

Brief Synopsis of Address by Prof. John Barry at the AGM of the ICC – 04/04/2019

John Barry is Professor of Green Political Economy, Queen's University, Belfast.

Professor Barry prefers to call the crisis facing us worldwide as CLIMATE BREAKDOWN.

Although his particular field is economics, he feels that the time has come, when addressing the general public, to refrain from speaking of mythical technical solutions and to seek to move hearts – this is a crisis of values and ethics, and coalitions of communities are needed.

He referred to Greta Thunberg's words : "I want you to act as if the house is on fire", and said that he thinks the political classes have no idea how willing the general population might be to effect major changes. He also spoke of the 'Great Pacific Garbage Patch', three times the size of France, and of a Curve of various stages : Denial – Frustration – Depression – Experiment – Decision – Integration.

Professor Barry was appealing for much greater church involvement and leadership, at local level and more widely. The big picture feels unattainable but small actions are manageable, and we need to sow positive seeds for the future, the results of which we personally will probably not be here to see : "We borrow the Earth for our children".

We live in a cynical culture and vision is largely absent – pressure from citizens is needed. He felt that by co-operating at parish and congregation level, churches could contribute not only in practical ways but, most importantly, by giving leadership at a spiritual and inspirational level.

Compiled by : Gillian Armstrong, Quaker representative at the AGM of the Irish Council of Churches, held at the Jethro Centre, Lurgan, Co Armagh on 4th April 2019.