

VOL 10 | No 1 | MARCH 2010

Corrymeela

www.corrymeela.org



Corrymeela will donate to Northern Ireland's Carbon Footprint Tree Planting Scheme, to offset the environmental impact of this magazine.

12



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THE
CORMYMEELA
COMMUNITY

View from the Hill

The Rhythm of the Bells

TWICE A DAY a bell sounds over Corrymeela. Everyone on site is made aware of what this signifies.

It is a time to pause. A time to recall the heart, a call to the heart. People are invited to the Croi, to sit and be present with themselves, with friends, staff, strangers, and to consider the Divine Other in their midst.

Morning and evening the bell rings. It is a planned event, led out by staff, volunteers and community members. Sometimes a liturgy is followed, plucked from the well-thumbed Corrymeela worship book. At other times the Croi becomes a place where kids laugh and jump at a story told using puppets. The ringing of the bells are a call to wonder, a call to wait, a place to practice being present.

Three symbols are on the small wooden table. Candle, Bible, Celtic Cross.

Twice a day the candle is lit and extinguished. Hope stirs as the candle is danced by the wind. Between light and darkness something happens. The Bible is opened, sometimes randomly, sometimes with intention. Give us this day our daily bread.

The Celtic Cross squats black and quiet – a Roman instrument for slow execution, transformed into a memory of death transformed by love.

And there is no magic formula in the placing of

these objects together.

And there is no power source turned on and off by the lighting and snuffing of a candle.

But there is possibility.

An invitation to ponder, to dream, to be renewed. To encounter a presence in the midst of feeling forsaken. A place for pilgrims - a leveling place for doubters, believers, stumblers and searchers.

A place to embrace our particular oddness and strangeness.

And when the bell rings, no-one knows what will happen next.

Who will attend?

Who will host?

What will be uttered or stuttered in a shy faint voice?

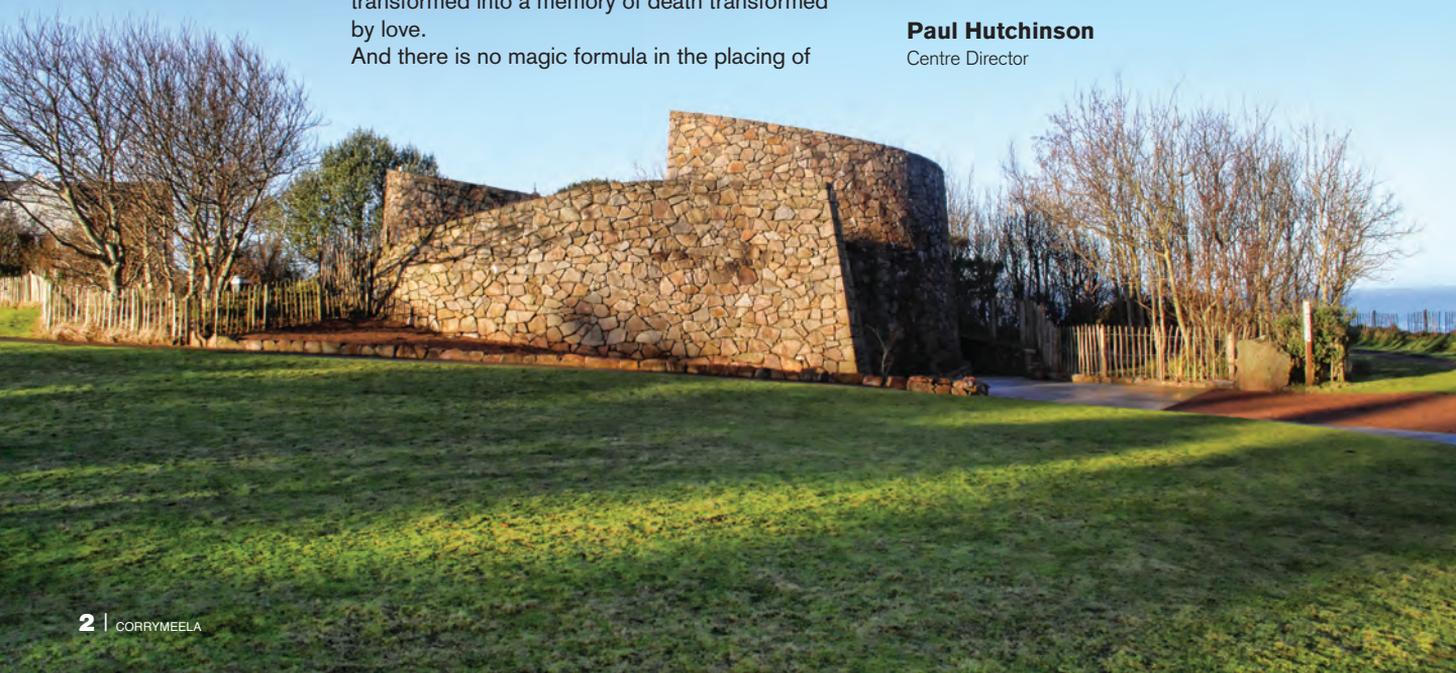
What will be renewed in repetition?

And it is a wonder to be here.

Twice a day the bell sounds over Corrymeela. Unless there is a youth or childrens group on site. In which case the bell is whacked and gonged and tolled and pealed all the long day long

Paul Hutchinson

Centre Director



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MEET THE CONTRIBUTORS



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Ronnie Millar Global Programmes Project Manager for Facing History and Ourselves reflects on his friendship with Corrymeela's much-loved Desie McLernon on page 22



Becki Fulmer is the Forgiveness Education Programme co-ordinator at Corrymeela. She explains how she moved across the world to get involved in forgiveness education on page 25



Alf McCreary is religion correspondent for the Belfast Telegraph and the author of a wide range of books, including 'In War and Peace – The Story of Corrymeela.' He writes about Hope, one of the great Christian virtues on page 27



David Masters is a writer, student and wanna-be clown. He volunteers with AKT as part of his studies in reconciliation at the Irish School of Ecumenics. He brings us a challenging reflection on rest, hope and the move to activism on page 32



Peter Sagar is a teacher, writer and human rights activist, acting as a Regional Representative for the NE and Yorkshire Region of Amnesty International and also Trade Union Co-ordinator for Burma Campaign UK. He shares his account of working with the San Jose de Apartado peace community on page 36

Corrymeela magazine
Volume 10 Number 1
March 2010

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Corrymeela magazine is published by the Corrymeela Community.

The Corrymeela Community is a dispersed community of people of all ages and Christian traditions who, individually and together, are committed to the healing of social, religious and political divisions in Northern Ireland and throughout the world.

Corrymeela magazine is sent to all 'Friends of Corrymeela'. To become a 'Friend of Corrymeela' and receive the magazine send your name and address to the Belfast office. Friends subscription is £26 (waged), £13 (unwaged), (€33 / €16, US \$50 / \$25) per annum. The magazine is published three times per year.

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Corrymeela is a company limited by Guarantee. Registered in Northern Ireland No. NI6823. Corrymeela is recognised as a charity by the (UK) Inland Revenue. Inland Revenue Reference Number XN 48052A

Design: TatchDesign, Tel: 9260 1832
Printing: GPS, Belfast.

Church leadership, idolatry, violence and hope

“We need to separate out hope from a facile optimism”

THE DEATH OF Cardinal Cahal Daly at the end of 2009 provides an opportunity to reflect on how church leadership met a situation of violence.

Cahal Daly was a bishop at the beginning of ‘the Troubles’ and ceased being Archbishop of Armagh in 1996 shortly after the first Republican ceasefire. He was the most articulate and persuasive upholder of a principled anti-violence position.

But, of course, in Ireland religion and national allegiance had wrapped themselves around each other, a symbiotic link between Protestantism and Unionism and Catholicism and Nationalism, expressed in the slogans ‘For God and Ulster’ and ‘For God and Ireland’.

What we had were ethno-religious worlds where church leaders were not just religious leaders and churches were not just religious institutions. Church leaders were chaplains and advisors to power blocks and sacralised political positions and national allegiances. The theological issue that this raises is that of idolatry: who we give ultimate allegiance to. When we give ultimate allegiance to national entities we worship them; they have become gods, and there is a link between idolatry and violence. When we worship the gods of Nationalism and Unionism, who preside over particular territories, we force other people who do not share our allegiances to fit in, or, we are happy to have them expelled. We are in the realm of violence.

Cahal Daly, to his everlasting credit, realised what was at stake and stood up to the god of Nationalism, who was also the god of violence. He was thus not popular in Republican circles, but Republicanism had to make a transition to realise that Unionists had to be included too - the direction in which Cahal Daly pointed.

Archbishop Robin Eames is the other outstanding church leader, who, during ‘The Troubles’ and in the 1990s, also discovered with particular intimacy, in his own Armagh archdiocese, what the Unionist god of territory could do.

North Armagh is an area where the Orange Order and the Church of Ireland could not be separated. The spirit of the god of territory is expressed by the capacity to march. The god is likely to turn violent when this possibility is



threatened. This duly happened at Drumcree, and was dramatically symbolised by Drumcree Parish Church and its role in the various stand-offs. The Archbishop found himself in a position of powerlessness as the drama of Drumcree was played out. Ultimately the Orange Order was defeated. What may happen is a slow untangling of the Church of Ireland and the Orange Order in rural Ulster. But what is also suggested is the difficulty of leadership in such situations.

What has all this to do with hope? What the experience of Northern Ireland suggests is that considerable tenacity is required; Cahal Daly had it, Ray Davey and Robin Eames have it. We need to separate out hope from a facile optimism. Facile optimism will not survive the intractabilities of Northern Ireland. Hope can come out of the worst of situations – witness Ray Davey after seeing the ruins of Dresden. Hope gives us the capacity to keep going and be patient before intractability; to be creative; not to give up.

David Stevens



David Stevens is the Leader of the Corrymeela Community

Dear Friends

I WELCOME YOU to this new issue of the Corrymeela magazine with its mix of news and articles, many with the underlying theme of hope. Hope was personified in Greek mythology as Elpis. When Pandora opened Pandora's Box, she let out all the evils except one: hope. Apparently, the Greeks considered hope to be as dangerous as all the world's evils. But without hope to accompany all their troubles, humanity was filled with despair. It was a great relief when Pandora revisited her box and let out hope as well. It may be worthy to note that in the story, hope is represented as weakly leaving the box but is in effect far more potent than any of the major evils. Hope can be passive in the sense of a wish or active as a plan or idea, often against popular belief, with persistent, personal action to execute the plan or prove the idea. As David Stevens says in the page opposite 'Hope can come out of the worst of situations – witness Ray Davey after seeing the ruins of Dresden.' also see page 16 for Dresden, sixty five years later. Hope is not naturally perfect nor is it something that happens by chance, it requires hard work and determination. I am proud to say I witness this many times a week in the care and dedication shown by the community members, staff and volunteers in the Corrymeela family. For me it is the hope of a different way of being that underpins so much of what you will read in this issue, learning that began in Corrymeela and is carried out into the world as the many volunteers and participants fly home. As Emily Dickinson so eloquently wrote in her poem "'Hope' is the thing with feathers... That perches in the soul...."

Jo Watson

Editor

HELLO AND WELCOME to Spring 2010 Corrymeela. It is with excitement and anticipation I offer these pages up for your thoughts and reflections and of course to your critical eye! It has been an inspiring and challenging process examining ideas of Hope and I want to thank those who shared their story with me and wrote heart-felt reflections for this issue.

Like many of you I was deeply saddened by the death of Desie McLernon, who had worked and been part of Corrymeela life for more than 30 years, though I had not known him for a long time I thoroughly enjoyed our conversations and remember in particular one drizzly afternoon when I had half an hour to kill. Desie took me on a tour of the grounds telling me tales of Corrymeela beginnings, of what happened here and there painting a vivid picture of laughter, mischief and time well spent. I hope we have put together a fitting tribute for Desie who will be greatly missed. Please tell us what you like and what you would like to see in your magazine.

For me I hope each of us can savour the bright misty mornings of Spring and take time to just be, in that quite place of contentment I believe transformation can take place, there we can find hope for a shared, diverse and colourful future together.

Alyson McElroy-Jones

Co-editor



Jo



Aly

LETTERS AND EMAILS

Thank you for all your emails and letters, we love hearing from you. Our summer edition is looking at themes of faith; if you have any personal stories, prayers or opinions around this subject please do get in touch.

To submit a letter please post to:
Editor
8 Upper Crescent
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Or email: editor@corrymeela.org



Hope to hear from you soon, Jo & Aly

CORRYMEELA MAGAZINE TEAM

A letter from Nepal

This letter is from Joe and Janet Campbell, Corrymeela Associates who have been living in Nepal for four years.

WHAT HAS THIS TIME MEANT, and what have we been learning? We have learned a little of some of the wonderful qualities we have seen much of here.

Living with uncertainty.

Uncertainty is about the only certainty. Intermittent electricity, politically motivated strikes, road blockages due to breakdowns and accidents and fuel shortages. Fierce monsoon rains wash away

roads, houses and all in their path. All this and much more are teaching us patience, flexibility and adaptability. There are many things we just cannot change, and like bad weather it needs to be experienced and lived through, making the best of it. Even welcoming and greeting the unexpected is a wonderful gift we have been learning something about.

Living in the present enjoying the moment, 'taking

no thought for tomorrow' is a highly honed skill of Nepali people.

Apart from neighbouring India, there is probably no country where family, tribe and caste count above everything else. You are not an individual here but a representative of your people, and therefore, carry enormous responsibilities for others. The extended family living together simply extends even further when

hardship strikes, through accident, illness or death. No one is excluded from care or left without a basic roof over their head. The education of younger siblings is the responsibility of those who are older, if they have a job. Money you earn is not yours but belongs to the family, since there is no social security system. We are learning something of this **hospitality and generosity**.



Of course we came here to help, and to somehow, out of our experience support others to make a difference. Perhaps we have been of some assistance to a few. But all against a backdrop of our inability to end poverty, hunger and homelessness in the UK and Ireland. So what makes us westerners think we can do it here thousands of miles away? **So we are learning more humility.** Making do with a lot less. Repairing rather than renewing, the way our parents lived. We have discovered what it feels like as westerners to be part of the problem, in having and using too much of the scarce resources of the world: when the vast numbers of people on the planet do not have anywhere near enough for basic needs.

People are always more important than things. I think we knew that before we came, but boy is it underlined here. Relationships are key, not education, wealth, gender or position. If you have a positive relationship with a Nepali, even if the language remains foreign and you are clumsy in their culture, your friendship and respect for them will more than make up for your mistakes. Spending time nurturing that relationship, endless cups of sweet Nepali tea, lots of chat and time spent just hanging out with people. All this is essential for living well in Nepal.

A sense of the spiritual is always near the surface and no effort is made to hide it. Religious celebrations are public; the Divine is to be revered, respected and spoken openly of, without any sense of embarrassment. The 'political correctness' culture



is still refreshingly afar off. The Christian church grows by about 14% each year, and this in a country having over 90% Hindu. I am convinced the growth is simply people taking their faith seriously, believing what the Bible says and simply living it out with no questions asked.

Death and dying are open topics for conversation. No burial here, only cremation. It is not hidden away but is right in the heart of the city at the main cremation site. In keeping with tradition and belief, it is beside the river which eventually will wend its way to India and join with the great and holy Ganges. In fact it's on the tourist trail. Family, friends and the public can see the body being placed on the pile of wood and the fire lit by the eldest son of the deceased. When the fire has consumed all, then the ashes are swept into the river for the long journey south.

By contrast, in the west death is rarely spoken about and often hidden. Perhaps it's because

in our materialistic and individualistic society we don't want to be reminded that wealth, fame, possessions and education are for one life alone. Few have a faith that prepares for death. St. Paul says: "Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where O death is your victory? Where O death is your sting?"

We are still learning. In August we shall leave Nepal to resume life in Belfast, and then in our home in Hollywood. We will be searching for ways that help us retain the best of what Nepal has been teaching us. The Presbyterian Church in

Ireland are arranging some 6 months of deputation work, about our experiences, beginning in September 2010. If you would like us to visit your congregation, house fellowship or peace group then do please get in touch with the Board of Mission Overseas office at 02890322284 or overseas@presbyterianireland.org

Thank you so much for your e-mails, prayers and friendship, and we pray that 2010 will be a wonderful year for you.

This letter is from Joe and Janet Campbell, Corrymeela Associates who have been living in Nepal for four years.



Our vision, our hopes and our prayers today are summed up in words from The Rule of Taisei:

"Be a sign of joy and of brotherly love among men. Open yourself to all that is human. Love your neighbour, whatever may be his political or religious beliefs, the colour of his skin, his age or attitude. In particular never resign yourself to the scandal of the separation of Christians."



Doug Baker behind the reception area coffee bar.

The Great Hope of God

— A sermon by Canon Reginald Askew AT THE OPENING OF THE CROI OF CORRYMEELA, ON 12th JUNE, 1979

You know who I am. I am Rachel's father. Parents have great hopes for their children. It is natural. I hoped she would grow up to be a happy woman. She is. When she was very young and our black Labrador had puppies, Rachel climbed into the basket with them. She lived down there. She took to having her meals down there. She liked to snuggle up to the puppies; and she carried them about in her jumper with their faces peeping out. There was a polite person who looked disdainfully under the table. She said sarcastically: 'Is that child hoping to grow up to be a little black wow-wow?' I said, 'I hoped she would not. You can see who was right.'

But the interesting thing about hope is that it does not know at all precisely how things will turn out, or where it will arrive.

Part of the friendliness of hope is just like that. It doesn't have to have the future all tied up and gagged, so that the future can't move. Hope has understood that the future must be able to breathe freely, and to happen as it will happen, unexpectedly. To hope is to grant the future all its own originality; and thus to be actually new, and never heard of before. When someone is bored, what he is doing is

very unambitious. Such people should really have been oysters. Oysters don't want anything to happen and they want it to go on the same for a million years.

What hope does is to congratulate the future. It admires what will happen next, without actually knowing what that will be. When a man takes a woman's hands and says: 'Let us be married' that is not hope. That is love. Hope is much more previous, and is full of admiration. Hope sits down next to a girl and says: 'You have the most beautiful hair I have ever seen. And what did you say your name was?'

But hope is not just idiotic. What makes hope convincing is that it works in practice. I can see now that when those people in London, at Christ Church, Lancaster Gate, set out to help Corrymeela six years ago, they were hoping. And look what has happened! It works. We did not know where we should arrive, but it exceeded all that we could desire. There is a prayer that says that. We shall say it at the end of the service.

But you see, hope is not just idiotic. What makes hope convincing is that it works in practice. I can see now that when those people in London, at Christ Church, Lancaster Gate, set out to help Corrymeela six years ago, they were hoping. And look what has happened! It works. We did not know where we should arrive, but it exceeded all that we could desire. There is a prayer that says that. We shall say it at the end of the service.



and hospitable hope is which allows the future to come in its own way unexpectedly, and which binds in the vision and the skill of others on the way.

There is no need for me to interrupt this process. But since the CROI has become a reality, and your possession, where has hope arrived which it didn't expect? I would like you to see to what can be seen, more clearly. To describe the CROI needs a poem, or a kaleidoscope which shakes images together; let us try that:

In the beginning of the world
When it was best to be mineral
And the rocks rose and the elegant basalt
To itself into bricks and chains

Small as buttons big as millstones
They reigned for as long as nearly forever.
The CROI has the shape of these creatures
To come corkcrawling in here is like entering
Their houses, and to know how it is
To linger in the chambers of the sea
Where the old evolution of life turned slowly
And creation coiled like a spring.

Now when men came along
With their heads full of stories
They liked to curl up in caves.
They dreamed of cities under the hill.
The fairies lived there.
Who would find a door into the huge hill
To open and bring them into the Land of Youth
Where it is always Autumn
And the apple trees ripe
The sun always shining?
Religious men called it the garden,
Eden, the hill of Zion,
The Eternal city, the Rest that remains
for the children of God.
It was called Beatitude
The interior castle
Here stood the tree of life,
And poets called it faraway

For the bones of saints to lie in
A good Irish king would wish
To be buried here. Simple and white as Easter
It describes the tomb of Christ
From whence our resurrection springs.
The place is set for Easter morning.
It has the dimensions of an egg
The possibilities of new life.

And I know that people will come
At once, and see it in different ways.
Children will see plainly that it is
Obviously a space ship paddled in the earth
Primed for patrolling the stars
With round hatches rolling above.
And hermits will regard it as a cyclotron
A machine for accelerating particles
And dancing folk will join hands
And make a ring without thinking
And those who like feasting
Will make a table round
And sit like kings in order
To welcome Christ's supper here
Above the sea above.

So now I have explained the nature of hope and tried to describe the effect of it which you can see around you. But I haven't got to the surprising bit, which is the point at which the sermon applies to you. Because the truest thing about hope must be about wild hope coming true, or if you like, that which was beyond your wildest hopes turning up, and which seizes the heart with joy. What could that be?

Well I will tell you that you haven't taken the mercy of God seriously. What you have done so far is let life teach you to prepare for disappointments because that is prudent and sensible, and not to hope except cautiously, and to develop the sort of fortitude that has a cheerful face. You have not begun to understand the mercy of God.

Under the fingertips of Christ are miracles. Have you not even hoped in the majesty of his miracles? Have you forgotten how poor people who had not dared to hope like you were amazed by what Jesus was doing; how the dreams of the prophets sang in their ears as Jesus made miracles come where ordinary, crippled reality was, so that in his hands the painfulness of living and the desolation in people's hearts became



The "Tree of Life" at home in The CROI provides a beautiful backdrop to a Corrymeela Concert.

The way to it was willingness to wonder.
And medical men coughed politely
And called it the smugness of infants
In their mothers' wombs. But no one doubted
The comfort of this desirable place
Which was full of treasure.

Upon that hill an archaeologist
Would put in his spade at once with patience
And in the excitement of archaeological men
Sift every handful of soil.
So when the grass has grown over our heads
The CROI will express the wisdom
To enter the
Imagined

The Great Hope of God

A sermon by Canon Reginald Askew at the opening of the CROI of Corrymeela on 12th June 1979

THE INTERESTING THING ABOUT HOPE is that it does not know at all precisely how things will turn out, or where it will arrive.

Part of the friendliness of hope is just like that. It doesn't have to have the future all tied up and gagged, so that the future can't move. Hope has understood that the future must be able to breathe freely, and to happen as it will happen, unexpectedly. To hope is to grant the future all its own originality; and thus to be actually new, and never heard of before. When you see someone bored, what he is doing is

insisting, even angrily, that the future must be exactly like the past, and that it should not dare to step out of line by one inch. In a sulky, domineering way people can actually boss the future like that. It is very unambitious. Such people should really have been oysters. Oysters don't want anything to happen and they want it to go on the same for a million years.

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says that. We shall say it at the end of the service.

But you see, hope that works is very inspiring. Isn't it? It is infectious. It is creative. It has drawn from an architect, and artists, and some builders, and electricians, something very subtle which it is their genius to contribute, and which those who ventured to hope at the beginning of the journey could have conceived. Now you see how friendly and hospitable hope is which allows the future to come in its own way unexpectedly, and which binds in the vision and the skill of others on the way.

What's On 2010



Belfast Events

Wednesday 05 May
AKT event 'Play'

For more information, and to join the conversation online, visit www.aktion.ning.com

Saturday 05 June
10 am – 4 pm

Book Sale

Cooke Centenary Church, Ormeau Road, Belfast

For further details please contact Bernie Magill at Corrymeela House on 028 9050 8080 or Susie Morrow on 028 9064 8909



Corrymeela Open Events Ballycastle Centre

Friday 14-16 May
Friends Weekend

A weekend of fellowship, study and learning for friends of the Corrymeela Community
Facilitated by: David Stevens

Saturday 19 June
10 am – 5 pm

The Land of Unlikeness

Exploring biblical texts about Reconciliation
Facilitated by: David Stevens

Saturday 18 September
10 am – 5 pm

Rest, stillness, silence

An antidote to the hectic frenetic consumer society
Facilitated by: Paul Hutchinson

Sunday 12 December
3 pm – 6 pm

Christmas Open Day

Facilitated by: Tim Rendell



Corrymeela Open Events Knocklayd Centre

Friday 09 – Sunday 11 April
Spring Gardening Weekend

Enjoy a weekend working in Knocklayd's beautiful garden in exchange for food and accommodation
Led by Knocklayd Team

Friday 16 – Sunday 18 April
Parents, Children and Sexual Identity

A weekend, led by parents, for parents struggling with issues around the sexual identity of a son or daughter
Led by Una Lount, Corrymeela Community, and Brian Treacy

Friday 07 – Sunday 09 May
Raising the Voice

The Knocklayd Writers invite you to their writing weekend
Led by Damian Gorman – Writer

Friday 21 – Sunday 23 May
Painting for Pleasure

These weekends are for those who enjoy painting/art and wish to experience the changing seasonal beauty of Knocklayd and Glenshesk
Led by Raymond Bakewell, Corrymeela Community

Saturday 05 June
10.30 am – 5.00 pm

Corrymeela Knocklayd Open Day

We invite you to join us for all, or part of the day

Friday 25 – Sunday 27 June

In Camera

A weekend for enthusiasts, incorporating a photographic safari to Rathlin Island. Non-resident participants are welcome

Friday 09 – Tuesday 13 July

Walking Together

A long weekend rambling along the coast and through the glens of Antrim. Non-resident participants are welcome

Friday 17 – Sunday 19 September

Painting for Pleasure

These weekends are for those who enjoy painting/art and wish to experience the changing seasonal beauty of Knocklayd and Glenshesk
Led by Raymond Bakewell, Corrymeela Community

Friday 01 – Sunday 03 October

Autumn Gardening Weekend

Enjoy a weekend working in Knocklayd's beautiful garden in exchange for food and accommodation
Led by Knocklayd Team

Friday 15 – Sunday 17 October

The Merton Retreat

A "Time Apart" – for silence, prayer, contemplation and personal reflection

Friday 05 – Sunday 07 November

Exploring the Ministry of Healing

Led by Ivan Bell and Gill Michael – Corrymeela Community

Friday 12 – Sunday 14 November

What makes people tick

An introduction to NLP
Led by Jim Robb

Friday 03 – Sunday 05 December

Advent Retreat

Preparation for Christmas
With the Knocklayd Team

A city without barriers...

IN DECEMBER 2009 the Inclusive Neighbourhood Project was successfully launched at the Ulster Museum, to an audience of 200 guests.

The Lord Mayor of Belfast, Councillor Naomi Long, opened the proceedings and voiced her support for the project. She was the first to contribute to the Time Capsule, which

was created to capture the dreams and aspirations of the moment; reflected by local communities and asylum seekers as they participate in this project: developed, to support integration between refugee and host communities in and around Northern Ireland.

Noel Thompson hosted the event and his facilitation skills meant that contributors were at ease, whilst maintaining a totally smooth and professional presentation. A highlight was visiting 'Scotswomen of the year 2008', Jean Donnachie and Noreen Real, who told of their dramatic experiences supporting and defending asylum seekers on their estate in Glasgow.



A project supported by the PEACE III programme and managed by a special EU programme body through the Community Relations Council/Pobal Consortium



The inclusive neighbourhood project is a partnership between Corrymeela and the Northern Ireland Community of Refugees and Asylum Seekers (NICRAS). They have worked closely over the last few years to set strong foundations for incoming asylum seekers to help build a positive and inclusive neighbourhood environment. Together their aim is to promote ways of dealing with difference that may reduce the likelihood of sectarian behaviour and violence, and increase the potential for members of the refugee and host community to fully integrate into their new environment.

For more information contact Ann Marie White at **Corrymeela 028 90508080**
e-mail amwhite@corrymeela.org or
website www.corrymeela.org



Fiona Campbell, Host Facilitator, Safdar Zaman, NICRAS, Ann Marie White, Corrymeela, Justin Kuoame, Participant, Rt Hon The Lord Mayor of Belfast, Cllr Naomi Long MLA add their notes to the INP Time Capsule

New beginnings



THE BALLYCASTLE CENTRE welcomed community member Aileen O'Reilly as the new volunteer development co-ordinator in January 2010.

Aileen, who was a long term volunteer from 1996–97, has a wealth of experience working within the field of reconciliation.

Originally from Ballymun, she has held posts including cross border development officer at Hazelwood College, youth co-ordinator with The Bridge, East Belfast and programme manager with Springboard Opportunities.

Aileen said, "I am delighted to be back working as part of the Corrymeela team and looking forward to the new challenges this year will bring."

Fundraising

WE ARE CURRENTLY WORKING on community fundraising ideas for 2010–12 and would love to hear from members, friends and associates who have ideas and want to get involved with fundraising in their local area. All suggestions are welcome, and we look forward to hearing from you. E-mail belfast@corrymeela.org with all your comments.

Aileen has been actively involved with Corrymeela for more than 10 years in a number of projects including the Summer Programme and Quest Programme, as well as bringing various womens' groups to the Ballycastle Centre.

Things you might not know...

Aileen is one of eight siblings and has been living in Northern Ireland for the last 14 years. She loves Pilates and other forms of deep relaxation. Time off is spent with family and friends, and her perfect night in is a good bottle of red wine and a movie.

FRIENDS WEEKEND

Friday 14 to Sunday 16 May 2010



We invite you to join us at the Corrymeela Ballycastle Centre for the Friends' Weekend 2010 to:

- **Learn more about peace-building in Northern Ireland and Corrymeela's work for reconciliation**
- **Consider the lessons for our own local churches and communities**

If you would like to attend the Corrymeela Friends' Weekend 2010 please complete and return the form with a £20 deposit or full payment to: Corrymeela House, 8 Upper Crescent, Belfast, BT7 1NT. For further information, or if you have any queries, please contact the Corrymeela Belfast office on 028 9050 8080 or e-mail: belfast@corrymeela.org

I would like to attend the Corrymeela Friends' Weekend 2010

I enclose payment of:

£78 (waged) £68 (unwaged) £35 (non residential weekend rate) £20 (deposit)

Name: [PLEASE PRINT] _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Please tick as appropriate:

- I will be present for a light meal on Friday at 7.30 pm
- I require a seat on the bus from 8 Upper Crescent on Friday at 6.00 pm
- I wish to have vegetarian meals
- I have other dietary/medical needs.

Please state:



New village under way

WE ARE PLEASED to let you know that at last our new village complex is underway with the contractor now on site for the next fifteen months.

The building has been funded by the International Fund for Ireland which has contributed £1.4m to the scheme (delivered through the Northern Ireland Rural Development Council). Corrymeela has raised a terrific £718,000 with special thanks to our friend John Fitzpatrick and the

Paddy & Eithne Fitzpatrick Memorial Fund. The total amount raised was £2,118,000.

Denis Rooney, Chairman of the International Fund for Ireland (IFI) said "The Fund for Ireland has been a long term supporter of the Corrymeela Community and as such is delighted to have

contributed £1.4m to its new residential centre and in turn support the vital contribution made by them every year. The project forms an important part of the Fund's Leaving a Legacy strand of work which aims to make a long term contribution to peace building and integration on the Island of Ireland."

Look out for an update on the building in the next issue of Corrymeela.



Denis Rooney, Chairman of IFI



Whatever
you say, say
something!

Healing through remembering

There are no set answers for dealing with the past.

Healing Through Remembering offers groups and organisations the opportunity to work with a facilitator to identify areas of interest and issues to be explored through discussion in a safe environment.

For more information or to get involved in the workshops log onto

www.healingthroughremembering.org

or call +44 (0)2890238844



Healing Through Remembering
Alexander House, 17a Ormeau Avenue, Belfast BT2 8HD
Tel: 028 9023 8844 Fax: 028 9023 9944
Email: info@healingthroughremembering.org
Web: www.healingthroughremembering.org

Healing Through Remembering

Facebook, keeping up to date

CORRYMEELA has a thriving facebook page, with more than 700 members, called, 'The Corrymeela Community'.

Facebook is a social networking site that connects people with friends and others who share similar interests.

Each week new events and comments by David Stevens are posted, with an easy

to use comment field allowing you to have your say.

It is not difficult to use, and we would be happy to offer help to any members who would require a little advice on getting started. E-mail: belfast@corrymeela.org for more information.



SAD NEWS

It is with sadness we announce the death of Corrymeela member of staff Desie McLernon. He died on Monday 15 February 2010, aged 62 years, following a courageous fight against cancer. We remember his family at this time. Our tribute to him is on pages 20-22

We regret to announce the death of Hylda Armstrong who passed away this February. She helped to raise money for the first playground at Corrymeela in memory of her son Sean who worked for International Voluntary Service and was murdered by loyalist paramilitaries. Our thoughts are with her family.

We regret to announce the death of Anne Townsend's husband Harvey. Anne is a friend of Corrymeela and a member of the Corrymeela Singers.

LEGACIES

We remember Gwendoline F Dawson, Alethea M Pitt, and Eleanor M Davis and sincerely hope that it brings some comfort to their families to know that their legacy gift will be put to good use.

GIFTS IN MEMORIAM

We remember Joyce Neice, Anne Earle, Desmond McBride, Francis Wallace and Glenda Patterson and their families.

Leading ladies

Inspiring women across Belfast

IT IS MY PRIVILEGE to be involved with Leading Ladies, an Irish Peace Centre initiative with Corrymeela and hear the many shared stories that paint a colourful picture of life as a mother, daughter, friend, sister, wife and business person in our great city.

Leading Ladies creates a safe space, free from life's pressures where women come together for some me-time across traditional neighbourhood divides, to learn about one another, swap stories and nurture unexpected friendships.

In December 2009 well-known public figure Baroness May Blood came to share her story with us recounting the highs and lows of her journey through the trade unions and into politics; exploring the consequences of the choices she made that marked out her path as a woman in leadership.

An unlikely hero May recounted her story to us

with humility and humour; once she started to speak we were all hooked. She described the reality of her 38 years in the Mill with honesty and many hilarious anecdotes. It seems May's time as an, initially reluctant, Trade Union Representative, was in fact the making of her and the place she gained the skills, confidence and tenacity to tackle men in a male dominated environment.

I think women today, myself included, cannot imagine the reality of walking into a meeting and being told to 'fetch the tea' because everyone assumed that is the only reason you would be there; yet May tackled this sort of opposition and much worse, both deliberate and accidental, for many years but refused to let their attitudes belittle who she was and what she was there to say.

What really stood out was May's determination and ability to keep going and never give up. She admitted

there were hard times, that when she left the Mill she didn't know what she was going to do with herself. May said she didn't have a clue how to form a political party but knowing that women had to have their say if things were to improve for Northern Ireland meant she went for it, full steam ahead.

Unsurprisingly when first offered life peerage at the House of Lords May turned it down, not concerned with titles and privileges, yet knowing there was a need May took on the role valiantly and credits good friends and wise counsel as key in getting her through her initial difficult and very lonely time in London.

May strikes you as someone who loves life, enjoys people and friends and loves Belfast. She is young at heart and not one for making excuses. May chatted with us about our lives and answered the women's questions meeting them when they were at, she proved that regardless of education, background or circumstance women can make their own fate with work hard, self-belief and good friends.

To find out more about the project or come along to one of the lunches contact Susan McEwen IPC Project Coordinator at: susanmcewen@corrymeela.org

Allyson McElroy Jones

Baroness May Blood was one of the founding members of Northern Ireland's Women's Coalition in 1996 set up so women could have a voice in the Belfast Agreement.





Bag Packingtastic!

WELL DONE to David Mark and Emmet Norris and their band of volunteers who helped out at the recent M&S bag packing in East Belfast and Belfast City Centre raising over £2,300 in three stores so far!

We still have a number of M&S stores that have kindly agreed to let us bag pack, but we need packers aged over 16 years.

This is money which we need to support the Corrymeela activities, all of which are important to us; but not necessarily to funders. Please e-mail Bernie Magill, at belfast@corrymeela.org, if you too can spare one hour on a Saturday to bag pack, and she will match you to a local store.

Girardian Summer School anyone?

ROEL KAPTEIN who developed models to help us understand conflict, violence and human relationships, worked extensively on community members' questions during his summer weeks at Corrymeela.

French literary critic René Girard, who helped many of us understand biblical texts in new ways, influenced Roel's models.

We are proposing a summer school to revisit some of the models that were used and also explore biblical texts that illuminate Girard's ideas.

If you are interested in such a summer school running on 26th & 27th August 2010 contact Anne McDonagh on annemcdonagh@corrymeela.org This event is open to all.



THE
Corrymeela
COMMUNITY

Where do belong?

Wednesday 5th May (10am)
to Friday 7th May 2010 (2pm)

A CONFERENCE FOR YOUTH WORKERS

**A creative exploration of youth work practice
in a multicultural context**

A dialogue within and between the UK and Ireland

This residential conference is hosted by Corrymeela at our centre in Ballycastle, all meals and accommodation will be provided.

**Conference
Cost • £20**



Let the fun begin...

ON BEHALF OF EVERYONE at the Corrymeela Community, I would like to say a big thank you for all the donations towards the replacement of our playground at the Ballycastle Centre which has now been completed. Your support for Corrymeela is greatly appreciated and is of real encouragement to us all. I am touched that so many of you chose to make a donation and I am mindful that you must be inundated with charitable requests but you chose us which is why we were very careful to spend it wisely.

I especially want to say a special thank you on behalf of all the many

children who will visit us and enjoy the playground. It is a gift that really will keep on giving as the children climb, play and make friends in the sea air, I just wish I could capture some of their sounds of laughter and play in this magazine!

Unfortunately I can't but please visit our website www.corrymeela.org to learn more about Corrymeela and see your donation in action. On behalf of the members, staff and the volunteers, thank you for sharing in Corrymeela's vision and thank you for your donation that made this possible.

Jo Watson
Fundraising Director



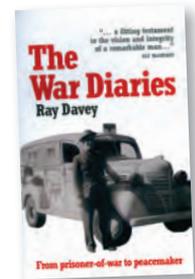
Dresden, sixty five years later

ON THE NIGHT OF 13 February 1945, 65 years ago, the city of Dresden was firebombed by the Allies. Ray Davey was in the city that day and he describes the experience in his 'War Diaries'.

It is estimated that between 25,000 and 40,000 people died. There was nothing exceptional about the attack; the Allies had been carpet-bombing German cities since 1942.

The city was as legitimate a target as any other German city. This wasn't a city of picture postcard innocence. It was a city producing military equipment; it was a key communications hub. Dresden also had a history of active anti-semitism. One of the Jewish residents of the city, Victor Klemperer, published his diaries in the 1990s under the title, 'I Will Bear Witness', and he describes in mundane and relentless detail how his city had turned into a place of terror that ostracised, humiliated, warehoused, tortured and finally killed its Jews. And paradoxically, the firebombing enabled Klemperer to survive.

Dresden is not a place of innocent violation. We cannot build a story of moral equivalence, revisionism and relativism out of Dresden, no matter how immoral the bombing was. The challenge is to acknowledge all victims of war without yielding to the temptation of equivalence; to see the evil of all war, and also the evil that led to this particular war and the necessity to resist it; to see ordinary decent Germans, as described in *The War Diaries*, in a criminal regime supported by millions; and to use what happened, as Ray did, for more peaceful purposes – paradoxically, only the experience of war can allow us to think about reconciliation.



The War Diaries by Ray Davey is available from Corrymeela House, e-mail Belfast@corrymeela.org for more information.



Dr Helen Lewis

Auschwitz survivor with immense moral authority

Dr Helen Lewis, who died recently at the age of 93, had a remarkable story as a survivor of the Auschwitz concentration camp – before making an important contribution to her adopted Northern Ireland through artistic talent and personality.

SHE WROTE AN ACCLAIMED BOOK, 'A Time to Speak', published in 1992, which documented her horrifying experiences in the death camps. She talked freely about those dreadful times as well as showing people the prison tattoo on her forearm, if they wished to see a tangible proof of what she had lived through. Dr Lewis had a bright, engaging personality, and her eloquent verbal recollections were both moving and challenging.

The Holocaust survivor was a close friend and Belfast neighbour of the Reverend Dr Ray Davey, the Founder of the Corrymeela Centre, who served with the YMCA in the Desert Campaign during World War II, and who himself was incarcerated in Italian and German prisoner of war camps, around the same time that Helen was in Auschwitz.

Another friend, the Christian writer and broadcaster Derick Bingham recalled recently how she had been forced to break stones at Auschwitz, which had made her extremely ill. She also told how a female camp commandant had co-opted her to take part in a Christmas concert. This meant missing the transport to the gas chambers, thus saving her life.

It was later, when she was on a forced march from Auschwitz, that she managed to escape unnoticed into

a snow-drift and make her way to safety.

After the war she settled in Belfast and married an old friend Harry Lewis, her first husband Paul having died at Auschwitz.

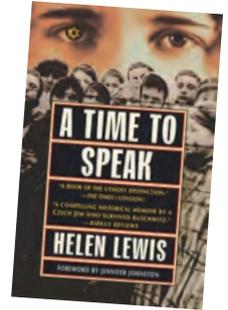
Helen Lewis was born in Prague and trained as a dancer. Her talent was put to good use later in Belfast when she became a dance teacher and choreographer and enjoyed a long association with the Lyric Theatre. In 2001 she was appointed MBE for her services to contemporary dance.

Physically she was a slight figure but she had immense moral authority. She spoke quietly about her experiences, but few people ever finished a conversation with Helen Lewis without feeling humbled or inspired.

Dr Lewis was among the last survivors of the brutality of the German World War II death camps, but her almost miraculous survival and the later blossoming of her artistic talent reminded succeeding generations of the ability of the human spirit to transcend the extremes of brutality and evil.

Alf McCreary

courtesy of the Belfast Telegraph



“...she had immense moral authority... few people ever finished a conversation with Helen Lewis without feeling humbled or inspired”



Alf McCreary is religion correspondent for the Belfast Telegraph and the author of a wide range of books, including 'In War and Peace - The Story of Corrymeela.'

The End of the Vi

“This looks like a funeral,” commented one of the volunteers who had gathered to say goodbye to the Village on Corrymeela’s Ballycastle site.

THE LAST GROUPS to occupy these spaces had laughed, argued, slept and shivered the day before, and on 26 January 2010 we met to say goodbye to the buildings.

When confronted with the question, “What can you do with people who find it hard to live together?” Ray Davey, the founder of Corrymeela, answered, “Invite them to

live together, temporarily, as an experiment in how to eat and sing and be in the same room as strangers, as the enemy, as the people who have hurt or harmed your people.”

Indeed tens of thousands of people have enjoyed these buildings since their construction in 1976. To mark the occasion a single candle was lit and placed on



the seat of an old wooden chair, alongside three pine cones. The candle flickered in the unpredictable breeze blowing through the open front door.

The pine cones that have

fallen to the ground, will die to give life. These buildings must also fall to allow a new creation - the New Village.

Where fresh stories will emerge about how ordinary people dared to embrace



llage

difference, heal division and enable reconciliation.

I will light this candle again, when the new building opens. I invited stories. Two volunteers had slept here on their honeymoon, in the honeymoon suite... complete with bunkbeds. We talked about exploring silence, and I described how the group I was with resisted stillness with a passion. The creaking plumbing was a theme in several tales.

I read the famous passage in Ecclesiastes 3, about a time for all things, and each line resonated with a special significance, especially, "A time to scatter stones and a time to gather them." We finished by snuffing the candle out after the second collective puff from the gathered group.

And now for the decant: the removal of all things necessary. By the time you read this, the demolition will have begun, starting with the exposing of asbestos. In the past we built with toxic substances.

Take all the metaphor you need from that.

Paul Hutchinson



Paul Hutchinson is Centre Director in Ballycastle.



THERE IS A TIME FOR EVERYTHING A SEASON FOR EVERY ACTIVITY UNDER HEAVEN

a time to be born *and a time to die*
 a time to plant *and a time to harvest*
 a time to kill *and a time to heal*
 a time to tear down *and a time to rebuild*
 a time to cry *and a time to laugh*
 a time to grieve *and a time to dance*
 a time to scatter stones *and a time to gather stones*
 a time to embrace *and a time to turn away*
 a time to search *and a time to lose*
 a time to keep *and a time to throw away*
 a time to tear *and a time to mend*
 a time to be quiet *and a time to speak up*
 a time to love *and a time to hate*
 a time to make war *and a time to make peace*

Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8



Remembering our friend



Reflections from good friend, Inderjit Bhogal

I FIRST MET DESIE at Corrymeela when he was just 28; five years older than me.

I recall seeing him surrounded by young volunteers. He was giving out instructions to us all and was clear about the jobs that needed doing; he commanded the attention and respect of all who worked with him, especially young people.

I came to work with Corrymeela as Worship co-ordinator, but Desie soon had me driving those old blue transit minibuses - remember them? Doing odd jobs around the site; in fact I think my

first job with him was to get underneath the old house and de-rust some metal girders, and paint them again!

Soon enough, I was turning up to Desie saying I had a spare hour, "Any jobs need doing?" After each lunch we'd get a football match going. Desie was a keen and skilled footballer - nobody wanted to be in his way when he was running down the pitch with the ball at his feet! Nothing and no one could stop him. Perhaps the only ones with the courage to challenge him were Andy Spence or big Pat Murphy.

We became very good friends and he would come along to worship when I was involved. I think our friendship was cemented when I ran into difficulty with one of the old buses; the head gasket had blown and the only way back from Belfast was with a tow. I expected Desie to be mad at the extraordinary lengths he had to go to in order to rescue me. But he was full of understanding.

We often talked about this incident. Sometimes when I travelled to Belfast with Desie he would point to the spot

the old bus had died on me.

Desie could do all repair jobs; nothing was beyond him. He was Mechanic, Builder, Electrician, Plumber, Painter, Joiner and Roofer; he even repaired the potholes in Corrymeela lanes often assisted by my son Liamarjit and I.

He was also a keen Boatman and Fisherman. To my regret I was never able to take up his offer to take me fishing around Rathlin. He knew how much I loved the local mackerel.

Oh! and he also repaired clocks. On the hour at his home you can hear a number of clock chimes make music. His favourite was an old grandfather clock he restored. Desie was also a champion dog breeder, and a regular winner at dog shows. My daughter Anjuli loved to go and visit his dogs whenever she was in Ballycastle.

It was visits to see the dogs that the Bhogals became great friends with Rae, Dominic and the whole McLernon family. We came to see how special his family was to Desie. We saw how much effort he had put into adapting the family house to meet his family needs. Desie adored his family and

nd Desie McLernon

I know he was dearly loved by all of them.

He made a great fuss of my family; my children Anjali and Liamarjit have a deep respect for him and are devastated at the news of his premature death.

Of course it is with Corrymeela that I most especially associate Desie; whenever we came to Corrymeela he would be there. In my estimation he was the most loyal and longest serving member of staff at the Ballycastle Centre. He devoted himself to Corrymeela and could always be depended upon.

He would be there with his inseparable co worker, friend and colleague, Peter Montgomery. They'd both always make time to sit and have a cup of tea and a natter. Desie had a wicked sense of humour and a chuckle of a laugh. I valued those moments very much.

My last memory of Desie at Corrymeela is from a Summer Festival in June 2008. I had arrived the day before the event and took a walk around the site. It was around 9 p.m. and quite a wet evening. I saw Desie near the cottages; he was lugging planks of wood around but dropped all he was carrying to greet me. "What are you doing at this hour?" I asked.

"Just finishing putting in these signposts" he said, "It's important for visitors to know where everything is." I asked him why he was doing this all by himself. It saddened me that he was working alone. My first memory is of a man surrounded with helpers. My last memory of Desie at Corrymeela is of a man alone.

I stood there and thought that loved as he was by all at Corrymeela, as a community we could have valued this amazing servant more. His contribution to Corrymeela was considerable, and often at the expense of his own home life and health. I gave him a hand to finish the job in hand and helped him get ready to go home.

As I watched him leave I looked at some pieces of wood Desie had been working with, and thought about a Cross he made for me. It's a Cross made from steps rescued by Desie when the old house was pulled down. He made five Celtic Crosses from this Thailand Teak, apparently one of the strongest types of wood. Desie gave me one of these Crosses.

I received it when I had just been inducted as

President of the British Methodist Conference, it was delivered to me, on behalf of Desie, by Trevor Williams. The inscription on the back reads: "To my friend Inderjit, Desie."

I have lost, and remember, a truly special friend, one for whom I had deep respect.

In all he did Desie made his own invaluable contribution to peacemaking in Northern Ireland. His contribution is immense. We give thanks for all that God gave in Desie to so many of us.



"I share these reflections with mixed emotions. It is good to be remembering Desie but it gives me no pleasure to think he is no longer with us."

"Desie adored his family and I know he was dearly loved by all of them."



Desie McLernon epitomised the spirit of Corrymeela. What a huge loss for his wife Rae, his family, the town of Ballycastle, and the Centre

“I appreciated his wisdom and his humour. I think he enjoyed the public banter with me at meetings as much as I did back with him.”

SOME OF YOU KNEW DESIE much longer and better than I did, and have your own experiences and stories about him. I only got to know him well since 2005.

He had an amazing toolkit of skills, and there was wasn't much that he couldn't attend to around the Centre. He was a touchstone for the volunteers, and always showed his care for them in big ways and small. I remember his sixtieth birthday, when the volunteer team decorated the house foyer and held a surprise celebration with a beautifully dressed mannequin, which gave him a good laugh.

I appreciated his wisdom and his humour. I think he enjoyed the public banter with me at meetings as much as I did back with him. He often had something quite profound to say, and was always very kind, honest, and down-to-earth. What a strong, reliable, and loving human being!

He knew every inch of the site, and had a hand in the building and upkeep of every unit. How many hundreds of young ACE workers and youngsters around the country did he mentor over the years? I was thinking that he must have cut every blade of grass as he spun around in that mower. It was wonderful to work alongside him in his role as clerk of works for Coventry; contractors and architects all paid attention when Desie spoke. One of his last projects was in the kitchen - he was moving something for the new oven, and he voluntarily came in on the evenings to lessen the disruption.

He loved the Croi. I loved it when he came to worship. His quietness grounded us in the presence of God. I remember one Monday morning; staff worship led by two visitors from Jerusalem - Sheikh Bukhari and Rabbi Eliyahu McLean - at one stage, I peeked up during the chanting and swaying, and saw Desie really getting into it.

He loved to go fishing in the summer, and occasionally took some of us along. What a privilege to sail with him up along the coast,

and on the other side of Rathlin. On the day of the 2008 Summer Festival, he went out all afternoon catching mackerel, then came back, cleaned them, and barbecued them for the hundreds of visitors to eat that night at dinner. The amazing thing was that there was enough fish for everyone, right down to the very last person. It was like a parable right out of the New Testament.

Woodworking was another of his hobbies, and when he finished a three-year project to restore his family's grandfather clock, he proudly unveiled it at the Centre. Remembering that day, I am reminded of Ecclesiastes: "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: a time to laugh and a time to weep, a time to dance and a time to mourn."

I'll never forget him. His deep, blue eyes, and lovely smile. I have an abiding image of him in his blue short-sleeved shirt, shirt-tail hanging out, speedily heading across the site, with a spring in his step, to repair a leak, or fix a broken tile in the cottages. And then back to base again for a cup of tea ("that's okay, I'll pour the milk"). He just loved problem-solving and helping people out.

We'll all miss him, and our thoughts and prayers go out to his family at this very difficult time.

Ronnie Millar
Former Centre Director



“He loved the Croi. I loved it when he came to worship. His quietness grounded us in the presence of God.”

“Randomized research trials show that forgiveness therapy with adults can reduce anxiety and depression and increase well-being for people suffering from many different kinds of injustices such as incest, parental neglect, and spousal abuse.”

Forgiveness education as a path to peace

OVER THE PAST EIGHT YEARS my colleagues and I have been involved in a new experiment in the peace movement: introducing forgiveness education into schools and homes, in the hope of reducing resentments, and making people more open to seeing the worth in others, even those with whom they have been in deep social conflict.

We have done this in Milwaukee, Wisconsin’s central city, and in Belfast. The point is to assist children in learning about and practicing forgiveness so that deep resentments, which can lead to prolonged violence when they reach adulthood, are reduced. We are honored to now be working with Corrymeela on this effort.

Forgiveness is an ancient concept with roots in Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Confucianism, and other philosophies and

religions. Because forgiveness is a virtue (as is justice, patience, and love), we are free to practice it whenever we wish. As we forgive we reduce resentment or ill will towards someone who was unfair to us, and we offer mercy in the form of beneficence or even love. When we forgive we begin to see the inherent worth in the other person, not because of what he did, but in spite of any injustice. As Aristotle reminds us in his *Nicomachean Ethics*: we usually start slowly in our mastery of any virtue and become better with practice and time; rarely reaching perfection.

Our approach to peace-through-forgiveness is a ‘bottom-up’ or grass-roots approach in which we assume the following nine points:

First, conflict between people is directly connected to conflict within people. Excessively angry people start conflicts.

“When we forgive, we begin to see the inherent worth in the other person, not because of what he did, but in spite of any injustice.”



“Forgiveness must become part of the community, not isolated and individualised, if it is to aid peace initiatives.”

Second, one person’s internal conflict has a way of infecting others, creating resentment within them until many in a social group are suffering from the malady of excessive anger.

Third, even if economic and social reconstructions are effective in altering a society’s infrastructure, the inner world of the human heart, when resentment remains, can prevent true peace from being realised.

Fourth, forgiveness is not a substitute for programmes centred on justice, but instead are complements to them.

Fifth, forgiveness practiced over years in schools, families, and places of worship, should be able to reduce or even eliminate internal resentments. This should allow people to accept rebuilt infrastructures and live together in peace.

Sixth, to be effective, forgiveness programmes must have a clear definition of the term forgiveness and not confuse it with somewhat related but distinct terms such as excusing.

Seventh, to be effective, forgiveness programmes must be sustained over a period of years to allow people to learn, and then to incorporate the practice of forgiveness into their daily lives, and to pass the learning and practice to others.

Eighth, forgiveness education cannot be isolated to a few willing participants, but instead needs to pervade a society if it is to change towards peace where deep social conflict was once the norm. In other words, the assumption is that forgiveness must become part of the community, not isolated and individualised, if it is to aid peace initiatives.

Finally, our approach is slow and developmental. We do not ask children in Belfast, for example, to confront ‘The Troubles’, but instead to learn from good children’s stories how the characters, despite their differences, can learn to forgive and live in harmony. As the children see story characters forgiving, might they too take up the challenge and begin to forgive the ‘little things’ of their lives, such as an unkind word from a sibling or a fistfight on the playground? As they continue to practice forgiveness in these small ways throughout childhood, might they confront the societal injustices once they are adults, once they are philosophically and psychologically

We now have teacher curriculum guides for forgiveness education available from primary two through year three in secondary school (available from the International Forgiveness Institute, Inc. in Madison, Wisconsin, forgiveness-institute.org). Feedback from teachers is that these guides are easy to use and help build character in both themselves and in their students.

- This research is published in the Journal of Research in Education in 2007 (volume 17) and 2008 (volume 18) in America

sophisticated forgivers, because of years of forgiveness education?

Might such learning from children’s literature have a two-fold effect of improved emotional health in the short run and improved community relations in the long run? My colleagues and I answer “yes” to both questions because of our past research with adults, outlined in my book, ‘Helping Clients Forgive’. Randomised research trials show that forgiveness therapy with adults can reduce anxiety and depression and increase well-being for people suffering from many different kinds of injustices such as incest, parental neglect, and spousal abuse.

Our research on the forgiveness programmes in the Milwaukee and Belfast schools show that as children take part in them, all taught by the children’s own classroom teacher, they reduce significantly in anger: a key catalyst to family and social unrest.*

Forgiveness education, as a scientifically proven approach to reducing anger in the short run, may be one of the answers to peace, within conflict zones and in post-accord societies, if we give it a chance to flourish.

Robert Enright, Ph.D



Robert Enright is a Professor in the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Wisconsin - Madison, a position he has held for 31 years. He has been scientifically studying forgiveness since 1985. His books include: ‘Forgiveness Is a Choice’ and a children’s book on forgiveness ‘Rising Above the Storm Clouds’. Both are available at www.amazon.com

The Forgiveness Project at Corrymeela

MY OWN INVOLVEMENT with forgiveness education began in 2006 when I first learned about it through a good friend who was, at that time, facilitating the programme in Belfast.

Padraig O'Tuama did a fantastic job at convincing me this was a programme worth investing in so... I changed my career path and moved back to Belfast. With a background in child, adolescent and family therapy, the hope that forgiveness education could bring to the lives of children and families regardless of background seemed evident to me.

I had spent years working with people affected by trauma, and what I recognised in the forgiveness curriculum was its ability to help children learn how to forgive the small hurts and injustices of childhood; with the hope that in adulthood, they will be able to see the humanity in everyone, even in those who have committed larger injustices or perpetrated larger hurts and learn to forgive them as well.

I have had the privilege of co-operating with some very talented teachers as they work tirelessly



- * The forgiveness education programme has been utilised in several primary schools in Northern Ireland for the past eight years.
- * In 2002, Dr. Robert Enright, Professor of Educational Psychology at the University of Wisconsin launched a research project in selected Belfast primary schools with the aim of establishing that forgiveness education can help reduce anger, increase academic performance, and improve peer-to-peer relationships within the class context.
- * Initially starting in primary three classes, it spread throughout three schools. The programme now has over 1100 pupils participating every year across 50 classes in Belfast, with specially written curricula for every class from primary two to primary seven.
- * This year will also see the expansion of forgiveness education outside of the Belfast area to schools in Derry/Londonderry and Ballymoney.

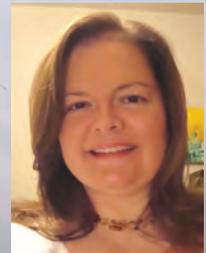
to share the hope of forgiveness education with the children in their classrooms across Belfast.

I have also met some wonderful primary school pupils who have shared stories with me about how they have learned to forgive the bully in their class, or the sibling who wouldn't share their toys.

These children are learning to look beyond the initial hurt by focusing on the humanity of the other and seeing instead a person who has value, who has dreams, and who also has a hope for the future. I believe it is a lesson we could all do with learning, and it leaves me filled with hope for our future.

Becki Fulmer

To find out more about Forgiveness Education go to www.forgiveness-institute.org or to contact Becki e-mail bfulmer@corrymeela.org



Becki is the forgiveness education programme co-ordinator at Corrymeela, working in partnership with the International Forgiveness Institute of America. Previously, she worked as a child, adolescent and family therapist in America.

Judge not that you be not judged'

Iris Robinson and sin

“But part of the story we are loving is that here was a woman who put herself on the moral pedestal, the Pharisee position, and now has been plunged into hell.”

THERE IS A CERTAIN REALISM required about the human condition – the persistence of sin in all of us. And that often the worst corruption is the corruption of the good.

This is Pharisee sin – the sin of the ‘religious’. The Pharisee puts himself above others – particularly the people who commit sexual sins, and the sins of impurity. It is interesting that the only people who Jesus really condemns are the Pharisees.

We are all fascinated by the ‘big’ sins associated with sex, power, money and violence. The Robinson story has all of these except violence, to date; and all of us are fascinated.

But part of the story we are loving is that here was a woman who put herself on the moral pedestal, the Pharisee position, and now has been



plunged into hell. We think: great, you have got your comeuppance. So from being the ‘good’ person, in her eyes, she has become the ‘bad’ person in every person’s eyes. Perhaps her tragedy is that she has become the ‘bad’ person in her own eyes, thus her mental health crisis.

There are ‘facts’, what she did or didn’t do, and she must be accountable for these. But making her the ‘bad’ person, over and against the rest of us, who are of course ‘good’ people, makes her a scapegoat. Issues around sex, power and money are constant temptations for most of us. The Pharisee position is again most of us. Iris thought she was better than most of us – now most of us think that we are better than her. Because she has thrown stones at others we would gladly throw stones at her. We are playing the same game. Ironically Iris may now be discovering the loneliness of the scapegoat – the position of many gays she scapegoated.

There is ‘knowledge’ in the Christian tradition that may help about scapegoating, and Jesus was the ultimate scapegoat, about the possibility of a new start, about being held in love, about accountability, about truth telling. In particular there is ‘knowledge’ about sin, about the persistence of sin, and about the relational dimension of sin: that it is often out of poisonous relationships that sinful acts come. Finally, sinfulness is something shared by all human beings. Recognition of solidarity in sin is a realistic recognition of a true human solidarity – we are all caught up together in our sinfulness. It is part of being human. Being human is not denied and cancelled out by the fact that people (including ourselves) have ways of being human which deny the being human of others. This is the tragedy of being human. ‘Judge not that you be not judged’.

David Stevens

Leader of the Corrymeela Community

Hope springs eternal

Alf McCreary writes about one of the great Christian virtues.

MOST PEOPLE WILL REMEMBER the first line of Alexander Pope's claim that, "Hope springs eternal in the human breast." Few, however, will easily recall the important sequel that, "Man never is, but always to be blest."

The word hope so permeates our everyday language, that it is easy to overlook its deeper metaphysical significance. We talk about 'living in hope' or 'hoping against hope,' these terms are suggestive not of hope but rather of a kind of hoping that does not really expect a happy outcome.

It is not easy to define hope, or to categorise the kind of hope that is appropriate to each situation. There is a difference, for example, in hoping that Andy Murray will win Wimbledon in the not-too-distant future, and of being certain that one's hopes are well-founded in the knowledge that he will do so.

The aspiration of hope differs from individual to individual, and in differing circumstances. Recently, for example, I stood waiting in the biting cold outside Charles de Gaulle airport in Paris, in the hope that our pre-booked minibus would actually arrive. A replacement vehicle did so, about two hours late and after, allegedly, the original minibus had experienced the inconvenience of not one, but two, flat tyres. After about 90 minutes of waiting, my hopes had diminished to the point where I was considering cutting our losses and taking a taxi instead.

That was a situation where false hopes could be rectified by taking evasive action or by adopting a new method of approach to a particular problem. It is not so easy, however, when one's hopes are as ill-defined and as all-embracing as making 'peace in our time' a reality.

One of the most striking characteristics of the founders of the Corrymeela Community, apart from their courage and vision, was their sense of hope during a period when the situation in Northern Ireland would become almost without hope.

In the late Sixties and early Seventies the situation was so bad that many people told me there

would never be peace in Ireland. I did not believe them, but I found it difficult to convince them that the light at the end of our tunnel was something other than the approach of an on-coming train.

There were many moments of doubt, and even of despair. More than once I shared this with the Corrymeela founder Ray Davey, and more than once he replied, with his re-assuring smile and one of his favourite quotes from Christopher Columbus, "No land in sight today – keep sailing." The courage and hope of that great voyager certainly paid off, but in a true sense our voyage of discovery through hope is never finished. Things have improved enormously since the worst days of 'the Troubles', but only recently during the tortuous Hillsborough negotiations we discovered again how fragile our hard-won peace can appear. So we have to keep on hoping for the best.

Perhaps we also need a sense of continuous gratitude because of our many hopes that have been fulfilled, despite our misgivings. In my wallet I carry a small printed note, it reminds me, "Hem your blessings with gratitude, lest they unravel."

Essentially, there is nothing wrong with living in hope; if your hopes are based on a right motivation, you will be given a Divine reply in due course. It may not be the answer you anticipated or wanted, but your hopes will most certainly have been taken into account.

No doubt St Paul was weighing his words carefully when he placed hope, together with faith and love, in the important trilogy of the great Christian virtues. Despite our all too many human fears and misgivings, hope really does spring eternal in the human breast, and rightly so.

Perhaps it is only with hindsight that we get the point.

Alf McCreary

Alf McCreary is religion correspondent for the Belfast Telegraph and the author of a wide range of books, including 'In War and Peace - The Story of Corrymeela.'

"Perhaps we also need a sense of continuous gratitude because of our many hopes that have been fulfilled"



Corrymeela volunteers come from all over the world. They have different backgrounds, interests, and abilities. They may stay for a few days, a few months, or an entire year. They do different sorts of work, from housekeeping to administration to program facilitation. But they have something in common: they know the positive power of volunteering at Corrymeela.



Volunteering – the lowdown

ACCEPTANCE

Sarah, a long-term volunteer from Lisburn, Northern Ireland, has already learned a lot from working at Corrymeela since her arrival in September. She says, “Corrymeela has taught me a lot about accepting others for who they are regardless of background. Here you can totally be yourself and not worry about what other people think.”

Sang Luaia, another long-term volunteer from Burma/Myanmar, agrees that Corrymeela’s strength is the atmosphere of respect that it creates

“It’s an open space without discrimination.”

Volunteers appreciate the chance to work in a place where everyone is valued and respected. They acknowledge that the work can be difficult — they often work long hours, and groups require high energy and creative thinking. But they do a variety of jobs and meet a variety of people. Each day is different.

COMMUNITY LIVING

Volunteers live in a community, which they find a positive experience despite its challenges. Sarah and Molly agree that living on-site makes



Deanna is a mid-term volunteer from Pennsylvania, USA. She recently graduated from university with a degree in public relations, and says that coming to Corrymeela was ‘perfect timing.’ It is a good way to do something for others as well as taking some time for you. She especially likes working with teens and kids because they teach her a lot. She says that as a volunteer she really has to be flexible, creative, and able to make plans on the spot. She loves the fact that Corrymeela is ‘like a big party — you always have someone to talk to.’

Dawit is a short-term volunteer. He was born in Eritrea but grew up in Ethiopia, and he currently lives in Belfast and works with asylum seekers. He has been to Corrymeela several times through his work with the organisation NICRAS. He says that people in Northern Ireland are typically not very well-informed about refugees, and it can be very difficult for refugees to become integrated into their communities. He believes that Christians should live in peace, and that Corrymeela helps bring about that peace by being a place that is free of racism.



Aileen



Sonja



Sang



Sarah



Molly

it difficult to get away and find time for yourself, but Molly also says, “There is a rhythm to the community life... it’s useful to learn how to live in a community.”

For Jelena, a mid-term volunteer from Canada, one of the most striking things about Corrymeela is this strong sense of community, “It distinguishes Corrymeela from other places that feel more like corporations.”

PEACE & RECONCILIATION

Another comment volunteers are making is how much they have learned about the conflict and peace process in Northern Ireland. They are able to talk with people of all ages, from school-age kids to adults who lived through ‘the Troubles’, which gives them a practical understanding of the conflict.

Jelena, who decided to integrate time at Corrymeela into eight months of travel and volunteer work, said, ‘I’ve learned more about Northern Ireland here than I think I could have from any book. I’ve had the chance to go to talks and hear peoples’ stories. You can’t get that from just travelling.’ Sang Luaia admits that it was difficult at first for him to grasp the complexity of the conflict; it took him a few months to really

feel comfortable with it. Corrymeela exposes volunteers to an active peace process, which has something to teach everyone, even those who grew up in Northern Ireland.

INDIVIDUAL TALENTS

Volunteers gain a lot by working at Corrymeela, but it goes the other way too – everyone has something to give. Molly is interested in community theatre and has the chance to use her abilities with groups at Corrymeela. Some of her favourite times have been putting on plays and doing silly games with kids. She says, ‘If you have an interest or skill, they will use it here.’ If you choose to give of your time and energy like these generous volunteers, Corrymeela will almost certainly give you a valuable experience in return.

Katy McFadden



Katy is an American who volunteered at the Ballycastle Centre for a weekend before Christmas 2009. She wrote this article to offer an outsiders perspective on life as a volunteer.

Corrymeela wouldn't be possible without volunteers. But volunteering wouldn't be possible without Aileen O'Reilly and Sonja Tammen, the volunteer support staff. These two women co-ordinate the efforts of the hundreds of short, mid, and long-term volunteers, who donate their time to Corrymeela every year.

Aileen and Sonja do their best to make volunteering a positive and worthwhile experience for everyone who chooses to do it. If you have volunteered at Corrymeela in the past or are considering volunteering in the future, keep in mind the behind-the-scenes work that they do to make your experience possible!



Jelena, a mid-term volunteer, comes from Canada and is originally Bosnian. She has a master's degree in international relations and specialises in human rights. Currently travelling the world, she decided to integrate time at Corrymeela into her eight months of travel and volunteer work. Corrymeela was a good fit because it was accommodating and flexible. The top three things she likes about Corrymeela are the sense of community, the diversity of the groups, and the beautiful location. She is glad that she took a few months of her time to stay at Corrymeela because it has taught her more than just travelling could have.



Are we there yet?

Hope and the summer programme

THE SUMMER PROGRAMME was in full swing. On the Saturday I drove one of the buses to Belfast to collect a cross-community group of mums and children who had been meeting together in Corrymeela House, in Upper Crescent, for the previous 6 months.

Not living in Belfast my knowledge of the geography was fairly basic, but I did know where I was to pick up the first part of the group. Arriving just before the scheduled pick up time, I saw a group of people standing in a supermarket car park, looking like a typical group of summer programme visitors, with a collection of suitcases, pushchairs and overflowing plastic shopping bags.

Sure enough they were the first part of the

group, and soon the mums, children and luggage were all loaded onto the bus. They took up their positions in the rear seats, and then came the difficult task of persuading them to wear the seat belts. After explaining this journey was long and at times windy, most of the mums had persuaded the children to, 'belt up as the man said.'

Just before moving off I asked, "Where do I pick up the rest of the group?" They looked at me with disbelief at my stupid question. Eventually one brave soul shouted out, "over there," and pointed to another area of housing just across the major road.

As we set off, an unusual silence descended upon the bus; we found the remainder of the group on the 'other' side, and though there were a

few polite exchanges of conversation between the two groups: silence reigned.

As we progressed northwards along the M2, we were quickly out of the city suburbs and into the countryside. One of the women came to the front of the bus and asked, “Where have all the houses gone?” and, “Are we there yet?”

It suddenly became apparent that the rural environment was a novelty for most of those on the bus, and removal from an urban environment almost a threat. After giving appropriate explanations the lady seemed to be reassured, and she proceeded to reassure the other adults on the bus. Gradually conversations developed, and the children began singing songs, creating an almost normal atmosphere.

After the obligatory ‘smoke stop’ about half way through the journey, Fair Head came into view, quickly followed by glimpses of the sea, and then Ballycastle itself. Through the town and along the road skirting the sea, and now the children were really excited, although, a few of the adults were apprehensive about the narrowness of the road.

Up the steep hill and through the bends, and Corrymeela’s buildings came into view; into the car park and down to the front of the house, where passengers disembarked to hugs, handshakes and many welcomes. They were soon into the dining room where refreshments were awaiting them, and gradually the more adventurous children broke away and started to explore their ‘new home’, as the adults chatted amicably together.

And so began another week in the summer programme.

During the week the two distinct groups slowly became one big homogeneous group: working, playing, laughing and even crying together. If a child was in difficulty, any one of the mums would reach out and support them. Trips out in the bus became the usual noisy and happy affairs; fitting in with Corrymeela time: a very elastic commodity.

Eventually the week came to its end and it was time to leave. Profuse thanks, tears, promises to remain in touch, hugs and kisses and exchanges of small gifts got underway as the children tried desperately to persuade staff and volunteers to come away with them, even trying to drag them onto the bus.

What a different journey back to Belfast. Much commonality had been found amongst the adults in the group, and new friends were now sitting together and sharing each other’s experiences. The children slowly settled down and eventually were sleeping, while the teenagers were engrossed in their own special world of new friends, music and looking forward to meeting up again. And so to Belfast, where the group dispersed to their various homes with many tearful partings.

All to be repeated the following day with the next summer programme group...

David Florida-James

David is a member of the Corrymeela Community and has volunteered as a bus driver for many years. He said, “It’s surprising what you hear and learn sitting up there in the driver’s seat; this piece offers a microcosm of the hope Corrymeela engenders.”

“Driving off in the direction indicated and hoping to quickly find the second part of the group, an unusual silence descended upon the bus”



From **R₁ E₁ S₁ T₁** to hope to aktion

Aktivism from the kitchen table recently hosted conversations on rest. Inspired by these conversations, David Masters reflects on the relationship between rest, hope, and social activism

NO ONE CAN ARGUE against rest. Taking time to rest is vital for a healthy body, mind and spirit. Yet many of us – whether because of the need to earn a living, the pressures of family life, or even love of work – struggle to find time to rest.

When we do eventually make space for rest, it's often expensive, going to a restaurant, the cinema, or a health spa; likewise holidays overseas are costly and often tiring and emotionally draining.

Less expensive rest activities, such as watching television or surfing the internet, are costly in terms of time and emotional energy. I have often arrived home in the late afternoon, switched on my computer to check e-mails, then decided to visit Twitter and Facebook, then to do some searching on Google. Bedtime arrives, I'm still on the computer, and I wonder where my evening disappeared to. I also feel more restless, in need

of spiritual and emotional rest, than I felt before I turned the computer on. The television has a similar lure for me. I switch it on because I can't decide what to do. I'm restless. Yet I have found that watching TV only augments this feeling.

Consumer culture, I believe, deliberately feeds and encourages this feeling of restless despair. Adverts, even if we do not buy the specific products they promote, teach us that to escape from this restlessness we need to spend money. The phrase 'retail therapy' perfectly encapsulates this process.

These rest activities that arise from restlessness, a desire to mask and ignore inner turmoil, are similar to what German theologian Jurgen Moltmann calls the "sin of despair". The sin of despair is characterised by, 'hopelessness, resignation, inertia and melancholy'. For

“The sin of despair is characterised by, ‘hopelessness, resignation, inertia and melancholy’.”



Moltmann, despair is the most profoundly threatening sin because, “It is not the evil the sinner does, but the good he does not do, not his misdeeds, but his omissions, that accuse him. They accuse him of lack of hope.”

When I turn on the TV or the radio out of restlessness, when I go out shopping to buy something – anything – to fill the void I feel inside me, I am giving in to despair. I give in because I am fearful of what I might discover if I spend time in unbearable silence and face up to my inner life. I am scared that if I attempt to be creative, I will find myself to be empty and devoid of creativity.

Rest rooted in despair is false rest. Giving in to restlessness does not rejuvenate or revive my inner life. Nor does it give me hope for the future – for my own future or for the future of the world. Another thing to note about rest rooted in despair is that it always involves consumption rather than creativity. It pushes us into passivity rather than action, into passive despair rather than active hope.



activism from the kitchen table

Aktivism from the Kitchen Table (AKT), a new Corrymeela project, provides a space in Belfast where people from all walks of life can come together for a meal, and conversation and reflection on social justice issues affecting Northern Ireland and the wider world.

Three AKT events have been held so far, with themes including the credit crunch, hospitality, and the importance of taking time to rest. AKT events are open to the public, and you are very welcome to join us.

The next AKT event, Play in May, will be on 5 May. For more information, and to join the conversation online, visit aktion.ning.com.

True rest infuses life with hope. It is meaningful, creative, and restores the soul. It enables us to come to terms with and recreate our inner lives. By taking time away from busyness of daily life to gain a sense of our own self, we begin to see what we genuinely have to give to the world, how best to love others and to work for social justice.

The Catholic monk Thomas Merton believed that times of true rest, reflection and contemplation unlock the doors of perception. When these doors are opened he explains that all



life takes on a completely new meaning: the real sense of our own existence, which is normally veiled and distorted by the routine distractions of an alienated life, is now revealed.

Philosopher John Macmurray put it this way: “In reflection we are engaged in changing our minds, in action we are engaged in changing the world. Action includes thought; it is not something which can be distinguished from thought. The life of reflection is not a different life from the life of action.”

True rest is often free or very low cost. For Thomas Merton, true rest meant contemplative prayer and meditation, spending time in the presence of God. For me, true rest means sitting at a desk with pen and paper, writing short stories and poems. It means walking along the river, noticing the colours and sounds of nature. It means baking bread by hand, feeling the dough take form in my hands as I knead it.

For others, true rest may mean spending time with close friends in thoughtful conversation. It may mean tending a garden to grow flowers and vegetables. It may mean eating together as a family, savouring the meal. It may mean drawing, cooking, writing a journal, painting, or singing.

Perhaps, the next time you feel worn out, restless, or exhausted, you will recall to mind the words of Irish poet John O’Donohue:

*You have travelled too fast over false ground;
Now your soul has come, to take you back.*

*Take refuge in your senses, open up
To all the small miracles you rushed through.*

*Gradually, you will return to yourself,
Having learned a new respect for your heart
And the joy that dwells deep within slow time.*

David Masters

“I give in because I am fearful of what I might discover if I spend time in unbearable silence and face up to my inner life.”



David Masters is a writer, student and ‘wanna-be clown’. He lives in Belfast where he volunteers with AKT as part of his studies in reconciliation at the Irish School of Ecumenics.

Finding a future of hope

AT THE START of the sixth century BC (about 596), the Judean exiles in Babylon received a letter from the prophet Jeremiah in Jerusalem. Did they receive words they wanted to hear?

“Thus says the Lord of Hosts, God of Israel, to the whole exiled community that I exiled from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and settle down, and plant gardens, and eat their fruit. Take wives and have sons and daughters, and take wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so they may bear sons and daughters. Multiply there; do not decrease. And see the wellbeing, the shalom of the city to which I have exiled you, and pray for it to the Lord, for with its shalom lies your own shalom... For thus says the Lord: When seventy years have passed in Babylon, I will take note of you and fulfil for you my promise to bring you back to this place. For I myself know the thoughts that I am thinking concerning you – an utterance of YHWH – thoughts of shalom, wellbeing, and not of evil to give you a future of hope.” Jeremiah 29:4-7, 10-11

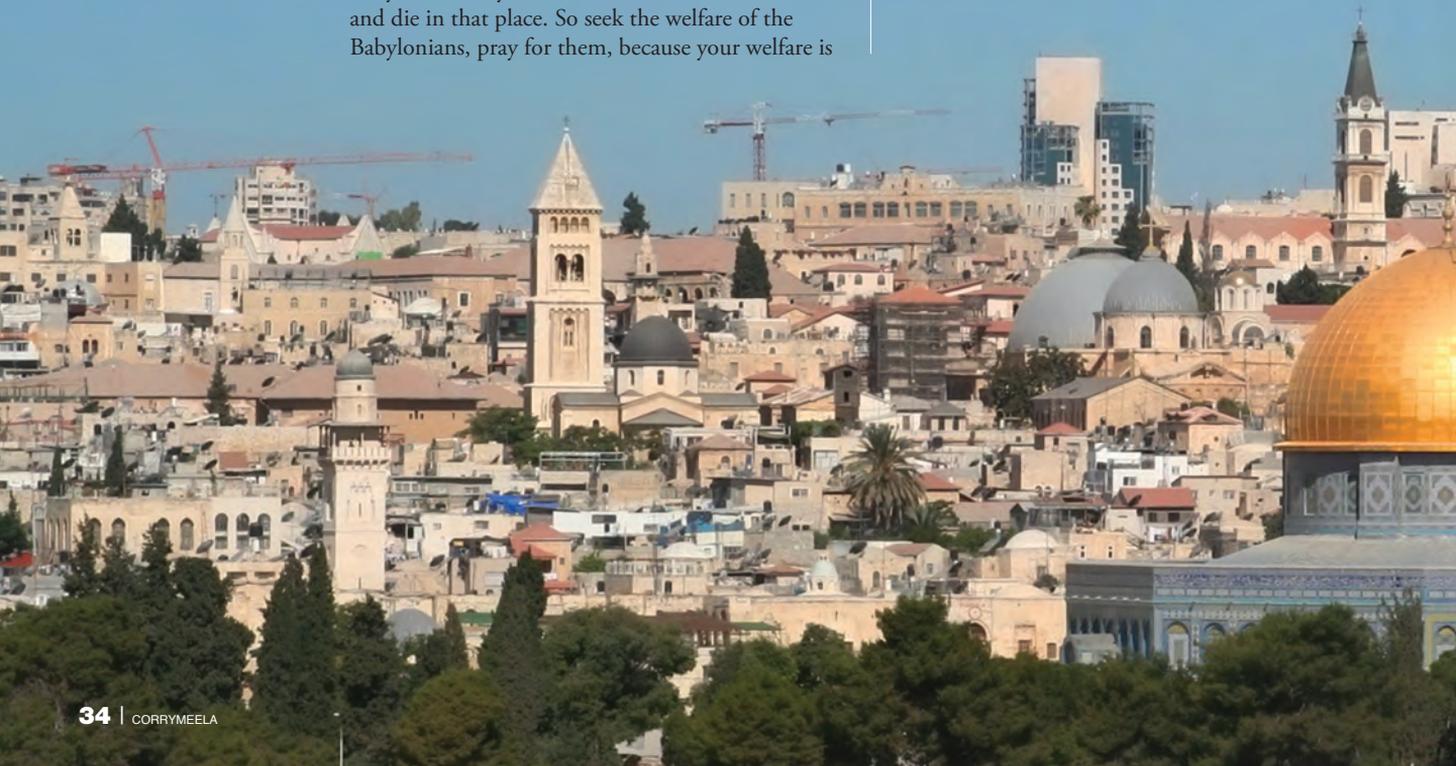
The exiles were being told: settle down in Babylon; make yourselves content. You will live and die in that place. So seek the welfare of the Babylonians, pray for them, because your welfare is

linked inextricably with theirs.

But perhaps the dominant feeling among the exiles about the Babylonians, were the outraged words of Psalm 137: “Happy are those who take their little ones and dash them against the rocks”:

Abiding hatred for Judah’s Babylonian captors is well represented in the Bible, and even in the book of Jeremiah itself. True, in his letter to the exiles, Jeremiah speaks a word of peace; he envisions Babylonians and Judeans prospering together. But peace is not the final word in the book of Jeremiah, which concludes with two long chapters (chaps. 50 and 51) of rage against Babylon, prophetic poetry declaring that Babylon is doomed by God, utterly damned and marked for destruction. So in the book of Jeremiah as we have it, the commitment to abiding hatred of Judah’s worst enemy trumps the great vision of shalom; and just in case the book of Jeremiah is not enough, the book of Revelation celebrates Babylon’s fall all over again, although this time ‘Babylon’ is a stand-in for Judah’s new Great Enemy, Rome.

What we see in the Bible is the profound human tension between a vision of shalom on



the one hand, and a desire for vengeance on the other. There are good reasons for both peace and a desire for vengeance, even good religious reasons for both; that is why the tension is so deep and often seems impossible to resolve. A desire for vengeance is an expression of a desire for justice. From a sixth century Judean perspective, the strong denunciation of Babylon is an appeal to God's judgement on those who wreaked havoc on the holy city of Jerusalem, toppling the eternal throne of David and exiling the king, along with thousands of the best workers and leading citizens, and force-marching them across the top of the Syrian desert to labour camps in Babylon. The cry is for justice to be upheld.

The evidence from the book of Jeremiah suggests that even the prophet himself was torn between two messages, both of which seemed to come from God: on the one hand, seek shalom for Babylon; on the other, wicked, godless Babylon will surely be destroyed.

We are still torn between the impulse towards peace with our enemies and the conviction that justice (and morality) must be upheld. Thus we find ourselves using violence to uphold justice and morality, and restrain evil. We find ourselves releasing politically motivated prisoners in Northern Ireland in order to have peace.

How do we deal with people who have profoundly damaged us? Scripture offers no final resolution to the dilemma. It does not suggest that we can, in every case, make community with

the Babylonian oppressor so we may prosper together. However, Jesus, the last and greatest of the prophets, pushes us further in a particular direction: "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matt 5:44). This does not resolve the tension, nor does it mean that we don't, with few exceptions, feel the same about our enemies as the Judeans felt about the Babylonians. What has changed since Jesus has spoken is that we know that actively seeking shalom with our enemies is exactly what God expects of us. This is what "a future of hope" (Jer 29:11) looks like.

But this is not the totality of the New Testament witness. The writer of Revelation:

Saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slaughtered for the word of God and for the testimony they had given; they cried out with a loud voice, "Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long will it be before you judge and avenge our blood on the inhabitants of the earth?" (6:9-10)

The martyrs and the slain speak up and claim justice against their collective persecutors, and armies rise up to support them. The visions of Revelation are very much about the wrath of God.

We live in a 'broken middle' in the words of the philosopher Gillian Rose. 'Broken,' because we are pushed and pulled by the pressures of the different claims of peace and justice. 'Middle,' because we have to live in a messy and confusing world where we have to mediate conflicting claims: and as we mediate these conflicting claims we are called to a future of hope.



David Stevens is the Leader of the Corrymeela Community

David Stevens



La Comunidad de Paz – San Jose de Apartado

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” Matthew Chapter 5:9

“The idea of forming a peace community, an unarmed community sounded really good to us. We liked the idea of not having weapons. We have machetes to work but not to fight”

PEACEMAKING CAN SOUND EASY and is often mistaken for simply not making war, or for talking about peace, without actually doing anything. It can actually be a very difficult and dangerous thing to do.

Sadly, peacemakers from Gandhi to Martin Luther King going all the way back to Jesus Christ himself have found themselves brutally murdered after speaking out for peace. These are famous examples; I want to tell you about a group of people who are not famous, but perhaps should be, for the brave and inspirational stance they have taken for the cause of peace in their country.

The Urabai Region of Colombia is a lush banana-growing area, which could almost be a paradise on earth, were it not for the fact that in its dark heart is some of the most fought over land in the whole of that troubled nation. It is unfortunate for the people who live there that the good soil, coupled with its strategic importance, has made the area a battleground between the left-wing FARC guerrillas and right-wing paramilitaries, allegedly augmented on occasions by members of the regular Colombian army.

The campesinos, or peasant farmers, in the region are left with a number of choices. They can leave; this could be seen as the ‘Pontius Pilate’ solution, understandable in the circumstances. They can accept one side as their protectors and so become involved in the conflict; or they could do what the people of San Jose de Apartado have done for the last ten years - declare themselves a ‘Comunidad de Paz’ a neutral community of peace. Why?

Gelita, a member of the community said, “The idea of forming a peace community, an unarmed community sounded really good to us. We liked the idea of not having weapons. We have machetes to work, but not to fight.” Anybody trying to enter the community with a gun is told to hand it in before they can come in. The community refuse to help either side in the civil war. It would be wonderful to think that this stand against violence and murder would have brought the community the peace and justice they deserve, the truth is a different story.

They are being attacked by both sides.

According to the report, ‘I Will Never be ‘Silenced’, since its creation in March 1997, “The community of less than 1,200 inhabitants has paid for their non-violent resistance with the lives of more than 165 men, women and children”. In one massacre in February 2005, one of the leaders of the community, Luis Eduardo was killed along with eight others, including his 18-month old son, who was then cut into pieces. After this particular outrage and charges that the Colombian army were involved, the US temporarily blocked a portion of its military aid to Colombia. This has now been resumed and it goes to Colombia along with military aid from the UK. It was heart-warming to read recently in The Guardian that 200 delegates at the Labour party conference in September 2007 had signed a petition calling for a cessation of this aid. Yet the UK remains the second biggest provider of arms to the Colombian government.

The peace community’s problems continue and in May 2009 the community was subjected to an unusual attack. On national radio, the community and specific leaders were accused of active collaboration with the FARC guerrilla insurgents, and of enslaving its members into a life of misery, with no option of leaving.

Last summer the community had to endure a growing paramilitary presence and several unexplained deaths; however, there is evidence that its message has been so successful that other groups are joining the movement in equally brave attempts





to use transformational protest to stop the violence and the injustice in Colombia.

When people were asked why they wanted to join, the answer was simple. By joining they found that the army had started to back off, and that the peace community's work model offered a feasible alternative to truly becoming enslaved to the vicious coca trade.

So the community is not only imagining, but doing. The community is not only surviving, but growing.

One action in particular of the peace community fits perfectly with the notion of transformational protest: when local police announced they were building a police station in the main village - not so they could protect the campesinos, but so the peasant farmers could effectively act as human shields for the police - the community, refusing to be dragged into the conflict, upped sticks and rebuilt their village further up the valley: a move that was criticised by President Uribe for giving the green light for the right-wing paramilitaries to continue their murderous business.

The community recently produced a DVD documenting their experiences, 'Hasta la Ultima Piedra', Until the Last Stone, named so, because after every brutal murder they paint a stone and pen the names of those murdered onto it as part of a moving memorial; one which is sadly far too big. Yet the title of the DVD says it all; despite all the problems they will not give up. I believe it is because they have a longer biblical vision, and understand what Jesus

meant when He said that those who live by the sword shall die by it. Any society worth living in has to be formed by peaceful means, and any peace resulting from the end of a violent struggle will merely be a short interlude in the cycle of violence.

Aung San Suu Kiyu, the elected leader of Burma, put it this way, "Military coups, which have happened enough in Burma, are violent ways of changing situations and I do not want to encourage and perpetuate this tradition of bringing about change through violence. Because I'm afraid that if we achieve democracy in this way we will never be able to get rid of the idea that you bring about necessary changes through violence."

Aung San Suu Kiyu is a Buddhist, but his message translates Jesus' command to Peter, to lay down your sword, into a modern context. Similarly, the brave, beautiful actions of the San Jose de Apartado peace community seem to be an excellent way of transforming biblical traditions of seeking peace and a better society into reality.

The members of the peace community are brave and principled people, making an oasis of peace in a desert of war and human rights' abuses in Colombia. They deserve our prayers and support.

Peter Sagar

For more information on how you can help the San Jose de Apartado peace community please contact Peter on sagar@biddlestone-road.fsnet.co.uk

"...making an oasis of peace in a desert of human rights' abuses"



Peter is a teacher, writer and human rights activist, acting as a Regional Representative for the NE and Yorkshire Region of Amnesty International and also Trade Union Co-ordinator for Burma Campaign UK.

Corrymeela hopes for

Tim Rendall – Resource Couple

“To invest more of my time with ‘The Others’ – both human and divine”

Tiffany Rendall – Resource Couple

“Successful implementation of police and justice devolution arrived at by the power sharing government at Stormont”

“Increased leading and serving from my own passions opposed to what I think people need”

“Hand gliding for my 17 + 10th birthday!”

Ethan Young - LTV

“I hope that 2010 is a prosperous year for Corrymeela both with social impact and financially. I hope Corrymeela can play a lead role in creating sustainable peace in Northern Ireland. Finally I hope the Julia Roberts brings plenty of groups to Corrymeela and falls head over heels in love with me”

Raziyah Ali – LTV

“My hope for 2010 is to learn the art of being fully present in every moment and not to live in the future”

Elli Beckert - LTV

“My hope is to enable conversations between people of different backgrounds and open up the space for possible relationships”

Sarah Logan – LTV

“I hope to learn more about people, different cultures, faith and life. Also I hope to make the right decisions”

Lindsey Pike - LTV

“My hopes for 2010 are to continue learning and growing through my experiences at Corrymeela. I want to connect with new people and travel as much as I can. I also hope to have a job once I leave in September”

Eamonn Maguire – LTV

“I hope to find a job after I leave Corrymeela so if you are hiring let me know”

Molly Gorman - LTV

“I hope that workers struggles become stronger and more organised in 2010 and I hope that South Africa win the World Cup”

Sangluaia – LTV

“Ummm..., my hope is to stop smoking before I go home. And, to get much knowledge of Peace and Conflict. And to maintain a good relationship among LTVs”

Hello!
My name is Lindsey Pike, I am from Valparaiso, Florida USA and I recently graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Literature. I stayed at Corrymeela last summer as part of a short-term study abroad trip with my school. My father is a retired US Air Force Officer and so my childhood was filled with travelling and new places. A cup of coffee with good company and good conversation is one of my favourite things. I look forward to becoming a part of Corrymeela and this amazing cause, and am truly thankful for the privilege of working with the fantastic people who make it possible. See you soon!
Lindsey



LINDSEY PIKE (22)

Check out the profiles of long term volunteers Lindsey and Kathleen.

I am Kathleen Campbell from Rhode Island, USA. I learned about Corrymeela from my older sister, Eileen, who was a short-term volunteer in 2006. My grandfather is from Donegal, so I am thrilled to be living near my Irish relatives for a year.
I have previously volunteered in schools tutoring children and also helping to rebuild homes in Mississippi following Hurricane Katrina. I am most looking forward to learning from all the people and the community at Corrymeela.



KATHLEEN CAMPBELL (22)

2010

from The Cure at Troy

Kathleen Campbell – LTV

I hope to make a conscious effort with every group and every task that I come across in the next year – to have the energy that is essential for my work while also finding time to relax and continue to build lasting relationship with my fellow volunteers. I hope to strengthen the skills I have acquired thus far but also learn new skills that will better prepare me for future endeavours. Finally, I hope for the good health of my family and friends back home and here in Corrymeela”

Brother Christopher Derby, Jesuit Volunteer – Mid term Volunteer

Jan – April

“I hope to use what I am experiencing and learning at Corrymeela in my work in the U.S”

Allie Mc Donnegan – Programme Assistant

“My hope for 2010 is that I can give back to the Corrymeela Community as much as they have already given me in the short amount of time I have been here. I also hope I can follow through with Ethan’s 2010 hope and help set him up with Julia Roberts”

Stephanie Stewart – Reception Volunteer

“I hope to reconnect with family and friends I have lost touch with over the years”

Maeve Walsh – Community Member

My hope for the future is that we see a real power-sharing executive in Stormont and that our politicians rise to the task.

Tim Page – Community Member

I hope that Corrymeela continues to be...

A space for encounter, celebration, support, silence

Open to friend, stranger, politician, employee
Valued and maintained by Corrymeela people
seeking to follow Jesus Christ together

Human beings suffer,
they torture one another,
they get hurt and get hard.
No poem or play or song
can fully right a wrong
inflicted or endured.

The innocent in gaols
beat on their bars together.
A hunger-striker's father
stands in the graveyard dumb.
The police widow in veils
faints at the funeral home.

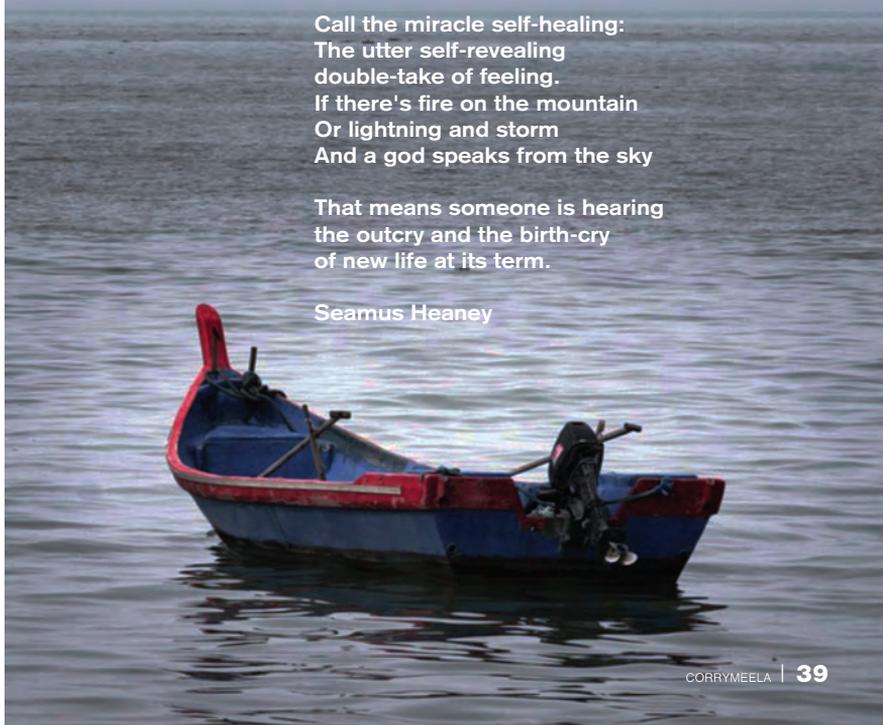
History says, Don't hope
on this side of the grave.
But then, once in a lifetime
the longed for tidal wave
of justice can rise up,
and hope and history rhyme.

So hope for a great sea-change
on the far side of revenge.
Believe that a further shore
is reachable from here.
Believe in miracles
and cures and healing wells.

Call the miracle self-healing:
The utter self-revealing
double-take of feeling.
If there's fire on the mountain
Or lightning and storm
And a god speaks from the sky

That means someone is hearing
the outcry and the birth-cry
of new life at its term.

Seamus Heaney



The Other

By R.S. Thomas, Welsh Priest and Poet

*There are nights that are so still
that I can hear the small owl
calling
far off and a fox barking
miles away. It is then that I lie
in the lean hours awake listening
to the swell born somewhere in
the Atlantic
rising and falling, rising and
falling
wave on wave on the long shore
by the village that is without
light
and companionless.
And the
thought comes
of that other being who is
awake, too,
letting our prayers break on him,
not like this for a few hours,
but for days, years, for eternity.*

The 'other' is a term I have often encountered and thought about during our year and a half here at Corrymeela. Many times it refers to the reaching out and meeting of the 'human other'; those not like us ethnically, socially or economically - a core tenet of Corrymeela's vision.

Other times, like Thomas' poem, I have heard the phrase point towards God and his divinity being 'other' than our humanity. The fact that 'other' can refer to both fellow humans and God is a sort of paradox, yet it is a paradox fundamental to Christianity and its foreseen fulfilment in the person of Jesus, the God/man. Of course, the incomprehensibility of the dual divine/human nature of Jesus is also quite 'other'!

Before I go any further into the theological forest, I simply want to say that it is the interaction of these 'others' - human, divine, and human/divine, that draws and sustains me at Corrymeela.

The Croi is a natural and wonderful place for these meetings to take place, it certainly is the heart of Corrymeela in this respect. But there is also a danger of limiting our ideas and modes of encountering the 'divine other' at Corrymeela only to times and spaces of the Croi. I would suggest that those well-known words above the front door in the foyer, "Corrymeela begins when you leave," issue a different yet equal challenge to how Corrymeela can encourage its staff, volunteers, groups, and visitors to take steps to experience the reality of divine otherness.

There are innumerable examples of the efficacious 'human other' work that Corrymeela does with individuals and groups here at the Centre, in Belfast and internationally. That work is beautiful, crucial, and well highlighted. But my particular joy and ongoing hope is that the parallel truth of Corrymeela's importance - being a place that creates space for engaging with the 'divine other' - will continue to be seen, used, and promoted as a great gift to our world.

Tim Rendall

Tim and his wife Tiffany are the Resource Couple at the Corrymeela Centre in Ballycastle.

www.corrymeela.org



The Corrymeela Community is a registered charity dedicated to reconciliation in Ireland.
For more information contact:

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