

Eco Congregation Notes

Season of Creation 2024

On Sunday our Communion Service will celebrate Season of Creation. This is not something we have observed previously as it comes close to when we traditionally mark Harvest. There is a slightly different emphasis - Season of Creation focuses on our responsibility of caring and stewardship, while a Harvest celebration may be more an expression of gratitude. Both have a place in our growing commitment as an Eco Congregation.

Season of Creation originated in 1989 when Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I proclaimed 1 September as a day of prayer for creation. The World Council of Churches was instrumental in making the special time a season, extending the celebration from 1 September until 4 October. Following the leadership of Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I and the WCC, Christians worldwide have embraced the season as part of their annual calendar. Activities are coordinated by an ecumenical steering committee, which includes representation from the World Methodist Council, and resources are provided via the website seasonofcreation.org

This year's theme is **'To Hope and Act with Creation'** and we are reminded that:

'Amid the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, many are beginning to despair and suffer from eco-anxiety. As people of faith, we are called to lift the hope inspired by our faith, the hope of the resurrection. This is not a hope without action but one embodied in concrete actions of prayer and preaching, service and solidarity.'

Rev Sikawu, Central Methodist Church, Cape Town, provides this prayer, among many others from across the ecumenical fellowship :

Blessed be the name of God, God of our ancestors, God of the generations yet to come.

Blessed be the Creating God, Redeeming Son and the Sustaining Spirit.

As we gather, we hear the groans of Creation and the cries of our sisters and brothers. As we gather, we bring our seeds of hope, the firstfruits of the Spirit.



SEASON OF CREATION

Launch of Dublin Climate Action Week

On Monday, Centenary, along with the 50 groups who have been awarded funding for Climate Action Projects were invited to the launch of Dublin Climate Action Week, organised by the four Dublin local authorities. Ross Hinds and I represented the Church. There were just two other churches from the Dublin City Council area who received funding.

The Lord Mayor welcomed the volunteers from the various projects and was positive about progress in climate action in the city. He mentioned in particular the Transport Plan, and flood relief in the Poddle Flood Alleviation Scheme. Minister Eamon Ryan struck a note of urgency about the terrifying temperature leaps globally, the fact that Dublin is one of the most car dependent cities in the EU, and about the extended timelines in the planning process. He was optimistic about projects like district heating, the fact that half a billion items have been recycled through the Deposit Return Scheme and the system change that can come through community action.

The examples of community action were fascinating. We heard from the Kingfisher Project, the leader of which pointed out that the 2 million private gardens in Dublin occupy the equivalent of 205 Phoenix Parks. The project aims to encourage garden owners throughout the city to join a network, supported by an educational digital hub on waste ground in Kimmage, to learn about sustainability and commit to grow food and combat biodiversity loss. We also heard about a travelling repair shop for electricals, furniture and anything about to be discarded, about a GAA club with a beehive on the roof, a reusable party kit and a heartening account of a Recovery Through Nature project at Coolmine Therapeutic Community. Many other groups were installing solar panels and working on energy saving projects similar to our own at Centenary. We were among the largest recipients of funding, only eleven of the 50 projects received over €50,000.

There are lots of interesting events going on as part of Climate Action Week. Details on <https://dublinclimatechange.codema.ie/climate-action-week/> I would love to go to the Eat the Streets Festival on Saturday 14th September in Richmond Barracks <https://www.eatthestreets.ie/festival>. Unfortunately I have to be in Galway so I will eat the blackberries, if there are any left!

Maureen Rowan



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Blackberry Picking



In these lines inspired by Exodus 3: 1-5, Elizabeth Barrett Browning seems to dismiss those ‘plucking blackberries’ as careless and unaware of the presence of the holy:

*“Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God:
But only he who sees, takes off his shoes;
The rest sit round it, and pluck blackberries,
And daub their natural faces unaware
More and more, from the first similitude.” **

This was not the experience of ‘plucking blackberries’ in Galway last Sunday. When the sun finally came out after the downpours of the previous day and a summer that had 73 rain days in the area, it felt like standing on holy ground. All was not lost in the chaos caused by the weakening jet streams. The blackberries were late, not as plump and juicy as last year, but the crop had not failed and it:

*“Sent us out with milk cans, pea tins, jam-pots
Where briars scratched and wet grass bleached our boots.
Round hayfields, cornfields and potato-drills
We trekked and picked until the cans were full,”***

**From Aurora Leigh (1856)*

*** From Blackberry Picking by Seamus Heaney*