

ECO-CONGREGATION IRELAND



Annual Review 2017

Eco-Congregation Ireland 2017 Awards

An Tairseach Dominican Farm and Ecology Centre, Wicklow

On Saturday, 23 September 2017, An Tairseach had a visit from Catherine Brennan SSL, who presented them with a Gold Award on behalf of Eco-Congregation Ireland. The award ceremony was held in the context of their annual celebration of the Autumn Equinox. Those present gave thanks to Mother Earth for her beauty and bounty which sustains us throughout the year not only physically but also in the depths of our souls. The ceremony was attended by a large crowd of friends and well-wishers as well as by twenty-two international sabbatical students from Ireland, England, USA, Canada, Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya, Australia, New Zealand and the Philippines.

Sr Marian O'Sullivan accepted the award on behalf of the Board of Directors of An Tairseach, the staff, the Dominican community and the many friends who have supported them over the past twenty-five years as they established the organic farm, the wild-life habitats, the farm shop and the Ecology Centre which now offers courses to people from all over the English-speaking world. She said the journey had

taken the community from the notion that they were to care for the Earth to an awareness that they are the Earth which is more than a physical reality. The event was covered by local media and this photograph was supplied by Michael Kelly of the Wicklow Times.



St James Church of Ireland & St Anne's Catholic Parishes in Shankill, Co Dublin

On 19 November 2017 Catherine Brennan SSL presented to St James Church of Ireland Crincken and St Anne's RC parishes in Shankill, County Dublin their ECI award plaques following their assessment in late October. This ecumenical endeavour began in October 2015 when the two parishes founded Shankill Action for a Green Earth - SAGE, to raise awareness, both in their congregations and in the wider Shankill community, of climate change and our responsibilities as Christians and citizens to counter its impact on the poorest peoples and on the planet.

The presentation of the plaques took place in two separate ceremonies following the main Sunday service in each



church. Catherine Brennan had this to say at the end of the award ceremony in St Anne's: 'Today it is appropriate to conclude with Pope Francis' words of hope 'Inner peace is closely related to care for ecology and for the common good, because lived out authentically, it is reflected in a balanced life style together with a capacity for wonder which takes us to a deeper understanding of life'. May we be inspired by these words to move towards a balanced life style in order to protect our common home and live in harmony with all God's creation'.

5 Eco-Tips to Whet your Appetite for God's Creation

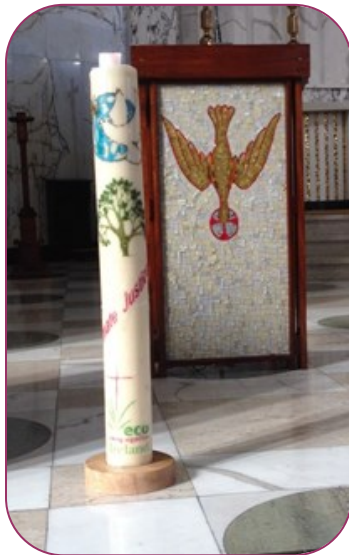
Jesus Christ, *'the first born of all creation'*, invites us to follow Him. So let us together learn from the ways of the Creator, the God of whom the psalmist wrote: *'You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing'*. (Colossians 1:15, Psalm 145:16)

1. Include regular prayers for the healing of God's creation in private and public prayers.
2. Take steps to reduce fossil fuel use, e.g. car share, cycle or walk, use meeting rooms appropriate to the size of a given meeting.
3. Endeavour to consume less and minimise waste, e.g. use crockery rather than disposable cups, cutlery and plates.
4. Plant up church grounds with native trees and shrubs for year round flowers to encourage bees and other pollinators.
5. Form an eco-congregation team to explore other ways to celebrate God's gift of creation and perhaps win an Eco-Congregation Ireland Award.

Eco-Congregation Ireland continues to Shine a Light on Climate Justice in 2017

In 2017 the Eco-Congregation Ireland Climate Justice Candle visited 26 different churches, parishes and faith communities and continues to weave its ecumenical and climate justice journey around 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. Inspirational stories of churches that hosted the Climate Justice Candle in 2017, using it in many different and creative ways include:

Ballinespaig Parish, Dennehy's Cross, Co Cork: parishioners 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 candle was also used in their series of Lenten talks on 'Wonders of Creation; Our Response'. Each of those present lit a small candle from the Climate Justice Candle and prayed together 'A Prayer for our Earth' (Laudato Si') while holding their candles.



Daughters of Charity: in June 2017 the Daughters of Charity met to review their whole year's work on Laudato Si'. This day was a culmination of a whole year's work and the goal of the day was to identify one Province action that they could take to continue their efforts to live out the challenges of Laudato Si'. As a Province the Sisters took the decision to commit to working towards becoming an Eco-Congregation and this was ritualised by hosting the ECI Climate Justice Candle.



Church of Ireland and Roman Catholic Parishes of Tashinny and Carrickredmond-Abbeyshrule, Co Longford: in June 2017 parishioners spread the word about the ECI Climate Justice Candle visiting the local area and the candle brought people together in ecumenical prayer services. The candle visited local schools and was the focal point of many faith gatherings.

The parishioners pray that the Climate Justice Candle's visit from place to place with its prayers and reflections has heightened the awareness of people in Co Longford.



Cloughjordan Community Development Committee: the Committee held a Biodiversity Week Celebration in May. The week culminated with a Community Eco-Service held at St Kieran's Church Green on the 28th of May. This was an ecumenical gathering with local Churches, to close Biodiversity Week and celebrate the natural world around us. The service included the ECI Climate Justice Candle. The candle was hosted by St Michael's and St. John's Church. The ecumenical gathering helped parishioners recognise their responsibility to both care for and nurture the environment of which we are a part.



St Francis Xavier, Gardiner Street, Dublin: as part of the Season of Creation, the parish hosted the ECI Climate Justice Candle during its weekend mass celebrations. Wrapped in white and surrounded by flowers and green foliage, the candle was lit and processed up the church aisle. Fr. Clarke said that he was grateful that the parish had the opportunity to take part, and how hosting the candle provided a good reminder to parishioners of the need to take better care of the natural world.





Carrigaline Union of Parishes: Rev Elaine Murray, Rector of Carrigaline Union of Parishes, Co Cork used the candle as the focal point of their Harvest Service, their Clergy Conference and at a talk to Douglas Churches Together on Eco-Congregation Ireland. All of these inspirational activities were recorded in a 'Candle Diary' where parishioners created a scrapbook of the candle's visit to Carrigaline containing photos and descriptions, poems and illustrations.

Church of the Three Patrons, Rathgar: the congregation of the Church of the Three Patrons Rathgar hosted the ECI Climate Justice Candle on in September 2017. The Candle was a focal point of an Interfaith Service of Prayer and Reflection, designed by Catherine Brennan SSL and members of the Three Patrons Laudato Sí group. Each person present was asked to make their personal commitment to change some aspect of their mode of living in the coming year to promote the care for God's creation.



Clonakilty Methodist Church: the church members coordinated various activities around the visit of the candle including inviting four local schools to take part in a number of competitions for different age groups to highlight the issue of climate justice which was also the theme of their Harvest



Thanksgiving Service. Members felt that hosting the Climate Justice Candle challenged them about their impact on the environment and has raised awareness of the issue of 'Climate Justice' in their community.

St Anne's, Shandon, Cork: Harvest was celebrated in St. Anne's coinciding as usual with the 'Jazz weekend'. The church was full to capacity with parishioners, friends and visitors coming together to give thanks for harvest and to celebrate through music on this 40th year of the Cork Guinness Jazz Festival. Rev Andrew Orr preached from his experience as the Chair of Eco-Congregation Ireland. The Climate Justice Candle was lit in St. Anne's for the service as it concluded its travels around Cork.



ECI is grateful for the financial support of Trócaire

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FINANCES

Opening Balance €9,120.53

INCOME:

Church Subscriptions €1,600.00

Trócaire Grant €2,000.00

Donations €810.00

Total: €4,410.00

+ €9,120.53

= €13,530.53

EXPENDITURE:

Staff, office & IT expenses €5,100.00

Printing €110.00

Award Plaques €302.05

Bank Charges €0.50

Total: €5,512.55

Closing balance at the end of 2017: €8,017.98

New Certificates from Eco-Congregation Ireland

Up to now churches and congregations have begun their journey to an Eco-Congregation Ireland Award by working their way through the Eco-Congregation Ireland



'Environmental Check Up for your Church' document and undertaking a number of items from it over a two year period. This then leads to the final and overall Eco-Congregation Ireland Award.

The ECI Committee has decided to issue two certificates in the earlier stages of this journey towards the final Eco-Congregation Ireland

Award marking stages on the way - the **Awareness Award** and the **Endeavour Award**.

Eco-Congregation Ireland will send churches an Awareness Award when they begin their environmental journey and when they get a bit further along the road, ECI will present churches with an Endeavour Award. After two years churches can then apply for the overall Eco-Congregation Ireland Award.



DONATIONS

ECI is grateful to all the individuals and churches who donated to our work in 2017. We are reliant on donations 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.

For more info visit:

www.ecocongregationireland.com



www.facebook.com/ecocongregationireland

Notes of Appreciation for ECI

'ECI is making a vital contribution to society and the life of the churches. They are leading the way through the quality of their Newsletter which shows how ecumenism and ecology can come together in the care of God's creation' - *Dr Dermot A Lane, Balally Parish*

'Our diocese of Cashel, Ferns and Ossory considers itself to be something of a pioneer in matters of environmental responsibility and stewardship ... Our Green Charter was probably the first of its kind in the Church of Ireland and we are grateful that it had proved a useful template for others. The challenge for us of course is to try to keep ahead of the posse in the long term! Worthy aspirations must be transformed into effective everyday actions, momentum must be sustained and we must keep abreast of fresh insights and technical developments. In short we need both encouragement and continuing education in matters of environmental awareness. This is where the work of ECI is of constant assistance to us, and I warmly commend its energetic commitment to a cause which is absolutely basic to authentic discipleship set in the context of reverence for creation'. - *Bishop Michael Burrows*

Chairperson's Remarks - Rev Andrew Orr



2017 was once again a mixed year for the environmental movement. The destruction of the planet continues apace: plastics, deforestation, climate change heading for 1.5 degrees and much more. But on the upside there is increasing awareness of the reality of man-made climate change, and growing pressure to take action now to prevent global average temperature increases reaching 2 degrees above pre-industrial levels. Concern for the climate has become mainstream, as the business case for action becomes as strong as the political case. The recent divestment conference held by our friends in Trócaire showed that selling off fossil fuel investments makes sense, before they become "stranded assets". Today, climate change isn't just an environmental issue: it's an economic issue too.

But of course we believe that this is a moral and spiritual issue as well: 'the earth is the Lord's, and everything in it' (Psalm 24): God's creation is a gift that we have a duty to care for and the wellbeing of all creation matters to God. We also believe that climate change is about justice. Acting on climate change is about loving our neighbours, now and for the future.

The local church can do a great deal. Congregations not only look after their area, their own buildings, their own usage: they are also at the grassroots, a movement for change. Once we can see what we can do locally, it filters up to become a changed mind-set in the central church: and from there politicians and governments start to take notice. Thank you to everyone who is working with us: we hope the stories in this report will inspire you to see how much is going on across the island of Ireland.