

VOL 11 | No 1 | MAY 2011

# Corrymeela

[www.corrymeela.org](http://www.corrymeela.org)

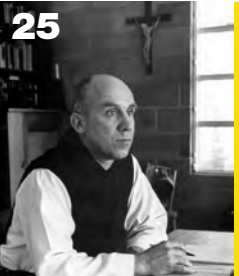


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**10**



**25**



**32**



THE  
Corrymeela  
COMMUNITY



# DIVÆR(CITY)

candor divided hearts and minds asunder  
a tale told of urban twins  
street wise for times either worst or best  
next day headlines not yet writ  
shadows cast long from days resigned  
influencing present expectations  
glass half full veracity  
melancholy adam captive  
metanoia saith the sage

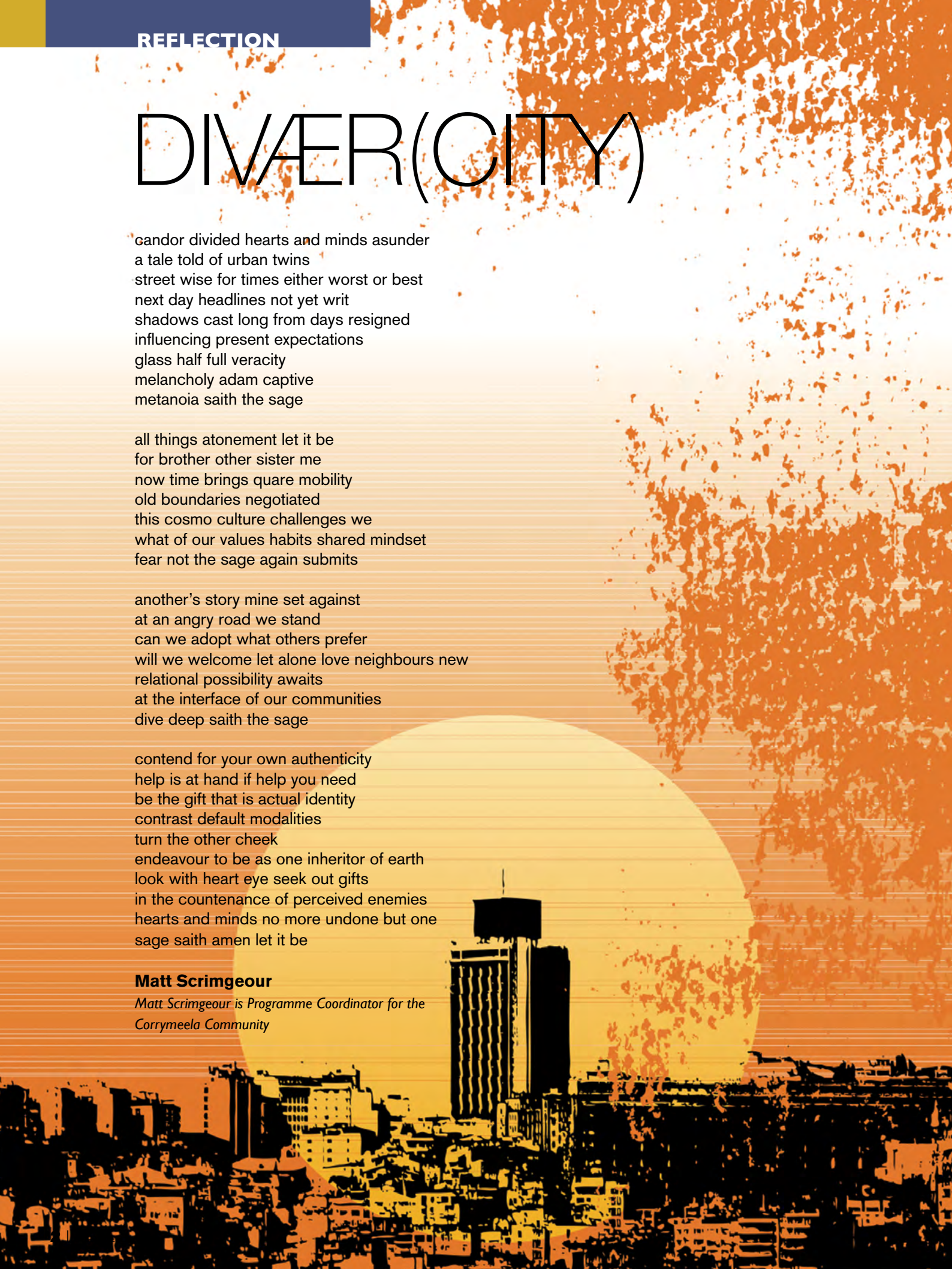
all things atonement let it be  
for brother other sister me  
now time brings quare mobility  
old boundaries negotiated  
this cosmo culture challenges we  
what of our values habits shared mindset  
fear not the sage again submits

another's story mine set against  
at an angry road we stand  
can we adopt what others prefer  
will we welcome let alone love neighbours new  
relational possibility awaits  
at the interface of our communities  
dive deep saith the sage

contend for your own authenticity  
help is at hand if help you need  
be the gift that is actual identity  
contrast default modalities  
turn the other cheek  
endeavour to be as one inheritor of earth  
look with heart eye seek out gifts  
in the countenance of perceived enemies  
hearts and minds no more undone but one  
sage saith amen let it be

**Matt Scrimgeour**

*Matt Scrimgeour is Programme Coordinator for the  
Corrymeela Community*



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# A word from the Corrymeela Community leader

**Thus says the Lord, “Stand at the crossroads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way lies; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls.” Jeremiah 6 v.16. I greet you in the name of Christ, and wish upon you all, and all who are in our thoughts today, the blessings and peace of God.**

**“The first thing I want to say to the members of the Corrymeela Community is thank you. Thank you for your dedication and contribution to Corrymeela and for your continuing commitment and support.”**

I AM PRIVILEGED to be appointed new Leader of the Corrymeela Community. I look forward to working with all Corrymeela members, staff, volunteers, supporters and partners. I ask you for your prayers and assure you of mine.

I first came to work with Corrymeela as a student Methodist minister in 1977, and was a volunteer worship coordinator and bus driver for the entire Summer Programme for three consecutive years. Since then, I have returned regularly to serve in other voluntary roles, like Family Week helper and then to bring various groups over from across the water to introduce them to Corrymeela and Ireland. I have also returned simply for holidays.

Corrymeela has always been a special place for my family; Kathy my wife, and our two children, whom we now regard as our two best friends, our son Liamarjit and our daughter Anjuli. In them we take great delight.

I was born into a deeply religious Sikh family. My parents are from Panjab in India. They moved to East Africa and I was born in Nairobi, Kenya.

The first thing I want to say to the members of the Corrymeela Community is thank you. Thank you for your dedication and contribution to Corrymeela and for your continuing commitment and support.

I came with my family to live in Dudley, West Midlands in 1964 where I attended a Methodist church and became captivated by the story of Jesus Christ. I became a member of the Methodist church, went on to be an ordained Methodist minister (1980) and eventually President of the British Methodist Conference (2000).

Corrymeela has come to be ‘a place of refuge’, a centre for reconciliation, an alternative expression of community, a space in which people of different backgrounds can cross over their divides and discover the image of God in each other.

“Stand at the crossroads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way lies, and walk in it, and find rest for your souls,” these are the words I offer you all. In the ancient pathways lie bad ways as well as good ways.

Perhaps the most ancient of pathways is that of hatred. Hatred is a deep seeded and ancient human



experience. In Buddhism, all hatred and hurt is rooted in and results from desire. In Islam, ‘there is only one sin... and that is theft’ (Kite Runner). Hebrew scriptures focus on the rivalries of men and women alike and you could say that all these classic rivalries are rooted in desire and theft. Christian theology insists that human weakness is to fall prey to temptation and selfishness.

Different faiths give different ancient insights into hatred. Unresolved anger can over time develop into deep and unresolved hatred. Hatred is at its worst when it moves to a point of no or little communication between the parties involved.

This is part of the ancient pathways we find at the crossroads. Some choose to walk this path of hatred. We will not walk in it.

The history of Ireland, particularly the Celtic tradition provides ancient wells for us to draw and drink from. Ireland has an international reputation for hospitality. Most importantly, the ancient monastic Irish hospitality was focused on welcoming ‘the stranger.’

There is no other ethical requirement more frequently stated in the bible than the command to ‘love the stranger.’ These words are repeated thirty six times in the Hebrew Scriptures.

Jesus said, “When I was a stranger you welcomed me.”



*Inderjit Bhogal is the newly appointed Leader and Chief Executive of the Corrymeela Community*

*“I saw a stranger yestereen  
I put food in the eating place  
Drink in the drinking place  
Music in the listening place  
And in the sacred name of the Triune  
He blessed myself and my house  
My cattle and my dear ones  
And the lark said in her song  
Often, often, often  
Goes Christ in the stranger’s guise.”*

– *Rune of Hospitality*

Hospitality is the framework for Jesus’ ministry; it shows the heart of God.

Jesus drew on his own ancient tradition to challenge the hatred of his own people. He chose to spend most of his time with those who were the outcasts of his day and to eat with them. The greatest criticism that could be levelled at him was that, ‘he eats with sinners.’ In the end he was executed for such behaviour.

The deepest expression of hatred is to steal the livelihood of ‘the Other’ and the most basic form of livelihood is food. The world is defined by who is included at the Table of plenty and who is not; who is in and who is out. Celtic tradition, shows us pathways of hospitality for our challenging times of religious and racial hatred and bigotry. Hospitality is about giving and sharing, grace and generosity, not about taking, desiring or stealing what belongs to others. It is about bread not bigotry.

Different faiths give different ancient insights into hatred and hurt. Hatred and hurt is rooted in the sense of injustice and unfairness when something that belongs to you is taken by another, or when you take something belonging to another.

How this has evolved in the history of Ireland is well documented. Ray Davey summarises a five hundred year history well in his chapter entitled Conflict in The Channel of Peace [Pages 94-106].

This is part of the ancient pathways we find at the crossroads.

But hatred is only part of the story. Ireland should not be defined by its history of hatred. To do that is to diminish Ireland. Individuals should not be defined by just one or two elements of their personality or story. Ireland has a deep beauty.

If hatred is about bigotry, and hospitality is about bread, holiness is about beauty.

The path of holiness invites us to explore the ways of holiness, to do ‘something beautiful’ (Mother Teresa) for God and each other.

Jon Sobrino of El Salvador defines spirituality as ‘honesty about reality’.

The same can be said about holiness.

Scripture shows us two strands of holiness. One lies in the call to separateness, to be apart. One is a call to intimacy.

In Jesus’ practice we see that holiness is not about separating but embracing. He shows a holiness which does not regard people or places as defiled or polluted. He demonstrated holiness

through hospitality best in his commitment to sit and eat with those considered to be unclean, ‘sinners’.

Together we should do all we can to uncover and announce our best traditions of hospitality. We explore and practice the pathways that promote the beauty of all that brings people together, the pathways of inclusion and belonging, and seeing the Image of God in each other.

**Inderjit Bhogal**

## A word of thanks

TO ALL THE FRIENDS OF CORRYMEELA who responded to my appeal letter accompanying the previous magazine, thank you all for your generous giving which has, to date, raised in excess of £17,000.

May I also take this opportunity to thank everyone who supported me during my tenure as Interim Leader and ask you to welcome Inderjit Bhogal who took up his post as our new Leader and Chief Executive on 4 April.

Very best wishes.

**Kate Pettis**

*Kate Pettis was Interim Leader of the Corrymeela Community until May 2011*

## Gratitude

I FELL ALL OF US AS MEMBERS of the Community owe a great debt of gratitude to Richard and Yvonne Naylor for hosting Knocklayd from the New Year until Easter. Probably only those who love the place and spend time there realise just how much commitment and sheer hard work is involved in keeping all running smoothly, as well as endlessly providing such a warm welcome, wonderful food and hospitality.

Mick and Aafke Whelan have succeeded Richard and Yvonne as Resident Volunteers at Knocklayd.

**Corrymeela’s mission is to embrace difference and enable reconciliation. Our vision is of a peaceful and sustainable society based on social justice, positive relationships and respect for diversity. The Corrymeela Community strive to embody these values in every aspect of our lives.**

# Millennium Volunteer programme at Corrymeela

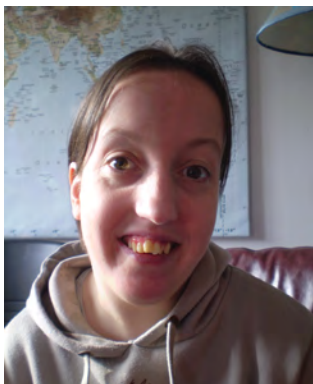
**During the last three years, 622 volunteers between 16 and 24 years of age joined the Millennium Volunteer (MV) Programme at Corrymeela. The programme is funded by the Department of Education and sees young volunteers receive an award for volunteering either 50, 100 or 200 hours. As an official recognition for their commitment, this award is a valuable addition to their CV.**



Millennium Volunteers

SO FAR, 206 volunteers have achieved 200 hours volunteering with the MV programme. Every year, during a special event in March, the 200 hours Awards of Excellence are handed out to every volunteer by the Minister of Education. Unfortunately funding for Millennium Volunteers has been cut and the programme at Corrymeela finished at the end of March this year. While recent Millennium Volunteers can still add their hours to gain an award, new volunteers cannot join the programme.

Corrymeela was one of a few MV Delivery Organisations in Northern Ireland, working closely together with Volunteer Now and the Department of Education. We built up



*Erin Wimming is one of the Millennium Volunteers*

partnerships with 15 other volunteer organisations to enable their volunteers to gain the MV award as well: The HURT Group, Causeway Open Award Centre, Peacelines, NICRAS, Public Achievement, Ely Centre, Kilcranny House, Peace and Reconciliation Group, WAVE Trauma Centre, Taghnevan Community Association, Springboard Opportunities, Moyle Youth Development Project, NICRAS, L'Arche and Youth Safety Partnership/ Greater Shankill Alternatives.

People can volunteer in many different ways. Some might help in kitchen and housekeeping, some might host groups, or others participate in leadership programmes and organise conferences. At Corrymeela for example, most participants in SEED group and Faith to Faith – Face to Face joined the MV programme, as did Billy Kane's Global Klass students from Sweden and Mervyn Love's student groups from the USA, who all spent a substantial amount of time volunteering in different organisations.

We were very lucky to have the chance of being a Millennium Volunteer Delivery organisation, to build up partnerships with other organisations and to

have such a committed team of volunteers. A big thank you to Volunteer Now, who supported us during the last three years, the Department of Education, to our MV partner organisations, colleagues,

community members and of course to all the volunteers!

#### **Sonja Tammen**

*Sonja Tammen was the volunteer support worker for the Corrymeela Community until March 2011.*


**Ormeau Churches Together**




**BOOK SALE**

*Saturday 11th June*  
**10am - 4pm**  
**Cooke Church Halls**  
Park Rd, BT7

**All Proceeds to Corrymeela, Trocaire, Christian Aid**

**Donations of books, CDs, DVDs to Cooke,**  
*Sun 5<sup>th</sup> June*  
**6-9pm**  
**& Fri 10th June**  
**5-9pm**  
Cooke Church Halls  
Park Road, Belfast, BT7





# Everest trek raises nearly £3,000 for Corrymeela

MY FRIEND JOHN ACCOMPANIED ME on our Everest adventure to raise money for Corrymeela. Our journey started in Lukla, which is at 2,800m and can only be reached by plane or by a 5 day walk.

It takes 8 days to get to Everest Base Camp, which includes a day acclimatising after you reach over 3,000m and 4,000m. You then spend one night in Gorap Shep at 5180m.

I did find the trek very challenging but was always confident we would complete it and in fact it only took us two and a half days to descend right back down to

Lukla after we had reached our summit.

It was definitely harder not being able to have a shower, living without heating and other creature comforts you yearn for after a hard days trekking. Most fascinating was visiting remote places with no roads where locals are solely reliant on what Yaks or Sherpas can carry.

So far we have raised £2,770 for Corrymeela - a big thank you to everyone who supported us.

## Thomas Stevens

*Thomas is the son of former leader of the Corrymeela Community Dr David Stevens.*





# Sad News

## Legacies

WE REMEMBER L.G Gillett, John C McElderry, Gwenda Patterson and The Ivan and Dorothy Wheeler Charitable trust. As ever, they are held in our hearts and their legacy gifts will be put to good use.

## Gifts in Memoriam

WE REMEMBER David Stevens, Noel Quinn, Joan Tomlin, Nicky Mowat, Rose Ann Grant, Tom Sinclair and their families.

## Leadership

INDERJIT BHOGAL took up his post as Leader of the Corrymeela Community at the beginning of April. He has been warmly welcomed into the Community and heard words written by former Leader David Stevens, "To my successor, blessings, wisdom, courage, creativity and a sense of humour."



# Alex Nelson donates car to Knocklayd volunteers

ONCE AGAIN Alex Nelson, a member of the Community, has very kindly donated a car for the use of the Knocklayd Volunteers. The previous car was becoming unreliable and so the gift of the gold Mercedes A class car was very welcome indeed. The Knocklayd Committee and volunteers would like to thank Alex most sincerely.



*Left to right: Yvonne and Richard Naylor (current volunteers), Una Lount, Raymond Bakewell, Peter Montgomery, Ivan Bell*

# Schools syllabus offers new opportunities for Corrymeela

SCHOOLS in the Republic of Ireland are now teaching pupils about Corrymeela as part of their Junior Certificate Religious Education course. In response to a request for a presentation about the Community, Heather and I went to St Aidan's Community School in Dublin's north side.

Our task was to help the students prepare their journal which is a key part of their coursework for their Junior

Cert. When we arrived, we were surprised to find the students were all boys. We used the Corrymeela DVD to set the scene, answered all their questions and felt there was a very useful exchange between 'them' and 'us'.

From our visit we realised there is a huge opening for Corrymeela to link up with constituencies in the Republic. Perhaps a new version of the cross-border

schools work could come from contacts like this? Of course the feasibility of providing this service could not depend on us alone. We need others who are willing and able to be involved.

**David and Heather Godfrey**

*David and Heather Godfrey are Corrymeela members based in Dublin*

If you are interested in volunteering for Corrymeela south of the border please contact [belfast@corrymeela.org](mailto:belfast@corrymeela.org)



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advisor

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# Murder Mystery Solved: Scorned Mistress Arrested!

ON FRIDAY, 25 MARCH, Le Mon Hotel was host to Corrymeela's fundraising Murder Mystery evening with sales reaching £2980.

The evening kicked off with the Valhalla Theatre group performing a classic Who Dunit sketch. Guests acted as detective inspector, questioning and hearing the story of each suspect. After much controversy and debate, the murderer was revealed as none other than the scorned mistress of the victim.

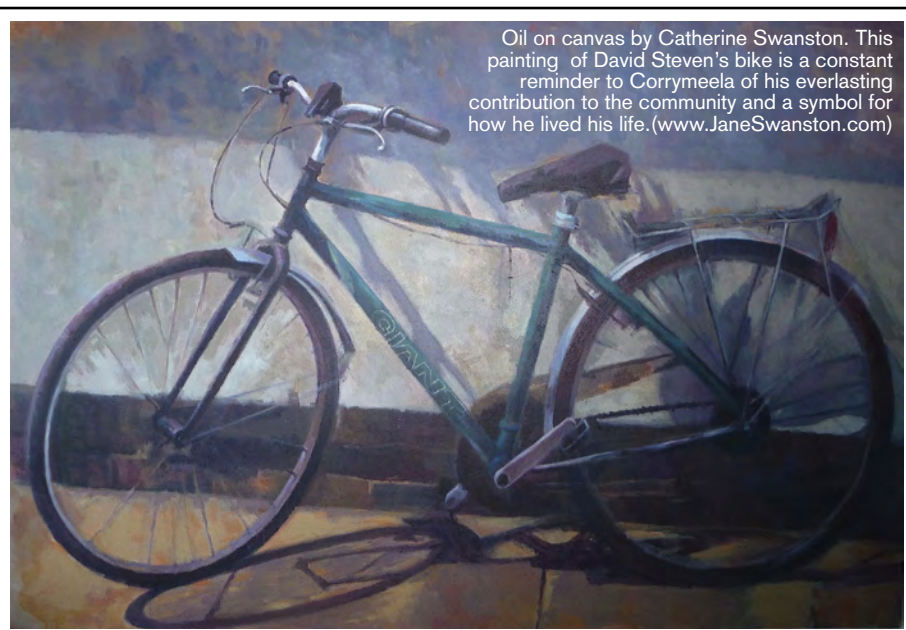
The event was a huge success with the raffle creating plenty of excitement; while live music from Mairead Adams and Orla Mathews, Two Girls Singing In The Corner, rounded off the evening perfectly.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who came along and made it such a



success. A special thank you to Frances Brady, MCD Productions, Corrymeela staff and members, Dorothy Perkins, La Tasca, 1st Impressions, Moviehouse, Tesco Knockbreda, and Diageo for their kind contributions.

*La Tasca*  
SPANISH TAPAS RESTAURANT AND BAR



Oil on canvas by Catherine Swanston. This painting of David Steven's bike is a constant reminder to Corrymeela of his everlasting contribution to the community and a symbol for how he lived his life. (www.JaneSwanston.com)

## Thank you Kate

KATE PETTIS stepped into the position of Leader in circumstances of loss and change, and has done an absolutely magnificent job.

Corrymeela members, staff, volunteers, friends and supporters say a big thank you to Kate.

Whenever we list former Corrymeela Leaders, Kate's name will be there. Kate's contribution as Leader was acknowledged at the Members Weekend at the end of April. There was also a simple ceremony of handing on of Leadership to Inderjit Bhogal in the context of worship with prayers and blessings.



# Introducing...

## Sarah Williamson

I GREW UP IN COUNTY ARMAGH as part of The Brethren, a Christian grouping characterised by silence, Scripture and acapella song. My family and I, with the other members of similar fellowships, lived within a very distinct framework and one of the central biblical texts was, 'Come ye out from among them and be ye separate.' In Northern Ireland, this left us in a very unique place. I didn't feel particularly Protestant nor Catholic and it was school that shaped this aspect of my identity as pupils in four different school uniforms mingled on the Mall every afternoon waiting on buses.

My family moved to a Baptist church when I was

13, and from then on faith life became more 'mainstream' Protestant evangelical. I remember hearing about Corrymeela, but it seemed miles away, both literally and theologically, with descriptive words like 'ecumenical' seeming exotic and suspicious.

Life and faith continued to evolve, particularly as I began to travel, teaching English in Ecuador and Korea and studying theology at University of Edinburgh and Union Theological Seminary in NYC. Deciding to study theology academically is, as most who have done it will tell you, a sure-fire way of provoking serious existential questioning. That journey has



led me to a place of humility about religious truth, and more comfort with questions and pilgrimage than with certainty. On returning to Northern Ireland, I met more and more people who talked about Corrymeela and the special 'place' that is the Corrymeela community. I had met Emi Earle in Edinburgh and when she moved back to N.I to be with her parents, I had wonderful conversations with Anne and Michael about their time directing the work at the Ballycastle Centre. I was a participant on a Dialogue for Peaceful Change course in November 2009 and experienced the warm welcome of the Centre for myself. It was around then that the inimitable David Mark at the weekly 'book' group which we attend (admittedly books are only granted a passing reference) stepped up a gear from strategically mentioning Corrymeela to me every week, to an insistent campaign that I move forward to provisional membership.

One beautiful conversation with David Stephens, a commitment

service in January 2010, an intriguing year of provisional membership later, and here I am having just become a full member. The overwhelming lesson I have learnt in this past year is that Corrymeela spells W.E.L.C.O.M.E. As I've observed community meetings, it has meant straining to hear someone's heart beyond their spoken words, and watching members determinedly choosing community over division... as best as any broken, frail group of humans can.

It's a privilege to have even begun to learn from those who have walked the walk and to hear stories of Ray and Kathleen Davey and others. As I sit in the Croi, comfortable in silence or in song, I am reminded of my formation in the gospel halls of the Brethren and I am convinced that the formative experiences that have shaped the Corrymeela community need to be told and retold. In doing so, they will weave a web of influence over those of us who are 'newbies' shaping us as we begin to participate in the ongoing story of Corrymeela. I want to hear how people have learnt the skills and the grace to have conversations where consensus and integrity are the twin goals. I'm looking forward to hearing those stories. Cup of tea anyone?

### **Sarah Williamson**

*Sarah Williamson is a member of the Corrymeela Community*

## Best Wishes to newly wed Ciara McFarland



CONGRATULATIONS to Ciara McFarland, former Corrymeela Schools Worker, who recently married. We wish them both every blessing for their future together.



# Here comes the summer!



AS THE DAVEY VILLAGE rises up to look over at Rathlin, plans for the summer are taking shape on how to fill this new space with amazing programmes, a global mix of volunteers and a wide range of participants. Take a look at what we have in store for those summer months:

**A week of all-site activity** and a wonderful high-energy programme in the shape of the Visions Week run by SELB – designed by and for young people aged 16+.

**A week of residential workshops** in July for young people from Belfast interface areas.

**A 10-day training and reflection programme** for Lancaster Theological Seminary, called Leadership Now.

**A range of family weeks** planned for people looking to come for respite, good relations training, fun and creativity.

**An Irish Peace Centres (IPC) International Summer School 1 - 4** August, which will explore the good practice, emerging themes and vexing questions coming out of this innovative work.

So, here is the mix: A new village and a long history:

- new ideas and familiar favourites;
- faithful members and new volunteers;
- curious, cross and comforting people;
- parents and kids in a healing rhythm;
- challenges and consolations

As the Undertones once blared, “Here comes the Summer!!” Amen to that.



To find out more about our Summer Programme or to get involved go to [www.corrymeela.org](http://www.corrymeela.org) and download the summer programme pdf.



# Facing our history,

**Karen Murphy shares the story of Corrymeela and Facing History and Ourselves new IFI funded project, 'Facing Our History, Shaping the Future' funded by the International Fund for Ireland (IFI)**

**'Facing Our History, Shaping the Future' is a three-year project delivered by the Corrymeela Community, in partnership with Facing History and Ourselves. The project combines Facing History's innovative approach to teaching history with Corrymeela's expertise in peace-building and citizenship programmes. Funding is provided by the International Fund for Ireland's 'Sharing in Education Programme' via the department of Education.**

IT STARTED WITH AN EMAIL, or perhaps, more important, a response. I sent out an email asking for some insight on history and education in Northern Ireland. Professor Tony Gallagher from Queens University Belfast wrote back. His response began an exchange that led me – and Facing History and Ourselves – from the States to Northern Ireland. It was also the first of many long emails devoted to understanding Northern Ireland, the decades-long conflict and its legacies, as well as the extraordinary efforts to reconstruct and repair the country and its people.

Facing History and Ourselves is an international, educational and professional development NGO, headquartered in Boston, Massachusetts, USA. Since its founding in 1976, Facing History has supported educators around the world in their efforts to develop compassionate, critically thinking global citizens. Through in-depth professional development in the form of week-long seminars and extensive bespoke follow-up support, including access to rich resources, we have reached more than 30,000 educators who, in turn, reach more than 2 million students annually. We do this by providing teachers with both curricular content and pedagogical support. Using an interdisciplinary approach, we draw on case studies of mass violence, such as the events leading to the Holocaust, to illuminate both the particularity of historical events

and the universality of human behaviour. We make the connection between history and ethics, between the choices we make as individuals and their consequences.

Over the past decade, Facing History has increasingly worked in countries emerging from mass violence or dealing with the legacies of conflict and division. In countries such as South Africa, Rwanda, Bosnia, and Mexico, we have worked with educators, NGOs, and governmental organisations to support the retraining of teachers and curriculum advisors, the development of new educational materials and the use of more interactive methods to promote discussion, understanding and critical thinking, and programmes which aim to achieve many things, including bringing people from different communities together to engage in discussion, learn and develop their practice as educational professionals.

In Northern Ireland that first meeting with Tony Gallagher led to meetings with other professors at Queens and the University of Ulster, including Alan McCully, and with organizations such as the library boards and Healing Through Remembering. Thoughtful educators and NGO workers from around Northern Ireland began to participate in workshops and some attended seminars. And then in 2006 I received a call from Ronnie Millar, then Director of the Corrymeela Centre in Co. Antrim. His wife Kelly taught Facing History in the Boston Public Schools, and suggested that we meet. And so began a partnership.

Several Corrymeela staff have attended seminars





# shaping the future



in London and then incorporated Facing History's content and methods in their work with young people. Ronnie Millar, however, had bigger plans, and Facing History was keen to do even more work in Northern Ireland. Together, we formed a collaboration focused on work in schools, bringing together what both organisations had to offer. Since autumn 2010, Sean Pettis has been coordinating this work from the Corrymeela Belfast office. He has worked closely with Facing History staff and immersed himself in our content and methods. We have also been privileged to similarly immerse ourselves in the world of Corrymeela, the writing of its leaders and the thinking of community members over the years. Together, we are delighted to work with new teachers and schools and to meet the needs of those educators who have been part of Facing History's network but did not have a local contact for borrowing resources, participating in ongoing professional development or meeting with a community of learners engaged in the issues that animate our work.

One of those dedicated educators is South Eastern Library Board Advisor Julie Taggart. Julie was one of the first teachers to attend a seminar in Northern Ireland and to implement Facing History's content and methods in her history class. She then took this experience into her role as an advisor and curriculum writer. In October, Julie spoke at a Facing History event in New York City. Her words that night help explain more about who we are, what we do and why this collaboration with Corrymeela is so exciting.

## Karen Murphy

*Karen is the Director of International Programmes at Facing History and Ourselves, based in their New York Office*

KAREN MURPHY, PhD is the International Director for Facing History and Ourselves. Facing History and Ourselves is an international, educational and professional development NGO.

Karen oversees Facing History's programme development and implementation in countries outside the United States and Canada. Her particular focus is on countries emerging from mass violence, including Bosnia, Colombia, Northern Ireland, Rwanda and South Africa, and she is interested in the role that educational interventions play in the development of stability and peaceful coexistence.

She has also published journal articles, presented papers, consulted and lectured on the (often neglected) role of education in transitional justice processes. She is on the board of New Haven Academy, a Connecticut-based public school, Shikaya, a human rights NGO in South Africa, and the Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies Network. She is a member of the Technical Expert Group for the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies. Murphy has taught at the University of Minnesota and in the Department of International and Trans-cultural Studies at Teachers College, Columbia University.

Corrymeela welcomes Karen Murphy and looks forward to her insights.

**“Together, we are delighted to work with new teachers and school and to meet the needs of those educators who have been part of Facing History’s network.”**



FACING OUR HISTORY  
SHAPING THE FUTURE



FACING  
HISTORY  
AND  
OURSSELVES



INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR IRELAND

# We should stop being silent

**Educator Julie Taggart from Northern Ireland spoke at the 2010 New York benefit dinner about her experience growing up in Northern Ireland, and the pervasive silence during “The Troubles.” Below is an extract of her speech, the full version can be downloaded from [www.corrymeela.org](http://www.corrymeela.org) .**



*Julie Taggart pictured right alongside two members of the Facing History School*

**SEVEN YEARS AGO** when I participated in the first Facing History training offered in Northern Ireland, I saw a photograph. It was a picture of a man, lying in a hospital bed. His wife stood beside him. It was clear that he had suffered some kind of attack. The instant I saw it, I realized that man might have been a stranger but his suffering was not. I had seen images of suffering just like it all my life. It was only then, seeing it in that setting, that I realized how pernicious the silence I had been raised in was, the silence that the poet Seamus Heaney once described as “that famous Northern reticence, the tight gag of place.”

I was born just a few years before the beginning of what we in Ireland euphemistically call ‘The Troubles’. Most people think that it’s about religion. On the face of it, it seems that way. But it isn’t. It’s about turning one another into The Other. It’s about silence—silence in the face of brutality, and making that silence part of us.

I grew up in Belfast in a housing estate, I had friends who were Catholic, Protestant, everything, and nothing. But there were limits to what we could share with each other, even as children. My father

was a police officer, but it was too dangerous to tell my friends that. He just got up every morning and checked his car to make sure that there wasn’t a bomb in it before heading off to work.

In the world I grew up in, the violence and the hatred was normal, it was a fact of life. When you’d go into Belfast, you knew that you were going into a war zone. You’d pass through security barriers, and if you wanted to park your car you’d have to leave someone in it as a kind of hostage to prove that the car wasn’t wired to blow up.

And then, when I was 15, my uncle was shot. He wasn’t political. He and his wife ran a small post office adjacent to their home. He suffered—just like the man in the photo—languishing in a hospital bed for six months before he died.

And during those six months, my family never talked about what had happened. Even after the fighting stopped—or nearly stopped, there are still the rare shootings or bombings—even after my countrymen and I began to realize that things could be different, we remained largely silent.

Beyond the silence, I had told myself that I didn’t have any of the prejudices that had wracked my country. I had always thought that I was a lovely liberal person. I never looked at it more closely because the feelings that I would have needed to examine were bottled up. I kept them bottled up until that first day I took the Facing History training. That was when I saw the picture of that man, that man who looked so like my uncle, and it all poured out of me.

If you would like more information on the Facing our History, Shaping the Future Project, please contact Sean Pettis for more information via our Belfast Office 028 90 50 80 80 or email [seanpettis@corrymeela.org](mailto:seanpettis@corrymeela.org)

## **Julie Taggart**

*Julie Taggart is a former participant of the Facing History project*



# Site

I see

the white van  
between  
the breezeblocks  
of the half built building.

And underneath,

for the builders,

a coded sign  
I can't crack –

a rectangle of blue,  
painted rough  
on rough grey block.

In six months time  
there will be trumpets,  
smooth walls and applause,

as the work is finished  
and most forget  
the foundations of this  
beautiful space.

But I will bear witness  
to these  
behind-the-scenes  
caught colours:

The white van  
between  
the breezeblocks  
of the half built building.

And underneath,

a rectangle of blue,  
painted rough  
on rough grey block

Paul Hutchinson



# Sowing a Seed

The Seed programme is a cross-border, cross-cultural, bi-monthly residential event that unfolds over 12 months at Corrymeela. Working with thirty 18 to 25 year olds, it explores issues of difference which impact on young lives and can lead to conflict and does this within a safe space. The young people themselves decide the direction of the sessions and areas covered include politics, family, health and well-being, gender and sexuality. Seed culminates with an international exchange programme to further enhance the participants' learning. Recruitment for Seed focuses on creating as diverse a group as possible; this encourages mutual learning from within the group, based on the participants' own experiences and backgrounds.

**Last November, I had an opportunity to join Seed, the group formerly known as PUB, People Understanding Borders, co-ordinated by Corrymeela's Youth Work Coordinator Ivan Cross and former Seed member Maeve McLaughlin.**

**The aim of the project is to bring together young people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds to get to know one another and have a safe space to share their opinions. Here is an account of my first Seed weekend residential.**

ON THE FRIDAY EVENING, once everyone arrived and greeted one other, we took part in



*2010-2011 Seed Group participants*





a facilitated brainstorming exercise to decide what issues were most relevant to our daily lives, including prejudice, division, conflict, action within the community, religion and behaviour. The participants also identified a range of topics that included changing people's mind-set/ open mindedness, family relationship, drug and alcoholic culture, mental/physical health, student fees, emotional wellbeing, environment issues, social networking, and stereotypes that they faced in three different settings – community, work and family. Other questions that were raised included how to deal with alienation and racism.

During the discussions, the group started to realise that there are many barriers and factors that can lead to a breakdown in their relationships or cause conflict with other people. One factor that was identified was poor communication especially with people from other countries, who do not speak English as their first language.

On the last day, the group members were divided into small discussion groups to identify a new name for their group. They decided on "Seed" and

set about identifying all the relevant issues that they wanted to examine. The following themes were identified by participants:

- Conflict management
- Sexuality, gender and relationships
- International culture (politics & religion)
- Physical and emotional health and wellbeing
- Understanding Northern Ireland
- Media influence
- Environment / nature
- Intergenerational communication

Ivan Cross facilitated all the subsequent training sessions to address the issues identified and to support the group in understanding their concerns and helping them find solutions to enable participants to be more active in their own community in addressing these issues.

### **Sota Sem McCann**

*Sota is currently working as a volunteer with Corrymeela as part of The Rank Foundation's Time to Shine Project and has become part of the Seed group project.*

**The Rank Foundation is a grant-giving charitable trust, restricted to causes within the UK, approved by the Charity Commission. It concentrates exclusively on:**

- encouraging and developing leadership amongst young people
- supporting disadvantaged young people and those frail or lonely through old age or disability
- the promotion of Christian principles through film and other media



# See the need Seed the change!

**“Membership of Seed Group offers individuals the chance to experience the relationships with others in a context in which they can explore and deepen those relationships.”**

HAVING BEEN INVOLVED WITH CORRYMEELA from such a young age, both as a participant and a volunteer, I was constantly surrounded with difference and change. I was taught the importance of maintaining relationships, explored my values and beliefs, and strengthened a sense of individuality and belonging. This personal change developed with time, yet it was more evident over an eight-month period in which I participated in Seed Group.

When I took a gap year to pursue my interests, I was given the opportunity by Ivan Cross to partake in The Seed Group programme. Having such a huge involvement in youth work, and hoping for a career in the field, I felt this was an opportunity not to be missed. My initial feeling of comfort and enthusiasm with the group came from having a sense of familiarity with the people. However, this was clouded with an anxiety about stepping into an environment that was set up to challenge and develop me.

Having been brought up in North Belfast, I was always aware of the difficulties within my community, but wasn't conscious of the intensity of these differences. Growing up in a safer and neutral environment that my parents created for me, I was unaware of the 'them and us' mentality in young people, and so found myself wanting to understand these perceptions.

Membership of Seed and the safety of the group can enable someone's talents to come to the fore for the first time, harness a larger pool of talents within the room, and even offers a shared experience of success. I was able to walk in others shoes for a short moment, allowing myself to re-evaluate my outlook on life, understand the significance of belonging, and allow ambitions to be achieved.

The Seed Group programme is really all about the process; the chance to explore yourself, others, and the achievement of a goal that requires you to work together is an overwhelming event. Not only is it a testing process, but also the most exalting, rewarding, and potentially most significant. It poses every conceivable element to the individual, and more: tears, triumph, isolation, friendship, learning, unthinkable self beauty, yawning senselessness, and above all a great, deep self-questioning.

With the experiences and knowledge that I



have achieved through Seed Group, I can only hope to offer the learning opportunities in a more supportive environment than the real world would traditionally offer. Based on these experiences, I feel that I have truly felt the lasting effects of an opportunity that challenged me and allowed me to grow, and will endeavour to provide a level of support to the next generation of Seed.

*\*If you are interested in taking part in next years' Seed Group, please feel free to contact Ivan Cross: [ivancross@corrymeela.org](mailto:ivancross@corrymeela.org)\**

**Maeve McLaughlin**

**Maeve is currently studying a certificate course in Community Youth Studies at the University of Ulster, Magee. She hopes to gain a wider understanding of the need for youth work and will go on to study Community Youth Work in September.**



*Maeve McLaughlin is a long term supporter of Corrymeela*



**The Rev Dr Inderjit Bhogal, OBE, who has been appointed Leader of the Corrymeela Community, is a former President of the Methodist Conference in Britain with a wide experience of diversity and church life.**

# New Leader appointed to take Corrymeela into the future

DR BHOGAL WAS BORN IN NAIROBI and came to the United Kingdom in 1964. He lived initially in Dudley in the West Midlands, and worked in Wolverhampton before moving to Sheffield in 1987.

He has been Chief Executive of the Yorkshire and Humber Faiths Forum and of United Faiths – its youth council – since 2005. He is also the Chair and Founder of the acclaimed City of Sanctuary, a national movement which is committed to building a culture of welcome and hospitality for people seeking sanctuary in the United Kingdom.

Dr Bhogal succeeds the former Leader and Chief Executive Dr David Stevens whose untimely death last year cast a shadow over the Corrymeela Community. David was also mourned by a large number of people from different communities outside Corrymeela and from those of different faiths and of none.

Dr Bhogal said on accepting his new appointment, “Diversity is much more complex now. Future peace in Northern Ireland will grow from the ability of many people from different traditions to accommodate their differences and build on their similarities. I am looking forward to life and ministry in Northern Ireland, and being part of the future of Corrymeela.”

Welcoming the appointment, the Interim Leader of Corrymeela, Kate Pettis said, “Inderjit brings to us gifts in abundance. His life’s work, informed by Christian principles, has been centred on peace building and is evidenced in his commitment to the building of inter-faith relationships and to working for the achievement of racial justice. We believe that our vision for the future which inspired the creation of Corrymeela is safe in his hands, and we look forward to his leadership.”

Dr Bhogal is the first Leader of Corrymeela to have been appointed from outside Ireland but he is by no means an outsider. He worked as a Corrymeela volunteer more than 30 years ago and he has maintained a close connection with the Community. In a perceptive address delivered in Coventry on Corrymeela Sunday in 2002, he underlined how he had found worship at Corrymeela a ‘transforming experience.’

He said, “I was praying with people of Catholic and Protestant backgrounds, most of whom came from the segregated areas in Belfast and Londonderry, people of all ages, so the style of worship was simple, inclusive, participatory and fun.”

Dr Bhogal also described how his experiences at Corrymeela equipped him for his inter-faith work in England. He said, “I remain convinced now, as before, that people of different faiths and ideologies and skin colours and politics – in cities like Coventry, Belfast, Birmingham and Wolverhampton – need to meet. Somebody, somewhere, needs to take the initiative to facilitate such meetings.”

The new Corrymeela Leader will no doubt have many opportunities to show such initiatives. There is widespread hope, and expectation, that he will indeed prove to be the right man, in the right place, at the right time.

## Alf McCreary

*Alf McCreary is Religion Correspondent of the Belfast Telegraph and the award winning author of a wide range of books, including the story of the early decades of Corrymeela, and more recently its 40 Anniversary history.*



**“Diversity is much more complex now. Future peace in Northern Ireland will grow from the ability of many people from different traditions to accommodate their differences and build on their similarities.”**

# Blocked sinks, spilt rubbish

IT'S A DUBIOUS HONOUR to be the only group to have completely blocked Corrymeela's dining room sink due to our young people's obsession with pot noodles (our thanks to Paul and the team who got that one sorted!) but then it reflects something of the gracious welcome extended to all who come through the door. Visitors are encouraged to make themselves at home, get a cup of tea and soak up the glorious views of the north coast. And it's more than just a friendly welcome, it's an open invitation to experience life in community.

Since I joined Public Achievement in July 2009 I've stayed at Corrymeela on eight different occasions – often bringing groups of young people to work on action projects as part of our Away from Violence programme and also using the Centre for volunteer or staff training. For some of our participants a residential may represent their first time staying away from home or being away with a group of new people, and in particular with people from a different community background to their own. What they often discover is that sharing a residential experience with 30+ other teenagers has its pros and cons. On the one hand you have a new set of friends who have no notion of sleeping either but on the other hand after 3 nights with little sleep everyone starts to get on each other's nerves and it becomes harder to tolerate each other's quirks.

This was demonstrated with striking effect in August 2010 when we held our annual 6-day Summer Camp with 33 participants aged 13-17

from five different areas of Northern Ireland – Claudy & Derry in the North West, Portadown, Ballymurphy, Westland and Lower Ormeau. Good relationships were being built up between the groups as they engaged in outdoor teambuilding activities and groupwork exploring the dynamics of division and discrimination in each other's communities. However a couple of days in, sums of money went missing from bedrooms creating tensions under the surface until it all came to a head with a spilt bag of rubbish in one of the rooms setting accusations flying all directions: "They did it, I saw them outside the room," "They're always staring at us like it's our fault," "Whoever stole the money needs to own up and be sent home."

Our staff spent time with each of the groups letting them talk through how they were feeling and helping them to sift through misconceptions, reactions and misunderstandings before one of groups decided that all the young people needed to get together to talk things through openly. Everyone agreed and asked the leaders to stay outside. So off we went to the dining room to sip nervously on tea and coffee like expectant fathers. Half an hour later the young people emerged from their discussion chattering and laughing together. In those 30 minutes it seems that they had done what many adults often fail to do – address conflict openly and honestly, and find a way forward. We heard later that the young people had sat in a circle and each took their turn to have their say. One young person told me he had never imagined he'd





# and life in community



be able to speak in front of a big group like that. Clearly these young people were making bold moves into maturity on a number of levels, and their experience of life in community had taken on a whole new meaning.

Corrymeela is a special place for sure with its sweeping panoramas down to the sea and across to Rathlin to boot. Many of the young people we work with come from what could be described as tougher social realities and the opportunity to get some time outside of those communities can be a highlight of the year, and even if they are not aware of it, I'd say it has valuable restorative properties. Tensions arising from community divisions which may be visible elsewhere seem to carry less sway and it is as if the young people sense that this is a safe space, a time to listen to what 'the other' has to say. Likewise for our staff and volunteer team, shoulders have a tendency of going back and relaxing when we arrive on site, and we welcome the time to set aside other pressures or concerns, regain fresh focus for our work and equip ourselves for upcoming projects.

"Why are they always so happy?" This was a question posed by a 13-year old on one of our residential with reference to Corrymeela's volunteer team. It may be hard for the volunteers – both long-termers and short-termers – to see what tangible difference they're making, but I believe that one of their contributions is the broadening of our

young people's horizons, in particular to service and to travel overseas. Volunteers who have come from the other side of the world provide great fascination, and I know of at least two young people planning to become long-term volunteers at Corrymeela as a result of their experiences. What's more, I don't know of any other residential centre where staff and volunteers stand outside as the group boards the bus for home to wave every young person off and wish them well. A cynic might say 'they're just glad to be seeing the back of you'. I think it has much more to do with the expression, 'Corrymeela begins when you leave'. When our groups come to the end of their stay, a host of new possibilities have opened up before them – they've made new friends from different cultural and religious backgrounds to their own, they're wondering where on earth Burma is, they're thinking about becoming a leader one day, they're expressing a commitment to make their communities a better place to live for everyone, they've got a deeper grasp of how 'community' can bring people together making a way through difference, division and disagreement...and they might try a different flavour of pot noodles next time.

**Deborah Erwin**

*Youth Work Manager for Public Achievement*

**"I don't know of any other residential centre where staff and volunteers stand outside as the group boards the bus for home to wave every young person off and wish them well."**

# Looking at diversity as a way forward

## The appointment of the Reverend Dr Inderjit Bhogal as the new Leader of Corrymeela is a timely reminder of the importance of diversity in our society.

DR BHOGAL has already emphasised the importance of diversity as a way forward, and his remarks come at a time when there is a much greater range of religious witness and practice in Northern Ireland and further afield than many people here realise.

At one stage of our not too distant history, the religious outreach was divided largely between the Roman Catholic Church and the main Protestant churches, as well as many smaller evangelical groupings.

However, the 2009 Directory of Migrant led Churches and Chaplaincies, outlined the great diversity of religious faiths and practice on this island. Michael Earle, who has given great service to Corrymeela and the Irish Council of Churches, currently back in his native New Zealand, wrote a revealing summary to the report.

He noted that, by 2009, there were 361 new local faith communities, congregations and chaplaincies in Ireland north and south which were being run by migrants, for migrants, and which were bringing new life to the ecclesiastical landscape.

More than 320 of these were based in the Irish Republic, and particularly in Dublin but with significant concentrations in the major population centres such as Louth, Galway, Cork, Kildare, Meath, Limerick and Clare.

Though the picture may have changed due to the demise of the Celtic Tiger, the new groups were demonstrating flexibility and mobility, and many were changing their locations to meet contemporary circumstances.

In Northern Ireland, the picture has been different, with the main churches catering largely for migrants' needs. These included, for example, the establishment by the Catholic Church of a monthly Mass in Polish.

In turn, the migrants have been making an important contribution to religious practice in the local communities within which they find themselves, and this further underlines the importance of diversity.

Meanwhile, we should not overlook the witness and contribution of the other faiths, including the Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Baha'i, Buddhist and other communities, and also the important work of the Northern Ireland Inter-Faith Forum.

In its work and outreach, the Corrymeela Community has long been aware of the importance of diversity, particularly against a background which was dominated by the Protestant and Catholic traditions.

The main Christian churches contributed greatly to better community understanding during the Troubles but they, too, had historical baggage which was so aptly summarised by the late and much-lamented Dr David Stevens, the former Leader of Corrymeela.

He once wrote that, "The Churches tend to reflect people's fears, to reflect community divisions and a community experience of violence and threat, rather than act as agents of change or transformers of conflict."

There is much more to it than that, of course, but David's comments in this regard had a solid ring of truth, as they always did about so much else.

It is important, therefore, that diversity should be encouraged by all of us not only to overcome historic and contemporary barriers to religious witness and practice, but also to help us all to learn from one other.

**Alf McCreary**



*Alf McCreary is Religion Correspondent of the Belfast Telegraph and the author of two books about Corrymeela.*



# Where culture and personality meet – supporting the Inclusive Neighbourhood Project

**THE INCLUSIVE NEIGHBOURHOOD PROJECT (INP)** is a partnership between Corrymeela and NICRAS (Northern Ireland Community of Refugees and Asylum Seekers) and builds on the wide range of learning and experience in Corrymeela over the past 40 years, working towards creating a peaceful and stable society. In supporting integration between the host community in NI and a new 'other', the refugee community, INP is building capacity and understanding in neighbourhoods in which the refugee community live.

The EU's PEACE III Programme supports INP, and one aspect of the INP programme is training facilitators from the local host community and the recently arrived refugee community to equip them with the skills to help their neighbourhoods and each other's communities to have a better understanding and respect for one another.

To date, 17 community facilitators from both the refugee and host community have been trained, and many are actively engaged in facilitating formal training, supporting mutual understanding and joint activities in neighbourhoods.

Where culture and personality meets - Fatima Ali, a facilitator from Phase 2 Training for the INP, tells us a bit about herself, why she got involved with INP and what she has got out of the training. Fatima expresses the benefits of being involved and the way that she is using the training to benefit others.

**Name:**

Fatima Ali

**Country of birth:**

Somalia

**How long have you lived in Belfast:**

7 months

**How did you get involved in INP:**

A friend who is a member of INP invited me.

**Why did you want to get involved with INP:**

I was new in Belfast and wanted to get more involved with people from the host community and the refugee community, and to know more about Northern Ireland.

**What have you done so far:**

I have done the training, which was a great chance to meet good people and gain more knowledge and I feel more confident. I am facilitating now with a group from the host community, Forthspring Women's Group, it's good to see that people want to have an insight into Refugee and Asylum Seeker Community.

**What effects do you think INP has on the community:**

INP is a brilliant project, bringing different groups of people closer – it's amazing. I now know more about the host community and other refugees as well.

**What do you enjoy about being involved:**

Knowing so much more about people who live here in Northern Ireland and doing social activities with the INP group.

*If you would like to find out more about the Inclusive Neighbourhood Project and how you can get involved visit [www.inclusiveneighbourhood.org](http://www.inclusiveneighbourhood.org) or call Ann Marie White at Corrymeela on Tel 028 9050 8080.*

**Fatima Ali**

*Fatima Ali is a facilitator for the INP in Belfast*



*Fatima Ali (centre left back row) enjoys 'doing social activities with the INP group' at the leading ladies Film Festival Screening of Yasmin at the QFT, Belfast.*

# Platform for a restorative society in Northern Ireland

**Reconciliation has been an important concept in building relationships and structures in Northern Ireland that lessen the harm done to people in the midst of conflict. It is also an important concept in the language of Track One, Two and Three conflict transformation strategies.**

**“A restorative society could integrate many previously distinct and important activities across ages and sectors.”**

CENTRAL TO RECONCILIATION is the promotion of right relationships and the securing of agreements and structural arrangements that build a new acknowledgement and respect between those seen as ‘different others’. Such work seeks to right previous imbalances and wrongs as well as promote new and more open and inclusive ways in which more recently arrived citizens can be welcomed and respected.

Important elements of that agenda in Northern Ireland include the drive for legal remedies and new laws on equality, good relations, human rights, harassment and hate crime, and the exploration of how the past is acknowledged and how victims are respected and remembered.

As a transcending idea, reconciliation continually challenges current ways of living with different and previously estranged others. However, it is a concept that many men and women have difficulty applying to their own actions. There is a tendency to see it as an activity for others in important positions, rather than as something all citizens can contribute to as part of their daily endeavours.

Work that develops a more restorative culture in our schools, churches, community organisations, trade unions and wider civil society through actions that remedy wrongs, actions that bring people who have been estranged into relationships, new ways of working and new structural arrangements – is a practical way of building platforms of reconciliation practice and a restorative culture in daily life in Northern Ireland.

Restorative practice is applicable across the spectrum of voluntary involvements, faith and trade

union organisations, political, civic and public life as well as with those working within the legally compliant worlds of the criminal justice system. It has relational, structural, policy and legally driven dimensions; each of which needs to be promoted to ensure this theme becomes a central societal task.

A restorative society could integrate many previously distinct and important activities across ages and sectors. Common cause can be made between actions that enable children and young people to resolve their difficulties and those that see responsible adults promoting and securing cultures that stand against bullying and scapegoating in family and care settings, learning institutions, voluntary organisations and workplaces.

The relevance of existing and developing practice that restores relationships and gives different people their equal and valued place also has importance for public and civic life in Great Britain, the Republic of Ireland and elsewhere.

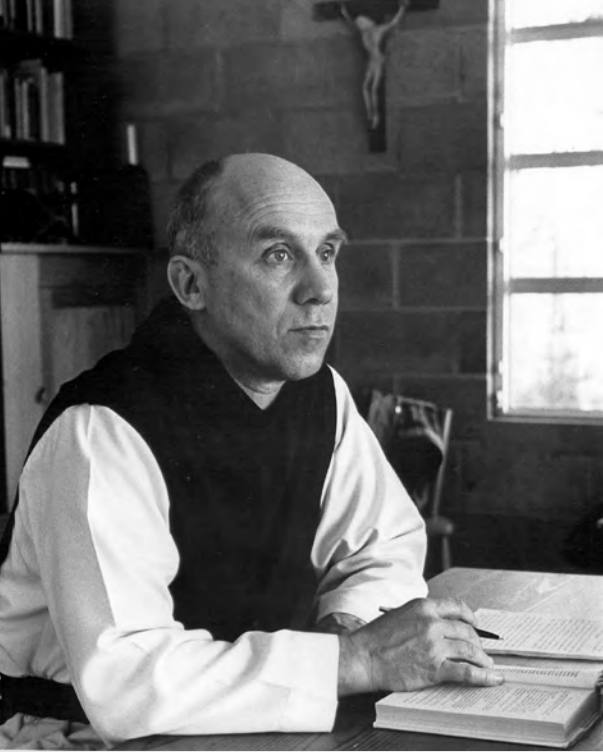
The longer paper, available on the website, invites people to locate their own actions as one contributory element in a wider landscape of restorative practices, in the hope that a new restorative culture develops to underpin the task of reconciliation. This requires a society that is committed to learning from its long history of enmity and its most recent history of violence develops better uses for the talents and energies of all of its people. It is hoped that Corrymeela, through many of its programmes, will contribute to this ‘Restorative Society’ agenda.

**Derick Wilson**

*Derick Wilson is a Member of The Corrymeela Community*

*You can download the full article at [www.corrymeela.org](http://www.corrymeela.org)*





## THOMAS MERTON WEEKEND

# Unlikely Figure Facilitating Ecumenical and Inter-faith Understanding in Northern Ireland

**An unlikely figure is helping to facilitate ecumenical and inter-faith dialogue and understanding in Northern Ireland. I say unlikely, because he is an American Trappist (Cistercian) monk, born in France to an American mother and an artist father from New Zealand, educated in France, England and the US, and who died prematurely due to accidental electrocution in 1968! An intriguing figure indeed. So whom might I be talking about?**

TO SOME, THE NAME OF THOMAS MERTON conjures up a vague memory of someone they've certainly heard of, but perhaps can't quite place. To others, he's a spiritual giant of the 20th Century to rival the likes of Bonhoeffer, King, Nouwen and a plethora of other popular religious writers and activists.

During his career, Merton penned in excess of sixty books and hundreds of articles and poems on subjects as diverse as contemplative prayer, monastic spirituality, civil rights, social justice, non-violence and nuclear weapons. In addition, he is perhaps most famous for his remarkably candid autobiography, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, which has been translated into almost thirty languages and has sold in excess of one million copies.

Merton was at home conversing with Buddhists, Jews, Hindus and Muslims and was a prodigious letter writer. His natural spiritual curiosity and ability to see past deeply ensconced stereotypes resulted in many personal friendships, and through his published work, enabled the wider world to see points of contact between seemingly irreconcilable and divergent faith systems. All of this, of course, was underpinned by a deep love of contemplative prayer through which his grasp of the Divine flourished and grew to maturity.

Merton's firm grounding in the contemplative

tradition enabled him to reflect more fully on the nature of Christ, and through this, his interest in ecumenical dialogue and understanding grew. As an early convert to Catholicism, he exuded an exclusivist confidence that was replaced in maturity by a deeper appreciation not only of his own faith, but also that of the wider Christian family.

It is against this backdrop of mutual journeying that Merton is perhaps of most relevance to Northern Ireland. That is at least one of the reasons why the newly formed NI Chapter of the Thomas Merton Society of Great Britain and Ireland (TMS) has generated much interest from diverse quarters. With an informal membership of Presbyterians, Roman Catholics and Moravians, the Christian interest is vibrant, and perhaps not surprisingly given Merton's affinity with Buddhism, there is also a very welcome input from this faith community also. Discussions, talks, book reviews and retreats all form part of the Merton experience in the NI Chapter. Corrymeela's Knocklayd Retreat Centre hosted the first TMS retreat earlier this spring.

For further information on the NI Chapter of the Thomas Merton Society, please contact Rev Dr Scott Peddie: [s.peddie@pattersonpeddie.com](mailto:s.peddie@pattersonpeddie.com)

**Rev. Dr. Scott Peddie**



*Scott Peddie is founder and convener of the NI Chapter of the Thomas Merton Society of Great Britain and Ireland. He is Minister of the Old Presbyterian Church, Templepatrick and First Presbyterian Church (NS) Crumlin, is heavily involved in local ecumenical activities and is an Executive Committee Member of the Northern Ireland Inter-Faith Forum.*

# Focus on interface reconciliation: peace-building at a local level

**An interface isn't simply a physical barrier that separates dissenting neighbours in areas of inner-city Belfast; it is an extremity of perceptions, assumptions, prejudice and misunderstanding that perpetuates division and stagnates co-operation in our society. It is not simply the task of political actors to realise the 'shared vision' of society. It is the individuals in their collective mentality – be it leaders of a faith community or women within a community group – who are in a position to make positive change felt.**

**“Positive female role models are vital to challenge the status quo and inspire women to push forward both personally and professionally.”**

THROUGH A UNIQUE CONSORTIUM APPROACH to peace-building, the Irish Peace Centres has created a strategic cross-border structure that supports a network of people who have become engaged in cultivating positive relations at a local level. The consortium, which comprises Co-operation Ireland, the Corrymeela Community and the Glenree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation,



is now well established and working effectively. The peace-building activities aim to engage people through a participatory approach that ensures that the ideals of peace and reconciliation are embedded into society at a grassroots level.

Leading Ladies is a programme managed by Corrymeela staff member and Interface Reconciliation Co-ordinator for Irish Peace Centres, Susan McEwen. The project gives local women, from all walks of life, an opportunity to meet some of Ireland's leading ladies. The lunches develop positive relationships across traditional neighbourhood divides and give local women a chance to look beyond their personal, professional and geographic circumstances to explore new ways to recognise and fulfil their potential. Positive female role models are vital to challenge the status quo and inspire women to push forward both personally and professionally. Groups in the Leading Ladies programme have had lunch and conversations with Baroness May Blood, Naomi Long, MP; Marie-Therese McGivern, CEO of Belfast Metropolitan College and Kerry Anthony, MBE and CEO of DePaul Ireland.

The Interface Reconciliation activity within Irish Peace Centres focuses on developing capacity and engagement across traditional and emerging cultural divides. It continues to provide the critical local dimension to this regional project. This activity strand looks at the development of relationships and activities not only at an individual level but between





*Nisha Tandon*

and within groups. In reality, this means that the types of work designed and delivered within this activity are less about short term interventions and more about long term and sustained support.

At this local level, IPC works strategically with groups, at times initially in a single identity context but always with the aim of bringing groups together. The overarching characteristic of this activity is to work with the intergroup dynamics to promote learning, understanding and deepening of relationships. This stream of activity makes particular use of creative expression and experiential learning as a means of developing positive relationships at local level. The experience of these activities will create opportunities for the participants to explore their

understanding of identity, both personal and communal. Participants from both communities are included in project work so that the theme of inter-community relations will be present and will cultivate cross-community relationships.

Re:mapping is another example of a successful programme that commences at the local, interface and intergroup level but which, through the integrated delivery mechanism of our approach, involves participants working at a cross-organisational level and cross-anchor strand level. The impact of this journey through the diverse range of strands is felt at different levels – the local (interface and intergroup), the regional (the Core Group of change-makers in communities) and the international (the capturing and sharing of the learning through reflective practice).

The broad compass of Irish Peace Centres' integrated approach can be relied upon to maximise and encourage participation of groups and individuals who may not have previously engaged with the Peace Centres or previous programmes. The added value of the consortium approach means that our strength lies in the ability to integrate our peace-building by working collaboratively with each activity strand and thereby ensuring that the needs of participants are met. The processes and journeys of peace-building are complex, intertwined and challenging but the participatory and transformative dynamics which emerge from these processes, informs our learning and understanding and subsequently fuels the development of the Irish Peace Centres programme.

Irish Peace Centres is funded by the EU PEACE III programme under Priority 1.1 from June 2008 until December 2011.

[www.irishpeacecentres.org](http://www.irishpeacecentres.org)

**Bronagh Sharpe**

*Bronagh Sharpe is a member of the Irish Peace Centres Consortium*





# The birth of a building

THERE ARE NOT MANY THINGS in this world less subtle than a wrecking ball.

Just days after our candle-lit service in the foyer of the old village when we recited the old Ecclesiastes 3, For everything there is a season... and remembered the thousands of people who had stayed there, the stories told, the miracles that happened, the hands that worked and maintained the buildings – yes, just days later, the walls came tumbling down in Jerichoan fashion.

I remember looking at a mountain of rubble and crudely sorted debris, the displacement of the earth, the newly-erected site huts, and all from behind the wire and wood-panelled fencing. A new clearly demarcated boundary. Another ‘us’ and ‘them’ and I remember thinking, ‘What have we done!’. The landscape was an unrecognisable version

of its former self, completely different and to be honest, a bit scary.

One clear evening during these first stages of the project, around late March last year, I sneaked onto the site after the workers had left and clambered up this newly-formed hill of earth and rubble. At the summit, two pieces of rock sat perpendicularly, forming a perfectly angled seat, inviting me to rest and enjoy the view. All that remained of the past was the old maintenance compound in the corner. But that’s not what caught my attention. This view, as many of you know, is, on any given day, spectacular. Even for myself, well into my fifth year here at Corrymeela, it is never taken for granted. But this was a different experience. It was like looking across Ballycastle bay, Kinbane Head, the Carrick, Rathlin Island, of course, and across to



Fairhead, all for the first time. From this elevated perspective, it all started to make sense. This was the very beginning of a new chapter for the centre. The rubble, the debris, the felled trees, the muddy, displaced ground were all merely temporary players in this new drama. The long-awaited vision for the centre was becoming clearer to see.

Slowly the rubble disappeared, the new foundations laid, construction (not destruction) machinery came on site, the diggers, the forklifts, the cranes. The workmen and site foreman became familiar, friendly, trusted. On a daily basis I witnessed new aspects of the build become reality, the great steel frames erected, interconnected, service pipes laid, block-work walls springing up. It was all going so well.

Then one day in June it all stopped. 100-year old abandoned mines on which Corrymeela centre sits caused enough concern that tools had to be downed until the ground could be inspected and surveyed. Umpteen bore-holes were drilled, analysed, re-drilled and re-analysed. It was a slow process. I remember talking one afternoon to the on-site geologist as she was inspecting a sample of rock taken from about 45 metres below our feet. 'How old do you reckon that rock is?' I asked.

'Without missing a beat, she said in a nonchalant sort of a way, 'It's probably around 35 million years old'. As the rock sample warmed in hand for the first time in this unfathomable duration of time, it began to put into perspective our impatient 7-week delay. The report came back with good news, confirming what we already thought – that Corrymeela is built on solid ground - literally.

The work resumed in August as the builders re-mobilised, re-connected and within weeks we had our roof. As autumn turned to winter, the construction continued at pace, windows arriving, internal works beginning to take shape; cabling, tracking, trunking.

On December 10 work ceased again, though this time only for a couple of hours as we invited all the builders over to the House for Christmas lunch - a timely opportunity to acknowledge their efforts and give thanks. It was a great afternoon appreciated by all, especially the roofers on that cold December day! Then came the real weather. The snow and ice held the site and surrounds in a vice-like grip making headway very difficult, at times impossible. We rested, hibernated, until the new year. The monthly site meetings continued with participants evolving from merely representatives of parties concerned into a team, a driving force to gently push the project along, through to completion.

It's a remarkable experience - architects, contractors, sub-contractors, quantity surveyors,

mechanical and electrical consultants, structural engineers, bricklayers, electricians, plumbers, plasterers, joiners, door-fitters, window-fitters, kitchen fitters, tilers, insulators, solar panellists, IT specialists, Audio-visual specialists, Gas consultants, Health and Safety controllers, painters, under-floor heating engineers, landscapers, furnishing suppliers, the list goes on and on. Literally hundreds of people working together in a carefully orchestrated fashion to get this building up and running.

And now we're approaching the end-game with plenty more work still to be done to ensure a smooth hand-over in May. A journey not without its hiccups, shaking heads, re-jigging and re-jogging, raised eyebrows and raised blood pressure, but a great journey nonetheless and an experience I'll never forget, nor want to.

As I see myself atop that mound of rubble, I think not of the building.

I think of people.

I think of beauty.

I think of peace.

For everything there is indeed a season, and a time for every purpose under Heaven.

Dedicated to the memory of Desie McLernon, my teacher and my friend.

### **Shane O'Neil**

*Shane O'Neil is the Corrymeela Centre Manager*





# Invaluable psycho-social support for vulnerable children with cancer

GLOBAL X-CHANGE participant and psychologist Cynthia Manzanares works for the KYTHE foundation. She explained that only five percent of the young cancer patients survive with ninety percent of the children dying from leukaemia. Although they do not yet have proof, possible causes are the potent car fumes from the busy roads or the use of dangerous pesticides in fields.

**The KYTHE foundation is a charity offering psycho-social support and therapeutic play to children living with cancer. The organisation helps in seven hospitals all over the Phillipines.**

Another factor contributing to the low survival rate is that poor parents often try to cure their sick



Global Exchange is an education and action resource centre. Valuing the rights of workers, the health of the planet and by helping to connect the world locally and globally, they strive to create a just and sustainable world. By prioritising international collaboration, Global Exchange are ensuring a path to peace and the acceptance of diversity within our growing communities. Their mission statement: 'Global Exchange® takes a holistic approach to creating change. With 20 years working for international human rights, we realize that in order to advance social, environmental and economic justice we must transform the global economy from profit centered to people centered, from currency to community'



**“only five percent of the young cancer patients survive with ninety percent of the children dying from leukaemia.”**

child with herbal medicine before ever visiting a doctor or coming to the foundation. On top of this, State-run hospitals are very basic with medicine and blood transfusions only available to patients who can pay privately - a barrier impossible to overcome for many.

Cynthia and her colleagues do their best to make the hospital stay for the children bearable, playing with them and working alongside their families to explain the illness and the planned treatment. Most of the mothers stay with their children to support them emotionally and also to get medicine or blood for transfusions from other parts of the city when necessary. Most children are under the age of five

and the time they get to spend in the small play room organised by KYTHE means the world to them. Cynthia said, “We engage the children in play as much as possible; fun is an essential part of the process.” But she is realistic and adds, “Most of the time we do not win the battle against cancer, but we want the children to enjoy the time they have left.”

For more information visit [www.kythe.org](http://www.kythe.org)

#### **Sonja Tammen**

*Sonja Tammen was the Volunteer Support worker for the Corrymeela Community*



**“Most children are under the age of five and the time they get to spend in the small play room organised by KYTHE means the world to them.”**



# But What If?

'Go and open the door,

Even if, there's only the  
darkness ticking',

even if there is  
nothing there.

But what if?

What if it is the  
Pentecostal stranger  
softly knocking,

Seeking to make  
relationship, to bring an  
affirming flame?

**David Stevens**

*The late David Stevens, former  
leader and chief of the Corrymeela  
Community*



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