

Dear Eco-Congregation friends

Welcome to the May/June 2018 edition of the Eco-Congregation Ireland newsletter. It's been a long winter and summertime is here!



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 with the New ECI Candle!

The Eco-Congregation Ireland [Climate Justice Candle](#) has been weaving its ecumenical and climate justice journey around Ireland since the launch of the project in 2015. Since then it had suffered quite a bit of wear and tear on its journey and unfortunately could not be fixed. This meant we had to have another candle made.

We are happy to report that our new Climate Justice Candle is ready to head off on its ecumenical and climate justice journey again!

If you would like to be part of this initiative and use the new candle in a future event, simply drop us an email to info@ecocongregationireland.com. We look forward to hearing from YOU!



Awards! Awards! Westport Eco-Congregation Receives ECI Award!

The congregations of Holy Trinity Church and St. Mary's Church with Westport Eco-Congregation were delighted to receive their Eco-Congregation Ireland Award on Sunday April 22nd on Earth Day! Over the last two years the committee with the assistance of the schools and many other community groups travelled together on this journey to Care for Creation, inspired by the publication of Pope Francis 'Laudato Si'. The award was presented at the 11.30am service in Holy Trinity and then in St.

Mary's at 12pm Mass. Catherine Brennan, Catholic representative on the Eco-Congregation Ireland committee presented the award to members of Westport Eco-Congregation. You can read Westport Eco-Congregation's report on this event in full and view their photos on the [ECI website here](#).



Cork Three Faiths Forum Celebrates Earth Day 2018: End Plastic Pollution!

For the second year now, the Cork Three Faiths Forum organised an Earth Day Celebration right in the centre of Cork City. The theme for Earth Day this year was 'End Plastic Pollution' and the Forum was delighted to be joined by a representative from VOICE Recycling Ambassador Program.

The weather was glorious and many of those in the park and those passing by joined the group to listen to readings from the Hebrew Scriptures, the Quran and the Christian Bible. The delicious food was again supplied by the Real Olive Company in the English Market.



The aim of the Forum is to show solidarity with each other, the Creator and all of Creation. As Judaism, Christianity and Islam all share a common concern for creation, the Earth Day Celebration is a wonderful opportunity to highlight the need for all to live in right relationship with the Earth and to collaborate with each other in order to address the causes of climate and ecological degradation. You can view lots more photos of the event on the [Cork Three Faiths Forum Facebook page](#).

Rathfarnham Quaker Meeting Children Plant Sunflower Seeds for Earth Day

The children of Rathfarnham Quaker Meeting enjoyed planting sunflower seeds for Earth Day. First they made biodegradable pots out of old newspapers. In a few weeks' time, they are holding a cake/book/plant sale after meeting for worship when they will sell the sunflower plants to members of the Meeting, like they did last year. They hope to raise funds for the environmental charity [VITA](#).



News from St Anne's and Shankill Action for a Green Earth

Kathie Davey from St Anne's Parish gave ECI an update on earth-centred activities in their parish. You can read her report in full and view photos [on the ECI website here](#). Actions included celebrating Earth Day by planting a new flower bed outside the parish centre facing the busy main road. During the Children's Mass at 10.30 a bowl of wildflower seeds was presented and later blessed. Members of the congregation were invited to gather at the flower bed after Mass and each take a "pinch" of seeds to sprinkle in the bed as a symbol of our care for the Earth, Our Common Home, to encourage biodiversity and the welfare of bees. Duncan Stewart of Eco-Eye gave a talk to SAGE looking at ways in which the community of Shankill could save energy and thereby contribute to mitigating Climate Change.



Sisters of Mercy Environment Week in Árd Bhríde Community, Co Mayo

Immaculata Brady, Maura Gallagher and Margaret Tiernan provided ECI with a report of their event. Examples of their Environment Week activities were as follows. Their first evening consisted of a prayer to ask God to be with them in their deliberations over the week. They reflected on the state of our planet today and on what they might do as a community to alleviate some of the problems that are so pertinent at present. On day two of Fr SintayhuGelaw celebrated Mass with all present and afterwards shared his experience of 'life in Global South'. On day three participants looked at another topic 'Women Sower of Seeds locally and globally'. To end the Environment Week John Cleary who recently completed an MA on Climate Change presented on 'Tracing the roots of Climate Change'. [You can read their report in full on the ECI website here](#).



Update on the Work of the Laudato Sí Working Group from Lorna Gold

Lorna from Trócaire has provided us all with an update of the work of the Laudato Sí Working Group so far. You can read this report [on the ECI website here](#). It includes news of the group becoming a partner with GCCM and Trócaire for the "Our Common Home" project at the World Meeting of Families; development of plans to roll out the 'Season of Creation' across dioceses and parishes in September this year; news of how the Irish divestment momentum is building and those organisations that have committed to divest and the next faith-based divestment announcement that will take place on 13 September. Lots happening!



Our Common Home – World Meeting of Families 2018

Jane Mellett has shared this news with ECI: 'As you may have heard, Pope Francis will visit Dublin for the World Meeting of Families event in August 2018. During the festival we are inviting all pilgrims into a conversation about 'Our Common Home'. This exciting project is in collaboration with the Laudato Si Ireland Committee, Trocaire and the Global Catholic Climate Movement.



Pope Francis has called each of us, in 'Laudato Si' to live wisely, think deeply and love generously. He calls each of us to listen to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor who suffer the most from environmental destruction. During the WMoF festival pilgrims will be able to visit 'Our Common Home' eco-spaces and join in prayer, discussion and action in caring for our beautiful planet. We will hear the eco-stories of families from around the world and discover more about how we, as family, can care more for our beautiful world. People can register as Eco-volunteers on the main website if they wish to get involved or contact 'Our Common Home' project co-ordinator: jane.mellett@worldmeeting2018.ie.'

"In the family too, we can rethink our habits of consumption and join in caring for the environment as our common home." (Amorist Laetitia, #277)

Church of Ireland CASC Holds Seminar on Role of Faith Communities & Climate Change

The Church and Society Commission of the Church of Ireland held a fascinating seminar on the role of faith communities in tackling climate change on 26 April 2018 in Trinity College Dublin. The event was hosted by Archbishop Michael Jackson and Archdeacon Andrew Orr, Chair of Eco-Congregation Ireland. The seminar took place in Trinity College's Science Gallery.

Among the faith communities and organisations represented at the event were the Church of Ireland, the Roman Catholic Church the Islamic Cultural Centre, the Methodist Church including the President of the Methodist Church in Ireland, Rev Dr Laurence Graham, Bishops' Appeal, the Irish Council of Churches, Christian Aid and Dublin City Interfaith Forum. [You can read this report in full on the United Dioceses of Dublin & Glendalough website here.](#)



Church of Ireland Holds Environmentally Sustainable Synod 2018

The Church of Ireland Synod, held from 10-12 May in the Armagh City Hotel was a 'sustainable synod' following on from a number of similar initiatives undertaken at central Church level. The Church of Ireland's commitment to the environment reflects the Anglican Communion's Fifth Mark of Mission: 'To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the Earth.' Initiatives include: providing an electronic option for distribution of packs to members and working with the venue to reduce the environmental footprint of General Synod; adopting an Environmental Charter (2015) and a further motion on climate change and investments (2017); providing information on environmental sustainability for parishes, including suggested eco-actions and a template for undertaking an energy audit and several more initiatives which you can read about in full [on the ECI website](#).



EcoQuakers are making a film!

This Spring, EcoQuakers Ireland have been gathering the experiences of Quakers from around Ireland, asking Friends to answer questions about their spiritual journey towards earth care and sustainability. Short answers will be filmed on a smartphone or camera and submitted. They are inviting Friends to answer the following questions:

- 1 For you, what appear to be the main spiritual challenges around sustainability?
- 2 Where do you find joy in the journey with sustainability?
- 3 If you had one wish for change in Ireland, what would it be?

The final short film will be shared at Ireland Yearly Meeting in July 2018. More information is available on the [Quakers in Ireland website](#).



Pray and Fast for the Climate – June 2018 Prayer Points

The June 2018 edition of Pray and Fast for the Climate [prayer points is now available](#). This month they are focussing on Environment Sunday and providing useful information and links to support you as you pray. There are also updates on the Paris Agreement and some research projects and reports to look at and pray over. Their newsletter is full of the usual helpful information and updates.



Reminder - Launch and BioBlitz at Jubilee Farm, Larne, Co Antrim

From Friday 22nd June at 5pm to Saturday 23rd June at 5pm, [Jubilee Farm](#) will be having their BioBlitz and Launch, in partnership with Drumalis and Mid and East Antrim Council. Expect 24 hours of walks, talks and activities, with good food, good music, and good fun! A save-the-date flier is available [here](#). Everyone is welcome!



A Sermon for Earth Day by Rev Bridget Spain, Minister of Dublin Unitarian Church

Rev Bridget Spain, Minister of [Dublin Unitarian Church](#) preached an inspiring sermon on Earth Day, 22nd April 2018. Fran Brady, Quaker representative on the Eco-Congregation Ireland committee, provided ECI with an abridged version of her sermon which you can [read on the Eco-Congregation Ireland website](#). *Oscailt* the Unitarian monthly magazine will have its own “green” content, beginning with the May issue which ran three “green” articles and a poem.

EARTH DAY | April 22, 2018
END PLASTIC POLLUTION



Society of African Missions launches The Family Tree Programme – Growing in Love Together

As the visit of Pope Francis to Ireland in August approaches, the Society of African Missions (SMA), have launched ‘The Family Tree Programme – Growing in love together’. The Family Tree Programme offers families of every kind the chance to become stronger by working together through a 4-session reflection



plan. The sessions look at different aspects of family life and one in particular encourages participants to reflect on 'What does our family do to care for creation, to protect the earth? How do we make creation a better place for others?' Every family who completes and submits a 'Family Tree' will be invited to plant a 'Laudato Tree' to mark their participation in the programme, and will be invited to join the SMA at the World Meeting of Families and the visit of Pope Francis. [Resources and tutorials will be available on the SMA website in the coming weeks.](#) You can read about this project in more detail [on the ECI website here.](#)

Update from Loving Sister Earth

Brian Grogan SJ shares this update of upcoming activities organised by Loving Sister Earth. Further information on all these activities available on the [Loving Sister Earth website.](#)

National Holy Wells Day: The second celebration of [National Holy Wells Day](#) takes place on June 17. There is a growing interest in the event, and several wells around the country have been restored. People are invited to visit a Holy Well, or to celebrate clean water at home, and to pray for its fair distribution worldwide.

World Meeting of Families: Loving Sister Earth has been asked to participate in the WMOF Aug 22-26 in the RDS. Their task is to create a Bio-diverse Celtic Garden for the event. Ideas at the moment include: the Universe Story, a Celtic spiral, a Holy Well, a sculpture by Imogen Stuart, an Irish Oak tree, plus examples of bio-diversity. If you have experience of this sort of thing, please let them know! All are welcome to visit the site during the WMOF.

Mysticism of Laudato Si': Brian Grogan has compiled a set of short reflections on the mysticism of Laudato Si' which will be published soon by Messenger Publications under the title Finding God in a Leaf. The aim is to enable readers to catch on to what nature is trying to tell them of God's closeness and affection. Only from this compassionate awareness will sustained action emerge for the good of Our Common Home.

Killiskey Parish Eco Tips!

Anne Newton, parishioner of [Nun's Cross Church, Killiskey Parish, Ashford, Co Wicklow](#) shares eco tips, published in their monthly church announcements sheet. This month Anne encourages us to garden without chemicals and with kindness:

Anne writes: 'Following the exceptionally cold, wet spring, many people are frantically trying to catch up in their gardens by tidying, sowing and planting – a useful short-cut is to visit a garden centre and buy some of the myriad flower and vegetable plants on display.

However, you may well be greeted by an overwhelming array of pesticides and sprays, all full of chemicals and all with the express aim of killing plants or animals that are perceived to be pests. Think carefully if they really are essential before buying any. Does it matter if moss grows in your lawn? In areas where wet, slippery moss on tarmac or concrete could pose a hazard, try using detergent powders, less noxious than other moss killers. Weed killers often do not have long-lasting effects and need repeat sprayings. In the time spent spraying, the area could have been weeded. The old-fashioned hoe is a very useful tool! Slug pellets are toxic to many bird species, so try using organic pellets, slug traps filled with coffee or beer, or spreading bran or crushed baked egg shell around delicate plants. Spray diluted washing up liquid if you need to kill aphids or, better still, use ladybirds. Treat your garden kindly. Sow three times the number of seeds you need, one each for the larder, the weather and birds/other animals.'



News from Eco-Congregation Scotland

This year the Eco-Congregation Scotland Environmental Chaplaincy Project moves into its second five-year period funded by the United Reformed Church. Eco-Congregation Scotland has announced the appointment of Rev David Coleman as successor to Rev Trevor Jamison, who leaves to take up a pastorate in North Shields. David hopes to be working with ECS in mid-August. [You can read more about Rev David Coleman here.](#)



The 2018 Eco-Congregation Scotland Annual Gathering took place in the Augustine United Church, George IV Bridge, Edinburgh on Saturday 28th April. The theme was 'Pass the Planet'. As part of the run-up to this event ECS held a photography competition and they received 135 entries across ten categories which were judged anonymously by two judges. The categories were Biodiversity, Caring for Creation, Climate Change, Energy, Transport, Waste, Farming, Urban Land Use, Rural Land Use and Pollution. [You can view the winning photographs here.](#)

Salesian Cosmology Group Morning Conference – Plastic Pollution in our Oceans

Teresa Devine from the Salesian Cosmology Group sent ECI a report of this event. The Salesian Cosmology Group organised a morning conference on April 14th on Plastic Pollution in our Oceans and the presenter was a marine scientist from the Marine Institute in Galway, Dr. Paul Connolly. This spring event was well attended and most importantly those who did attend found the conference worthwhile and very informative. There were many worrying statistics shared. The fact that 40% of plastics are found in packaging when we visit the supermarket doing the usual round of shopping. [You can read Teresa's report in full on the ECI website here.](#)



Recycling Workshop in the Church of the Three Patrons, Rathgar

The Church of the Three Patrons Rathgar celebrated Earth Day on Sunday 22nd April by including special prayers and hymns in the Sunday liturgy. The Parish Laudato Si Group organised a recycling workshop on the following evening 23rd April. Tom Seaver, Voice Recycling Ambassador, gave a workshop on what can be recycled. He brought a number of items to demonstrate what can and cannot be currently recycled in Ireland. These items generated much discussion, humour and interaction. Tom also encouraged everyone to refuse and reuse plastics when possible. A large number of people, in excess of 60, attended the workshop. [Read more here.](#)



St Paul's, Glenageary, Co Dublin Marks 150th Anniversary with Eco Initiatives

Parishioners young and old went home with three sunflower seeds each to plant after an eco-service at St Paul's, Glenageary, Co Dublin, on Rogation Sunday, May 6th. The Rector, the Rev Gary Dowd, promised prizes to those who can grow the tallest by the time of the parish's annual outdoor service and family barbecue on the first Sunday in September. He noted that he was giving out the "giraffe" variety of seed that could grow up to 17 feet tall – so expectations are high!



This inaugural St Paul's sunflower-growing competition is one of a number of eco initiatives the parish is adopting to mark the 150th anniversary of its church building this year. The aim is to raise more awareness of the impact we, both as a community and as individuals, are having on our environment. [View more photos.](#)

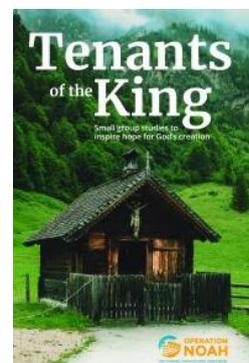
Update from Tuam Parish

Anne F Quinn shared this update with ECI: Tuam Parish Eco-Congregation was delighted to support Tuam Tidy Towns annual event which showcases their projects and plans for the year. These include projects in the areas of Heritage, History and Environment. This year's environment area focused on the Nanny River which flows through the town. This included walks along the river, describing habitat, flora and fauna. Special attention was given to the invertebrates living in the river. A marquee in the park featured Buzzing in the Park, an information and visual display by Galway Beekeepers emphasizing the need to protect our pollinators. You can read about all the inspirational events they had [on the ECI website here.](#)



New Publication from Operation Noah

Tenants of the King is a new resource from Operation Noah. This four-part study series is designed to help you and your church consider what the Bible has to say about today's climate crisis. Through interactive group sessions, video interviews with leading Christian thinkers and insightful Bible commentary, this resource will help you and your church to reflect on the challenges of a changing climate, and how Christians can respond with hope to one of today's greatest challenges. [Learn more here.](#)



Fr Simon's Bee Blog

Fr Simon Sleeman OSB from [Glenstal Abbey, Co Limerick](#) has been a beekeeper for over 40 years. He is the monastery bee-keeper and writes [a monthly Bee Blog](#) in between caring for the monastery bees and beehives. His blog is an inspiration and as well as being informative about the world of the bees, his writing ties in the spirituality of Laudato Si.



[The Irish Catholic carried an article](#) on his work with the bees and said: 'At first he saw the bees as just honey producers, as a means to an end. "So, I looked at them very much as a utilitarian, something really not with their own intrinsic value which Pope Francis talks about again in Laudato Si'," he said. In his encyclical on the environment Pope Francis states: "Each organism, as a creature of God, is good and admirable in itself; the same is true of the harmonious ensemble of organisms existing in a defined space and functioning as a system. Although we are often not aware of it, we depend on these larger systems for our own existence." Fr Simon says he is convinced of the ecological conversion the Pope discusses, in order for humanity to "walk on this earth with reverence and care, sharing it with others'. Read the Irish Times article: [Ireland joins international group trying to protect bees.](#)

Eco Challenge!

Did you know? Slovenia proposed that the United Nations proclaim 20 May as World Bee Day. On 20 December 2017, following three years of efforts at the international level, the UN Member States unanimously approved Slovenia's proposal, thus proclaiming 20 May 2018 as the first World Bee Day. The purpose of the [World Bee Day website](#) is to present the initiative and its implementation, raise awareness of the importance of bees and beekeeping, inform the public of major beekeeping events around the world and celebrate World Bee Day. This website is full of information and resources. You can get lots of inspiration from Fr Simon's Bee Blog mentioned above. *Something to think about – what can you as an individual or your faith community do to help bees?*



Prayer for the Earth

This beautiful concluding prayer and blessing was used in one of the liturgies during the Árd Bhríde Environment Week mentioned earlier in this newsletter:

As we go forth with joy and hope to care for God's creation, we walk gently on earth, in right relationships, nurtured by love, taking only what we need, giving back to the earth with gratitude, sowing seeds of justice, love and beauty, honouring all with reverence, reconciling and healing, mindful of those who will come after us. Amen.

With kindest regards,

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