



Dear Friends of Eco-Congregation Ireland

Welcome to the Autumn 2021 edition of the Eco-Congregation Ireland newsletter! The ECI Committee hopes that everyone had a blessed and inspiring Season of Creation. If you have any information or stories you would like to share in our future newsletters, we would love to hear from you! Send them to info@ecocongregationireland.com.

ECI Climate Justice Candle on the Move Again!!

After a long break due to the global pandemic the ECI Climate Justice Candle is on the move again! If your church or faith community would like to host the candle all you have to do is drop a line to info@ecocongregationireland.com and we will arrange to get the candle safely to you. We are looking forward to seeing the candle in different locations around the country and hearing about how you use it to raise awareness of climate justice!



ECI Climate Justice Candle Visits ...

Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Sean McDermott Street, Dublin

One of the parishioners, Brenda Farrell brought the Climate Justice Candle (by bus!) to the parish of Our Lady of Lourdes on Sean McDermott Street. They were delighted that it can now burn brightly again (after a year and a half in lockdown) especially as we draw closer to the UN Biodiversity Conference in October and the UN Climate Change Conference (COP 26) in November. During their watch they kept the candle lit for those most adversely affected by our runaway climate and reminded themselves that our extravagant way of living is at the expense of others. 'What you did not do for the least of these, my brothers and sisters, you did not do for me' (Matt 25: 45).



St Laurence's Parish, Kilmacud

St Laurence's Parish in Kilmacud was delighted to host the Climate Justice Candle during the 2021 Season of Creation. Positioned on their altar, the Candle was a wonderful visual reminder of the need to care for God's creation, our planet and its people. As the Candle now continues on its journey, they are committed to continued prayer and practical steps that they as a parish community can take to contribute to the care of our common home."



St Anne's Church, Shandon

St Anne's has been hosting the Climate Justice Candle since early March 2020 as they received the candle just prior to the first lockdown and it got 'stranded' in Shandon! They were indeed very glad to have the candle 'Shining a Light on Climate Justice' during their Season of Creation services.



Whitechurch Parish Receives Eco-Congregation Ireland GOLD Award!!

The Eco-Congregation Ireland Gold Award is for those churches who have already received their initial Eco-Congregation Ireland Award. In order to receive an ECI Gold Award, churches have to show continuing work in all four areas of their initial ECI Award, and mentor another parish/community on their Award journey.



Whitechurch Parish in Dublin was presented

with their ECI Gold Award on 13 September by Canon Andrew Orr. The award recognised parish's great efforts to improve biodiversity as well as mentoring another parish. Whitechurch is mentoring Nun's Cross, Killiskey, as they take their first steps to improve biodiversity in their church grounds. Presenting the award, Canon Andrew Orr congratulated the team in Whitechurch and praised the work in the grounds. "It is so important to do this kind of work. We all know about

climate change ... but we can also do much to improve biodiversity," he said. You can read a report on their Award ceremony by Lynn Glanville, Diocesan Communications Officer Dublin & Glendalough [on the ECI website here](#). The photo on the left shows The Grass Cutters – the volunteers who keep the grounds of Whitechurch looking fantastic. The photo on the top right shows Canon Andrew Orr, chairperson of Eco-Congregation Ireland, presenting the Gold Award to Canon Horace McKinley, Pam Sheil and Reg Richards of Whitechurch Parish. Very well done to all!

Westport Eco-Congregation Holds Gold Award Ceremony

Westport Eco-Congregation received their ECI Gold Award as part of the ECI online ceremony on Wednesday 9 June 2021. On Sunday 3 October they held a face-to-face award ceremony to celebrate their Gold Award! Well done to all! [View more of their photos on Facebook](#).



Awards! Awards! Prosperous Parish, Kildare Receives ECI Award!

Bishop Denis Nulty presented Prosperous Parish, Kildare with their ECI Award and planted a tree in their eco-garden for the Season of Creation. Sr Maureen O'Connor gave a Communion Reflection on the environment. There was beautiful singing of Seán Ó Riada's repertoire during Mass.



The tree planted was a hawthorn tree which had self-seeded over the last 2-3 years in Marie Keogh's garden, one of their eco members. The seed had been dropped by a bird. It is an excellent plant for biodiversity, with lovely, scented flowers in May important for pollinators, and in Autumn red haws to feed the birds. They sang Seán Ó Riada's 'Ag Criost an Siol' around the tree, led by Bishop Denis. It was a great celebration! Well done to all!!

ECI Awareness and Endeavour Certificates 2021: **Methodist Centenary and Nun's Cross Church, Killiskey Parish** have received their ECI Awareness Certificates and **Orlagh in the City LS/ECI Eco Group and Kirkinriola Parish, Ballymena** have received their Endeavour Certificates! Well done everyone!

ECI Committee Welcomes 2nd Presbyterian Representative!

Rev Dr Allen Sleith is the minister of Hillsborough Presbyterian Church and is the Stewardship of Creation Agent for the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. You can contact Allen on 07801273354 and allen.sleith@tiscali.co.uk. **Welcome Allen!**



Celebrating Season of Creation ...

Orlagh-in-the-City Receives ECI Endeavour Award!



The Orlagh-in-the-City community was very pleased to recently receive the ECI Endeavour Award! This gives recognition to their efforts to move towards greater environmental awareness and action. They celebrated this award at one of their Season of Creation 'garden Masses' in Kilmacud. This was also an opportunity to prepare for forthcoming United Nations meetings on climate change and biodiversity, with prayers of intercession for their success. The community was encouraged to sign the Healthy Planet Healthy People

petition. Livestreaming helped connect with members who were not physically present. Covid has encouraged the community to walk local. Their recent visit to the Blessington Street Basin, Dublin's secret garden less than ten minutes from Parnell Square was quite a surprise! [Read their report in full on the ECI website here.](#)



St Anne's Church Shandon

St Anne's Shandon has marked the Season of Creation for the last number of years, and this year was no different. During the five Sundays that make up the Season of Creation they had, with the help of visiting Clergy and Lay Readers, included a special prayer in their worship each Sunday and also included





material on their service sheets each week about the Season of Creation. On Sunday the 3rd of October, the Eve of the Feast of St Francis, they were delighted to welcome Fr. Patrick Younge the Guardian of the Franciscan Community in Cork City to visit and to preach on the theme 'Restoring Our Common Home'. Fr. Patrick spoke on the topic of our Common Home, about St Francis and how the Creator and His Creation is very much at the heart of Franciscan Spirituality.

They were also delighted to once again welcome Fr. John O'Donoghue and members from the Climate Justice groups in the North Cathedral, Blackpool, The Glen, Ballyvolane, and Sunday's Well who joined them in worship on the day. [Read this report in full on the ECI website.](#)

Cathedral of the Assumption Tuam

The photo on the right shows their Sacred Space for Creation Time laid before the beautiful new altar in the recently refurbished Cathedral of the Assumption Tuam. This indicates the centrality of caring for God's Creation in their parish. At



the front of the picture is the prayer being recited daily for Creation Time at all masses. The banner in the Cathedral porch reminds the community of the purpose and importance of Creation Time in the Church calendar. At present Eco-Congregation Tuam is recruiting parishioners wishing to join their core group. They welcome anyone with time and energy to spare in the organisation of services, events or community activities which serve to bring awareness and practical care for God's Creation in their efforts to 'Restore our common home' Earth. [Read more of their report here.](#)



Drumalis, Larne, Co Antrim

On the right, we see Sisters Margaret Rose and Anna planting the Creation Time crocus bulbs at Drumalis at the beginning of September. The bulbs planted now are a sign of hope for the future. As Drumalis slowly begins to welcome in-house guests back to stay and restrictions gradually ease, they pray that by spring 2022, visitors will be there in person to enjoy the beauty of the crocuses in bloom. This was not the only way in which Creation Time has been marked at Drumalis. Sr Margaret Rose along with Sr Anne Harnett CP ran a three-part weekly series by Zoom in September entitled "Earth Matters," providing a creation time opportunity to engage with the ecological issues of our day and exploring a way forward for all. The series has proved extremely popular with almost forty in attendance each week, covering topics such as Laudato Si, Climate Crisis, Biodiversity, Covid-19 and COP26.



Galway Diocese

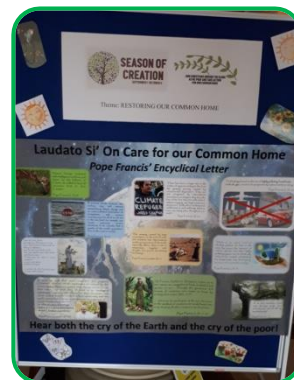
The Diocese of Galway has formed a Laudato Si' working group. The group has met twice in recent months and will seek to lead the diocese and support parishes in promoting the message of Laudato Si', and take appropriate actions to ensure their communities and parishes are embracing the message of the 2015 encyclical. As part of the Season of Creation this year, they have been creating a weekly poster for their parishes, with some simple ideas each week for energy conservation and eco-friendly actions, a prayer, or a message from Laudato Si'. If you are interested, these posters can be seen here: www.galwaydiocese.ie/season-of-creation-2021



Diocese of Galway
Kilmacduagh &
Kilfenora

Rathgar Parish

The poster on the right about Laudato Si and the theme of the 2021 Season of Creation – Restoring our Common Home has been in a prominent position in Rathgar Parish Church during Season of Creation 2021. Laudato Si group members spoke at the beginning of each Mass on Sunday 5th September, the first Sunday of the Season of Creation about our fragile common home. Prayers of Intercession were included in each Sunday Mass about Climate Justice, restoring Our Common Home and reflecting on all our daily choices/decisions and how they impact on the most vulnerable. Features on Season of Creation have been in the Parish Weekly Newsletter. Work continues in the Laudato Si Biodiversity Garden behind the Church with new volunteers and gifts of plants. One of the Laudato Si Group continues to attend the Dail with young people on most Fridays as part of Fridays for Future and joined on 24 September for the larger demonstration outside Government Buildings in Dublin.



St John the Baptist Parish. Clontarf Road

For the Season of Creation, Sr Bernadette created a lovely display in the church porch for the duration of the Season. On the first Sunday of the Season of Creation, they left bulbs on a table in their church porch for people to take away and plant. That same Sunday, they had a special focus on Creation at the 12.00pm Mass, with special prayers and reflections. Most weekdays they prayed a prayer for Creation at Mass, and we had a Creation themed reflection after Holy Communion, such as the reading of a section of the 'Canticum of Creatures' by Saint Francis of Assisi. On the last Sunday of the Season of Creation, for the first time, they had a special blessing of animals and pets in the grounds of the parish church. You can read more of their activities [on the ECI website here](#).



Blessington Lacken

Due to the sharp decline in the number of swifts Blessington Tidy Towns together with the help of Oran O Sullivan (Irish Birds) embarked on a project to identify suitable sites for Swift Nest Boxes. Five suitable sites were chosen in the town. Each box is accompanied by a calling system to attract new birds to the sites. In the Autumn of 2019, a composting site was created using old wooden pallets from the garden centre for fallen leaves to the rear of the church. These were left to rot for 18 months and this Summer parishioners were rewarded with an abundance of leaf mould which will be used to suppress weeds in the area adjacent to our Wildflower bed.



The wildflower bed provided all with a great display of colour from July onwards. Lacken NS visited the Wildflower garden. The visit concluded with a prayer service and each child was given a bee pollinator spring bulb to plant at home.

To mark the Season of Creation, a prayer Service on Care of the Earth was held in St Mary's Church Blessington on the

feast of St Francis of Assisi Oct 4th. [Read this report in more detail on the ECI website](#).



Bonnybrook

The focus of Bonnybrook's activities is twofold: to raise awareness of the need to care for our common home and to undertake activities to underpin that awareness. All of their liturgies highlighted the wonder of God's creation, the damage being done to our beautiful planet, and steps we can take in



our daily lives to care for our environment. People were

invited to take a copy of a flyer (found on their website: bonnybrookparish.ie), as they left the church, and to pray the Creation. The parish celebrated the sacraments of Confirmation and First Communion during the Season of Creation. On September 17th, third Class from their local school helped Fr Joe plant a native Irish hawthorn tree. The children can now watch and wait for new buds, flowers, and fruit to appear in the coming year. The sixth classes in their school are creating a collage of pictures, all focused on raising awareness of the urgent need to care for the earth and illustrating concrete actions each can take in daily life.



Church of St Therese, Mount Merrion, Dublin

Creation Hour was their contribution to Climate Sunday. Drawing on Balally parish's Earth Day '21 Prayer Service, and led by their Care for Creation group, their celebration of Creation commenced with a reading from 'Laudato Si' and some background context to the current Climate and Biodiversity crises.



There then followed a rolling programme of reflective music, readings, poetry, and video recordings of the Dawn Chorus and the Cry of the endangered Curlew. Filling the vault of the church with the songs and calls of birds resulted in an astonishing sound, and a visual mirroring of a forest canopy. Their celebration aimed

to express both the uplifting and groaning aspects of Creation – especially within the bird community – and how both we and creation are interconnected and interdependent. The afternoon concluded with the exchange of autumnal seeds, in readiness for Spring. Visit <https://www.mountmerrionparish.ie/> to view the recording – click on the webcam button then on "recordings" and Creation Hour.



Carrigaline Parish

Last month parishioners promoted the start of the Season of Creation in their Parish by creating a display in the sanctuary of the altar of the Church of Our Lady and St. John in Carrigaline. They encouraged parishioners to sign up to the 'Healthy Planet, Healthy People Petition' in advance of the crucial climate talks at the UN COP26. They placed the link to thecatholicpetition.org in a colourful poster in their display. Care for Creation was prayed for at Masses each Sunday. A Silver Birch Tree was planted on the Feast Day of St. Francis of Assisi on 4th October. [View their photos on the ECI website here](#). They also wrote their own prayer for this special time of year:



Praise be to you, Creator of all things. Come to us, dear Lord and plant the seeds of compassion in our hearts and grant our local and worldwide leaders wisdom to make the changes we need to see so that your earth and your people can thrive as you planned. Reach out your loving arms to all your brothers and sisters and renew our love for you, our fragile planet and all living creatures. Grant us peace in our hearts as we

remain hopeful for change. Guide us with presence as we continue to commit ourselves to work for climate justice.

St Anne's Parish, Shankill, Co Dublin

St Anne's Parish prepared for the Season of Creation by putting up a number of quotations from Laudato Si' in the Church, hoping that these will bring its message into hearts. They also placed a large globe near the altar with the Prayer for Creation below it. Their organist was wonderful, providing the liturgy with suitable hymns praising God in his works of Creation, accompanied, line by line with beautiful images and every week the Prayers of the Faithful include prayers that we should be mindful of the needs of creation and our responsibility towards it.



Those in the parish who are creative with crafts joined up with "STITCHES for SURVIVAL" and have been making woollen panels to adorn COP 26 in Glasgow in November, later to be re-purposed into blankets for the homeless, refugees and others. Meanwhile, the panels have been on the Sept. 26th Climate Strike in Dublin and at the gate in Shankill for the regular "Fridays for Future" witness. Recently, they have also hung them along the church railings on Sundays, weather permitting!



Carrigaline Union of Parishes

Carrigaline held Climate Sunday on 29th August 2021. All services that day had a climate focused theme, acknowledging God as our Creator, giving thanks for the Beauty of Creation, acknowledging our part in the desecration and neglect of the same and asking for commitment and strength to work towards rebalancing the harmony of our planet. They had a very striking visual aid, a photograph taken of

Planet Earth by Nasa which reinforced the message that the earth is an enclosed system with limited resources. A very comprehensive guide to COP26 was in the weekly Pewsheets along with a leaflet of practical actions for our everyday lives. Postcards printed and addressed to Minister Eamonn Ryan (requesting Irish delegates to do their utmost at COP26 to work towards alleviating climate crisis) were available to parishioners to sign and post. Their annual Tallest Sunflower competition was held this summer. It is a wonderful opportunity for the younger parishioners to get involved in gardening.



Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice

To mark Season of Creation, the Eco-Congregation group alongside the Jesuit community, Gardiner Street national school and JCFJ are planting a tree in their garden. They will be joined by Jesuit communities across the Irish Province. On the 28th September JCFJ also hosted a webinar, COP-On, exploring the importance of the COP summit in November and how we can get involved. [A recording of the webinar is available on their website.](#)



Climate Sunday at Donagh Parish Church, Glaslough, Co Monaghan

Sunday School children at Donagh Parish Church, Glaslough were very busy preparing their videos to be shown during the service for Climate Sunday which was held on Sunday 12th October. In their videos the children read bible verses relating to God's creation and reminded everyone of their obligations to take care of our world. They demonstrated simple steps everyone can take to help climate change by highlighting the importance of biodiversity, saving water and electricity etc.



Healthy People Healthy Planet Petition and Update on Laudato Si' Animators Network

News from Jane Mellett, Laudato Si' Officer, Trócaire: **Healthy People Healthy Planet Petition:** This year we have a unique opportunity to care for our Common Home. Ahead of a critical UN Climate Conference (COP26) planned for November in Glasgow, Pope Francis is urging us to sign the [Healthy Planet Healthy People petition](#). Now we need your help to gather these signatures which will then be presented to the President of the UN Climate Conference in Glasgow. The petition calls for world leaders to take urgent action on the climate crisis, increasing their ambition to reduce global warming, protect vulnerable communities from the effects of climate change and address the biodiversity crisis. Here are some ways to gather signatures:

Please invite your communities, families and friends to sign by going to www.healthyplanetandpeople.org. In your local parish / community you may prefer to gather physical signatures. If so, you can email jane.mellett@trocaire.org for the relevant templates and guidelines on how to do this. Information is also available [here](#).



The **Laudato Si' Animators Network** is growing in Ireland and includes individuals who have completed some training with the Laudato Si' Movement or Trócaire in recent times. It also includes anyone who is interested in promoting Laudato Si' locally. The next meeting of this network will take place on Thursday October 7th at 7.30pm and will focus on hearing your good news stories from the Season of Creation, updates on COP26 as well as information on the final push for the [Healthy Planet, Healthy People Petition](#). Please register by filling out this form here: <https://forms.gle/3QF2ToBcDu2g3bKy6> or you can email jane.mellett@trocaire.org

Justice and Peace Regional Networks Hold Seminar on Healthy Planet and Healthy People Petition

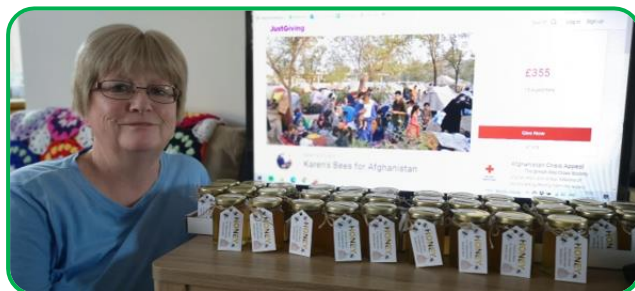
On 15 September, the members of the Justice and Peace Regional Networks, a grouping facilitated by the Council for Justice and Peace of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference, held a short online seminar on the [Healthy Planet and Healthy People Catholic Petition](#) ahead of the COP26 Conference. The speaker was Jane Mellett, Laudato Si Coordinator at Trócaire, who gave an excellent overview of the background to the



petition and urged the various groups to get active in promoting it at diocesan and parish level and within the wider community. Since then, a number of people from parishes across the country have made contact with the Council for Justice and Peace and Trócaire to offer their time and services in the promotion of the petition at a local level. People can still get involved online or by contacting either Jane Mellett at Trócaire Head Office, Maynooth, Co. Kildare, Ireland, W23 NX63. Tel: +353 1 6293333 or Dr Gary Carville, Research Coordinator, Council for Justice and Peace, Irish Episcopal Conference, Columba Centre, Maynooth, Co Kildare, W23 P6D3. Tel. +353 1 505 3016. Further meetings of the Justice and Peace Regional Network will be held online over the coming months.

Bees for Afghanistan

The Quaker burial ground in Belfast has had a number of bee hives in it for the past 3 years. The beekeeper there is none other than Eco-Congregation Ireland's admin assistant Karen Nicholson. South Belfast and Frederick Street Quaker Meetings were looking to offer their burial ground to a beekeeper to use, at the same time that Karen had started a beekeeping course and needed a location for her hive. 2020 was the first year Karen was able to get some honey from her bees which she shared with friends at Christmas. This year she was able to get about 3.75 litres of honey from her hives and she decided she wanted to do a little more than share it with friends. This was at the same time as the humanitarian catastrophe in Afghanistan was unfolding, and she came up with the idea to offer her honey, and in exchange people could donate to the Red Cross Afghanistan Appeal.

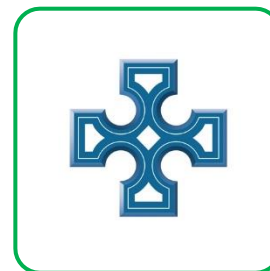


Friends have generously donated £700 to assist the Red Cross purchase food, basic medical supplies and medicines, shelter and water. In a spirit of neutrality, independence and impartiality, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement works with all communities and in all regions to help reach and assist those most vulnerable. Thanks to Karen's bees for doing so much hard work all summer and to the Quakers in Belfast for sharing the space of their lovely burial ground.

Church of Ireland General Synod 2021: Divestment from Fossil Fuel Extraction

Church of Ireland to Divest from Fossil Fuel Extraction by 2022

The Church of Ireland is to complete its divestment from companies that extract fossil fuels by the end of this year, therefore meeting its target date of 2022. The Church's annual General Synod took place online from Thursday, 30th September, to Saturday, 2nd October, and this will fulfil a commitment made in resolution at General Synod in 2018, to the effect that companies where more than 10% of turnover is derived from fossil fuel extraction would – by 2022 – be excluded from investments made by the Representative Church Body (RCB).



Through its Climate Change Policy, the RCB seeks to mitigate and lower the climate change impact within its investment portfolios and has taken several steps in this regard over the past number of years, including collaborative engagement, investments in wind and solar energy and forestry, the implementation of restrictions for investments in coal mining and tar sands, and several disposals and divestments.

The policy relates to direct investments and exposure via acquisition and/or takeovers is reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the RCB's Investment Committee, which will continue to monitor and review companies that appear not to be aligned with the long-term transition to a low-carbon economy and engage and/or divest as considered appropriate.

The RCB is also a member of the Church Investors Group (CIG) and the Institutional Investors Group on Climate Change (IIGCC), which provide investors with a collaborative platform for engagement with public

policy-makers and the exchange of expertise on climate change issues. It is also a founding signatory and supporter of the Climate Action 100+ initiative which engages with the world's largest corporate greenhouse gas emitters with a view to curbing emissions, strengthening climate disclosures, and improving climate governance.

General Synod Leads the Church of Ireland's Response to the Glasgow Climate Conference by Rev Trevor Sargent

Taking place in Glasgow in the first two weeks of this November, the COP26 United Nations conference will bring together world leaders to put in place an updated and urgent strategy to combat and adapt to the accelerating climate emergency.

Climate change requires both urgent action and long-term sustained commitment. Whatever the outcome of COP26, it is our vital duty, as disciples of the Prince of Peace, that we push for solutions, and meanwhile, 'take the log out of our own eye, before we take the speck out of our neighbour's eye', to paraphrase Jesus (Matthew 7:5).

Synod & COP26 singing off the same hymn-sheet

Members of General Synod will recall the address by the Most Revd John McDowell, Archbishop of Armagh & Primate of All Ireland, who spoke as follows:

"In some ways we have made a good start as a Church, completing our divestment from the extraction of fossil fuels by the end of this year, therefore meeting its target date of 2022. This fulfils a commitment made in resolution of the General Synod in 2018.



But this is not the whole story. Far from it. Investments are one thing, and difficult enough to get right in this regard. The whole life of the Church, particularly in our parishes, where our main work and witness takes place is quite another. Not least if we are to be responsible ancestors, never mind have any credibility as the People of God with the younger generation, we will need to bake environmental sensitivity and action into our everyday life as a Church. To ensure that a carbon footprint assessment of our parish and personal activities is as natural to us as an Easter Vestry return and that we act on its results.

We cannot honestly challenge governments without also challenging ourselves. The Church of Ireland cannot solve the climate crisis. However, unless we take seriously how we can do what little we can to contribute to that solution, whether that's making zero carbon a parish target (and asking young people to help us do so) or changing our personal life style, our credibility with another generation depends on our willingness to do so. I know that the Church and Society Commission (CASC) are in the process of giving that effort some organising principles in tools in a conference being planned for the spring of next year, and I wish them well in that."



Why is this Glasgow Conference called COP26?

The story of COP26 is rooted in the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. This is where the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was agreed, which earned near universal acceptance. Ireland, along with 196 countries (called 'parties' in diplomatic language,) signed up to the UNFCCC. Every year (except last year!) these 197 countries, known collectively as the Convention of the Parties, (COP for short)

meet to assess progress and agree the actions which need to be taken next.

What needs to happen in Glasgow?

The latest U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report, was written by 234 authors drawing on over 14,000 scientific studies. Its title is 'Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis', (August 2021). The U.N. Secretary-General, António Guterres, called the report 'a code red for humanity'.

COP 21 in Paris in 2015 agreed that civilisation could not easily survive beyond a 1.5 degrees centigrade increase above average pre-industrial temperature levels. We are presently feeling the effects of just one degree of global warming. However the collective national plans, following the 2015 Paris Agreement, are insufficient to avoid over-heating the Earth. Our current national plans would lead to a global average temperature increase of 1.5 degrees by 2030 and an increase of at least 3 degrees by the end of the century. That would mean a veritable 'hell on earth'!



COP 26 in Glasgow, this month, will need to agree legally binding measures, and ways to enforce the national and international actions needed to hold global warming to the 1.5 degrees increase which was agreed in 2015 in Paris. All of us, especially our children, require no less!

Nations' Climate Sunday Service

As we approach the COP26 climate conference in Glasgow later this year, the Nations' Climate Sunday Service took place at [Glasgow Cathedral](#), in partnership with [Glasgow Churches Together](#) and [Churches Together in Britain and Ireland \(CTBI\)](#). You can watch a recording of the service on the [Eco-Congregation Scotland website](#). Rev David Coleman, Chaplain with Eco-Congregation Scotland has shared photos from the service and [you can view them here](#).



Roman Juriga Eco-Church Award 2022 – A Call for Applications!

The European Christian Environmental Network Roman Juriga Award seeks to recognise and affirm Christian environmental action in local churches across Europe. Applications are accepted from community projects, churches and ecumenical initiatives, with a preference given to local engagement and impact. Applicants for the RJA need to demonstrate creative solutions to environmental challenges through our European churches and which contribute to protecting the world's natural and cultural heritage as part of God's whole Creation. Applications are to be submitted in the application form, latest by 30 October 2021 to ECEN secretary at ecen@ecen.org. The winner will be announced and decorated at the next ECEN Assembly, June 2022, Bad Herrenalb. Criteria here >> <https://bit.ly/3lj2CIY>. Application form here >> <https://www.ecen.org/media/20>



Update on Courses at An Tairseach

An Tairseach is currently hosting their Autumn Sabbatical. Within the programme they have some 'stand-alone' courses, check out their webpage for more information >> [Courses in Wicklow at An Tairseach Retreat & Ecology Centre](#).



Exploring Spirituality in the Context of an Evolving Universe, an Endangered Earth and the Christian Tradition

Sunday 17th October to Friday 12th November 2021

Mini Sabbatical

Join us for a four week mini Sabbatical from 17th October to 12th November 2021. The programme will include exploring the theological implications of the 'new' cosmology; being aware of the consequences for understanding our place in the universe; listening to the wisdom of the mystics; examining our images of God and critiquing our present world order and exploring possibilities for a sustainable lifestyle.

Monday 25th October to Thursday 28th November

Emerging Consciousness. Implications for Faith and Life with Sr Sharon Zayac OP

We are in the midst of a cosmic shift in understanding who we are as persons, as people of faith, as a human species. What is this newly emerging consciousness? Using the Cosmic Story, we will explore and reflect its deeper meaning and find inspiration and hope. Sharon Zayac is a Dominican sister of Springfield, Illinois and co-founder of Jubilee Farm, her congregation's Centre for Ecology and Spirituality. She is author of "Earth Spirituality: In the Catholic and Dominican Traditions" as well as of numerous articles. She has lectured on many ecological issues within and outside the United States including Laudato Si, Pope Francis's widely acclaimed encyclical on Care of Our Common Home. Her latest work focuses on evolutionary consciousness as a sign of hope. This is a 'hybrid' course which means that you can engage with the content either online via zoom or as a residential guest. The residential course includes half board and accommodation.

Tuesday 2nd November to Friday 5th November

Integrating the Living Cosmology – Covid 19 and the Anthropocene

In dialogue with Diarmuid O' Murchu the conversation will focus on the recent pandemic and its long-term ecological and spiritual implications. Covid 19 is an urgent call to reclaim our status as earthlings, creatures with a seven-million-year evolutionary story, now fixated on a new wave of human domination, (named by some as the Anthropocene), proving to be perilously dangerous for our future on this earth. What will it take for us to heed this global wake-up call?

Kildare Women in the Food and Climate Crisis: Historical and Contemporary Provocations and Actions

In this online event two days before World Food Day, pioneering women who live, work, and are changing Kildare and the wider world, discuss and demonstrate how they are addressing the food & climate crisis.



Speakers will include Deirdre Lane (Shamrock Spring & the Kildare Environmental Network), Eibhlín Ní Chearbhaill (Kildare Library & Arts Services), Dr. Mary O'Connor (Ecologist & Chair of Kildare Tidy Towns), Rose Hogan (Sustainable Agriculture Adviser, Trocaire), and Dr. Patricia Healy Kettle (Maynooth University & Maynooth Green Campus). This event is online – [please register here](#). [More information here](#).

Publications of Interest ...

Pray and Fast for the Climate Prayer Vigil for Glasgow Resources

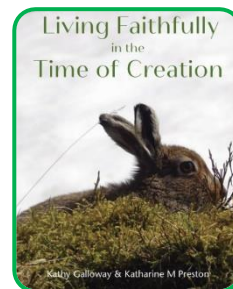
The UN climate talks in Glasgow this year – COP 26 – offer a chance for the global community to move the Paris Agreement to the next stage.

It's an important moment – and one that needs a lot of prayer! Pray and Fast for the Climate have resources for holding a prayer vigil. The materials are flexible, whether you have a short or long amount of time available. The [prayer vigil for Glasgow COP26](#) was compiled by Dr Isabel Carter on behalf of Pray and Fast for the Climate. It is freely available for individuals, churches and organisations to make use of – provided that full credits are given and its source acknowledged. Email: info@prayandfastfortheclimate.org.uk



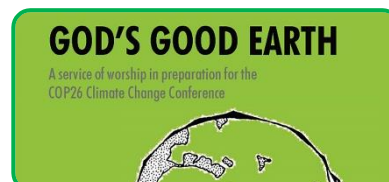
Living Faithfully in the Time of Creation by Kathy Galloway & Katharine M Preston

For celebrating Creationtide mindfully in an age of environmental emergency, a resource from the Iona Community's Common Concern Network on the Environment. Reflections, essays, hymns, songs and liturgical resources from more than twenty writers around the world, covering the twelve weeks from September, through the United Nations COP conference and future years. [Learn more and purchase here](#).



God's Good Earth – A Service of Worship in Preparation for the COP26

God's Good Earth provides a service of worship in preparation for the COP26 Climate Change Conference and can also be used during Creation Time. It contains a complete liturgy with preparatory notes and most of the songs included in the appendix can be sung to tunes commonly known in churches. There are Leaders' and Congregational versions. It has been produced by the Wild Goose Resource Group in consultation with The Iona Community's Common Concerns Network on the Environment. For more details and to purchase see the [Wild Goose Resource Group](#) website.



The Big Church Read

Join Martin & Margot Hodson as they lead us through 'A Christian Guide to Environmental Issues'. Presented over 10 sessions with accompanying videos and questions for reflection and discussion. As you read through 'A Christian Guide to Environmental Issues' Martin and Margot Hodson will consider the key current environmental problems, giving the biblical basis for looking after the environment and helping to integrate environmental thinking into the reader's understanding of Christian faith. [Visit their website to learn more and sign up](#).



Green Christian – Why Faith Matters at COP26

Green Christian have produced a visual presentation called 'Why Faith Matters at COP26', which highlights the four main areas of concern which they believe need to be addressed at the COP and includes insights from leading theologians and activists: 1 our interconnectedness with nature; 2 the importance of climate justice to protect the vulnerable; 3 the potential for wellbeing without ever-increasing consumption; 4 the significance of hope if change is to be achieved. [Check out their visual presentation here](#). [Click here for more COP26 resources](#).



Eco Challenge!

Rev Trevor Sargent's Ecological Notes for Autumn 2021 – Are we like Migratory Birds, as we Return to Church?

October is the month when we welcome back to Ireland about half the world population of the rare migratory **Greenland White-Fronted Geese**. Two-thirds of this number over-winter on the grasslands of the reclaimed wetlands, known as the Wexford Wildfowl Reserve, between Wexford Town and Curragloe.



What attracts Greenland White-Fronted Geese here?

Speaking to Mr Dominic Berridge, the Conservation Ranger at the National Parks and Wildlife Service, who is based at the Wexford Wildfowl Reserve on the North Slob, he talks about how the geese are managing overall:

‘The preferred grazing for these geese is regular rye grass, and local farmers are paid towards maintaining these grazing conditions, and for leaving it to the geese over the winter months. The grazing area covers about 2000 acres, a quarter of which is owned by Birdwatch Ireland and a quarter by the National Parks and Wildlife Service.’

‘The management of a wildfowl reserve also benefits many other species, mainly migratory waders, swans, ducks and geese. Dunlins, Knots and Redshanks, for example, all come to the ‘sunny south-east’, from their northern nest sites, where it is too cold to find food in the winter. Likewise, the Golden Plover comes to us from Iceland. Curlews from northern Europe over-winter in Ireland, and supplement the resident and sadly fast declining native Curlew population.’

‘Unfortunately, the Greenland White-Fronted Geese, are also suffering a decline in numbers. Climate change has made them vulnerable in recent decades. Research at Wexford and in Scotland has shown that they have not had a really good breeding season since 1995. It seems that the birds have been reaching their nesting grounds earlier, only to find that there is still snow lying and they lose condition while waiting for it to melt so they can start feeding. Less successful breeding is the result.’

Why do many migratory birds fly in a V-formation?

You may notice this month the characteristic V-formations in which many migratory birds fly. There are good reasons for this phenomenon. First, it conserves energy. Each bird flies slightly above the bird in front of them, resulting in a reduction of wind resistance. The birds take turns being in the front, falling back when they get tired. In this way, the geese can fly for a long time before they must stop for rest. The authors of a 2001 Nature article found that birds which fly alone beat their wings more frequently and have higher heart rates than those that fly in formation. It follows that birds that fly in formation glide more often and reduce energy expenditure (Weimerskirch, 2001).



The second benefit to the V formation is that it is easy to keep track of every bird in the group. Flying in formation may assist with communication and coordination.



A Reflection on the Return of the Geese to Wexford

There are some people who associate the returning geese with the dates of the Wexford Opera Festival. To me, however, they are also a metaphor for our returning to church after the ‘lockdown’. During the nesting season, these birds have been separated from their wider community of geese, confined to their nests, while looking forward to getting back together where they can gather once again and catch up. Flying in formation, they have re-discovered the pleasure and benefits of working together again to make a journey, or to follow ‘the Way’, as Christians might say! For as the prophet Jeremiah tells us, the Lord has plans to give us hope and a future.

Did you know?

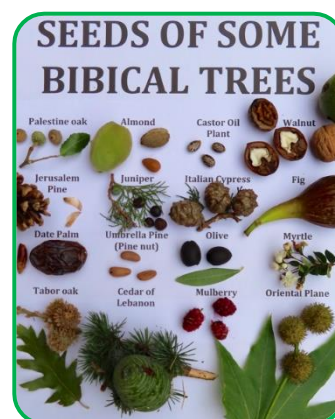
The Greenland White Fronted Goose is known as ‘**an Gé Bhánéadanach**’ in Irish, or **Anser Albifrons Flavirostris** by its Latin scientific name. However, in the Inuit language of Greenland, this bird is known as ‘**Nerleq**’, which is sound the bird makes, if you listen out for its call, when it is in flight, or grazing on the North Slob, the next time you are visiting the Wexford Wildfowl Reserve.



Prayers/Reflections for the Earth

The Oak of Tabor by Rev Andrew Kingston

Rev Andrew Kingston, Methodist Centenary Church, Leeson Park, Dublin Sent ECI this reflection: The National Botanic Gardens is an absolute treasure, and is enhanced at the moment by a wonderful sculpture trail. Many biblical trees, including most that are featured in the attached photograph that I put together recently can be found in the collection there. Each one tells a story.

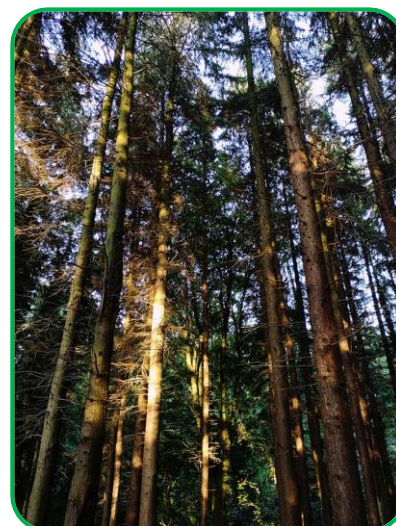


After Samuel anointed Saul with a flask of olive oil he was told that he would meet three men at the “oak of Tabor”. I picked up acorns from the *Quercus macrolepis*, the Tabor oak, underneath a specimen growing close to the walled vegetable garden. It was either the squirrels or me! In fact it was me because of the squirrels, and it was their foraging in the canopy above that had dislodged the acorns and leaves. Saul shared a Holy Communion of bread and wine underneath that great tree, and subsequently the Spirit of the Lord came upon him.

Trees provide fruit for people and nature during this “season of mists and mellow fruitfulness.” Trees are also important environmentally, they are landmarks the dress both town and country and their shade provides meeting places for Church communities in hot places. We thank God for the gift of trees.

Deforestation 1847 by Fr Michael O’Shea SMA

Quite often members of the Society of African Missions (SMA) have contributed to the *Newsletter*. Our Founder, a missionary bishop in Coimbatore, India, wrote the following in 1847: “The clearing of the Forest might be a good thing ... if it was done with intelligence and moderation. But it is heart-rending to see the reckless looting and devastation of the precious forest, allowed and positively promoted by a greedy [colonial] Government, with no precaution whatsoever for the future of these vast rich lands ... The most valuable trees (like teak and cedar) are already almost wiped out ... No effort whatever is being made to replace the felled giants.” [From his *Memories of Twelve Years in India*, p 775.]



Perhaps an element of our SMA charism is and should be, a heightened concern for the environment (as indeed it should be of great concern for *all* Earth’s dwellers). Since I last wrote something for the ECI Newsletter my circumstances have changed radically: from Zambia to Ireland, from being a rather fit self-reliant ‘old’ cyclist to being a rather dependent person after a bad fall from my bike. To dig I *was* able, to beg I was ashamed, now I cannot dig and often have to beg transport from others. Here in our retirement house I have joined an ecology group of about a dozen good men of average age about 80 – obviously ‘digging’ is not an option for most. Discussion, lobbying, support (for those who can dig and plant) and prayer are among our options but I would hate if environmental groups became only ‘talking shops’, zooming groups, ‘virtually’ working for the environment. Heartiest congratulations to all those young and old who *are doing something* as well as talking. **Michael O’Shea SMA, Cork, September 2021.**

A Reflection by Fr Hugh O’Donnell – ‘What Spider Wants to be Human’

It is arrogant to think that we come first, that we matter most, that God loves us best. Or to imagine that other creatures would love to be like us, to be human, too! Of course nothing could be further from the truth as all creatures go about their lives completely fulfilled and in every way perfectly at home in their own skin! So the kingfisher, rattlesnake, grasshopper, frog, worm, all live lives that we



can only wonder at (no matter how close we come to them) for we cannot imagine what it must feel like to be dolphin, kestrel, mollusc, or moss.

All of them embodiments of the great Unknown, all revealing a different flavour of the goodness of God. Every species a masterpiece! How silly of us then to think that the spider would be willing to give up its ability to spin silk in exchange for playing the piano? Or migrating birds their sense of travel and direction for becoming a football fan or being good at business or ballet? It's true we all have our senses (to varying levels of achievement) to make sense of life and happily for us all the wonder of diverse beings to accompany us on that journey. Theirs is the sweetness our souls need as we find ourselves ever more anxious on an increasingly lonely planet. How could we ever survive in a world where ours was the only fragrance of acclaim; ours the only show in town?

With kindest regards,

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