

Dear Eco Congregation friends

Welcome to the May 2017 edition of the Eco Congregation Ireland newsletter. Summer is coming with many opportunities to get outside into God's beautiful creation!



Are you interested in learning more about Eco-Congregation Ireland?

Perhaps your congregation or parish has an interest in the environment and has thought about becoming an Eco-Congregation? The Eco-Congregation Committee has Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist, Church of Ireland and Quaker representatives on it and they are happy to come to speak to your group no matter how small! The contact details are listed at the end of this newsletter.

Do you know we are on Facebook? You can access the Eco-Congregation Ireland Facebook profile [here](#) or just go to facebook.com and search 'Eco-Congregation Ireland'. It's a great place to keep up to date with ECI's activities and access current news and information from other NGOs and faith organisations.

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Our Climate Justice Candle – the journey continues!

Since our last newsletter, ECI's Climate Justice Candle has visited **Lismore Church of Ireland, Carlow Methodist, Baltinglass Church of Ireland, Tullow Catholic Church, Abbeyleix Church of Ireland and Cloughjordan Eco Village**. It is still continuing on its ecumenical and climate justice journey! If you would like to be part of this initiative, simply drop us an email to info@ecocongregationireland.com.

Climate Justice Candle Inspiration!

The [Eco-Congregation Ireland Climate Justice Candle](#) can be used in many different ways in a church or parish. Ballineaspaig Parish, Dennehy's Cross, Co Cork hosted the candle over the weekend of [Earth Hour](#). The candle was present in the Sanctuary for all the weekend Masses, during each of which the candle was lit and special prayers for the environment were said. The parishioners estimate that up to 2,000 parishioners participated over the course of the weekend.



The parish held the final in their series of Lenten talks on 'Wonders of Creation; Our Response' which was led by Fr. Declan Mansfield, Parish Priest of Ballinora parish. In the spirit of Pope Francis' letter *Laudato Si'*, and with the aid of Biblical passages, poetry, music and reflections, Fr. Declan drew together the themes of wonder, awe and reverence for the work of God, and led parishioners into prayer. The session concluded with the lighting of the Climate Justice Candle. Each of those present lit a small candle from that. They prayed

together 'A Prayer for our Earth' (*Laudato Si'*) while holding their candles, then each of the parishioners brought home their candle so they could pass on the light to family and friends.

Gardiner Street Inner City Parish gets a Spring Clean!

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis urges communities everywhere to undergo what he calls an ecological conversion. He says that "the ecological conversion needed to bring about lasting change is also a community conversion...." [2015, para. 219]. Gardiner St., a Jesuit parish located in Dublin 1, is actively answering this call by placing care for our common home at the heart of parish activities.



On Sunday, April 23rd, a small but eager group of parishioners came together, as part of National Spring Clean Month, for a clean-up of the streets within the parish. The clean-up event was also part of parish efforts towards their Eco-Congregation Ireland award. Later that day, Sr. Catherine Brennan, Catholic representative on the Eco-Congregation Ireland committee gave an inspiring address to the congregation at the Sunday evening Gospel Mass. She was joined by Orla Davin Carroll, a member of Balally Eco-Congregation, who motivated everyone with her account of the various initiatives taking place in their award-winning parish. [Read more of this story](#). Visit the [Gardiner Street website](#) to learn more about their environmental work.

Update from Ballineaspaig Parish, Dennehy's Cross, Co Cork

Parishioners from Ballineaspaig Parish in Co Cork have been busy since our last newsletter. They hosted the Eco-Congregation Ireland candle over Earth Hour (read more on this above under our Climate Justice Candle report); held a gardening demonstration in Atkins Garden Centre, Carrigrohane Road, Cork which was so successful that they intend holding more in June and September; held a vegetarian cookery demonstration to encourage parishioners to eat less meat and by doing so help climate change; distributed free seeds to parishioners of vegetables, herbs and flowering plants after Mass on 'Seed Sunday' and submitted a response to the Irish government's public consultation on the Draft National Mitigation Plan to transition Ireland to a low carbon economy by 2050. You can read Ballineaspaig Parish's full update and their response to the public consultation on the [Eco-Congregation Ireland website](#).



Diocese of Kerry is planning ahead for Creation Time 2017!



Diocese of Kerry

This year the Diocese of Kerry is moving their celebration of Earth Week to [Creation Time](#). They will be hosting a series of events across the month and trying to establish Creation Time as a season to be marked every year in the diocese. Last year the parishioners chose the theme of the loss of biodiversity from Laudato Si' and invited every parish to set up a biodiversity garden. This is now an ongoing project. This year the parishioners are focussing on 'food', another theme from Laudato Si' and in particular food waste. Pope Francis notes that "approximately a third of all food produced is discarded, and says "whenever food is thrown out it is as if it were stolen from the table of the poor" LS #50.

There will be a series of events on this theme across the month beginning with a prayer service in Tralee Town Park on September 1st. A leaflet for parishes is being prepared to outline the theme and offer suggestions to reduce food waste and giving suggestions for parish activities. The programme will be available in the [Diocese of Kerry website](#) under the Justice tab (then Earth Week).

Magheralin Parishioners celebrate Nature on St Patrick's Day!

On St Patrick's Day this year, following celebration of Mass, the annual parade from Sts Patrick and Ronan's Church took place. This is a cross-community event in the village of Magheralin, Co Down, organised by St. Michael's Gaelic Football Club. The theme this year was 'Nature' and was drawn from Pope Francis' recent encyclical 'On Care for Our Common Home'. Children participated in a series of art workshops to create their beautiful float depicting scenes of flowers and animals. The children were invited to wear animal onesies in the parade. There was an opportunity on the day to handle birds of prey such as owls and peregrine falcons. Also a local petting zoo brought exotic animals such as snakes, giant snails, lizards for everyone to look at and handle. A local pet rescue centre Almost Home NI, based in Moira, brought some dogs to show the children, which also gave them the opportunity to highlight the work they do. They received a donation from St. Michael's GFC.



Clogher JPIC Group celebrates Laudato Si'!

Clogher Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation Group is holding a Celebration of Pope Francis' Encyclical Laudato Si' which will take place in St Macartin's Cathedral Hall (Iniskeen Room) near St Macartin's Cathedral (Halls Lane) on Saturday 3 June 2017, 2.00pm-4.00pm. Guest speakers are Tanya Jones – 'Heart, Hands and Voice: Living out Laudato Si' and Anne Marie Russell – 'Zero Waste'. All welcome! Learn more about [Clogher JPIC Group](#).



Wonderful inaugural Earth Day Celebration in Cork for the 3 Faiths Forum!

Carrigaline Union of Parishes, an Eco-Congregation, was involved in an Earth Day celebration in Cork with the Three Faiths Forum. The Three Faiths Forum is an initiative that brings together representatives of the three Abrahamic faiths – Judaism, Christianity and Islam, seeking to create a space where people of faith can dialogue openly and respectfully, come to a better understanding of each other's faith and work together to enhance tolerance, co-operation and friendship in our society. Each of the traditions read in turn from their own scriptures about the value of Earth, our home and God's creation. The Forum was delighted with how the inaugural Earth Day celebrations went and they hope to hold a similar event next year. Read more about this event and see more photos [here](#).



Caring about a Small Blue Planet - SMA Parish, Wilton, Cork

The SMA Parish, Wilton, Cork is in the process of becoming an Eco-Congregation. The Wilton Justice group, attached to the SMA parish decided to host a programme called 'Caring about a Small Blue Planet'. They highly recommend this programme as a means of educating ourselves on the state of our planet and how our lifestyle is negatively impacting our earth. The programme consisted of 21 course hours, spread over six evenings and one full day. The course was facilitated by two experienced facilitators, Frank Dorr and his wife Eileen Lynch. The participants found the programme spiritually very enriching. Over the weeks they became very aware that they are intimately connected with the whole of life. At the end of the programme the participants were very aware that they need the solidarity of like-minded people to take on the many challenges that the program highlighted. Read more [here](#).



Update from South Belfast Quaker Meeting

[South Belfast Quakers](#) were awarded their Eco-Congregation Ireland award in 2014 but haven't been taking it easy since then! Last year all Quaker meetings in Ireland were asked to complete a Sustainability Report. South Belfast approached this by organising a 'Conversation' and 'Bring & Share Lunch' after their Sunday morning meeting on 13th November last year. Over 30 people attended. In the Conversation, what they do now and what they hope to do in the future were discussed. Eco practices that currently take place include using environmentally-friendly cleaning products, changing lights over to LEDs when they stop working, and maintaining a small allotment/vegetable patch in the grounds of the meeting house. Ideas for the future will include keeping bees, planting bee-friendly flowers in the grounds, and installing photovoltaic solar panels on the roof of the meeting house when the roof is renewed in the near future.



Creation Care Network in Northern Ireland – Report of Gathering 18 March 2017

The Creation Care Network in Northern Ireland held a meeting on Saturday 18 March 2017 in Templeton Hotel, Templepatrick, Co Antrim. Participants came from: Kilbride, Abbey, Hillsborough, 1st & 2nd Donegore and Ballynure Presbyterian churches, Christian Fellowship Church, Drumalis Retreat Centre, Eco-Congregation Ireland, A Rocha UK, Templepatrick Presbytery and Northern Ireland Community Energy.



The focus of this Network meeting was a talk from a guest speaker, Rev Dr. Ron Elsdon. Ron has long established roots with [A Rocha](#). He highlighted initiatives in his churches stemming back over many years when it was not topical or common for ecological ideas to be developed or linked directly to Christian worship. Members received a superb outline from scripture of the primary theological basis for Christians to make creation care central to Christian belief, Christian worship and Christian living. It was an excellent talk and there was some time for questions following the talk.

The group is very keen for other individuals, groups or churches who may be interested in promoting care of creation issues in their churches/church groups to come along. Please email Bertie Stirling on spectre747@bopenworld.com to get added to the email list and to receive more information about the next meeting. Read their report in full [here](#).

Lights out in Balally Parish!

Lots of lights were turned off in Balally parish on Saturday 25th March when parishioners of the [Church of the Ascension of the Lord](#), Balally, Dublin 16 were encouraged to come to the church to participate in a candlelit vigil for Earth Hour 2017. The purpose of the vigil was to celebrate the beautiful gift of creation and to recognise how we contribute to the climate change which threatens the future of our earth and which is already devastating the lives of many of our fellow citizens of the world.



For a quiet, candlelit hour, readings from scripture and from Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'* were interspersed with music, prayers, poems and reflections. The chosen readings celebrated the beauty of the earth, emphasised the duty of all Christians to care for the earth, to preserve it for future generations and to ensure climate justice for all the world's citizens today. Guests from Dundrum Methodist Church and from Kiltarnan Church of Ireland gave a welcome ecumenical dimension to the vigil which was judged by all present to be both moving and meaningful.

Support the new Grow It Yourself Cottage Market in Newbridge!

[GIY \(Grow It Yourself\)](#) is a not for profit social enterprise in Co Waterford that works with food growing groups across Ireland to transform the nation's health and well-being, strengthen communities and protect the environment by inspiring and empowering people to grow their own food. [The Cottage Market](#) is their latest initiative to help members of the GIY Community do just that.



[Shamrock Spring](#) is encouraging everyone to take part in the new monthly [Cottage Market in Newbridge](#) Town Hall, originally the Methodist Church, on the first Saturday of every month, 10.00am-2.00pm. The market launches on Saturday June 3rd and will show case locally grown, baked and made produce as well as arts and crafts. You can meet local community groups and Grow It Yourself enthusiasts raising awareness of their activities and selling their home-grown produce.

SMA Annual Summer School, Dromantine Retreat and Conference Centre, Newry – 7-9 July 2017

The SMA Annual Summer School will take place in Dromantine Retreat and Conference Centre, Newry, Co Down from 7-9 July 2017. This year's theme is 'Faith Responding to Changing Times'. Topics being addressed include Justin Kilcullen on 'Sustainable Development Goals: A Faith Response', Mary Reynolds on



'Remembering our Roles as Guardians of the Earth' and Sr Nellie McLaughlin RSM on 'Laudato Si' and the Call to Conversion - Impossible Challenge for the Modern World?' Visit the ECI website to download the Summer School [brochure](#) and [booking form](#). For more information and booking details contact laity@sma.ie or telephone 048 3082 1024.

EcoQuakers report on progress at Ireland Yearly Meeting 2017



At Ireland Yearly Meeting 2016 (IYM) Quaker Meetings were asked to become "as sustainable as possible", following a resolution made by IYM. Each Meeting was asked to develop a sustainability plan before January 2017, taking into consideration factors such as accessibility by public transport, energy efficiency, use of Fairtrade tea and coffee and use of organic and locally sourced food, when possible.

The Irish Quaker environmental committee, EcoQuakers Ireland, undertook to assist Meetings in working towards fulfilling these commitments and the booklet '[Responding to Ireland Yearly Meeting 2016: Living Sustainably and Fairly on This Earth](#)' was prepared to assist with this. Nineteen Quaker Meetings prepared a great variety of sustainability plans, the variety being indicative of the diversity of circumstances experienced across Meetings. EcoQuakers reported on their progress at Ireland Yearly Meeting 2017 and you can read their report [here](#).

Eco-Congregation Scotland Annual Gathering 2017 a Great Success!

Around 100 representatives from Eco-Congregations across Scotland gathered in Glasgow on Saturday 22 April to take part in workshops and hear from the keynote speaker [Alastair McIntosh](#). As well as the formal meetings there was time to socialise and meet people from other Eco-Congregations. Feedback from participants was very positive and there was great optimism about the way the ECS activities are growing, both in practical and spiritual work. An audio file of Alastair McIntosh addressing the ECS Gathering is available to listen to [here](#).



Cherishing Churchyards Week

[Caring for God's Acre](#) is a UK based charity dedicated to conserving and celebrating burial grounds and encouraging a holistic approach to management. As well as being a place for people, burial grounds can also be a haven for wildlife. Caring for God's Acre is encouraging churches to join them for '[Cherishing Churchyards Week](#)', 3-11 June, to celebrate churchyards and burial grounds and to raise awareness of the treasures they contain. From magnificent ancient Yews and the tiniest lichen, to old headstones and rare preaching crosses – all need care and attention. Watch a short video on Cherishing Churchyards Week and learn more [here](#).



Pray and Fast for the Climate

[Pray and Fast for the Climate](#) is a movement of Christians praying and fasting on the 1st of each month for climate justice. The movement started off in the UK, but now includes people from all over the world. Each month they produce a very informative list of prayer points for use individually or in public worship. Join them in praying and fasting each month. The prayer points for May 2017 are available [here](#).



The Dublin Squirrel

If you find yourself on George's Quay in Dublin, make sure to look up and see this brilliant new piece of street art. Portuguese artist Artur Bordalo (AKA Bordalo II) has travelled the world building 'Trash Animals' out of rubbish, and his latest sculpture has been unveiled on George's Quay. This massive red squirrel now sits proudly on the side of The Workshop Pub. The squirrel took around five days to build, with the base assembled out of car parts, bike wheels, and plastic barriers before being painted over. He chose the red squirrel as the focus of his installation in Dublin due to its endangered status – previously, he has constructed manatees, foxes, and opossums. Learn more [here](#).

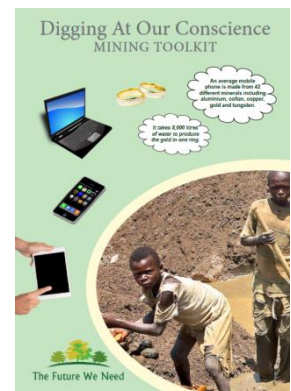


The Future We Need Group – Seminars on the UN Sustainable Development Goals

Seminars on the Impact of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) Leading into the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

The Future We Need (FWN) is a faith based group, comprising members from the Columbans, Franciscans, Loreto, Mercy Family and Presentations, which is expanding to include members of different religions. Members of FWN are keen to collaborate with like-minded groups, to ensure the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Agenda in Ireland. To this end they are offering half or whole day seminar / workshop sessions, either alone as the FWN, or with a broader network across Ireland. For further information please contact: Betty Lacey:

research@mercyinternational.ie; Michael O'Sullivan: 087 137 0972; or Denise Boyle: 087 794 0563



FWN was set up after the UN Rio +20 conference to promote education and advocacy on sustainable development issues. In March 2016 FWN produced a Mining Toolkit: '[Digging At Our Conscience](#)' to highlight through a series of 12 case studies the impact of mining on local communities worldwide. The toolkit also serves to challenge us to take responsibility for what we buy! FWN does not have a website, however you can see more of their activities on the websites of the [Sisters of Mercy Worldwide](#) or the [Presentation Sisters](#).

Eco challenge!

Protect our beautiful Irish waterways and seas by taking the [#plasticpledge](#) this summer! Environmental groups are asking us to love our waterways and pledge to put our rubbish in the nearest bin, recycle it or reuse it and help keep the world's oceans and rivers free from litter! Let's commit this summer to be mindful of the plastic based rubbish that ends up in our waters and try our best to reduce this destruction. Follow the Take the Plastic Pledge on [Facebook](#).



Prayer for the Earth

Prayer before a Green Team/Committee meeting

God our Creator, bless the work of our group to protect the Earth. Be with us as we plan ways for our parish to be good stewards of creation. May our faith community be a light for those around us, modelling a deep commitment to the wellbeing of the Earth. Please shower your grace on all of our activities. Keep us committed, motivated, and hopeful as we carry on this important ministry. Thank you for being with us every step of the way. This we pray through Christ, our Lord. Amen

If you have any information or stories from your congregation, parish, meeting or Eco Congregation we would love to hear from you! Please forward your news to us at info@ecocongregationireland.com. Don't forget, if you hold an event or meeting, please take some photos and we can include them on our website and our bi-monthly newsletter. If you want your event promoted in our bi-monthly newsletter, please email us about 2 weeks before the next newsletter is due out to ensure inclusion. Our next newsletters will be sent out at the end of July, September and November.



With kindest regards,

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