

## Dear Eco Congregation friends

Welcome to the March 2017 edition of the Eco Congregation Ireland newsletter. Spring is here and we are journeying through Lent and on to Eastertime!



### Are you interested in learning more about Eco-Congregation Ireland?

Perhaps your congregation or parish has an interest in the environment and has thought about becoming an Eco-Congregation? The Eco-Congregation Committee has Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist, Church of Ireland and Quaker representatives on it and they are happy to come to speak to your group no matter how small! The contact details are listed at the end of this newsletter.

Did you know we are on Facebook? You can access the Eco-Congregation Ireland Facebook profile [here](#) or just go to facebook.com and search 'Eco-Congregation Ireland'. It's a great place to keep up to date with ECI's activities and access current news and information from other NGOs and faith organisations.

### In this newsletter:

- Our Climate Justice Candle – The Journey Continues!
- Eco-Congregation Ireland Annual Review 2016 available to read online
- 2017 Revised Edition of ECI's Environmental Check Up for your Church document
- Eco-Congregation Scotland Annual Gathering 2017
- Report from SAGE (Shankill Action for a Green Earth)
- Bishop Alan Abernethy's Lent Course - Stewards of Creation
- Daughters of Charity review their work on Laudato Si
- Seminar at An Gáirdín Organic Garden and Ecology Centre
- Salesian Cosmology Group holds 'Be the Change' Programme
- Third Christ Church Cathedral Film Series focuses on the Environment
- Global Divestment Mobilisation 2017
- Carrigaline Union of Parishes holds Coffee Morning for Irish Seed Savers
- Cashel, Ferns and Ossory Diocese gets serious about Stewardship of Creation!
- Church of the Three Patrons, Rathgar – Meditation and Caring for the Earth
- Anglican Communion Environmental Network Lenten Resources
- A Sustainable Life: Quaker Faith and Practice in the Renewal of Creation
- Operation Noah - Divest your church: new resource for local churches available now!
- An Tairseach – Spring talks programme 2017
- Earth Day - 22 April 2017
- ECI provides a prayer for use during Earth Hour Weekend 2017
- Eco Challenge!
- Prayer for the Earth

### Our Climate Justice Candle – the journey continues!

Since our last newsletter, ECI's Climate Justice Candle has visited **Kilcooley Church of Ireland Co Tipperary, Kilkenny Church of Ireland, Kilkenny Catholic Parish, Carlow Church of Ireland, Killeshin Church of Ireland and Ballineaspig Parish, Dennehy's Cross, Cork for Earth Hour and their Lenten series.** It is still continuing on its ecumenical and climate justice journey! If you would like to be part of this initiative, simply drop us an email to [info@ecocongregationireland.com](mailto:info@ecocongregationireland.com).



## Eco-Congregation Ireland Annual Review 2016 available to read online

The [Eco-Congregation Ireland Annual Review 2016](#) is now online! It includes ECI's highlights for 2016, including presenting awards to Mercy Sisters, Western Province and Balally Parish and the journey of our Climate Justice Candle. We also welcomed two new faces to Eco-Congregation Ireland in 2016: Fran Brady, our new Quaker representative and Karen Nicholson, ECI's new administrative officer.



## 2017 Revised Edition of ECI's Environmental Check Up for your Church document

The [ECI Environmental Check Up for your Church](#) document has been revised to make it easier for groups to get started in their journey to becoming an Eco-Congregation. ECI has developed this Church Check Up document to make it more user-friendly and the questions in it reflect ECI's four eco-friendly areas: spiritual, practical, community and global. To become an Eco-Congregation, we recommend you form a small group to work through the document. This document will help your group to prioritise your next steps and when you have done this, send us your completed registration form at the end of the document.



It will:

- help you identify and affirm the environmental work you are already doing with your congregation, church centre and/or church offices
- give you advice on how to develop and grow as an eco-congregation
- show your areas of strength and those that can be further developed
- point you to help for the areas you want to get involved in.

It is not a test! It is here to help you get started on your journey!

## Eco-Congregation Scotland Annual Gathering 2017

Eco-Congregation Scotland Annual Gathering is on 22nd April at Burnside Blairbeth Church in Glasgow. The main speaker is the writer and friend of Eco-Congregation Ireland, [Alastair McIntosh](#) who will be speaking on the themes from his latest book *Poacher's Pilgrimage*. The day will offer a chance to network with other Eco-Congregations and attend workshops from Christian Aid, Tearfund, Meet-Your-MSP Project, RSPB, and the Scottish Pilgrim Routes Forum. At this year's event, Eco-Congregation Scotland hopes the day of talks, workshops and networking will equip and inspire all to go forward with practical inspiration, encouragement, and hope. All friends of Eco-Congregation Ireland are welcome! [Learn more and register here.](#)



## Report from SAGE (Shankill Action for a Green Earth)

SAGE, Shankill Action for a Green Earth, is an ecumenical initiative of the Roman Catholic and Church of Ireland parishes in Shankill. Their objective is to promote awareness of climate change in the wider community and to promote action to conserve energy. Their recent report is available on the [ECI website here](#) with photos of their various activities which include:

- Lobbying political representatives in Buswell's Hotel, Dublin with Stop Climate Chaos
- Hosting a public meeting with Professor John Sweeney who reported back following the COP meeting in Marrakech
- Energy Conservation in the Community



- Holding a meeting in Dun Laoghaire with transition year students to discuss 'Meat Smart' – looking at the effects of our meat-eating diet on climate change
- Organising a trip to Dunleer to meet up with representatives of Dunleer Better Energy Community
- Co-ordinating tree planting of 80 heritage Irish apple trees
- Hosting an ecumenical Lenten reflection with the different churches in the area
- Marking Earth Hour with special prayers at a Vigil Mass

## **Bishop Alan Abernethy's Lent Course - Stewards of Creation**

*Stewards of Creation* has been the theme of the Church of Ireland Bishop of Connor's Lent course this year. Bishop Alan Abernethy has been delivering talks in each of Connor's three archdeaconries as follows: Tuesday 21st March - Bushmills Parish Centre; Wednesday 29th March - Lisburn Cathedral; Monday 3rd April - Jordanstown Parish Centre.



If you are interested in attending the last talk in the series on 3 April, information and booking details are available from Rosemary Patterson (Bishop's PA) on 028 9082 8870 or by email at [rpatterson@diocoff-belfast.org](mailto:rpatterson@diocoff-belfast.org).

## **Daughters of Charity review their work on Laudato Si**

On 28th January 2017 approximately 110 Daughters of Charity gathered in their Provincial House in Blackrock Dublin. Part of this day was devoted to a mid-year review of their work on Laudato Si. As part of their Province Plan drawn up in 2016, each Daughter of Charity in the Province of Ireland committed to 'educate ourselves towards a new understanding of our place within the universe in order to have a change of heart and embrace an ethical use of the earth's resources' (Province Plan p. 8).



There are 23 local communities of the Daughters of Charity in Ireland and 5 communities in Kenya. All of these local groups worked on the first three chapters of the encyclical from September to December 2016. In order to help them the Formation Commission provided a Laudato Si study guide to help the Sisters navigate their way through the encyclical and also to reflect on relevant Vincentian texts. At this half way point the Sisters thought it would be good to have some input from Eco-Congregation Ireland and Sr Catherine Brennan, Catholic representative on the Eco-Congregation Ireland committee, delivered an inspirational and informative presentation to the Sisters. Read more about the Daughters of Charity Laudato Si review day and Sr Catherine's presentation [here](#).

## **Seminar at An Gáirdín Organic Garden and Ecology Centre**

On Saturday April 1st An Gáirdín Organic Garden and Ecology Centre, Portumna will be hosting a seminar on the theme of 'Care for our Common Home – Reconnect with the Sacred in Nature'.

The facilitators are Nellie McLaughlin and Paul Kingsnorth. Nellie teaches Creation Spirituality and is author of 'Out of Wonder and Earth's Sacred Balance'. Paul is a writer and thinker and is interested in Spiritual Ecology.

Cost: €10 (Lunch included). Please book your place by contacting 087 284 5443 or [angairdin1@gmail.com](mailto:angairdin1@gmail.com). Visit their website [here](#) for more information.



## Salesian Cosmology Group holds 'Be the Change' Programme

The Salesian Cosmology Group held a spring event recently which was held in Don Bosco Centre, Limerick. This was a transformative educational workshop that explored the role of people can play in creating a healthier future for us all. It was structured on the programme 'Be the Change' which is sourced in the alliance between the indigenous Achuar tribe of the Amazon and North Americans formed in the mid eighties, which is called the Pachamama Alliance. The purpose of the workshop was centre to the presentations; 'Bringing forth an environmentally sustainable, spiritually fulfilling, socially just human presence on this planet.'

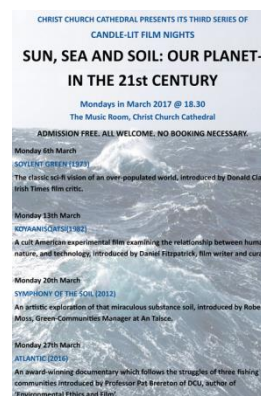


Be the Change programme presents the reality in terms of degradation of earth's resources and ecosystems, questions our human impact on planet earth, but it closes with hope that whatever measure each individual or group may take to stem the 'unbridled consumerism' has genuine positive implications for all areas of our planet. The Salesian Cosmology Group have provided a short report and photos of their event which you can read [here](#).

## Third Christ Church Cathedral Film Series focuses on the Environment

'Sun, Sea and Soil: Our Planet in the 21st Century' was the theme of the third Christ Church Cathedral Film Series which began on Monday March 6<sup>th</sup>. There were four films, all with an environmental focus, in this series and all were screened in the cathedral's candle-lit Music Room.

The series opened on Monday March 6 with *Soylent Green* (1973) which was introduced by Donald Clarke, Irish Times film critic. On Monday March 13 the film *Koyaanisqatsi* (1982) was introduced by Daniel Fitzpatrick, film writer and curator. On Monday March 20 *Symphony of the Soil* (2012) was introduced by Robert Moss, Green Communities Manager at An Taisce and on Monday March 27 the film was *Atlantic* (2016) and it was introduced by Prof Pat Brereton from DCU, author of the recently published 'Environmental Ethics and Film'. Read more [here](#).



## Global Divestment Mobilisation 2017

If it's wrong to wreck the climate, it's wrong for our universities, pension funds, places of worship, cities, museums and banks to profit from that wreckage. Divestment campaigns are weakening the fossil fuel industry's political and economic stranglehold over society. Every time a respected institution publicly breaks its ties with fossil fuels, we chip away at their power to carry out immoral business plans, and we open up space for just climate solutions to flourish.



This May, join thousands of people everywhere to demand that we do what is necessary for climate action — divest from fossil fuels. Events are being organised around the world. Keep an eye on the [Fossil Free Europe](#) website for actions in Ireland. Join the Global Divestment Mobilisation — organise an action that helps to highlight the destructive climate impacts of your target institution's continued support for the fossil fuel industry. Learn more [here](#).

## Carrigaline Union of Parishes holds Coffee Morning for Irish Seed Savers

Carrigaline Union of Parishes in Co Cork organised a Coffee Morning in the Rectory for Irish Seed Savers Association on Wednesday 1st March 2017. This was mainly an awareness building initiative but they also raised €70 from those who attended. Four people from the Parish then attended the Irish Seed Savers 'Seed Share' Open Day in Co. Clare on Sunday 5th March as a result of what they had heard at the Coffee Morning so a quite successful morning! See more photos [here](#).



## Cashel, Ferns and Ossory Diocese gets serious about Stewardship of Creation!

Parishioners and clergy from across the Cashel, Ferns and Ossory Diocese came in large numbers to Kilkenny College on Saturday, 18th February to learn ways of improving their church properties, inside and out. A number also teamed up with parishes which have already been grant-aided to carry out work. There was good collaboration between Roman Catholic, Methodist and Church of Ireland parishioners represented at this 'Inside & Out' conference. Speakers included Ruth Buggie from the Sustainable Energy Agency of Ireland (SEAI), Dr Úna Fitzpatrick from the National Biodiversity Data Centre and Alison Harvey from the Heritage Council. Read their report in full [here](#).



## Church of the Three Patrons, Rathgar – Meditation and Caring for the Earth

Parishioners from Church of the Three Patrons, Rathgar invited Fr Donagh O'Shea OP, Director of the Dominican Retreat Centre to give a talk to them entitled 'Meditation and Caring for the Earth' on the 20th of February last. In his reflection Fr Donagh identified three ways in which through meditation 'being' can help us in our 'doing.' Firstly, over time meditation increases the sense of the sacred. That becomes particularly evident in how we experience nature. Secondly, meditation increases our awareness so we actually become aware of ways in which we can protect and care for our environment. Thirdly, one of the fruits of meditation is that it helps us let go of our ego so our need for domination weakens over time. Gradually it becomes more a case of 'thy will be done' rather than 'my will be done'. Read more [here](#).



## Anglican Communion Environmental Network Lenten Resources

During Lent we remember the 40 days that Jesus spent in the wilderness, facing challenge and temptation. It is a time when we reflect on God's purpose for our own lives. The Anglican Communion Environmental Network has produced useful Lenten resources with an environmental theme. Their focus this year is water. Water is a gift. Water is life. Through their website you can learn how to take part in the Carbon Fast for Lent, enhance this vital season of prayer, study and repentance by using their Study Guide on 'Reflections on the Water of Life' and take part in the annual '[Seven Weeks for Water](#)' initiative of the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Water Network by following a pilgrimage of water justice in Africa by using reflections, liturgies and other resources on the website. Lots more information [here](#).



## A Sustainable Life: Quaker Faith and Practice in the Renewal of Creation

[Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre](#) in Birmingham provides many interesting online courses. From Monday 11 September 2017 - Sunday 26 November 2017 they are running an online course called 'A Sustainable Life: Quaker Faith and Practice in the Renewal of Creation'.

Woodbrooke  
Quaker Study Centre

Sustainability cannot be 'one more thing' Friends are concerned and active about. A fresh look at Quaker faith and practice reveals that it's all about sustainability. This course reframes the Quaker tradition within the global horizon that defines our lives in the 21st century. Participants will discover a concern for balance with the earth among the earliest Friends, and way of life that can sustain us together in the work for a peaceful, just, and sustainable world. Learn more, and register [here](#).

## Operation Noah - Divest your church: new resource for local churches available now!

Does your church have investments in fossil fuel companies? Ever thought about moving your money somewhere that builds the world you want to live in? A new resource produced by [Operation Noah](#), 'Divest your church', explains how your local church can divest from fossil fuels and reinvest for a brighter future. Although written for a UK audience, this publication has much helpful information that everyone can use. Read more and download your copy [here](#).



## An Tairseach – Spring talks programme 2017

An Tairseach Dominican Farm and Ecology Centre has many fascinating talks and events coming up this season. Talks and events for those with a love of creation are as follows: A New Harmony – the Spirit, the Earth and the Human Soul; Biodiversity – the Extravagant Efflorescence of Life; New Cosmology Eight Week Programme; 'A Splendid Universal Communion' – Exploring Some Theological Implications; Celtic Spirituality - Sacred Times and Sacred Space. Something for everyone! Visit their [website](#) for more information.



## Earth Day - 22 April 2017

Earth Day 2017's Campaign is Environmental and Climate Literacy. The Earth Day website states: 'Education is the foundation for progress. We need to build a global citizenry fluent in the concepts of climate change and aware of its unprecedented threat to our planet. We need to empower everyone with the knowledge to inspire action in defence of environmental protection. Environmental and climate literacy is the engine not only for creating green voters and advancing environmental and climate laws and policies but also for accelerating green technologies and jobs.' Learn more and take part [here](#).



## ECI provides a prayer for use during Earth Hour Weekend 2017

Earth Hour is an opportunity for parishes and other faith groups to celebrate, pray and explore environmental concerns and how our faith calls us to address them. Did you know that your church's Earth Hour activities can count towards your parish's application for



an ECI Award? As a global campaign, it neatly intersects with Eco-Congregation Ireland's four award criteria - spiritual, practical, local community and global solidarity. Our current understanding of parish includes the whole bioregion with all that exists, lives and grows. Visit the [Eco-Congregation Ireland website](#) for ideas for next year's Earth Hour and to read the prayer.

## Eco challenge!

Easter is nearly here and throughout the world millions of Easter eggs will be purchased and shared. However, do we ever give some thought to where our chocolate comes from or the producers who work so hard, sometimes under terrible circumstances and injustice, so that we can enjoy our Easter eggs? Buying Fair-trade eggs where possible we can ensure that the producers receive more money for their cocoa. Fair-trade chocolate also has to guarantee that no trafficked labour has been used in the harvesting of the cocoa beans. Let's bite into Fair-trade Easter chocolate and the fact that the Fair-trade movement helps others to simply live will make it taste even sweeter!



[Traidcraft](#) is one company that sources products from farmers, growers and artisans across the world. At the heart of their company are the relationships they develop with trading partners, helping them to develop skills and build sustainable livelihoods through trade. You may have another organisation that you use for your fairly traded merchandise. This Easter let's support Fair-trade!

## Prayer for the Earth

God may we see today that all creation is precious to you,  
From the smallest microbe to the largest whale,  
You created all to live and flourish together,  
An awe inspiring interdependent ecological community of your love.

God may we listen as all creation sings of your glory,  
And the whole earth gives you praise.

May our minds turn to you in morning,  
And our hearts be filled with your love at night,  
May we sit in your presence and find life. Amen.



If you have any information or stories from your congregation, parish, meeting or Eco Congregation we would love to hear from you! Please forward your news to us at [info@ecocongregationireland.com](mailto:info@ecocongregationireland.com). Don't forget, if you hold an event or meeting, please take some photos and we can include them on our website and our bi-monthly newsletter. If you want your event promoted in our bi-monthly newsletter, please email us about 2 weeks before the next newsletter is due out to ensure inclusion. Our next newsletters will be sent out at the end of May, July, September and November.

With kindest regards and blessings of this Springtime,

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