

## **Kate Graham's Story**

Kate and her husband Fred first heard about Corrymeela, in its very early days, through a close friend, Donald Brownlie. She recalls visiting the old house with him when it was still empty and disused. The whole idea captured their imagination. When Fred was first ordained, they were in St. Matthew's parish, Shankill Road, Belfast, and they brought youth groups to Corrymeela. They also spent times at the Centre with the Franciscan Companions. In those days they slept in the chalets, where later the Cottages were built, and they celebrated Communion in the morning around the big wooden cross looking towards Rathlin. They were there when daughter Rosy was one year old and Laurie was present in the womb!

Over the years Kate and Fred continued to be inspired by Ray and Kathleen, and they were eager visitors to Corrymeela. Kate was a facilitator with groups from the Church's Ministry of Healing and she remembers times spent in the old house quiet room.

The family attended every Summer Fest and they also brought some of their foster children. When Mother Teresa came, young Jim received her autograph on his palm and refused to wash!

All this time they were not in a position to take on the commitment of membership. Kate and Fred had such a busy life, and weekends were seldom free. They brought various groups over the years and met numerous members in other contexts.

When Fred and Kate moved to Buncrana they were invited to join the Derry Cell Group. This was an important time, getting to know some wonderful, very human people, a cross community group outside of their parish – such a great support and encouragement. Kate greatly values cell groups.

Nearing retirement Kate was at last able to become a member, inspired by Isobel McDonagh. Isobel also introduced her to the Community Life Committee where she very much enjoyed serving. Later she was also on Council and on the Knocklayd Committee. Kate was also one of the Knocklayd gardeners. Kate felt she was able to put something back for all the years she and her family had received so much through Corrymeela. At one time all three daughters and one son-in-law were in the Corrymeela Singers.

Kate believes that the attitudes learnt and shared in Corrymeela have shaped her and the life of her family and she is glad that some of their grandchildren are also growing up with Corrymeela.