

Dear Eco-Congregation friends



Welcome to the July/August 2019 edition of the Eco-Congregation Ireland newsletter. The beautiful photo to the left is called 'Goldcrest Conversation', taken by Fr Hugh O'Donnell.



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 and at the above link.

Do 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.

Would you like to start your journey towards an Eco-Congregation Ireland Award? A good way to get started is by completing our [Environmental Check Up for Your Church!](#) Send us your completed Checklist and one of our committee will be in touch to help you move towards an application for an Eco-Congregation Ireland award.

Don't forget! ECI will award two certificates in the earlier stages of your journey towards the final Eco-Congregation Ireland Award to mark stages on the way - the Awareness Certificate and the Endeavour Certificate. [Learn more on the ECI website here.](#)

ECI Awareness Certificate 2019: Since our last newsletter [Parish of Tullow, Orlagh in the City and Holy Family Parish, Belfast](#) all received their ECI Awareness Certificates!



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Our Climate Justice Candle – The Journey Continues!

The Eco-Congregation Ireland [Climate Justice Candle](#) has been weaving its ecumenical and climate justice journey around Ireland since the launch of the project in 2015. If you would like to be part of this initiative and use the new candle in a future event, simply drop us an email to info@ecocongregationireland.com. We look forward to hearing from YOU!

ECI Climate Justice Candle visits Carrigaline Parish, Co Cork

Janet Twomey from [Carrigaline Parish](#) sent ECI a report on the candle's visit to her parish: 'The candle was welcomed at Mass by our Parish Priest, Fr Patrick Fogarty and by the boys and the girls of St. John's National School. Fran Deasy, a member of our Parish 'Care for Creation Group' lit the candle for the first time at this Mass. Fr Pat made a huge effort to include mention of the candle in the liturgies of each of the Masses throughout the week. We also included the candle's presence at the liturgy of the Corpus Christi Procession. Sr Anne wrote up some lovely pieces on the importance of minding creation in the weekly church bulletin which is distributed to homes throughout the parish. We had a closing ceremony at Mass to bid the candle



to bid the candle

goodbye as it leaves on its next journey to Limerick. Fr Pat, our Parish Priest invited me to the altar to read the Prayer for the Earth from Pope Francis' Laudato Si'.

ECI Climate Justice Candle currently visiting the Selesian Cosmology Group

At their meeting on June 29th the Selesian Cosmology Group inaugurated the journey of the Climate Justice Candle within the members of their group who belong to various parishes and communities. Group members felt that the candle initiative is an inspiration that has potential to bring so many people on board with a focus on care of Planet Earth. *Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better* - Albert Einstein. The candle is currently travelling with the group and we will have a more detailed report in our next newsletter.



Awards! Awards! Parish of Tuam receives ECI Award!

[The Parish of Tuam](#) recently celebrated the recognition of its environmental work by receiving their Eco-Congregation Ireland Award! The Award was presented at the 10.30am Mass in the Cathedral by Eco-Congregation Ireland's representative Catherine Brennan SSL. The Mass was concelebrated by Archbishop Michael Neary, Fr. Pat Farragher and Fr. Brian Grogan. Delighted to accept the award on behalf of Tuam Parish, Anne Quinn stressed the need for a combination of prayer and action, the ideals of an Eco-Congregation, as the basis for a solution to our mother Earth's current problems. The award while acknowledging work done will also encourage further action. [Read Anne's report in full and view their photos here.](#) [Read about the Tuam Enthusi Plastics Campaign here.](#) Tuam held a Holy Wells Day Prayer Service – [read about it here.](#)



Resources for Season of Creation 2019

[You can find resources for Season of Creation 2019 on the ECI website here.](#) These resources were prepared by the Laudato Si' Working Group. Catherine Brennan SSL from the ECI committee is a member of this group. Further resources are available from the [Season of Creation website.](#) [Eco-Congregation Scotland has also produced some resources](#) linked to the revised Common Lectionary. Each resource is written by a different writer within their own context.



Biodiversity: A New Movement to Make Glendalough's Churchyards More Hospitable to Birds and Bees

Lynn Glanville, Diocesan Communications Officer [Dublin & Glendalough](#) sent ECI an article she wrote for their diocesan magazine - the Church Review - about the efforts of the Rector of Rathdrum and a parishioner of a neighbouring parish who have been assessing opportunities for encouraging biodiversity in churchyards and, where appropriate, installing bird and bee boxes. The Rector of Rathdrum the Revd Brian O'Reilly has joined forces with Redcross parishioner Oran O'Sullivan, formally of [Birdwatch Ireland](#) and now owner of [Irish Garden Birds](#). Together they have been surveying churchyards in the Diocese of Glendalough to see what can be done in these green spaces to encourage biodiversity. Their goals are to educate and inform people at parish level as well as install boxes for birds and bees, if it is appropriate to do so, in churchyards.



Oran says: "Churchyards are very good because they are undisturbed for most of the week and are generally in mature grounds surrounded by high walls. That's why I was interested in this project and I feel that it is sustainable. Some graveyards are over manicured and while I fully understand there has to be a level of tidiness, there are corners that can be left and choices can be made on planting," he comments. "In some cases it is not worth putting up a box and in some cases planting is as important." [You can read Lynn's article in full on the ECI website.](#)

Latest news from the Parish Church in Portumna

David Frizelle from the Parish Church in Portumna sent ECI this update: Even after two months, the bee, butterfly and bug population has increased as the occupants rush from bloom to bloom enjoying the new abundance of flowers in the area. However, biodiversity does not stop here. Throughout the graveyard, the area is treated with a wholly organic moss killer that has the added effect of feeding the grass and soil. This spring/summer has been ideal as



the product is only active after temperatures have risen above 10 degrees and has the added benefit of not harming animals and the environment. Weed control in other areas or the grounds is simply by manual removal. In the long term, Christ Church is exploring ways of heating the church by harnessing natural energy either by solar or air. A young enthusiastic eco-engineer from Cork has undertaken this research and hopes to have a plan in place early June. The photo above shows the congregation of Christ Church Portumna pictured in front of their uncultivated corner.

Belfast Tool Library Open Day – 4 August 2019

Belfast now has its first [Tool Library](#)! If you would like to visit and learn more they are holding an open day and giving you the first chance to see the Tool Library and workshop as they take shape. You are welcome to go along to see the space, meet the team, put your name down to volunteer and/or join! So, if you've been meaning to clear out that shed and donate hand, power, gardening or other tools, this is your moment, as they will be taking tool donations on the day. Details: Vault Artist Studios, 4-84 Tower Street, Belfast BT5 4FH on Sunday 4 August from 12 noon to 3pm. Tea, cake and lots of tool library information available! [Visit the Tool Library on Facebook.](#)

BTL

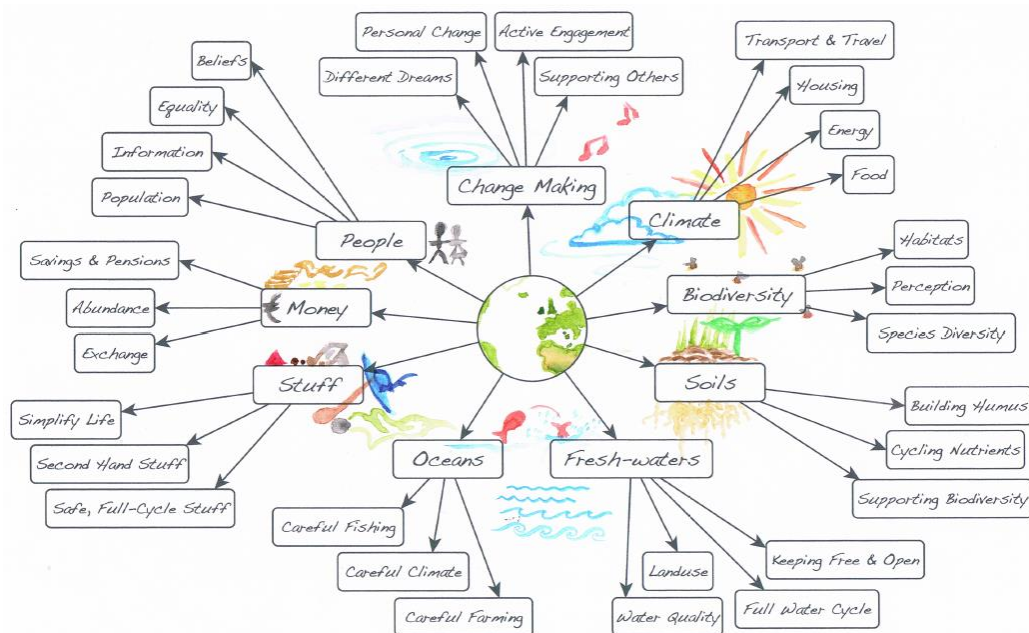
Human Rights Based Climate Action

[Quaker United Nations Office](#) has prepared a one page, colourful summary for climate change negotiators, on how including people in climate policies makes it more effective and fair. This leaflet was written to help decision makers better understand how a rights-based approach in forming climate policy will lead to more effective and fair action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHG). The leaflet explains a 'human rights based approach', why it is advantageous for policy makers, and offers positive examples of successful rights based climate action in reducing GHG mitigation and adaptation. The leaflet was presented to negotiators at the climate negotiations (SB50) in Bonn, in June 2019. [Download the leaflet here.](#)



Féidhlim Harty and Oana Marian facilitate workshop in Limerick Quaker Meeting House

A workshop facilitated by Féidhlim Harty and Oana Marian, incorporating learnings from science, nature, and from past and current social, spiritual and environmental movements was held in Limerick Quaker Meeting House, Southville Gardens, Ballinacurra, Limerick on Sunday 26th May 2019. Although we know that climate breakdown is serious, many of us are unsure how best to respond. The workshop explored solutions and invited collaboration, in an uplifting and inspiring atmosphere, where attention to intention, reflection and action, was focussed on the question: How can I live a life of meaning in the midst of crisis and be a good ancestor to those who come after me? This chart below was shared which shows the direction of their workshop on the day. [View it in your browser here.](#)



Speak out for climate justice with Christian Aid!

On Wednesday 26 June, [Christian Aid Ireland](#) supporters lobbied Lagan Valley MP Sir Jeffrey Donaldson, North Down MP Lady Sylvia Hermon and North Antrim MP Ian Paisley Jnr, as part of a UK-wide effort to demand MPs tackle climate change. 58 Christian Aid Ireland supporters gathered at 4 churches across Northern Ireland to telephone or video call their MPs, warning them of the dangers of climate change, especially for the world's most vulnerable



countries, and urging them that the time is now for action. Supporters also spoke to the offices of Gavin Robinson and Emma Little-Pengelly and they are in the process of arranging meetings with other MPs in the autumn.

On the same afternoon, Christian Aid Ireland Chief Executive Rosamond Bennett joined 13,000 people who descended on the Houses of Parliament in Westminster for 'The Time is Now' mass lobby of MPs about climate change. In total 351 MPs were lobbied. There is still time to take action and, if you're in Northern Ireland, use their template to write to your own MP online at caid.ie/thetimeisnow and speak out for climate justice. Christian Aid Ireland is planning an exciting event in the autumn to inform, equip and inspire people in Northern Ireland to take action on climate change. To register interest, please email eventsireland@christian-aid.org

St Anne's Church Shandon & Cathedral of St Mary and St Anne journey together to become Eco-Congregations

On Saturday 27 July 2019 Rev Sarah Marry and parishioners were warmly welcomed to the 5pm Vigil Mass at the North Cathedral of St. Mary and St. Anne. Parishioners came together to celebrate their friendship, the gifts of God's creation and their joint effort in caring for God's work on their Eco-Congregation journey.



Those present were delighted and honoured to have Catherine Brennan SSL and Rev Andrew Orr, Eco-Congregation Ireland representatives present for the occasion. Fr. John o'Donovan PP and Sr. Catherine Brennan spoke very encouraging and passionately, and all there were emboldened to further develop their fellowship and encourage each other in their efforts to respond to the challenge of climate crisis by doing what they can as individuals and churches to reduce their impact on the environment, share best practice and make ecologically responsible decisions.

Diocese of Kerry takes up challenge of climate change for Season of Creation 2019

Initiatives by the Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation Committee of the Diocese include - all 53 parishes across the diocese will receive copies of a leaflet which explains the theme and gives suggestions of practical actions to be taken in three areas: energy, water and waste. The leaflet will be available on the diocesan website www.dioceseofkerry.ie. The theme will be included in a Sunday Mass, and resources to support the leaflet will also go to parishes. The Radio Kerry programme 'Horizons', the daily 'Just a Thought' and the diocesan Facebook page will all highlight the theme across the Season.



Diocese of Kerry

There will be an exciting workshop in Killarney, John Paul 2 Pastoral Centre, Rock Road on Tuesday 17th September at 8pm "Climate Crisis: Food, Floods and Faith" when local eco leaders, Lisa Fingleton and Martha Farrell will speak on the specific impacts of the Climate Crisis on food and floods. Local action groups will have information stands to give people the opportunity to get involved locally. These groups include Transition Kerry, Kerry Climate Action Network, Kerry Sustainable Energy Cooperative (KSEC), Grow It Yourself (GIY), the Climate Action Regional Office (CARO) and of course Trócaire. There will be a warm welcome for all.

The 14th European Symposium for the Protection of the Night Sky

[Mayo Dark Sky Festival](#) this year is holding an extra event for those interested in Biodiversity, Climate Actions, Wellbeing and Dark Sky themes. This will be of special interest to rural community groups who are interested in seeking dark sky status. It is the first time the International Dark Sky Association has licensed an event in Ireland so the organisers expect a good international attendance. Details are:



Event Name: The 14th European Symposium for the Protection of the Night Sky

Venue: GN Mulranny Park Hotel, Mulranny, County Mayo

Dates: 3rd to 5th November 2019 (immediately following the Mayo Dark Sky Festival weekend)

You can find out more about this event on the [Eco-Congregation Ireland website](#) or visit <https://www.mayodarkskyfestival.ie/symposium>.

'Facing ecological and climate breakdown – despair, love and hope' – EcoQuakers Ireland Belfast conference

Advance notice of an exciting series of three conferences across the island of Ireland starting this Autumn hosted by the [EcoQuakers Ireland](#). The first conference, entitled 'Facing ecological and climate breakdown - despair, love and hope' will take place on Saturday 19th October starting at 10am until about 4:30pm at South Belfast Quaker Meeting House, 22 Marlborough Park North, Belfast, BT9 6HJ. The gathering will be aimed at all those interested in promoting a sustainable approach in their Meetings, churches, church groups and personal lives. All will be very welcome to attend from whatever faith group you are part of. There will be a number of speakers to introduce participants to the issues at stake - Lindsay Fielder-Cooke the representative for Climate Change from QUNO (Quaker United Nations Office in Geneva); John Barry, Professor of Green Political Theory at Queens University; and Lynn Finnegan from Coleraine Quaker Meeting who will be encouraging us to see the positive in the despair that we are currently experiencing with this climate crisis.



Promotional information with more details and how to book will be available shortly or if you would like further information feel free to email Kerry Nicholson at kerry@karenandkerry.com. EcoQuakers hope to run another two conferences in the Leinster and Munster areas in early 2020. EcoQuakers Ireland is a committee of Quakers in Ireland that supports Quaker Meetings in their efforts to live peacefully and sustainably. Kerry Nicholson from South Belfast Quaker Meeting and EcoQuakers reflects on the issue of consumerism in the Irish Council of Churches blog in their series on Climate Justice - [God's Provision and Our Consumerism](#).

Dromantine goes wild!

In response to recent concerns being expressed about the global threat to biodiversity the Dromantine SMA Community decided to allow a sizeable area of the grounds to 'go wild'. They felt it is no longer justifiable for their religious houses to maintain beautifully trimmed lawns and hedges thereby depriving bees and other insect life of a home and means of sustenance. With effect from spring 2019 the ride on lawnmowers are restricted from entering these areas delineated for pollinators and other wild life. The SMA Community will endeavour to follow



the guidelines published in the excellent pamphlet [Faith Communities: Actions to Help Pollinators](#) published by the National Biodiversity Data Centre.

St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Blackrock creates pollinator-friendly border

St Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Blackrock has been busy. Church members have transformed a grass patch which was more mud and weeds than grass, into a shrub and flower border. Members originally started with the idea of making it more aesthetically pleasing but then decided that they could also make it butterfly, bee and insect friendly. They sought advice from members of the RHSI about what would do well in their area which is shaded by trees as well as the church building and what would attract butterflies, bees and other insects. As well as shrubs and flowers they have also planted bulbs to bloom next Spring. They have created a border with all-year round interest as well as one that will attract pollinators!



Drumalis Retreat Centre to hold Season of Creation reflection mornings

[Drumalis Retreat Centre](#) in Larne, Co Antrim will hold four mornings of reflection during Season of Creation. These will take place on the four Wednesdays in September from 10.30am to 12.00pm. Tea/coffee will be provided. Suggested donation of £5. To book either email clare@drumalis.co.uk or phone 028 2827 6455 or 028 2827 2196.



Clogher JPIC Group writes to GAA & Fermanagh and Omagh District Council highlighting biodiversity crisis

Members of the Clogher Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Group have written letters to Fermanagh and Omagh District Council and the GAA expressing their concern over the types of weed killers and pesticides they use and their impact on the biodiversity of their area as well as the use of plastics and waste. Read this story in full [on the ECI website here](#).



Update from Sacred Heart Messenger

Carolanne Henry, Communications and Marketing Executive at [Messenger Publications](#) sent ECI this update: Season of Creation is an annual celebration of prayer and action to protect creation. It begins on 1 September, the Day of Prayer for Creation, and runs until 4 October, the Feast of St. Francis, who is the patron saint of ecology in many traditions. In acknowledgement of the season, the September issue of The Sacred Heart Messenger carries two articles that urge us to actively engage in care for our common home: Catherine Devitt, in [Caring for all Gods](#)



[Creatures](#), argues that as Christians, love and care for the natural world should be an intrinsic aspect of our faith experience; Brian Grogan SJ in [Burning Bush Burning Planet](#), draws a parallel with Moses' response when God calls him by name – 'Here I am.' Can we, like Moses, step up to the 'burning bush' of our planetary overheating, treading barefoot on what will undoubtedly be thorny ground?

Brian Grogan SJ's popular booklet, *Finding God in a Leaf – The Mysticism of Laudato Si'* is to be reprinted for the second time. Inviting us to recognise God in all things, the author brings a lived appreciation of

God's creations to this accessible book of meditations of Pope Francis' Encyclical. Published by Messenger Publications, it is available to order on their [online bookstore](#).

Vita launches a Unique Carbon Calculator and Travels Stateside for Leadership Conference of Women Religious

This August, [Vita](#) is delighted to be participating in The Leadership Conference of Women Religious in Scottsdale, Arizona. They will be travelling to meet the leaders of congregations of Catholic women in the United States to discuss their community-led model for supporting climate justice in Africa. Vita is proud to have the opportunity to collaborate with these extraordinary women who meet annually to find better ways to further the mission of the Gospel in today's world.



Vita has just launched the first not-for-profit carbon calculator – a unique and innovative platform that allows people to measure, reduce, and offset their carbon emissions. A fitbit for your carbon footprint, this calculator makes it easy to support some of the world's most disadvantaged people achieve sustainable livelihoods in Africa. [You can visit the calculator here](#).

Latest news from Gardiner Street Parish

Gardiner Street Parish in Dublin is exploring the possibility of becoming an SEAI Sustainable Energy Community. While currently at the planning stage this would be an excellent opportunity to bring the community together to see what changes we could make to have better, more efficient homes and community buildings. Ciara Murphy from the [Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice](#) responded to the Government's recently published Climate Action Plan. While the Plan is a step forward in our journey to becoming decarbonised it lacks ambition and fails to address how we are going to adapt to the consequences of climate chaos that are already happening. [You can read Ciara's article here](#).



The Memory Garden Valleymount, Co Wicklow

Carmel O'Neill sent ECI this report: The date 3 March 1940 is a day forever etched in the memory of people living in the Lacken Valleymount area outside Blessington, Co Wicklow. It was on this day that the village of Ballinahown became submerged in water after the construction of a dam at Poulaphouca which led to the creation of the Blessington lakes. Over 6,500 acres were lost and 76 families were uprooted from their homesteads and moved to Kildare. To mark this unique event in the life of our community it was decided to erect a memory garden in front of a patch of waste ground at the presbytery. Local people volunteered to clear the weeds, donate materials and plant flowers/shrubs around the granite memorial.



On June 23rd Bishop Eamonn Walsh blessed this garden to honour the memory of all who sacrificed what was dearest to them, their place of being. Today people enjoy the many amenities around the Blessington lakes. It is hoped that this memory garden will provide people the opportunity to have time for quiet reflection and contemplation in beautiful surroundings.

Latest news from St Anne's Parish, Shankill

Katharine Davey from St Anne's Parish, Shankill sent ECI this update: We have two items from St Anne's parish, Shankill, which also includes members of our sister group, SAGE, Shankill Action for a Green Earth. From the beginning of this year we have tried to have some presence outside the Dail between 1pm and 2pm on Fridays, as part of 'Fridays for Future', initiated by Greta Thundberg. Normally, at present, there are three or four SAGE members and the total number of demonstrators varies between 15 and 150 depending on the number of school children and others present. We also took part in the big turnout on 15th March, when the young people featured prominently.

Another initiative was to make and give away bee hotels on the main road, opposite St Anne's Church. This was to sensitise people to the urgent need for pollinators to have more habitat available. We are also in the process of planning to plant bee-friendly plants and shrubs in the church grounds with a grant towards this from DLRCoCo. This we hope to do during Creation Time in September.



Update from the Care for the Earth Ministry at St Joseph the Artisan Church, Bonnybrook

The Care for the Earth Ministry Group at [St Joseph the Artisan Church, Bonnybrook](#) has recently received an ECI Awareness Certificate. The group has invited all parishioners to place an intention on their Tree of Life indicating what they intend to do to in the coming weeks to care for the Earth. The Tree is in the church and all can read other people's intentions too. All are welcome to come in and commit to this project. In the coming weeks parishioners are invited to help put the Bonny back into Bonnybrook by coming to church to reflect on some points from Laudato Si'.



Eco Challenge!

Everyone needs a holiday – including the Earth! Do you consider your carbon foot-print when planning a holiday?

Rev Trevor Sargent's Ecological Notes for July 2019 encourage us to consider the Earth when deciding on how we travel this summer. Trevor is one of the Church of Ireland representatives on the ECI committee and ministers in the Diocese of Cashel, Ferns and Ossory. You can read his Ecological Notes [in full on the ECI website](#).



Trevor's 5 Tips for Holidaying More Lightly on the Earth:

1. Take your holiday somewhere that you can get to by bike, boat, train or car. Make the journey a part of the holiday experience.

2. Pack light, but include a re-usable shopping bag and a refillable water bottle, (if possible with a built in filter for peace of mind).
3. Eat (and drink) locally, ethically, seasonally and ideally organically produced fare.
4. Walk, or rent bikes when away to get around, and use public transport, or hire an electric vehicle.
5. Bring a drawing pad, pencils, or paints, to relax while intentionally observing and sketching places, people or artefacts.

Prayer for the Earth

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



The new leaves of our prayer plant un-scroll. I follow their progress over days; six new leaves at first tightly packed now deep in the ballet of their unfolding. I am a witness to a world beyond me. A light green leaf invites, 'do you read me?' but I am illiterate in leaf-time and back away from this living text, this inspired word. Of course, with the sophistication of electron microscopes we can now see into the tiniest cell and are aware in some partial way of what is going on.

Leaf is the connection between sunlight and the family of life; it is its ability to capture sunlight and use it to make food that is mind-blowing. But though gifted in our generation to 'know' how that chemistry works in the chloroplasts - a mesmerising process - we will always remain at a distance. Perhaps we may go to the tree and expect it will be easier to grasp this larger body. But if we don't appreciate the leaf will we appreciate the tree? And without the alphabet of wonder have we any hope of hearing the one who reaches out to us in this un-scrolling? 'There is a presence whose language is not our language', writes R. S. Thomas. To read a leaf requires us to look humbly, serenely, attentively until the eyes of our heart open, the eyes of our eyes. Amen.

With kindest regards,

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