



**Dear Friends of Eco-Congregation Ireland**

**Welcome to the Advent 2022 edition of the Eco-Congregation Ireland newsletter! The ECI Committee wishes everyone a peaceful and safe Advent and a blessed Christmas. 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](mailto:info@ecocongregationireland.com).**

## **Awards! Awards! St Joseph the Artisan Parish, Bonnybrook Receives their ECI GOLD Award!**

Margo Delaney sent us this inspiring report of the ceremony: On Sunday, December 4th, 2022, our parish was awarded an Eco-Congregation Ireland Gold Award. This award is conferred on any parish that strives actively to care for our common home. It requires evidence of consistent initiatives taken over a period of time. Over the past four years, the Care for the Earth ministry group have submitted four reports of their initiatives to ECI's independent assessor and received the Endeavour Certificate in 2019, the Awareness Certificate in 2020 and an Eco-Congregation Ireland Award in 2021. Now we rejoice in our identity as an Eco-Congregation Ireland Gold Award Parish!



It was a joy to welcome Archbishop Farrell and Fran Brady, Quaker representative on the ECI committee, to our liturgy on this joyous occasion. Before the liturgy began, symbols representing aspects of our work, were placed in the sacred space. Three children from our local area, who had won prizes at the recent Season of Creation art competition, led the procession.

Three members of the Care for the Earth ministry group carried forward

Bonnybrook Eco Aware Candle, the two key inspirational documents, Laudato Si' and Archbishop Farrell's The Cry of the Earth – the Cry of the Poor and the report submitted to Eco-Congregation Ireland, seeking recognition as an Eco-Congregation Ireland Gold Award parish. Parishioners were invited to take a bookmark in memory of the event and as a reminder to act responsibly towards all creation. The recognition of St Joseph the Artisan Parish as an Eco-Congregation Ireland Gold Award parish is not the end of the journey: as a popular song says, "We've only just begun"! Congratulations to all!



## **ECI Climate Justice Candles on the Move!**

Did you know that ECI has four Climate Justice Candles? One for each historic province of Ireland – Ulster, Munster, Connacht and Leinster! This means that we can get a candle to your church or parish when you need it. 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](mailto: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 in 2023 and hearing about how you use it to raise awareness of climate justice!

### **ECI Climate Justice Candle Visits ...**

#### **Donagh Group of Parishes**

Ethne McCord sent us this update: The Climate Justice candle had a busy few weeks in our midst as it followed us around the Harvests in the Donagh Group of Parishes (Church of Ireland), appearing first in St Sillian's, Tyholland for the first of our Harvest Evensongs, before travelling to St Muduain's, Errigal Truagh.



After this it went to St Mary's, Glennan (Catholic) for our Ecumenical Harvest led by Father Hubert who spoke in his homily of how our care for the environment is central to our shared vocation as Christians from all our different traditions and how our care for the world in which we live is a mark of how seriously we take our love for our neighbours in our interconnected word.

Donagh Community Choir led the music singing the appropriate piece entitled "When Your Father Made The World" from 'Hymns for a Caring World' by Peter Rose and Anne Conlon. This much loved hymn was commissioned by WWF-UK for a special environmental edition of BBC's Songs of Praise. After this, the Climate Justice candle was present at the Festival Harvest Evening Prayer in St Salvator's, Glaslough where the Minister for Social Protection Heather Humphreys was our special guest and the Church of Ireland Bishop of Clogher was preaching on the theme of nurturing and tending the seeds of faith to bring forth a harvest of faith, hope, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness and self-control as our farmers tend and nurture the seeds of the earth to bring forth the harvest.



The Climate Justice Candle's final destination was at Glennan Presbyterian Church for their celebration of Harvest Thanksgiving where they were joined for the occasion by many of their friends and neighbours. On so many levels our lives are intertwined with the lives of others, but none more so than in the home we share in this world which God has created for us to enjoy, cherish and care for. The more we care for the world in which we live, the more fully we live our lives in love for each other, recognising God's own image in every other human being and the presence of God through everything that God has made.

#### **Church of the Immaculate Conception, Kanturk, Co Cork**

Don McSweeney sent us this report: We had a Parish Mission in the parish (Kanturk & Lismire) facilitated by the Redemptorist Mission team from Limerick from 17th -23 September and each evening the mission team focused on a particular theme. We set aside one evening to focus on what we called 'Creation/Harvest'. [Here is a copy of the text that we used to introduce the candle.](#) A number of parishioners are very committed to the environmental and



climate justice programme of Pope Francis and very much wanted to promote this. They also decided, as this is a very rural community, to integrate this with a celebration of harvest, and worked on a three-part liturgy/ritual for the evening.



The liturgy was as follows: firstly, a telling of the creation story from Genesis, with children bringing up in procession symbols at the appropriate moment (sun, moon, birds, animals etc). Secondly, we had a harvest procession of local produce of the land, and thirdly, having celebrated creation, we focussed on the threat to creation and the concept of climate justice. Here we brought forward the climate justice candle in procession and had it lit and displayed on the sanctuary for the duration of the Mission, and remaining in place until the Feast of St Francis of Assisi on 4th October, the last day of the Season of Creation.

People were invited to call to the church to pray and reflect at the candle during that time. We had [a special prayer card printed](#) for parishioners with a picture of the candle on one side and a Laudato Si prayer from Pope Francis on the other side. On the left is a photo of artwork done by local school children which we had on display for the mission night.

### Christ Church Delgany

Thabi Madide sent us this report: We were delighted with the windfall arrival of the Climate Justice Candle in Christ Church Delgany. It arrived on the 9th of October 2022 instead of the 16th . That meant we had it among us on three consecutive Sundays during worship, one of which was our Thanksgiving Harvest Service. During this time we reflected on the beauty of God's creation, particularly the privilege and unique position that humankind hold as both works of God's creation and stewards of it. We also prayed for wisdom, courage and resolve to do better for the natural environment; and for our neighbours in developing countries, who are already paying the price for climate change problems caused by the entire world.



Each Sunday we shone a light on a specific climate change issue, consulted the scriptures for guidance, and shared ideas about practical action we can each take to reduce the impact of that particular issue. The three climate change issues we shone a light on are: water scarcity, food waste, and the direct link between consumerism (overconsumption) and climate injustice – the unequal distribution of the burden of climate change problems, where the poor and the disadvantaged carry a significantly larger portion of the burden. Beyond its visit, we will endeavour to keep the Climate Justice Candle aflame in our hearts, minds and actions in Christ Church Delgany – as individuals and as a congregation.

### Bunclody Union of Parishes

Rev Trevor Sargent sent us this update: St Fiacac's Church, Clonegal, hosts this Service of Light, as Bunclody Union of Parishes (Bunclody, Kildavin, Clonegal & Kilrush) unite to pray for climate justice, just ahead of the COP 27 climate policy talks in Egypt. We also sing hymns of praise to Jesus Christ, the Light of the World, to whom we pray for help with the miraculous social transformations needs to ensure simpler living so that the poor can simply live. To help with our worship, Eco-Congregation Ireland, an inclusive Christian charity, has produced prayers etc. as well as their famous Climate Justice Candle which we are hosting in Clonegal at present.



Some children have designed their own Climate Justice Candles which you can see in this video, in between the singing, prayers and readings. May Jesus Christ, the Light of the World, help you to pray for justice, to talk about the climate emergency and to strengthen you for actions which are needed to create a liveable future for our children. You can download [the liturgy](#) we used on the day, along with the [readings and an adapted hymn](#). View the video of the Climate Justice Candle Service from Clonegal here >> <https://youtu.be/YtIVY3H-XEM>.

### **Mercy International Centre, Dublin**

Máire Hearty Sent us this report: We were delighted to have the candle as part of our remembrance prayer service. It was the anniversary of the death of the foundress of the Sisters of Mercy: Catherine McAuley. She died on 11th November, 1841. We combined that commemoration with a prayer service remembering all those who have died in the past year. It was wonderful to have the Climate Justice Candle as another light shining hope in our lives and in our world.



### **St Patrick's Church, Culfeightrin Parish, North Antrim**

Fr Con Boyle PP & Eleanor Duff – Chair of Carey Community Care for Nature Group sent us this update: This small rural church in the barony of Carey in North Antrim, is one of the oldest churches in the Diocese of Down and Connor. We were delighted to be able to host the candle for the last two Sundays of the Church's year and during COP27 to shine a light on climate justice in our parish.



The themes in the liturgy from the Word of God on these Sundays enabled us to make the links to creation, culminating on the Solemnity of Jesus Christ, King of the Universe. The homilies and intercessory prayers focussed on our Christian response to the climate crisis, highlighting how our lifestyles impact on the people of the global South, who cause least harm to the environment and yet suffer most through floods, drought and famine.

The presence of the candle and other materials on the display boards within the church, caught the attention of the parishioners and the imagination of some of the younger members. Earlier this year the Carey Community Care for Nature Group was set up to help raise awareness and encourage local action.

### **Cork Methodist Churches**

Andrew Robinson sent us this update: As part of the Eco-Congregation Ireland Climate Justice Candle initiative, we highlighted environmental justice and faithfulness through the lighting of the candle. Find below the prayer we prayed as we lit the candle during worship over the past weeks.

#### **A Prayer for Our Earth**

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe,  
And in the smallest of your creatures.

You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.

Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty.

Fill us with peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one.

O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this

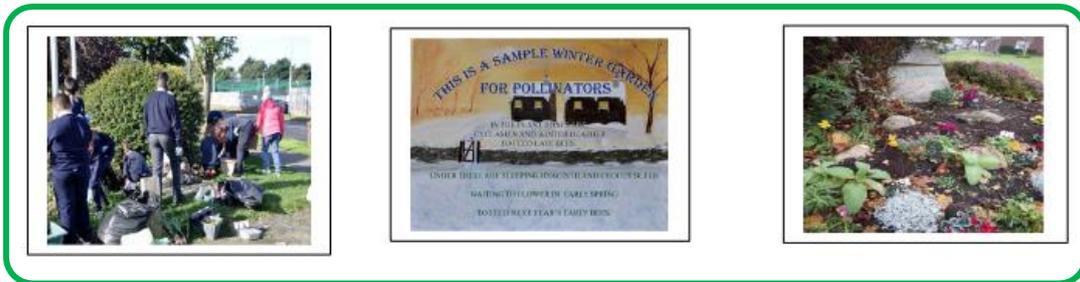


earth,  
so precious in your eyes.  
Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it,  
that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.  
Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and the earth. Teach us to  
discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation,  
to recognise that we are profoundly united with every creature  
as we journey towards your infinite light.  
We thank you for being with us each day.  
Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace. Amen

**ECI Awareness and Endeavour Certificates 2022: Holy Trinity Parish, Killiney** has received their Endeavour Certificate! Well done everyone!

## Latest News from ... Springfield Parish Cluster, Tallaght

Maureen Ferguson sent this latest news: Our Harvest Festival this year coincided with the 50th Anniversary of the Parish. In preparation for the celebrations, the Confirmation class from St Mark's School planted a 'winter garden' around Our Lady's statue at the church entrance.



The celebration of the Harvest Festival included sharing of talents, as well as sharing of food. During the weekend, services available locally had personnel on hand – not forgetting a 'stall' for climate justice at which we distributed booklets with hints for caring for the planet. After a meal of 'international food' on Sunday, the produce, which had been donated by local businesses, was shared. The blessing of pets was very popular. Because of the weather it had to be held in a grow tunnel of the Little Farm in Fettercairn.

Advent: A Care for the Earth leaflet was distributed in each of the four churches on the first Sunday of Advent. Considering the struggle people locally have to make ends meet we decided to encourage a 'meat-free day' each week, which would also be beneficial to the planet. And, following on from that, members of the group are exploring possibilities for a cookery class, for simple, cheap and tasty meals.

Our group viewed the film 'The Letter' from Laudato Si' Movement and decided to show it to the Confirmation classes in St Anne's School, Fettercairn. This is scheduled for 5th December, and the young people will be asked to follow up by writing a letter to the adults in the parish stating what they need for a healthy planet for their future. These letters will be displayed in the Church of the Incarnation under the heading; 'What the Children want for Christmas.



## St Joseph the Artisan Parish, Bonnybrook

Margo Delaney submitted this: Consultation on Santry River: Members of our group attended the consultation held by Dublin City Council representatives to create a greenway along the banks of the River Santry, helping to reinvigorate the river in the process.

The Climate Book Initiative: Donated to the Friends of the Earth campaign to put this book, curated by Greta Thunberg, into the hands of every government representative, to ensure they prioritized the implementation of the government Climate Action plan.

Collaboration with the local St Joseph's School (school grounds). Rejoiced to hear that the school's Litter Pickers Scheme is now being extended; pupils from designated classes take home the pickers to use in their local areas.



St Joseph the Artisan Parish ECI Caring for the Earth Gold Award ECI Gold Award: On December 4th, the parish gathered to celebrate not only the Sunday liturgy, led by Archbishop Dermot Farrell, but also the awarding of the Care for the Earth Gold Award to St Joseph the Artisan Parish. We created a bookmark to celebrate the Gold Award. This bookmarker was given to all parishioners who attended the mass on the 4th December.

At our parish Eucharist commemorating deceased family, relatives and friends, each family was invited to take a spring bulb to plant at home in memory of their loved one who had died. During the season of Advent, the parish community will be invited to a showing of The Letter, a film created by the Laudato Si' movement and based on Pope Francis's letter "to all people".

COP 27: All members of our Care for the Earth Ministry Group wrote, phoned, emailed the five TDs in our Dublin Bay North Constituency. Using the Friends of the Earth guide, we urged our elected our representatives to ensure our government leaders supported key issues on climate justice for our planet, especially as these affected the people and countries most affected by climate disaster. Joined the campaign in lobbying EU representatives not to designate nuclear and gas as "green fuels".

## Moviddy Union of Parishes

Harriet Pritchard submitted this latest news: Moviddy Union of Parishes is a small rural parish in Cork. We began our Eco-Congregation journey this past summer with our main focus on the environment of the three churches. Each church yard and the rectory garden had areas where the grass was left unmown resulting in some attractive areas of wildflowers- this is a strategy which we hope to develop further each year using seed collected from the flowers already growing and augmenting with native Irish wildflower seeds. A confirmation candidate and his mother were involved in the making and positioning of a large bug hotel during the summer. We added homemade bee hotels and nesting boxes during the autumn. All small steps, but steps on our environmental journey.



## Holy Trinity Parish, Killiney

Joan Millar sent us this update: We want to give the congregation an opportunity to feel really involved in our Eco-Congregation Ireland journey. We have put in place for each organisation in the parish a 'Thought/Prayer for the Month' to realise their contribution in making others aware of ecology, environment and climate change, and what they can do within the Parish to help.



In October, we started with Sheep Thrills, a community Textile group. Their thought was: "Dear Lord, we pray for all craft lovers that they may share their skills and talents to make garments for the homeless and less fortunate in Ireland and in the wider global community. We thank you Lord for our community group Sheep Thrills and pray we will be able to continue to help and support the less fortunate. Amen."

In November it was the turn of the Gardening Group: "There is a time for work and a time for rest. Our gardens are resting after a long and productive season. Nature is reminding us that we should follow their example and slow down, take time for reflection, and gather our strength for the seasons of growth and bloom to come. O God, we thank you for the sleep of winter, the rebirth of spring, the glory of summer, and the abundance of autumn. Help us through our gardening activities to protect Nature in all its forms during all seasons. Amen."

In December the Choir will contribute their prayer/thought. This initiative will continue all next year with our other organisations, including KWD-Diners Club, Flower Guild, Ladies Guild, Y Club (Men's Club), Silk (Ladies Group), Table Tennis Club, and Sunday Club. Other groups such as the Bible Study Group, and Service & Social group may also like to contribute. Individuals who are not in a Parish club can also contribute if they wish. By asking each organisation and individual parishioners to think about ecology by writing a prayer or thought about same, engages them with these critically important issues and hopefully unites everyone in Holy Trinity Killiney with the common purpose of caring for our environment and everything in it.

## Westport Eco-Congregation

Bríd McAuley submitted this report: As part of our Advent preparations Westport Eco-Congregation ran an extremely successful screening of 'The Letter' – a wonderful film about four voices that have gone unheard in global conversations who had been invited to an unprecedented dialogue with the Pope. Hailing from Senegal, the Amazon, India, and Hawaii, they bring perspective and solutions from the poor, the indigenous, the youth, and wildlife into a conversation with Pope Francis himself.



The documentary follows their journey to Rome and the extraordinary experiences that took place there, and is packed with powerfully moving personal stories alongside the latest information about the planetary crisis and the toll it's taking on nature and people. Westport Town Hall theatre audience participated in a lively Q & A session following the film with a distinguished panel of speakers including Dr Lorna Gold Chairperson of Laudato Si, Jane Mellet from Trocaire, Laura Dixon Climate Action Officer, Mayo County Council, Martin Palmer from FaithInvest and the award winning director of 'The Letter', Nicolas Browne. A recording of the panel discussion will be available on our YouTube channel in the coming days – check out [Westport Eco-Congregation YouTube](#).



## Blessington, Lacken and Vallemount

Carmel O'Neill sent us this latest news: There were a number of ceremonies and events held throughout the month of October to celebrate the Harvest. Deacon Gerry carried out the blessing of the stock in the townlands of Lacken. This annual blessing is much valued by the farming community who rely on sufficient rain and sunshine in the growing season for grass growth.



This was followed by the annual mass of Harvest Thanksgiving in Lacken church which this year drew a large crowd. The First Holy Communion children brought up symbols of the Harvest while some senior children sang Harvest hymns. Fr Richard read the blessing prayer for the farming community and blessed the congregation with holy water. All the produce donated was sold after mass and this raised €400. A donation of €200 was sent to Fr Alan Whelan of the Sacred Heart missionaries who is ministering in Sudan. His parish has been affected by drought where the people rely on rain between May and October for their staple food – groundnuts.



Deacon Gerry also visited Gaelscoil na Lochanna for their annual ceremony of Thanksgiving for the beauty of Creation and the blessings of harvest time. Throughout the month of October, the rosary was led each Thursday by pastoral worker Aine. On October 20th Aine offered the joyful mysteries of the Rosary for Care of the Earth. Meditations and reflections were read from the CAFOD Care of Creation Rosary. "We invoke the guidance of Our Lady in finding new ways of living with creation and of being global neighbours".

Progress is ongoing with the creation of a market garden at the rear of the parochial house Vallemount. The Men's Shed group have cleared the ground of weeds and bramble and are now ready to put in the raised beds and fill them with compost. Planning for the Wildflower garden at the rear of Lacken church has entered a new phase with the sowing of yellow rattle seed harvested from wildflower area in the village. The area was scarified, a layer of leaf mould scattered and the yellow rattle sown. The Tidy Village group have also been working on the next phase of planting bee pollinator bulbs along the verges entering the village. We look forward to a colourful display of allium, crocus, anemone and tulips in the Spring.

## Fr Tom's Garden

Submitted by Sean and Eileen O Rriordan: When, in 2014 Father Tom Kearney decided to establish a garden in the grounds of the SMA house in Wilton, he wanted to demonstrate that it could operate, in as organic and sustainable a manner as possible. This was not without its challenges, as the area available consisted of a patch of poor soil; but Father Tom set about the work with energy and enthusiasm and with the help of the gardeners began planting flowers, fruit trees and vegetables and supervised the construction of a poly-tunnel, which greatly improved the variety of plants that he could cultivate.



Ever eager to experiment, he even tried his hand at aquaponics. A shoal of rainbow trout reared in tanks were used to fertilise plants growing in gravel beds, the plants in turn cleaning the water before it was returned to the fish tanks. This allowed plants to be grown alongside the fish, while using less than 10% of the water required to grow similar plants in soil.

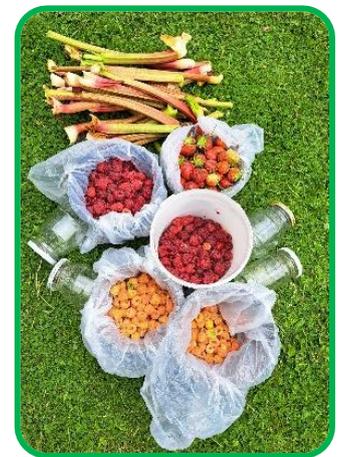
Upon Father Tom's sudden death in November 2021; several friends, parishioners and some members of the Wilton Justice Group that he had recruited to help him in his endeavours, decided that it would be a great pity to allow the garden to fall into decay and disuse.



So following a meeting with SMA Fathers in Wilton it was agreed to continue with the garden using a number of volunteers and some valuable involvement from a community employment worker. It was also decided that Father Tom's ethos of operating sustainably would be continued. And so, last Spring we set about preparing the ground and planting vegetables, flowers, wildflowers, and shrubs. With the help of a friendly beekeeper, two hives to improve the pollination of the plants have been added. We also carried out some much needed repairs to the polytunnel, necessitated by the visitations of a family of foxes the previous Summer!

Perhaps our greatest achievement has been in the rather unglamorous area of composting. We received some expert advice and managed to establish a new composting regime for the garden waste, and for kitchen waste from both the SMA house and the parish centre, which has significantly reduced the amount of material being sent to landfill.

We achieved a good harvest of vegetables and fruit, for both the SMA house and the customers of the parish centre. Some of the fruit was very successfully made into Jam, which sold well with the assistance of staff in the Parish Centre. This helped to cover some of the costs of maintaining the garden. Great social connections were formed through this project as well as sharing valuable gardening expertise and tips. One of the highlights of the year was a barbecue hosted by the SMA Fathers, on a beautiful Summer's night in August, in gratitude for the great work done by all the volunteers. During the year the garden was also an inspirational venue for two Prayer Services one them was ecumenical and marked the Season of Creation. The garden's main virtue is that it remains a beautiful and peaceful space in the heart of an otherwise built-up area. It is available to raise the spirits of anyone who visits it, for social gatherings, prayer and it is also a place where Fr Tom is fondly remembered.



## **Carrigaline Union of Parishes Encourages a Sustainable Christmas**

John Andrew sent us this: We are encouraging parishioners to opt for a more sustainable Christmas by including hints and tips in Intercession Prayers, back of the Pew Sheet and on the eco poster in the Parish Hall.

### **Ways to have a more sustainable Christmas**

Climate Change is front of mind for so many this winter. More of us than ever before are looking to make truly sustainable changes to protect the planet in our daily lives. Christmas is a brilliant time to be part of the movement towards a more sustainable future.



### **Eat with the seasons**

Most of our beloved vegetables harvest at Christmas, including potatoes, sprouts, carrots, leeks, and parsnip. Opting for Seasonal, Organic food means supporting Ireland's nature-friendly farmers, who grow using fewer pesticides, on Irish farms that support diverse wildlife and healthy, living soils.

### **Christmas Waste**

We might be doing some more online shopping this year which often has more Packaging than we want or need, please ensure to Recycle this by placing it clean, dry and loose into your recycle bin along with all of the other items such as rigid plastics, tins and cans. For some of the larger packaging you may have that will not fit in your bin at home it can be brought to your local civic amenity site.

## Reuse

By reusing more, we can reduce our environmental impact. When it comes to decorating, deck the halls with less, use what you have or buy second hand. You can create a festive atmosphere at home by foraging foliage and displaying natural decorations like pine cones, holly, fruits and nuts. There are also great reusable plastic alternatives to tinsel, like colourful paper bunting/decorations.

## Planting A Tree Gift

Planting a tree in someone's name is the perfect present. The planting of a tree to celebrate an occasion is an incredibly unique and thoughtful gift that will be more appreciated with every passing year. Trees planted will also provide a vast array of essential benefits to the local environment, helping to keep the air fresh and clean, improve the soil and provide food and shelter to various wildlife. There are a host of Irish companies offering this service in Ireland which can be searched for on the internet.

## Dundrum Methodist Church

Helen Shiel submitted this: Prompted by the climate and the cost of living crises, on November 5th the Eco-Congregation Team in Dundrum Methodist Church hosted an afternoon of information sessions and demonstrations on how to reduce our carbon footprint and cut down on costs. Advertised locally and on social media, including a full programme on local radio and a short interview on Spirit FM, we still had no real sense of what the turn out might be, but were thrilled when people started to pour in on the afternoon.



The foyer was buzzing as folk (including a "deputation" of about fourteen members of the Church of the Ascension of the Lord, Balally, with their Parish and former Parish Priests), were welcomed, guided to sessions, or stopped to watch the videos on Loss and Damage playing on a loop. So, what was on offer?

- A talk and demonstration on food waste and home composting sponsored by the local county council (DLRCOCO).
- A workshop on reupholstery, sponsored by The Rediscovery Centre Ballymun (National Centre for the Circular Economy).
- A talk on food planning, freezing and use of left overs and cookery demonstration given by a professional cook and caterer who is a member of the congregation.
- A talk and slide show on how to attack "stuff" and redistribute or repurpose it and, if all else fails, how to dispose of it ethically, given by a former church member – a psychologist turned professional declutterer.
- A stand with literature, energy saving tips and temperature cards supplied by CODEMA – a not for profit agency providing a wide range of energy and climate mitigation services), which one of our very eco savvy church members managed. He also demonstrated the Home Energy Kit with its five diagnostic tools, on loan from the local library.
- The Dundrum Climate Vigil (a group which stands and engages with by passers-by on Dundrum Main Street for an hour every Friday morning).

And, of course, there were refreshments. Although the event was free, a donations box yielded almost €400 in aid of Methodist World Development and Relief and Christian Aid. All the sessions were very well attended – the most popular being the Cooking and Decluttering ones and the evaluation sheets, for the most part, were very positive. We also asked for suggestions for future events and will aim to incorporate these in next year's event, which we have already pencilled in and will set about sourcing our experts in the very near future. We were thankful, relieved



and delighted the afternoon went so well and are very grateful to everyone, especially the volunteers from the church who helped in the kitchen and carpark, and to all who made it such a positive event.

### St Thomas Indian Orthodox Church, Dublin

The new Vicar Fr Dr Abraham Koshy Kunnumpurathu from Kerala, India, took charge in St Thomas Indian Orthodox Church, Dublin. Former vicar Rev Fr Anish John, Trustee Mr Shebin Mathew, Secretary Mr John Mathew, together received him at St Thomas and St George Church, Dublin 2.



A Christmas Eve celebration of St Thomas Indian Orthodox Church, Dublin "An Eve in the Crib" will be on 17th December 2022, 4pm at St Lorcan's Boy's National School Auditorium, Plamerstown, Dublin 20. Vicar Fr Dr Abraham Koshy Kunnumpurathu will preside the eve celebration and Rev Viji Varghese Eapen will deliver the Christmas message. All spiritual organisations like Sunday School, Youth Movement, Ladies fellowship will perform programmes related to Advent Season. Christmas Carol rounds started on 13th November and Christmas service will be on 24th

December, 6pm at St Thomas and St George Church, Dublin 2.

### St Anne's Parish, Shankill

Kathie Davey sent us this latest news: Some members continue to take part in demonstrations on Fridays outside the Dail supporting Fridays For Future, calling for Climate Justice and Climate Action. We were also represented at the Aviva Stadium on 6th October as part of AFRI's demonstration against the Business Fair taking place there that day. The spur for AFRI's action was the participation of Irish companies producing missile systems with sophisticated controls for the international arms trade.



Following the Season of Creation we set up a series of meetings to discuss Pope Francis' recent book "Let us Dream", which sets out, from a perspective of Catholic Social Teaching, his analysis of where the world is now and the roadmap ahead. The discussions were led by Hilda Geraghty, our organist, who earlier in the year had introduced us to Pierre Teilhard de Chardin in another series of meetings. About 20 members of the parish attended regularly.

On 16th October we celebrated the richness of Autumn with a Harvest Mass, with relevant hymns and prayers and a display at the altar. The fruit and veg. were later distributed to any who came forward! This was followed on 18th October by a parish screening of the film "The Letter , a message for our Earth" about the meeting of Pope Francis with five climate activists bringing him up to date the extent of damage to the world by Climate Change. Those he invited came from India, Ghana, The Amazon and the Pacific.

On Saturday 12th November we responded to a call from Stop Climate Chaos to take part in a demo at the Famine Memorial on the Dublin Quays for a photo shoot to raise awareness of the seriousness of the climate crisis and the urgent need for COP 27 to take meaningful action. We now look forward to receiving the Climate Justice Candle in the New Year.

### Parish of Our Lady of Good Counsel, Johnstown, Killiney

Geraldine Murphy submitted this: We established a group of 6 parishioners, led by horticulturist Máire, also a parishioner, to tend to the church gardens, keeping beauty and biodiversity in mind. We recently planted cyclamen, bright and cheerful for the Christmas season, and trimmed fuchsia bushes and agapanthus.



COP 27 – each morning, for its duration, we said Pope Francis ‘Prayer for the Earth’. On 14th Dec. we will show the Laudato Si documentary film ‘The Letter’ in our parish centre to which we have invited neighbouring parishes, friends, family and neighbours.

In January, 2023, we will place a ‘Climate Action Tree’ in our church, inviting all to write a promise to undertake some appropriate action and hang it on the tree. Homeless People in Dublin City – we are collecting non-perishable food for the Capuchin Day Centre, serving 800 plus meals daily and 1,200 weekly food parcels.

## Other News ...

### Partnership Between River Rectory and A Rocha UK

At the end of October, A Rocha UK, led by the Northern Ireland Manager Bertie Stirling, launched its latest ‘Partner in Action’, [The River Rectory](#) in Northern Ireland near Omagh. Owned and managed by the Pomeroy family, the site is an incredible mixture of six acres of woodland, food-growing areas, orchards and wet grassland. To celebrate the official partnership, Sarah-Jayne and Terry (parents) took Bertie and other guests on a guided tour of the site, highlighting the significant amount of drainage and ground preparation works over the previous two years.



Sarah-Jayne, who has recently gained her new postgraduate certificate in wildlife and conservation management, will help the family to plan a strategy for nature on the site in years to come. Their vision is to welcome both nature and the broader community in a season of ecological crises. A Rocha UK is delighted to welcome this amazing family to our growing network! A Rocha UK has just under 40 [Partners in Action](#) throughout the UK.

### “Dying to Live” Creation Spirituality Retreat at Drumalis

“Dying to Live” Creation Spirituality retreat at Drumalis, Sunday, 24 - Thursday, 28 July 2022 with Sr Margaret Rose McSparran CP, Sr Anne Harnett CP, Sr Nellie McLaughlin RSM and Sr Coirle McCarthy RSM – for further details, please [click here](#).



### Celebration of Winter Solstice at An Tairseach

Join the An Tairseach community on Wednesday 21st December 2022, 16:00 to 17:30 to celebrate the Winter Solstice – a time in the northern hemisphere when earth journeys furthest from the sun and darkness extends over the daylight. The solstice summons us to reflect on the quality of balance in our own lives as earth rests from productivity, and seeds of new life gestate in the darkness of her womb. As the Winter solstice also celebrates the planet’s first slow turn toward increasing daylight, we welcome the return of the sun as we embrace the enriching aspects of winter’s darkness. Join us to celebrate through prayer and ritual. Refreshments will be served. This event is free of charge. For more information and to book these events, please check out their website: <https://antairseach.ie/events/events-calendar>



## Climate Stewards' Carbon calculator for Individuals and 360 Carbon for Churches

This can be found at: [Offset - Climate Stewards](#). Here's the calculated amounts required to offset travelling from Belfast to London -

... as a foot passenger by ferry and rail via Liverpool - £0.40 one way

... by plane from Belfast City to Heathrow - £2.75 one way



This is with CO<sub>2</sub> being costed at £20/tonne. This blog by Climate Stewards Director, Caroline Pomeroy, is helpful in giving some details about how offsetting works: [Ice-cream and carbon offsets - Climate Stewards](#)

## Theology, Church and Farming at Jubilee Farm

Submitted by Dr Matthew N. Williams, Founding Board Member, Jubilee Farm: On 19th November, Jubilee Farm partnered with Tearfund to run a "Consultation on Theology, Church and Farming". It was fantastic to have twenty people turn up for the day, including experienced practitioners from a variety of farming, church and theological education contexts from all across the island of Ireland (see photo attached, courtesy of Michael Jemphrey).



The event had two main parts: the morning session at 1st Larne Presbyterian included an introductory roundtable, presentations from myself and Philip Powell (Tearfund) and lunch. The afternoon session included a guided tour of Jubilee Farm with talking points along the way and a final discussion about the potential ways forward for developing the programme. We had four main questions that we hoped to answer, with a very brief synopsis following:

1. What challenges face agriculture on the island of Ireland from a practical and theological point of view? There are multiple and varied challenges, with the most notable being the increasing social marginalisation of farming as a vocation and the economic pressure to farm in a way that is detrimental to people and environment.
2. How might Tearfund's "Abundant Community Theology" report provide a helpful basis for addressing some of these challenges? The call to move from a 'theology of scarcity' to a 'theology of abundance' is a promising way to combat the individualistic and materialistic mindset that underlies several of the challenges facing agriculture.
3. Are there ways in which farm-based theological education can help equip the Church to address this situation? Three main points of focus were suggested for either formal or informal courses: to target agricultural practitioners, church members (including leaders) and those involved in theological education (as lecturers and students).
4. Would there be a network of stakeholders willing to support this agenda going forward? Yes – which is the most encouraging thing! For more information, please email [matt.williams@jubilee.coop](mailto:matt.williams@jubilee.coop)

## ECEN Assembly 2023

European Christian Environmental Network's Enabling team adopted the decision to hold the next ECEN Assembly in 2023. After two online Assemblies, this will be the first face-to-face Assembly after the 2018 conference in Katowice. The event will take place from 31 August – 3 September in Roskilde (Denmark), under the title Every part of creation matters.



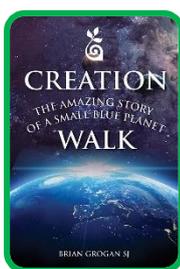
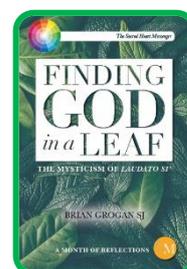
The Assembly will offer an opportunity to discuss the key concerns of rapidly developing eco-theology, assess developments related to key EU policy-shaping on a response to climate change and outline a vision of a sustainable future in Europe, as is formulated in the European Green Deal. At the same time, the Assembly will be an opportunity for discussion on the future of ECEN and the timing of the launch of the Churches Contributing to a Sustainable Future 2023 – 2030 project, a project that outlines the future of ECEN for the next period. A significant moment in the Assembly will be the 1 September launch of the Season of Creation 2023 as part of the Assembly programme.

The Assembly is an open event, all interested parties are invited. ECEN especially invites colleagues and friends engaged in works on care for creation in Denmark and neighbouring countries for participation in the Assembly. More information on the programme of the Assembly, as well as other details, will be made available in the coming weeks. All information can be found here >> <https://www.ecen.org/>.

## Publications and Resources

### Messenger Publications Eco Titles 2022

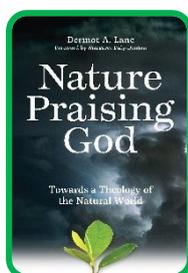
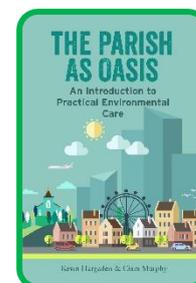
As part of their commitment to one of the four Jesuit Universal Apostolic Preferences announced in 2019, To collaborate in care for our common home, Messenger Publications continue to include books on different aspects of caring for our common home among its new titles. 2022 saw the reprint of Brian Grogan SJ's hugely-popular **Finding God in a Leaf**. This best-selling booklet serves as a daily invitation to observe in physical world around us God's invitation to love and care for all God's creation. Finding God in a Leaf [can be ordered here](#).



And don't forget Brian's recently-published **Creation Walk: The Amazing Story of a Small Blue Planet**. This inspiring book reveals the divine orchestration of the Creation story in a dramatic, fresh and appealing way, merging the insights of science with the wisdom of scripture. The Irish Catholic says that it's 'packed with information and insights'. And The Methodist Recorder says it is 'strongly commended as a means for Christians to explore the cosmological context... of vital issues'. Creation Walk [is available here](#).

### **The Parish As Oasis: An Introduction to Practical Environmental Care** by

Kevin Hargaden and Ciara Murphy is an exciting new book, just published, that picks up on the theme of 'prayer in action', mentioned by Pope Francis in his 2015 encyclical Laudato Si'. The book offers a practical and accessible introduction to how local churches can contribute in concrete ways to healing the environmental crisis. It presents a practical array of experiments and actions that congregations can undertake that can make a tangible impact in caring for our common home. While hands-on, with real-world examples, the book also plants these initiatives within a coherent eco-theology. The Parish As Oasis is [available to order here](#).



**Nature Praising God: Towards a Theology of the Natural World** by internationally-respected theologian Dermot A. Lane takes a more theoretical approach to our relationship with God through our treatment of the natural world. Lane says that we need to flip the way we regard nature—traditionally as a resource for human needs—and embrace a new way of praising God through an appreciation of and care for the myriad of life forms on earth. This book has been widely acclaimed and has received many glowing reviews. Nature Praising God is [available to order here](#)

### **Church Investment in Climate Solutions: Financing a Liveable Future – A New Report from Operation Noah**

Churches have a vital role to play in accelerating the transition to net zero emissions, according to '[Church Investment in Climate Solutions: Financing a Liveable Future](#)' – a



new report from Operation Noah relevant to climate campaigners and faith investors. The UN estimates that religious institutions manage a combined \$3 trillion (£2.5 trillion) of investments globally. Faith institutions invest not only for financial returns, but also to live out their ethics and values. As this new report recognises, some UK faith groups such as the Quakers in Britain, the Church of Ireland, the Diocese of Truro and the Church of England's Church Commissioners for England are now doing just that by investing in climate solutions.

The report reiterates the finding that if the world were to redirect the \$570 billion of annual planned oil and gas investments towards renewables, this could fully finance wind and solar expansion in line with the 1.5°C goal of the Paris Agreement – a target that, while still possible, is quickly slipping away as earlier this month the UN warned that the world is currently headed for a catastrophic 2.8°C rise in average temperatures if emissions do not begin to fall rapidly.

## UN Climate Change Conference – COP27: Statements and Initiatives from the Churches and Christian Organisations

Churches Together in Britain and Ireland has provided a summary of statements and initiatives from the churches and Christian organisations in the run-up to, during and after the conference. [Visit their website to learn more.](#)



## God saw it was good...

To help you and your church reflect on and pray about biodiversity, take a look at Elizabeth Perry's '[Visual Guide](#)'. It's a series of beautiful powerpoints and videos that share the splendour of creation and call us to action to preserve and protect it, shared on the [Anglican Alliance website](#).



## Tips for a Green Christmas

Looking for ways to celebrate Christ's birth in a way that cares for the earth? There are a range of helpful tips available from [A Rocha](#), the [World Wildlife Fund](#), and [Friends of the Earth](#).



## All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2022: Annual Review

Dr Úna FitzPatrick, Project Manager with the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan has circulated the AIPP 2022 Annual Review. [You can download it here.](#) [You can download the Summary Infographic here.](#)

## Eco Notes for Advent

### Rev Trevor Sargent's Ecological Notes for Advent 2022: Growing Christmas Trees Teaches Patience, a Love of Nature – and, Points Us to God!

There are many stories about how the custom of bringing an evergreen tree for Christmas into our homes and churches first began.



## THE FIRST CHRISTMAS TREE

One good story relates to St Boniface who was martyred in the year 754. He was a Benedictine monk, who was a helper of the aged St Willibrord, Apostle of Frisia, (who spent 12 years in our own diocese in Leighlin). One cold December night, Boniface was walking through a wood and came across a group of people about to kill a boy who they had tied to an oak tree as a ritual sacrifice. Boniface was horrified. In a rage he rescued the boy, took an axe and chopped down the oak tree.

When the tree crashed down, Boniface noticed, growing among its roots, a small fir tree. From now on, 'Boniface told them, 'this tree will be a holy emblem. It is a sign of peace, for we build our homes from its wood; it is a sign of life eternal, for its leaves are always green; and, because it points to heaven, it will be a symbol of the Christ-child, who points us towards our loving heavenly Father'.

## HOW CHRISTMAS TREE GROWING BEGAN IN IRELAND

Wexford man, Nicholas Sweetman, Chairperson of the of Irish Forest Owners organisation, explained that Christmas trees only became popular in Ireland from the 1940's. These were often the young trees taken as thinnings from Norway Spruce commercial forestry. Nowadays, about 200,000 Irish grown Christmas trees are exported annually to the U.K., France and Germany.



## ENJOYING A VISIT TO A CHRISTMAS TREE FARM

I recently visited Tommy Kidd at his very welcoming, child friendly, Christmas Tree Farm. Tommy has over 12 acres planted with trees including Korean Fir, Noble Fir, Scots Pine, Nordmann Fir, Norway Spruce, Lodgepole Pine, Douglas Fir, as well as oak and beech. His beautiful site overlooks the Slaney Valley and the Blackstairs Mountains, just outside the town of Bunclody, Co. Wexford.\*

Tommy and his family have worked hard to make the visitor experience an enjoyable one, providing a 1 km forest walk, with quirky informative notices, as well as benches, a scenic sheltered viewing point as well as bird and bat boxes.

## WHAT ARE THE MOST POPULAR CHRISTMAS TREES?

About two-thirds of Christmas trees bought from Tommy are Noble Fir, with most others being Nordmann Fir, a popular Christmas tree on mainland Europe.

## HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO GROW A CHRISTMAS TREE?

Young trees are planted out when they are a foot high. They grow on for 8 to 10 years. Trees are generally cut when they are 7 to 10 feet high, depending on the customer's requirements.

## DO THE TREES REQUIRE MUCH ATTENTION WHEN THEY ARE GROWING?

Initially, undergrowth has to be controlled. Some growers use weedkiller, others graze the undergrowth with Shropshire sheep which conveniently don't nibble young fir trees! Some graze around their trees with geese. Then trees need encouragement to put on denser growth. This means pruning to ensure a good shape. If the girth is becoming too wide, then side buds are pinched out.

## HOW DO YOU REPLANT AFTER TREES ARE CUT?

Young fir trees can generally be planted just beside an old stump. Eventually the stump rots away to return organic matter to the soil. Growing trees soak up carbon dioxide. The soil is also a valuable carbon store if we can avoid turning it over.

## DOES THE CHRISTMAS TREE FARM SUPPORT MUCH BIODIVERSITY?

Aside from good soil life, the forest at Ballyrankin has its resident population of rabbits and foxes. Bats also forage among the trees and along the nearby Slaney River, and we hear and see many species of birds, bees and butterflies.



## WHAT SHOULD WE DO WITH OUR CHRISTMAS TREES AFTER CHRISTMAS?

Each local authority provides collection points for post-Christmas trees which are then chipped for mulch. Alternatively, the branches can be removed and used to 'carpet' muddy footpaths. The remaining trunk can then be sawed up as firewood and the resulting ash added to the compost heap.

## BEANNACHTAÍ NA NOLLAG – PEACE AND GOODWILL TO ALL GOD'S CREATION!

\*Kidd's Christmas Farm, Ballyrankin, Bunclody, Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford, Y21 KX 71. Ph: 087 1305353.  
[Follow on Facebook.](#)

## Prayers/Reflections for the Earth

### A Reflection by Fr Hugh O'Donnell – Earth's Begging Bowl

The cartoon read, 'I've spent most of my life playing golf. The rest I've wasted.'

I'm looking at the leaves building into mounds around the trees. It started weeks ago. Now, in November, it's raining leaves. We are blessed with such notice of our (super) natural world. Trees know when it's time to hibernate. The mounting leaves suggest a time for quietness and a chance to breathe. Another season advances with its gift and threat.

leaf fall –  
Earth's begging bowl  
Overflows



'Fortune favours the fast', advertises a broadband company. We need to speed up our communication. We need to speed up our lives. We have so much to do and so little time! Yet we have everything we need to be alive except the awareness that we are alive. On a particular date we emerged from our mother's womb. Another date will sweep us out of time. Meanwhile, Christ's coming reminds us that the light of our true selves shines in us. On a moving train the landscape blurs. We don't quite know where we are until the next station slows us down. Winter is for taking stock, for checking our pulse – a season to be savoured over cups of tea and conversation; in warmer clothes; in longer silences with the whole of bowed-down creation before the One who is our light.

### Eco-Spirituality by Fran Brady

Fran Brady, Quaker representative on the ECI committee, wrote this article: Throughout history the general consensus among Christians was that humans had the right to use nature to meet their own needs. The doctrine of imago dei, a likeness of God, reinforced the idea that humankind was superior to the rest of creation.

Many religions and spiritual traditions are now becoming aware of the sacredness of the Earth and all of nature. They have become active in the environmental movement through carrying out practical actions and raising awareness among their members about the necessity to protect the planet. Religions are well placed to nurture environmental consciousness and to show concern for ecological issues. They can provide guidance on how to work on environmental causes and raise awareness regarding the sacred value of nature.



Eco-Spirituality pertains to our connectedness to the Earth and to our consciousness regarding the presence of God, or other Ultimate Reality, in all of creation. It is based on a belief in the blessed nature of

Earth with all its living creatures and the habitats and bounty that sustain all, including humankind. The awareness of Sacred Earth needs to be kept alive, and celebrated with gratitude every day, not only on Earth Day. Traditional eco-spirituality has been practised by indigenous peoples since the beginning. Modern eco-spirituality includes and transcends traditional eco-spirituality. Bron Taylor, who coined the terms “dark green religion” or “dark green spirituality”, defined eco-spirituality as a conviction that “nature is sacred, has intrinsic value, and is therefore due reverent care.”

The roots of environmentally motivated spirituality go back centuries. Eight hundred years ago, St Francis of Assisi expressed his devotion to God through his love for all of God’s creation. [Pierre Teilhard de Chardin](#), a French Jesuit, born in 1881, was an advocate of revering this wonderful planet. He spoke of [divinity](#) within every particle of life and believed that humanity, rather than being at the centre of the universe, is part of a divine whole. His theology was rejected by the Vatican at the time. [Pierre Teilhard de Chardin](#) was posthumously recognised by [Pope Benedict XVI](#), and his teachings cited by [Pope Francis](#) in the 2015 encyclical, [Laudato si’](#). Pope Francis, who chose to be named after St. Francis Assisi, is taking leadership in this regard with his calls to care for “our common home”.

[Thomas Berry](#), an American priest known as a ‘geologist’ lived between 1914 and 2009. His books included: Dream of the Earth, the Universe Story (with Brian Swinne), and Evening Thoughts: Reflection on the Earth as Sacred Community, published when he was ninety-two. An activist in the Spiritual Ecology Movement, he rejected anthropocentrism and supported the need for a sense of wonder and reverence for the natural world, for an awareness of the sacred within creation.

Poets, philosophers, prophets and writers, perhaps unknowingly, fostered the precepts of eco-spirituality. Henry David Thoreau, a nineteenth century American naturalist, poet, philosopher and transcendentalist, wrote Walden, a reflection upon simple living in natural surroundings, Another ecological thinker from the same century was John Muir, a Scottish mountaineer and religious prophet, whose writings became a guide into nature for many people. Walking among the Plants and Animals helps to increase our spiritual connection to the natural world. Imagine the Earth as a Great Spirit. Poet, novelist, and environmentalist Wendell Berry’s contended that to cherish what remains of the Earth and to foster its renewal is our only legitimate hope of survival. Spiritually Motivated Environmentalism is embraced by those whose experiences transcend the scientific or material environment. Contemporaries in this field include Wendell Berry, Matthew Fox, Satish Kumar, Brian Swinne, Stephanie Kaza among many others.

[Ultimate Reality](#), for some, God, for others, Spirit, Buddha, and/or the Divine, is not just the source of creation but also a part of creation. Essential to spiritual ecology is an understanding of the interdependence and unity of the entire cosmos. We need to cultivate a way of life that is in harmony with the Earth as a living whole.



With kindest regards,

**Karen Nicholson**  
Administrative Officer

[info@ecocongregationireland.com](mailto:info@ecocongregationireland.com)  
+353 (0) 89 974 0744

**Canon Andrew Orr**  
Chair and Church of Ireland representative

[andreworr1234@gmail.com](mailto:andreworr1234@gmail.com)  
+353 (0) 87 419 6051

**Catherine Brennan SSL**  
Roman Catholic representative

[catherinebrennanssl38@gmail.com](mailto:catherinebrennanssl38@gmail.com)  
+353 (0) 87 259 9071

**Rev Allen Sleith**

Presbyterian representative

[allen.sleith@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:allen.sleith@tiscali.co.uk)

+ 44 (0) 7801273354

**Fran Brady**

Religious Society of Friends representative

[franbradywritings@gmail.com](mailto:franbradywritings@gmail.com)

+353 (0) 86 373 0396

**Rev Trevor Sargent**

Church of Ireland representative

[sargentt@tcd.ie](mailto:sargentt@tcd.ie)

+353 (0) 87 254 7836