address Sister Caitlín spoke of the honour it was for her to accept the award. She said, 'The call to walk gently on the earth seems simple but we know that it is very challenging for those of us who live in this part of our world. Today's event invites each one of us and the community in general to take this call very seriously.'

Sister Caitlín encouraged us to hear Pope Francis' plea: *'The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development.'*

'A true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.'

Sister Caitlín shared that this is something very dear to the heart of Catherine McAuley, her Order's Foundress. The Sisters hope that we are all inspired by these words to move towards a balanced lifestyle in order to protect our common home and live in harmony with all God's creation.

Since the launch, a copy of the book was presented to An Taoiseach, Enda Kenny, to bring to Pope Francis for their first official meeting.



Balally Parish

receive their ECI award for Caring for God's Creation

On December 4th 2016, the parishioners of the Church of the Ascension of the Lord, Balally, situated in the foothills of the Dublin mountains, welcomed Sr. Catherine Brennan, Catholic Representative of Eco-

Congregation Ireland, to their Sunday Eucharist. The occasion was the presentation to the parish of the ECI Eco Award in recognition of the parish's long engagement with the issues of climate change and climate justice.

Members of Balally Parish Environment Group,

contributed to an ecologically themed liturgy during which Sr. Catherine made the award. The liturgy started with a procession of ecological symbols

representing elements of life on this planet: water, earth, fire, bulbs. An image of the suffering earth, painted by a local artist, was also placed before the altar.



The Bidding Prayers, the Penitential Act, the Post-Communion Reflection, a poem 'What did you do when you knew?', the solo violin

music and the recessional hymn, all combined to reflect the theme of care for our fragile earth, God's creation.

In an inspiring homily, Monsignor Dermot Lane, Parish Priest of Balally, reminded the congregation that

humanity needs to recover our bond with the natural world, that respect and care for the beautiful earth, our common home, is an integral part of our Christian faith and mission, that 'being a Christian in the 21st century carries with it a commitment to care for God's creation, not as optional, but as something essential to Christian faith today.'



Sr. Catherine spoke about the work of ECI to encourage parish communities all over Ireland to 'walk gently on the earth' before presenting the award. She said "Care for our common home' is at the heart of prayer and the Sunday liturgy in Balally parish.

This is not an optional extra in our churches but integral to worship'.

Two children from the parish primary schools, both of whom are members of their respective school's Green Flag Committee, representing the next generation, accepted the award on behalf of the whole parish community.



A memorable occasion for all the parishioners of Balally was followed by a celebratory cup of Fairtrade tea and homemade buns in the Parish Pastoral Centre, heated by solar panels!

Chairperson's Remarks

By Rev Andrew Orr

2016 was definitely a mixed year on the environmental front. Climate change and its effects continued to be part of the political agenda in Ireland and in much of Europe, China and India. There was a welcome slowing in the rate of global carbon emissions, but it may be a case of too little too late. The passing of the disinvestment bill in the Dáil in early 2017 was a great achievement, thanks to the pressure exerted by all of us in the Stop Climate Chaos Coalition. On the other hand, there was almost no discussion of the crisis in the Dáil elections; nor in the upcoming Assembly elections; and the climate denialism at the heart of the new US government is frightening.



All the more reason, then, for grass roots action in communities, congregations and parishes. If you feel that you are a lone voice in your congregation, we hope this report will help you realise that there are many Christians who are working hard across Ireland, and that making a start is easy.

Thank you to all of you for prayers, encouragement and hard work. Thank you to Gillian Armstrong who has finished her time as Society of Friends Representative. She has been an outstanding, very competent member, not least in keeping all our financial matters running smoothly. We welcome Fran Brady as her replacement and Karen Nicholson who joined us as Administrative Officer.

We hope that you find much in this report to inspire and encourage you to protect our planet and mitigate the effects of climate change in God's world.

FINANCES

Opening Balance €8,602.86

INCOME:

Church Subscriptions €2,176.60

Trócaire Grant €4,500.00

Donations €295.13

Total: €6,971.73

+ €8,602.86

= €15,574.59

EXPENDITURE:

Staff, office & IT expenses €6,102.10

Volunteers' expenses
(travel & subsistence) €46.15

Events & award €101.31

Stop Climate Chaos Subscription €200.00

Bank Charges €4.50

Total: €6,454.06

Closing balance at the end of 2016: €9,120.53

NEW FACES AT ECI



In 2016 two new colleagues joined the Eco-Congregation Ireland team. **Fran Brady** is the new Religious Society of Friends Representative on the ECI committee replacing Gillian Armstrong who represented Quakers since 2011.

Karen Nicholson started working with ECI in May as Administrative Officer replacing Fiona Murdoch who had served in this role for several years.



UPCOMING AWARDS 2017

- Drimalis Retreat Centre, Co Antrim
- Westport Church of Ireland, Co Mayo
- Westport Catholic Church, Co Mayo
- An Tairseach, Co Wicklow

TRÓCAIRE

Working for a Just World



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Facebook

[www.facebook.com/
ecocongregationireland](http://www.facebook.com/ecocongregationireland)

FIND OUT MORE

We are always happy to answer questions, hear your eco news and accept invitations to speak. To get in touch, simply email info@ecocongregationireland.com or contact one of our committee members (each one is appointed by their denomination):

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DONATIONS

We are reliant on donations from churches and individuals in order to keep our work going.

BANK details:

Ulster Bank, Ranelagh, Dublin 6

Account name: Eco-Congregation Ireland

Sort code: 98-50-50

Account number: 10373901

IBAN: IE68 ULSB 9850 5010 3739 01

BIC: ULSBIE2D

CHEQUES:

Euro and Sterling are both acceptable. These should be made payable to 'Eco-Congregation Ireland' and sent to: Rev Andrew Orr, The Rectory, Tullow, Co Carlow

STANDING ORDERS:

Euro standing orders are welcome. Unfortunately Sterling standing orders are not possible currently.