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GREENING THE CHURCH

NENAGH UNION UNDERTAKES ENERGY AUDIT

Recommendations for Select Vestry

Five parishioners from Nenagh Union, in the Diocese of Killaloe were recently appointed to undertake an energy audit of their three churches.

They have now produced a detailed report for their Select Vestry to consider. Recording energy uses in each church, the committee has researched more economical and environmentally-friendly alternative energy sources and uses.

The report finally makes recommendations for the union of parishes to follow, on a per church basis.

This first-class report clearly indicates the enthusiasm and concern of the people to take stewardship of the environment seriously, and outlines their determination to "make a difference."

It makes fascinating reading, and sets up Nenagh Union as a worthy example of good environmental practice at grass roots level. *Well done, Nenagh Union! Keep up the good work!*



Members of the Nenagh Union energy audit committee (left to right): Jack Bayly, Patrick Rowley-Brook, Dennis Croft, Caleb Clarke (Baden Powell was unable to make the photo-call).

CHURCH BELLS SOUND ALARM ON GLOBAL WARMING

Parish churches in Ireland rang their bells on Saturday 8 December as a warning about global warming on the Global Day of Action on Climate Change.

In doing so, the Church of Ireland contributed to an international day of protest by many churches and other organizations, which coincided with the Bali talks on climate change.

The aim of the action was to draw the matter to the attention of local politicians and call on them to do more about it. One of the many churches which took part in the bell-ringing was St John's Parish Church in Moira, where sexton and bell-ringer Colin Morwood sounded the alarm *(see photo)*.

The plain fact of the matter is that the world must warm by no more than 2 degrees centigrade if mankind is continue to live here with any level of comfort and safety.



KIDS CREATE FLOWERBED IN DUBLIN CHURCHYARD

Members of the Sunday Club at Whitechurch (Diocese of Dublin) have just made themselves a flowerbed in the church grounds. Each group within the Sunday Club has been given responsibility for their own section of the bed.

This is an excellent idea, as it teaches the children a lot about the whole principle of stewardship, and it helps adult parishioners to realize that even something as simple as this is an important contribution to make.

The Whitechurch parishioners are fairly new to environmental matters, but they're making rapid progress!



Whitechurch kids at their new flowerbed

AN INTERESTING LITTLE BOOK…



"Thinking Biblically about Climate Change" by Richard Bull, published by Scripture Union, 2007.

In this booklet the author outlines the key facts about climate change and encourages readers to explore and develop a distinctly biblical perspective on this crucial issue.

This is an easy-to-read booklet, and we think it could be used for group discussion as well as by individuals.

A thirty-two page booklet, it certainly isn't expensive—we bought our copy in the Good Book Shop in Belfast for £3.99!

ISBN 978 1 84427 279 2

Are you sure that the only way to get rid of that last piece of Christmas junk is to send it to landfill?



Almost anything can be recycled nowadays!

Have a long, hard think about it!

Have you had a look at the website of ECO-CONGREGATION IRELAND? Here is a site full of practical help in making the link between the environment and your faith. There are all sorts of ideas here—and they're all free! Take a look!

www.ecocongregationireland.org

WHAT DO *YOU* THINK ABOUT CARBON OFFSETTING?



Carbon offsetting is becoming popular nowadays—what do YOU think of it?

You know what it is, don't you? It means getting involved in activities that will remove carbon dioxide from the environment in response to the carbon dioxide you've produced doing something else.

For example, you might take a plane flight halfway across the globe, producing an amazing amount of carbon dioxide; so to ease your conscience you come home and plant two or three trees, believing that this will counteract the damage you've done.

Well, maybe a few new trees would be better than no new trees at all, but surely carbon offsetting can never be an excuse to keep polluting our environment—and I'd certainly like to see some statistics about the carbon dioxide balance between a plane flight and planting a few trees.

For a start, planes pollute the atmosphere immediately, while trees will be growing for quite a while before they begin to absorb similar amounts of carbon dioxide!

Am I suggesting we shouldn't fly any more? No, of course not—but I am suggesting that we consider very carefully how often we should fly. This is only one very common example, of course—there are lots of others.

You see, we still don't seem to be taking the problem of global warming seriously enough. Oh, we're certainly more aware of it—and probably more worried about it; but we're still looking for easy ways out—we want a solution, but how far are we prepared to put ourselves out to get one? Not far enough, I suspect!

Carbon offsetting is not the answer to the environmentalist's prayer—so let's not be hypocritical like the Pharisees of old!

So yes, let's continue to carbon offset as much as possible, but let's not con ourselves into seeing it as a means of absolution for our sins of pollution.

A cynic

"...surely carbon offsetting can never be an excuse to keep polluting our environment."

"Carbon offsetting is not the answer to the environmentalist's prayer."

Would anyone like to respond to this outburst? Just e-mail us your reply, or comment on any other environmental matter you like. We can learn a lot from each other!

DID YOU GET A NEW MOBILE PHONE FOR CHRISTMAS? WANT TO GET RID OF THE OLD ONE? READ THIS:



Did you get a new mobile phone for Christmas? Then why not recycle your old mobile phone and get paid up to £150 for doing it?

Recycle your mobile phone, help to save the planet, and make some cash, is the message being delivered by a company called Mazuma.

Mazuma have set up a website which makes it quick and easy to recycle your mobile phone online. All you do is enter the mobile phone make and model that you want to recycle into their search box, and then enter your personal details. They then send you a free-post envelope, which you pop you mobile for recycling into (they don't need the charger) and in the post.

Once they have received your mobile phone, they will despatch a cheque to you for your recycled mobile. It's as easy as that!

Take a look at www.mazumamobile.com

and see if you could benefit from this interesting offer.

So, has "Greening the Church" inspired you or your parish to become more involved in any aspect of environmental stewardship?

Why not drop us an e-mail and let us know.

You'll find contact details at the bottom of the red strip on page one.



What about Al Gore's film?

Is it good or bad, true or false?
Is it helpful to environmentalists, or is it a disaster?
Is it really worth watching, or worthwhile showing to the parish?
Let's hear from someone who has seen it!

David Humphries has seen it and has used it in his parish.
Here's what he thinks...

How and where did you show the film?
I used a local primary school which had recently upgraded its facilities. I gave a short introduction, we watched the film, there was much discussion afterwards—none of it planned.
I would point out that it was not an isolated event, but that my parishioners are actively involved in environmental stewardship as part of their ministry.
However, I think that for parishes looking for a way into this whole area, the film would be a good place to start.

Where can the film be purchased?
I would think you could probably get it from any good DVD shop. I purchased mine on line from AMAZON.

You may require a licence to show the film—we recommend that you check your own government regulations.

As a child I used to watch the Royal British Institute Christmas Lecture each year on television. A renowned scientist would conduct experiments, using the latest technology.

It is this format that is used by Al Gore in his "crusade" to capture our hearts and minds for the cause of saving the planet from the effects of Global Warming—and in my opinion, it works!

In the film, Gore comes across as I have never seen him before—as an almost charismatic figure with a genuine concern for what is happening to the earth.

I can't comment on the scientific data in the film, but Gore makes his presentation in an easy-to-understand fashion, and his arguments can be followed without difficulty.

Believe it or not, he also manages to throw in some humour—but this is very well balanced, and the overall effect of the film for most of my parishioners who saw it was at the least stunning, and at most, frightening.

There's no doubt that the film could only have been made by a good communicator, and Gore's skills as a politician certainly come to the fore.

There is perhaps a tiny amount of political point-scoring—but this, of course, refers to the American system, and in no way does it interfere with its impact on Irish viewers.

Despite criticism in some quarters, I believe this to be a thought-provoking film, made by a genuinely concerned individual, who has openly used his political clout to get his message across.

I'm glad I've seen the film, I've no regrets about showing it to my people; it has interested many and shocked many more, and I would recommend it to anyone as a "must see."



A section of the audience at the showing of "An Inconvenient Truth"



Facilities in a local primary school proved useful for showing the film and also, perhaps, as an attraction to get people there!

ANY SPARE GROUND AROUND YOUR CHURCH?

Why not try a small, wildflower garden? They had a go at this at St Molua's, Stormont, with mixed results.

Some of the parish's young people took on the project, together with children from Tullycarnet Primary School.

There was a bit of effort involved in preparing the ground, and while this was going on, the school kids grew the seeds in their classrooms. The seeds, of course, were all native to Ireland.

Once they were planted out in the field at the back of the church, it took about a year before we saw any results—which we have to admit, were mixed.

Some plants grew quickly and attracted butterflies and other wild life, but didn't come back; some didn't appear at all; but others, including the teasel you see below, really took off!

That's the good thing about the work associated with environmental stewardship: you win some, and you lose some—but nothing beats a try!



BIG WORDS!



A lot of people are put off environmental matters because either they don't understand the jargon, or they can't remember the words that are used. It's no wonder!

Every now and then, "Greening the Church" will throw in a few words and try to explain them as simply as possible.

Sustainability: The best description we can offer is that of Jonathan Porritt, who defines it as "the capacity for continuance into the long term future."

Sustainable Development: "The process by which we move towards sustainability."

Ecological Footprint: This is the "mark" you make on planet earth. People sometimes try to analyse their ecological footprint—in other words, they try to find out what sort of a demand their lifestyle makes on nature. There are lots of sites on the web which help you to do this, but some environmentalists are not very happy with this approach, as they believe it is very inaccurate. However, we don't need scientific analysis in order to try to reduce our footprint—we just get on with it and do what we can.

NEW DUBLIN COMPANY SEEKS PARTNER FOR ECO PROJECT

Erik van Lennep works for Tepui, a new company based in Dublin. Tepui has been set up to promote creative community responses to climate change, and it specialises in the application of living technologies.

This sounds a bit complicated, but in short the company is a sustainability consultancy dealing with sustainable technologies, sustainable design, and carbon offsetting. For some background, take a look at the company's (still developing) website: www.tepuidesign.com which will give some examples of what they're interested in, such as green roofing.

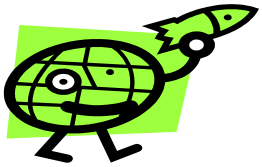
The company is seeking partners within the city of Dublin to work with them in creating a city plant nursery and youth training project. The idea would be to train young people in the care and maintenance of these ecological systems, beginning with basic plant propagation and production of edible landscaping plants and green roofing plants for use around the city.

The company hopes that a church with land inside the city would be interested in working to co-develop this project, and it is believed that some project funds from the city council, development board, Bord Bia, and others could be made available to create the infrastructure and cover initial running costs.

Eric says that the project would eventually be able to return some income to the land-holder as well.

Contact details for the company are on the website, under "About us." Do let us know if you decide to take up Tepui's offer, or discuss matters further with them.

YOUNG GREENS TO HOST HILLMAN TALK AT TRINITY



MAYER HILLMAN will be the guest speaker at a meeting of the Young Greens on Friday 8 February at 2 pm.

The meeting will be held in the Edward Burke Theatre at Trinity College, Dublin, the topic being "The Church and Climate Change."

The meeting is open to anyone who is interested, so we hope that the Church of Ireland will be well represented—not only by Dubliners, but hopefully by those from further afield as well.

Young Greens (Ireland), also known as Oige Ghlas, is a member of the Federation of Young European Greens, and is based at 16/17 Suffolk Street, Dublin 2.



Trinity College, Dublin—the venue for Mayer Hillman's address

MAYER HILLMAN

guest speaker of
The Young Greens

on
Friday 8 February

at 2 pm

in the
Edward Burke
Theatre

at
Trinity College Dublin

Topic:
THE CHURCH and CLIMATE CHANGE

Open to all interested persons!

Mayer Hillman, born in London in 1932, is a qualified architect and town planner, who completed a doctoral thesis on transport, planning and environmental issues in 1970 at the University of Edinburgh.

He has been at the forefront of the climate change debate, and is said to be decades ahead of his time on issues such as transport, energy and child mobility. He is a strong proponent of personal carbon trading, and specifically Personal Carbon Allowances, a concept which he helped to develop. He believes that public policy should be more environmentally conscious.



Meyer Hillman

On the Church of Ireland's ecological and environmental panel we are slowly but surely gathering a number of people who are experts in their field.

Are there any particular issues which you would like to see covered in this e-mag? Or perhaps you are in a position to offer your help and advice.

We would love to hear from you! E-mail address on page 1—do get in touch!

GRANTS TO GROW ENERGY CROPS

Jimmy Scott is a member of the Donegal Town Group of Parishes in the Diocese of Derry & Raphoe.

His background is in agriculture and rural environmental management, and he has worked for 30 years in the Agricultural Advisory Service.

He has a particular interest and involvement in how indigenous bioenergy can replace fossil fuel, and he has had direct involvement in various bioenergy projects, such as Biofuel—producing pure plant oil from oilseed rape; biogas—energy from waste; biomass—energy from woodchip, willow chip and energy crops such as miscanthus.

Jimmy contributes this article which should be of interest to those living in the Republic.

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food have just announced the Bioenergy Scheme for this year.

Establishment grants for planting miscanthus and willow are available under this scheme in the 26 counties in the R.of I.

The closing date for receipt of applications for pre-planting approval is 29th February 2008.

50% Establishment grants for planting miscanthus or willow are available under this scheme to a maximum of €1,450 per hectare. Establishment grants are payments to cover part of the costs of establishing willow and miscanthus crops.

Eligible costs include ground preparation, weed control, pest control, supply of planting stock and planting.

The minimum allowable area per applicant eligible for the establishment grant is 3 hectares.

Aid will only be granted where there is clear evidence of linkages with end users that utilise willow/miscanthus biomass as a source of bioenergy.

Energy Crops Ltd. is an example of a company that offers contracts to landowners for the supply and planting of miscanthus and also to purchase the crop at an agreed price of € 60 per tonne for a period of years that is a requirement of the grant scheme.

In addition to the Single Farm Payment, additional grant aid under the EU Energy Crop Scheme, the National Energy Premium, an adjusted Disadvantaged Area Scheme payment and an adjusted REPS payment can give a total payment of € 365 per hectare. After the establishment phase yields of 15 tonne per hectare per annum are projected. This then gives a return of over € 1,000 per hectare per annum.

Miscanthus has very low labour demands and suits landowners that would like an income from the land but are not in a position to put in the usual work involved with livestock farming.

50% grants available for planting miscanthus or willow

EU Energy Crop Scheme also issues grant aid



Jimmy Scott—a Church of Ireland man with a lifetime's experience in Rural Environmental Management.

HELP OFFERED

Jimmy is offering his services to be available to help individuals and groups who wish to make a contribution to lowering carbon emissions—and indeed, to also reap an economic dividend.

If you would like further information, or you want Jimmy to make a presentation to your group, parish, organisation, etc., just ask. Jimmy may be contacted initially through the E-mail address in the contact box on page 1.

PLEASE HELP US TO SPREAD THE WORD

Do you know of anyone else in your parish who might like to receive "Greening the Church"?
If so, please give us their e-mail address.
It doesn't cost anything to produce this document, and we want to have as large an e-mailing list as possible.
Thanks for your help!

MAJOR ONE-DAY CONFERENCE TO BE HELD IN BELFAST

"Ireland and Global Warming" is a one-day conference to be held in the Spires Conference Centre, Fisherwick Place, Belfast, on Saturday 16 February. The event is organised by Christians in Science Ireland.

For those who might be interested, the conference website is: www.cis.org.uk/ireland

CiS is an international network of those concerned with the relationship between Science and Christian Faith.

GM FOODS—A FEW FACTS

We promised that this issue would include some info on GM foods. Well, here are the basics, followed by some website information which will give more details for those who want them.

What are GM Foods?
GM stands for *genetically modified*—it means that scientists have artificially changed foods under laboratory conditions.

Scientists have been breeding plants with other plants for years—a process which takes a very long time—but GM foods are changed without this long wait.

What's the purpose of changing foods in this way?
Scientists say that changing the plants in this artificial way makes them better and stronger. Those who support this technology say that plants can now be bred to remain disease-free, and to fight off pests. This, they say, is the future for many types of food.

Because of these advantages, it has been suggested that it would now be much easier and cheaper to feed the many hungry people of the world.

So what's the problem?
Quite a few people are worried about the whole process. While so far there hasn't been a long enough period of time to test the effect of GM foods on human beings, tests on rats suggest that the rats don't grow properly.

Also, the idea of "mixing things together" is said by many to be going against the natural order, and it has been suggested that new diseases might accidentally be created.

On the island of Ireland, the concern about GM foods is so widespread that many of the big supermarkets have decided to ban them.

What do those in authority say?
The government in the Republic is trying to ensure that the whole of Ireland remains a GM-free zone, and this has the support of the Minister for Agriculture in the Northern Ireland Assembly.



However, there is a lot of powerful opposition to this stance from the biotech industry, as well as from the EC and the US Government.

The problem is that once live GM seeds are released on the land, there's no going back—they would contaminate the eco-system and the food chain *permanently.*

So this is a serious matter about which people really need to make up their minds. It's no good saying "Wait and see", or decide to let those in authority make the decisions themselves.

It has been suggested that Christians have a responsibility to learn about the facts and make their own decision for or against GM foods

NewsTarget.com features all sorts of articles on GM foods, and this might be a good starting point for those who want to learn more.

Alternatively, typing *GM foods* into a search engine will produce literally thousands of web pages for you to choose from!



Apparently our humble little e-mag made the "Weekly Article" on CatholicIreland.net last month. "Greening the Church" certainly gets about!

CHURCH OF SCOTLAND TAKES A LEAP OF FAITH

Following a debate on climate change at its recent General Assembly, the Church of Scotland has now appointed a climate change project officer.

Welcoming the appointment, the convener of the Church and Society Council said:

"The Church of Scotland is concerned that climate change poses a serious and immediate threat to people everywhere, particularly to the poor of the earth, and that climate change represents a failure in our stewardship of God's creation.

We accept the need to reduce the emissions of greenhouse gasses urgently, to avoid dangerous and irreversible climate change; and to promote a more equitable and sustainable use of energy."

US "U-TURN" SEALS CLIMATE DEAL

The Bali talks on climate change, ending just a week before Christmas, kept us all on the edge of our seats.

Finally an agreement was reached, after a "U-turn" from the United States.

However, we may have come a long way, but there is an even longer way to go.

The United Nations can now begin a two-year process of negotiations designed to agree yet another set of emissions targets to replace those in the Kyoto Protocol.

The good thing about the Bali agreement is that the nations can now work together to fight climate change more successfully.

News reports indicate that the talks were quite intense, and that at one stage when the US would not agree, loud boos were heard in the auditorium.

The result of the deliberations, the so-called "Bali Roadmap", includes matters such as halting deforestation and helping poorer nations protect their economies against the impact of climate change, dealing further with emissions cuts, the transfer of clean technologies to developing countries.

Talks will continue to produce yet another series of negotiations, to be finalized by 2009.



The endangered tropical rain forest, one of the concerns at the Bali talks

Some environmental groups have criticized the Bali talks, claiming that they don't go nearly far enough.

But one good thing was that delegates agreed on a framework to allow richer nations and companies to earn "carbon credits" by paying for forest protection in developing countries.

So what has been achieved at Bali is not terribly strong—probably the best thing that happened was that the United States was brought on board.

We can therefore be pleased with results so far, but we must continue steadfastly in prayer if we want to see a satisfactory outcome at the end of all this—we've got a long way to go!

"Both the Bible and Christian tradition have some vital and profound insights into care of what the world terms the 'environment' but which the Church understands as God's creation."

"As evangelists of God's good news we should care for God's Cathedral of Creation, for to despoil it is akin to placing a barrier between people and their awareness of God's presence."

"Exploring 'green Christianity' can be a positive, enjoyable and fulfilling part of Christian discipleship."

"There is a sense in which creation may be viewed as God's first Cathedral, a place where God can be found and worshipped."

eco congregation ireland

And where did we get all this from? Why, EcoCongregation Ireland, of course!
Go on—just take a look! **www.ecocongregationireland.org**