

The Corrymeela Community Charter

Leadership of Corrymeela is shared by the Council, the Executive Director and the Leader of the Community. Our shared leadership model does not have a single-spine line management structure; instead, we hold each other accountable to our shared purposes. We have adopted the Corrymeela Community Charter as a work in progress to assist us in resolving issues and to serve as a reference point for our governance.

Who We Are

We are community members, staff, volunteers and partners who together ‘engage with difference, heal division and support peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland and beyond.’*

*Membership in The Corrymeela Community is open to people of all backgrounds, including staff. Members ‘journey together towards reconciliation, seeking guidance from the teachings of Jesus, the wisdom of other traditions and the lessons of our encounters.’** The membership elects a Council, which appoints the Community’s Leader. *The membership through the Council holds responsibility for the charity.**

The *staff*, headed by the Executive Director, carries out tasks and undertakes particular responsibilities identified by Council that are consistent with the community’s commitment to reconciliation. Staff are key leaders on programme and in Corrymeela’s life at the centre and elsewhere. Staff do not carry the burden of delivering results on their own. They are accompanied in all they do with respectful support from the membership and appropriate collaboration with members and other volunteers.

Staff, members and *volunteers* shape community at our centre and through our activities. Whether they come to live residentially for a year or join for shorter periods of time, volunteers offer us a renewed sense of community, expand our horizons and challenge our complacency.

Partners add to Corrymeela’s life as a community as they join in, co-create or support our activities.

Our structures, plans and policies, including our shared leadership model, grow from the members’ commitment to reconciliation and ensure that we fulfil our obligations as a Christian charity where we work together with clear roles and responsibilities. We are a constantly changing community; our shared purpose holds us together. Members, staff, volunteers and partners shape our programme work and our life together through ongoing collaboration. It is our different relationships, expertise and experiences that allow us to make and remake community in all that we do.

What We Do

Corrymeela is committed to reconciliation through community. Our programmes, our centre, and our life together provide time and space for people of many backgrounds to meet and to nurture relationships that connect us to our shared humanity. We learn how our differences enrich our lives as we share our experiences and disagreements and as we contribute together to a more cohesive and peaceful society.

Why We Do It

Our society has been scarred by violent conflict, and our culture is shaped by forces such as consumerism, political dysfunction, zero-sum models of success, the realities of the climate crisis – and our tendency to divide ‘them’ from ‘us’. An open community of faith that prioritises ‘*justice, mutual respect, the participation of all, concern for the vulnerable and stranger, stewardship of resources and care for creation*’ provides a clear public benefit.

By welcoming the challenges and joys of difference, we have gained a greater understanding of ourselves, others and the Divine, and have come to know that a future where we live well together is possible.

How We Do It

We can only offer a sense of community as members, staff, volunteers and others live out:

Welcome: a generous and mutual hospitality based on compassion and empathy;

Respect: the recognition of each other's worth and openness to each other's experiences;

Courage: honesty to look at the world and ourselves so that change can begin from within;

Collaboration: a commitment to working as partners in achieving our ends;

Hope: faith that we can move closer to a future where we all live and work well together.

Our rhythms and behaviours aid our sense of community, leading us to

be generous with each other and to those we encounter;

listen to understand other perspectives;

agree to be held accountable in appropriate and supportive ways;

respect those in leadership roles while challenging any misuse of power;

accept that change starts with ourselves;

and allow everyone the freedom to fail and start over.

Because conflict arises between us as human beings, we commit to practices of reconciliation following Jesus's teachings. We try to engage directly one on one and to seek an informal mediated conversation before escalating further. We assume everyone is making decisions with the best intentions and that we have something to learn from them in resolving our misunderstanding. We look to find solutions together rather than to judge or to assign blame.

We Know We're Doing It Right When:

Being in community brings a sense of joy, security and purpose.

In the community we hope to be a part of:

We catch glimpses of a future where everyone belongs.

We respect our policies and procedures because we need them to keep everybody safe.

We seek ways to ensure everyone's view is valued even when we do not agree with a decision.

We offer apology and forgiveness to one another when we get it wrong.

We are open to more people and receive more support because the difference we make together is undeniable.

We understand each other better and we trust each other more.

We will seek to collaborate with members, staff and volunteers to improve this Charter in both its language and implementation. The Community Life Committee will review the Charter annually, enabling Council to address how it is working as a living element for supporting our life together and as an aide for our mutual accountability.

** from the Articles of Association of the Corrymeela Community*

*** from 'The Journey We Continue' (see above)*