# The Witness

Volume 80 • Number 11 • November, 1997


# *Northern Ireland:*
## *winds of peace*

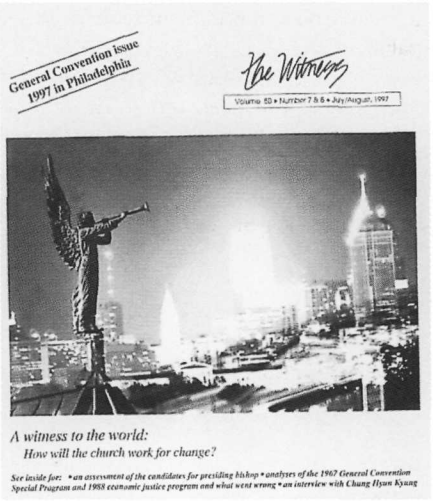
## A witness to the world

THE ARTICLE ON THE LOS ANGELES consultation on ordination issues in the July-August issue for people of color was very fine. It gives a very balanced picture of what happened and a reasoned argument for the need for such a gathering. The voice of a community united with a faithful commitment is not simply louder but more persuasive than the sum of individual voices. As many pointed out, the real test of the meeting is what happens afterwards, among the organizers, participants and beyond. The end of Presiding Bishop Browning's legacy gives us responsibilities for continuing the causes that he supported and yet also opportunities for the opposition to reconfigure the structure and direction.

**James Kodera**
**Wellesley, MA**

THIS LETTER CONCERNS WHAT I VIEW as a substantial distortion of Bishop Frank Griswold's views on prayer book revision contained in your coverage of the candidates for Presiding Bishop in the July-August issue. Normally I wouldn't presume to speak in print for someone else; but in view of the facts that (1) the candidates agreed to refrain from public discussion of the issues themselves, and (2) at this writing, Bishop Griswold has just been elected Presiding Bishop, I hope you'll allow me a bit of space in your columns to address this matter.

You cite as "a huge letdown" Bishop Griswold's quoted statement that "this is not the time for prayer book revision" despite the fact that much of the church's constituency "finds (its) common prayer uncommonly white, male, straight and privileged." Based on my experience as a member of Bishop Griswold's diocese, I find it quite impossible to believe that he means the 1979 BCP is everything the church needs in a prayer book.




Rather, I believe that if queried, he would respond that we are in a time of rich grassroots liturgical ferment—in areas including gender-inclusive language and imagery, and the whole issue of marriage and the blessing of committed relationships, among others—and that it is simply too soon to attempt to codify the outcomes of this ferment in a revised prayer book. To interpret his statement as an expression of satisfaction with the status quo is neither logically necessary nor, in my view, correct; and it could do the church a considerable disservice by fomenting early and unfounded dissatisfaction with a Presiding Bishop-elect who may well make some of his greatest contributions to the church's common life precisely in the realm of liturgy.

**James G. Carson**
**Evanston, IL**

## A role model?

IF A PERSON, BELONGING TO AN organization, aspires to its highest office, it is usual for that candidate to take an oath of allegiance and to swear to obey and uphold the rules and regulations and the resolutions and by-laws. If, after so doing and being installed into that top position, the appointee then publicly vows to violate those oaths and states that he or she will ignore those that bothers their conscience, it would seem to me to require one of two things; either the organization should remove that person from its membership or that person should resign the moment such a violation is voiced.

Here we have the bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth, well aware that the laws (canons) he disagrees with have been in effect long before his quest to be made bishop, proceed to be ordained and consecrated a bishop by kneeling before many of his peers and a big congregation in a church and swearing before God and on the Holy Bible to "conform to the doctrine, discipline and worship of the Episcopal Church in the United States of America."

This implies obeying the canons and resolutions of the triennial National Conventions, one of which has just occurred. For a bishop to violate the very solemn oaths he made at his consecration because he doesn't like some of them sends a terrible message to our young people as well as us older ones.

What a role model! He should have the intestinal fortitude to either obey or to leave.

**Peter Tringham**
**Fort Worth, TX**

## Fundraising appeal

HERE YOU GO AGAIN — making me wish I were rich. I've been thinking about The Lottery. Maybe if God knew I'd give at least half my winnings to *The Witness*...but no — somehow I don't think She works like that.

Anyway, here's what we can do this year and please don't talk about the "end times" for *The Witness*. It has to last at least as long as I do and I expect that to be another 20 or more years. You're such a blessing to us.

**Sara Owen**
**Atlanta, GA**

I RECEIVED THE APPEAL FOR FUNDS. I am currently on disability but *The Witness* has added so much to my life that I feel compelled to send what I can. I also would like to staff a table at St. Timothy's. A friend introduced me to this publication during some very dark moments of my life and it has certainly been an inspiration and comfort. I am a "born in the cradle" Episcopalian and honestly had never heard of the journal nor seen it in the homes of any of my Episcopal mentors.

I am most appreciative of the light which

this journal has brought into my life. I am currently trying to start a new business to work my way out of disability and to be able to support myself. The disability was a wake-up call to stop and smell the roses; to re-think the value of life, to take my soul out and study my own purpose; to just let go and let God; to build my spirit; to release my fears; to know that God loves me no matter what the condition of my body, mind or spirit; to learn to be quiet and listen gently and lovingly; to recognize that every moment, every occasion is a chance to learn new lessons which enable us to be more Christ-like. If we look at those things which are often labeled as "bad" and study how those factors can enrich our lives as well as enrich the lives of everyone that we assist or meet, then we suddenly recognize what an absolutely amazing world God has created for us. My disability has become my ability.

Ms. Willie Lester, one of my mentors, used to say that when things were bad I should remember, "God is good, God is great." Her philosophy was that these were the beginning statements of a childhood prayer which were easy to recall even in the most trying of times. I found that recalling these two simple statements put new light on many trials and tribulations. The other comfort phrase she emphasized was one that certainly was simple but ever so true. Her belief was if you were feeling unworthy, insignificant, useless or unloved then you say three times, "Jesus loves me, this I know. Because the Bible tells me so." She also taught us that when we found ourselves at a loss for strength to turn our palms upward and sing "Onward Christian Soldiers! Marching as to war, With the cross of Jesus Going on before." If you really needed to put up a battle it was permissible to turn one palm up and to close the other hand as if holding a very solid cross. Now you have the necessary love and support of Christ.

I have been ill for 11 years, been through some physical, emotional and mental battles that have taken their toll but the words of this loving Episcopal Sunday School teacher have carried me far and prevented much scarring. The two prayers she told to hold us near and dear were, "The Lord's Prayer" and "The Jesus Prayer." She stated that "The Lord's Prayer covered pretty much all of man's needs and would accommodate you when your brain shut down and you couldn't think of fancy prayers." Also if you are tired, this prayer will soften your mind and kinder your spirit. Remember the word *tired* covers a broad scope of maladies.

Ms. Willie stated that we should remain about the business of "The Jesus Prayer" daily, not only for our benefit but for others and the world about us. I believe this to be more true today than ever before.

Ms. Willie would have enjoyed *The Witness*. This donation is sent in memory of one of the finest Christians, ladies and Sunday School teachers a young girl ever knew. I owe her much for her introduction of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost to a little girl who grew through many troubling years at her door and in her class and at her table and then grew into a woman who has had to relearn many of the lessons. However, it was easy to recall what had been taught in such a loving manner. I also would like to thank her for teaching me to make the best cup of tea and to appreciate the drink in like manner as one appreciates the knowledge she passed on to that child and many others.

Again thank you for such a wonderful journal.

**Edwina C. Staten**
**Newbit, MS**

THE ENCLOSED IS JUST A *SMALL* token to express my deep appreciation for the continuing excellence of *The Witness!*

I look forward each month to receiving the current issue. I'm *never* disappointed — always stimulated!

**Jane Schutt**
**Florence, MS**

## Mailing snafu!

We were chagrined, last month, to discover that many readers did not receive their September issue owing to a mailing label error. Because of the popularity of that issue, we were caught short on replacement copies and had to ask the printer for more. If you haven't received that issue by now, please let us know by calling 313-841-1967.

## Classifieds

### Prisoners need stamps

Christian prisoner project seeks donations of postage stamps and Christmas cards (limit 10). Help inmates keep in touch with loved ones at Christmas. Christian Williams, FSP, Route D18367, Represa, CA 95671-5071.

### Episcopal Urban Intern Program

Work in social service, live in Christian community in Los Angeles. For adults 21-30. Apply now for the 1998-99 year. Contact: The Rev. Gary Commins, 260 N. Locust St., Inglewood, CA 90301. 310-674-7700.

### Vocations

Contemplating religious life? Members of the Brotherhood and the Companion Sisterhood of Saint Gregory are Episcopalians, clergy and lay, married and single. To explore a contemporary Rule of Life, contact: The Director of Vocations, Brotherhood of St. Gregory, Dept. W, Saint Bartholomew's Church, 82 Prospect Street, White Plains, NY 10606-3499.

### Activist training

Two workshops on nonviolence and leadership for social change will be offered in Philadelphia in January, 1998. Jan. 16-18: The Nonviolent Warrior: Confrontation and Long-Range Strategy. Jan. 23-25: Leadership Inside & Out: Building Skills, Renewing Your Spirit. Trainer: George Lakey. Contact Matt Guynn, Training for Change, 4719 Springfield Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19143; phone 215-729-7458; fax 215-729-1910; e-mail peacelearn@igc.org.

### Classifieds

*Witness* classifieds cost 75 cents a word or $30 an inch, whichever is less. Payments must accompany submissions. Deadline is the 15th of the month, two months prior to publication.

# The Witness

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*Cover: Peace Cairn in Donegal in North West Ireland. Visitors are invited to add rocks to the Cairn to symbolize the laying down of primitive weapons, turning them into building blocks for a better future. Photo by Michael McMullin.*

*The Witness* offers a fresh and sometimes irreverent view of our world, illuminated by faith, Scripture and experience. Since 1917, *The Witness* has been advocating for those denied systemic power as well as celebrating those people who have found ways to "live humanly in the midst of death." We push boundaries, err on the side of inclusion and enjoy bringing our views into tension with orthodox Christianity. *The Witness'* roots are Episcopalian, but our readership is ecumenical. For simplicity, we place news specific to Episcopalians in our Vital Signs section. *The Witness* is committed to brevity for the sake of readers who find little time to read, but can enjoy an idea, a poem or a piece.

Manuscripts: We welcome multiple submissions. Given our small staff, writers and artists receive a response only when we are able to publish.






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Office: 7000 Michigan Ave., Detroit, MI 48210-2872. To reach Julie Wortman: HC 35 Box 647, Tenants Harbor, ME 04860. Telphone: (313) 841-1967. Fax: (313) 841-1956. E-mail: [first name]@thewitness.org. Our web site: \www.thewitness.org

# Creating a context for peace

by Marianne Arbogast

Most of my impressions of Northern Ireland have been based on the bleak stories behind news headlines — smoldering bomb ruins, the hunger strikes, street shootings and government repression. As we began work on this issue of *The Witness* last spring, the picture seemed true to form: The ray of hope from the first IRA ceasefire had been eclipsed by the exclusion of Sinn Fein from the peace talks, and the wearying violence had resumed.

We could never have anticipated the changes that were soon to take place: a new Labour government in England, a new ceasefire and the tentative movement toward dialogue between political parties that have long refused to acknowledge each others' right to speak. Throughout the summer, it was exciting to check the Irish news headlines on the Internet and see the fragile course toward peace talks hold. But as we talked with people in Northern Ireland, it also seemed apparent that the political breakthroughs rest on the steadfast efforts of countless groups and individuals who, for years, have been laying the groundwork for change.

My first phone call to Northern Ireland was answered by Jim Anderson, a Catholic who left the seminary in 1989 to help found a small ecumenical community called Solas (Gaelic for "light") in Belfast. Like nearly everyone in Northern Ireland, Anderson has painful stories to recount. When his grandmother died, his father met with organizers of an Orange march scheduled to pass by the Catholic church on the day of the funeral, to ensure that the service would be over before the march came through. But, by accident or intent, the march began early, and the hearse outside the church did not deter marchers from raising the volume of their drums, shouts and anti-Catholic songs (led by what are colloquially known as "f___ the pope bands") as they passed by.

Yet, while Anderson is frank about Catholic grievances, he is also firmly committed to fighting "the bitterness and bigotry that is passed on from generation to generation." After eight years of cross-community work with young people in Belfast, he admits to a measure of burnout, but is nonetheless making plans for a small retreat center in the west of Ireland.

"We hope to organize programs that encourage young people to look across the border to a place like Donegal [in the Republic of Ireland], which is a mix of Protestant and Catholic, and see that they can live side by side," he explains.

Anderson's perspective is shared by many. Corrymeela ("Hill of Harmony") is one of the oldest and best known of such initiatives [see p.15]. Now in its 33rd year, it has long served as a beacon for those committed to reconciliation between Northern Ireland's Catholic and Protestant communities. Likewise, the Cornerstone community [see p. 29] is a long-standing witness to Christian unity in a country where works of mercy between Catholics and Protestants are fraught with risk and political significance.

A recent report of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council lists 496 projects which received grant funding last year. They are as diverse as an ecumenical gay men's retreat; a cross-community effort to refurbish ambulances for a town in Romania; and a drama project entitled *Two Tribes and a Dragon* which depicts "a mythical people who divide into two tribes and a dragon which feeds off their conflict."

"In most countries the unifying myth emerged from a historical struggle for independence," Brian Lennon (a Northern Irish Jesuit) recently wrote in *Commonweal* magazine. "In our case the struggle for independence was against each other." Lennon reports that "what was fascinating during the last ceasefire was the extent to which nationalists and unionists wanted to meet each other, to find out about the other side's life and values, to celebrate what they have in common."

Such meetings, though less dramatic than the political talks, may be no less vital to Northern Ireland's future.

Mari Fitzduff, director of the Community Relations Council, writes that "the prime necessity is not finding a creative constitutional solution, but the development of a context in which a solution will be collectively considered. Experience has suggested that when enough structural issues of injustice have been addressed, enough positive relationships have been developed, and much of the violence has stopped, then it will be more possible to draw upon some of the many constitutional solutions that are available."

If such a time is drawing nearer, it may largely be due to the faithful, courageous, daily efforts of Northern Irish Catholic and Protestant Christians to create such a context. Now, when I think of Northern Ireland, I think of them. TW


**Marianne Arbogast** is assistant editor of *The Witness.*

# Was the church at Diana's funeral?

## by Douglas E. Theuner

I can never remember whether it is in *The Plague* or *The Fall* that Albert Camus' protagonist comes to the realization: "I was absent in the place where I occupied the most space." Still, that expression came to my mind while watching the funeral of Princess Diana of Britain in Westminster Abbey. I could not help but think that the same could be said of the church as it was represented on that occasion by our mother Church of England.

What struck me was not what happened, but what didn't happen. As far as I can tell, the Church of England's venerable Book of Common Prayer was not in evidence save for some opening sentences, the recitation of the Lord's Prayer at the end of the intercessions offered by the Archbishop of Canterbury, in his final benediction from the Burial Office: "May the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ ...," and perhaps in the vague implication of the Holy Trinity in the commendation read by the Dean of Westminster Abbey, unionjackily resplendent in red cassock, white surplice and royal blue cope.

It has been said that the British royal family had in its initial reaction to Diana's death shown itself to be out of touch with the modern world. Surely that charge could not be made in the matter of the funeral. The recitation of poetry, the song by Elton John (who happens to be a favorite of mine) and the eulogy by a family member who admonished not to make Diana out to be a saint were very much in touch with the world. The TV cameras focused on the entrance into the Abbey of John and his same-sex partner, while there was no attention paid to the Primate of All England, dressed down in purple slip collar shirt and black rachet and chimere; a man known to Anglican insiders as one who does not approve of homosexual relationships. I wonder how Carey felt about having his worldview devalued in his house.

What the funeral did not show was what is uniquely Christian in death: anything that points beyond it to the miracle of resurrection or speaks to an antecedent life of faith. Surely it is a good thing to be in touch with the world. But that is quite a different matter from being subsumed by it. Was I seeing the church in touch with the world or just the world, albeit tinged with the symbols of an apparently bygone age of faith, in touch with itself? Surely the church needs to be closely in touch with the world if it is to offer a message of salvation. In Diana's funeral I saw the touch but not the message.

*Surely the church needs to be closely in touch with the world if it is to offer a message of salvation. In Diana's funeral I saw the touch but not the message.*

Diana's funeral gives evidence that the Church of England has effectively been disestablished or, worse, coopted. Of course, one needs only to visit the great churches of England, filled with their war memorials and cenotaphs of imperialism, to see that that is nothing new in the Anglican experience. It's just that today's principalities and powers are not empire and its expansion but celebrity and its feeding.

This is not just a matter for our mother church, however. Our own post-Constantinian church and its investment in Euro-American imperialism must pay heed not only to what the world is saying to it but, even more importantly, to what it is saying to the world. In a TV interview after the funeral, Lord Jeffrey Archer, peer, Member of Parliament and best-selling novelist, said that everything had changed in England in the past week — no doubt an overstatement but one with enough truth to be heeded carefully, not only in England, but the world over, and especially where the trappings of England's past glory are still invested with power, as in an aristocratically caparisoned episcopate so little understood or attractive to even our Lutheran sisters and brothers, as evidenced by their reservations in Philadelphia about taking on a still imperial-appearing episcopate. That was probably our first wake-up call of the summer. Now, the second.

By all means, let us draw near to the world, as our Lord did, but in drawing near let us consider what Word we have to speak and let us speak it, as he did, with clarity and compassion. The Word was not to be heard in Westminster Abbey, save as noted above and perhaps in the hymns and in the reading of I Cor. 13 without any context that indicated that the love extolled was any more than that which is within the unredeemed capacity of human beings. Westminster Abbey ranks high among the icons of Anglican tradition. As for a witness to the Faith, it seems to me that the church was absent in the place where it occupied the most space, Westminster Abbey and millions of TV sets the world around. If not a plague or a fall, that should at least be a wake-up call. TW

**Douglas Theuner** is Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of New Hampshire and president of the Episcopal Church Publishing Company.

# My Home Town This Earth

by Mitsuye Yamada

Imagine there is a future
where a tight ring of peace
like Saturn's collar
holds us all in
and there is no
space for war

Imagine there is a future
where my home town
this earth
is no longer
an experimental station
for nuclear wars

Imagine there is a future
where our psychic Geiger counters find
no clicking nightmares in the air

where no child sees its mother's image
in pieces of charcoal
buried in the ground
where she was burned
where no mother cries
over her child's coffin
killed at war
killed in the war
killed by hate
killed by hunger

I lay my aging woman body
on this ground
spread eagled
reaching to four points
of our common future
our shared pasts
and remember

we must make a future
for those for whom survival only
is not enough
we must make a future
for those so bereft in mind and spirit
they cannot imagine there is a future.

Imagine there is a future
for eyes
watching us here
watching us now
through the wrong end of a telescope.


*Desert Run: Poems and Stories* Lathan, NY: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1988.

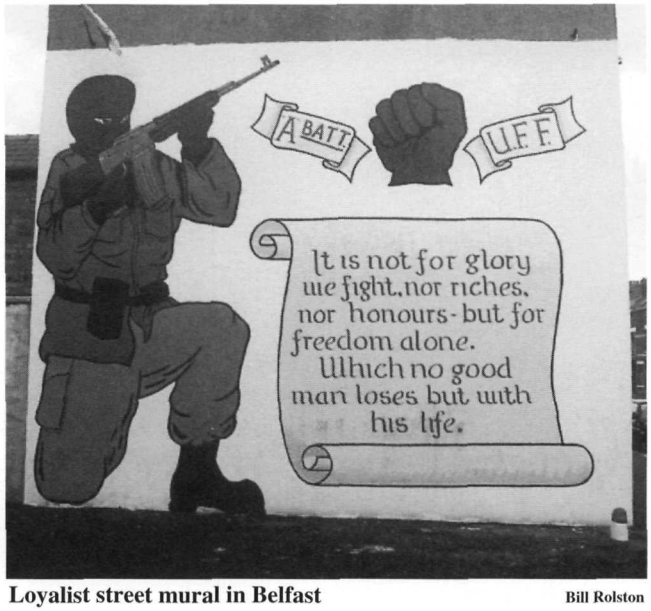
# Northern Ireland's grail: peace without losers

by Duncan Morrow

For three years now, Northern Ireland has been on a "peace process." Beyond all doubt, the IRA ceasefire of 1994, followed six weeks later by a ceasefire from the pro-British or "loyalist" paramilitary groups, ushered in an identifiably new period in Irish political history. In the beginning, the sheer shock of the experience, the turning off of the political violence which had transfixed the political landscape for 30 years, took time to get used to. Palpable relief and enormous hope sat side by side with a kind of confused disbelief as people wondered if it was safe to crawl out from their protective shells at last. Now, in late 1997, and a few breakdowns and renewed ceasefires later, the early euphoria has long since given way to the realities of tough real-world political enmity. But as we come to the verge of groundbreaking political talks, it is clear that some "process" is still taking place, in spite of the doubts and the vagaries surrounding partners, methods and even goals.

### A sense of movement

A glance at the Oxford English Dictionary confirms the many meanings which the word process carries in English: "a state of going or being carried on," "a method of operation in manufacturing," "a natural or involuntary operation, series of changes" or even "to go in procession." Common to them all is a sense of movement and change coupled with a conviction that something is being turned into something else. All of these meanings are like straws blowing increasingly powerfully in the Northern Irish winds. Two crucial questions remain, however: What is the ultimate destination of the procession and who is processing whom?




**Loyalist street mural in Belfast** Bill Rolston

Underlying the process is the undoubted desire of the overwhelming majority of people in the North of Ireland for an end to political killing. Although by 1994 the level of violence had already dropped dramatically from the levels of the 1970s, the distinguishing mark of communal conflict, a fear of potential armageddon, continued to paralyse political and social relationships.

### Fear of being the loser

A generalised desire for peace is only the first step, however. As has become clear since 1994, peace, like Heinz, can come in at least 57 varieties. Victory at the end of a war brings peace, in the sense of ending conflict. But such a peace is built on a clear distinction between winners and losers. The possibility that the peace on offer might be indistinguishable from losing continues to haunt the Irish peace process. Fear of being the loser, justified or not, may yet drive some to continue the war. In a conflict between innocents, where everyone is apparently justified in their own violence because it is seen as merely reactive to the violence of others, the peace process at times has degenerated into a series of demands that other people should change. Peace means that "the others," whoever they may be, should stop their violence. Until then, "we" can do nothing. The risks of passively slipping back to reciprocal violence because "they" won't do what they need to for peace remains.

### Doubt about ownership

A peace without losers remains the holy grail of Irish politics. For it to be possible, the process must change everyone and the procession must be everyone's. At the core of the Irish peace process there is a doubt about ownership. The root of this model of peacemaking in the dialogues within nationalism between John Hume for the nonviolent Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) and Gerry Adams for Sinn Fein was enough to set alarm bells ringing among unionists. Of course, unionists and their largely Protestant supporters wanted an end to political violence,

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**Duncan Morrow** is a lecturer in politics at the University of Ulster. The photographs by **Bill Rolston**, a professor of sociology at the University of Ulster, are from his book, *Drawing Support, Murals in the North of Ireland* (Belfast: Beyond the Pale Publications).

but not if violence was to be replaced with a new and more powerful worldwide political attack on their position. The language of a peace process, with its emphasis on movement being articulated so enthusiastically by Irish republicans and nationalists, contained for them its own looming threat. A peace process with nationalists cast in the role of processors left unionists convinced that they were to be processed.

### A path for Sinn Fein

A serious upsurge in political tension in October 1993 led the British and Irish governments to accelerate their own search for a new initiative in Northern Ireland. The result was the Downing Street Declaration, in which the British and Irish governments effectively restated the principles of the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985, but with two significant additions: The Declaration was warmly welcomed by all of the democratic parties in Britain and Ireland outside Northern Ireland and was explicitly aimed at providing a path for Sinn Fein to join talks on the future of Northern Ireland once the IRA called a halt to political violence. With British-Irish political consensus, Northern Irish unionists and republicans faced the prospect of isolation from the source and object of their respective political strengths and affections.

*The possibility that the peace on offer might be indistinguishable from losing continues to haunt the Irish peace process.*

### Unionist resistance

The peace process, with its roots in Hume-Adams and the Downing Street Declaration, lacked a clear unionist partner. "Processes," with their emphasis on movement and change, always make those who fear a loss of power nervous. But when the Clinton Administration made clear its strong and active support for the new initiative, both republicans and unionists were forced to face ever greater consequences of refusing to cooperate. As Gerry Adams toured the United States in triumph, unionists, with their insistence that Northern Ireland is a matter of domestic United Kingdom politics, saw the renewed interest less as a gift than a threat. But while the temptation for unionists to sulk in a corner was always going to be hard to resist, the risks of taking a back seat were all too clear. Unionists were shaken to their foundations by their experience of 1985, when the British Government under Mrs. Thatcher signed the Anglo-Irish Agreement without consulting them. Furthermore, the Agreement had proved impervious to the considerable unionist effort to destroy it. While the more fundamental unionists, especially around the veteran ultra-Protestant Ian Paisley, professed their undiminished opposition to any dealing with Sinn Fein or the Irish Government, the mainstream Ulster Unionist Party adopted a less strident approach, especially after the British government reiterated that any change in the status of Northern Ireland would only take place following a referendum and the agreement of the major Northern Irish political parties. The decision of loyalist paramilitaries to join the peace process by declaring their own ceasefire confirmed that, in theory at least, a new window of opportunity existed.

### The decommissioning roadblock

The search for co-ownership at the core of the process, however, was to prove a repeating theme. Irish nationalists have historically regarded the British government as their primary negotiating partner, able to pressurise unionism at will. Many therefore expected a swift reaction

## Peace process players

**PLACES**

**Northern Ireland**: the six-county region partitioned from the rest of Ireland in 1921, as a Protestant-majority state belonging to the United Kingdom. Under direct British rule.

**The Republic of Ireland, Eire, Ireland**: the Catholic-majority state which gained independence from Britain in 1921, centered in Dublin.

**POSITIONS**

**Nationalists**: primarily Catholic supporters of the reunification of Ireland as one nation. The term "**republican**" generally refers to nationalists who are prepared to use force to achieve their goal.

**Unionists**: primarily Protestant supporters of retaining Northern Ireland's union with the United Kingdom. The term "**loyalist**" tends to connote those for whom Protestant (as opposed to British) identity is paramount, and who believe in a covenantal loyalty between Britain and Northern Irish Protestants.

**PARTIES**

**Ulster Unionist Party**: the main party of the unionist establishment. Led by **David Trimble**.

**Social Democratic and Labour Party**: moderate nationalist party led by **John Hume**.

**Sinn Fein**: republican party which supports the armed struggle of the IRA. Led by **Gerry Adams**.

**Democratic Unionist Party**: mainly working-class unionist party led by loyalist minister **Ian Paisley**.

**PROBLEMS**

**Decommissioning**: Hotly debated issue of IRA disarmament. The initial demand for decommissioning prior to Sinn Fein's inclusion in the peace talks brought an end to the first IRA

*continued on page 11*

to the calling of the ceasefire. In reality, however, the unwillingness of unionists to engage with Sinn Fein until the ceasefire had become "permanent" rather than "complete" created an enormous difficulty for the weak Conservative administration. In contrast to many nationalist assumptions, Britain could not simply "deliver" the unionists to any talks. John Major's government, conscious that it could soon be forced to rely on unionist votes in parliament and aware of a considerable number of unionist sympathisers in its own ranks, sought instead to secure voluntary unionist participation in the process. But in supporting unionist demands that the IRA should decommission it weapons before entering talks as a sign of the permanent good intentions behind the ceasefire, they enraged the IRA and alienated the majority of Irish nationalists. In the absence of any other gestures, especially over the early release of prisoners, many in the Catholic community began to suspect that the peace process was a British stitch-up.

The visible split between the British and Irish governments over decommissioning left the peace process without any firm inter-communal partnership. The alignment of the British government with the unionists confirmed nationalist fears that the British were not serious. Meanwhile, the refusal of constitutional nationalists, throughout Ireland, to demand disarmament by the IRA was held to be proof of general nationalist bad faith by unionists. Shortly before President Clinton's triumphal visit to Ireland in November 1995, an international commission into decommissioning under U.S. Senator George Mitchell was cobbled together. Mitchell's principles, more specifically the idea that decommissioning should take place in parallel with progress in the peace negotiations, was in many ways a master-stroke of diplomatic fudge. When [former British Prime Minister] John Major was seen to undermine the commission, intentionally or not, by a begrudging acceptance of its findings and the erection of a further hurdle to talks for Sinn Fein, the IRA signalled its alienation with a bomb at Canary Wharf in the heart of London's docklands.


**Republican street mural, reproduction of a "Cormac" cartoon from *An Phoblacht/Republican News*.** Bill Rolston

### Marching rights dispute

For 18 months, the whole peace process appeared to be slowly disintegrating for want of a clear direction. Elections to a peace forum, in which Sinn Fein did exceptionally well, were marred by the continuing IRA campaign which disqualified Sinn Fein from taking their place at the negotiating table. The atmosphere between communities on the ground was also being poisoned as a result of the escalating dispute over marching rights. The irony that exclusive processions were threatening the pursuit of an inclusive process went largely unremarked.

Residents in overwhelmingly Catholic districts started to object openly to the annual parades of the exclusively Protestant Orange Order in their neighbourhoods. When the police sought to block such a march at Drumcree near Portadown in July 1996, the Orange Order and their supporters brought public life in many parts of Northern Ireland to a standstill. The police decision after four days of rioting and blockades to allow the march after all, and the use of brute force to secure the Orange route, resulted in widespread Catholic outrage. The fragile plant of less antagonistic community relations could be seen withering under the stress of the hostile street confrontations.

The two potential axes of a broadly-based peace seemed to be diminishing rapidly rather than strengthening. Inter-governmental relations remained impaled on decommissioning. Meanwhile, Northern Ireland's political communities, Protestant and Catholic by tradition, seemed less inclined than ever to seek a mutually inclusive political relationship. While there was little doubt that the vast majority in Northern Ireland had no appetite for a return to inter-communal killing, the absence of an agreed version of what peace might mean was becoming a serious flaw.

### New hope, new tensions

The sin of extrapolation is to draw lessons from today's trends about inevitable paths tomorrow. The election of new governments in London and Dublin in May and June transformed an apparently moribund situation. Suddenly, calculations in the republican movement favoured re-engagement in the peace process. A more confident British govern-

ment signalled its preparedness to fudge the decommissioning precondition, while [new British Prime Minister] Tony Blair simultaneously expressed his own expectation that Northern Ireland would remain within the United Kingdom at the end of the process.

On the surface, however, the tensions were rising. The improved climate between the two governments was almost derailed by a renewed crisis over the Orange parades issue [see story, p. 12]. While the public remained largely uninformed about developments in the consultations between the governments and Sinn Fein, the atmosphere between the communities was becoming dangerously violent. When an Orange Parade was forced through at Drumcree in July few were predicting the breakout of peace. Indeed, the potential for serious inter-community violence appeared to be greater than at any time since the 1970s. Only a historically unprecedented, and internally divisive, decision by the Orange Order to avoid the most serious flashpoints at a number of venues prevented a widely predicted disaster. Within a week, the situation was further transformed by the announcement of a renewed IRA ceasefire.

*The irony that exclusive processions were threatening the pursuit of an inclusive process went largely unremarked.*

### Edging toward talks

The Blair government in Britain signalled its intention to avoid the long delays which had so threatened the previous ceasefire. There was little jubilation in any area about the second ceasefire. But perhaps the very absence of unrealistic expectation created the climate for real movement for the first time. Irish republicanism had now chosen the political over the military path for the second time in three years.

Unionists, too, though unhappy about decommissioning, were faced with a serious possibility that they might be blamed for the failure of inclusive talks. Despite serious splits within the Protestant community, the largest unionist group edged slowly towards talking directly with all parties.

In political terms, then, the process is suddenly alive. The contradictory goals of unionism and nationalism remain, if taken at face value, irreconcilable. But the need to show a willingness to include others in front of an international audience has put enormous international and intergovernmental pressure on all exclusivist actors.

While the potential for breakdown exists all too clearly, the costs for any party which is seen to destroy Northern Ireland's best hope for political peace in 75 years, whether republican or unionist, are very serious. As such, there is a sense in which the process, guaranteed by the governments, may now own the parties rather than the other way around.

The outcome and the destination remain uncertain, but a much-maligned effort produced by the British and Irish governments in 1995, known as the Framework Documents, appears to offer the best clues about the shape and scope of any thinkable settlement. For as long as the talking goes on, it seems at least possible to believe that an inclusive political settlement for the North of Ireland will rest on the reality of the setting as an interface between different peoples rather than any romantic myth of exclusive ownership by one group against another. **TW**

ceasefire. Sinn Fein has now been included with the understanding that decommissioning will take place in parallel with progress in the talks.

**Marching rights**: The right to hold sectarian marches along traditional routes. Until recently, insisted upon by members of the Orange Order and others, over the objections of communities (mainly Catholic) they passed through [see story, p. 12].

### PAPERS AND POLITICS

**Anglo-Irish Agreement**: an international agreement signed by the British and Irish governments in 1985, asserting that any change in the status of Northern Ireland could come about only with the consent of the majority of the people of Northern Ireland. It also acknowledged the Republic's legitimate interest in Northern Ireland, and committed both governments to promoting a devolved (locally run) government in Northern Ireland that could be supported by all parties.

**Hume-Adams dialogue**: discussions between John Hume of the SDLP and Gerry Adams of Sinn Fein held during 1993, with the goal of finding areas of agreement and making joint progress toward their shared aim of British withdrawal.

**Downing Street Declaration**: a joint British-Irish document issued in 1993, reiterating the principles of the Anglo-Irish agreement, stating that any decision on the future of the union was to be ratified both north and south of the border, announcing a Forum for Reconciliation set up by the Irish government for dialogue between parties in Northern Ireland, and providing for North-South cooperation.

**Framework Documents**: a joint British-Irish document issued in 1995, outlining a framework for internal government in Northern Ireland and intergovernmental relations.

# The Orange parades: marching to quell anxiety

by Bob Mulvihill

On July 12, 1991, a Protestant friend of mine asked if I'd be interested in seeing the big man preach at an Independent Orange Lodge parade in Ballycastle, Northern Ireland. I knew, of course, that he was talking about Ian Paisley, and so I eagerly accepted the invitation. I'd seen Orange Lodges and Apprentice Boys of Derry practicing for the Twelfth before, but never had I been involved in the parade itself. So much was and is made of the Twelfth parades that I couldn't wait to get a direct look.

I wasn't disappointed. Big drums, the Reverend himself, Bible in hand, marching through the streets of seaside Ballycastle, orange sashes and families ready for a festive day. After the parade itself was over, the crowd spilled onto a football pitch for a picnic and speeches. Political rhetoric filled the air, but it was not until Paisley began to fulminate against the pagan Catholics who desecrated the body of Christ that I became self-conscious.

From the earliest times, the Twelfth parades have been a major source of discord. In 1782, a Catholic wrote the following for a newspaper column:

*On Tuesday last the Gentlemen called Orange Boys, who have desolated the County Armagh during the last year, paraded publicly in large bodies, with orange cockades and colours flying, through the towns of Lurgan, Waringstown, Portadown, etc. Their colours, which were new and costly, bore on one side King William on horseback, and (will it be believed?) on the reverse King George the Third!!!! This banditti, who have hunted upwards of 700 families from their homes and their all — who have put the Catholics of the County out of the "King's Peace," parade in open day bearing the King's effigy, and sanctioned by the magistrates!!!*

Ask any recent visitor and you'll find that not much seems to have changed. Arches across the streets proclaim "no surrender," curbsides get new coats of red, white and blue paint, the Union Jack is everywhere to be seen and bunches of Sweet William and Orange Lilies are attached to the drums used in the marches. Among the many questions one could ask about the parades, I'll pose two: What is it about these marches that is so confusing to us and yet so important to Ulster's Protestants?

Most Americans know far more about the Catholics of Northern Ireland and their cause than they do of Protestants. What little we think we know of the latter convinces us that they are attached to religion in an anachronistic manner and are generally intolerant. The infamous parades seem a parody of religious expression. We tire of such displays and wonder what all the fuss is about.

*Arches across the streets proclaim "no surrender," curbsides get new coats of red, white and blue paint, the Union Jack is everywhere to be seen and bunches of Sweet William and Orange Lilies are attached to the drums used in the marches.*

Protestants, themselves, have had a very difficult time telling their story, when they have bothered to try. A Protestant leader of the Ulster Defense Association, a man closely associated with paramilitary activities, asked me a few years back if I could help persuade the U.S. State Department to permit him to travel to the U.S. I told him what I presumed was obvious: that I was an academic doing research in Northern Ireland and that the State Department would have little interest in my thoughts about a man they regarded as a terrorist. He seemed genuinely disappointed. Only recently have Protestant leaders taken seriously the need to tell others of their predicament, as they see it.

Contrary to prevailing stereotypes, there is considerable division in the Protestant community regarding the marches. The Irish writer Dervla Murphy points out that there really are two different types of Twelfth marches.

"It can be taken either as a super-deluxe, hyper-Bank-Holiday-cum-Folk Festival or as a militant demonstration of Northern Irish Protestant power and the Orange Order's determination to retain that power at the expense of the democratic rights of one-third of the population."

The overwhelming number of parades are peaceful, family-oriented and generally inoffensive to Catholics. In 1996, only 65 out of over 3000 parades provoked some form of governmental or police intervention.

**Robert Mulvihill** is a professor of political science at Rosemont College and co-author of a forthcoming book on politics and peacemaking in Northern Ireland.

While virtually all Protestant political leaders insist that the people have the right to march when and where they choose, many will argue against provocative parade routes, i.e. those passing through Catholic neighborhoods and those known to have been the source of previous disturbances. Moreover, many Protestant leaders, including those representing some of the most extreme Protestant groups, will argue convincingly that violence against Catholics must be prevented because it violates the Protestant conscience.

Why are the parades so important to Protestants? According to Northern Irish writer Rosanne Cecil, "parades are the very stuff of Protestant politics." At one level, they are celebrations, of Protestantism, Orangeism and Unionism. Indeed, because of the very close links between these three faiths and the establishment of the Northern Ireland state, the parades celebrate the state itself. The problem, of course, is that it is their state, a Protestant state for a Protestant people. Catholics are presumed to be disloyal to this state.

These parades, especially those on the Twelfth of July, commemorate not just the battle won in 1690, but the continuing battle against the enemy within, the Catholic republican effort aimed at the extinction of the Protestant people in Ireland and later in Northern Ireland. (In this sense, many Protestants are much like the white people of South Africa whom the American anthropologist Vincent Crapanzano described as "waiting," waiting for the inevitable end.) How is it, visitors will ask, that Protestants are able to sustain the myth of 1690 with such intensity, as though the historic event were actually part of the living memory of the community? According to Jennifer Todd, a political science professor in Dublin, the parades "provide a motivation and rationale for the continuing battle and they imaginatively resolve the existing contradictions faced by Northern Protestants by having them win the battle."

It is commonplace to refer to the Protestant people, faced as they believe they are with the threat of extinction, as living in a state of siege. They must be hypervigilant because their position in Ireland and in Northern Ireland was and is threatened by two major factors, Catholic encroachment and British abandonment. Indeed, it is these fears, both real and imagined, of encroachment and abandonment that testify to the failure of the Protestant people to dominate the country in any stable fashion.

Always in the Protestant mind was the anxiety that Catholics would try to undo the political settlement that assured the Protestant place in Ireland and in the United Kingdom. It was a worldview in which Protestant survival depended on Catholic suppression. Protestants were required to be hypervigilant with respect to the traitors in their midst. This constant sense of threat gave rise to the self-defense tradition of marching and banding in which small groups of Protestants organized for protection in the face of weak central government and later, by the end of the 16th century, to subdue or eliminate potential Catholic challenges. The legendary Orange Order, the sponsor of the parades, founded in the 1790s, continues to this day to organize Protestant determination to resist the inevitable Catholic threat.


**Members of the Orange Order march through Belfast in 1996 as fires from sectarian riots smolder in the background.** Andrew Holbrooke, ENS

*"It can be taken either as a super-deluxe, hyper-Bank-Holiday-cum-Folk Festival or as a militant demonstration of Northern Irish Protestant power."* — *Dervla Murphy*

This aptly de-

# Ireland's colonial history

The colonization of Ireland began in the twelfth century, when the Normans under Henry II of England captured Dublin. For several centuries, English influence seldom extended beyond the "Pale," a narrow strip of land surrounding Dublin. The colonizing of Ulster — the region of today's Northern Ireland — took off in 1607.

Colonizers, who included everyone from fugitive criminals to London financiers, were required to clear their estates completely of native Irish, but in practice needed them as laborers. While many of the early settlers merged with the native population, later colonists retained their religious and political distinctiveness. Colonists were required to take an oath of allegiance to Protestantism to get land. The dispossessed native Irish were Catholic.

In 1685, when James II attempted to recatholicize his kingdoms, the English aristocracy named a new king, William III. William defeated James in Ireland at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690, and consolidated his victory the following year at Aughrim in 1691 on July 12 — still the biggest celebration in the Ulster Protestant calendar.

From 1691 onwards penal laws dispossessed Catholics and dissenting Protestants of their land and denied them religious freedom, voting rights and education. A series of revolts, some led by Protestants, challenged the colonial system.

In 1846 the potato crop — staple food of the rural Irish — failed. Although the peasants produced enough food, they were forced to sell it to pay rent. Throughout the Famine ships left Ireland for England laden with grain and cattle. More than a million people died and at least as many emigrated to the U.S.

In the late nineteenth century, the campaign for "home rule" gained momentum. After most adult men in the U.K. won voting rights in 1884, Irish nationalists regularly won 80 percent of Irish parliamentary seats at Westminster. In 1912, when a home rule bill seemed destined to pass, outraged Irish loyalists launched the Ulster Volunteer Force and pledged to seize control of Ulster. The British government promised special arrangements for Ulster after the First World War ended.

Convinced that constitutional methods were doomed to failure, a small group of republicans staged the Easter Rising in 1916, seizing key buildings in Dublin. The execution of its leaders rallied public opinion behind the rebels; the republican party, Sinn Fein, won the first post-war election by a landslide. Its members refused to go to Westminster, instead forming their own parliament, Dail Eireann. A guerilla war ensued between the IRA and the British forces.

Britain's response was to divide Ireland in two, forming six of Ulster's nine counties (those most heavily Protestant) into Northern Ireland. In 1921, Britain withdrew from the new Irish Free State (now Eire, or the Republic of Ireland).

Northern Ireland, as a province of the U.K., was ruled by its own parliament, Stormont. Catholics suffered systematic discrimination and the abuse of security measures enforced by an overwhelmingly Protestant police and judiciary.

In the 1960s, a Northern Ireland civil rights movement met with widespread support, but also with violence from extreme loyalists, leading to the re-emergence of the IRA. When rioting broke out in Derry and Belfast the British government sent in troops to restore order. The British started trying to end discrimination in housing and local elections, but Catholics' initial welcome soon dissipated when the army cracked down hard on civil-rights protest. When internment without trial was introduced in 1971, nearly all those imprisoned were Catholics. At a march in Derry in 1973, 13 civilians were shot by British paratroopers in the incident infamous as Bloody Sunday. Two months later direct rule from Westminster was imposed.

Britain's attempt to restore local rule in 1974 was brought down by a loyalist workers' strike. For the next decade Britain treated the problem as one of law and order rather than politics, a policy which backfired in 1981, when republican prisoners went on hunger strike to demand political status. As 10 men starved to death without the Thatcher government giving ground, the republican cause gained support. When Britain set up another elected assembly in 1982, nationalist members refused to take their seats.

In the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985, the British government conceded a special role for the Irish Republic, while the Irish government agreed that the country could be reunified only with the consent of the majority in the North. The Agreement was reached without consulting unionists; their sense of betrayal increased, along with loyalist paramilitary violence. Northern Ireland seemed stalemated until talks between nationalist leaders John Hume and Gerry Adams, followed by the Downing Street Declaration of 1993, reawakened hope.

*[Adapted and reprinted with permission from* The New Internationalist, *Box 1143, Lewiston, NY 14092.]*

scribes the situation of Protestants in relation to Catholics, not only in Ireland historically, but in Northern Ireland since partition, as well. Protestants could not provide for themselves that for which they most yearned, a high degree of security for a Protestant Ulster. The drive for security will also produce aggressive actions if the state either requires a very high degree of security or feels menaced by the very presence of the "other." Thus Protestants called on the combined services of Orange Lodges, the Apprentice Boys of Derry, the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the British Army. And yet these anti-Catholic practices and politics only deepened the enduring threat posed by a dispossessed Catholic population. Despite the futility of this search for security, loyalists persisted because domination was seen as the only alternative to humiliation.

Ulster loyalism is dominance, Todd tells us, "and most would agree, but it is not as uncomplicated as that assertion sounds. Protestants enjoyed a powerful advantage in Northern Ireland, but as their acute fears remind us, they were never really in control of the region."

To be dominant in a system is not to dominate the system. Both the dominant and the dominated are equally caught in it. One has the advantage, the other does not.

We know that anxiety increases as the shape of a political system begins to change. The Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985 threatened the heart of the covenantal arrangement between Ulster's Protestants and the British government. Not only did the British allow for the possibility of a united Irish state, but they also permitted the Republic of Ireland to plan an active and formal role in the governance of Northern Ireland.

It was no accident, then, that the number of loyalist Protestant parades grew from 1,897 in 1985 to 2,581 in 1995. The parades are a "ritual restoration of the proper order," an order which Protestants saw slipping away from them.


**Protestant march on the Shankill Road in 1993 to commemorate the anniversary of the death of a comrade in arms.** Christina Cahill/Impact Visuals

The anxiety spilled over in the summer of 1996 when a dispute between the Orange Lodges and Catholic residents over a parade passing by the Drumcree parish church brought Northern Ireland close to anarchy. The police first prohibited and then permitted the march, alternately angering first loyalists and then nationalists. The dispute resulted in two deaths, substantial communal polarization and serious disruption of the peace process.

It is stunning, therefore, that compromises over parade routes, only a year after Drumcree, helped to create the conditions required for the peace talks to be resumed. Loyalist and Orange leadership reciprocated the IRA's cease-fire with an agreement to re-route several parades away from controversial sites.

"Where you could walk, you were dominant," was a characteristic summary of the Protestant insistence on parading at will.

Both sides had offered persuasive and significant compromises: the IRA had stopped the violence and loyalists had abandoned the effort to dominate. Whether there is any possibility of a vital relationship between the Protestant and Catholic peoples can now be examined at the negotiating table and in discussions within and between communities throughout Northern Ireland. TW

*Indeed, it is these fears, both real and imagined, of encroachment and abandonment that testify to the failure of the Protestant people to dominate the country in any stable fashion.*

# Corrymeela: sowing seeds of trust

by Meg Egan

Gerard Campbell didn't know the difference between "Protestant" and "Catholic" until he turned 10, he says. That year, the Portadown neighbors he'd grown to know as friends—the same ones he played ball with after school—turned on his and three other families with bricks, breaking windows and dumping paint on their homes. Neighbors spat as the Campbells moved from River Way to another street just off the Garvaghy Road: Portadown's tiny Catholic neighborhood, a site best known for sectarian marches and deadly, explosive violence. That's the day Campbell's mother explained what Catholic and Protestant mean in Northern Ireland. "We're not welcome here," she said simply.

Conversely, where Aileen O'Reilly grew up, in the Republic of Ireland, most folks didn't talk about religion—at least, not the young people. In Ballymun, a housing estate within Dublin's city limits but miles psychologically from Trinity College and the pastoral St. Stephen's Green, young people struggling to get by on their families' low incomes worried more about jobs than spiritual development.

"Religion was never an issue. No one ever asked you if you were a Catholic or a Protestant or a Christian," O'Reilly says. "People went to Mass on Sunday, but that was it." And Northern Ireland, she says, "was too far away to bother thinking about."

Campbell, 26, and O'Reilly, 21, grew up on the same island, a place whose name changes with the company one keeps. The physical miles between Portadown and Dublin measure in the hundreds, but only a radical approach to community-building could bridge the ideological distance keeping most of the citizens of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland apart. At the Corrymeela Center in Ballycastle, on the island's Antrim Coast, even simple exercises can have radical results: Pouring a cup of tea for a stranger can be the first step toward a change of heart as dramatic as convincing staunch unionists and Sinn Fein to sit at the same table at Stormont. A program developed at Corrymeela, the Seed Group, brings young people from both sides of the border together for six weekends over a period of six months; while "the troubles" may never actually enter the conversation, participants generally find their interaction puts an end to stereotypes they associate with people from the other side. They talk together, eat together, travel together and, in the end, most learn that as individuals, they aren't so different after all. Campbell, O'Reilly, and other former Seed Group participants gathered at Corrymeela in September for a reunion. Laughter abounded.

*At the Corrymeela Center in Ballycastle, on the island's Antrim Coast, even simple exercises can have radical results: Pouring a cup of tea for a stranger can be the first step toward a change of heart as dramatic as convincing staunch unionists and Sinn Fein to sit at the same table at Stormont.*

**The Seed Group program**

Founded in 1965, the Corrymeela Community draws its members from many different Christian traditions. Corrymeela is a dispersed community; its 180 members rally around a commitment to seek the healing of social, religious, and political divisions in Northern Ireland and throughout the world. Corrymeela's Ballycastle center welcomes guests from all backgrounds, whether Christian, non-Christian, or non-religious. About 6,500 people visit each year, attending a variety of programs that fall under five main headings: schools, youth, families, Christian education, and "open events." The community developed the Seed Group program in an effort to encourage cross-community relationships among young people who might then become resources for each other, for Corrymeela, and for the community at large. The Seed Group name comes from the parable of the mustard seed and the belief that the tiniest seed, sown well, can grow into something massive.

"I don't think I would be where I am today if it weren't for Seed Group," Campbell says plainly. Now a community activist living in the U.S., Campbell first visited Corrymeela with a Jesuit priest who was showing the Antrim coastline to a friend; Campbell went along for the ride. "I came through the front door, and people just make you feel so welcome," he says. When he was invited to join the Seed Group, Campbell's republican fam-

**Meg Egan** is a social worker and freelance journalist living and working as a volunteer at the Corrymeela Center in Ballycastle until September, 1998. For the safety of those who participate in their programs, Corrymeela requested that their faces not appear in photos.

ily wasn't particularly enthusiastic about it, but Campbell came anyway. A quiet person, he says he usually wouldn't have opened his mouth in a group setting. But as the months passed and he grew more intimate with the others, Campbell found that looking forward to Seed Group "kept me going month to month."

Four adults coordinate the program, recruiting some 15 young people ages 18 to 25, male and female, from a mixture of religions and from both rural and urban areas in Northern Ireland and the Republic. Each weekend addresses a particular theme; the first usually focuses on participants' personal histories. Once they know about each other and have shared a few laughs, in later weekends they address family relations, relationships outside the home, politics and spirituality. Finally, the Seed Group travels the following summer to another country, where together they learn about another culture's ways.

**An atmosphere of acceptance**

At their initial meeting, the Seed Group's first task is to draw up a contract outlining how they plan to work together. This typically means agreeing that the information shared within the group stays within the group, and that participants strive to create an atmosphere in which no one feels pressure to divulge private or painful information, one in which each person's views are heard and differing opinions respected.

"People accept you the way you are," says Joan Wilson, 24, who plans to stay connected to Corrymeela now that her Seed Group experience has ended. Wilson comes from Enniskillen, in County Fermanagh; she calls Corrymeela "a haven" and the Seed Group, a chance to learn that "the other side isn't alien. They're just like us." Away from everyday realities, from the police and the television clips that focus so much on violence, the Seed Group offers participants a bit of a holiday, and that frees them up to meet one another as people, not labels. By the time participants find out each others' religious leanings, Wilson says, they already like one another. "We never discussed the troubles," she says. "What religious side you come from isn't apparent or isn't visible ... It's very clever." Rather than learning what categories the others fall into, participants learn what others think and have the freedom to ask why.

Mick Colton, 23, laughs when he imagines sharing the kinds of talks he had at Seed Group weekend "with the lads at the pub." There are two issues he's never heard chewed on at a pub in Ballymun, Colton says: religion and politics. "All we'd talk about [there] is football and women. It's hard to talk about spirituality," he says, laughing. Children in Dublin schools almost automatically grow into nationalists, he says. Being part of a Seed Group led him to examine the views he once held by default. "I just want, I suppose, peace now," he says. "I want it to be peaceful."

**Risking commitment**

Recruitment for the Seed Group hasn't always been easy. Corrymeela Community members and staff are well-connected with youth organizations and schools throughout both the Republic and Northern Ireland, but entering a group alone takes self-confidence and at least a little courage. Not every young person wants to take the risk.

"It was a little bit awkward," says Niall Browne, 24, from Enniskillen. He'd been doing data processing for the Corrymeela office in Belfast when he heard about Seed Group. The opportunity to meet other people his age was attractive, but when he discovered that others in the group already knew one another, Browne got nervous. "Then I

**Corrymeela volunteers leading children on a walk to the beach.**

realized that even the ones who came up in groups felt as out of place as I did," he says. In addition to overcoming the inevitable nervousness, participants also must be willing to devote six weekends over a six-month span. When individual members don't commit, the entire Seed Group suffers.

"I didn't feel there was commitment from the group," says Jackie Duffy, 24, who comes from Belfast. Out of a group of 17, at least five or six participants were missing from each of her Seed Group weekends in 1991-92. Duffy reasons that not everyone was as "into" Corrymeela as she (Duffy visited Corrymeela as a school girl and "just kind of fell for the place"). In addition, her Seed Group experience did not include the trip abroad "which, to be honest, would have been an incentive to come up," she says.

The trip abroad is meant to be a chance for the group to further experience and bond around their similarities, as they experience the mysteries of another culture. But it may also be the carrot that convinces wary Seed Group participants to come to Corrymeela in the first place.

**Peace and romance**

The chance to make friends—and the possibility of romance—also draw young people to the Seed Group. "It's not that they don't believe in peace," says Helen Rooney, 31, a member of the Corrymeela Centre staff, but most of the young people are more enticed by the chance to meet peers than by "the peace the justice thing." Rooney's first visit to Ballycastle was as a participant in the Seed Group. Her mother, a librarian at a Catholic Boys' school in Belfast, arrived home one Thursday night and announced to Helen that she would be spending the weekend at a place called Corrymeela. "And I said, "What's Corrymeela?" Rooney remembers. If given more than a night to think about it, Rooney probably wouldn't have gone through with it, she says; another 24 hours and she likely would have balked at spending a weekend with strangers. But that weekend became the beginning of a long-standing relationship with the Corrymeela Community.

Rooney's bus from Belfast arrived at Corrymeela at 10 p.m. on a dark, windy October night. "We were taken to this very warm room with a lovely open fire," she recalls. When the ice-breaker exercises began, she says, "I thought, 'God they're mad.'" Because the success of a Seed Group depends on participants' trust for one another, the staff spends a lot of time leading team-building exercises and silly action songs. Learning to fall backwards into the arms of the other participants, singing raucously, and sharing clean-up duties after tea lead to a familiarity which encourages openness.

At the Seed Group reunion, past participants spoke warmly of the trust that grew—and that remains. Aileen O'Reilly met most of her "true friends—as in deep" during her Seed Group experience. "I talk to them in a true way, a spiritual way," she says. "There's people there I would sort of, like, put my life in their hands."

A slogan touted by Corrymeela Community members says that "Corrymeela begins when you leave." In learning to listen, in learning to value difference and respect others' views, Seed Group participants may grow to be more compassionate adults: citizens who strive for peaceful ends to conflicts, whether in their own homes or across borders.

The Seed Group "is a model for Northern Ireland, basically," says Niall Browne. "Mutual understanding. At the end of the day, that's what it's all about." TW

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## Boardroom diversity

The United States Trust Company (investment managers specializing in services for investors with social concerns) reports that for seven years they have been voting against slates of directors of companies that do not include both women and minorities. The good news is that the number of women and members of racial minorities in corporate boardrooms continues to increase, albeit slowly. However, there is little evidence that increases in board diversity improve diversity in the rest of the organization. On the contrary, some earlier preliminary research found that where racial minorities are present on boards, minorities are less likely to be among senior managers.

The news on the issue of economic empowerment of women and minorities in the marketplace is mixed. Women today earn just 72 cents on the dollar, compared to the pay of men in similar positions. While this is modest progress from the 59 cents on a dollar women earned in 1970, it also points out how far we still have to go.

For African-American men the news is more discouraging. A recent University of Massachusetts study found that in 1996, African-American men earned 76.5% of the pay of white men in similar jobs, a decrease from 78% in 1990.

**— *Values*, 7/97**

## For the healing of the nations

Church World Service (CWS) is celebrating its 50th anniversary with a "pilgrimage of prayer" in their Jubilee year.

For a half century CWS has embodied the mutual commitment of U.S. churches to life-giving ministries. In flood, drought, war and famine CWS provides emergency aid, often remaining after the crisis to accompany long-term development. Support of U.S. churches' resettlement of refugees at home complements ministry to refugees worldwide.

*For the Healing of the Nations* is a 30-day devotion booklet for this jubilee celebration and is available for $3 from CWS, Box 968, Elkhart, IN 46515-0968.

## Green taxes work

Green taxes work, say the Swedes. Environmental taxes in Sweden amount to only 6 percent of the country's tax revenue, yet theirs is one of the world's largest exercises in using taxes to protect the environment. Taxes on sulphur dioxide emissions resulted in a 30 percent reduction in acid rain between 1989 and 1995. The tax on fertilizers has led to an estimated 10 percent reduction in use. The program has caused power stations to switch over to burning self-renewing brushwood rather than fossil fuels, and cleaned up diesel emissions. Other taxes cover nitrogen fertilizers, pesticides, the scrapping of cars, water pollution, and gravel extraction. Sweden's Environmental Protection Agency has released an evaluation of the taxes, which were phased in starting in 1984. "Taxes work better than environmental regulations," said Rolf Annerberg, the agency's director-general.

**— *Timeline*, 9-10/97**

## The Breakfast Club

In September, 50 Christian leaders in the Chicago area began engaging in an experiment in "racial reconciliation" called The Breakfast Club. Each has covenanted to meet for breakfast each month with another member of the group — a person of another race — over the course of a year for the purpose of discussing race on a one-to-one basis.

"Most programs are far too complicated," says Tom Lach, who will be the facilitator and coordinator of The Breakfast Club. "We must finally move to action after all the sermons, lectures, workshops and rallies by asking busy leaders to participate at the very beginning. We hope to tell the world that this issue of race is finally at the top of our priority list."

The project is sponsored by the Chicago Urban Reconciliation Enterprise (CURE). CURE president, Russ Knight, hopes that after this pilot year, the Breakfast Club will spread throughout the nation.

## Busted for 'anarchy'

When seven Rainforest Action Network protesters boarded a Mitsubishi ship, they expected arrest. But they didn't expect a felony conviction. They got one. Cowlitz County, Wash., threw the book at them. The prosecutor reached back to a 1919 union-busting statute outlawing "felony anarchy and sabotage."

The activists did not damage the Mitsubishi ship during their October 29, 1996 demonstration. They rappelled down the freighter's sides, where they hung a banner that read, "Protect our Forest. Stop raw log exports. Boycott Mitsubishi."

On June 9, a jury found six of them guilty of breaking the anti-sabotage law. On July 22, a Cowlitz County judge sentenced each of them to two years probation and 11 hours of community service. (The seventh protester was already serving a short sentence in Canada for chaining himself to old-growth timber and has not yet been tried.) Rainforest Action Network claims it is the first felony conviction for nonviolent environmental action in U.S. history.

Longview, where the protest took place, is a city of about 30,000 and is home to one of Washington's largest ports. Environmental protests go on all the time there. Deputy prosecutor Sue Baur told the *Longview Daily News* that the county used the anti-sabotage law to deter future protests. "They're not going to do it again here. That's our thinking," she said.

Use of the felony anarchy and sabotage statute worries the protesters. "In Washington, this law can be used arbitrarily now," says Charissa Niles, one of the defendants. "The law doesn't only apply to ships. If a protest affects a business, it can be a felony."

**— Erin Middlewood,**
***The Progressive*, 9/97**

Short takes

# 'Reconciliation is not weakness': an interview with Robin Eames

*Robin Eames, the Archbishop of Armagh, has a reputation for being one of the most thoughtful and open Protestant leaders in Nothern Ireland. He has been active in ecumenical work between Protestant and Roman Catholic church leaders.*

**Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann**: I thought maybe the most constructive thing to do in this interview would be to present to you with a stereotype and let you break that down and introduce nuance to it.
The impression that I get on this side of the Atlantic is that England created a colonial situation in Northern Ireland much like they did in other countries where they've arbitrarily put a small percentage of people in a privileged position, and that the Protestants have been reluctant to let go of that privilege even though it would result in justice for Catholics. From a distance, it looks as though the Protestants are the ones who need to let go of some of the power and influence that they've had. Is that a fair description? Or is it way too simplistic?
**Robin Eames**: How long have you got? I'm afraid it's a very unfair picture and a totally erroneous one. I don't know quite where to begin. The position is simply this: There are two main communities in Northern Ireland — the Roman Catholic and the Protestant. If you're born into a Roman Catholic home, you will be brought up under the political influence of either nationalism or republicanism. If you're born into a Protestant home, you'll be brought up under some influence of unionism. Now because of this over-identification between religion and party politics, it is very, very easy for a person to be judged politically by their religious label and to be judged religiously by their political label. The two communities are roughly 60 percent Protestant, 40 percent Roman Catholic. It's getting closer because of the birthrate, but it's still a majority of Protestants who live in Northern Ireland and it would be almost 100 percent their wish to remain members of the United Kingdom. It's not a question of the British getting out of Northern Ireland, because the Protestants are Irish, but they're British.

The conflict has arisen over the constitutional future of Northern Ireland. Republicans wish to see the border brushed aside to form a united Ireland in which the Protestants feel they would be totally outnumbered and in which their ethos and culture and religion would be sublimated into a foreign state.

And the Provisional IRA, the Irish Republican Army — whose main aim has been to end the British presence in Northern Ireland — has, in fact, been attacking the Protestant community. From within the Protestant community, there has, of course, been paramilitary activity by what are called the loyalist paramilitary gangs.

We're on the verge of political talks which hopefully may produce a political solution which will allow an equality to exist, which will allow a justice position to increase in which there's fair treatment of both sides.

But the instability that would occur with an ignoring of the wishes of the majority would be unbelievable and *that* wish of the majority is justice for both communities, but living within Northern Ireland.
**J.W-K.**: Now my understanding is that things actually have been becoming more equitable — that the economic balance in favor of Protestants has been shifting and is becoming more equal. Is that true?
**R.E.**: Yes, we have the most strict anti-discrimination laws in western Europe. If you employ five or more people, you must account for a balance between the two religions in your employment. That is probably the strictest anti-discrimination law you will ever come across. And I don't think there's anything, knowing your country as I do, to equate with it.

Early on there was definitely discrimination against Roman Catholics in housing, jobs and promotion. I don't deny that and no one with a fair mind would attempt to deny it. But I have to say to you that if you saw Northern Ireland now you would see beautiful houses, excellent education opportunities and, above all, a promotion of Roman Catholics to very senior positions in virtually every walk of life.

*There are times when you've got to represent the feelings of your people, but there are times when it is very important to show that reconciliation is not weakness and that accommodation is not surrender.*

So often in your country I meet people who have this mystical view of Northern Ireland which is based on the past rather than the present. That's why I smiled when you began your analysis,

**Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann** is co-editor/ publisher of *The Witness*.

because I have heard that analysis more times than I've taken a cup of tea.

You'll get large pockets of people living in the United States — particularly on the eastern coast from Boston down to New York, who still believe that that is the situation in Northern Ireland. And it's totally false! There's lots still to be done to get true justice and equality, but the whole situation has evolved in a way which has left that past far behind us.

**J.W-K.**: It was confusing for people from a distance to imagine why Britain would refuse to negotiate with the IRA after the IRA unilaterally agreed to a ceasefire. It seemed like a very courageous thing for the IRA to say that they would have a unilateral ceasefire and we were amazed that they weren't allowed then to come to the table to talk.

**R.E.**: Well, first of all, people are not convinced that it isn't just a tactical exercise, a cynical exercise. People have still to be convinced that this is real peace, because the IRA refuses to surrender its arms. They have murdered and maimed hundreds and hundreds of Protestants, and to ask a population to believe in a matter of weeks or months that that's the end of it is asking a great deal. I've personally buried many, many people who have been murdered by the IRA.

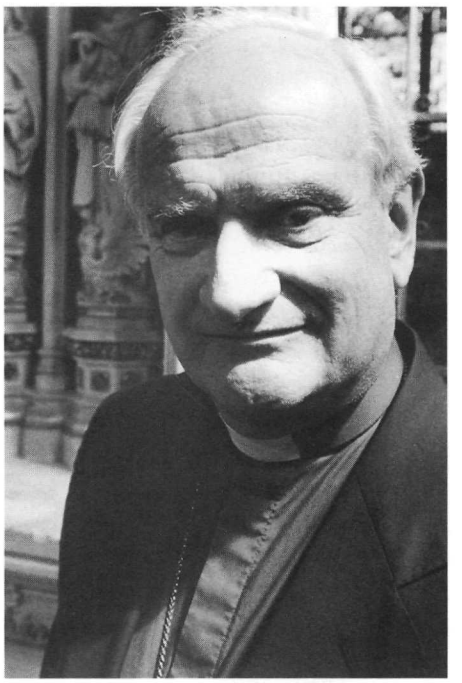
Part of the resentment of the Protestant community against Sinn Fein has been that for years and years Sinn Fein has lectured them in the media about what's needed for peace and at the same time the IRA, of which Sinn Fein is the political voice, has been murdering people. It's not easy to simply say in an instant, "It's all ended and we can believe them."

**J.W-K.**: It seems to me like a lot to ask the IRA to actually surrender their weapons, unless there's going to be a reciprocal collection of the weapons that are in the hands of the Protestants.

**R.E.**: Yes, well, I mean this is the whole point, if I may say so. It's a question of building up trust between the two sides. And in addition to that, it's the process rather than the fact. Process takes time. Nobody here believes that the arms will be given up by either side in an instant.

**J.W-K.**: I guess the thing that I would like to see is a consistent standard. Since there is violence on both sides, there has to be a way that entry into the conversation doesn't make it sound as though the IRA are the only people who use weapons irresponsibly.

**R.E.**: Well, the Mitchell Principles do



**Archbishop Robin Eames** Andrew Holbrooke, ENS

this. They don't equivocate between one side or the other. They talk about democracy in terms of total democracy without a need for arms. And the phrase that I use — and the phrase everyone else who is involved in the movement that I'm involved in would say to you — is that our ultimate aim is to take the gun right out of Irish politics.

**J.W-K.**: I've been doing a little bit of reading about the role of the church. I've heard very good things about your role in helping to negotiate, but in terms of people on the parish level, I've heard that pastors in all the churches feel like they're in a Catch-22. If they don't preach politics, then it looks as though they're irrelevant. If they preach reconciliation, it looks as though they're traitors to their own people. And if they preach the justice concerns of their own people, then it seems like they're fanning the flames of hatred.

**R.E.**: Well, I think you've got that very accurate, if I may say so. I think a lot of clergy feel they're prisoners of the situation. They know what they should be preaching, but very often they're afraid to step out of line with what they know are the views of their people. I use the phrase, "They're hostages." Now I know from my work as a diocesan that in fact this is true of many, many of my clergy.

**J.W-K.**: Is there a way for pastors to get out of the trap? What kind of advice do you give to people when they lament the situation that they're in?

**R.E.**: Well, there is only one path for clergy to tread and that is the path of the Gospel — irrespective of who it hurts or who it hinders, their duty is to preach the Gospel of Christ. Under God every one of us is equal. It's not a question of being a Protestant Christian or a Roman Catholic Christian, it's the question of being a Christian. If you're an ecumenist, as I am, you try to draw the two sides together. There are those would attack me for being weak, saying, "You're not standing up for your side." Now there are times when you've got to represent the feelings of your people and I do so with as much courage and clarity as I can, but on the other hand there are times when it is very important to show that reconciliation is not weakness and that accommodation is not surrender, but that in fact it's the reality and it takes a lot of courage to do it.

**J.W-K.**: Where do you find your hope politically?

**R.E.**: I find it in several bases. Number one, I find it in the resilience of the people

of Northern Ireland who have come through so much and are still living normal lives. Secondly, I believe there's a new dawn coming insofar as politicians are becoming more able to take on board the views of the so-called opposition. And thirdly, I have always believed in the principle that, in time, common sense prevails.

As a Christian, of course, I believe in the ultimate eternity of the Christian faith and I think that with churches working more closely together and with a common attempt to be Christian rather than secular or divisive, that's bound to lead us eventually into the Promised Land.

**J.W-K.**: Is there more cooperation between the Protestant churches and the leadership in the Catholic churches?

**R.E.**: Much, much more than there ever was! For example, we were the first country, I think, in the west to have a regular interdenominational conference which tackled difficult issues. The Methodist, Presbyterian, Church of Ireland and Roman Catholic leaders meet regularly. We're totally committed to the good of all the people in this land and we're striving for that. And I like to say we're achieving it.

**J.W-K.**: Do you have a word to say about how the U.S. could play the most constructive role possible?

**R.E.**: First of all, I believe slowly but surely the fact is getting through in the United States that there are two communities here. Protestants have felt for generations that the only picture the U.S. had of Ireland was the nationalist republican one — that they were the downtrodden people and that they were under the domination of the Protestants. While there's some vestige of truth in that, as I said to you, you've got to recognize that there's a perfect legitimate right to be a unionist and to be a Protestant. People born and brought up here under the Protestant or unionist flag have as much right to live here as the Roman Catholic nationalist or republican.

The second thing is that the U.S. must always appear to be even-handed. For many, many generations it was felt over here that the U.S. was not even-handed. But I believe that under President Reagan and certainly under President Clinton there's a greater recognition of the two communities' right to live together here.

And the third thing to say is that it is mistaken to believe that if the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic disappeared overnight, that this would solve the problem. I think it would provoke far more problems than it would ever solve.

**J.W-K.**: It seems that there's a real dedication in both populations to different governments. I don't know how you resolve that.

**R.E.**: Well, it's been described by some commentators as the irreconcilable problem. As I say, that's part of the challenge and the difficulty for people like me. I'm primator, presiding bishop, of the Church of Ireland in Ireland, which means I have two jurisdictions —Northern Ireland and the Republic. I have to walk on both sides of the border and to deal with two governments and two totally different cultures. And that, believe me, is not easy.

*A lot of clergy feel they're prisoners of the situation. They know what they should be preaching, but very often they're afraid to step out of line with what they know are the views of their people.*

**J.W-K.**: I'm concluding from what you've said that you figure that the most hopeful opportunity is for Northern Ireland to stay within the United Kingdom, but for the laws and the regulations to become even more equitable than they currently are.

**R.E.**: You're very close to it in that. I believe the hope for the future is living with difference and diversity, but living in peace with it. Mutual rights. Mutual respect. Mutual tolerance. But as long as the majority wish Northern Ireland to remain within the United Kingdom, I do not see an alternative to that.

**J.W-K.**: If it were 60-40 the other way, would you believe that going with the Republic of Ireland was the right way to go?

**R.E.**: I think if it was 60-40 the other way, it would be the same question I'm asking only in reverse. I believe that, obviously, in a democratic society, if the majority voted to move within the Republic of Ireland, this would happen. But not all Roman Catholics want a united Ireland! There's a sizable proportion of Roman Catholics who are quite happy to live in the United Kingdom, but they do want justice.

**J.W-K.**: I want to be sure that you knew that we understand that the U.S. has difficult and challenging problems that are every bit as full of violence and confusion and anger as those in Northern Ireland. I wonder if there are social problems that you see *us* facing that you have thoughts on about how we could proceed.

**R.E.**: I don't know that we are yet in a position to teach the rest of the world and I wouldn't want to do that because we have enough problems of our own. But I do see problems like the problem of ethnic minorities being very similar to the problems that people have here.

You just have to see the black-white issue in the U.S. and you've got — with a change of scene — the Roman Catholic-Protestant problem. It's a question of how people relate to each other and how you reach the maximum degree of community harmony. TW

# CPF agrees to meet with union

by Richard W. Gillett

The Church Pension Fund (CPF), responding to a letter last July signed by 80 bishops of the Episcopal Church including Presiding Bishop-elect Frank T. Griswold, has agreed to meet with two representatives of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) to discuss a long-standing labor dispute involving janitors in Washington, D.C. The Fund's board of trustees authorized its Social and Fiduciary Responsibility Committee to meet this month with union representatives and to report back to its December meeting.

As previously reported in *The Witness* [10/97], the bishops' letter, initiated by Los Angeles bishop Frederick H. Borsch and four other bishops (Allen Bartlett of Pennsylvania, Barbara Harris and Thomas Shaw of Massachusetts and Stewart Wood of Michigan) asserts that CPF could be in a position to help bring about a settlement of the janitors' dispute. That dispute, a nine-year struggle by SEIU Local 82 on behalf of the janitors with CarrAmerica, Washington's largest private building owner, could be resolved, the union hopes, through CPF's intervention with Security Capital Group (SCG). SCG has a prestigious contract with CPF as a special investment advisor and is also a 40 percent owner of CarrAmerica through a subsidiary. CPF also has investments in a subsidiary of SCG. Carr has persisted in using only non-union cleaning contractors in the buildings it owns, the bishops stated in their letter to Frank S. Cerveny, executive vice-president and manager of CPF.

Recently Carr's property management arm settled an unfair labor practice complaint by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) for denying union organizers entry to its buildings despite a previous court order granting union organizers access to meet with Carr's contract janitors — Carr thus defying both a court order and the NLRB. It is worth noting that the issuance of a complaint by the NLRB against an employer is a significant statement about a company's actions. Last year only 37 percent of charges filed nationally were found by the NLRB to have merit.

The focus of the labor dispute — well-known in the nation's capital — concerns 230 workers who work in 17 buildings, all non-union, managed or owned by Carr.

*There is a substantial constituency, both church and labor, who are awaiting the outcome of this issue with great interest — and with determination to see justice done.*

The cleaning contractors under Carr pay their janitor employees, many of whom are recent immigrants from Central America, wages of $5.75 to $6 an hour with few if any benefits. Says Ellen Johnson: "I've cleaned Oliver Carr buildings for the last nine years. I am making $6 an hour with no benefits." The federal poverty line for a family of four is $16,000, the full-time equivalent of $7.50 an hour.

Better off is Maria Abrego, who works for a union cleaning company in Washington. "Most of my co-workers and I are older women with a lot of seniority," she says. "With the union we know they can't fire us for any little reason."

The issue of the Washington janitors highlights for CPF its social responsibility as a church institution. In their letter to CPF the bishops expressed the hope that in this situation "where and how the Episcopal Church invests its funds must not be found at variance with our baptismal vows to strive for justice and peace among all people." Acknowledging CPF's recent investment successes (it now has over $3 billion in assets), the bishops assert that "this distinction carries with it a special social responsibility."

Over the years, as the rest of the Episcopal Church and other churches have engaged consistently in shareholder actions, CPF tended to remain aloof from such involvement. More recently it has begun to move somewhat toward a policy of selective investments and toward the voting of proxies on some stockholder resolutions. Now it is challenged to do more.

In this regard, it might take note that some of the large public pension funds, such as the California Public Employees Retirement System and the New York Common Fund, have adopted responsible contractor policies to ensure that the janitors cleaning their real estate investment properties are employed under fair and decent conditions. If with their concern for the pensions of their members they can begin to face up to their wider social responsibilities, much moreso should the pension fund of the church.

Hopefully CPF's trustees will take note that a very large number of bishops, plus both the retiring presiding bishop and the presiding bishop-elect, have expressed in this instance their strong support for the most vulnerable of the working poor. There is a substantial constituency, both church and labor, who are awaiting the outcome of this issue with great interest — and with determination to see justice done to the janitors who clean CarrAmerica's buildings.


**Richard Gillett**, a long-time advocate for economic justice and a former staffer for the Episcopal Church Publishing Company, has been recently appointed minister for social justice for the Diocese of Los Angeles.

# In the wake of struggle:

## the Episcopal Church in El Salvador

### by Ann Stanford

*In August of 1996, my students, a colleague, and I ride in the back of a pickup truck up to the remote and beautiful village of Perquín. As we jolt our way past deep potholes and breathtaking views of the mountains, we discuss the colorful mural painted on the church that anchors the square. On it, I explain, they will see a striking image of Archbishop Oscar Romero. We pull into the square and see only a whitewashed church with slight traces of color visible under the paint.*

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*I am back in El Salvador in March of 1997 on the anniversary of Romero's assassination (1980). Puzzled as to why there are no public proclamations or advertised memorial masses, I am told that the current archbishop thinks it best to ignore Romero's anniversary because it might interfere with the canonization process. (Most people say that the archbishop wants to bury the memory of Romero.) We are in the midst of the dusty, dry season, but that night the skies uncharacteristically pour rain, crack with violent lightning. Many people believe it is Romero's anguish. Or God's rage.*

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El Salvador, the focus of intense U.S. media scrutiny and recipient of billions of dollars in U.S. military aid during the 12-year civil war, has been all but forgotten in the relatively uninteresting post Peace Accords epoch. U.S. solidarity groups are seeing diminished membership and lack of interest. Although the crime rate is out of control, death squad activity persists and poverty and inflation are on the rise, increasingly democratic elections and the veneer of prosperity projected by glitzy new shopping centers in wealthy areas of San Salvador make El Salvador seem, as one embassy official there recently declared, "a U.S. foreign policy success story." Indeed, recent FMLN gains (the political party aligned with former guerrillas) in the National Assembly attest to major change, much of which some Salvadorans see as hopeful. But conflict in El Salvador is far from being a thing of the past.

*In addition to the disheartening fact that the poor remain desperately poor, a struggle for the spiritual allegiances of the Salvadoran people is being waged.*

In addition to the disheartening fact that the poor remain desperately poor, a struggle for the spiritual allegiances of the Salvadoran people is being waged. Not only have conservative evangelical groups gained powerful footholds, but the rift within the Catholic Church between conservative and progressive elements has widened. The current archbishop, Fernando Sáenz Lacalle, is a member of ultra-conservative Opus Dei and a paid officer in the Salvadoran military. (One Salvadoran priest notes that Lacalle is paid more than 30,000 colones per month by the military, an amount far in excess of the average annual salary.) Far from the legacy of Oscar Romero (who from his pulpit ordered the Salvadoran military to cease the repression and killing), Sáenz has actively worked to suppress the remnants of the Christian base communities (CBCs) that were a source of theological reflection and resistance throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Instead, Sáenz has called for individual responsibility and obedience to the tenets of church doctrine.

Many in El Salvador are saddened and angry at the shift. A story circulates that when the pope visited El Salvador this year and asked gathered Catholic bishops their opinion about Romero, one exclaimed, "He is responsible for the deaths of 75,000 Salvadorans!" (the number of those killed in the war). Only one bishop openly disagreed.

Dean Brackley, S.J., a theologian at the University of Central America (where seven Jesuits and two women were murdered by Salvadoran military in 1989) believes that, counter to what many say, CBCs are far from dead, but look quite different than they did 10 years ago. "People associate CBCs with the war," says Brackley, "and they want to heal, to move on. At the same time, people are coming together spontaneously to do ministry and there is a political and social edge to their work that is very exciting."

This is evident in the small community in Perquín located in the mountains of Morazan where my students and I participated in a Maundy Thursday Eucharist with a roomful of lay people and nuns. The mass was celebrated by Rogelio Poncelle, a Belgian priest who is not recognized by the Salvadoran Catholic Church, but who was chaplain to the FMLN throughout the war. Despite the conservative local priest (who had the church's mural whitewashed in an effort to move Perquín beyond its politicized past), this community struggles to maintain its social and pastoral projects — and to repaint their murals on other buildings as signs of hope.

"We are in a theological war now and

**Ann Folwell Stanford** is an associate professor in the School for New Learning at DePaul University, which has maintained a cooperative relationship with the National University of El Salvador since 1990. Stanford is writing a book, *Mechanisms of Disease: Women Writers of Color and the Politics of Medicine*.

this one is much harder to fight," explains a Salvadoran nun at the local CBC, Casa CEBES. Numerous signs of resistance and hope such as Casa CEBES — along with resettlement communities, educational initiatives, cooperatives, community banks, and social projects— continue to exist against all odds.

Less known is the work of the Episcopal Church in El Salvador. Established in the 1950s and served by North American priests, the Salvadoran Episcopal Church has remained under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Church until this year, when General Convention voted to grant autonomy to the Dioceses of Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, Costa Rica, and Panama. They will be called the Iglesia Anglicana de la Region Central de America (IARCA) after applying in December to the Anglican Consultative Council for recognition.

This is a welcome and long needed change, according to Martin Barahona, the diocese's first Salvadoran bishop. Since the 1940s, when the Episcopal Church came to Central America, the role of clergy has undergone an evolution (in varying degrees) from a church serving the needs of wealthy North Americans to a church aligned with the people. In El Salvador, however, the Episcopal Church, itself poor by U.S. standards, has a long record of commitment to and, as Barahona says, "standing with" the poor.

Known as a "church of the people" during the crises of the 1970s and 1980s, the Episcopal Church engaged in a strong program of social ministry, working with refugee resettlement projects and building new communities away from zones of conflict. During the war, San Juan Evangelista, the largest and oldest Episcopal Church parish in El Salvador, served as a sanctuary for hundreds of refugees. With the urban offensive of 1989, several clergy and laity were arrested and detained as political prisoners, including the present rector, Luis Serrano.

Currently the church is involved in health projects, land transfer advocacy (as a result of the peace accords, or, as many Salvadorans more precisely say, "the treaty to end armed conflict"), education, as well as daily pastoral care. Ten priests work in 15 congregations and several missions. Of the ten, only one is not Salvadoran. Barahona estimates around 5,000 Episcopalians in the country.

Barahona is passionate about the work of the Church in El Salvador, especially in building bridges among the sharply divided sectors of the country as well as increasing its focus on the empowerment of women. "Women have suffered a great deal in El Salvador and 80 percent of our church members are women," Barahona says. This commitment has led to the formation of an Instituto de la Mujer this past year.

Indeed, the Episcopal Church received a great deal of attention this fall when Hannah Atkins' photograph ran on the front page of El Diario del Hoy, one of the two principal Salvadoran newspapers. Denounced by the Catholic archbishop, Atkins' ordination was broadly supported by political groups, social organizations, universities, and especially women's groups.

Atkins, a North American, serves a parish that meets in the street. At Santissima Trinidad, eucharist is held on Sunday afternoons after the women parishioners have sold their wares in the morning market. One parishioner donated an exterior wall of her house for a mural painted by local young artists (who also happen to be gang members). Parishioners arrange benches and chairs facing the makeshift altar and mural while Atkins vests in the street. "We make church and it is beautiful. Dangerous, but beautiful."

**Young men whitewash the image of Archbishop Oscar Romero on a church wall in Perquín in El Salvador.** David Henricks

Street violence is common in El Salvador. Atkins says of the post-war transition, "There is a need for recovering the values of solidarity, love and service that led people into the popular struggle and base communities. Everyone knew what to die for, but many have forgotten what to live for."

Atkins, along with Barahona, teaches in the Women's Institute, which is designed to train lay women in such areas as theology, women's psychology, liturgy, and stewardship. The 37 women who are currently enrolled have committed themselves to meeting one Saturday each month for three years.

"The institute is a sign of the Episcopal church's commitment to women's leadership — both recognizing and facilitating it at the community level," Atkins explains.

This is a crucial time in Salvadoran history, one in which the continued friendship and witness of friends outside the country is deeply felt. In the U.S., only the diocese of Central New York has a formal relationship with El Salvador. Established in 1992, the companion relationship has spawned a number of exchanges (60 people from Central New York have visited El Salvador and about 40 from El Salvador have visited New York), as well as financial support.

Richard Bower, dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, Syracuse, recently spent six months on sabbatical in El Salvador, studying the issue of autonomy (see story in next month's issue of *The Witness*) and working with a small rural congregation. "What has been of high importance to us in Central New York and El Salvador is accompaniment: being together, with Central New York sticking with the El Salvador church in this difficult time."

But he acknowledges that accompaniment won't be easy.

"What worked in El Salvador during the war, in ministry and public stands, doesn't work during this more complicated time where the 'enemy' is much harder to define, where there is not much clarity, and where so much energy is needed simply to survive as a poor church."

# RC bishops urge acceptance of gay children

U.S. Roman Catholic bishops last month extended to parents and families of gay and lesbian children an "outstretched hand" of support but reaffirmed church teaching saying homosexual activity is a sin.

The 20-page pastoral statement, "Always Our Children: A Pastoral Message to Parents of Homosexual Children and Suggestions for Pastoral Ministers," was developed over four years by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' committee on marriage and family and given approval by the conference's top policy-making board.

"All in all, it is essential to recall one basic truth," the statement said. "God loves every person as a unique individual. Sexual identity helps to define the unique person we are. God does not love someone any less simply because he or she is homosexual."

Speaking directly to parents, the statement calls on them to "accept and love" their gay sons and daughters because "homosexual orientation (is) experienced as a given, not something freely chosen" and "by itself, a homosexual orientation cannot be considered sinful, for morality presumes the freedom to choose."

Parents of homosexual children need the help of the church," said Phoenix Bishop Thomas J. O'Brien, chair of the committee. "So often they can find themselves in a state of isolation and confusion, drifting to the margins of church and community life," he said.

The document broke no new ground theologically and is rooted in the most recent version of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the church's main compilation of its teachings. It celebrates human dignity, recognizes strong friendships with those of the same sex as long they don't include "genital sexual involvement" and urges Catholics to "concentrate on the person, not on the homosexual orientation."

However, the statement is meant neither as an endorsement of the "homosexual lifestyle" nor is it intended to "serve a particular agenda," the bishops stressed.

The pastoral was welcomed by some Catholics in gay ministries.

"Several years ago, I would not have dreamed that there would be a document like this or one that was so connected to family," said Jim Schexnayder, who heads the church's Oakland, Calif.-based National Association of Diocesan Lesbian and Gay Ministries, a network of nearly 30 dioceses and 250 individuals.

He said the document could help break down stereotypes about homosexuals, such as those portraying gays as part of a seamy sub-culture, stereotypes which have hampered outreach efforts to gays by the church.

Robert Mialovich, president of DIGNITY, the nation's largest gay and lesbian Catholic organization, welcomed the bishops' statement "as a significant opening of the arms to gays and lesbians in the church, especially to young people who are struggling. DIGNITY looks forward to grasping that 'outstretched hand' the bishops are offering and to making sure that gays and lesbians are made full and inclusive members of the Catholic Church."

The statement seeks to maintain a delicate balance on the high-wire issue of homosexuality in the wake of incidents and statements that have given the church a harsh, anti-gay image. In the 1980s, the Vatican disciplined Seattle Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen, in part because of his allowing a gay group to meet at St. James Cathedral and it stripped Charles Curran of his right to be a Catholic theologian, also in part because of his views on church teaching and sexuality.

*— B. Denise Hawkins, Religion News Service*

# Struggling with the language of faith

## by Constance Chandler-Ward

***The Inclusive Psalms*, Priests for Equality, Brentwood, Md., 1997.**

Years ago, during those early days of feminist awareness, I had a vehement argument with a friend about inclusive language in Scripture. She said she felt included in Scripture, even when she was called a "brother" in Christ, because she knew that the masculine terms were really meant to include her. I think she was a little amused by my passionate inability to think likewise and by my declaration that we all suffer when we accept noninclusive language as large enough to hold us.

A year or so later, I received a letter from her in which she described a psalm with feminine pronouns that had been sent to her by a friend. "I found myself sobbing," she said. "I had no idea how excluded I felt until I felt those tears falling off my face."

I am so thankful that somewhere there are Roman Catholic priests who felt their faith diminished by language which forgets to acknowledge the presence and story of half of humanity. Although Priests for Equality have had little official support for their inclusive language project and must struggle on a small budget, they have done good scholarly and literary work to bring us a highly usable New Testament and now also the psalms.

The questions that arise around translation have long fascinated me. I lived a good deal of my younger life in Europe, during the course of which I became bilingual in French. I noticed that when I was speaking one language, my gestures, expressions, humor and manner of thinking altered from those that occurred in the other. It was subtle enough, but I was quite clearly altered in the language shift. The reason, of course, was that the words were surrounded by the culture out of which they sprang and the connotations were peculiar to that culture and not translatable. I even noticed those differences between English from England and from the U.S.

I must begin, then, by believing that any translation is an approximation at best.

The introduction to *The Inclusive Psalms* names the same struggle: "How to express the sentiments of one culture in another language is always perplexing. It becomes even more trying when you are dealing with ancient languages. ... In our translation, we try to find a balance between the kind of poetic form familiar to the ears of the English-speaking public, and the earthy, gruff tone of the original language." Not only were they dealing with translation issues *per se*, but also with our familiarity with and assumptions about the earlier translations. Somehow many of us grew up thinking that God was really Elizabethan and English because of the King James version of the Bible.

*I am so thankful that somewhere there are Roman Catholic priests who felt their faith diminished by language which forgets to acknowledge the presence and story of half of humanity.*

The translators recognize, too, that some of the texts cannot truthfully be translated inclusively. A translator's job is not to delete, yet I refuse to be assumed within patriarchal universal statements. I do not believe that God established the male line of David or that God willed the winning of battles or the death of enemies. When the texts are patriarchal I do not blame the translator, but I do not want to pass them on to my children.

Bearing all that in mind, it is indeed refreshing to have this translation for our use in worship. In our weekly inclusive Eucharist at our retreat house we have introduced *The Inclusive New Testament* and *The Inclusive Psalms* with gratitude. Sometimes there are lines that seem grinding to my ear like: "Fling wide the gates, open the ancient doors, and the Glorious Liberator will come in! Who is this 'Glorious Liberator'? Adonai Sabaoth is our Glorious Liberator!"(Psalm 24)

But often the translation seems refreshingly real, like: "Why should I be afraid in times of danger, or when I'm surrounded by those who lie and deceive? They trust only in their money, and boast of nothing but their wealth. Yet even they cannot redeem another person — no one can pay God ransom for someone else, because the payment for a life is too great."

Sadly, I doubt that this or any other more inclusive biblical texts will readily be finding their way into mainline church worship services. Most clergy seem to think that such texts are too radical and upsetting for the majority of church members. It may well be too late, anyway, as so many people on a spiritual quest find their needs unmet in typical congregations. But I hope *The Inclusive Psalms* will somehow find its way into the hands of those who thirst and hunger for a deeper exploration into the heart of Christian tradition.

**Constance Chandler-Ward** is one of three priests who run Greenfire, a retreat house in Tenants Harbor, Maine. For more information about Priests for Equality, a project of the Quixote Center, write them at PO Box 5243, W. Hyattsville, Md., 20782-0243.

### $$ for Advocate and H.O.M.E.!

The final tally on funds raised to benefit the restoration of Philadelphia's historic Church of the Advocate and the work of Project H.O.M.E.through *The Witness'* awards banquet last July is complete. A total of $3000 was raised for the church and an additional $1000 for H.O.M.E. (beyond the catering fees paid to the Back Home Cafe). We're grateful to all who made the event a success!

# Church-based reconciliation

by Gordon Judd

**The Reconciliation of Peoples: Challenge to Churches**, eds. Gregory Baum and Harold Wells (Orbis Books: Maryknoll, NY, 1997).

This collection of essays is a wide-ranging, diverse potluck on the theme of reconciliation, including stories, reports, historical overviews, interviews, and reflections from a dozen different ethnic or national experiences. There is a feast of variety and plenty here, and far too much to digest in just one sitting. Like many such collections that bring together a variety of authors around a particular focus topic, *The Reconciliation of Peoples* offers something useful and satisfying for almost anyone interested.

Editors Gregory Baum and Harold Wells are Canadian-based theologians who have brought together writers "to record and reflect upon actual efforts and achievements by Christian churches, organizations, and individuals toward reconciliation in many different circumstances of ethnic, cultural, or religious conflict" (vii). The circumstances are indeed different. Some encompass historic or recent experiences involving staggering human rights violations such as Nazi war crimes, South African apartheid, or the disappearances, torture, and extra-judicial executions under Chile's military dictatorship of the 1970s. Others deal with subtler human rights abuses such as the United Church of Canada's response to the linguistic and cultural aspirations of Quebec and others with situations that are little known or reported, such as efforts at reconciliation in the Korean Peninsula or the Fiji Islands.

*While conflicts may arise from a variety of sources, they almost always entail ignorance or misunderstanding of each other's story. But this is not a variation on the 1970s mantra, 'I'm Okay, You're Okay.'*

At first glance, readers might balk at a collection that appears to balance torture and murder with the issue of bilingualism. The book does not, however, imply any such equation. Instead, it invites readers to recognize that both division and reconciliation lie along continuums. Whether groups have suffered from apartheid or linguistically exclusionary practices, they can feel deeply aggrieved, and any effort at bringing people together, at narrowing the breach of mutual suspicion and acrimony, is movement toward healing. All of these essays recount significant stories of reconciliation and suggest the wide-ranging possibilities presented churches to become agents of positive social change.

Gregory Baum thoughtfully provides "A Theological Afterword," synopsizing seven "common convictions implicit in these essays." Three of these are particularly important for readers who want to be teachers or practitioners of the process of reconciliation: [a] This process demands a conversion or change of mind and heart, [b] needs a common story, and [c] emerges from the willingness of some people to lead.

While Baum and most of the authors address head-on the critical role that justice must play in every effort of reconciliation, they also point out that all parties to the conflict need to move even further, whether by recognizing the Christian call to confess that one has sinned against others and making reparations, or by embracing the Christian call to forgive and love one's persecutors.

One of the most striking aspects of these essays is the role that story-telling had in reconciliation. Anyone acquainted with the theory or practice of conflict resolution will not be surprised, however, since they view conflict and communication as inseparably linked. While conflicts may arise from a variety of sources, they almost always entail ignorance or misunderstanding of each other's story. When opposing groups are able to tell these stories, and when they struggle to arrive at a common story, reconciliation is already at work. This is not a variation on the '70s mantra, "I'm Okay, You're Okay." The outcome is mutually remembered and embraced truth even when some storytellers must confess their roles as oppressors or murderers.

Baum states, "In all accounts reconciliation between groups of peoples is

**Gordon Judd**, a Basilian priest who lives and works in the Detroit area, has an MA in Conflict Resolution and a private practice in group process consultation.

review

promoted by a few Christians with strong convictions surrounded by many who remain indifferent or are even hostile to the idea." I would add that this kind of leadership is strongly characterized by a willingness to take unilateral action in seeking reconciliation, not knowing how one's overture will be received or whether greater humiliation and hurt will ensue.

*The Reconciliation of Peoples* is perhaps most valuable in two ways. First of all it is inspirational reading, strongest in this respect when it is dealing with victims' stories of reaching beyond their wounds and anger to rebuild the broken human community. Secondly, it is potentially very useful for those teaching about or implementing church-based reconciliation processes. In this respect, the authors and editors powerfully reinforce the conviction that the Christian "faith tradition offers resources for reconciliation that need to be emphasized and made explicit."

Of particular interest for this issue of *The Witness* is a short but insightful piece on Northern Ireland by Jesuit priest Michael Hurley. For those whose grasp of the Northern Ireland situation is somewhat blurred, Hurley helpfully traces some of the background to the decades-long violence, noting that the Protestant and Catholic churches have historically been perceived by many as implicated in the bigotry and bloodshed. He believes, however, that this perception is off the mark. He points out that in recent years the churches have made a concerted effort to further the cause of reconciliation. Hurley argues that this "new interest in and appreciation of the churches' ministry of ecumenism and reconciliation is a complex phenomenon" arising, in part, out of their recognition that they are not self-sufficient and that they must work together to succeed. TW

## N. Ireland's churches have allies in reconciliation work

The ground is fertile for joint church efforts to foster reconciliation between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland partly because the churches have strong allies among a myriad of community groups committed to promoting peace through cross-community, nonsectarian means. Sometimes supported by aid from outside granting agencies such as the Ireland Funds (an international confederation of groups of Irish interest and concern which sponsors fundraising events in 40 cities around the world), these numerous grassroots projects are wide-ranging, practical and often highly imaginative approaches to dispelling ignorance and misunderstanding between traditional enemies — as the following sampling suggests:

- Belfast Harpers — a cross-community joint effort to revive traditional harp music through a festival and professional recordings;
- Bryson House — a voluntary organization in Belfast whose activities include support for families under stress, services for the elderly, environmental projects and employment and training projects;
- Committee on the Administration of Justice — a cross-community group in Belfast providing information on human rights and establishing standards of justice in Northern Ireland;
- Belfast Community Circus School — an artistic circus involving cross-community groups;
- Glencree Centre for Reconciliation — a Wicklow-based effort aimed at encouraging reconciliation, North and South, through structured programs in peaceful settings;
- Derry Centre for Creative Communications — a center which facilitates exchanges between people from different cultural backgrounds and draws in participants from around the world to learn how Derry has coped with division and conflict;
- Cultural Traditions Group — a Belfast-based organization providing seminars, conferences and publications that promote mutual understanding and debate on cultural diversity and traditions in Northern Ireland;
- Flax Trust — a Belfast business center that works toward reconciliation through economic and social development;
- Dungannon Bereavement Counseling — a bereavement and counseling service for the families of victims of sectarian killings;
- Harmony Community Trust —a program in Down to develop cross-community relationships among young people through leadership training and enterprise;
- Lower Shankill Women's Group — a project enabling women in a deprived area of conflict to recognize and develop their own skills;
- Holiday Projects West — a Derry-based project to provide holiday programs for children from troubled areas;
- Women's Information Drop-In Centre — a Belfast community-service organization founded by Joyce McCartan, who lost three sons to sectarian violence, and committed to reconciliation through job-training, job-creation and children's education;
- Shankill Community Information Services — *The Shankill People*, a community newspaper published by the Shankill Community Information Services, confronts sectarian thinking and action and encourages positive dialogue in North and West Belfast.

Sam Burch

*We need to weep over the situation, over having done such terrible things to each other.*

# Building on the cornerstone

by Kate DeSmet

In the neighborhood where Sam Burch and his playmates grew up they regularly heard a warning from their parents that was simple and severe: "Stay on our side of the road or you will get beaten by the Catholics." Burch, a Methodist, lived close enough to the Catholics in West Belfast to see them and fear them. Not close enough, however, to know them. But Burch, like some fellow Irish clergy and lay persons, eventually grew tired of the hate and bloodshed and poisoned spirit of the place. They built Belfast a new road, a symbolic middle road, where people of separated faiths could meet. Burch's "road" is known as the Cornerstone ministry.

"There is a wall that divides the notorious areas of Shankill, the heartland of loyalist Protestants, from the Falls, where the republican Catholics live," said Burch, an ordained minister. "The wall keeps the two communities separate. So we moved into two houses on what we call the peace line between the two neighborhoods. And we called [the ministry] Cornerstone because of that wall. It looked like a good name for symbolizing something strong in Jesus, that we can rely on Jesus and not a wall to keep us safe."

Burch, along with a Roman Catholic nun and a Presbyterian minister, helped create Cornerstone's interfaith "wee community" in 1982. Some 20 Christian lay persons and clergy began meeting to pray together for peace. Belfast was deep into the "troubles," a period of murders and bombings and street fighting between the two groups. Violence was a companion to the overwhelming poverty of the area. It is estimated that nearly 80 percent of the residents in the hardest-hit neighborhoods like the Falls and Shankill receive government assistance. The neighborhoods are regarded as among the most poverty-stricken in all of Europe, and many families haven't had a paying job in generations.

"That's what makes the fighting so violent — each of them are afraid of the little bit of bread they've got being taken out of their mouths," Burch said. "There is a big contest between the two groups over jobs, low-paid jobs, especially for the women. There are stitchery jobs, making up shirts and so forth, and cleaning the hospital. They don't want to leave their own area because they have such low self-esteem. The government put in training units to give young people better skills and that's been partially successful. But it has got a long way to go."

The Cornerstone group realized it had to do more than walk the streets to reach the people. They had to live where the two sides were most divided. And they had to do something to witness to the message of the Gospel in the midst of religious hate and mayhem. The community spent years in prayer for peace. But eventually they were drawn to action.

"We all had busy ministries at the time so it was hard to see the way forward," said Burch. "But it grew out of our prayer. We were coming through the hunger strikes at that time and we thought we were plunging into civil war. The strikes galvanized us into doing something."

The Cornerstone activists, including five who live full-time in the ministry's two houses, began setting up programs to draw together the very people fighting each other. They began after-school clubs for young people. Senior citizens were

Witnesses, the quick and the dead

**Kate DeSmet** is a locked-out *Detroit News* religion reporter.

coaxed out of their homes to eat lunch together. Women's groups were organized to help train the many single mothers in new job skills. And parents with toddlers began meeting three times a week for first-hand evidence that both Catholics and Protestants want the same things for their children: a homeland without violence, without walls, without warnings about "our side of the road."

"What they discover about themselves is as important as what they discover about each other," said Burch, who at 65 is retired but still spends three days a week living at Cornerstone. "The gospel is about loving your neighbor and you can't stop doing that just because they are of a different denomination or color."

The move by Burch to become more fully involved with Catholics did not go over well with his "very loyalist" Methodist congregation. While a few supported the effort, many others thought he was going too far afield from what he'd been called to do as their pastoral leader. As Cornerstone's ministry evolved, hearts began to change.

With intensified violence on the streets, the Cornerstone group began to make a more public witness of what it believed was necessary for peace. Teams of two persons — a Catholic and a Protestant — began visiting the homes of the murder victims. They counseled the families, grieved with them, talked of the unifying message of Jesus, and then moved on to the next sorrowing family. Cornerstone leaders and supporters also led processions through the streets and held joint religious services of prayer for healing and peace. There was one service in particular that Burch says was a turning point for many who had not understood what Cornerstone's work was all about.

"There'd been these scenes of horrible murders and we decided to do an ecumenical prayer service," Burch said. "We asked two women to hold up a scroll listing the names of the dead. One woman had lost her husband, the other had lost her brother. There were 2,700 names on the scroll. We wanted them to place the scroll on the altar of the church.

"With everybody watching, these two women carried the scroll, lifting it up high and they placed it on the altar. Then they turned to each other, this one woman a Protestant, this other one a Catholic, and they embraced and began weeping and all the church began weeping. It was a very moving experience. It showed the hurt and suffering on both sides. We need to weep over the situation, over having done such terrible things to each other."

The tearful service deeply affected Burch. He still recalls it with emotion in his voice. And he remembers when he first began to see Catholics as something other than the enemy of his loyalist Protestant community. As an itinerant Methodist preacher he was often on the road in Ireland, making his way to assignments at churches in counties north and south. During a stay in the Catholic south Burch began having more conversations and interactions with Catholics that convinced him he needed a more open mind. His heart didn't reconcile with the Romans overnight. It took years to see through the warnings he'd received as a loyalist youth.

*Teams of two persons — a Catholic and a Protestant — began visiting the homes of murder victims.*

"I'd discovered that the Catholics were not so frightening as I'd thought," said Burch, who cites the Christian gospels as the great healing force in his life. "The thrust of the gospel is to find each other and find friendship in Jesus. It was a long journey, a slow journey for me. I've endured a lot of setbacks as well. But these experiences have tremendously enriched my faith."

One setback took place about four years ago when somebody set fire to the Methodist church where Cornerstone celebrates interfaith prayer services. The fire destroyed some of the pews, blackened the ceiling and damaged the electrical wiring. Fortunately, someone spotted the smoke early enough to save the structure from being lost. While police believe the fire was deliberately set, they have no suspects. Burch said it may have been caused by troubled youths but he does not believe it was a message of protest against the work of Cornerstone.

And the good news is that the Methodist church is fully restored after raising about a million dollars for the work. The church now includes a modern community center that will be inaugurated at celebration ceremonies that will include Catholic and Protestant worshippers.

In fact, Burch said, much of Cornerstone's work in the past year has focused on celebration instead of mourning. As Ireland moves cautiously towards a possible political settlement of its troubles, the West Belfast community is inching its way towards a still tenuous but budding reconciliation between Protestants and Catholics. Cornerstone recently held a festival for all the neighbors on either side of the "peace line," featuring floats and bands. There was even a summer barbecue for families held out in the open, in view of the wall that has so long stood as a barrier to peace.

With so many programs and plans that develop each week, Burch said he "can be quite weary at the end of the day." A routine of prayer twice a day at the Cornerstone homes, including shared meals and housework, helps refresh the group. And while the activists don't always "agree with what our churches teach," said Burch, "we do believe in the one Jesus. That is a powerful help to us all." TW

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