



Dear Friends of Eco-Congregation Ireland

Welcome to the Early Summer 2021 edition of the Eco-Congregation Ireland newsletter! Read on for stories of hope and encouragement! The ECI committee hopes that everyone is keeping well and safe. 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.

Latest News ...

Eco-Congregation Ireland Holds GOLD Awards Ceremony!

Good news!! On Wednesday 9 June 2021, Eco-Congregation Ireland hosted an online ceremony for the presentation of its first Gold Awards! 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.

The first ECI Gold Award recipients are: Westport Eco- Congregation Co Mayo, SAGE – Shankill Action for a Green Earth St Anne's Parish Co Dublin, and Faith in Action Group Ballineaspig Parish Co Cork. If you would like to read the Gold Award submissions, [visit the Eco-Congregation Ireland website here](#). Congratulations to all!



[A recording of the ceremony is available to watch here](#)



ECI GOLD AWARDS

June 2021

ECI Plants a Tree at Drumalis to Mark Laudato Si' Week and the Feast of Pentecost

"...we know that approximately a third of all food produced is discarded, and "whenever food is thrown out it is as if it were stolen from the table of the poor." Laudato Si 50

Catherine Brennan SSL, Catholic representative on the ECI committee, asked the Sisters at Drumalis to plant a tree on behalf of Eco-Congregation Ireland to mark Laudato Si Week 2021 and the Feast of Pentecost.



Echoing Pope Francis' words taken from Laudato Si', Sister Margaret Rose and Sister Anna have planted an apple tree in the grounds of Drumalis. We are connected to the earth for our planet's survival – the apple tree is symbolic of this. Its fruit will provide nourishment, its flowers and leaves will provide a habitat for wildlife. The apple tree is a reminder that we must support the poor and the starving throughout the world, on the brink of famine, who do not have the basic necessities we take for granted in the economically developed world. A new apple tree planted in front of Drumalis house will stand as a renewed call to awareness of world hunger and the need for us to put an end to water and food waste. 800 million people suffer from hunger worldwide and 700 million are obese – victims of improper dietary habits.

"Even if I knew that tomorrow the world would go to pieces, I would still plant my apple tree." Martin Luther

Sr Catherine also asked An Tairseach to plant a rowan tree at their orchard in Co Wicklow to mark Earth Day 2021.

A tree has been planted on the Dominican Farm,
overlooking Wicklow Bay

For: Eco Congregation Ireland - Earth Day 2021

At the request of: Sr Catherine Brennan

Your tree is a: Rowan No:

Laudato Si' Week at Drumalis

Although Drumalis is closed at present to guests due to the pandemic, this has not prevented the resident Sisters from marking Laudato Si' week in a number of ways. In early spring, Sr Margaret Rose and Sr Anna have sown wildflower seeds at the cosmic walk, a much loved element of the many creation spirituality retreats which have taken place here over the years. The beauty of poppies and cornflowers and the many species they will attract therefore awaits the returning guests.



Ecology along with spirituality and ecumenism form the core work of the Sisters of the Cross and Passion at Drumalis. At a Congregational level too, care of the earth is a central focus. To mark this commitment, two Passion Flowers (passiflora) have been planted in the Conservatory. The flower has long been associated with the Order, given its etymology as a symbol of Christ's Passion, including his scourging, crowning with thorns, three nails and five wounds.

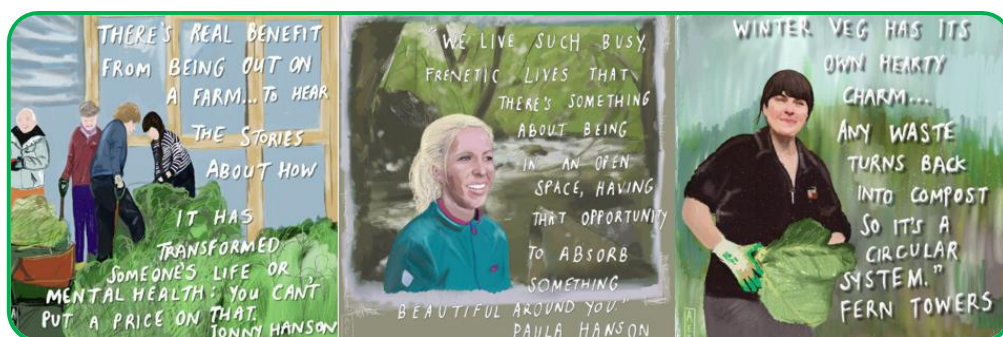
Latest news from the Corrymeela Community

Glenise Morgan sent ECI this latest news: The [Corrymeela](#) Climate Justice Group continues to meet by Zoom but happily the Ballycastle centre is slowly and carefully opening up to groups. With precautions in place, the gardening group is working hard on care and planting of the flower beds, aware of how much solace and pleasure we have derived from our green spaces during the pandemic. Planting for the new season has also begun in the polytunnel in preparation for supplying salad, vegetables and fruit to the kitchen. Several of us recorded words and music for our own small Climate Sunday service at the Croi in the Ballycastle centre in May. This included the Prayer for our Earth from the Laudato Si Pope Francis Encyclical, thoughts from Per Espen Stokes, a Swede who has spoken about how to make the message of the climate crisis more accessible, eg, encouraging us to reimagine climate as living air, a Buddhist prayer and a call to sign the national Climate Coalition Declaration 'The Time is Now'. We have also encouraged some local churches to hold their own Climate Sunday service.



Update from Jubilee Farm in Co Antrim

[Jubilee](#) was on BBC Radio Ulster's Farming Matters recently from 17:00 minutes in, talking about their 6 part 'Introduction to community farming course', which has had 15 people from 10 farms, social enterprises and charities taking part. The course was co-delivered with Cooperative Alternatives and funded by the Co-op Foundation. Here is the link: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m000wbb5>. Quote art by Jubilee supporter Anna Burcombe – from Jubilee's appearance in UTV's Rare Breed, series 9, which, with 150,000 – 200,000 viewers per episode, 'saw an unprecedented level of interest in the work of Jubilee, at a time when community farming has never been more important to meet the pressing social, environmental and economic challenges of the 21st century.'



Energy Pathfinder & the Cathedral of St Mary and St Anne, Cork

Cork Cathedral

Cathedral of St. Mary & St. Anne (North Cathedral)

Ann Harnedy sent ECI this latest news: The Energy Pathfinder project is working with partners in Scotland, Finland, Sweden, Faroe Islands and Ireland. They are working together to identify and address challenges for improving energy efficiency in historic buildings. The project partners are developing an online toolkit to support owners of historic buildings to carry out appropriate retrofits which will help bring their buildings to near zero energy standards.

The [Cathedral of St Mary & St Anne](#) is one of 6 demonstrator buildings involved in the project and data gathered from the Cathedral during the project will be incorporated into the online toolkit. NCE Insulation will work with the users of the building to determine the comfort levels of the building and gauge their experience of the benefits of having installed an air-to-air heat pump and PV panels. This will help inform future heating strategies for the Cathedral.

The project also seeks to improve user comfort in the Cathedral and Visitors Centre as well as reducing energy bills and CO2 emissions. An evaluation was carried out to determine if cavity wall insulation and attic insulation should be installed. As part of the Energy Pathfinder project, energy monitoring will look at the efficiency of the current heating system. This will include the metered use of electricity as well as the electricity generated by the solar PV panels. To learn more about the Energy Pathfinder project go to energypathfinder.eu and watch our [Energy Pathfinder video](#).

Carrigaline Union of Parishes - don't mow let it grow!

John Andrew sent ECI this update: We have been focusing on making gardens more pollinator friendly. The rectory lawn and the church grounds in Carrigaline were designated "No Mow" areas for May and we have been encouraging parishioners to have some if not all of their lawns uncut for longer, "Don't Mow Let It Grow".



We grew Oxeye Daisies from seed and distributed them to our parishioners and to the Church of Our Lady and St John community for their celebration of the end of the Laudato Si year. Not only are the Oxeye Daisies a great source of food for bees, they are a native Irish flower. Some of the daisy plants will be used for planting public areas in Monkstown by the Tidy Towns group.

National Holy Wells Day Celebration Sunday 13 June 2021

[Loving Sister Earth](#) and [Solas Bhride](#) will present a Virtual Celebration of National Holy Wells Day on Sunday June 13th 2021 at 15.00 hours Irish time. They invite you, from wherever you may be, to participate in this unique event, told in story, ritual, prayer, and images. To register, [click here](#). This will begin your registration process. You will be taken through a number of steps to complete your registration. You will receive a Zoom link to this free event 24 hours in advance. Numbers are limited. [You can view the National Holy Wells Day poster here](#).



Wanted – Climate Campaign Organisers!

This year is crucial in the fight for climate justice, as the UK hosts the G7 talks in Cornwall this June and then the UN Climate Summit in Glasgow this November. Closer to home, Christian Aid has been part of a committee getting a Climate Change Bill specific to Northern Ireland through the Assembly. But Christian Aid needs your time and your talents. Join them for 6 months as a Climate Campaign Organiser and help build the power for change through 2021. Put faith into action and tackle poverty and the climate crisis with your local church, as part of a network of climate campaign organisers across the UK.



Running from mid-June – December you'll receive training and support to campaign locally at a crucial time for climate justice. Whether you have a few hours to give each week or more, they want to equip you to engage your local church and communities to speak out for climate justice and help them build action in Northern Ireland. Time is pressing, so find out more on [this webpage](#) and apply [here](#). If you would like to chat more about this exciting volunteer opportunity, do give Helen Newell or Dave Thomas a call on 028 9064 8133.

St John's Orangefield, Belfast Mini Series on Creation Care

St John's Orangefield in Belfast, recently held a mini-series on creation care and the climate crisis. In week one, Rev Ross Wilson laid the



foundation with the Biblical basis for caring for creation. Next, Ruth Cooke from Christian Aid Ireland challenged the congregation to consider the global picture, particularly focussing on how those in poverty are bearing the brunt of the climate crisis. Finally, Helen Newell empowered them to respond, through prayer, through speaking out for justice and then with some lifestyle principles to adopt.

Speaking out for climate justice straight away, Grace Johnston (12) wrote one of 40 postcards to Boris Johnson, UK Prime Minister, letting him know that the world is watching this June at the G7 summit. The postcards also call on him to prioritise climate justice in the talks with a just finance deal. If you're in Northern Ireland, you can write your own postcard through Christian Aid's website: <http://caweek.ie/G7>. St John's is working towards becoming an Eco-Congregation, and this service series was the first step in launching this.

Lacken/Valleymount Churches Get Planting!

Carmel O'Neill sent ECI this update: The past few weeks have been busy as work commenced on developing areas of waste ground in both Valleymount and Lacken churches into sustainable gardens. In late Autumn, a number of parishioners cleared the neglected area behind the grotto. Having allowed the ground to settle for the winter months, the group decided on a planting scheme in April. Much thought went into the choice of plants as the area is quite shaded. Trees were planted at the rear wall, Holly, Japanese maple and Acer while to the front saw the planting of fern, dicentra, vinca, astilbe, aquilegia, nepeta, geranium and anemones. This area which is partially visible from the main church door looks very attractive now. Bee pollinators were also added to the bed at the car park, lavender, nepeta, foxglove, Shasta daisy and Lupin. The rear of Lacken church grounds was a wilderness and ground elder and elder bushes had taken control.



Members of the Tidy Village group hired a mini digger to clear the ground and together with the church caretaker set about clearing the weeds and rubble which had built up over the years. It was then agreed that we would plant climbers against the old stone wall to provide a food supply for the birds in winter, cotoneaster, ivy and pyracantha. We also planted 2 dwarf trees as the area is sheltered and Buddleia for the butterflies.

Finally we used the wildflower seed which had been given to us from our biodiversity course with Aoife Munn to create a wildflower strip both to the front and rear of the church grounds. This seed uses native Irish wildflowers only. A bee box was erected to attract honey bees. In April the Lacken Tidy Village Group was awarded a Certificate for Sustainable Tourism by Wicklow County Council. Parishioners hope to focus more on the spiritual dimension now that churches are open and include some of the prayers for the earth.



Orlagh-in-the-City Laudato Si' Eco Group Early Summer Update

Lorcan McDermott Sent ECI this news: Now that Covid restrictions on groups meeting outdoors have been lifted, the Orlagh-in-the-City Laudato Si' Eco Group will start organising walks. Possible options are the West Pier of Dun Laoghaire, the Dodder towards Bohernabreena reservoir, or the lead mines in Kiltarnan. Some members will be supporting the Fridays For Futures lunchtime attendance which has just re-started outside the Dail. Eco-Congregation Ireland liturgy resources were very useful in our Laudato Si' week worship, particularly the environment/creation-based wording of the Lord's prayer.



The United Nations Climate Change Conference, COP26, is scheduled for Glasgow this coming November. The objective is to get a commitment worldwide to greenhouse gas emissions which will be limited to 2°Celsius above pre-industrial levels, preferably to 1.5 Celsius. Climate Sunday on September 5th will be an opportunity for a specially focused worship in preparation for COP26. We have yet to finalise what other related activities we may organise. Covid travel restrictions will probably discourage large scale civil society and or faith group attendance at the conference.

The book club has just begun reading Dermot Lane's Theology and Ecology in Dialogue. The book deals with the question of how ecological issues are important to theology and to the everyday practice of Christian faith, a stimulating read!

Orlagh in the City – Zoom Prayer Group

Members of Orlagh-in-the-City, (<http://www.orlaghinthecity.ie/>) would love to meet with like-minded people of faith and/or spiritually who are interested in a theology of creation/climate justice to meet in a regular prayer service on zoom. Would you be interested in learning more? Contact Patricia Devlin on ppkdevlin@gmail.com.



Balally Parish Celebrates Earth Day

BEG, the [Balally Parish Environment Group](#), celebrated Earth Day 2021, in the Church of the Ascension of the Lord, Balally, on April 22nd. The celebration took place on-line with poems, prayers, readings and reflections, birdsong and silence. The service is available on the [Balally Parish website](#) to be viewed by anyone who might be interested.



Latest News from Methodist Centenary, Leeson Park

Rev Andrew Kingston sent ECI this update: Methodist Centenary, Leeson Park has built a raised herb bed for Church and community use. Hundreds of people use the building and grounds each week and the garden is creating a lot of interest. The children came in small groups over several weekends to plant seeds and plants, and painted stones identifying the herbs. Many of the herbs planted are mentioned in the Bible and this has allowed us to connect the Bible with caring for the environment and featured during our online Climate Sunday service where Maureen Rowan brought a very helpful and challenging address to the congregation. The raised bed is divided into sixteen compartments for herbs and has an olive tree in the middle. The herbs are black mustard, oregano/hyssop, basil, rue, dill, fennel, rocket, borage, onions/garlic/chives, coriander, bay, mint, thyme, parsley, sage and French tarragon. Rosemary grows nearby.



Latest News from Westport Eco-Congregation

A zoom talk was hosted by Westport Eco-Congregation on 16 May entitled: 'Faith in the Environment and Inter Faith Perspectives' by Alastair McIntosh, Scottish writer, academic and activist and the question was asked 'Does faith have anything to say to the Climate Crisis?' listen to his entire talk on the [Westport Eco-Congregation YouTube channel here](#). As part of the Mayo County Council goes green for Paddy's week, Westport Eco-Congregation hosted an online seminar exploring one aspect of the current climate emergency – feedback loops and forestry. [You can listen to this seminar here](#). Caroline Goucher's reports on both these inspiring events are on the ECI website and [you can read them in full here](#).



Exploring Our Wildflowers with John Feehan as the Floral Year Speeds Up!

As you go about your daily local walks, don't forget to visit [John Feehan's youtube channel](#) to learn about our wildflowers! There are some wonderfully inspiring videos here, for example:

Cowparsley and pignut <https://youtu.be/91ywXGTWTYE>;

Cowslip - <https://youtu.be/Gk93x5jJ5Hg>;

Wild Garlic or Ramsons <https://youtu.be/FXVEk2w9-r8>



Latest News from Diocese of Kerry

Sylvia Thompson sent ECI this update: Care of Creation and the promotion of the urgent message of Laudato Si' remain a priority for us. At present we have invited all parishes to nominate a contact person so that we can create a diocesan network of interested people as a step towards parish based 'Care of Creation' groups. Such a network will offer support, sharing of ideas and actions and even the opportunities for visits, sharing seeds and plants etc. This, we hope, will help to 'embed' the celebration of the Season of Creation as an integral part of the parish calendar and caring for 'our common home' as part of parish life in general.



St John's Ark, Castle Street, Tralee: The parish has an active Care of Creation group and on Earth Day (22 April) blessed the new sign to launch its ARK. This is a small area set aside for biodiversity which saw the planting of a Rowan tree during the Season of Creation 2020, followed by the addition of snowdrop, crocus, and bluebell bulbs. The idea for the ARK came from Paddy Daly the parish pastoral worker. Read all about this initiative by Mary Reynolds in <https://wearetheark.org/>. It includes all and more of what we had already planned, making it an area rich in biodiversity with a variety of habitats. So far ferns, foxgloves and oxeye daisies have been added and a small woodpile and of course the Managed for Wildlife (All-Ireland Pollinator Plan) sign...next step is a small pond. The group also had an excellent window display in their Hub window for Laudato Si' Week, to which was added a candle and prayer for Gaza. All things are connected. The photo above shows St John's ARK is giving shelter to native Irish fauna, a fox, hare and hedgehog.

SMA Summer School 2021

SMA Summer School 2021 via Zoom on Saturday 3rd and the morning of Sunday 4th of July. The theme for this year's Summer School is 'Migrations in Our Common Home: Causes, Effects & Responses'. Book here <https://bit.ly/2TGjrDB>. Full programme <https://bit.ly/3wYrCcT>. Chaired by Fr Seán Healy SMA, Social Justice Ireland. Speakers: Prof John Barry – School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy, Politics and International Relations, Queen's University, Belfast. Dr Dug Cubie – School of Law, University College Cork. Dr Kevin Hargaden – Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice, Dublin.

**Society of African Missions
Summer School 2021**

Via Zoom - Saturday 3rd July - Sunday 4th July 2021

MIGRATIONS IN OUR COMMON HOME
Causes, Effects & Responses
Hosted by Fr Seán Healy SMA - Social Justice Ireland

Hillsborough Presbyterian Church Mental Health Awareness Week

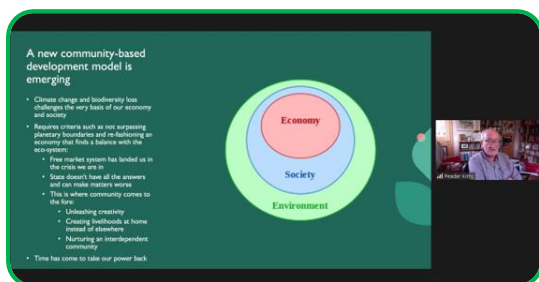
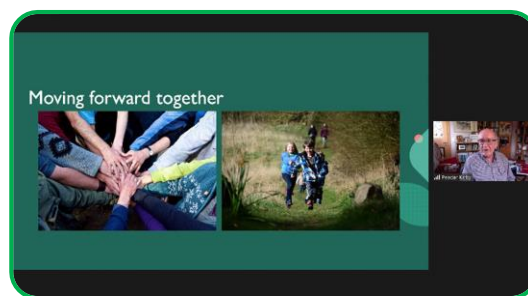
Under the umbrella of their outreach group, HOST, Hillsborough Presbyterian Church designed a range of activities to promote positive mental health and well-being during the Mental Health Awareness Week 10 -16 May. The theme this year was 'Nature and the Environment'. The rationale for holding this programme stemmed from an awareness that there are people in their congregation who have been affected by COVID in a variety of ways in terms of having been ill themselves, of being furloughed, perhaps having lost their jobs, not being able to attend school or university, on-line learning, having to cope with working from home and maybe also juggling that with home-schooling. A number of families have also been bereaved during this period. Many members of the congregation will have missed attending Church and the fellowship of their organisations, and everyone has missed their usual contact with friends and family due to COVID restrictions, and on top of that, we hear frequent reports on our news bulletins about the impact extended periods of lockdown have had on people's mental health and wellbeing.



The programme was open to any member of the congregation or wider community, and was designed to run online in order to be COVID-safe. Most of the events are still available – just go to the HPC website <https://www.hillsboroughpresbyterianchurch.com/> and click onto the relevant day to find the event you are looking for. [Click here to see the programme.](#)

Wilton Justice Group – Building Communities after Covid

Wilton Justice Group hosted a presentation on May 26th by Peadar Kirby on 'Building Communities after Covid'. Drawing on lessons learned from the pandemic, the online talk outlined the different types of community from families, neighbours and colleagues to local businesses and services. Attendees also heard how the nature of community needs to change in the face of climate change. Peadar Kirby is Professor Emeritus of International Politics and Public Policy, University of Limerick and holds a PhD from the London School of Economics. He has published widely on politics and globalisation and his latest book is [Karl Polanyi and the Contemporary Global Crisis: Transforming Market Society in the Era of Climate Change](#). He is a resident of Cloughjordan Ecovillage, Co. Tipperary which was set up "to create a living example of a healthy and harmonious future while treading more lightly on Planet Earth." More information on this community can be found at www.thevillage.ie.



This talk was one of a series of events from St Joseph's Parish and Wilton Justice Group, Cork over the last few months around finding hope in nature and in our communities. The first event was a gardening talk in February by Ellie O'Donovan, the Head Gardener at Nano Nagle Place in Cork. There was also a seed planting campaign in April which can be viewed [here](#).

Church of Our Lady & St. John, Carrigaline Celebrates Laudato Si Week

Fran Deasy sent ECI this report: Laudato Si' Week 16 – 25 May 2021 was celebrated locally in the Church of Our Lady & St. John, Carrigaline by a group of people working together on Care for the Earth from the Eco-Congregations of St. Mary's Church of Ireland and the Church of Our Lady & St. John, Carrigaline. To prepare for the week, the



Transition Year students from Carrigaline Community School created posters which beautifully expressed the themes of the week of having hope and taking action “for we know that things can change” (Laudato Si’ 13). A different poster each day featured in a week long display in the sanctuary of the Church of Our Lady & St. John and on the sign board outside the church.

Laudato Si’ means ‘Praise Be to You’ and it is an urgent call by Pope Francis to build a more just and sustainable world, where all people live with dignity. It asks us all to listen to the “cry of the earth and the cry of the poor” and to do what we can to make a difference. Daily posts during the week onto Carrigaline Parish Facebook pages helped to create awareness and to provide support for people in order to be committed to making that personal difference. Each day we highlighted support for change such as the ‘Pledge Your Garden for Pollinators’ from the All Ireland Pollinator Plan, Trócaire’s 100 Ways to Implement Laudato Si’ and events for National Biodiversity week 2021.



Several grass lawns on the church grounds were re-designated as no-mow areas so that native flowering plants can be allowed to grow to support pollinators, and to mark and celebrate the week a silver birch tree will be planted near the Parish Centre of Our Lady & St. John by Fr. Pat Fogarty PP. To quote from the All Ireland Pollinator Plan “If Ireland was truly green, it would be such a beacon of hope” Rev. Elaine Murray.

Finally on Pentecost Sunday at the end of the week people leaving after Mass were offered a choice of plants and vegetable seedlings to take home, grown by members of the two local Eco-Congregations. These included sunflower seeds sown in homemade recycled newspaper pots which had been harvested last autumn by the pupils from Scoil Mhuire na nGráist, Belgooly. The seeds were given out to new homes around the parish, as were the homegrown sunflowers, tomato plants, oxeye daisies, cucumbers and sacred basil seedlings. We hope that during the week we were able to share with others some of the inspiration of Laudato Si’ and pass on our hope and prayer that “we and all creatures belong to our common home and that it’s our responsibility preserve it for future generations”. [View the rest of their photos on the ECI website here.](#)

Rathgar Parish Laudato Si Group Creates Biodiversity Garden

Miriam Mooney sent ECI this latest news: The 6th anniversary of the publication of ‘Laudato Si’ was celebrated during the week 16th to 24th May 2021. Shortly after the publication a Laudato Si Group was formed in Rathgar Parish to read and reflect on the Encyclical. Since reading the Encyclical the activities of the Laudato Si Group have expanded. It has responded to the Pope’s exhortation in many ways including arranging talks from guest speakers; Brian Grogan SJ recently gave an inspirational talk to a group of almost 50 attendees on Zoom- the incorporation of prayers for the environment in the parish liturgy, raising environmental awareness generally and latterly the development of a Biodiversity garden to the rear of the church.



The garden project commenced in Autumn 2020 and progress has been made to-date. A range of pollinating plants and shrubs have been planted including native Hawthorn, Willow and Alder saplings. Dandelions are encouraged as they are super pollinators and their seed heads provide great feeding for Bullfinches and Goldfinches. We are avoiding peat based compost. Posters with information about biodiversity are attached to the railings of the garden helping raise awareness of the actions everyone can take to enhance biodiversity.

A bird feeder, bird boxes and insect nesting sites have been installed. We would like to thank parishioners and others for their generous gifts of plants, advice and finance to-date. The biodiversity garden is a community response to the Pope’s urgent call for action on our environment - how we interact with our natural world is deeply related to how we interact with all other human beings. We always welcome any

offers of assistance/ involvement / knowledge and pollinator plants. Our email address is: pollinatorgarden1@gmail.com.

News from the Parish of San Matias, Santiago, Chile

Fr John Greene, has been working in Chile with the Columban Fathers since October 2015 and hopes to return to Dublin in the coming months. He sent ECI this news from his parish: Here in the parish of San Matias, a very poor area on the outskirts of Santiago, we try to promote ecology. The main chapel has a beautiful garden of flowers, shrubs, trees and vegetables. All the work in the garden is done by the elderly, on a voluntary basis. They come for a few hours three times a week to water the shrubs and do any pruning or weeding.

With the restrictions of the Pandemia, this curtailed their work, but were glad to be back attending it, when the restrictions were lifted.



Here in our zone, they run courses in the summer time for all our parish helpers. Last January (our summer), the coordinator of one of the chapels, came to me afterwards to say she had got great ideas to help the parents and children of the First Communion Program – recycling, a vegetable garden, etc. Initiatives like these are very useful in a poor area, where people are used to throwing their garbage on the side of the street, knowing that the Local Authorities will clean it up. It is difficult to educate them, but initiatives like the two projects at the chapels are a help.

Voices of the Climate Crisis: Christian Aid and the Irish Council of Churches

Damian Jackson, Programme Officer with ICC sent ECI this report of this stimulating event: On Tuesday, the 25th of May Christian Aid and the Irish Council of Churches jointly hosted an event called “Voices of the Climate Crisis”. The aim was to equip people in local church leadership in Ireland to better engage their churches in action on climate justice by connecting us in the global North with people directly impacted by climate change, in the global South.



Attendees heard from Bob Kikuyu, Christian Aid’s global theology advisor, Julius Mbatia of Youth for Sustainable Development Goals Kenya, and Rebecca Wilson, a climate activist from Northern Ireland. Helen Newell of Christian Aid also shared information on resources they have developed for churches to respond to climate change spiritually and practically.

Bob spoke about how nature is suffused through Jesus’ teaching, and how we have much to learn from indigenous peoples’ recognition of the interconnectedness of the sacred and the natural. He suggested that simple acts can be spiritually profound, such as planting a tree for every baptism, which connects the new life with its community and place, and acts as a reminder of the person, and this connection, long after they may have left. This act localises a global concept of humanity’s interconnection and interdependence with nature and our need to protect and preserve it for the common good.

Julius pointed out the importance of the moral voice, to act as a corrective and counterpoint to the political and economic voices active at local, national and international levels in discussions on addressing climate change. The injustice inherent in the fact that those most affected by climate change have done least to cause it, and the fact that we share a planet that is on the brink of collapse need to be communicated in these circles and churches have a voice to use in doing that. The question “How do we deal with the impacts of climate change?” is a moral question and needs a moral voice in formulating the response.

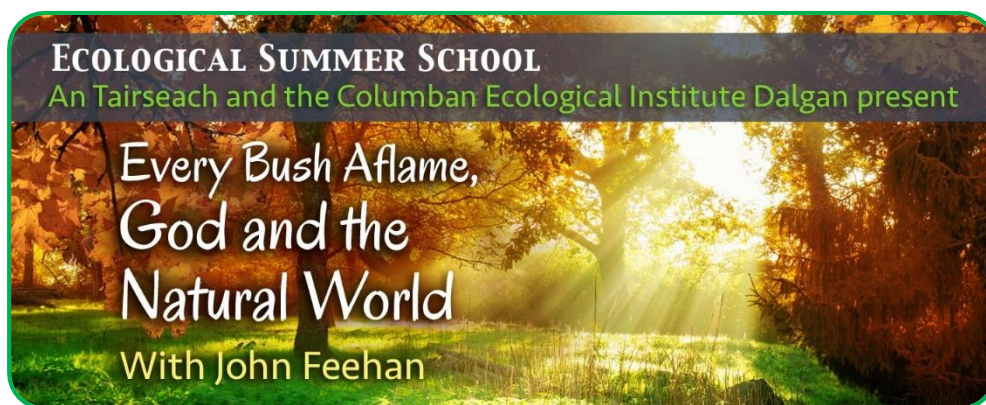
Rebekah reminded us that Christianity is an everyday calling to justice. While 9/10 young Christians are concerned about climate change, only 1/10 of them said their own church is doing enough to respond to it. Young people are hearing that call to justice but are not seeing evidence that their church communities

have their ears open. She pointed out that climate change is impacting people's lives now; that it is interconnected with other justice issues like poverty and racial justice; that most of us, as inhabitants of the global North, have the privilege of being able to choose whether to ignore the effects of climate change without it having much of an effect on our personal lives; but that choosing not to is our calling as Christians as part of our obligation to love God and neighbour, and act justly.

A recording of the event is available at youtube.com/watch?v=p9EvxBLLWL8. More information is available at christianaid.ie/climate, irishchurches.org/voices. Fran Brady, Quaker representative on the ECI committee, attended the event and [provided this report](#).

Ecological Summer School: Every Bush Aflame – God and the Natural World

[An Tairseach](#) and the [Columban Ecological Institute, Dalgan](#) present: An exploration of the new understanding of creation that underpins and informs Pope Francis' exposition of Biodiversity and Nature in Laudato Si'. Join them in the garden of Ireland at the beautiful Ecology Centre, An Tairseach, in Wicklow Town for this unique experience. John Feehan's profound insights into the beauty and wonder of the natural world have led him to become passionate about our responsibility as humans to care for our common home. The Summer School will consist of lectures, recognition of species, field trips in the surrounding Wicklow area and work with microscopes. There will also be time for meditation and prayer, to ponder on the miraculous in the everyday. Dates: Monday 28th June arrival between 4pm and 6pm to Sat 3rd July – depart after coffee break. Cost: Deposit: €100. Full payment: €500 (inclusive of deposit). [Full information here with registration details](#).



An Tairseach 10 Week Sabbatical Programme – Applications Open!

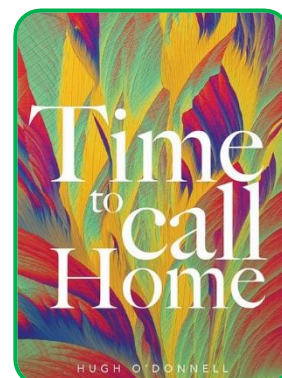
An Tairseach has opened its doors again! They are currently planning for their ten week Sabbatical Programme due to begin in September entitled: Exploring Spirituality in the context of an evolving universe, an endangered earth, in the Christian tradition. Dates for the next Sabbatical course: 5th September to 12th November 2021. Applications are open. All participation is subject to government guidelines for both national and international travel at the time of the programme. Applications are welcome from anyone with an interest and commitment to the content of the programme. Visit here >> <https://antairseach.ie/sabbaticals/> for all information



Publications of Interest ...

'Time to Call Home' by Hugh O'Donnell – New Publication

Hugh O'Donnell is a Salesian priest who works in Sean McDermott Street Parish in Dublin's north inner city. He is particularly interested in the connection between faith and the protection of the environment. He is a regular contributor to the ECI newsletter with his beautiful and inspiring reflections and photos.



'Time to Call Home' is a collection of short meditations inspired by Laudato Si', Pope Francis' landmark encyclical letter on climate change, that encourages the reader to take courage in the face of adversity and to ponder the astonishing gift of the natural world. Unlike many examinations of the environmental crisis, that are understandably prescriptive in approach, the aim of this particular work is not to admonish but to embolden. Readers are inspired to ponder the awesome gift of creation and to heed its attendant call to stewardship of our shared home. With recourse to poetry, scripture, art and music, Hugh O'Donnell takes the reader on an awesome ecological journey, from which we emerge committed to redoubling our efforts to live at one with our natural surroundings. You can purchase this publication from [Veritas Books Online](#).

How to be a Hero for All Our Children

In the run up to COP26 in Glasgow, the Quaker United Nations Office (Geneva) is pleased to share with you their new educational publication [How to be a Hero for All our Children](#). This little booklet (A6 or extended version in A5) focuses on connecting readers with the latest climate science, suggested personal actions, and questions for politicians. Its aim is to reach those new to, or uncertain about, climate change and how to help. You can share digitally, or put printed copies through doors/hand out in community meetings. The publication can be viewed [on their website](#), where paper copies may also [be requested](#). You can also use the 'at-home-print' version to create your own copies. "How to be a Hero" is the final instalment in a [trilogy of QUNO publications](#), the first for policy makers ([The Government Official's Toolkit to Urgent Climate Action](#)), the second for climate activists ([People's Climate Empowerment Series](#)), and the third, this booklet, for neighbours, friends, family and/or strangers.



Resources from Eco-Congregation Scotland

Rev David Coleman, Chaplain at Eco-Congregation Scotland has compiled a 'goody bag' of links, videos and resources which has developed out of the churches in the ECS movement and the chaplaincy. It includes a link to the URC resource for Climate Sunday. [You can access these resources here](#).



Creation Care Ezine by Ethel White

This new e-publication is provided by Ethel White, a scientist based in Belfast. From time to time, Ethel will have a guest contributor. In the latest edition the guest contributor is Olivia Elwood. Olivia is from Belfast. She's studying Environmental Management and Sustainability at Plymouth University. [Click here to read her 'Ideas Bank' of 'How to care for creation.'](#) You can subscribe to this publication by emailing ethel.white@live.co.uk. [The latest edition is here](#).



Draft Dublin City Biodiversity Action Plan

Dublin City Council is preparing a new Biodiversity Action Plan for Dublin City for the next 5 years. The draft plan has been prepared with the assistance of many environmental organisations through a Biodiversity Forum. They want to hear your views to inform the final Biodiversity Action Plan. Closes 16 June 2021. Follow this link to share your views >> <https://bit.ly/2RylNUq>.






Northern Province of Sisters of Mercy Summer Series

The Northern Province of Sisters of Mercy is holding a Summer Series of comhthionól ar líne (online gatherings) to mark 50 years since the publication of "A Theology of Liberation" (Teología de la Liberación) by Gustavo Gutiérrez. This series is open to anyone who is interested. The link to the Eventbrite: <https://www.eventbrite.ie/e/summer-series-of-comhthionol-ar-line-online-gatherings->

[tickets-157753560145](https://www.eventbrite.com/tickets-157753560145). The Zoom link will be provided to registered participants 3 days prior to the events. [View the event flyer here](#). Inquiries to: Sr. Sheila Curran rsm (scurranperu@gmail.com) or Sr. Nellie McLaughlin rsm: (earthspace07@googlemail.com).

The Sisters of Mercy
of the Northern Province,
Ireland present

**Summer Series
of comhthionól
ar líne (online
gatherings)
featuring**



Barbara Reid O.P. Ivone Gebara Miriam MacGillis

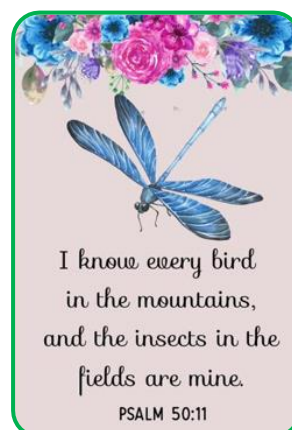
 Sisters of Mercy
Summer Series
of comhthionól ar líne

*Marking 50 years since the publication of
"A Theology of Liberation" by Gustavo Gutiérrez*

Eco Challenge!

Rev Trevor Sargent's Ecological Notes for Early Summer 2021: 'Mayday' – urgent need to reverse decline in insect numbers!

'Mayday, mayday, mayday' – has nothing to do with the month of May, it seems. 'Mayday' is a phonetic way to say the French term, m'aidez, (help me). Almost 100 years ago, the term was coined by Frederick Stanley Mockford, the officer-in-charge of radio at Croydon Airport in London. 'Mayday, mayday, mayday' – signifies a life-threatening emergency, usually on a ship or a plane. In the light of the scientific evidence about the escalating climate crisis and rapid loss of species, especially the loss of insects species, is it not time to focus more on this life-threatening emergency, i.e. the collapse of the Earth's life support systems, which is unfolding like a slow car crash in front of our eyes? Speaking of which, have you noted the lack of dead insects on the windscreen these days?



Why are insects so important?

- Insects create the biological foundation for all terrestrial ecosystems. They recycle nutrients, pollinate plants, disperse seeds, maintain soil structure and fertility, control populations of other organisms, and provide major food sources for other species.
- If all insects on Earth suddenly vanished, it is likely that civilization and ecosystems would be in serious trouble. Nitrogen-rich faeces would potentially build up, choking plant life and preventing new growth.
- Many insects, especially beetles, are scavengers, feeding on dead animals and fallen trees, thereby recycling nutrients back into the soil.

In summary, this is the story: "If insect species losses cannot be halted, this will have catastrophic consequences for both the planet's ecosystems and for the survival of mankind," said Francisco Sánchez-Bayo, at the University of Sydney, co-author of the first global analysis of insect populations decline, with Kris Wyckhuys at the China Academy of Agricultural Sciences in Beijing, [published in the journal Biological Conservation](#), and entitled, 'Worldwide decline of the entomofauna: A review of its drivers'.

More than 40% of insect species are declining and a third are endangered, the analysis found. The rate of extinction is eight times faster than that of mammals, birds and reptiles. The total mass of insects is falling by a precipitous 2.5% a year, according to the best data available, suggesting they could vanish within a century.

The planet is at the [start of a sixth mass extinction](#) in its history, with [huge losses already reported in larger animals](#) that are easier to study. But insects are by far the most varied and abundant, but their fate has been largely overlooked because of their small size and the ubiquitous nature of a few well known insect species.

The authors of this scientific analysis don't mince their words! "The world must change the way it produces food", Sánchez-Bayo said, noting that [organic farms had more insects](#) and that occasional pesticide use in the past did not cause the level of decline seen in recent decades. "Industrial-scale, intensive agriculture is the one that is killing the ecosystems," he said. In the tropics, where industrial agriculture is often not yet present, the rising temperatures due to climate change are thought to be a [significant factor in the decline](#). Sánchez-Bayo said the unusually strong language used in the review was not alarmist. "We wanted to really wake people up, and the reviewers and editor agreed", he said. "When you consider 80% of biomass of insects has disappeared in 25-30 years, it is a big concern."

What's to be done to turn this 'mayday' into a good day?

- Plant native trees, shrubs, and flowers.
- Avoid flowers that have "double" blooms; insects cannot access their nectar because their mouthparts are not adapted to do so.
- Avoid chemically based pesticides and fertilizers. On the other hand, manure and compost favour insects.
- Protect hedgerows and natural ground covers which are important habitats for insects.
- Appreciate more the importance of dandelions, nettles and other native plants for insects, especially bees and butterflies.
- Where possible, buy organic cotton clothes, sheets, and towels. Conventional cotton uses an enormous quantity of pesticide with significant negative impacts on insects.
- For farmers, GLAS and other E.U. based initiatives are available to help to turn around the decline in biodiversity. One such initiative is the European Innovation Partnership (EIP) on Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability which encourages partnership among farmers in any E.U. region.



Around a 100 farmers working together to enhance biodiversity locally. An example of such an EIP project is the Blackstairs Farming Futures (BFF) EIP pilot project on the Wexford / Carlow border. This is a results based project rewarding good habitat conditions on semi-natural habitats using a scoring system based on results indicators. For information about the Blackstairs Farming Futures (BFF) Sustainable Farming Project in the Blackstairs Mountains, visit:

<https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/find-connect/projects/blackstairs-farming-futures-bff-sustainable>

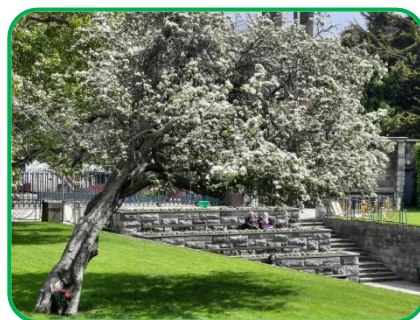
Above photo is 'Under the Blackstairs Mountains' by Mark Rothwell of Bunclody Union of Parishes, which won 1st Prize in the Bunclody Union Photography Competition.

Prayers/Reflections for the Earth

A Reflection by Fr Hugh O'Donnell – Adlestrop

Fr Hugh O'Donnell is a poet and ministers with the Salesian community in the parish of Sean McDermott Street in Dublin. He shares the following reflection with us, entitled 'Adlestrop':

You may believe time is linear and that the end comes at the end, but what happens when you draw aside for a moment and see how it feels to stop? Sometimes the moment is made for you. The car breaks down in the month of May and you find yourself on a country road



surrounded by hedges of hawthorn blossom with its delicate fragrance and a welter of bird voices. Something close to what Edward Thomas experienced when his train stopped for no apparent reason at a small station called Adlestrop, 'and for that minute a blackbird sang/ close by and round him, mistier,/ farther and farther, all the birds/ of Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire.'

The journey broken, the mad rush forward to what comes next is halted. Now that you have stopped you might even look inside at how you are, not sniffing and moving on but letting be and allowing your inner weather to change under your gaze. Time need not be your master. All those interruptions – slow traffic, red lights, breakdowns – can be gifts of the best kind because they give you back to yourself in a flicker of awareness. They dare you to stay right where you are with the initial feeling of annoyance until you discover a constriction in yourself loosening. You open a window and breathe, suddenly not overly concerned about what happens next as you tune into the music of what is happening now. And it feels good.

Became Man: An African Story by Fr Michael O'Shea, Mpima Seminary, Zambia

[The story so far: In the large monkey tree outside my window in Mpima Seminary Zambia, feminist monkesses (simians, not nuns) voiced grievances whilst their male folk ('monks') slept off the effects of their Sunday beer pot. Abbess Bess, the last to speak, caused great excitement when she said she'd prefer to use the phrase "God became one of US" rather than "God became man"].

Chief Kolwe never really trusted women, least of all his clever consort, Conniecubina, so he always slept with one eye and both ears open. He thumped his chest and proclaimed, "Ladies, I'm shocked, that's heresy, you're going too far." Abbess Bess reiterated that what she wanted was a different emphasis such as you find in John's Gospel, where John begins with the Word and continues with many genderless images for the Saviour: Light, Way, Truth, Life and, note well, he said 'the Word became Flesh'.

Ruby excitedly broke in, "Even in the synoptics, the Baptist called Jesus the 'Lamb of God' not the Ram of God. And if anyone deserved the title 'Beloved Disciple' surely it was Mary Magdalene".

"Wake Abbot Capo" ordered Kolbe aware that he was getting out of his depth. Capo too felt threatened, but resorted to the Church History lessons he'd overheard in the seminary. Stroking his Capuchin beard he said, "There is certainly evidence that Jesus was a man, contemporary historians, Josephus a Jew and Tacitus a Roman bore witness to that. Incontrovertible."

Wife-battered Aba, who looked forward to a better life after this one surprisingly spoke up, "Our lives on earth are short-lived, I'm looking forward to our real home in heaven where there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage."

Phil O'Sophy strongly batting for an ongoing genderless saving event said, "Spirits, angels, and all creatures in the mind of God before birth or after death are probably genderless. Gender is not the issue, Love is. 'God is Love' said St John and in his account of Jesus's last discourse with his followers Jesus assures them of his continued presence in his, genderless, Spirit.

The monks groaned, they felt outdone. Kolbe made a last gambit for male supremacy, "You won't find much evidence for what ye are claiming in the Bible!" "O no?" queried, Philo, "Who wrote the Bible? All males except for two in the Old Testament and not one in the New Testament! Of course they support the male view. Even Mary, the Mother of God, was hardly quoted and she quite obviously had a lot to say."

At that Kolbe climbed down from his high throne. Fuming and frustrated he fired his last salvo, "You're all wrong. Anyway, I thought this is supposed to be an Ecological forum not a theological one".

Sweetly Mother Bess smiled at him, "It's all One my dear Father monk, we and everything in this Universe are all united in the one love of God. The new Theology is necessarily ecological and Ecology is necessarily theological."

With kindest regards,

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