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Corrymeela



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The Walnut Tree
A living example of reconciliation

Struggling to find that special something for the one you love this Easter?

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Roger Courtney acclaimed singer and songwriter and creator of 'The Pollen of Peace' brings you a collection of best loved songs old and new for your listening pleasure.

Go in Peace

'Go in Peace' is a fantastic musical compilation featuring big names like Peter Corry and Siobhan Petit and the accompanying song book means you can bring the lyrics to life at home, or in choir.



The CD & Songbook are available from Corrymeela House.

CD :: £12.00 Songbook :: £14.00

Buy them together for **only £20** and save more than 20%



To order yours contact **Bernie Magill** on **028 9050 8080**

Go in Peace Concert

Saturday 12th April 2008: 7.30pm Elmwood Hall, Belfast

Tickets £10

Available from Bernie Magill at Corrymeela House 028 9050 8080 / www.corrymeela.org

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SPRING HAS OFFICIALLY SPRUNG and as the keen gardeners among you will know it has led to the early appearance of daffodils, snow drops and as for the confused wildlife that's another story. In this edition of Corrymeela the magazine, there are many interesting stories with weather, nature, climates and changing times featuring in lots of them.

I was asked recently by an American researcher, Alan Hayes from Queen's University, Belfast, how did I feel about the current political situation in Northern Ireland? Big question that's for sure but I feel the analogy of spring and the feeling of change, new growth and fresh opportunities isn't far off the mark. Northern Ireland metaphorically speaking has experienced the bleakest and coldest of winters and now richly deserves the spring with its glimpses of sunshine, freshness and new buds.

With every spring comes cold snaps and we all struggle with how we can play our part to support others through changing times, to integrate more and acknowledge hurt. As we work through the past, live in the present and face the future, it is a lot like spring cleaning with the necessary pausing to remember the memories and work out what to keep and what to recycle, donate or dump. As a self confessed hoarder I know this part is always a struggle but the rewards are huge when completed.

In real life it is not possible to tackle one room at a time, and our house in Northern Ireland can seem a mammoth task with many different opinions on where to start. As you will read later in the magazine we all share responsibility for this task, not least with the healing of memories, sharing the future and dealing with the past. We can find the energy from the changing season. Spring has sprung.

Jo Watson, Editor



IT IS VERY EXCITING to be part of 2008's first edition of Corrymeela, the magazine.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my role as co-editor working under Jo's expert eye.

As Spring arrives and cold winter dawns fuse with the bright morning sun the elements seem to echo the themes of hopeful expectations, new beginnings and shared learning that are prevalent in this issue.

I take great comfort from the accounts of personal growth and insight friends and members share with us in these pages. Barbara Stanley's account of the Barnes Close Friends Weekend last winter and her fresh experience of the interfaith perspective, parallels the exchange at A Shared What? the conference in Belfast dedicated to engaging in new conversations about sharing together.

Trevor Ringland offers great us wisdom in his article What are the Chances? He describes Northern Ireland in the midst of positive change, where previously unthinkable political alliances are living out the present side by side and stresses the absolute need for each of us to grasp the opportunity to build a better, more shared future.

The magazine builds up an image of Corrymeela within a much wider context and underlines the ever-growing importance of our work within damaged communities at home and even further afield - with Mediation Ireland coordinating invaluable reconciliation work in Burnley.

The great old Walnut Tree reminded me of the power of the natural elements and ultimately of a higher power at work in the hearts and minds of individuals who choose healing, restoration and community building a choice each of us can make as we grow and journey into a shared future together.

Alyson McElroy-Jones, Co-editor

The man who re-knit the wounds



IT IS INSPIRING TO GO TO THE FUNERAL of a genuinely good man. Such was the experience of going to the funeral of William Rutherford – a long-time member of Corrymeela – at the end of December. His luminosity (Ken Newell’s word about him) shone through the service and the iconic picture of William on the railings of the Royal Victoria Hospital came to mind.

William was Head of the Accident and Emergency unit at the RVH at the start of the Troubles and he remained there until he retired in 1986. His big contribution to the peace process was that he helped to save the life of Gerry Adams when loyalist gunmen attempted to murder him. At the funeral the words ‘duty in love’ were used about William. Of course, medical staff have a duty of care to patients no matter who they might be, whether to Gerry Adams, a police officer, a loyalist paramilitary, or to someone simply caught up in violence. Duty is one of those boring, old-fashioned words that nobody wants to talk about today, but lots of people during the Troubles held things together by simply doing their duty.

But ‘duty in love’; William’s extra dimension was his compassion. At the funeral the story was told of

the mother of a murdered police officer who wanted to see the spot where her son had been shot. William took her in his car, where he was embraced by some of the local women. To the Clonard members of the Clonard/Fitzroy Group – an ecumenical group from Fitzroy Presbyterian Church, where William belonged and to Clonard Monastery where he was ‘our’ William.

As we go into the future and the dark times recede, we need to preserve the stories of William Rutherford and others like him. It is not only the stories of the victims we need to remember.

During December there was another funeral – that of Patsy McGurk. His bar was blown up in 1971 and he went on television and asked for no retaliation. Patsy said he was praying for the bombers. ‘What’s done can’t be undone. I have been trying to keep the bitterness out of it.’ You can see William and Patsy in heaven having long and slow conversations that in eternity need never end – entering into the worlds of each other.

David Stevens



“
‘... Duty in love’;
William’s extra dimension was his compassion

”



David Stevens is the Leader of the Corrymeela Community.



Santa visits the croí

Christmas Open Day at the Centre in Ballycastle

THE CORRYMEELA CENTRE CELEBRATED its traditional Christmas Open Day in December, with more than 500 visitors from Ballycastle and the surrounding area. Local families enjoyed Christmas carols played by a string quartet as they sipped warm punch and enjoyed a generous spread of mince pies, sandwiches and other tasty treats prepared by the Centre's kitchen staff and volunteers.

Long- and short-term volunteers made Christmas decorations with the kids in the arts and crafts corner, and storytellers read Christmas stories from around the world to those who wanted to take a break from the action and curl up on comfy pillows for a listen.

In the midst of it all, Santa arrived on the back of the Corrymeela tractor, and made his

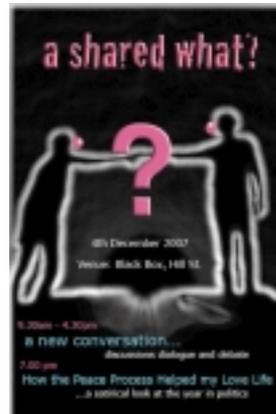
way into the Croí to Santa's Grotto, where a steady queue of children came to tell him their Christmas wishes. Some stayed on to get their faces painted and watch a Christmas movie with Santa's elves.

Back in the main House, a packed programme of entertainment, including carol singing from Barnish Primary School and the Moyle Youth Council, and a debut performance by local band Second From Last, kept spirits warm on a cold and frosty winter evening. 'Our visitors throughout the year get such a warm welcome from the Ballycastle community,' said Ronnie Millar, Centre Director. 'The Christmas Open Day is a good way for Corrymeela to say "thank you" to all the local people who help us do the work we do.'



A Shared What?

An overview



A SHARED WHAT? was a conference designed to create an alternative space for individuals to engage in new conversations around sharing, brainchild of three organisations: Ballynafeigh Community Development Association, North Belfast's Equipping for Leadership Programme and Corrymeela's Community Partners was itself, a model of a shared perspective.

Held in the Black Box, these groups came together to offer practitioners a fresh lens through which to look at the concepts of sharing in the community, our ability to share and the boundaries

of sharing.

The discussions looked at René Gerard's ideas of rivalry and their effect on our willingness to share. The day drew out the visions, dreams and anxieties of the communities represented as they met and relaxed in a safe space.

There was a strong creative element throughout the course of the day and the creative team facilitated some playback theatre for closing evaluations.

Very well attended, plans are already in place to hold another conference along these lines in 2008 so watch this space.

Thanks

Thanks go to Emmet Norris and his friends for terrific fundraising on behalf of Corrymeela at their fun Crazee Golf Day. Emmet is a member of Corrymeela and part of our managing Council. He also has a diverse hat collection not least his golfing attire!



An apology

Sincere apologies go to Stephanie Hill who was incorrectly named Michelle in the Youth in the Community feature in our winter edition (page 31).

Calling all Friends

Just a reminder that the next Friends weekend is coming up on the 23rd to 25th May 2008 in Corrymeela, Ballycastle. There is varied and interesting programme planned and it is a great way to experience for yourself why Corrymeela is unique. I encourage anyone who has an interest in Corrymeela to make the effort to come, you won't be disappointed.

New foundations for peace



JUST BEFORE CHRISTMAS Corrymeela staff, funders and friends celebrated the £1.4m new build getting underway at the Ballycastle site.

The International Fund for Ireland, Community Relations Council, Peace II and the Rural Development Council joined with our architects, builders, staff, volunteers and Corrymeela Council Chairperson Kate Pettis to mark the occasion.

This major investment allows Corrymeela to redevelop and so transform the long-term volunteer accommodation where Coventry once stood.

These modern new buildings will provide a combination of self-contained and shared accommodation and will be used by both local and international volunteers to help Corrymeela deliver its current range of programmes.

Kate Pettis said: 'Over the past 40 years the Corrymeela experience has proven that understanding and trust develop both through doing things together and making people feel welcome as well as sharing stories and listening to each other. All of these good things flourish in the Corrymeela Centre in Ballycastle and we all look forward to the next forty years with enthusiasm.'

The International Fund for Ireland have generously contributed £1m to the scheme

through the Northern Ireland Rural Development Council; the Community Relations Council, through its work with the EU Peace II programme, awarded £200,000 and the Ulster Garden Villages charitable trust donated £100,000. Corrymeela has worked hard to raise the outstanding balance.

Denis Rooney, Chairman of the International Fund for Ireland,

said: 'We are focused on supporting and enabling community relations and reconciliation. This project is a perfect example of the vital work which still needs to be done in our community.'

'The new residential building will allow people of all ages and from all communities to come together to build mutual understanding within a safe and secure setting. Indeed when approving this grant the board indicated its willingness to consider further support towards phase two.'



Leader David Stevens said: 'This generous grant of £1 million marks an important next step in Corrymeela's major capital build and refurbishment appeal. This new accommodation will allow people of all ages and from all communities to come together to work, socialise and build new friendships in a safe and healthy environment.'



The gift of a stranger:

an interfaith perspective on reconciliation

A review by Barbara Stanley – long time Corrymeela friend



CORRYMEELA FRIENDS WEEKEND welcomed individuals from all over Northern Ireland, England and Wales to Barnes Close Reconciliation Centre near Birmingham.

The weekend was part of the 'Bringing Reconciliation Home' series and discussion focused on the desire to understand and learn from other faith perspectives. In the light of the London bombings in July 2005, and their effect on intercultural understanding across Britain, the group felt it was important to discover ways to maintain and develop positive cross-culture relationships in Britain.

A dynamic mix of speakers including Dr Helen Reid of the Bradford Churches for Dialogue and Diversity, Dr Gurnam Singh of Coventry University and Revd Diane Johnson offered enlightening explanations of many faiths, challenged stereotypes and offered examples of productive intercultural work going on throughout Britain.

A video clip showing Muslim distress at their collective treatment after the bombing stirred up emotion, and footage of an American-Muslim project in Bradford highlighted our tendency to view certain groups as a single entity and judge by stereotypes

when in fact the majority of Asians in Britain identify the UK as their home and us as their fellow citizens!

It was heartening to hear that the good work being done in Bradford is not unique. Revd Johnson inspired us with her enthusiastic account of how a small interfaith seed sown in a small, demoralised Christian congregation grew into the vitally important Saint Philip's Centre. Here multicultural study and engagement is so well developed that every new Leicester police officer and health worker does a training week there.

Dr Singh was most





enlightening on the underlying tenets of Sikhism, a name meaning 'seeking'. He described it as a relationship with the absolute divine being. I was struck by its openness to Truth and the respect for the best in all spiritual traditions. He posed the question 'How can we disconnect faith from "identity" and link it to the "cosmos", where it truly belongs?' This led on to the dangers of fundamentalism, which he suggested was possibly the inevitable refuge for the

Bringing Reconciliation Home

This is a programme which joins together the work of St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace and St Martin-in-the-Fields in London with the Corrymeela Community from Northern Ireland.

The programme examines the experiences gained by Corrymeela and by others in reconciling the sources of conflict and division in our own lives and throughout the world, so that we may be better able to apply this learning to our own situations.

disorientated in a world where identity is not only fluid, but often evaporating.

Jacynth Hamill, whose devotional sessions throughout the weekend greatly enhanced the spiritual dimension, closed the weekend with a time of worship.

David Stevens described the exciting new developments on the Ballycastle site and, alongside Jo Watson, answered questions on funding, current politics, and the all-important topic of Corrymeela's way forward.

The strong message was that Corrymeela's vast reconciliation experience could and should inform and enhance mainland interfaith development and that young people are an essential cog in this process.

Thanks to this weekend I feel I was able to appreciate again the attributes of Christianity as seen through other faiths' eyes. I realised again the importance of its essence – 'love God and love thy neighbour as thyself'; it was very affirming that other faiths can admire our hymn singing and the congregation participation in services.

I strongly recommend the Barnes Close experience. Excellent meals fed the body while spiritual 'food for thought' inspired our minds. I came away with my faith revitalised and a renewed zeal to put into practice the Corrymeela ideals of dialogue, understanding and reconciliation.

Corrymeela Friends Weekends are bi-annual events; the Spring residential is hosted at the Centre in Ballycastle while the Autumn event takes place at the Community of the Reconciliation Centre in Barnes Close, Worcestershire.

Full details regarding speakers and programme will soon be available on the website, alternatively you can contact Anne McDonagh at Corrymeela House in Belfast on 028 9050 8080.



Much needed short-term volunteers

VOLUNTEERING is an integral and indispensable part of life at the Corrymeela Centre in Ballycastle. Indeed the practical work of peace and reconciliation undertaken by the community's dedicated programme staff would be impossible without the long-term volunteers' (LTVs) tireless commitment and input.

This international group, who live and work there, are part and parcel of the Corrymeela experience, but there is room for you too.

Weekend, or short-term volunteers, as they are known, are vital to the running of the Centre, providing year-long, weekend or

midweek support and relief for Centre staff and LTVs.

Short-term volunteers come in all shapes, sizes and ages. Individuals based in the immediate area often help out at reception, in the kitchen, organising lifts or facilitating a visiting group; training is provided to educate short-term volunteers about the Centre's guidelines and procedures.

These training weekends also enable the many departments and volunteers to mix and learn from a whole new network of people.

See page 27 to read first-hand accounts of life as a short-term volunteer.

Driving round in circles



WE ARE VERY INTERESTED in making contact with individuals holding a Category D vehicles licence and with two years' experience, who would like to get involved with the Centre in Ballycastle.

By expanding the bus volunteer base we can offer the

Community groups who visit the Centre even more.

If you are interested in contributing to the work of the Community by offering your time and skills as a volunteer driver please contact Oona at the Centre for more information on 028 2076 1739.

Community Fundraising

ROGER COURTNEY AND FRIENDS will be raising the roof with song on the 12th April 2008 in the Elmwood Hall, Belfast. Make sure and reserve your tickets as possible at £10 with all proceeds to Corrymeela.

Keeping with our spring

theme, Corrymeela in partnership with Marks & Spencer will be featuring their Spring Summer Range in the La Mon Hotel on the 30th April 2008. Tickets are £10 with all proceeds again going to Corrymeela.

New staff and volunteers

Alyson McElroy Jones Temorary Communications Officer



Hi, I'm Alyson and I started working in No.8 in November and I'm thoroughly enjoying my

role in Communications.

I first got involved in Corrymeela last year volunteering at Susan McEwen's residentials with NICRAS families and Momington Ladies groups and loved it.

2007 was a time of huge changes personally and professionally; I resigned from my job in journalism, got engaged, became self-employed, got married and joined the team in No.8!

I'm excited to be working as part of an organisation I believe in and I hope to use my role to help raise awareness of Corrymeela's work within the secular and Christian press. In 2008 I will be more involved with the teams in Ballycastle and Knocklayd; actively and creatively promoting all the events going in Belfast, Ballycastle and Knocklayd.

Ferenc Holczinger Volunteer: Ballycastle



Ferenc, from Hungary, is volunteering in Ballycastle until 31st March as part of his placement from the Jesuit

Community, Dublin.

He studied both Philosophy and Theology and later taught Religion in schools, organising summer and winter camps for students.

Ferenc considers himself a 'Jesuit teacher'; having entered the seminary

after school he joined the Jesuit order in 1992 and was ordained as a priest in 1998. Interesting fact: Ferenc is fluent in five languages.

Rotraud Haenlein Volunteer: Ballycastle

Some of my friends were skeptical when I told them I was going to the Northern Irish coast, during winter, to spend time in a Centre for peace and reconciliation.

But the weather back home in Hamburg, Northern Germany, really isn't much better at this time of the year; so the prospect of rain (and lots of it) wasn't enough to deter me.

My good friend Sonja, who has been working in Corrymeela since last October, assured me I would have a brilliant time and it has been incredible. I've learnt the following wonderful things:

- 1 That Corrymeela staff, volunteers, group members, facilitators and community members are incredibly friendly, open and interesting
- 2 To understand the Northern Irish accent (and some American ones) slightly better
- 3 At least 20 inspiring ways of leading worship, brilliant outdoor activities and ice breakers
- 4 The word 'awesome' is originally an Old Testament word
- 5 The sea and Rathlin Island look different every day and a happy seal population lives beside Rathlin
- 6 A lot about Northern Irish history, politics and society.

I could feel Corrymeela is a place of healing; I spent a very relaxing, nourishing time here. I'll miss the place and the people.

Thanks to everyone I met, talked to, spent time with and had fun with. I thoroughly enjoyed it.

Interesting fact: I am a qualified trainer in the Korean martial art of Shinson Hapkido.

Take religion out of work, urges Ringland

Courtesy of Belfast Telegraph

THE WORKPLACE IN NORTHERN IRELAND is still blighted by 'unacceptable' levels of religious segregation, a high-profile seminar in Belfast was recently told.

Trevor Ringland, the Belfast solicitor and former Irish rugby international, said the business sector could be doing more to promote community relations.

Mr Ringland was addressing a seminar organised in support of One Small Step, the reconciliation body.

The gathering, chaired by Mary Black, Chairperson

of the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland, was devised as an economic reflection and discussion.

Mr Ringland, Chairman of One Small Step, said there were many excellent examples of the business community taking the lead in countering sectarianism; he used the Apprentice Boys' parade in Londonderry as an example.

He added: 'The business sector should be opposing any form of sectarianism and should be seen to oppose it by taking public positions.'

Mr Ringland, a member of the Ulster Unionist Party, also urged the business community to re-engage with party politics.

He said the political system could benefit from the expertise which business people could offer.

'The fact is that addressing division makes good financial sense and the business community and the economy have much to gain from a shared future,' he said.

Robin Morton



Trevor Ringland

www.onesmallstepcampaign.org

One Small Step Campaign seeks to create awareness and a message that we are all responsible for developing a peaceful society in Northern Ireland.

See page 23 for an article by Trevor Ringland

Thousands contribute to handwritten Bible

A HANDWRITTEN BIBLE involving the work of 10,500 people in Northern Ireland over 13 months went on display for the first time last autumn at the Bible Society headquarters in Belfast.

The historic 19-volume project was completed last year when the Church of Ireland Primate Archbishop Harper wrote in three verses from Psalm 150. Other church leaders including Archbishop Sean Brady and Archbishop Robin Eames also made contributions.

The contributions have come from Protestant and Catholic churches and schools all over Northern Ireland.

John Doherty, the general secretary of the Bible Society in Northern Ireland, said: 'Nearly 200 different schools and churches took part, so it was like trying to complete a giant jigsaw. At any one time there were up to 20 different schools or churches writing their contributions simultaneously.'

The first contribution to the 19-volume Bible came from Pomeroy Presbyterian Church in April 2006, and a similar project has been taking place throughout the Irish Republic.

John Doherty said: 'This is a parallel exercise and they are not yet finished, however, they are now well on their way.'

He said the purpose of the project was two-fold. 'It was to remind people how the Bible has



survived down the ages, from the earlier handwritten versions, and it was to help them to read the Scriptures in a new way.

'When you copy a portion of the Bible by hand, you get a greater understanding, and people told us many times "I never knew that the Bible said this."' Each contributor received a signed certificate, and the names of all the contributors are held in a computer.'

Volumes of the handwritten Bible will be available to each contributing church or school.

Mr Doherty said: 'They have been beautifully bound by RMB Bookbinders in Belfast and it is almost like a modern Book of Kells.'

www.bsni.co.uk

Regeneration for East Belfast communities



CONNSWATER COMMUNITY GREENWAY secured a £23m grant from the Big Lottery Fund's Living Landmarks programme. Greenway were one of only three projects, and the only Northern Irish project, commissioned by the Living Landmarks programme.

Connswater Community Greenway will transform a huge area of East Belfast, connecting 379 acres of public open space, building 43 bridges and creating 19 km of cycle- and walkways. Almost 50,000 people living adjacent to the Greenway will benefit with new opportunities for leisure, exercise and recreation.

Breidge Gadd, Northern Ireland Chair of the Big Lottery Fund, said: 'After lots of hard work from the projects and some extremely tough decisions taken by the Living Landmarks committee we are delighted to announce the three successful initiatives. I'm looking forward to seeing these truly ground-breaking projects come to life and capturing the imagination of the surrounding communities.'

Due to decades of underinvestment the open spaces on the riverbanks are underused, inaccessible,

unsafe and unconnected to communities. The Greenway will be a linear park connecting people and places from Castlereagh Hills to Belfast Lough and allowing people to travel along the course of the Connswater, Knock and Loop rivers, creating a safe, welcoming and open public space for residents and visitors.

East Belfast Partnership are managing this project and construction is due to commence early 2009.

Ceremony and celebrations as Primate becomes Cardinal



Cardinal Brady in his new robes pictured recently with President McAleese and her husband

IN NOVEMBER 2007 the Catholic Primate, Archbishop Sean Brady, knelt before Pope Benedict XVI in St Peter's Square in Rome to receive his special red biretta confirming his new status as a Cardinal.

The weekend ceremonies ended with a papal audience for the thirteen new cardinals from four continents. There was also a service for Irish pilgrims at the Church of St John Lateran, followed by a reception in the Irish Pontifical College.

Breaking with tradition Pope Benedict announced his intention to 'nominate' the new cardinals at a public ceremony in Rome; past procedure saw cardinals nominated in private to a secret consistory, followed by a public ceremony.

Archbishop Brady was the ninth cardinal-nominate to kneel before the Pope. He said: 'This part of the ceremony symbolises the special relationship between each new Cardinal and the Bishop of Rome.'

Corrymeela member appointed as victims commissioner

WE WELCOME THE APPOINTMENT of Brendan McAllister, Director of Mediation Ireland and Corrymeela member, as one of four Victims Commissioners nominated by First Minister Ian Paisley and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness in January.

He will sit on the panel, representing families

who lost relatives during 35 years of bloodshed across the Province, alongside Bertha McDougal, whose police reservist husband was gunned down by the INLA; Patricia MacBride, the sister of an IRA man shot dead by the SAS and Mike Nesbitt, a former TV news anchorman who has worked for Ulster Television and the BBC.

Former Corrymeela member Harold Good receives World Peace Methodist Award

REVD HAROLD GOOD, former President of the Methodist Church, who helped oversee the Provisional IRA's decommissioning process, has received the World Methodist Peace Award 2007.

The presentation to the Revd Good, 70, was made by the chairman of the World Methodist

Council, Revd Dr John Barrett, in Belfast and was followed by a reception for invited guests. Revd Good said during his address, 'I want to applaud all those who, over the years, have kept alive the vision, shown courageous leadership and, in the more recent past, have taken great political risks to bring us to where we now are.'

Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness and First Minister the Revd Ian Paisley attended the Protestant Church ceremony together.

The Revd Good is the third local recipient of this prestigious award, which is given on behalf of the world's 75 million Methodists.

International recipients include former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, former US President Jimmy Carter, and former South African President Nelson Mandela.

The Revd Good has been involved in peace-making since his early days as a Methodist minister on the Shankill Road, Belfast and later as the site director of the Corrymeela Community in Ballycastle.

Two years ago he made headlines when, with Catholic Priest Fr Alex Reid of Clonard, he was an independent witness to the Provisional IRA decommissioning process.

He said: 'I see myself as a captain of a team who will receive this award on behalf of all who have striven for peace. So many people across this community have made major contributions to our peace process. Some are well-known and others may never be known.'

The current Methodist President, the Revd Roy Cooper, said: 'We are honoured, as a Church. Harold Good is a tireless peace activist, a listener and a persuader, who is a well-deserved recipient of this award.'

Alf McCreary



Reverend Harold Good is the third local recipient of this prestigious award



Ballycastle

March 2008

14-16 St Patrick's Day Retreat

Explore Celtic spirituality in a new and living way; learn about sacramental lifestyle and experience the cleansing of the senses, washing of feet and a fresh engagement with nature. Led by Terry Hogg, Leader of the Coracle Community, West Belfast.

21-23 Easter Youth Conference

A weekend led by Corrymeela long-term volunteers.

May 2008

16-18 Interfaith Young Adult Residential

Join other young adults from different faith backgrounds for community service work, discussions, reflections and making new friends. Led by Corrymeela long-term volunteers.

16-18 Radical Love

A retreat for members of the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender communities to explore issues of faith and spirituality in context with personal sexuality.

23-25 Corrymeela Friends' Weekend

NOT TO BE MISSED!

A weekend of fellowship, study and learning for friends of the Corrymeela Community. All welcome. (Winter Weekend: 14-16 November 2008 at Barnes Close, Bromsgrove)

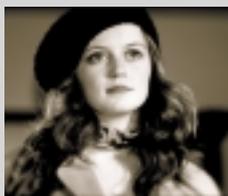
June 2008

28 Corrymeela Summer Festival

Family day with picnic lunch, workshops looking at politics, faith and life, global issues, environment, gender, sexuality and film. Worship, family fun, market stalls and youth activities. From 10 am.

*go in
Peace*

Tickets £10
from Bernie Magill
at No.8 on
028 9050 8080



Fashion Show

Tickets £10
from Bernie Magill
at No.8 on
028 9050 8080

Belfast

April 2008

12 Go in Peace Concert 7.30 pm Elmwood Hall, Belfast

A Corrymeela musical extravaganza with special appearances by Ceol-le-ceile and Roger Courtney.

30 M&S Fashion Show La Mon Hotel

Corrymeela have teamed up with Marks and Spencer and Logan's of Ballymena to showcase what your wardrobe staples should be this summer. Drinks reception & nibbles sponsored by La Mon Hotel and Dale Farm.



Knocklayd

March 2008
5 Lenten Quiet Day
Seasonal reflection.



7–9 March Addressing the Hard Issues:

Using resources for diversity inclusion. A skills-based course for church leaders, youth leaders, Sunday school teachers and others involved in this work. Led by Yvonne Naylor, Community Member.

April 2008 **4–6 Raising the Voice**

A writers' weekend led by Damien Gorman, Writer.

18–20 Parents, Children and Sexual Identity

A weekend led by parents for parents struggling with issues around the sexual identity of a son or a daughter. Facilitated by Una Lount and Brian Treacy.

May 2008 **2–4 Gardening Weekend**

A working weekend in Knocklayd's beautiful spring gardens in exchange for food and accommodation. Led by Carol Press and Kate Graham.



23–25 Painting for Pleasure

For everyone who enjoys art and wishes to experience the changing seasonal beauty of Knocklayd's gardens. Led by Raymond Bakewell, Corrymeela community.

June 2008 **14 Knocklayd Open Day**

We invite you all to join us to experience the best of the Knocklayd Centre. 10.30 am – 5.00 pm

20–22 Just Write – writing for pleasure

A weekend of reminiscing for those who are writing or interested in starting 'My own life story'. Led by Una Lount and Gill Michael, Community Members.



July 2008 **11–15 Walking Together**

A long weekend of rambling along the coast and through the Glens of Antrim. Everyone warmly welcome.

LTVs unveil 2008 Easter Youth Weekend

'CAN'T THESE LONG-TERM VOLUNTEERS LEARN how to take a rest?!

If you've ventured to the Ballycastle Centre in recent months, chances are you've heard that question at least once.

Since arriving last August, the LTVs have made a name for themselves as an ambitious, caring and creative lot who have taken on various projects for the benefit of their personal development and Corrymeela at large.

With their latest venture, the LTVs are pleased to announce a special youth weekend that they will lead at Easter – Friday 21 to Sunday 23 March. The 2008 Easter Youth Weekend will provide Northern Ireland residents aged 18 to 25 with the opportunity meet, forge new friendships and explore issues that are important to their own communities.

'There isn't a more relevant time than right now for young people to discuss the rapidly diversifying community around them in a space which fosters learning and friendship,' said Sarah



McCullough, co-chair of programming.

The weekend will also host reflections and celebrations surrounding Easter for those who wish to participate.

'We are working hard to invite people from varied backgrounds. An immediate difficulty, but long term

benefit concerns our need to recruit those who have never before been to Corrymeela. This means our strategies have had to be creative and our mailing list extensive,' said Sheila Vennel, co-chair of recruitment.

The cost of the weekend is £10 per person. Space has been allocated in the budget to provide for disability, childcare and transport, and a limited number of scholarships are available for those requesting financial assistance.

For more information, contact Becca Moody, Corrymeela Programme Assistant, at 028 2076 2626 or beccamoody@corrymeela.org.





THE CROÍ

At seventy-seven,
I didn't think
that I would fall in love again.
But when I walked into the Croí,
the heart of Corrymeela,
the listening place,
it happened.

Christine gave us Christ's words:
'The Kingdom of God is within you'
and asked us to ponder
the meaning in silence.
We sat in a circle there,
in a blaze of candlelight,
still.
And the words that came to me
fell softly on my soul
like dew on grass:
round, warm, holding,
beautiful, vulnerable, holy,
light-growing, flowing,
receiving and giving.

And afterwards,
when I thought of the Croí,
I was sorry,
sorry for the smallness of my own heart,
and the narrowness of my horizons.

Anthea Dove

October 2007

The walnut tree

In the gardens of the Dominican Priory at Tallaght, Dublin stood an old, gnarled walnut tree. This particular tree, called the Maelruan Tree, with its huge, canopy-like branches, captivated me. It wasn't just a beautiful tree, it was a tree that began speaking to me and I had to listen to it.

DURING THE HEALING OF MEMORIES consultation held by the World Council of Churches we heard about lives that were destroyed by violence; the trampling of human rights, oppression and war.

Often, the destruction was meaningless: a bomb going off in the street; a child stepping on a landmine; a young man disappearing suddenly because of his political beliefs; whole families being murdered because they were of a different ethnic group.

We heard how the healing process only began when men, women and children gave the violence they had experienced a name, and voiced it loudly so that others could hear.

Certain individuals had the strength to look their violator in the face and say, 'Look, this is what you did to me. This is how inhuman you were. How do you feel now?'

When people did this, they often saw their violators not as powerful men but as weak, ignorant and pathetic. Many did find it possible to forgive, be reconciled with their violator and be healed of their anger and pain even though the scars remained.

The walnut tree was a living reminder that all of creation needs reconciliation and healing from violence. In 1997, this tree was sliced into several parts when lightning struck it. Branches fell far apart and some appeared to wither and die. Then, over a period of time, it seemed as if the broken tree refused to give in and just die. Parts of the tree made peace with the earth where they had fallen and slowly began to take root. Little twigs began to appear; then fresh, new leaves and finally fruit. People picked the fruit and found it sweeter than before and marvelled at it.

How like the walnut tree many of our lives are. We too are suddenly struck by disease or the death of a loved one, by physical violence, or by thoughtless everyday verbal and emotional violence.

For a while, we are unable to make sense of it; neither do we have the desire or energy to rebuild our lives. But when we face our violator with courage, reconcile and make peace, like the walnut tree, we too get a new life.

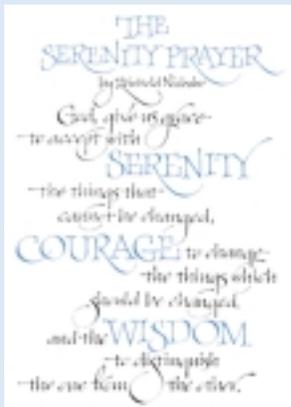
The fruits that we bear will be scattered far and wide. Those who taste our fruit, which may be in the form of kindness, compassion, empathy, or a commitment to work to end violence and suffering, will truly marvel at the new life that has given birth from violence.

Usha Jesudasan

Usha is a journalist and writer from India, author of I Will Lie Down In Peace, a book on facing terminal illness, When Winter Comes, a book on dealing with pain and grief and beginning again, and a series of graded children's books on values - A Child's Path. She is currently working on a series of children's books called Living In Peace and Harmony for the Decade to Overcome Violence.



Grace, courage and the wisdom to know the difference



HOW ARE YOUR NEW YEAR'S resolutions working out in 2008? Despite all the hype about more exercise, saving the planet and preparing better diets, I decided to go a different route this year, and focus on one simple prayer: God, give us grace to

accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed, courage to change the things that should be changed, and the wisdom to distinguish the one from the other.

This prayer, which was written by Professor Reinhold Niebuhr (a Yale classmate of Dietrich Bonhoeffer) in 1934, has been a source of calmness and inspiration for decades. It offers hope to those who feel overwhelmed in the face of personal struggles, and is a motivation to those who care about justice, the environment, who stand with the vulnerable, and who want to see positive change take place in our society.

At the Corrymeela Centre, it has recently felt like we are surfing a wave of goodwill as more groups than ever want to stay at the Centre. We appreciate the trust that people put in us as they journey with us for a few days. Our staff and volunteers continue to support youth groups, schools, families and community organisations seven days a week with commitment, care, and courage. In the latter part of last year, we hosted churches from Northern Ireland, South England, Yorkshire, Denmark, the United States, an eight-day ecumenical school, a six-day interfaith youth

conference with 16- to 25-year-olds from nine different traditions, and three open faith and life events. a

Our new volunteer team are really enjoying the experience of living in community and supporting the work. We have been further developing our volunteer training programme, and looking to increase the number of local, short-term volunteers. Our two new staff members, Matt and Sonja, are bringing new energy and fresh ideas into the Centre. We are also delighted that Becca Moody will be volunteering with us through 2008 as our new programme assistant.

As 2008 unfolds, we are excited about the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead. We are looking forward to the opening of the new volunteer accommodation, the refurbishment of the Croí, and a number of open events, including the big Summer Festival on 28 June with speakers, workshops, family fun events, market stalls, music and drama. Old and new friends will help us look at how Northern Ireland can share the past and share the future.

Above all, we hope the Centre continues to flourish. We want to spend more time this year reflecting and evaluating our work. Perhaps one of our biggest challenges is to raise funds to support our work and the groups who visit.

As we move forward, may we all know peace, tranquility and freedom when we realise that some things can't be changed; the courage to face into those things that we know need to be changed; and may we have wisdom, from above, to know the difference.

Ronnie Millar
Centre Director



FUN

The soldiers led Jesus away to the inner part of the palace, that is, the praetorium, and called the whole cohort together. They dressed him in purple, twisted some thorns into a crown and put it on him. And they began saluting him, 'Hail, king of the Jews!' They struck his head with a reed and spat on him; and they went down on their knees to do him homage. And when they had finished making fun of him, they took off the purple and dressed him in his own clothes.

Mark 15:16–20

What a skilled weaver he was the roman soldier who wove
That vicious crown
With callused fingers immune to murderous thorns.

Ah, but he was the battalion's joker too.
There's always one isn't there?
In every classroom;
Every office;
Every factory floor;
A person so scared of being scorned
That a satirist, a comedian, an ironist emerges
From the hidden depths of their fear, wearing a safe (?) Clown's face;
Popular all right.

This Roman humorist, then;
Did he toss that well crafted crown of thorns
Across the laugh-filled air like a frisbee, to one of his comrades?
Intent both on sharing the joke, but also on avoiding the actual cruelty,
The messy, bloody, physical nastiness
Of ramming it down on that vulnerable head.

In the Warsaw ghetto, the Jews had been rendered so seemingly broken,
That the soldiers laughed at a baby's brains
Dashed out against the imprisoning wall.

In the Deep South the pale crowd bayed in ecstasy
At the lynching of a black man.
And later sweet Billie Holliday sang us a bitter reminder,
'Strange fruit hanging from the trees.'

In Belfast, people have jeered and laughed
At wee girls, shaven headed, tarred and feathered,
Tied to lampposts.
Or written, 'Bye for now Gow'!
And 'We will always remember you Tommy Sands'
(Geddit?)
On gable walls.

At its best, humour is healing and laughter divine,
But God forgive us
For our cheap jokes, coward hearts, traitors' rejoicing
When evoking the crowd's easy laughter,
Always at someone else's expense.
For behind the benign make-up of a Clown
May lurk a back-seat killer's face.

Sylvia Sands

GARDENER

Mary Magdalene stood crying outside the tomb. Then she turned round and saw Jesus. 'Woman why are you crying?' Jesus asked her. 'Who is it that you are looking for?' She thought he was the gardener, so she said to him 'If you took him away, sir, tell me where you have laid him, and I will go and get him.'
John 20:14–15

Down the centuries
People have preached at length about my error;
Some with pity, others with scorn.
(Typical over-emotional female – to think he was
the Gardener!)

Looking back,
He did not crash into the allotment of my life
But leaned on the gate gently;
Requesting entry.

First, he was the bin man
Clearing out the accumulated rubbish
And putrid, rotting debris of my life
Hidden in the undergrowth.

Then he was the ploughman,
Furrowing, harrowing with his terrible love,
Slowly breaking up the foundations,
Breaking through to my good rich soil.

Next, he was the sower,
Patiently, in wind and rain
And glorious sunshine
Scattering such tender, hopeful seeds
Into my deepest earth.

Finally, oh see! The flowers and heathers,
The shrubs and grasses,
The birds and butterflies,
The bursting, the blooming
Of my individual plot.

In hindsight,
I was doubly right among the tombs and terror,
The ruins and relics of that morning.

I did see,
I did recognise
My Beloved Gardener.

Sylvia Sands

Full reading: John 20:1–18



Snowflakes, snow angels and storms



Mary Anne and her husband Chris are the resident resource couple in Knocklayd

WEATHER IS SUCH A WONDROUS and mysterious thing, isn't it? As we concern ourselves with climate change and global warming, I wonder how many of us take time out of our hectic days to give thanks for the beauty of the earth and our changing weather. It offers us variety, stimulation and excitement. This is especially so up here on Knocklayd.

On 3 January we experienced an unexpected snow storm. The long-term volunteers were staying with us and had gone to Balintoy during the evening. Chris and I stayed behind with the youngest volunteer team member, Gabriel, son of Helen and Kai. He wanted to help us make a surprise birthday cake for Davey for later in the evening.

As we left to join the others, it began to snow. Gabriel, a keen observer, noted that snow at Knocklayd was quite different from snow in Germany. He asked quizzically, 'Why are the snowflakes at Knocklayd so small? In Germany we have very big, fluffy snowflakes.' The wonder in Gabriel's observation was what captured me.

Hours later, when, thanks to the snow, the whole team returned to Knocklayd on foot, that same sense of wonder was expressed by two team

members, Lillian from Gambia and Ariana from El Salvador, who were experiencing snow for the first time. They were thrilled at the sight and the feel of the stuff as the volunteers all went out to make snow angels and snowballs in the crisp winter night. It snowed most of the next day and we were formally 'snowed in' at Knocklayd.

We had a wonderful time enjoying the beauty of the mountainside covered in white, the silence that snow brings to an otherwise noisy world, and, of course, each other's company by the fire in the living room.

Chris and I often watch the stars here at Knocklayd; they are so clear and bright, far from city lights. The monthly full moon illuminates the interior of the house during the night, often wakening me. I always say a prayer for our family at home as I remember this is the very same moon shining in their North Carolina and Texas windows.

One night last week 80-mph gale-force winds whopped and howled throughout the night, rattling windows, blowing down trees, disturbing our electric service. The sounds were fantastic but we prayed we wouldn't be left powerless.

The next morning the commotion of the night before had evaporated, the sun shone and the temperature soared to 14 degrees.

Certainly, the world is changing; Northern Ireland is changing. Climate change must be addressed; the political and social climate in Northern Ireland must be addressed, not forgetting change within ourselves.

We can always pray that 'things will work out' but we must not feel 'powerless', we must act.

In some ways, life here on the mountain is distilled and it's easy to wonder at the beautiful surroundings. I pray for the grace to recognise the awe and mystery in my everyday life, wherever I am. To see things as a child does or as someone who is experiencing them for the first time. I also pray for wisdom to act when it is the right and just thing to do; to quash my feelings of 'powerlessness'.

Peace,

Mary Anne



What are the chances?

Can a shared future be born from an imperfect political deal?

SOME NORTHERN IRELAND ARTICLES on a shared future were to say the least somewhat depressing. They represent on the one hand the regurgitation of a particular political position, and on the other an expectation that seems to me to go well beyond what politicians can deliver if they are to maintain electoral support in the still tribal voting system.

The political deal worked out between the DUP and Sinn Féin was truly historic, if not ideal. It had all the similarities of a marriage of convenience, and like such marriages, love, understanding, respect and trust are in short supply.

But is this a surprise? Could we ever have expected a set of cosy relationships between these long-time political opponents to develop overnight? Is it not

the case that for the foreseeable future we shall just have to accept that we will be administered on the basis of the lowest possible political denominator?

The actions of the Executive members so far suggest that we can expect a series of policy decisions taken unilaterally without any collective consideration evident. A decision on the Irish language was taken apparently without any collective agreement or even, perhaps, discussion. A decision on funding for groups related to the UDA was also taken without consensus and indeed in the midst of a public spat between ministers. No collective responsibility here then.

While the current reality may be depressing for many and given that it might continue for some





time to come, what are the chances of a shared future, however defined, succeeding?

It seems to me that accepting the current political settlement, warts and all, still provides the best landscape for moving beyond conflict towards a society that has more to share than to divide. But it does require a level of political maturity which so far is in short supply apart from the obvious steps taken by Ian Paisley and Martin McGuinness to display harmony while all around them appear at loggerheads.

I was never under the illusion that we would move rapidly onto a cosy shared future following devolution, but I had expected the new Executive to set an example on the conduct of debate on the issues that divide. The big test of their collective resolve will be the content of their first Programme for Government.

But we do not have to rely only on politicians to shape our future. Everyone has a responsibility to play their part. There is a corporate responsibility for areas like business, the churches, the trades unions and the voluntary sector to question whether they are doing enough to apply pressure on our politicians to develop a shared future agenda as well as examining their own role in creating a new society here. And individuals must play their part by considering and taking small steps in their own lives to overcome division and build relationships.

I was particularly interested in the role of the

voluntary sector in the light of the research last year on behalf of NICVA (Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action), which contended that most voluntary organisations did not address reconciliation in their work and took limited steps to ensure representation of the different communities in their areas. Politicians respond to popular opinion and it is up to civic society to give them the incentive to change.

I also acknowledge the need to address the issue of so called peace-lines which remain as an enduring monument to our divided society. There is no easy answer to the very real fears that communities still harbour and there remain very real recollections about why these barriers emerged in the first place. But difficult as it will be there needs to be a concerted effort by the public sector to help those communities come to terms with a future without walls. This requires the full involvement of community organisations trying to shape the terms and conditions necessary for change, whether it is support for building capacity for dialogue, physical development or policing measures. In this the new Executive must lead and set an example by giving the removal of peace-lines a clear priority in the Programme for Government.

The current political arrangements may not be ideal but the departure that their establishment represented from the previously held positions of our respective political leaders does demonstrate that very big steps as well as small steps are possible. If Ian Paisley and Martin McGuinness can put aside old enmities to co-operate on matters of interest to society as a whole, we know that we are living in an era of positive change when even the unthinkable is possible. Each and every individual in Northern Ireland should grasp the opportunity that the new political era presents to build a better, more shared future.

Trevor Ringland

Chairman of the One Small Step Campaign
www.onesmallstepcampaign.org



“
**there
 needs to
 be a
 concerted
 effort by
 the public
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 future without
 walls

”



Dealing with the past

THE EAMES BRADLEY CONSULTATIVE GROUP on the Past has been wrestling with important issues in relation to the Northern Ireland conflict: Was it a war? Should there be amnesty? What about apologies by the main protagonists? How do we deal with the hurt and the pain? Two plays by the Chilean playwright Ariel Dorfman deal with some of the issues we are facing. In a recent article he wrote about these two plays.

‘When I went home to Chile in 1990, after an exile of many years, I found a land morally devastated by the dictatorship of General Pinochet, who had ousted the elected government in 1973. Although no longer president, he was still head of the army, and remained ominously powerful, ready to strike again. Everywhere I turned, I saw victims and tormentors living side by side, drinking at the same bars, eating at the same restaurants, jostling each other on buses and streets – never acknowledging the pain and the guilt, not to themselves, not to anybody.

‘I couldn’t stand that silence, and the result was my play, *Death and the Maiden*. I wanted to look at the question of how we coexist in the same country, even in the same room, with someone who has caused us grievous, perhaps irreparable harm. Would we be able to resist taking revenge, if that revenge were made possible? My protagonist, Paulina Salas, captures the doctor she believes raped and tortured her many years ago, and puts him on trial in her beach-house. During one long day and night, she must try to extract a confession from that man. More crucially, she has to decide what, if any, violence she might inflict on him, whether to kill or spare him.

‘I was astonished by the play’s success, mainly because it ended so ambiguously on so many levels. I did not let the audience know for certain if the doctor was really guilty, or what Paulina did with her prisoner. Nor did I resolve that central dilemma: how to seek justice and yet not lapse into violence, how to break the cycle of recrimination and



OPEN LETTER

TO ALL THOSE AFFECTED BY THE LEGACY OF THE EVENTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND OVER THE PAST 40 YEARS

As a result of our work with the Commission for the Past, we have been invited to contribute to the Commission's report on the legacy of the events in Northern Ireland over the past 40 years. We are pleased to do so and to share our thoughts on the legacy of the events in Northern Ireland over the past 40 years. We are pleased to do so and to share our thoughts on the legacy of the events in Northern Ireland over the past 40 years.

retaliation?

'These questions have stayed with me, and are now the subject of a new play, *Purgatorio*, which can be read as an intellectual and emotional sequel to *Death and the Maiden*. In *Purgatorio*, I lock a man and a woman in a stark, bare room. She seems desperate to escape from what could be a hospital or an insane asylum. The man, apparently her therapist, appears just as desperate to help her. But both have hidden agendas. Slowly, it will be revealed that they are both in the afterlife, kept there until they have atoned for crimes they have committed. Both are victims and both are perpetrators; both are patients and simultaneously healers.

'Why return to the questions at the heart of *Death and the Maiden*? Because in that play I was in a way letting the audience off the hook. It was an agent of the state who was torturing, or "disappearing" bodies, or censoring. This permits spectators the luxury of distance – the thought that it's just a matter of ridding the world of such repressive figures and everything will be all right. But there is no such comfort in *Purgatorio*, where both my characters are implicated in something dreadful. What is the worst thing a man can do to a woman? What is the worst thing a woman can do to a man? These two have done it to each other, in spades. I wanted to make sure that, in the supremely private and claustrophobic relationship I had wrought for them, they could not blame the government, or history. I wanted them to dwell in the murky moral landscape where most couples live and love and fight.'

'We inhabit a time of fear and mistrust: nothing could be more urgent than asking ourselves how we

should react when we have been overwhelmed by a monstrous offence; nothing could be more imperative than the need to understand how easy it is to go from victim to accuser, from accuser to invader, from violator to victim.'

'In the austerity of that room, the man and woman I dreamt up embark on the quest for guidance and deliverance that Paulina Salas originally formulated in *Death and the Maiden*. Stripped of all defences and masks, they go at each other with all the hope they can muster. They wonder, as I do, if we will be able to find a way out of the endless cycle of hatred and retribution in which our species seems to be trapped?'

'And this is where the issues of repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation enter in. Can they be made real in our world? Can they be made real in Northern Ireland?'

The German writer Bernhard Schlink's novel *The Reader* – shortly to be filmed – covers some of the same moral complexity as Dorfman's plays. The narrator tries to make sense of his teenage love affair with a woman who is later tried and convicted of war crimes. The novel covers a central German theme of the 20th century: 'that people who do monstrous things are not simply monsters' and its agonising converse that 'the one who I loved has a very dark side'. And this leads directly to the themes of complicity and collusion, evasion and ambiguity – and how we make sense of it all. All of this has disturbing echoes in our Northern Ireland situation.

David Stevens

Corrymeela has produced a submission to the Eames Bradley Consultative Group and this is available on our website - www.corrymeela.org



The reflections of our current resource couple



A year and a half in Corrymeela and our third baby on the way; we are now used to the howling winds that accompany many of our nights and take the closeness of the sea and sand for granted.

It's a place so exposed to the elements, and although in the warmth and friendliness of the Centre you can forget them temporarily, we are never far from the intensity of the emotional elements which accompany community life here.

It is a wild place. Groups constantly coming and going, volunteers running around crazily trying to fit in all their tasks, the eternal element of the unknown when you attend or lead worship; Coventry under massive reconstruction (Simeon has a fantastic view of the digger from the breakfast table and it is his first bilingual word!).

We are, in some ways, just getting to grips with what our contribution here is all about. Between us we continue to help with our various duties, learning as we go more about the work of peace and reconciliation as seen through Corrymeela's eyes.

During our time here so far, we have had the opportunity to grow within and without, both as a family and as individuals. We have gained much – in experiences and insights, friendships and contacts. In May we will have been here for two years and it is likely we will be moving on, back to Germany, in the summer. When we go it will be with new resources and strengths of our own and it's now impossible to imagine life without Corrymeela as some part of it.

PERSONAL STORIES

The reflections of Marjorie and Shaun, short-term volunteers.

Below are two personal accounts of the short-term volunteer experience from Marjorie Hanna, 56, a retired headmistress and Shaun Robinson, 23, a local barman.



Marjorie Hanna

'Having retired a few years before as head of Carhill Integrated Primary School, Garvagh, I missed being useful. No longer responsible for anyone or anything I wanted to feel needed

again and Corrymeela gave me the sense of belonging I was looking for.

'Corrymeela is warm and welcoming and I feel very much part of the team. I know my work is appreciated and I enjoy the opportunity to meet people from all walks of life.'

Marjorie works at the busy reception in Ballycastle, taking messages, sending emails, doing admin., manning the souvenir shop as well as looking after visitors when they arrive.

'I first helped out at Corrymeela in the 1960s when I was still at boarding school but it was the Causeway Volunteer Bureau that pointed me back to the Centre when I was looking for a project to get involved in. The hardest thing in the beginning was trying to remember everyone's name.'

Shaun Robinson

'I've been involved with Corrymeela's Ballycastle Centre for four years now and was a long-term volunteer in 2004/5. At the moment I work mainly with groups of all ages, but in the past I was at the reception quite a lot, and also helped in the kitchen or anywhere else I was needed.

'I enjoy meeting people and personally think I get a lot out of the work I do. I believe in the need for peace and reconciliation; for me it is an organisation worth supporting.'

Truth & reconciliation

Mediation skills built up during Ulster's sectarian conflict may defuse tension between Asians and whites in English towns.

MEDIATION NORTHERN IRELAND has helped puncture myths about Burnley's divided communities.

Perhaps the single most striking aspect of the work Mediation Northern Ireland (MNI) has been quietly getting on with in Burnley over the last three years, is the fact the organisation is involved at all.

MNI's mediators developed their expertise in seeking to improve community relations over 20 years of the UK's most bitter, deadly, sectarian conflict. For their skills even to be applicable in a small, former mill town in northern England highlights how deep Burnley's divisions had become, erupting most notoriously in the disturbances between Asian and white youths, and the police, in 2001.

The official report into the disturbances by the Burnley Task Force rejected the idea that the disorder constituted 'race riots', or riots at all, concluding instead that it was criminal behaviour – both by white and Asian young men – of which 'white racists took advantage to promote disharmony'. The report did, however, highlight the wider context of 'segregation' between Burnley's white community and those of Bangladeshi and Pakistani origin, who form around 7.5 per cent of the population and live overwhelmingly in two deprived areas, Daneshouse and Stoneyholme.

Burnley was blighted, the report said, by 'significant racism' among the white community, many of whom believed the Asian areas had received disproportionately high levels of public investment – a perception fuelled by the local media and by Burnley Borough Council's failing adequately to communicate where money was spent.

Into this strained environment came Elevate, one of nine Pathfinder projects set up by the government to address housing market collapse across the north and parts of the Midlands. Elevate's chief executive, Max Steinberg, saw immediately that it would have to address underlying economic decline and community division, otherwise the physical refurbishment of shattered, boarded-up, terraced streets would be 'doomed not to succeed'.

The council agreed, fearing that the new investment could produce a repeat of the resentment fostered – and exploited by racists – after single regeneration budget money was spent in

Stoneyholme and Daneshouse in the early 1990s.

Casting around for community cohesion projects, Steinberg says he found disappointingly few relevant examples, until MNI was invited to Whitehall seminars to discuss the disturbances in Burnley, Oldham and Bradford. Established in 1987 by Brendan McAllister, a former probation officer and member of the Corrymeela Community, MNI mediated in the notorious Maze prison between paramilitary commanders on the wings and the governor, and then in some of Northern Ireland's most difficult local conflicts, including the Drumcree parades and the Holy Cross school dispute of 2001–02.

'In England, the divisions are less extreme than in Northern Ireland,' McAllister says, 'but the background is useful because we are living testament to what can happen if social segregation is allowed to grow and fester.'

When conceiving what became the Good Relations project, Elevate, the council and MNI were aware of the sensitivities, and the risk that it could exacerbate, rather than ease, tensions. Steinberg decided that, to be effective and credible, it had to include the British National party, viewed as malign and threatening by the Asian community, but which receives around 10 per cent of the white vote and has four local councillors. 'Some have criticised that decision,' Steinberg says, 'but we stand by it. We believed all sections of the community needed to be involved.'

Trained as mediators

They conceived a three-year structure, beginning in 2004–05 with two workshops aiming to improve communication between 'civic leaders', including councillors and senior public sector officials. In the second phase, local community workers trained as mediators, and in the third, which is now nearing completion, local infrastructure is being strengthened so the work will continue when MNI's involvement has concluded.

Elevate agreed that the participants could be involved without publicity, and that what happened in the sessions would be confidential. Both Elevate and the council pondered deeply before agreeing to discuss the project, even in a limited way, with the Guardian, but decided to do so partly to demonstrate

the efforts made to build community cohesion and partly to share good practice.

McAllister is at pains to stress that MNI's work was not to change minds and eliminate racism, but to build understanding and dialogue: 'It is to make for a more cohesive community – one marked by a high level of social partnership, rather than the gaps that were clearly there.'

A key principle is to enable people to meet in more social circumstances than they ordinarily do, so a comfortable hotel on the outskirts of Burnley was chosen as the venue, and sessions began with lunch and personal introductions. Then the MNI staff led discussions about key issues dividing the town, including segregation, law and order, education, and housing renewal. The participants were encouraged to speak openly, although care was taken over what was accepted as a fact. Some myths were punctured.

'That was very helpful,' says Mike Waite, the council's head of community engagement and cohesion. 'When, for example, the council's previous investment was discussed, we were able to explain why it was done in those deprived areas and why we feel the imbalance has been exaggerated.'

According to Waite, the exchanges were at times 'sharp and emotionally charged'. He recalls a discussion about race and religious difference, in which Asian community and religious representatives put it directly to the BNP's representative that his party believed they had no right to live in Burnley and should be sent 'home'. 'It was emotional, but an example of the project's value. The Asian representatives had an opportunity they would not otherwise have had to question the BNP, and the

BNP [had the opportunity] to hear things and exchange information. There was dialogue.'

Abdul Haleem, one of 24 local people to undergo the MNI training and qualify as a mediator, says: 'People discovered how much we had in common. Even with the BNP – some people had extreme views we cannot agree with, but with others, we realised we had similar concerns about housing, resources, deprivation. Communication is the key to better relations.'

Peter McCann, the town's mayor and a Liberal Democrat councillor, took part in the civic leaders' workshops. 'They were very challenging,' he says. 'I was certainly forced to examine my own attitudes. I've been guilty of saying: 'I'm not racist, but the Asian community have had favourable treatment.' Now I understand the serious implications of that, and know the facts better. There is innate prejudice in Burnley, but we can break complaints down into the underlying issues.'

Steinberg believes, tentatively, that the MNI project has improved relations and helped communication in a town where it had broken down. He says: 'People ask has it been successful, but it depends how you measure success. There is a continuing dialogue, and improved lines of communication. More people understand how to work to avoid societal conflict and disorder. But for a society that likes quick fixes, it has to be understood there's a long way to go. The improvements will take years, and continuing work, to yield solid results in better lives for Burnley people.'

David Conn

courtesy of the Guardian





Friends from the other side

FOR THE PAST FEW YEARS Corrymeela has been involved in a community relations project with pupils from the Girls Model School and Our Lady of Mercy Girls School in North Belfast. Through this project, the pupils have been able to meet and develop friendships with girls they never would have met otherwise, even though some live less than a mile from each other. The programme runs over the course of the school year and involves two residentials at our Ballycastle Centre and a number of school visits and day trips. On our last meeting the girls met up to discuss how their opinions of the 'other side' have changed since taking part in this programme.

They were asked to consider:

1. **What did you think about Protestants/ Catholics before taking part in this programme?**
2. **Did you have any concerns about meeting the pupils from the other school before taking part in your first residential? If 'yes' what were they?**
3. **Do you feel differently about Protestants/ Catholics after taking part in this programme?**
4. **What did you learn about the other religion?**
5. **Would you recommend this programme to others?**

Stacey, Jade and Aine talked about their experience:

Stacey: Do you feel differently about Protestants after taking part in this programme?

Aine: Yes, because I have respect for them now and I hated them before.

Jade: I realised that we are all the same.

Stacey: I learned Catholics have nuns in their schools and I'm afraid of nuns, so I was afraid going into the other school at first.

Stacey: I would so recommend this programme to others, we got on well and everyone stayed together as a group in their free time. It was brill.

Jade: I really liked that we got the chance to learn about each other.



“
I really love
it here at
Corrymeela
and **I don't**
want to go
home
”

“

I loved the outdoor activities 'cause we got to know people from the other school much better

”



Stacey and Michelle:

Stacey: Yes I would recommend this programme because it gives you the chance to meet other people and make new friends.

Anne-Marie and Melissa:

Melissa: I was worried that the girls from the other school would be cheeky and that they would not like me.

Anne-Marie: I learned that Protestants are not the way everyone makes them out to be and I liked them.



Kerrie and Courtney:

Kerrie: I learned about King Billy and who he was and why people marched on the 12th. I thought it was just to cause trouble.

Courtney: I learned all about the flags and what they meant which was really interesting.

Naomi and Paula:

Paula: I didn't really like Protestants before, but I have changed my mind now.

Naomi: I learned that Catholics make their communion and get to wear a white dress and I didn't know about that before.

Aisling and Ashleigh:

Ashleigh: I didn't really know any Catholics so I didn't know what to think but I was worried we would fight.

Ciara and Jamie:

Jamie: I feel differently about the Catholics I have met, I was surprised that we made friends but we did.



Project supported by the
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The Schools have been working with Corrymeela's Schools Worker for the past three years.

The Project has been funded by YESIP (Youth Education Social Inclusion Partnership) www.yesip.org

Author of the famous *Chronicles of Narnia*, C. S. Lewis, is still a relatively unknown name, even in his native Belfast. Sandy Smith tells Alf McCreary how he is trying to raise the great writer's profile through a series of tours.

CS Lewis

In the footprints of a literary giant

One of Belfast's most famous authors – C. S. Lewis – died nearly 45 years ago, but his books still sell more than one million copies every year.

One of Lewis' best-known works is *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, which was made into a film, and his autobiographical *Surprised By Joy*, was adapted for the highly successful play and movie *Shadowlands*.

Despite his international eminence, C. S. Lewis is still not a household name in his native land.

'Many people in Belfast still have not heard about C. S. Lewis,' says Sandy Smith, who leads tours around the author's native city.

Sandy is a senior civil servant who has an almost encyclopaedic knowledge of C. S. Lewis and his writings. 'I discovered that Lewis was brought up the same area of Belfast where I live, and that sparked off my interest,' he reveals.



The Old Rectory at St Mark's Dundela where Lewis lived for a period

'There are many allusions in his writings to the Belfast of his boyhood. For example his references to "the lion" probably derive from his connection to St Mark's, Dundela, which is known locally as "The Lion on the Hill".'

Lewis' writings also refer to the Belfast shipyard and to Campbell College, where he was a pupil. He was christened Clive Staples Lewis by his grandfather, who was then the rector of St Mark's, but at the age of four he announced that he wanted to be called Jack after a train-driver he knew.

Sandy says: 'He was an Ulsterman through and through, and his love of Co. Down in particular comes through in his writings.'

Lewis was a friend of J. R. R. Tolkien, author of *The Lord Of The Rings*. Both were at Oxford University where Lewis held a Fellowship of Magdalen College until his departure for Cambridge in 1954, where he was Professor of Medieval and Renaissance Literature.

Outside academia, he was well known for his children's fiction and his considerable range of Christian writings. Some people



The lion on the door handle of the Old Rectory at Dundela

“

*I have learned how to **live in peace with others even when there is tension present**, to be positive and to be myself*

”

“
for the first time
in my life I
worked with
vulnerable
and sensitive
people
”



Relaxing with his wife Joy

even regard him as a precursor of J. K. Rowling, whose Harry Potter stories have an underlying distinction between good and evil, though others would claim that the secularism in the world of Potter is predominant.

Sandy says: ‘Lewis writes children’s myths to try to convey absolute truths. The lion was the Lion of Judah, which represented Christ, the witch was the embodiment of evil, and the wardrobe was the entrance to a whole new world through the imagination. His writing has essentially a spiritual message.’



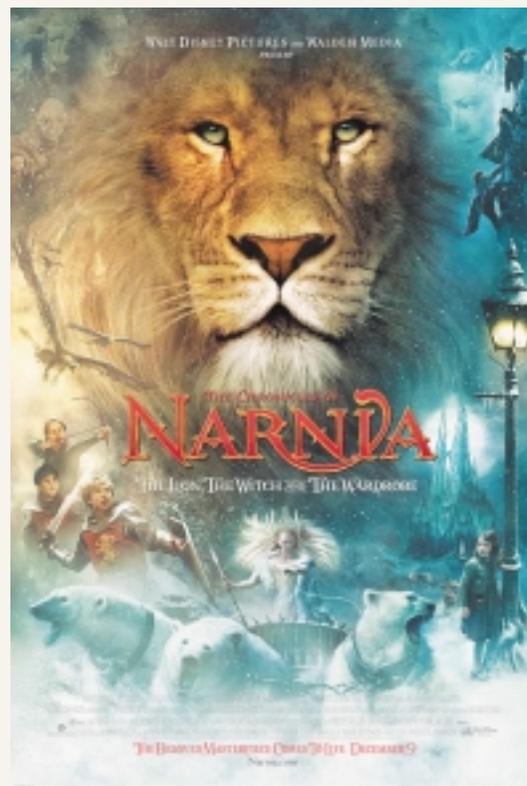
The CS Lewis statue in Belfast



Lewis’ works do not shirk from the big problems of human existence, including pain and bereavement, in a world created by a ‘loving’ God.

‘Lewis also asks, “Are miracles possible?”,’ says Sandy, ‘and his answer is “Most certainly, yes! There are things happening which may not seem plausible, but they do happen.” Lewis also asks, “Does prayer work?” Again the answer is “Yes” but not in a way that people might expect. Lewis stresses that the essence of prayer lies in changing the attitudes of those who are praying.’

Some of the deepest meanings in C. S. Lewis’ work are discovered by those who embark on the journey of finding out for themselves. Sandy explains: ‘This is why I am so keen that people get to know about Lewis in a wider context. I am delighted in helping people to “find” C. S. Lewis and to set them on their own journeys of discovery about the life and work of this remarkable man.’



The poster of The Chronicles of Narnia film

Talking to Roger Courtney

Roger Courtney, former member of Corrymeela, lifelong friend and author of the celebrated hymn 'The Pollen of Peace', talks about his latest CD and songbook collaboration and the journey towards its upcoming launch and fundraising concert.



The concept

Corrymeela has been a crucial part of my life for almost forty years now and this relationship has been beneficial in so many ways. I have had the privilege of getting to know a diverse group of people I would otherwise never have come into contact with; because of this I appreciate how music can, and I believe must, play a role in communicating a message and in this case a message of reconciliation. I felt it was time to tell the Corrymeela story through music. Go in Peace is a selection of songs that mark out key moments in Corrymeela's journey, including Summerfest festivals and of course the Pollen of Peace phenomenon.

The highs and lows

Music is my pleasure so I have thoroughly enjoyed putting together the CD and songbook from start to finish; it was fabulous working alongside some of Ireland's most talented musicians; it made my job a lot easier. Sincere thanks go to everyone who

dedicated their time and energy to the project. My biggest high was hearing Peter Corry sing 'The Pollen of Peace'; it was a really powerful experience and a low point... if I'm honest I was accepting my own limitations as a singer and musician.

Reviews

I like to pretend I won't care what people think but truthfully I want people to enjoy the music; I hope the lyrics speak to them and they are prompted to listen to the songs again and again. Hopefully the concert will generate positive reviews; the musicians deserve it.

The finished product

I am extremely proud of both the CD and the songbook; I love the design, finish and how they look. I love the arrangements and instrumentation; I am still moved when I listen to the songs.

The concert

I am very nervous about the concert; about trying to reproduce the CD before a live audience. I do prefer running around behind the scenes but I have the feeling I'm not going to get away with that this time round, so I am facing the challenge head on. I know it will be a positive experience for those performing as well as the audience. I'm sure there will be a few unexpected surprises lined up too.

Final thoughts

When I think of the power of music in other conflict situations like South Africa or the civil rights movement in the USA, it gives me confidence to think that music has been able to play its part in promoting peace and reconciliation in Ireland too. Music can bond people together and help them feel in solidarity with others who share the same beliefs or values; it helps people reflect on their situation. You just never know when a particular song resonates with someone and gives them the courage to stand up for truth, justice and reconciliation, when they otherwise might not have found the strength to do so. I believe there is real power in music and it has an important if not essential role in Corrymeela's future.

Alyson McElroy Jones



The Go In Peace CD

Jo says:

**remember to
call Bernie on
028 9050 8080
to book your
'Go In Peace'
concert ticket**



CORRYMEELA

Over here in England I'm helpin' wi' the hay,
And I wisht I was in Ireland the livelong day;
Weary on the English hay, an' sorra take the wheat!
Och! Corrymeela, an' the blue sky over it.

There's a deep dumb river flowin' by beyont the heavy trees,
This livin' air is moithered wi' the hummin' o' the bees;
I wisht I'd hear the Claddagh burn go runnin' through the heat,
Past Corrymeela, wi' the blue sky over it.

The people that's in England is richer nor the Jews,
There's not the smallest young gossoon but thravels in his shoes!
I'd give the pipe between me teeth to see a barefute child,
Och! Corrymeela, an' the low south wind.

Here's hands so full o' money an' hearts so full o' care,
By the luck o' love! I'd still go light for all I did go bare.
"God save ye, colleen dhas," I said; the girl she thought me wild!
Fair Corrymeela, an' the low south wind.

D'ye mind me now, the song at night is mortal hard to raise,
The girls are heavy goin' here, the boys are ill to plase;
When ones't I'm out this workin' hive, 'tis I'll be back again—
Aye, Corrymeela, in the same soft rain.

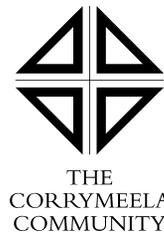
The puff o' smoke from one ould roof before an English town!
For a shaugh wid Andy Feelan here I'd give a silver crown,
For a curl o' hair like Mollie's ye'll ask the like in vain,
Sweet Corrymeela, an' the same soft rain.

Moira O'Neill

from Padraic Colum (1881–1972) Anthology of Irish Verse I



sharing the future, sharing the past



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With special guest speaker
Donald W. Shriver Jr

28 June 2008 • 10.00am – 10.00pm

DONAL W SHRIVER JR is one of the world's leading experts on citizenship. He has written on the Holocaust, Apartheid, the Civil Rights Movement in America and is the author of *An Ethic for Enemies: Forgiveness in Politics and Honest Patriots: Loving a Country Enough to Remember its Misdeeds*.

Shriver argues that 'once we have learned the discipline of forgiveness for the harms we inflict, we will experience, with our enemies, a new increment of hope that neither strangeness nor enmity is forever.

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For more information, contact Becca Moody 028 2076 2626 or beccamoody@corrymeela.org and please see our website www.corrymeela.org for programme details



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One generation plants the trees; another gets the shade

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Corrymeela makes a real difference to the lives of children and families; this depends on your donations. Support our work by becoming a friend of Corrymeela and keep up to date with news, events and community life. Friends also receive a complimentary copy of Corrymeela's quarterly magazine.



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