

23rd Meeting of Creation Care Network
Saturday 28th September at Knock Methodist Church

The meeting was opened by John Stothers, the convenor for the Sustainability Team at Knock Methodist Church-East Belfast Circuit

- John led us in a reflection using the LICC material '*Jesus Died to Save The Planet*' by Paul Kunert. He focused upon Genesis Chapter 2 verse 15 '***The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and take care of it***'
- He drew our attention to the word '*work*' that is found in the N.I.V. translation. The word work is derived from the Hebrew word '*abad*'. In many other instances within the N.I.V. the word work is not used but the word '*serve*' is and brings a fuller meaning to our responsibilities. The Hebrew word also has the notion of sacredness and worship. The conclusion is that God intends that we work the land but as an act of sacred service. A service that helps sustain the earth but also as an act of worship.
- Bertie Stirling led us in a prayer asking God for an even greater sense of community and fellowship.
- Bertie reminded us that Creation Care Network meets biannually.
- ECO Church now has over 6000 churches on its membership.

,Denominations/Groups attending the meeting

- Methodist, Church of Ireland, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, Bahai Community, Vineyard Church, A Rocha UK, Join the Dots
- Those who attended had an opportunity to talk about what is happening at their churches or sphere of influence. They shared the successes and difficulties they had experienced.
- Mark Dick opened the updates and gave news about Jubilee Farm.
- Nicky McBride from St John's Orangefield C.O.I are working to encourage the congregation to be more environmentally aware. They have a pollinator garden.
- Grace Davin from Hillsborough Presbyterian reported that they were continuing to look at keyways to improve the environment. They have recently carried out a litter pick. They have decided to widen their remit as a way to get more people involved, including their youth. She asked for information on how to maintain a wildflower garden. She found that buying rattle was very expensive. Creation care is an

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integral part of their services. At their monthly prayer meetings, they are including creation care aspects.

- Mia Taylor who works in local government advised us that information on grants for planting projects. There is a community garden grant which will close at end of October 2024.
She advised us that there was new personnel who were keen to advance environmental improvement.
- Edwin Graham from the Bahai community informed us that they had refurbished their building. They wanted it to be sustainable. They took advice and installed a heat pump. They also have a community garden.
- Juanita Majury from '*Join The Dots Together*' made us aware of her support for Creation Care and that their movement stood for '*Sharing information and working for climate justice in Northern Ireland*'
- Lynn Orr from Newtonbreda Presbyterian informed us that they have a polytunnel in place where they grow, tomatoes, chillies and aubergines. Their minister is making people aware of an environmental 'Messy Church and Messy Prayer'
- Rev. Ruth Mathews from Bloomfield Methodist church is actively promoting the Methodist Environmental policy to the congregation and will be starting the ECI Awareness award. Currently their prayer is about creation, and she intends to conduct a creation care service.
- Brian Moore and Brian McLaughlin from Saint Colmcille's, Ballyhackamore want to support Knock Methodist on receiving their ECI award. They are doing an ecology audit. They would like to plant trees in local parks.
- Joan Cook from Knock Methodist welcomed the new labelled recycling bins in the church kitchen and throughout the centre.
- Rev. Fiona McCrea, Knock Methodist will be including a creation care type of service during the Harvest celebration
- Sarah Clarke reported Vineyard church reported that they are keen to become an ECO church but are currently meeting in the Tech
- John Stothers from Knock Methodist made us aware that at QUB Belfast their engineering students have environmental awareness as an integral part of their degree. He also asked if there was an

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alternative to using plastic bin liners? He was advised to contact Karen Nicholson of ECI about decomposable bin liners.

- Michael Jemphrey from Knock Presbyterian is working with the Scouts who did a beach clean at Rathlin Island as part of the future Island-Island project.

They are currently replacing some of their older premises with new buildings and there will be a particular emphasis on sustainability in the new build.

Maureen Rowan ECI/MCI/CSR Presentation

- Maureen presented Knock Methodist Church with their Awareness Award and confirmed that Knock was now the third Methodist Church in the North of Ireland to receive this first stage award. Knock's Sustainability Team acknowledged their gratitude towards her diligent assistance. They also acknowledged her tireless work in helping to create and drive the new recommendations that the Committee for Social Responsibility (CSR) have made for all Methodist churches' in Ireland. They also gave credit to ECI and Karen Nicholson for her eager assistance
- Maureen helped us recognise that our faith in God was essential as the source of our motivation. The fact that we are surrounded physically by the goodness of God is a constant reminder.
- She made us aware of the strong links that now exist between Irish Methodism and ECI and how cooperation was essential in our shared goal of a sustainable earth
- She also focussed on Knock's next step in achieving the Endeavour award. Based upon ECI/MCI guidelines
- She stated the four main areas of church life need to be considered

Spiritual-----Practical----- Community and Global

- She highlighted 6 minimal steps a church can take for consideration as objectives

Environmental Policy Objectives

Waste and Recycling

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- Promote the “reduce, reuse and recycle” message to all users of church premises
- Direct to collection facilities for recycling items which can be used by church members or local community
- Encourage appropriate use of council / local authority recycle bins for church waste

Lighting and Energy

- Use energy saving bulbs
- All lights and stand -by devices to be turned off when rooms are not occupied
- Plan for high efficiency boilers and regular servicing
- Use renewable energy, if possible, e.g. solar panels
- Employ low-cost electricity tariffs
- Install zoned, thermostatically controlled heating systems where possible
- Review standard of insulation, walls, roof space, double glazing

Water (excluding wastewater systems)

- Install water saving devices e.g. dual flush toilets
- Check water outlets for drips and leaks
- Fix de-scaling devices
- Read water meter and monitor consumption
- Prevent pollutants entering the drainage system

Purchasing Policy

- Purchase recycled paper, envelopes , ink cartridges etc
- Reduce paper use by using electronic communication where possible
- Eliminate the use of disposable cups and cutlery
- Use only ethically and environmentally aware suppliers e.g. cleaning materials, building stock, Fairtrade goods.

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- Buy locally when possible

Use of Land external to Church or Manse

- Encourage wildlife friendly management of church land and property
- Publish green tips in church magazines
- Facilitate biodiversity and natural species are facilitated and not eradicated by cutting down trees etc.
- Minimise use of pesticides and weedkillers

Travel

- Make every effort to reduce air pollution and energy consumption from car usage by avoidance of unnecessary travel and the use of energy efficient vehicles
- Promote car sharing where possible
- Support local initiatives for the expansion of good quality public transport, the provision of improved facilities for cyclists and pedestrians and local Green Travel Programmes.
 - Having finished her presentation she then used her own church as an example but highlighted that because each church has a unique geographical location it required imagination to see possibilities for ECO improvements.
 - Her example was this for her home church, Methodist Centenary ECO congregation in Dublin:
 - In her local community foreign refugees were in a hostel nearby. They were quartered 6 men to a room.
 - The mainly young men have experienced animosity from local residents and indeed there was little the refugee's could do to integrate as they cannot even earn a wage until processed by the government as having asylum status

Maureen's Church Council were aware of a plot of land that was neglected and got permission to work the land into a productive garden. The men gladly got involved and relations with the local community improved

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She then went on to share some more of the joys and setbacks she had also experienced.

They had produced their monthly-yearly-long term action plan and secured some grants for insulation and renewal of their windows. In addition, the installation of solar panels and a bicycle parking cage

They had monitored the consumption of electricity in their premises and by finding the causes of unnecessary use (e.g. lights and appliances left on) they made good savings

They addressed items that were causing unnecessary water waste such as dripping taps and again helped effect financial savings.

They made sure that doors were not left open unnecessary open to conserve heat.

A drive to help congregational members to be more aware of the need to save electric and heat was and continues to help.

Not all was plain sailing because they found that in order to integrate the solar energy with the main grid, modifications had to be made to the existing electric consumer unit. It was discovered that not only was there asbestos present but also the existing wiring at the church was outdated and would need renewal. The grants given by the council did not include money for upgrading and indeed they would have to pay them to obtain the planning permission for some structural work and the installation of the bicycle cage.

To Close:

Bertie Stirling from A Rocha UK/Creation Care brought the meeting to a close. He reminded us about the ECO Congregation Candle can be made available both north and south as part of an Eco service or meeting.

He reminded us to keep an eye out for ECI monthly newsletters

Dr Mark Dick kindly suggested his church in Ballymena for the next meeting.