





Richard & Joanne Naylor

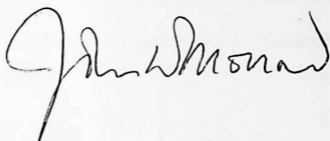
# Journey of Hope

Sources of the Corrymeela Vision

---

JOHN MORROW

ILLUSTRATED BY  
DAVID EVANS



*All proceeds from this book  
will be used to further the work of  
The Corrymeela Community*



The Corrymeela Press

## JOURNEY OF HOPE

This book is dedicated to the Members and Friends of the Corrymeela Community and to all who seek renewal in Church and reconciliation in the world today.

### *Acknowledgments*

*I wish to acknowledge with gratitude the support and encouragement of the Irish School of Ecumenics and especially the Director Rev Alan Falconer for permission to research and write this memoir as part of my work with the school.*

*I also wish to thank Ray Davey, Trevor Williams, Alan Evans, Peter Moss and Doug Baker for reading the script and making helpful comments, and especially Ray for writing the chapter on Tullio Vinay.*

*Mathilde Stevens has been of enormous help in typing the script. My wife, Shirley, has helped me to "stay with it" when I have been tempted to drop the project amidst other concerns.*

*My thanks to David Evans for the drawings.*

Journey of Hope  
ISBN: 1 873739 23 0  
Copyright © 1995 John Morrow  
Illustrations © 1995 David Evans

Published September 1995 by



The Corrymeela Press

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in any retrieval system or transmitted by any means, electronic, mechanical, copying, recording or otherwise without the written permission of the Publisher.

# JOURNEY OF HOPE

## *Contents*

Foreword by Jim Wallis	4
Introduction	6
The Iona Experience	11
God's Frozen People	19
People on a Journey	29
Healing the Wounds of History	39
Spirituality and Community	49
Re-formation - New Forms or Expressions of Church	57
The Dutch Dimension	67
Quakers and Mennonites	79
Prisoners of Hope	89
"Agape": A Memoir on Tulio Vinay by Ray Davey	97
References	107
Questions for Discussion	111
Becoming a "Friend of Corrymeela"	115

## FOREWORD

On the wall along the staircase at the office of Sojourners magazine, the emblems of various Christian communities around the world can be seen. They represent examples of faith and courage in diverse circumstances - brothers and sisters with whom the Sojourners community shares a kindred spirit. The Corrymeela Community in Northern Ireland is one of those on the Sojourner's wall. Those little wall plaques are part of Sojourners family tree, people who inspire, encourage, and challenge us to be who God has called us to be.

John Morrow has written a book about Corrymeela's family tree. It traces the many influences upon the life of this extraordinary Irish community that has been such a powerful witness to the possibilities and power of reconciliation in one of the world's most divided and conflictual societies.

I will never forget my first visit to Corrymeela's home at Ballycastle on the island's rugged and stunningly beautiful northern coast. Speaking at their "Summerfest," my topic was the beatitudes. As we explored the radical meaning of Jesus call to be peacemakers, I was struck by several women sitting together in the front row holding hands and softly crying. Meeting many of them later on, I learned they were all mothers who had lost children in "the troubles" and now were bound together in a common bond and commitment to peacemaking. Every time I have since visited Corrymeela, or met their disbursed community members around Ireland, or welcomed their representatives at Sojourners in Washington D.C., I have felt our common bond.

Corrymeela is part of our family tree as are many of the

people John Morrow describes in his wonderful little book.

We too have been shaped by the legacy of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the worship of the Iona Community, the prophetic witness of base communities in the Philippines and South America, the healing power of the l'Arche Communities, and the resurrection faith of the South African church. We too have been molded in the refiner's fire of peacemaking from Nicaragua to the mean streets of America's inner cities. We too have learned that peace must be "waged" with at least as much commitment as the waging of war.

Many of the names in this book are familiar to us and some are new. You learn a great deal about a community by studying their family tree. This book shows that the Corrymeela Community comes from "good stock." I wish more communities would write about their family trees. Maybe Sojourners should. This is a delightfully hopeful book and one which reminds us all that we indeed have a "goodly heritage."

*Jim Wallis*

## INTRODUCTION

**T**he Corrymeela Community was founded in 1965 and the members of the Community, together with staff and volunteers at our Centres, have sought to respond to the guidance of the Holy Spirit in shaping our life and work over the years.

Both before 1965 and since then the Community has been influenced by many movements and individuals in the wider world and from many branches of the Christian traditions. It has consciously and unconsciously absorbed and integrated a great deal of this into an on-going vision. However, those who have only become involved with the Community in recent years are often unaware of the sources from which this vision has been shaped.

In his book entitled "An Unfinished Journey", published to celebrate our 21st anniversary, Ray Davey included a section entitled "Guides on the Journey". In many ways this booklet is an expansion of that section with some significant new inclusions and omissions. In attempting to describe some of the influences which have been specially significant for the life of our Community, there is always a danger that any selection will prove to be subjective and arbitrary. Many others would make a different selection.

Obviously I have concentrated on those areas of influence which deeply affected me personally but I would regard all of them as being significant for the Community as a whole.

The influence of the Iona Community was clearly the most formative one for quite a number of the early members, but I have included as a postscript the equally special influence of



Tullio Vinay. This could only have been written by Ray Davey, our founder, but it was too important to omit.

The Coventry Cathedral link is particularly symbolic for a variety of reasons, not least the physical building called "Coventry House" at our Centre. Jean Vanier's occasional visits have always been memorable events which deeply touched us all with a quality of spirituality that we found deeply authentic. Roel Kaptein and his other Dutch colleagues brought new insights to our whole understanding of relationships and of the freedom which Jesus embodies. This has had implications for every aspect of our life and work. The chance to share with other new communities and with older peace churches like the Quakers and Mennonities have enriched us beyond measure.

Some people who might also have been included are e.g. Eberhard Bethge, the nephew and biographer of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German martyr, whose contributions on 'prayer and justice' on an extended visit in the mid 70's, were deeply relevant to many aspects of national and Church life in Ireland. Dr. Sheila Cassidy with her experience of imprisonment in Chile and more recently of the Hospice movement, has been a regular visitor, and her refreshing honesty and humanity have been liberating and encouraging to all. Archbishop Derek Warlock and Bishop David Shepherd have been an "icon" of the kind of ecumenical witness to which we aspire and their willingness to share their own story with us and support our life in many ways has been deeply encouraging.

The list of those whose names could be mentioned is endless, especially those who have come from far-flung places like South Africa, the Middle East, USA, the Philippines. Some would rather make mention of those whose presence was more unobtrusive and who quietly entered our life with no fuss or announcement, but whose influence we have come to

## JOURNEY OF HOPE

realise is more significant than many others.

Also, perhaps, the pervasive influence of historical figures like St Francis of Assisi may have been more fundamental to our vision than any of our contemporaries. From the beginning there was always a deep sense of affinity with his strong affirmation of all God's creation, his love for the poor and his spirit of gentleness, forgiveness and peace.

In a Community where by definition everyone is important in their own special way and where each gift is unique, we have learnt to be very suspicious of any tendency to create VIP's. Does this selection then contradict that principle? I sincerely hope it does not. Its purpose is simply to remind us of some of the richness which we have received and to understand a little of its source. Only if we know where some of these gifts have emanated from are we able to return to the sources, draw from them afresh and renew our life on the next stage of the journey.

The story is recorded in order to illustrate the nature of our ecumenical encounter with one another and with some of those who have shared part of our journey. But it is above all to aid us in a fresh encounter with Christ through the many mirrors in which he is reflected to us through the work of the Holy Spirit in our brothers and sisters. Its purpose is not to limit or tie us to our past but to enable us to be faithful stewards of the trust which has been given to us; to enable us to use all the insights of our past as we face the new questions and challenges of today and tomorrow and to follow Christ afresh in our time.

In order to stimulate this process I have included a number of questions related to each chapter so that it could be widely used to help us all reflect on our continuing journey.

Although the issues of conflict and peace in Northern Ireland have been central to our journey, the story is much bigger

## JOURNEY OF HOPE

than that and transcends it at many points. Jesus said: "Seek first the Kingdom of God and all the other things you need will be added unto you." Only an agenda which is ecumenical in the fullest sense of the word can save us from the kind of preoccupation with the Northern Ireland situation which can be counterproductive. Only as we walk together on this bigger journey can we find the freedom to transcend our ancient feuds and the faith to receive God's new future as a gift.



## THE IONA EXPERIENCE

I won't easily forget the first impact of George MacLeod on me. The tall moustached figure in a blue suit might well have been offputting to some, by his aristocratic, military and pungent style. I was not surprised to learn later that, although he was a pacifist, he had won the M.C. in the 1914-18 War.

But what impressed me was his robust humanity. The spiritual power he exuded, had an earthiness about it which communicated to me. He knew about life in the raw; he knew about the experience of 20th century humanity, in its suffering and in its lostness. He knew that the Church was often out of touch with the realities of our time.

His own pilgrimage had come to a crisis point in a ministry in industrial Clydeside during the "hungry thirties". He perceived that the Church was proclaiming a message of "individual" salvation to the exclusion of the "corporate" dimension of the Gospel. Soul-salvation instead of whole-salvation! Street debates with communists convinced him that the message had been truncated, thus creating a radical divorce between the secular and the sacred.

Amongst many parish projects, he set up one to rebuild an old mill with the help of unemployed men. Ultimately he was led to the Isle of Iona to launch what was to become a new initiative in Christian renewal.

The Isle of Iona on the West Coast of Scotland, off the Hebridean Island of Mull had been the Centre from which St. Columba had launched his mission to all of Scotland.

## JOURNEY OF HOPE

In 563 AD Columba (or Colomcille) had sailed with companions from Derry to Iona. There he established one of the most significant centres of Celtic Christianity. The monks went forth in teams which included an evangelist, a teacher and an agriculturalist to claim all of life for Christ.

MacLeod was inspired by the "wholistic" approach of the Celtic Church and by the way in which the early monks had understood the Gospel as a way of transforming and integrating every aspect of life.

We know, from the many prayers which have come down to us, something of this Celtic mysticism whereby life is penetrated at every point by the Spirit of Christ, e.g.

Christ be with me; Christ within me  
Christ behind me; Christ before me  
Christ beside me; Christ to win me  
Christ to comfort and restore me  
Christ beneath me; Christ above me  
Christ in quiet; Christ in danger  
Christ in the hearts of all that love me  
Christ in the mouth of friend and stranger.

*(St. Patrick's Breastplate)*

Many years after the Celtic period, in the 12th century, the Benedictines had established a monastery on Iona. For a period in and after the feudal ages, they were the most influential movement in establishing the foundations of culture and learning, out of which emerged the medieval civilisation. After the Scottish Reformation the Abbey had fallen into decay as a fresh impulse of critical renewal stirred throughout the land. At the turn of the 19th century the Church of Scotland had rebuilt the Abbey Church but the remainder still lay in ruins!!

With his genius for symbol, MacLeod saw this as a sign of the Churches' tendency to separate the sacred and the secular,

## JOURNEY OF HOPE

to privatise the Gospel as individual salvation and to fail to proclaim Jesus as Lord of the whole of life. It therefore offered both a practical and symbolic challenge to a group of trainee ministers and unemployed craftsmen, to work together on the rebuilding of the "secular" part of the Abbey and in so doing to rediscover the meaning of the corporate life into which the Gospel of Christ calls us; to learn what it means to be "members of one another" within the body of Christ. George knew intuitively that the discussion of ideas outside of the concrete reality of a daily life of interdependence, would produce nothing more than hot air! He knew that only when ideas are embodied do they take on life. Surely this was part of what the incarnation was about? The experience of living together on an island and sharing in work, worship and daily life had a profound effect on all involved. Forgiveness was a necessity for their life on an island where there was no easy withdrawal route!

It was in this context of the painful building of relationships between people who often spoke a different language, that the issues of prayer and politics; faith and life; work and worship began to be explored in a fresh way. The Community developed in various steps into a wide network of people who became involved at the frontiers of the Church's mission in industry, new housing estates, with alienated youth, and overseas in places like Central and Southern Africa and India. The pattern which they developed was that of a dispersed Community with a small resident group at the Abbey Centre on Iona. Members were encouraged to seek ministries in frontier situations not only in Scotland but throughout the wider world. They met together in local and regional groups, where possible, and returned to Iona annually (except for those overseas) to renew their vision and dedication. The Community discipline involved prayer, time and a degree of economic sharing and eventually a commitment to peace-making in the world. This pattern was deliberately designed to enable members to maintain a "dual loyalty" both to the

local church and to the Iona Community, so that in solidarity with the whole they might seek renewal and unity, service and witness.

For an Irish Presbyterian like me this movement awakened a new consciousness on a number of frontiers. Experiencing the searching dialogue across the social and industrial divide in Scotland forced some of us to look at our own situation at home; to recognise many of the same features, such as the complete inadequacy of a privatised Gospel of individual salvation to confront the reality of urbanised culture and its sectarian divides. In the renewed worship on Iona we recognised the richness of that holistic Celtic tradition with which many Irish protestants had lost contact. Also the challenge to recover a shared common life was there in the Benedictine tradition of the Abbey even though the Community knew that they must search for different ways of expressing that in the secular world of the 20th century.

In this new corporate context, the essence of the meaning of "sin" began to be more urgently related to the issues of class, race, economics and peace and not just to matters of sexuality, gambling and alcohol abuse!! It was a recovery of the sense that life is wholly relational in its character and that our relationships with God and with one another are inextricably intertwined as for example in the Lords Prayer: "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors". This petition has both personal and corporate dimensions for our life together as families, churches, communities and nations.

Most centrally of all, Iona seemed to be recovering the heart of the message of the incarnation that in Jesus "the word was made flesh". As MacLeod once put it: "Jesus Christ was not crucified on an altar between two candlesticks, but on a cross between two thieves..." By turning Jesus into a remote stain glass figure we had lost his humanity, and in the process removed him from the common life of men and women. Only a fully embodied Christianity which took seriously the whole



## JOURNEY OF HOPE

person and the life of the whole community, can be a witness to the Kingdom inaugurated by the crucified and risen Lord. Only a vulnerable Christian Community which engages with the world in challenge and service could speak a word of healing and hope.

The Iona vision gave many of us our first truly ecumenical vision; one which sought to heal the broken body of Christ in the Church and in the world. Amongst those most touched by this experience in addition to Ray Davey and myself were Alec Watson, Minister of Harmony Hill Church in Lisburn, Craig Cameron a former treasurer of the Community, and many others. But it was as much about transformation as unity and therefore wholly consistent with the tradition of the radical reformers of the 16th century. It seemed to offer possibilities for an open ended movement for renewal where people of all traditions could share together and learn from one another. Inevitably some of us began to ask what this implied for us and our divided society in Northern Ireland? Could we adapt this model to our particular circumstances? When the Corrymeela Community came into existence there were many marked influences from Iona in our structures and thinking.

Our early relationships were forged in the workcamps at Ballycastle and the close integration of work and worship, faith and life, was an obvious reflection of the holistic model of Iona. To this day the Corrymeela Centre remains a place where people live together and share in community and not a mere conference centre; but even more so in the "earthy" flavour of every aspect of the Community's life. It is the material world which is the arena of God's work. The Christian Community is not meant to be a religious ghetto but a witness of God's purpose for all creation.

Corrymeela sought to reflect that biblical and Iona sense of "the word made flesh" by rooting its life and work in a shared common life, open to all who were willing to join us

## JOURNEY OF HOPE

on a new ecumenical journey of faith; open also to those who were sceptical, disillusioned with their past experience of the church and to those who were victims of injustice, discrimination, intimidation and fear in our society.

This fundamental solidarity with people from every background, around the table or the sink, where we meet one another in wholeness, provides the basis on which, through mutual acceptance, we can recognise and receive each other's gifts. But there was so much more in the contacts which Iona opened up for us too, which will be part of succeeding chapters of this reflection. Not the least of these was the value of this model of a dispersed Community which offered a pattern that was adaptable to different situations and was open to the average lay person living and working in society.

## JOURNEY OF HOPE

### MAN IS MADE TO RISE

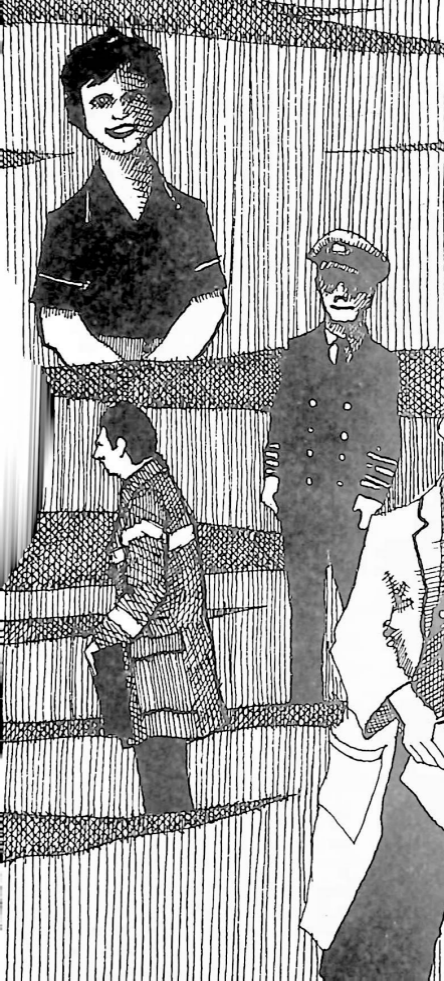
Invisible we see You, Christ above us.  
With earthly eyes we see above us, clouds or sunshine,  
grey or bright.  
But with the eye of faith we know You reign:  
instinct in the sun ray,  
speaking in the storm,  
warming and moving all Creation, Christ above us.

We do not see all things subject unto You.  
But we know that man is made to rise.  
Already exalted, already honoured, even now our  
citizenship is in heaven  
Christ above us, invisible we see You.

Invisible we see You, Christ beneath us.  
With earthly eyes we see beneath us stones and dust and  
dross,  
fit subjects for the analyst's table.  
But with the eye of faith, we know You uphold.  
In You all things consist and hang together:  
The very atom is light energy,  
The grass is vibrant,  
The rocks pulsate.

All is in flux; turn but a stone and an angel moves.  
Underneath are the everlasting arms.  
Unknowable we know You, Christ beneath us.  
The Whole Earth Shall Cry Glory.

*A prayer of George MacLeod*



GOD'S FROZEN PEOPLE

**T**he dry humour of a Manchester school teacher called Mark Gibbs was easily open to misunderstanding, but I soon realised that here was a Christian layman with a mission not to be denied. Strangely enough it was on Iona that I first met him too. On the first occasion I was a research worker in plant breeding with the Ministry of Agriculture in Northern Ireland and our common interest in, and frustration with the vocation of the average lay person within the life of the Church had drawn us together in conversation. When, later on, I decided to study theology and become ordained he accused me of "betraying the cause"!!

Mark was deeply fired by the need to affirm the vocation of the whole people of God, not just in the life of the Church, but even more in the life of the world. I began to realise that he was but one sign of a movement of the Spirit which was emerging spontaneously on the Continent of Europe and especially in Germany, Holland and Switzerland. In the wake of World War II there had been a lot of heart-searching about the failure of ordinary church members to stand up to Nazism and to defend the Jews from persecution and the eventual Holocaust. They concluded that church members had not been equipped for their witness in the social situation with the result that they either identified Hitler's movement with God's purposes or in their individualistic pietism simply opted out and took refuge in an escapist other-worldly spirituality. The Life and Work movement, which became so influential in the formation of the World Council of Churches, was a catalyst in the process of challenging this stance; as also were the writings of theologians like H. Kraemer, I. Congar and some leaders in the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF).



Two significant expressions of this new movement of which Mark was a part were the German "Kirchentag" and the setting up of Laity Centres which became known as Evangelical Academies. The Kirchentag brought together thousands of people in Germany to take part in a major "teach in" and "festival" all wrapped up in one. The agenda included not only worship and prayer but also all the major social, political and ethical issues which were exercising the whole society and many matters of international concern. In the early years issues like the unification of Germany figured strongly and later nuclear disarmament and the new ecological consciousness have received a strong boost and encouragement. The concept of the "Kirchentag" was later adapted by Corrymeela into a biennial festival called "Summerfest". This exciting market place of ideas has been brilliantly co-ordinated by one of our staff, Rev. Doug Baker, through the generosity of the US Presbyterian Church.

The evangelical academies were (and are) residential centres for adult ecumenical learning and dialogue with people from every sector of life. Every subject from law, industry, employment, housing, men/women relationships, education, international security, immigration, medical etc. are tackled with the contribution of people with day to day practical involvement in different areas of life. An attempt is made to seek the will of God for our daily life and to promote wider communication and dialogue in the midst of ongoing tensions and conflicts.

Mark Gibbs was anxious to promote similar developments in the U.K. In the book which he co-authored with Ralph Morton (of the Iona Community) entitled "God's Frozen People" he developed his thesis and later amplified it in "God's Lively People". According to Mark, the main body of church members is hardly more than a frozen asset, in most cases. True, a small section of them are active in the organisation and administration of the internal life of the Church

as elders and deacons, but the vast majority do not have their real vocation in the world acknowledged and nurtured.

Worse still, the impression is often given that the real work of the Church is in the congregational life alone, with the possible exception of "foreign missionaries" or special charities. But the life of the farmer, businessman, postman, trade unionist, teacher, dustman, councillor, shopkeeper, policeman, doctor, nurse, social worker, industrialist, etc. are not valued for their own sake and the total context and web of their life and relationships is not recognised as the major arena for the work of the Holy Spirit and the witness of the Church. It is in wrestling with the integrity of responsibility in these situations that a vital part of the work of the Kingdom is done and opportunities for witness are opened up authentically.

Mark wanted the Church to reorder its life so as to give this a high priority, and in so doing help the clergy to understand a central aspect of their task as "helping to equip the people of God for their service in the world".

This new learning needs to take place together, and must complement the preaching ministry. Only as minister and people wrestle together with the concrete situations which lay people are facing in their daily life, can the real questions emerge and the spiritual and theological resources be found.

Mark also saw the need in the U.K. for centres like the evangelical academies and this had an immediate implication for those of us who were soon to engage in the Corrymeela project. The idea of a centre where lay people could exercise their gifts and engage in dialogue with others on the many questions facing them in today's world was one of the strongest motivating forces of the founding group. Many of the lay people and students were frustrated by the narrowness in the range of the Church's agenda. The daily questions facing people in the world's life often seemed to be absent from

Christian conversation and sometimes the impression was given that these "worldly questions" were not even appropriate. Theology seemed to be concerned with so-called "spiritual" matters to the exclusion of the "material". However, any close study of the Old and New Testaments and especially of the parables of Jesus showed that such a dichotomy was a perversion of the meaning of the spiritual and a denial of the incarnation. "For the people of God are meant to show God's love to the world, not to enjoy it quietly in a cosy group of their own. They are meant to be the body of Christ - the embodiment of Christ's love and compassion towards the world." (God's Frozen People, p.26)

There was another factor which prompted the development of laity education in Europe which began to influence the whole ecumenical atmosphere of the Churches. During the Hitler period many Catholics and Protestants had suffered persecution together and shared life in concentration camps under the Nazis. One of the results of this was a new recognition of the really important things which united Christians, and of the new tasks which they needed to tackle together. All of this began to put the older historical differences into a new perspective. In pre-war Germany the separation of Catholics and Protestants was a bit like Ireland - "the folk memories of the Thirty Years War still worked subconsciously" (Owen Chadwick - Pelican History of the Reformation).

But there was now far more common endeavour and worship and a growing number of mixed marriages. Scholars on both sides worked together on Luther and this had its own impact eventually (through people like Karl Barth and Karl Rahner etc) on the process leading to Vatican II. The early contacts between visiting groups from Ireland (led by Ray Davey) and Christians from all traditions working for the reconstruction of Europe after World War II had a catalytic effect. As we reflected on our divided society these new developments gave us a fresh vision and a hope for a different future.



One of the pioneers of the new laity centres in Germany was Werner Simpfendorfer, who became General Secretary of the European Association of Academies and Laity Centres. His vision of ecumenical learning is worth quoting in order to understand the meaning of this new movement.

“Ecumenical learning is a process in which we discover that God in Christ has given us not a first, a second or a third world, but one world. He has promised this one world a common future. To discover, unveil and put into practice this common future is the task of ecumenical learning. Such learning is a process of discovery. It involves the departure from my father’s house, an exodus from my homeland, taking the risk of unexpected brotherhood and sisterhood. Such faith journeys of discovery cannot be prescribed by any authority... the unforeseen and even chaos are normal factors on this journey because the one world looks different from different angles.”

“It happens when we participate in the painful struggle of Christ for his one world.”

“It is first and foremost a call to follow in the footsteps of the suffering Christ, involving ourselves in the struggle against those principalities and powers which distort lives, destroy creation and rob people of the fullness of life.”

“For us in the West this means above all, conversion from the misuse of power to sharing and solidarity within the one world. It means taking up the struggle against the forces bent on dividing the one world...an act which will bring us into conflict with the ruling powers who want us to be system integrated consumers.”

“Ecumenical learning happens when we link local experience with global concerns... it requires a worldwide network of centres designed to foster primary ecumenical experience (i.e. face to face meeting across the divides).”

In his contribution Werner Simpfendorfer stresses the development of a new consciousness which links the local to the global. It recognises the call to the Church to be a sign and a foretaste of the new global humanity to which we are called in Christ.

It was consistent with this that the international dimension was built into Corrymeela from the beginning both in terms of the presence of volunteers and staff from overseas and through networking with other centres and exchange programmes etc.

The Corrymeela Community, as distinct from the Centre became, in many ways, a support network mainly for lay people from all denominations. They often found themselves challenged to act together with other Christians for the sake of healing of the wounds of society as a whole, rather than giving an exclusive focus to their own denomination (see "Faith under Pressure", Audenshaw Paper No 19). They sought to promote openness within church and social structures where the tendency is always towards the closing of ranks and inevitable pull towards sectarianism. People who took this path were (and still are) accused of disloyalty; they often feel very lonely and isolated, and a target of suspicion and mistrust; they need mutual support on the way.

One of the most important aspects of the new style of learning which emerged in the laity movement and the work of new centres has been the emphasis on learning through the sharing of stories. This has had the advantage of developing an empathy amongst participants, and a capacity to enter into each others' experience and history. Where people enter into an atmosphere of trust and where they risk sharing something of themselves, a deeper bonding of relationships can occur, which enables social, cultural or religious gulfs to be bridged. There is a recognition of our common humanity which transcends other divisions and makes possible new and unexpected developments. It is above all in the experience

of listening to one another and in listening to God's word together that real change takes place. There is a place for sharp debate and encounter but unless it is in the context of listening it tends to be defensive and polemical, seeking to justify rather than search for the truth.

To take seriously the "whole people of God" in the life witness of the Church in the way that Mark Gibbs suggests still require a major revolution. And yet it is wholly consistent with the teaching of Christ and the Apostles as set out in the Gospels and the Epistles. Perhaps it is in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4 that this understanding of the diversity of gifts within the unity of the one body is most clearly spelt out. To take it seriously is to recognise our total interdependence and to acknowledge that sometimes our "less comely parts are given greater honour". In other words that God works in ways which always surprise us, and our understanding of what and who is important can often be sadly wrong!!

PRAYER

We are new men and women in Christ,  
members of his body, the world Church.

We are called,  
We are free,  
We are rich,  
We are sent,  
We are ministers, servants.

Lord help us to fulfil our ministries.

Dear Lord

Thank you that I am sometimes strong,  
Help me when I am still weak.

Thank you that I am sometimes wise,  
Help me when I am still foolish.

Thank you that I have sometimes done well,  
Forgive me the times that I have failed you.

And teach me to serve you and your world  
With love and faith and truth,

With hope and grace and good humour.

*Amen.*

*(written by Mark Gibbs)*





PEOPLE ON A JOURNEY

**T**here is always a tendency for us to believe that the form of the Church which we inherit is the form which it has had from the beginning. Because we inherit a tradition we can sometimes assume that it has been set in a mould like concrete from the start. "The rock of Ages."

Of course there is a line of continuity in the history of the Church which is there throughout all of its history, otherwise it would not be the faith of the Apostles, but the ways in which the people of God have had to respond to different historical circumstances has meant that their social patterns of life have often changed. One of the people who helped some of us to see this most clearly was Ralph Morton, deputy leader of the Iona Community and a former missionary in China. Ralph exercised his influence in a very unobtrusive way and with great humility in partnership with such a dominant personality as George MacLeod. However, he was just as prophetic in his own way.

In his book "The Household of Faith" Ralph traced the various phases through which the Church has expressed its social pattern of life beginning with the early Church when they were a persecuted minority within the Roman Empire. During this period they formed small communities often attached to a house - perhaps the house of a better off member of society. These households, like most of the households of their time, were fairly large groups, including slaves and free servants as well as members of the family. When a household became Christian it became the meeting place of a much larger group. They did not meet only for worship, but for meals and not only on Sundays. Travelling Christians found board and lodging there. They shared most of their

possessions; men and women were fully involved together, Jews and Gentiles, people with different customs, slaves and free. Justin Martyr wrote "we who hated and destroyed one another, on account of our different manners and would not share the same hearth with men of another tribe, now, since the coming of Christ, live on intimate terms with them, and pray for our enemies and endeavour to persuade those who hate us to live according to the good precepts of Christ, so that they may become partakers with us of the same joyful hope".

After the conversion of Constantine (300+AD) the Church, though still a minority, began to be organised on an official basis throughout the Empire and the pattern of parishes and clergy (a kind of official civil servant) developed. Although this new format resulted in a much more systematic spread of the Christian Faith, it also raised new questions for those who were alarmed at the corruption and decay of the Roman Empire and who wanted to express the original impulse of the Gospel. So, new experiments in Christian social living developed in monasteries, led by Augustine, Benedict, Basil and others. Benedict's pattern became the norm and it was essentially a lay movement for ordinary Christians. (The original monks were not priests.)

In the turmoil of the collapse of the Roman Empire and the breakdown of ordinary social life, here was a place where all could find security, fellowship and work. The Abbot was elected by his fellows. Manual work had an integral place. It was a self-contained economic organism. Daily life was regulated and ordered - work, meals, leisure and worship - and this gave meaning to life. The vows of poverty, chastity and obedience led to a life of security, fellowship and peace. In practice the monasteries preserved and promoted learning, education and agriculture. They eventually produced the resources to send out missionaries and the missionary team included teachers and agriculturalists. The Celtic missionaries



from Ireland and Scotland and the Augustinians from Canterbury spread the Gospel through all of these islands and much of Western Europe. This pattern of life was very different from the earlier household of faith. Out of it grew the whole medieval civilisation and the concept of "Christendom".

The basic structures of the monastic pattern became the building blocks for the new feudal society. But in the process society became clericalised and there was a new separation of religion and life, of clergy and lay, in the hierarchical pattern of the Church's life which emerged. Through their economic success monasteries became part of the land-owning class and heralded the beginning of capitalism. Francis of Assisi was the first sign of a new prophetic protest and of a desire to return to the personal source of the divine life for all. Sadly his own efforts were clericalised and contained in the medieval monastic patterns. But his free spirit and its influence lived on in the precursors of the Reformation such as the Waldensians in northern Italy.

As the pattern of life changed it was the family which was becoming the dominant pattern. The manor house had ousted the castle. There was a greater security in social life and education began to be more widely available. It was the existence of this newly developing unit of social life that made it ready to receive the message of the reformers. Reacting against the separation of religion and life and in the conviction that faith was concerned with the ordinary life of people they substituted the Table for the Altar, the participation of all in the sharing of the bread and wine and the use of the Bible and language of worship in the vernacular. The church building was no longer thought of as the only or even main place of worship. The home, not the Church, was the place of daily prayer. Even in the Roman Catholic Church this effect was seen in the new focus on the Holy Family and the place of the Virgin Mary and Joseph. To this day in Protestant Churches in Ireland church members are counted in families

rather than in numbers of communicants.

But this new pattern gave women less of a place than the Middle Ages. After the dissolution of the convents, the new options were mainly for men in the eldership. Gifted women looked for philanthropic ways of expressing their discipleship (Elizabeth Fry and Florence Nightingale). The idea of "vocation" gave men a way of seeing their daily work as the place for God's will. So long as the work situation was closely linked with the physical pattern of family life, the Christian spirit penetrated it all. However, gradually the commercial life and the political life came to be separate from the family and there was no ethic to prevent this developing into economic individualism. In the end it became accepted that economic progress and moral elevation were synonymous!! This combined with the worship of thrift encouraged greater cumulation of wealth.

The crisis deepened with the development of the industrial revolution. The response of the Victorians was the development of "the Congregation" with its many activities of charity, service and philanthropy to the despairing working classes. Some strains of Methodism did reach the people with a more authentic solidarity but on the whole there was no possibility of challenging the economic patterns. They were as the laws of nature - unchangeable!! So ethics was concerned with how we spend our money but not, in the main, with how we make it. Even Shaftesbury, who attacked the conditions of the poor and their exploitation, did not challenge the iron laws of economics.

The missionary movement of the 19th century did begin to break with the individualistic pattern of the age, in that they began to work with missionary teams of medical, agricultural, educational and evangelistic components. They also showed some willingness to break out of the ethnic rigidity of Western European life and to cross racial and ethnic

## JOURNEY OF HOPE

boundaries in spite of their shared prejudices. Their more equal sharing of income began to be a question-mark to the Church at home. Lay men and women had a bigger role here and clergy no longer dominated.

In all of this Ralph Morton gives us some perspective as we look at the particular questions facing us today. It is clear that there can be no return to an old style rural society; no return to Christendom in the new global society where we must meet and live together with people of all races and creeds. There can be no return to paternalism in a society where more people have access to education. We also know that to retreat into our families today would be to deny our interdependence with all in the new kind of world in which we live. What we have to do above all is to be signs of the reality of our interdependent world and to use our freedom of choice to express this in ways that can enable people to live a Christian life in today's world. We are called to be a sign of the new world which the Spirit of God seeks to bring into being which transcends the boundaries of class, race, culture and gender, enemy and friend.

If we turn to the story of the people of God in the Old Testament, one of most potent images is that of the Children of Israel travelling through the desert. (refs. Numbers 9: 15-23) The sign of the presence of God with them is a moveable tabernacle, not a stone building. Their image of the Church as a "caravan" rather than a stone building is a dynamic image rather than a static one and it gives us a way of understanding many aspects of our faith that is fresh and illuminating. We can see the people of God venturing in faith in new ways at each stage of the journey, equipped with a caravan and but not with a detailed plan. That alone can be w in each particular situation.

This image was highlighted for me by another (Seeliger) comparing it with the image of the "coo

in Western United States. If our image of the Church is a "caravan" then our image of God is a dynamic one too. God is more like a trail boss who gets down in the mud when the wheels get jammed. He is with us on the journey. If our image of the Church is the "court-house" then God becomes more like an autocratic mayor who is more concerned with the law than the journey. With a dynamic image we can understand "sin" on the journey as turning back based on fear and lack of trust in our guide. But in the static image of the "court-house" and the mayor, sin is understood as breaking the law and faith is simply keeping your nose clean or being respectable!!

All of this simply shows how the images we have can condition so many aspects of our understanding of God, of Church and of sin or faith. It is only as we are liberated from static imagery that we are free to see the real challenge of the life of faith today. Professor Enda McDonagh of Maynooth once said that the most significant change in the Roman Catholic Church at Vatican II was when the image of the Church as "the body of Christ" was complemented with the image of "a pilgrim people". That opened the door to many new possibilities.

The Corrymeela Community is one attempt to explore alternative models of the Church for our situation today. The specific aspects of our context include many of those outlined by Ralph Morton as we share in the search for signs and patterns of interdependence and explore the meaning of human relationships in a fraternal rather than a paternal way. But the most concrete aspect of our local situation is that of a divided society and a divided Church, where the enmity, rivalry and violence have been at least partly nourished by our respective traditions. Only by learning to live and share together in new ways can we begin to forge an alternative pattern which transcends past struggles for domination by different national, cultural and religious traditions.

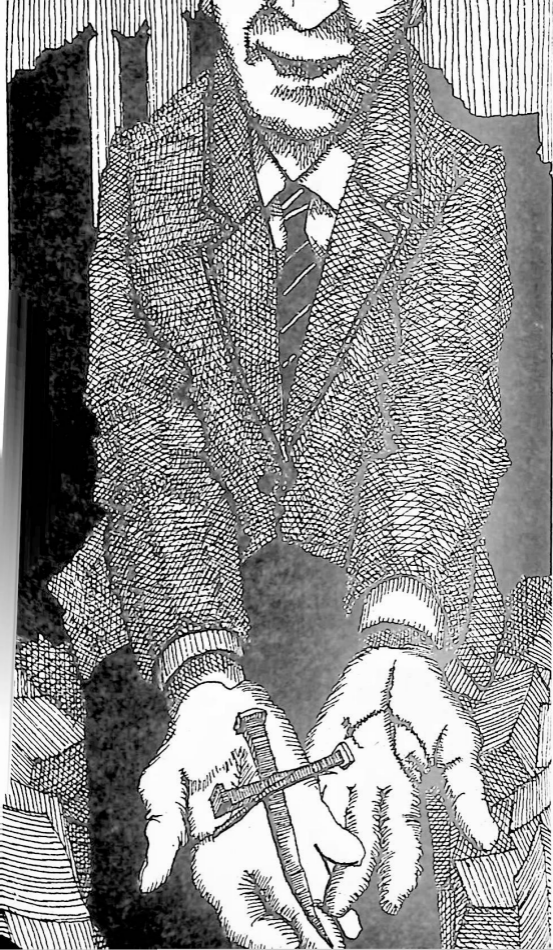
The model of "a people on a new journey" also helps us to understand and address the situation in new ways. Most of the main church traditions have been wedded to a very static model of the Church, a too static understanding of God and a more legalistic rather than a faith understanding of the Christian life. Protestants have sometimes used the image of the people of God in an exclusivist way to justify their special calling in the midst of a "heathen" or "idolatrous" people, like the Children of Israel in the promised land amongst enemies. Roman Catholics have sometimes seen their struggle as a way to recreate an earlier pure Celtic and Catholic culture and to overthrow the oppression of imperial and Protestant Britain. These separate stories have sometimes aggravated the political violence over the centuries. There is now a chance for the image of the pilgrim people of God to be a common one for Catholics and Protestants as they seek a way out of a history of conflict and have fresh experiences of the meaning of diversity in unity and interdependence. It can be a journey on which we are both transformed and where the new patterns of community are inclusive of all and in solidarity with the victims of our society.

'THE HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH'

"We can be quite sure that some new form of Christian corporate life will emerge in the world. To refuse to believe that is to refuse to believe in God. Already there are groups in other countries that are making experiments. Already there are different patterns of Christian living to be found in the younger Churches of Asia and Africa. It may be that from these the new world pattern will emerge. Our problem is simply that of obedience - of doing the things that are revealed to us and of leaving events to mould the form."

*Quotation from Ralph Morton*







## HEALING THE WOUNDS OF HISTORY

**T**wo years after the founding of the Corrymeela Community I was invited to take a position as chaplain to overseas students in Glasgow. It was a daunting task and no one could really define it adequately yet I felt drawn to see what I could make of it. Without going into unnecessary detail, I was asked to be the Church of Scotland's ecumenical representative and ambassador to 1,500 visiting students from dozens of different countries and from many different religious, cultural and racial backgrounds.

It was above all, for me, an education and an exposure to the harsh realities of our conflict laden world. During my time there (4 1/2 years) at least seven civil wars took place (including one in Nigeria (Biafra) and in Pakistan leading to the creation of Bangladesh). I was forced to wrestle with the complex issues of the post-colonial era; to become aware of the unhealed wounds between and within nations and the legacy of European exploitation of indigenous peoples. Attempts to keep dialogue and conversation going between students whose parents and friends were at war was a sobering experience. It did, however, help me to put some of the issues of conflict in Northern Ireland into perspective. Although Corrymeela had been founded in the full consciousness of a divided society and the challenge of reconciliation, in 1965 it was still more of a "cold war". It was only when I was in Glasgow that I became aware that it was rapidly becoming a hot war!!

All of this was making me more aware of the wider dimension of the Northern Ireland problem and of my need to experience life in the larger part of the island of Ireland, if I was to understand more fully the wounds of our history and the sources from which our enmity arose. The opportunity to work

as a Presbyterian chaplain to colleges and universities in Dublin seemed to offer such a challenge. In 1971 the effects of Vatican II were beginning to be more widespread and the opportunities for dialogue and co-operation across traditional boundaries were greatly increased. Concern for events in the North brought me together with a wide network of people in, for example, the newly formed Irish School of Ecumenics, the Glenree Centre for Reconciliation, the Social Studies and Glenstal Ecumenical Conferences etc.

Amongst the many people I met in the process was Mrs Una O'Higgins O'Malley who had a deep vocation to work for the healing of the wounds in Ireland and between Britain and Ireland. This commitment was closely related to her own personal history. Her father, Kevin O'Higgins, had been Minister of Justice in the first Free State Government and had had to carry the burden of maintaining order at a time when irregulars were still trying to destabilise the fledgling state. He was one of the last of the key figures to be murdered by the IRA (in 1927.)

Una had a deep sense of the need for the healing of the scars of the Irish Civil War and equally for the healing of the North/South and East/West (British/Irish) dimensions of our history. For her this was no abstract theory but a living reality which she experienced and which led her to become a pioneer in attempts to explore the role of forgiveness in politics. She was deeply aware of the way in which symbolic occasions like memorial and remembrance services can be highly divisive so she sought to create imaginative occasions where people could be helped to enter into each other's suffering and let go of past hatred, bitterness and enmity. She realised, better than most, that calling for the resolution of our problems in the name of "Justice" alone could never succeed unless the basic hurts on all sides had begun to be healed. She knew, in her bones that forgiveness and repentance were the heart of Christ's message and that they were the only foundation for a

## JOURNEY OF HOPE

renewal of politics - a politics of reconciliation.

Strangely enough it was around the same time that many of us within Corrymeela came under the influence of the Coventry Cathedral Community of the Cross of Nails. When Provost Williams and Canon Horace Dammers launched a major international appeal to build a residential house for our volunteer staff and a resource for the work of the Corrymeela Centre we were drawn into the Coventry story and experience.

Many are aware of the recent history of Coventry Cathedral and how the older building (St. Michael's Cathedral) was destroyed during the heavy bombing of the city of Coventry (in November 1940). Following the devastation, a charred cross was erected behind the altar amid the ruins and later the inscription "Father Forgive" was made on the stonework. Three of the roof nails were put together into the form of a cross (the Cross of Nails) and this later became the symbol for an international movement of healing and reconciliation, at first between Dresden and Coventry. (Dresden was the German city which received the most devastating allied bombing towards the end of the war in 1945.) The depth of bitter feelings between British and German peoples at the end of World War II was immense and this two way gesture between Christians in Dresden and Coventry was a recognition of the urgent need to promote a process of healing. It led to the founding of the Deaconess Hospital in Dresden and a reconciliation centre staffed by German volunteers in the ruins of Coventry Cathedral. But even more so it led to a world-wide movement (known as "the Community of the Cross of Nails") into which we at the Corrymeela Centre were being drawn through the initiative to build "Coventry House".

Amongst the many activities promoted at that time by Canon Horace Dammers (Warden of Kennedy House Coventry) was a project to bring together theological students from Anglican, Presbyterian and Roman Catholic traditions and expose them

to the Coventry vision. I was privileged to be asked to share in the leadership of that together with Fr. Brendan Murphy, a Northern Ireland priest and a member of Corrymeela. I will never forget my first experience of the impact of the ultra modern new Cathedral growing, as it were, out of the ashes and ruins of the old, which had been deliberately left untouched since the bombing. It remained, a permanent reminder of the suffering and of the miracle of "life through death" which lies at the heart of Christian faith.

The experience of sharing in the healing process between Britain and Germany and contact with many other initiatives of healing linked to the Cross of Nails in USA, Nicaragua, and Israel have greatly encouraged and influenced the life and work of Corrymeela. Coventry House at Corrymeela has, over the years, become the home of over 200 one-year volunteers and some permanent staff and a meeting point across so many international cultures and traditions, enriching and challenging us all. A residential house where the sharing of life has thrown many of our young people into contact with their contemporaries from other cultures through living and learning together in community.

Within Britain and Ireland this focus on the healing of the wounds of our history has led a number of members of the Community into many different initiatives often in partnership with others. For example within the Interchurch Group on Faith and Politics (sponsored by Corrymeela, Glencree and the Irish School of Ecumenics) Una O'Higgins O'Malley and Fr. Brian Lennon, a Jesuit priest, have been prominent contributors. An attempt has been made to draw together Catholics and Protestants, lay and clergy from North and South on this island, to reflect together on ways of "Breaking down the Enmity" and seeking to inject the insights of faith and the call to repentance and forgiveness into the political process and the Church's witness. The results of these reflections have been published in pamphlets which have been widely

dispersed and have led to ongoing dialogue with all sections of Church and society (including political leaders).

Other initiatives such as Joseph Parker's "Witness for Peace" movement and the "Cross Group" founded by Maura Kiely, a member of Corrymeela, have been examples of bereaved groups in which people from all traditions have reached out to one another and made a public witness for the benefit of us all. Fr. Neal Carlin (of Columba House in Derry) has explored the special value of symbolic occasions of public repentance in Derry, Belfast and London and Una O'Higgins O'Malley has initiated imaginative services of remembrance and healing in Dublin. Brian Frost and others have taken this up in Britain and done research on other examples of the politics of forgiveness in international affairs (e.g. President Carter's initiative involving Begin and Sadat, and Mandela and De Klerk in South Africa).

Anyone who has long established roots in one of the "traditions" in Ireland is aware of the depth of the past wounds that are carried from generation to generation. The celebrations of ancient battles are never able to become mere folk history because the issues connected with them remain unresolved in the present. Thus 1690 and 1916 are still highly partisan events and remain very much "the property" of orange or green. Coming to terms with history and hurt is further confounded as we continue to inflict new wounds daily and new causes for remembrance in divisive ways are manufactured each year. Anniversaries of Bloody Sunday, hunger striker deaths, the Anglo-Irish Agreement and various massacres etc. compete for space in the calendar.

Even more difficult is the task of helping Churches to acknowledge their part in nurturing sectarian strife or in upholding divisive patterns in e.g. interchurch marriage or education. Nevertheless something has been learnt over the years both in small group sharing and in more public events of

the need to hear and acknowledge the hurts that we have inflicted on one another in the past, in terms of oppression, colonial exploitation, discrimination, revenge killings, mutual intimidation and ethnic cleansing etc., and to set one another free for new beginnings. In a special seminar on "The Healing of Memories" the Irish School of Ecumenics has made a notable contribution to the various dimensions of this theme and helped us to recover the centrality of forgiveness for the healing of the painful memories of our society.

In spite of many weaknesses, the Anglo-Irish Agreement (and now the Downing Street Declaration) is an attempt to take on board the three major dimensions of the healing which is necessary for any real progress to be made. The internal strife within Northern Ireland has to be set in the context of a broken North-South relationship and still unhealed British-Irish dimension. To have recognised the importance of all three of these dimensions is a positive step even though the significance of the journey which has to be travelled has still not really been appreciated by all of the parties involved. The recent breakdown of the former Yugoslavia and the new ethnic tensions in parts of the old Soviet Union are a reminder that many of the wounds of history remained unhealed and are often simply suppressed by an imperial power of one kind or another.

The co-option of national churches to the support of different cultures of national or ethnic groups has left them powerless to act as instruments of reconciliation. Indeed we have often contributed strongly to the sectarian conflicts by providing the cement for our cultures and some of that sense of self-righteous superiority or idolatry which finds expression in the conflicts.

Ireland is a classic case of this captivity of the churches. Yet the Ecumenical movement has not been totally suppressed in spite of these sectarian forces. Corrymeela is not alone in its witness to a new kind of partnership and a new willingness

## JOURNEY OF HOPE

to risk the vulnerable journey towards healing and renewal.

Coventry House at Corrymeela remains an important physical symbol and reminder of our international solidarity with movements for healing the wounds of history in many parts of the earth. It reminds us that our wounds are not so unique as we think and that in sharing with others we can deepen our own understanding as well as share our experiences of hurt and healing with others. But because it has been above all a house for young people it has been a place where new international bonds of friendship have been forged and a sign of hope for tomorrow's world.

THE COVENTRY LITANY  
OF RECONCILIATION

Father, forgive

All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.

The hatred which divides nation from nation, race from race, class from class,

Father, forgive

The covetous desires of people and nations to possess what is not their own,

Father forgive

The greed which exploits the labours of men and women, and lays waste the earth,

Father, forgive

Our envy of the welfare and happiness of others,

Father, forgive

Our indifference to the plight of the homeless and the refugee,

Father, forgive

The lust which uses for ignoble ends the bodies of men and women and children,

Father, forgive

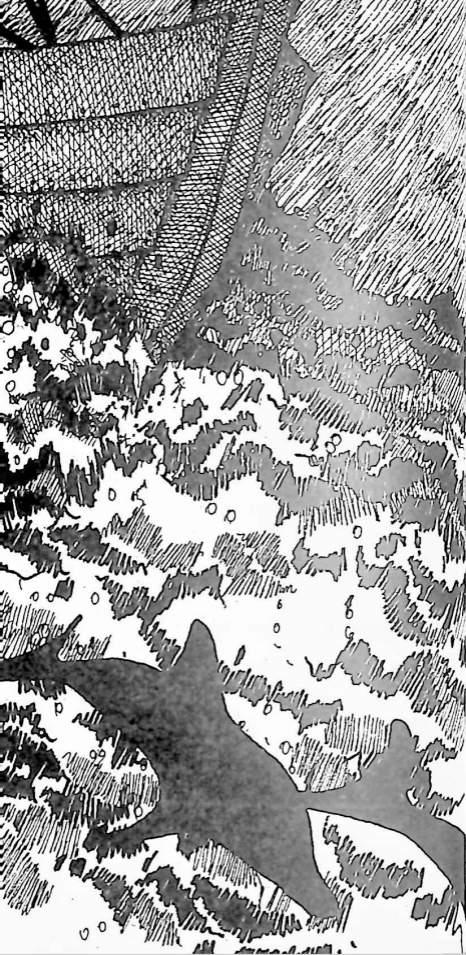
The pride which leads us to trust in ourselves, and not in God,

Father forgive

Be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.







## SPIRITUALITY &amp; COMMUNITY

**M**y first awareness of Jean Vanier came about through the contact with an Anglican sister (Sister Anna) working for reconciliation in North Belfast. Indeed so strongly did she press me to become involved in recruiting for one of his visits to Belfast that it almost had the opposite effect!! To support her enthusiasm she left some tapes on the desk in the chaplain's office at Queen's University where I had come to work in the mid 70's. Almost accidentally I began to listen to one of them in an idle moment and found myself held by the voice and the conviction which flowed from it. Since that time many Corrymeela members have had strong links with Jean Vanier and he has made a deep impact on many people within our network.

Some of those who became involved in the Community in the early years were deeply suspicious of a certain kind of pietism which they associated with a "holier than thou" attitude, and a lack of any social conscience. Indeed they often saw certain forms of spirituality as deeply sectarian and a divisive force in our society. Unfortunately this sometimes led to a kind of liberal activism and a superficial approach to life in Community. Faced with the increased pressures brought about by having to live and work together closely and to meet with so many practical, pastoral and social demands from the visiting groups and individuals, our staff and volunteers were often exhausted and frustrated. The expectations laid upon us by others and even more by ourselves led us to a practice of keeping up a welcoming face and an accompanying sense of guilt that we were hypocrites after all. The daily worship was often focused more on the needs of the visiting groups and did not feed us for our own community life. Our efforts to be

available at all times led to a degree of indiscipline which sooner or later took its toll.

Jean Vanier brought to us a depth of understanding of spirituality in community taken from his experiences of living with the mentally handicapped and in the formation of the worldwide network of l'Arche Communities. Jean is a lay Catholic of French/Canadian origin and although his deep Catholic roots permeate much of his writing it reaches out to people of every tradition or none.

Of special value to us in Corrymeela was his "embodied spirituality" arising out of lived relationships with others in their total bodily existence. There is no trace of any kind of "precious" approach which dodges the realities of life and the pain that we all go through as we come to terms with the physical stresses and strains of daily existence. The particular gift of the mentally handicapped is their greater honesty and openness which does not allow us to play the sophisticated games of evasion and self deception.

It was by putting us in touch with our own vulnerability that we began to learn from Jean to know ourselves better. He showed us how the heart of Jesus' teaching was in revealing the darkness within us, as well as the light, and how it is in our interrelations with others that we can discover more about ourselves. But we always want to flee from that because it is too difficult for us to accept that we too are poor.

One of the most poignant New Testament passages by which he used to convey this was the one on Peter's denial. When Peter denied that he knew Jesus he used the words "I do not know that man". Jean comments: "He spoke more truly than he knew. He did not know the real Jesus and he did not know himself." It has always been a part of our philosophy that in welcoming guests we receive as much and often more than we give. But in practice unless we are fully open to the implications of new friendships we can remain

limited by our self perception as serving and helping and not be open to being served and helped ourselves. The message of the l'Arche Communities is a warning against a kind of superficial activism and a challenge to move on towards authentic community and friendship.

"If you enter a relationship with a lonely or suffering person, you will discover something else. It is you who are being healed. The broken person will reveal to you your own hurt, but also how much you are loved. Then the one you came to heal becomes your healer."

Jean Vanier knew better than anyone I have ever met the healing power of acceptance. Above all he knew that the deepest need of us all is for God's unconditional love. But he also knew how difficult it is for us to really learn to accept others and ourselves.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German theologian and martyr under Hitler, described three phases in the process of acceptance which he observed in the growth of Christian Community. At first we think everyone is an angel. But soon reality sets in and we find out each other's faults and inadequacies. At this point we are liable to see only the worst in each other (hypocrites or devils in disguise!). If we are willing to stay the journey we may reach the stage where we accept one another "warts and all".

In the life of our resident Community at Ballycastle we often noted those phases. It is so easy to love our "dream" of Community rather than the real brothers and sisters which God has given us. To reach the point where we really can give one another their place, when we begin to learn how to call forth each other's gifts rather than crush them, is not without pain. In the process we have to learn to deal with those who reflect back to us those parts of our own being that we cannot face or accept. And because we continue to hurt one another and often fail to listen, our community life is only possible through forgiveness.

It is often in this process that we realise afresh the importance and meaning of prayer. The challenge of new and old relationships reveals to us the urgency of being in contact with our real centre. We know that we need to learn how to be at rest. We need to discover our own secret rhythm. L'Arche Communities make much of simple times of celebration like common meals. Reconciliation communities must give as much time to their own needs and nourishing, if they are to have anything to give. Times of fun and frivolity are just as important as serious reflection. As Sheila Cassidy put it: real friendship is built with those who are prepared to "waste time" with us and not just "spend time" with us.

One of the great dangers of groups committed to work for peace and reconciliation is the temptation to look for the big gestures, the dramatic action which turns the world around. There is, of course, a place for these, but even then they may arise quite surprisingly from something very simple or unsuspected. As Jean Vanier says

"Peace making begins.....

in welcoming with compassion  
others with whom we live and work,  
those who threaten us, because they are different,  
those who hurt us, our enemies,  
because they tread on our toes....  
 Peace making begins at home  
 as we carry the wound of others  
 and allow them to carry ours....  
 The basis of true human life  
 is a rooting in the earth  
 of faithful relationships,  
 fidelity to those to whom we are bonded in love...  
 It will be from there, from fidelity and love  
 for those with whom we are called to love  
 that we might be called to stand firm  
 against insolent power structures,

## JOURNEY OF HOPE

and called to struggle, to help each person find their rightful place in society and the Church, the space in which to grow. It will be from there that each of us may become an agent of change and of love for the whole of society."

*The Broken Body - Jean Vanier*

There is an integrity and consistency in these words which cuts through all our pretence and it has come as a profound question to the spirituality at the heart of our community life.

We know that we have not reached mature levels of acceptance in many of our relationships and there is much hurt even amongst ourselves which remains unhealed and unforgiven. But at least we are no longer innocent and it is less possible to delude ourselves. In this atmosphere of greater honesty and less sentimentalism, an openness to the Spirit of God does from time to time reveal to us the profound mystery of unity in diversity and our interdependence in Christ.

'BROKEN BODY'

"It is always easier to do things for people than to help them find their human dignity, and so by doing things for themselves.

When we do too much,  
not helping others to grow  
or take responsibility for themselves,  
are we not just serving ourselves?

- seeking power and a pedestal?

To serve broken people  
means helping them, like a mother helps her child  
to discover their own gifts and beauty,  
helping them to a greater independence,  
so that gradually we may disappear."

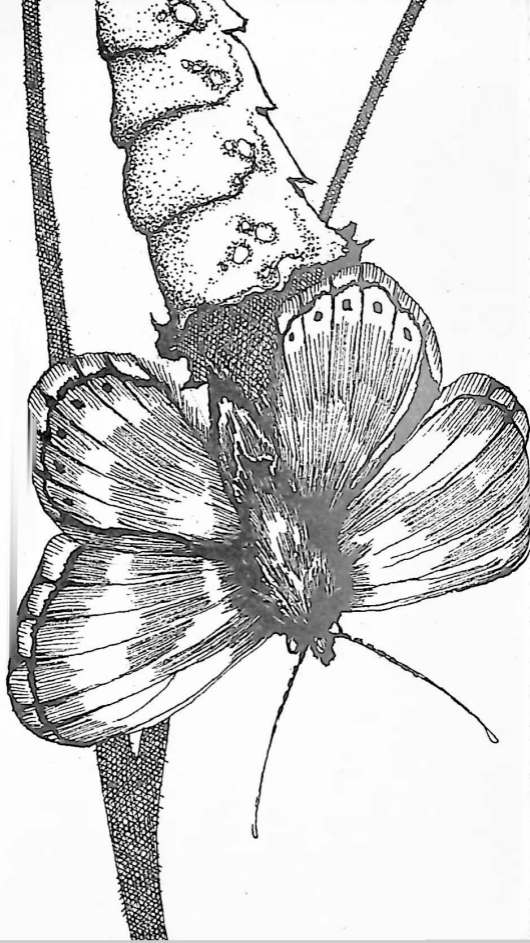
*from Jean Vanier "Broken"*



lf-respect

ld,

*n Body*"



## RE-FORMATION - NEW FORMS OR EXPRESSIONS OF CHURCH

**C**orrymeela emerged at a time when there was a growing frustration with the limits and forms of mainstream church life in different parts of the world. Our current structures seemed to be inward looking, obsessed with their own life and preservation and not engaged with the life of the world. They were sectarian and denominational in a world where division was more and more threatening to split societies apart, not only in Northern Ireland, but on a global scale on issues of race and poverty. They were paternalistic, not creating adult relationships or an authentic partnership between clergy and people.

The breakdown of older social patterns in society, the separating of work and home environments, the increased mobility and the loss of close knit communities left parish and congregational structures no longer able to address the whole of life and with a tendency to privatise the faith. The growing anonymity of society left many people, especially in urban areas, without a sense of significance or a sense of belonging. In more deprived areas where unemployment was rife this was most severe.

Within the churches there was a stirring of the Spirit as people began to search for alternative or complementary forms and expressions of Christian Community for our time. This arose also because of a resistance on the part of the existing institutions to take on board the changes in society and the need for new approaches.

Corrymeela was but one of many different groups which came into existence in the 60's and 70's which came together

in a loose confederation as the "National Association of Christian Communities and Networks" (NACCAN). One of the key figures in this development was Rev. David Clarke, a Methodist Minister who became a lecturer on Community Studies at Westhill College, Selly Oak, Birmingham. He recognised a growing movement experimenting with new ways of re-forming the Church in our society.

Many of the groups or communities which became part of this network arose as a result of particular local situations. The focus could vary as widely as community with the mentally handicapped (l'Arche Communities); housing and homeless projects, economic and ecological communities; multi-ethnic groups; renewal groups, therapeutic and healing communities, etc. But all of them were transdenominational or at least moving in that direction. They were open ended and in some kind of engagement with the world.

In many of the groups although clergy were sometimes significantly involved, there was strong lay leadership and participation and equal partnership between men and women. Although the groups were many and varied there was no sectarian spirit or suggestion that they wished to claim an exclusive vocation or set up new denominations. In general there was the feeling that they needed to remain in solidarity with the Church at large, with particular traditions and keep dialogue open at all levels.

The importance of the "NACCAN" network was that it enabled a wider "catholic" expression of this new movement to emerge where some of the common dimensions could be identified and clarified for the sake of all. Central to the whole development was a search for a "missionary" or outward looking structure for the Church of tomorrow in place of one which was preoccupied with its own life and preservation. A structure which was adaptable, fraternal rather than paternal in its approach to authority and able to be a sign in our society of God's purpose for the whole.

## JOURNEY OF HOPE

In addition to Corrymeela other groups in Northern Ireland which emerged were eg. the Christian Renewal Centre Rostrevor, the Cornerstone Community, Columba House in Derry, the Columbanus Community. Each of these groups had a distinctive approach and sometimes a very specific focus as for example the Christian Renewal Centre: the rediscovery of the gift of the Holy Spirit for the life of the Church and society; Columba House: the need for a ministry to prisoners and ex-prisoners; Cornerstone: the call to be a visible sign of reconciliation on the peace line in West Belfast etc.

As already indicated, Corrymeela owed much to the inspiration of the Iona Community which was one of the first developments in re-formation, but we were greatly influenced by our own context here in Northern Ireland. The sheer pressures of our denominational structures made it difficult to work for change without an instrument which would give us a degree of freedom to experiment and yet retain a sufficient solidarity to maintain creative communication with the whole. Thus from the beginning, the members of our dispersed Community were urged to retain dual membership of Corrymeela and a local congregation. Our particular pattern was given focus by the setting up of an open centre of meeting where groups and individuals from every section of our divided society could find a common sense of acceptance and of belonging; where we could create "safe space" in which to promote a more truthful conversation on every aspect of our social and personal lives.

The voluntary and participatory dimension of this "open village" has been retained even in a changed situation where it is necessary to employ a significant number of full-time staff. The relationships between staff and members, friends and guests is promoted in a fraternal and co-operative style and the partnership between them is of the essence of the ethos of the Centre.

The wider network of members and friends is enabled to

relate to the Centre and to one another in terms of a common vision and commitment and through various working groups, local district cell groups, and wider meetings, with the assistance of a non-residential resource centre in Belfast.

No-one would claim that these patterns or alternative ways of re-forming Church and expressing its life in different ways are a panacea. They are simply responses to the movement of the Spirit of God in our time. They presuppose an interdependence with other forms and seek no monopoly, only creative partnership. But what is important is to recognise that some of our previous models of Church are inadequate to address our current situation.

The situation is analogous to that in science when it was found that a particular model of mechanistic understanding of physics (developed by Isaac Newton and others) was no longer able to cope with the new questions arising. Only the work of Albert Einstein and others allowed a fresh approach. Again, contemporary science is having to move away from a purely analytical approach to understanding with all its overtones of control and domination, to a more holistic understanding of reality. This is being forced upon us all by the ecological crisis of our time and the recognition that the expansionist ethos of Western Culture is ultimately self-destructive.

The Catholic theologian Avery Dulles helps us to put different models of Church in perspective by a historical survey of the different forms and paradigms which have had controlling influence in different periods and regions. The Greek Orthodox pattern, the Roman pattern and the Reformed patterns all have their strengths and weaknesses and in different ways responded to cultural or historical situations. But, as David Clarke has shown, we have often become captive to one form as if no alternatives ever did or could exist.

Some aspects of our existing structures are obstacles to the

creation of community, of belonging and significance, for our society today. These structures can contradict the words and the message of Christ in various ways. Thus clericalism is often paternalistic and can prevent real partnership of the whole people of God in a truly fraternal way. Parochialism can be a kind of domestication of the message of the Gospel where it loses its wider reference to so many areas of our world's life. It often fails to recognise that in today's world community of interest is of equal importance to community of place. Also, community of place can sometimes be the victim of a narrow class or cultural group and be no kind of sign of the catholic and universal dimension of the Gospel, eg suburban areas, inner city ghettos. Our current structures do not readily make possible the kind of creative meeting across many boundaries which is the essence of a ministry of reconciliation. Indeed they have often promoted a kind of superficial politeness rather than honest encounter and dialogue.

Again our denominational structures can prevent the Church from being an agent of mission, unity and community in areas of new housing developments, in sectarian and divided societies like Northern Ireland, and in ministries to the total life of industry, commerce, agriculture and the arts. The priorities of our denominations for survival create the kind of competition which can undermine the central thrust of ministry and mission, waste energy and resources and cause frustration amongst all who seek to promote a wider vision. Such a wider vision seeks to give priority to the coming Kingdom and to enable the Church to serve it rather than to pretend to be its full manifestation.

But such a Kingdom-centred emphasis does not imply that the world's agenda is the only or even the right agenda. To do so would be to capitulate to the equally closed idea of a secularism which leaves no room for the work of the Spirit. It is only in an open ended encounter with the world that we can identify the real opportunities for witness and learn to

discern what needs to be affirmed as positive and good and what needs to be questioned. New structures need to offer people a sense of significance and a sense of belonging which is rooted in the depth of God's love for each of us and the breadth of God's love for all. They need to be signs of inclusive community which is also healing community and not superficial camaraderie.

In her recent book on communities Jeanne Hinton describes some of the groups as centres "where people's search for friendship and relationship has been met". Another quotation she gives is "where else would I find a place where I can give myself so completely to my sisters and brothers and where change is possible?" But she also says "communities are fragile and vulnerable" i.e. they sometimes break down; but even those which have seemingly failed are part of our common search and journey.

Perhaps it is dangerous to speak of models because each project is more a developing story than a model. A story which changes the model on the way. The important thing is that men and women are willing to risk new ways in response to the Holy Spirit.

The Corrymeela model has emerged out of the dispersed Community pattern of Iona, but with many adaptations to our own particular experience in Northern Ireland. The tension which arises between the commitment to a solidarity with existing structures (dual membership) and the increasing difficulty experienced by young people in identifying with those structures is an ongoing part of our life. We are totally opposed to the creation of a new sect which attempts to be the whole church in the fullest sense as understood in the New Testament. However, the increasing irrelevance of denominationalism is leading to a crisis which will have to be faced by the mainline churches if they are to win the allegiance of a new generation. The diversities which seek expression



## JOURNEY OF HOPE

today often cut across all our traditional divides. Only a new ecumenical vision can hold together valid old and new diversities within a unity which can be a sign of Christ's healing and reconciliation in the world.

'THE LIBERATION OF THE CHURCH'

"This book is about a church which has lost its way. It is about a great and glorious institution which has survived for more years than nations and empires; yet which now finds itself at the end of an evolutionary era. Like the dinosaur, the church now possesses a lifestyle and a form which prevents it making an effective response to the world of the present, let alone that of the future. But this book is also about a church which God never abandons. It is about the hope of liberation and of a "new re-formation" through which God is offering his people a new message, showing them new ways of making the Gospel real for our time."

*From "The Liberation of the Church" by D. Clarke*





## THE DUTCH DIMENSION

In 1974, along with a group of clergy from Ireland, I was invited to the Netherlands for a seminar. With the help of two Dutch facilitators (Fr. Andre Lascaris and Aat van Rhijn) one Catholic and the other Protestant we were given the opportunity to reflect on our situation from a distance. It was the beginning of an awareness that adult learning and adult education were much more advanced in the Netherlands than in Ireland. Although we did at first experience something of a culture clash with our Dutch hosts we realised that we had something important to learn from them.

My next significant connection with the Dutch was in January 1980 when Derick Wilson (then the Corrymeela Centre Director) and I were given the opportunity to visit Dutch lay academies and adult education centres. On that occasion we met a third member of the Dutch team (Roel Kaptein) with whom we developed a close relationship over the succeeding years. Roel had a great deal of experience of the pastoral care of ministers of the Dutch Reformed Church and his combination of theological and psycho-therapeutic insights has proved to be very enriching to many people in Northern Ireland, especially within the Corrymeela Community.

One of the key sources from which Roel drew his insights was the writings of René Girard, and he developed this in ways which have shed a lot of light on the dynamics of human relationships and conflict. What was especially significant was the way in which this enabled us to read the Gospel and the Scriptures in a fresh way. It is not possible in a short space to do justice to much of this inheritance but I will attempt to convey a little of the flavour of a process which has profoundly influenced our life and work. A central presupposition of

*mimesis*  
 Girard is that in our relationships we are always in "mimesis" i.e. I am feeling, thinking, doing as you do without knowing that I am imitating you; without being conscious of it. This always happens before we think, it is not the same as imitation.

In human culture this mimesis is a mimesis of desire. We take on or react to each other's desires to have or to get something or somebody without even knowing it. The object of our desire can be anything: a man, a woman, a reputation, a car, a position, a job and so on. If we all desire the same thing, the result can only be a clash - violence.

*rivalry*  
 The Genesis story of Adam and Eve is an attempt to explain this human enigma. I desire what you desire because you desire it and you desire it more because I desire it. We usually assume that our desires arise spontaneously within us but our desire always involves somebody else. It is triangular; the other who is already desiring, ourselves, and the desired person or object. Because we are both desiring the same thing we become rivals. As our desire escalates the conflict intensifies and soon we forget the original object of desire. It becomes more and more a "power fight". Also we become more and more like our rivals and this is true for people, groups or nations. We can see this in the history of the Northern Ireland troubles where the more we fought with each other the more we became doubles, the UVF became more and more like the IRA and vice versa and more and more the original object of desire disappeared or got lost.

The words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount e.g. "agree with your adversary while you are on the way with him otherwise he will take you to court and you may end up in prison or paying your last farthing", (Matthew 5 v 25) are an illustration of the tendency for all conflicts to escalate more and more so that if we do not settle them early on, the price paid by all parties may be very dear indeed.

Another possible relationship arising out of the mimesis of desire is that instead of being rivals we become absolute obstacles for one another. In a "model-obstacle" relationship I seek a model which is so great that I can never win. I am attracted to an unreachable model in a way which ensures that I will always lose, although I am not consciously aware of that. It may be a person I admire or an impossible ideal or a wish to be stronger than an enemy who is clearly stronger than I. In this relationship we become more and more obsessed by our goal and drive ourselves into the pit of depression or self destruction. Many of the addictions of our society fit into this category and when we struggle to defeat the addiction we constantly fail to do so. Many aspects of our conflict in Northern Ireland can be like an addiction. We need it almost like alcohol. We struggle against one another "knowing" that we cannot succeed.

model-obstacle

One very illuminating Biblical passage here is the story of the man at the pool of Bethesda who had been paralysed for 18 years. According to the story he was always waiting for the water to be disturbed in the belief that the first person to enter thereafter would be healed. When Jesus approached him the man explained that he could never reach the pool in time to receive its healing waters. Jesus confronted him with the question: "Do you really want to be healed?" He is trapped in a model-obstacle relationship seeking something which deep down he believes is impossible!! In the wake of that encounter with Jesus he finds a new freedom which liberates him from the mimesis of desire and brings about his healing.

One of the central theses of Girard is that human culture has been founded on particular acts of sacred violence through the mechanism of the scapegoat. After many years of anthropology he came to identify this pattern. Because the problem of mimesis of desire between human beings tends to escalate into uncontrollable violence and chaos, a way of stabilising societies was to focus the violence on one member (or group)

scapegoat

who was held responsible for all the difficulties (the scapegoat).

Peace came to societies when the scapegoat was unanimously driven out. The scapegoat carries away our violence for us. We project all our difficulties on to him or her and so find agreement with each other. This is a ritual of society and with it goes a myth or story which "explains" our origin. But the scapegoat is no more guilty than all the rest of us although this truth is hidden from us as part of the myth. We are the goodies. He or she is the baddie - even the devil. So our cultures and societies are always founded on a great hypocrisy.

Most stories of history are stories told from the point of view of the scapegoaters. But Girard became aware that the story of the Children of Israel was different. Here was a story told from the point of view of the scapegoat. The Israelites were the victims of oppression in Egypt.

The God who met them as scapegoats was not the "power God" of the nations but the God who identifies with the victims. They never fully understood their calling and kept hankering after the power Gods of the nations as illustrated in the events of the Old Testament.

The prophets recalled them again and again to keep faith with the one who cared for the victim and who alone was trustworthy. The story of Jesus brings all of this to a climax and finally unmasks the lie of the scapegoat for those who have eyes to see. Jesus exposed the hypocrisy of all attempts to divide people into goodies and baddies (i.e. to scapegoat some). No longer can we get rid of our problems by projecting them onto others. We are faced by the truth in Jesus and also with the possibility of a new beginning. To begin to live without scapegoats.

In his ministry Jesus refused to accept the distinction between righteous and sinners in Jewish society. He mixed freely with those who were regarded as heretical, unclean or morally incorrect, like tax collectors; fishermen; lepers and



Samaritans. He questioned the basis on which judgement of others took place, as in the case of the woman caught in an act of adultery. (Let whoever is without sin cast the first stone!) He pointed to the hypocrisy of many of our judgements in the vivid metaphors of the mote and the plank. "Why do you see the mote in your brother's eye, but fail to notice the plank that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take out the plank out of your own eye and then you will see clearly to take the mote out of your brother's eye." (Matthew 7: 3-5) In his teaching and example on forgiveness he laid the foundations for inclusive rather than exclusive community.

The history of the Church is rather like the history of Judaism in its ambivalence to its own message through the centuries. Worse still, we have at times used the event of the crucifixion in precisely the opposite way to its true meaning, i.e. as a weapon with which to scapegoat the Jews rather than face up to our own responsibilities or confess our own sins. But again and again through the renewing action of the Holy Spirit the lie of the scapegoat is unmasked and the reconciling power of the Gospel is revealed.

All cultures still continue to be built on the scapegoat mechanism but it is more and more difficult to convince ourselves that those whom we criminalise or exclude are more "guilty" than any of the rest of us. They are at least partly victims of circumstances and we suspect that given the same circumstances we could have acted in a similar way.

This is another way of expressing the traditional, theological doctrine that "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" but it gives it a fresh perspective. It takes us back to the central doctrine of grace and away from the moralising which so often dominates the life and teaching of the Church. It helps us to recover a full sense of our human solidarity which can be particularly salutary in a society like Northern Ireland. No longer can we look on terrorists as "scum" who

*inclusive community*

## JOURNEY OF HOPE

nsk  
are beyond the pale. We can only see them as part of our society with whom we are inextricably linked. They are no more or no less in need of redemption than all the rest of us. Only in that perspective can we meet and learn from each other, face up to the need for painful changes and open ourselves to the transformation which Jesus offers.

It is this unique reality of freedom which Jesus brings to our world as the one who is free from the mimesis of desire. Jesus knows this freedom in a different kind of mimesis - i.e. his relationship to "the Father". Being free from the mimesis of desire, he is free to follow the will of God.

dis  
You and I can only find this new freedom in mimesis with those who are truly free or in mimesis with Jesus who is the source of that freedom. Because the mimesis of desire is so powerful, in order to be free it is sometimes necessary to put a significant distance between us and our rivals and the objects of our desires eg. when a conflict between partners in a marriage escalates, both may require a temporary distance in order to be able to come back with a new freedom to the relationship. In the presence of authentic community we can catch this alternative mimesis.

Most communities including Christian communities are however, a mixture of the old rivalries with perhaps some glimpses of real freedom in our relationships. Some of the New Testament models are illuminating in showing us the pattern to which we are called. Paul's use of the model of "the Body" is especially rich. Here is a diversity of gifts within a unity. The differences are the basis of our interdependence. Each member has his or her unique place. In that place we are safe and free from rivalry. We enrich and receive from each other.

unexpected  
Another way of breaking the mimesis of desire is to "do the unexpected". This is the subject of part of the Sermon on the Mount in the New Testament. When people attempt to coerce

us in various ways our natural tendency is to resist or simply to give in. We either become a victim or we get into a violent rivalry with our opponent. Jesus shows us another possibility if we are sufficiently free to consider it. The examples of "going the second mile", "turning the other cheek" etc are not new laws but examples of ways of expressing that freedom. They show that we need not have our behaviour determined by that of our oppressor. At the same time we may disarm the oppressor by surprising him/her in a way which can break the mimesis and may lead the oppressor to change course.

It does, of course, require us to take a risk and there are no guaranteed results or strategies that are bound to work. We have to be ready to suffer, if necessary, but we can open up possibilities which leave room for the Spirit to work.

One of the realities of modern life is that it is continuing to erode the older structures of society and put everyone on the same level. Superficially this can appear to be a movement towards greater equality, freedom and democracy. However, the older structures, limiting as they were to our choices, did provide a place for each person within the hierarchy, through difference, and they limited the mimesis of desire to the different levels or classes of society. In our present situation mimesis of desire is escalating as we all compete with each other for everything. The result is that we destroy real diversity and become more and more like each other as we rival in every sphere.

This is another way of saying that the modern liberal concept of freedom is a very superficial one which is likely to lead to greater bondage, as we see daily in the consumer society. There is no way of reversing the process which erodes those aspects of the older hierarchical structures which are obviously unjust. However it means that if we are to avoid equality of dignity leading to eternal rivalry, the only viable alternative is the model of unity in diversity as given in St Paul's description of the body. It is in the acceptance of difference that the true

real diversity

basis of unity and community is found.

The experience of the Corrymeela Community in exploring how we can rediscover the diversity and unity between Catholic and Protestant, Nationalist and Unionist is that we can only do so if we include every other aspect of human diversity as well. In other words reconciliation is about the interdependence of men and women; disabled and able-bodied; black and white; young and old etc. To live this life of community as distinct from proposing it as an ideology is a different matter. It is to risk a journey of new relationships and to begin to exchange the illusory freedom of our culture for the true freedom of the Gospel.

The influence of this ongoing relationship with our Dutch friends has been pervasive in many aspects of the life and work of the Community. It has influenced and stimulated ongoing study groups, staff training, new approaches to Bible study, political mediation, psychiatry, historical reflection etc and it has deeply affected the format and basis of our reconciliation programmes with youth and school groups, family projects etc.

One particular initiative which emerged in recent years was entitled "Understanding Conflict and Finding Ways Out of It", in association with Corrymeela and the University of Ulster. This has been led by Derick Wilson, Frank Wright, Duncan Morrow and Roel Kaptein. It has sought to make available some of these insights and approaches to a wider network of community groups. It has been an enabling agency through which many small community initiatives have found a deeper trust and freedom in their relationships and through which they can make clearer decisions for the future and find ways of accepting and dealing with differences and ongoing tensions.

In the wider society of Northern Ireland the Dutch/Northern Irish Advisory Group has made its resources, finance and

## JOURNEY OF HOPE

personnel available to a wide cross section of groups and individuals in Northern Ireland including the police, paramilitary groups, community workers, clergy and many others.

The death of Frank Wright has been a great loss, but we can acknowledge with deep gratitude the unique contribution which he made to our common life, to a better understanding of the dynamics of our tragic conflict, and to the work of healing wounds and peacemaking in society.

the spirit of  
antagonism

“ON THE WAY TO FREEDOM”

The Lord's prayer, is about the Kingdom of God in every line, where He is the King of our hearts and our lives. Every sentence of it brings us on the way of Jesus:

*Our Father in heaven*

God is in heaven. We cannot reach Him to rival with Him. He is an external mediator.

*May your name be held holy*

The name of God, His being, is 'untouchable' for us. If we touch Him, making Him something like our equal, He is no longer our Father. He is then a god of the scapegoaters.

*Your kingdom come*

He gives His kingdom, it comes to us. It is not our doing.

Your will be done

May it be given to us to do your will, doing the things we see Jesus doing, speaking the words he speaks, being outside the mimesis of desire. In this manner we are already in the Kingdom.

*On earth as in heaven*

Let us do your will, as the angels do. They are always with you, images of you, being in mimesis with you.

*Give us today our daily bread*

Let us not desire more than we need now, not even desiring that knowing that you give.

*And forgive us our debts*

Forgive us that time and again we go back to our old life, the life of the mimesis of desire, so wronging each other and you.

## JOURNEY OF HOPE

*As we have forgiven those who are in debt to us*

Being together with you in who are in debt to us prayer, we confess that it is impossible not to forgive. We no longer resent what others did to us and we confess that we did the same to them.

*And do not put us to the test*

Keep us near to you, so that we will not trip up on the stumbling block and fall into the pit of desire, in whatever form it might take.

*But save us from the evil one*

Save us from the devil, who is the embodiment of the mimesis of desire, the stumbling block over which everyone who is without you falls.

*(from 'On the Way of Freedom': R. Kaptein & D. Morrow, Columba Press)*





## QUAKERS & MENNONITES

**I**n early 1980 Peter and Valerie Tennant having recently retired, came from Scotland to Northern Ireland to explore ways in which they could become associated with the work of reconciliation here. As they reflected on various possibilities,

I am told that one factor which helped to confirm their decision to set up house on the Knocklayd hillside close to the Corrymeela Centre, was an observation made outside Corrymeela House at Upper Crescent in Belfast. Apparently, on the said day, I had been seen cleaning the outside windows!! They concluded that a community where the leader cleans the windows was a healthy one!! They were not to know that this freakish occasion was so unusual as to be unlikely ever to be repeated!! On that day the state of the windows had reached such a pitch that we could barely see out of them and the sun certainly could not penetrate in any strength!!

Peter was not the first or last Quaker that has had links with Corrymeela, but he epitomises the contribution of the many others and the whole essence of that tradition which has touched the life of our Community. It was Derick Wilson, our Corrymeela Centre Director at the time, who more than any of us saw the possibilities of Peter's contributions right from the start.

With that deep practical spirit so common to the Quaker tradition, Peter set about the task of planting trees at our wind and salt sprayed centre on the North Antrim cliffs. The task, in terms of forestry alone, was daunting. Many of his original seedlings were wiped out en mass by climatic conditions and a long painful process ensued during which he gradually discovered those species which could survive and those which could not. But, as he gradually conquered the elements and

established more ground cover, he created the conditions of shelter where less hardy trees could also survive. The result over 14 years has been to transform the site and give it a warmer and much less bleak feeling.

In a strange kind of way the whole exercise was a kind of parable of peace making in a hostile environment. The sight of a frail near-80 year old man clearing the weeds from his nursery, even in the midst of the most vicious North Atlantic squalls, often made the rest of us feel that we were all “softies”!! Also, the fact that Peter was from highly cultured, upper class society made his authentic humility and unobtrusive presence a kind of living testimony.

But Peter was also part of that overall Quaker influence in the life and work of Corrymeela at so many levels. Together with Diana Lampen, Ann Grant and of course, his wife Valerie and other Quaker members and friends in the North and South of Ireland, this has deeply affected us all. It has also been closely linked with the contribution of another historic “peace church”, namely “the Mennonites”, who have been working in Ireland since the early 80’s (see below).

The Quaker influence on Corrymeela goes back to the very beginning, to people like Denis Barritt, one of our patrons, and Charles Carter who in 1966 wrote the first significant book which was prophetic about the troubles, namely “The Northern Ireland Problem”.

There were at least three distinctive areas through which this influence was felt amongst us:

- 1) a spirituality of silence and listening.
- 2) a witness to the way of non-violence, love and peace making.
- 3) the advocacy of justice in society and concern for the marginalised.

1) The tradition of silence and listening

To talkative Presbyterians, liturgical Anglicans and hierarchical Roman Catholics, a tradition which is built on such texts as "let your yea be yea and your nay be nay" or "let your words be few" comes as a bit of a shock!! George Fox, the founder of the Society of Friends, saw how theology, liturgy, hierarchy and the machinery of Church government can divert us from the basic need for an awareness of the "Divine Light" within the soul of each person. He saw the danger of all "notions" of rational and conceptual thought and sought to replace these with lively imagery and metaphors that would stir the heart and will. Truth, said Fox was "the witness of God", "the seed of God", "the spring of life", the "Inner Light" and not merely theological orthodoxy. The "light" is the "word of peace", "the word of reconciliation" which makes for unity with the Father and the Son. And this "light" is known in the person of Christ.

This emphasis on the "Inner Light" led to the traditional Quaker pattern of worship where silence was seen as the meeting place with "the Light". The central meaning of worship is to "wait for the presence", words may come but they are not essential.

Many Quakers have developed the capacity to listen in a deep and searching way beyond what is usual in other traditions. They have learnt how to discern truth, not only in the silence, but also in listening to one another as they seek to make decisions by consensus rather than vote. I have no desire to present this tradition as without flaws or to urge that we all accept it as the norm, but it seems to me that they have kept alive an awareness which needs to be given a stronger place in other traditions, with benefit to us all. Many of us have little experience of how to use silence and often end up in a drowsy, unthinking state of mind when given the opportunity to use it. Paradoxically, some of those from the highest liturgical and

sacramental traditions are often closest to Quakers in their contemplative spirituality.

In the work of reconciliation the gift of listening comes to be more and more central with time and experience. The limitations of debate and point scoring when faced with the reality of communities who have had separate understandings of their history, are only too apparent. Acceptance is only arrived at as we learn to open our experiences and consciousness to each other, in the full context of our sharing. Most recently some Quakers have been amongst those who have seen the value of integrating body, mind and spirit by means of relaxation, using the insights of Eastern traditions like Yoga. These too can aid our capacity to listen to our inner life and to one another and to discern God's will for us.

2) The Quaker witness to the way of non-violent love arises out of the conviction that the Christian vocation "takes away the occasion of all wars". The testimony is based on a conception of "that of God in every person" to which the Christian in the presence of evil is called to make appeal. The conviction is that, although it may well involve suffering, it is most likely, in the long run, to reach the inward witness and change the evil mind into a right mind. That result, they believe is not achieved by war.

The debate about pacifism is ongoing, but whatever view one takes there is no doubt that we have all been challenged to explore the non-violent path much more fully than ever before. Older doctrines of a just war are impossible to sustain in a nuclear era where mass and indiscriminate destruction are the inevitable consequences. The examples of Martin Luther King and Gandhi have become much more potent in our world and they both point back to an aspect of Jesus' life and teaching often neglected by the mainstream churches.

Within the Corrymeela Community this has led some

members to explore non-violent initiatives. For example as a way of challenging oppressive patterns of marching by Orange parades in imaginative ways, and in the development of skills of mediation. This latter development was especially due to the influence of Mennonite groups from the USA. It was particularly interesting that it was within the USA, a society dominated by litigation, that the option of mediation began to be developed as an important alternative, by this anabaptist tradition.

It was only as some of us became involved in learning a little of these newly developed skills that we realised how little insight our own culture had given us into negotiation rather than confrontation. This is not simply a comment on our political culture; rather is it the case that at all levels, from the family outwards, there is a tendency to turn a dispute into a fight. The traditional definition of the Irishman or Ulsterman as someone "who does not know what he wants but is prepared to die for it" has more than a grain of truth in it. Presbyterians in both Scotland and Ireland have had a reputation for divisiveness second to none.

Adam Curle defines mediation as "a psychological effort to change perceptions both of the conflict and of the enemy to the extent that both protagonists gain some hope of a reasonable solution and so are more prepared to negotiate seriously". Or again "the attempt to bring about change in understanding will include continual interpretations of what the other side is saying, explanations of their attitudes, exposure of false rumours, therapeutic listening and the development of a personal relationship of trust and friendship with decision makers on both sides.

By such means tensions of hostility and anxiety may be reduced to a point where cautious hope prevails." (Curle pg 27) "Active mediation is also directed towards helping each protagonist to clarify and reassess his or her objectives." "It

tries to point out that some degree of flexibility, some capacity to compromise or bargain is almost always essential; and that such "weakness" may be thought of as strength in the quest for peace. It also points out that if one side compromises so must the other." "The task is to find ways of reducing tension and enabling the opponents to stand back from obsessive fears, suspicions and hatreds that have come to dominate their minds; to see each other and their dispute more rationally in terms of what is of real interest to them and others involved." "Above all they must learn how to solve the problems themselves."

Steve and Sue Williams, a Quaker couple from the United States who have worked for a period of years in Northern Ireland, make the point in their recent book that it is essential not to attempt to play the role of mediator and of advocate. Both tasks may be necessary but they cannot be played by the same person.

The Northern Ireland Mediation Network which has grown from these early beginnings now facilitates training, dialogue and mediation in many facets of community life is now led by Community member, Brendan McAllister.

The Mennonites have also had a particular influence on one of the key constituencies in Northern Ireland, namely those who would describe themselves as "evangelical" protestants. Because of their strong Biblical emphasis (more explicit than that of the Quakers) they have been able to bring to the attention of many evangelicals the wealth of insight into the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments on the issues of justice and peace in society. Until relatively recently, many from that tradition understood the biblical concept of peace almost exclusively in terms of inner spiritual peace and saw little relevance in the Gospel to active work of reconciliation in the world. Groups such as ECONI (the Evangelical Contribution on Northern Ireland) have now made a significant

contribution to peacemaking in Ireland, North and South by questioning the connection between the evangelical message and 'political protestantism'.

3) Arising out of their deep sense of reverence for each human life and their own experience as a suffering minority, Quakers have for generations awakened the public conscience on issues like prison conditions (eg Elizabeth Fry), torture and other abuses of human dignity. It was therefore not surprising that it was partly out of this influence that we have been alerted to the need for closer scrutiny of our policing patterns, prison conditions and deficiencies in the impartiality of the administration of justice in our society.

At one point this led to the founding of the CAJ (Committee for the Administration of Justice) when the Community of the Peace People and a number of professional lawyers and community workers and Corrymeela members came together. Peter Tennant, in particular, played a significant part in the process of developing a more independent structure for dealing with police complaints, a key issue in a society where traditional distrust of the RUC is very great, especially in Nationalist districts.

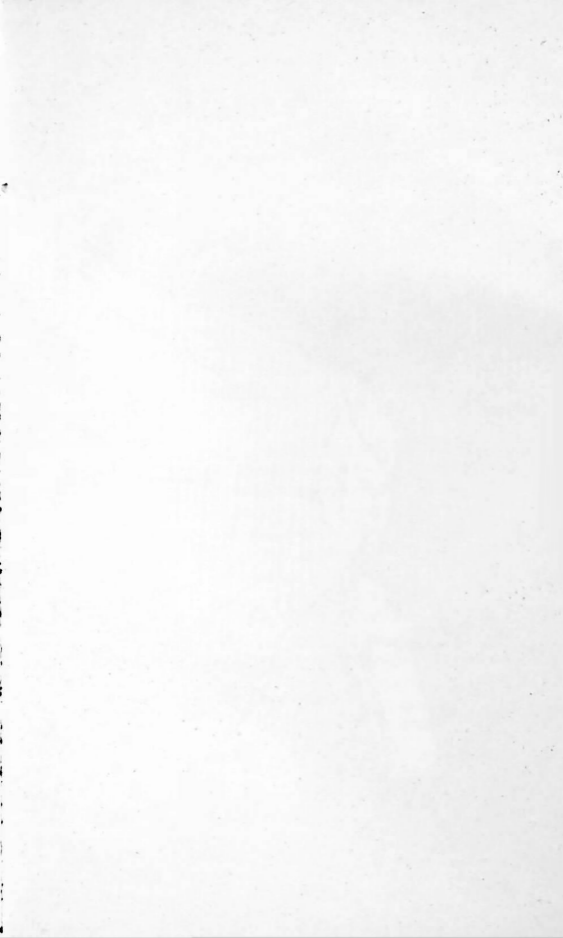
But it is not so much in the specific developments which have flowed from our friendship with Quakers and Mennonites as in the pervasive influence of a way of being and living which has enriched us all. Quakers in Ireland have had an influence on our society far beyond what their small numbers might indicate. And not only in Ireland, because their global consciousness and commitment to such causes as the United Nations have constantly lifted our sights and put our problems in a wider perspective. It has also helped us to see that our situation in Northern Ireland is not so unique as we might like to think it is!!

THE PEACE TESTIMONY  
OF THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

We utterly deny all outward wars and strife, and fightings with outward weapons, for any end, or under any pretence whatever; this is our testimony to the whole world. The spirit of Christ by which we are guided is not changeable, so as once to command us from a thing as evil, and again to move unto it; and we certainly know, and testify to the world, that the Spirit of Christ, which leads us into all truth, will never move us to fight and war against any man with outward weapons, neither for the kingdom of Christ, nor for the kingdoms of the world.

*(From a Declaration from the Harmless and Innocent People of God, called Quakers, presented to Charles II. 1660)*







## PRISONERS OF HOPE

**R**ay Davey has often quoted the Chinese proverb 'It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness'. Perhaps it was through being a fragile sign of hope that Corrymeela has contributed most since 1965. Ray has often spoken of our purpose in terms of being a 'trailer of the future' in Northern Ireland, showing that it was possible for Protestants and Catholics to share in a realistic Christian Community and make a common witness in society in spite of differences of culture or politics.

Sustaining that hope has not been easy and there have been many times when the Community has experienced near despair. The source of this hope was not to be found in human optimism but was rooted in the conviction of God's love as it was shown to us in the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Such a hope faces all the possible contradictions which the human situation can produce. It does not deny the reality of evil, human blindness or resistance to God's will but believes that in and through it all, God comes to meet us afresh, offering a new future, as the Lord of history. We recognise, as T.S. Elliot has put it, that human hopes are often 'hope for the wrong things'. So the challenge of the human experience is in learning how to discern that purpose and unite our wills with it instead of knocking our heads against a brick wall by resisting it.

It is often necessary for small groups to recognise that society resists necessary changes in the short term. But there is given to us the possibility of being a sign of that future which seeks to break in upon us. It is possible to sustain hope for those who struggle against seemingly intractable forces.

also means recognising that whilst we all have our part to play, it is ultimately God alone who 'brings in the Kingdom' in ways and at a time when we may least expect it. Since 1965, Corrymeela has been sustained in this hope through sharing in a global ecumenical network of contacts. This has kept the Community in touch with other groups and individuals who were faced with situations often much more socially and politically intractable. The powerful testimony of those who visited Corrymeela over the years often left an indelible mark on the staff and members and enabled them to put their situation in a fresh perspective.

From South Africa came people such as Alan Boesak and Beyers Naudé, two of the pioneers in the struggle against apartheid. They heightened our awareness of the enormity of that evil structure of society and the deep seated racist ideology and theology which upheld it. Naudé, in particular, illuminated the internal struggle in the Dutch Reformed Church and the courage of those who had to face ostracism for so-called betrayal of their own people. What impressed above all was the way in which those who were so fully engaged in this struggle were able to do so without demonising or dehumanising their opponents. Members of the KOINONIA movement, which provided simple meals between black and white people in each others' homes helped us to empathise with the painful journey of those whites who have been captive to racial stereotypes and to see parallels to this and learn how we might break free from our own sectarian patterns.

Contacts with groups in Israel and the Middle East were also important. At the House of Hope in Shafar Am in Galilee (linked with the Coventry Community of the Cross of Nails) Christians, Moslems, Druze and Jews meet to break down distrust and find new ways of co-operating. Also, Fr. Elias Chacour from Ibillim and one of our "Summerfest" speakers, shared something of his own personal story. His family lost

all their land in the war in 1947. Yet his father was willing to return to tend the olives he himself had planted and work as a labourer to the new Jewish occupiers. At the Arab-Israeli village Neve Shalom encounter programmes for Palestinian and Jewish students have been going on now for many years and one of our staff spent time learning about their work and its relevance to youth work in Northern Ireland. Together with Gabriel Habib and colleagues from the Middle East Council of Churches and a similar team from the South African Council of Churches some members of Corrymeela and other Irish colleagues shared in a reflection on the role of religion in conflict situations. These were in no way purely academic exercises since those involved found themselves in the presence of men and women on the frontline of struggles for justice, reconciliation and peace. The significance of these deep encounters and the mutual support provided by such opportunities, can hardly be exaggerated, in sustaining hope.

One of the most moving experiences since the founding of the community has been the way in which groups in Sweden, Germany, USA and many other places have faithfully supported the life and work of the Community over a lengthy period. Nearer to home from its headquarters in Reading, the Corrymeela Link has mobilised support from Churches and groups in every corner of Britain. But most surprising of all was the friendship, love and prayers which came from East Germany, where fragile groups were themselves facing a cruel regime which cramped their life and severely limited their freedom. The story of how the church there eventually became a focus and a shelter for a vast popular movement for peace and freedom, leading to the collapse of the Berlin Wall, has not yet been fully told. The impact of those relationships on the Community was humbling as members began to count their blessings and recognise how much they took for granted the many positive opportunities which were still open to us in this society, in spite of the conflict.

We also learnt about the Sojourners Community from downtown Washington DC, led by Jim Wallis, who bring hope to the black and white poor and challenge the social and political priorities in the public life of the USA with a living embodiment of the Gospel. For those from a strongly evangelical background in Northern Ireland, this contact has opened up new ways of seeing the social relevance of the New Testament.

The special influence of Jean Vanier the founder of l'Arche Communities has been mentioned earlier but it would be remiss to omit the powerful sign of hope that these fragile communities represent.

One of the concepts which gained wide currency in recent years is that of 'civil society'. This has emerged especially in relation to the struggle for change in Eastern Europe and has been associated with key figures there such as Vaclav Havel of the Czech Republic. The experience of the abuse of power by totalitarian governments made many of the citizens in Eastern European states realise the necessity for that loosely defined but politically independent layer of democracy which they described as 'civil society'. Because of the restrictions imposed by East European governments on the activities of churches, voluntary groups, writers, dramatists etc this essential base of democratic society had almost been destroyed. Only the courageous action of groups such as those who launched movements like Charter 77, kept alive this spirit of freedom of expression and search for truth in those dark days (see Havel "Living in Truth").

But it is by no means the case that Western Society with its philosophy of the 'free market' guarantees or encourages a healthy civil society. The experience of the last 15 years in the US has led some people to conclude that an overemphasis on the market as a 'cure-all' can itself undermine the very values on which democratic society is built, and erode that

fundamental community and solidarity without which any society will disintegrate.

The particular relevance of this to Northern Ireland arises because the conflict of the past 25 years has at times led to the near collapse of public institutions in parts of society. In retrospect it may well be recognised that it was the spirit and actions of voluntary groups which filled this vacuum in dozens of different ways. The multifarious growth of mutual help groups, community associations, human rights projects, ecumenical communities, housing associations, unemployment projects, peace making groups, new drama and writing etc has been characteristic of Northern Irish society for the past 20 years. These initiatives have frequently been led by women or have had very significant women's involvement in contrast to the formal political structures and parties. The full significance of this both in terms of women's participation in peace-making and also in the changing gender relationships in Irish society is a major subject for separate study in itself.

However, this resurgence of civil society, which found one of its most public expressions recently in the Opsahl Commission (a public enquiry into ways forward for Northern Ireland) has been a source of hope for a society trapped in conflict for so long. It has provided some degree of 'transcendence' amidst a sectarian culture, giving people the hope that there are common values and sources of healing which can be shared by all, and which can provide some basis for a new society based on mutual respect for diversity, participation of all and the sharing and stewardship of our common resources.

I am writing this at a time when a major change has taken place in South Africa, a new initiative has emerged in the Middle East and a ceasefire by paramilitary groups following the Downing Street Declaration in Northern Ireland. At this time of fragile hope it may be appropriate for Corrymeela to

## JOURNEY OF HOPE

look afresh at the wider ecumenical vision which brought it into being in 1965. No doubt there are elements of that which will seem dated and will need to be refocussed or even transformed in the light of today's questions. But the value of that earlier vision lay in the fact that it was both global and local.

We will certainly need new inputs and new insights if we are to address the questions facing us today and tomorrow and the vast task of healing the wounds of the past 25 years. However, it may be wise for us to remember what we have received and what we have learnt on the journey so far. Hope is generated in us when the God of the future breaks into the present in judgement, mercy and liberation. The stories of our past are also stories of hope and sources of renewal to which we can return as we seek to nurture a new vision for today. The reconciliation for which we work and hope is always deeper and more profound than we can comprehend. It can never be a glossing over of hurt or injustice anywhere in the world. It is above all a gift to be received as we more and more discern its shape and obey the call to follow the way of Jesus in our time.



“I OFFER YOU THIS HOPE”

I offer you this hope.  
It is so small  
the wind could blow it out.  
Its feeble flickering  
turns up in unexpected places  
and seems to annoy those  
with a big investment in dazzling light,  
or in measuring the strength of darkness.  
If this hope lives  
it will be like swallows' wings,  
erratic, unpredictable,  
always on the move.  
If this hope dies,  
It will be buried shallow  
like grass seed.

*Janet Shepperson (a member of Corrymeela)*



*POSTSCRIPT*

“AGAPE” - A MEMOIR ON  
TULLIO VINAY

Those of us who met with Ray Davey in the early 60's when we were searching together for God's guidance, before the Corrymeela Community was founded, were deeply conscious of the enormous impression which had been made on Ray by Pastor Tullio Vinay of The Waldensian Church in Italy.

Some of us had been involved with Ray on the first visits to the Agape Centre and others had become involved in supporting the new development in Riesi, Sicily. Regular newsletters were lying around the Presbyterian Centre at Queen's University telling of this exciting and pioneering project. When I began to make this selection of some of the key influences in shaping our life and work I knew that it would be impossible to omit some reference to Tullio Vinay. However, as I had only met him briefly on a couple of occasions, it seemed much more appropriate that this contribution should be made directly by Ray. Because of their relationship and the deep conviction which that had brought with it, Ray is the only person who can convey his significance for us all and link his story to ours.

I am deeply grateful to Ray for this memoir and I hope that it provides an appropriate postscript to the rest of the story. Perhaps Ray's greatest gift is his capacity to be open to the gifts of others and to help us receive them and integrate them into our life?

TULLIO VINAY

*by Ray Davey*

My first meeting with Tullio Vinay was in 1952 when with a group of students from Queen's University I arrived at the Christian Centre he had established in the Cottian Alps. I shall never forget that dramatic journey from Turin in which we changed our transport three times as the roads became steeper and the corners sharper. Meeting Vinay and some of the founder workers as well as the setting of Agape (as the Centre was called) 5,000 feet up among the peaks of the Alps, made a profound impression on us all.

For me also it was not only a physical journey but also a spiritual one. My memories of Italy and the Italians were, to put it mildly, not happy. With thousands of Allied soldiers I had been captured in North Africa. I was not a soldier but a YMCA Field Worker who happened to be in the wrong place. This resulted in 18 months in three miserable camps until we were moved across the Alps into a German Stalag.

Looking back over the years it is clear that this visit to Agape was a very important landmark in my own spiritual pilgrimage. It was a "healing of memory" after all that we as prisoners had endured under the Fascist rule of Mussolini, not so much in terms of direct cruelty but rather in squalor, hunger, cold, inefficiency and over-crowding in the different campos in Bari, Lucca and Fermo. Nor could I forget many who had died through the inadequacy of food and pathetic medical services.

Here with Tullio Vinay and his fellow workers, I found the other face of Italy. I was able to listen to their story and understand in a new way what many Italians had endured

## JOURNEY OF HOPE

through the war years and the ferocious strife between the Fascists backed by the occupying Germans and the Italian Partisani, those who resisted the horror and cruelty of the Nazis and Italian Blackshirts. One has only to walk around the Waldensian Valleys in Piedmont to see the multitude of simple crosses on roadsides marking the summary execution of large numbers of young people who had been forced to take up arms against the barbarous actions of the invaders.

Vinay at this stage of the war was pastor of the Waldensian Church in Florence which was occupied by the Nazis. He was deeply concerned for the Jewish families in the city and the danger of what might befall them should they fall into the hands of the Gestapo. He did everything he could to help them to escape into the comparative safety of the countryside outside the city. He hid many of the families in the space between the roof of his church and the floor of his flat above the church. For this he became known as 'the Rabbi of Florence'. Later after the war the Yad Vashem monument was built in Jerusalem to commemorate all the victims of the Holocaust. In it there is a tree-lined avenue remembering "Righteous Gentiles" - those who cared for and saved Jews at this terrible time and Tullio's name is among them.

At the end of the war Vinay was appointed Youth Pastor in the Waldensian Church. It was a demanding task to meet the needs of many of the young people who had been involved in the Partisan war. Most of them had endured great hardship and danger. They had seen and taken part in terrible deeds. How could he help these young people to get back to normal life and discover what he calls "the new world of Jesus Christé" He knew well that talk and discussion were utterly inadequate at such a time to such people. He understood like all true leaders that the only way their confidence and support could be won was by challenging them to join together in doing something demanding and costly in terms of their physical energy and experience. It had to be something imaginative

and meaningful that would challenge all sorts of young people disillusioned and embittered by what they had experienced. Even more important it would have to be something symbolic which would create hope and vision for the future. It would have to be a place of meeting for work, prayer and dialogue.

Soon this dream of the Agape Village began to become a reality. At 5,000 feet above sea level and with so much having to be manhandled, the work was incredibly hard and demanding. Rocks had to be moved, forest cleared, timber cut and cement prepared. But they had a vision and nothing could stop them. Gradually young people began to come from Switzerland, Germany, France, Holland and many other countries and join in the work.

It took five summers of toil and sacrifice and in the final year some 30 nations took part in the building.

Tullio Vinay's words express the spirit in which these tasks were carried out:

"Feeling that we had been raised, as it were, from the dead by the mercy of God, we wanted to express our thankfulness to him who first loved us, by carving upon the rocks of our mountains His face, in its beautiful character of brotherly love."

The story of Vinay and Agape still excites me as first impressions come back. The unforgettable and dramatic setting far up, 5,000 feet up, surrounded by the snow-capped peaks of the Cottian Alps; the incredible sharp clear air with the eloquent stillness, broken occasionally by the distant chatter and laughter of a group of young people coming up from the small village of Prali down in the valley below, and the tinkle of sheep bells as the animals moved gently round the hillside looking for fresh pastures - these all live in the memory.

The complex of Agape itself is also unforgettable. It was no surprise to learn from Vinay that it had been planned by one

## JOURNEY OF HOPE

of his friends, Leonardo Ricci, a leading Italian architect from Rome. The various parts of the centre were carefully terraced into the slope of the mountain behind. The local stone was quarried near at hand and the spacious areas for meetings, recreation, worship and dining were linked together, suggesting the importance of community and communication. There were also plenty of places to walk and talk or just be quiet and enjoy the delectable surroundings. Agape is a place that makes meeting, communication and dialogue easy and natural.

I can clearly remember the sessions for Bible study. Each person had the Bible in their own language - French, German, Italian, Dutch or English. Some had copies of the Greek New Testament. I can recall how thoroughly they worked on the interpretation of the set passage and equally carefully on just how it applied to the society in which they lived. At that time Marxism, poverty, war and ecumenism were the main themes.

As I listened I could not but think of the context of these meetings. Agape had come from the tiny Waldensian Church, whose history predates the Reformation and which has been probably the most persecuted Church in Europe. It is a Church well versed in Reformed theology and practice, sharpened continually by the struggle to survive against continuous hostility and suffering. I was most impressed by the pastors I met and how they were following the lead of Tullio, striving to make their people alive and open to the challenges of the post-war situation rather than living to themselves.

Eventually in the early sixties Vinay decided that it was time for him to move on and leave Agape in the care of the new generation. He is a man with a very deep concern for the underprivileged and felt that the Church paid too little attention to them. He was very aware of the situation in southern Italy and Sicily where poverty and social deprivation were rampant. He wrote about this time in one of his articles:

“We must not bring an empty message which makes too

small an impact upon our generation, but we must live and incarnate the problems and difficulties of men, be they hunger, unemployment or whatever, in order to bring the message of reconciliation, of service and of love."

Again he was very conscious that so much church life was self-centred and protective of its own interests and power. "The Church in our time has become a ghetto with a ghetto mentality. We are walled in from the world. The salvation we offer is a Maginot salvation. We are afraid to take down the walls and go into the world. Yet this frame of mind is a denial of the mind of Christ." Again in another passage he writes: "The Church does not live to save itself, that is to think of its own prestige and prosperity, but it exists to take care of men, both believers and unbelievers for whom Christ died."

With ideas like these it is easy to understand Tullio Vinay's move south to Riesi in the centre of the island of Sicily in 1961. Perhaps he felt that Agape was "a mountain top experience" and that its message of "the New World of Jesus Christ" had to be incarnated in such a place as Riesi. I visited it in the spring of 1963 and found it difficult to believe that such conditions still existed in Europe. It was a place of squalor and poverty. Open drains, in which children played, ran along the streets, some people actually lived in caves and others were not much better off as frequently 10-15 lived in a single room without windows and often shared by their animals. Illiteracy was 70% and unemployment very high with 60% having work for 4 months in the year and many with no work at all. In the midst of all this there was the sinister and strangling power and influence of the Mafia, controlling much of public life such as the transport system and local politics. It is chastening to realise that the Mafia originated in Sicily - an apt comment on the condition and mentality of the island over many decades.

It was into this cauldron of poverty and corruption that Servizio Cristiano, as they were called, launched itself.



Members knew well that if they were to make any impact on such a grim situation, the ordinary church activities would be utterly inadequate. Carefully they researched the situation. The mass of workers had to emigrate each year to the more affluent parts of Europe such as North Italy, Germany and Switzerland. It was easy to see the results for family and communal life in Riesi. Then there was the utter inadequacy of proper educational facilities and the very high rate of illiteracy. There was little in the way of social welfare resources for the needs of children and families. All this in addition to the corruption and ruthlessness of the Mafia. How were Vinay and his team, Servizio Cristiano, to respond to this situation? Vinay has always said that the Church of Christ lives to show by word and deed the Way of Christ. What did this mean for them in their life in Riesi?

In my visit in 1963 I was able to see for myself some of the steps they had already taken. A kindergarten had started to be followed with a primary school. A training school for young mechanics and the production of oil from the olive groves - these are only a few of the new initiatives that Vinay and his team had taken.

One phrase which he used when he visited us in Ireland still stays with me. "Love", he said "can never be theoretic." This to me was what his theology was all about. It was something that was not just learnt or discussed or just preached, it was something that was lived, something that was done. It is this that impressed all who met him. Not only does he talk of the cost of discipleship, but in fact he has risked his life many times for others. He does not just talk about Agape - Christian love - his own life is lived in self-giving. Sometimes it has been with the unemployed men walking the streets of Riesi debating with them about Marxism and at the same time telling them about Christ's way. In addition there is the presence of the Mafia and the challenge of their way which has to be faced all the time.

I remember him talking about "being contagiously human" and that seemed to me to be an apt description of Vinay himself. I think of his tremendous compassion for people of all sorts and his indignation when there is injustice and his lovely humour and his ability to challenge but not threaten those he meets. His theology is centred in his Christology: the Christ who is Lord and at the same time Servant.

I will close by quoting from the short address he gave when he came to Ballycastle in October 1965 to open Corrymeela, as it seems to sum up his whole outlook:

"In this moment of deep emotion for me, I wish that with the help of the living God this centre may become:

**FIRST:** a place of preaching the New World as we see it in the person of Jesus Christ. The world needs to see this message in the real world of men.

Here, living together, the New World in work and prayer, you may point it to all categories of people and push them to the same research, be they politicians, economists, sociologists, technicians, workers or students.

**SECOND:** a place of encounter and dialogue with all believers and unbelievers. The believers need the presence of unbelievers, because they represent a criticism of our way and life; the unbelievers need us if we have real news to bring. A member of the Italian Parliament once said to me: 'I am not religious but I am terribly attracted to Christ.'

**THIRD:** to be a question mark to the Church everywhere in Europe, so that it may review its structures and tasks, and be free from the instinct of preservation to hear the time of God for its mission in the world.

**FOURTH:** more than all, that you - being together - have always open eyes and ears to understand when the Lord is passing nearby, to be ready to follow the way He shall indicate to you. As a Church we should have no inferiority complex - not because we are or have something - but because every opportunity is given to us as His instruments."

LITANY OF DEDICATION

(used at the Opening of Corrymeela on October 30, 1965)

*Leader:* To the glory of God the Father, who has called us  
by his grace:  
To the glory of the Son, who loves us and gave  
himself for us:  
And to the glory of the Holy Spirit, who guides and  
sanctifies us:

*All:* We dedicate this centre.

*Leader:* For the training of Christian laymen and laywomen  
to play a reasonable part in society and the Church:

*All:* We dedicate this centre.

*Leader:* For quietness and retreat, so that people under stress  
or wishing to discover the meaning of life may find  
renewal

*All:* We dedicate this centre.

*Leader:* For the meeting of men and women from industr  
commerce and professional life for conference and  
study:

*All:* We dedicate this centre.

*Leader:* For the bringing together in work-camps of craftsmen  
and voluntary helpers in a realistic Christian  
fellowship:

*All:* We dedicate this centre.

*Leader:* For the bringing together of young people from this  
and other countries and the increase of friendship

## JOURNEY OF HOPE

and understanding:

*All:* We dedicate this centre.

*Leader:* For the ministry of reconciliation in working and community life and in the church:

*All:* We dedicate this centre.

*Leader:* And now, as a people within the household of God:

In the unity of faith:

In the communion of saints:

In love and goodwill to all:

In gratitude for this centre:

*All:* We dedicate ourselves to the worship of God and the service of his kingdom.

REFERENCES

*The Iona Experience*

- 1) MacLeod G.F. *We shall Rebuild*  
(Iona Community)
- 2) MacLeod G.F. *Only One Way Left*  
(Iona Community)
- 3) Ferguson R. *Chasing the Wild Goose*  
(Collins, Fount)

*God's Frozen People*

- 1) Gibbs M. & Morton T.R. *God's Frozen People*  
(Collins, Fontana)
- 2) Gibbs M. & Morton T.R. *God's Lively People*  
(Collins, Fontana)
- 3) Kraemer H. *A Theology of the Laity*
- 4) Morrow J. *Laity under Pressure*  
(Audenshaw Paper)
- 5) Simpendoerfer W. *Ecumenical Learning*  
(Ecumenical Review)

*A Pilgrim People - People on a Journey*

- 1) Morton T.R. *The Household of Faith*  
(Iona Community)
- 2) Sheriff/Scout - *Wes Seeliger*
- 3) Davey R. *An Unfinished Journey* (Corrymeela Press)

*Healing the Wounds of History*

- 1) Frost B. *Women and Forgiveness* (DLT)

## JOURNEY OF HOPE

- 2) Frost B. *The Politics of Peace* (DLT)  
Coventry Cathedral (*Visitors Guide*)
- 3) Williams H.C.N. *The Cross Road*  
(Magazine of the Community of the Cross of Nails)
- 4) *Breaking down the Enmity*  
(Interchurch Group on Faith and Politics)
- 5) Falconer A. (ed) *Reconciling Memories*  
(Columba Press)
- 6) Morrow J. *The Captivity of the Irish Churches*  
(Audenshaw Papers)

### *Spirituality and Community*

- 1) Vanier J. *Community and Growth* (DLT)
- 2) Bonhoeffer D. *Life Together*  
(Billing and Sons, London)
- 3) Vanier J. *The Broken Body* (DLT)

### *Re-formation - New Expressions of the Church*

- 1) Clark D. *The Liberation of the Church*
- 2) Dulles A. *Models of the Church*
- 3) Hinton J. *Christian Communities*
- 4) Vincent J. *Alternative Church*  
(Christian Journals, Belfast)

### *The Dutch Dimension*

- 1) Girard R. *Violence and the Sacred*
- 2) Kaptein R. and Morrow D. *On the Way of Freedom*  
(Columba Press)
- 3) Lascaris A. *Reading the Bible in Northern Ireland*  
(Corrymeela Press)
- 4) Wright F. *Northern Ireland, A Comparative Analysis*  
(Gill and McMillan)
- 5) *Understanding Conflict and Finding Ways Out of It*  
(Third Year Report)

## JOURNEY OF HOPE

### *Quakers and Mennonites*

- 1) Barritt and Carter *The Northern Ireland Problem*
- 2) Curle A. *Tools for Transformation*  
(Hawthorne Press)
- 3) Lonkes H. *The Quaker Contribution* (SCM)
- 4) EGONI *For God and His Glory Alone*  
(Evangelical Contribution on Northern Ireland)

### *Prisoners of Hope*

- 1) Chacour Elias *Blood Brothers*
- 2) Davey Ray *Channel of Peace* (Harper Collins)
- 3) Haval Vaclav *Living in Turth* (DLT)
- 4) Middle East Council of Churches:  
*The Role of Religion in Conflict Situations* (MECC)
- 5) Moltman Jurgen *A Theology of Hope* (SCM)
- 6) Wallis Jim *The Call to Conversion* (Collins)





## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

### *The Iona Experience*

- (1) In what ways have churches tended to create a dichotomy between the sacred and the secular?
- (2) How can we recover the full significance of the Christian confession "Jesus in Lord" for today's world?
- (3) What does it mean to "privatise" the Gospel? Is the Gospel just about personal salvation?

Biblical passages for consideration:

Acts 10 v. 15

"What God has cleansed, do not call common or unclean."

Colossians 1 vs. 13-20

esp. v. 17 "All things are held together in him."

v. 20 "Through him God chose to reconcile the whole universe to himself."

Luke 4 vs. 14-24

### *God's Frozen People*

- (1) Is the phrase "God's frozen people" still an apt title for the lay people of today's churches? If not, what phrase would you use?
- (2) What does it mean to take seriously "the whole people of God" and their vocation in the world?
- (3) In what ways can the Church equip its members to play a more active part in peacemaking in Ireland and throughout the world?

Biblical Passages

1 Corinthians 12, v. 1-31

Romans 12, v. 1-21

Ephesians 4, v. 11-16

*A Pilgrim People - People on a Journey*

- (1) The Church has responded to new situations and taken many forms in its history. Can you think of some examples of this that you are aware of?
- (2) What are the issues to which we are being called by the Holy Spirit to respond in today's world? and in Ireland?
- (3) What new models of church can enable Christians to witness to their faith today? eg. what would it mean to be a "pilgrim people".

Biblical passages:

Hebrews 11 and 12, vs 1-3

Acts 10

Acts 15, vs 1-29

*Healing the Wounds of History*

- (1) Our history in Ireland has left both communities with deep seated wounds which remain unhealed. How have the churches contributed to these wounds?
- (2) Is the message of reconciliation the central thrust of the Gospel? What does this imply for our vocation today in a divided society?
- (3) What can we learn from the healing ministry of churches outside Ireland? (eg. South Africa; Liverpool; Jews and Gentiles in the early Church etc)

Biblical passages:

Ephesians 2, vs 11-22

Matthew 6, vs 9-14

## JOURNEY OF HOPE

Colossians 3, vs 12-17

### *Spirituality and Community*

- (1) Do you experience a lack of reality in the life of the Christian Community to which you belong? Describe what you feel is lacking?
- (2) D. Bonhoeffer speaks of 3 crucial stages on the journey towards full acceptance in relationships. Does this ring true in your experience?
- (3) Have you found the courage and the support to enable you to acknowledge your own vulnerability and thus be more open to healing?

Biblical passages:

John 18, vs 23-27

John 21, vs 1-22

1. John 4, vs 7-21

### *Reformation - New Forms or Expressions of Church*

- (1) Are many of our present church structures and congregations geared mainly to maintenance rather than openness to society, service and mission? How can they be re-formed?
- (2) Is denominationalism a contradiction of the Church's vocation to be sign of unity for all humanity?
- (3) In what sense can the Church be an inclusive community rather than an exclusive community and yet still maintain standards?

Biblical passages:

Revelation chs 2 and 3

1 Corinthians 1, vs 10-31

Matthew 22, vs 1-14

## JOURNEY OF HOPE

### *The Dutch Dimension*

- (1) Can you understand how both sections of the Community in Northern Ireland have become caught up in a cycle of rivalry and violence where the original cause of the dispute gets lost?
- (2) How can we use our imagination to "do the unexpected" so as to open the way for transformation?
- (3) Can we recognise how we are continually scapegoating one another? How does the Gospel set us free and unmask the lie of the scapegoat?

#### Biblical passages:

Matthew 5, vs 21-26

Matthew 5, vs 38-42

1 Corinthians 5, vs 17-21

Matthew 7, vs 1-7

### *Quakers and Mennonites*

- (1) Is your tradition preoccupied with words and lacking in the nurture of a listening spirit?
- (2) Has the non-violent aspect of the teaching of Jesus been central to your understanding of the Gospel?
- (3) Does our culture help us to learn skills of mediation and negotiation or are we prone to confrontation? How might this change?

#### Biblical passages:

1 Samuel 3

Matthew 5, vs 10, 11

James 3, vs 13-18

## JOURNEY OF HOPE

### *The Corrymeela Community*

The Corrymeela Community is a group of Christians in Ireland, both Protestant and Catholic, who believe themselves to be called together as an "instrument of God's peace" in the Church and in the world.

The formal members of the Community (of whom there are about 170) work in close co-operation with *The Friends of Corrymeela* (of whom there are about 1,200 in Ireland and throughout the world) and others who share their commitment to the work of reconciliation.

Corrymeela runs a centre at Ballycastle with accommodation for up to 120 people. It is used as a base where people from different traditions meet and talk freely and also serves as a refuge for victims of violence. Conference and education programmes concerning the roots of social conflict are developed through staff workers in the areas of Youth, church, Schools and Community Work. Every year over 8,000 people in some 250 groups visit the centre.

Corrymeela House in Belfast is an administrative office, a base for field workers, a meeting place for Corrymeela groups in the city and a resource for many groups who share some of the aims of the Corrymeela Community.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE WORK OF CORRYMEELA OR IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO BECOME 'A FRIEND OF CORRYMEELA' PLEASE CONTACT:

THE CORRYMEELA COMMUNITY  
CORRYMEELA HOUSE  
8 UPPER CRESCENT  
BELFAST BT7 1NT

TELEPHONE (01232 325008)

John Morrow is a minister of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. He was one of the founding members of the Corrymeela Community in 1965 and leader of the Community from 1980-1993. He is currently Northern Ireland lecturer with the Irish School of Ecumenics.

He is married and has 3 sons and a daughter.



*'John Morrow has written a delightfully hopeful book about Corrymeela's family tree. It traces the many influences upon the life of this extraordinary Irish community that has been such a powerful witness to the possibilities and power of reconciliation in one of the world's most divided and conflictual societies.'*

Jim Wallis  
*Sojourners*

£6.95

*Front cover: Window in the Croi at Ballycastle*