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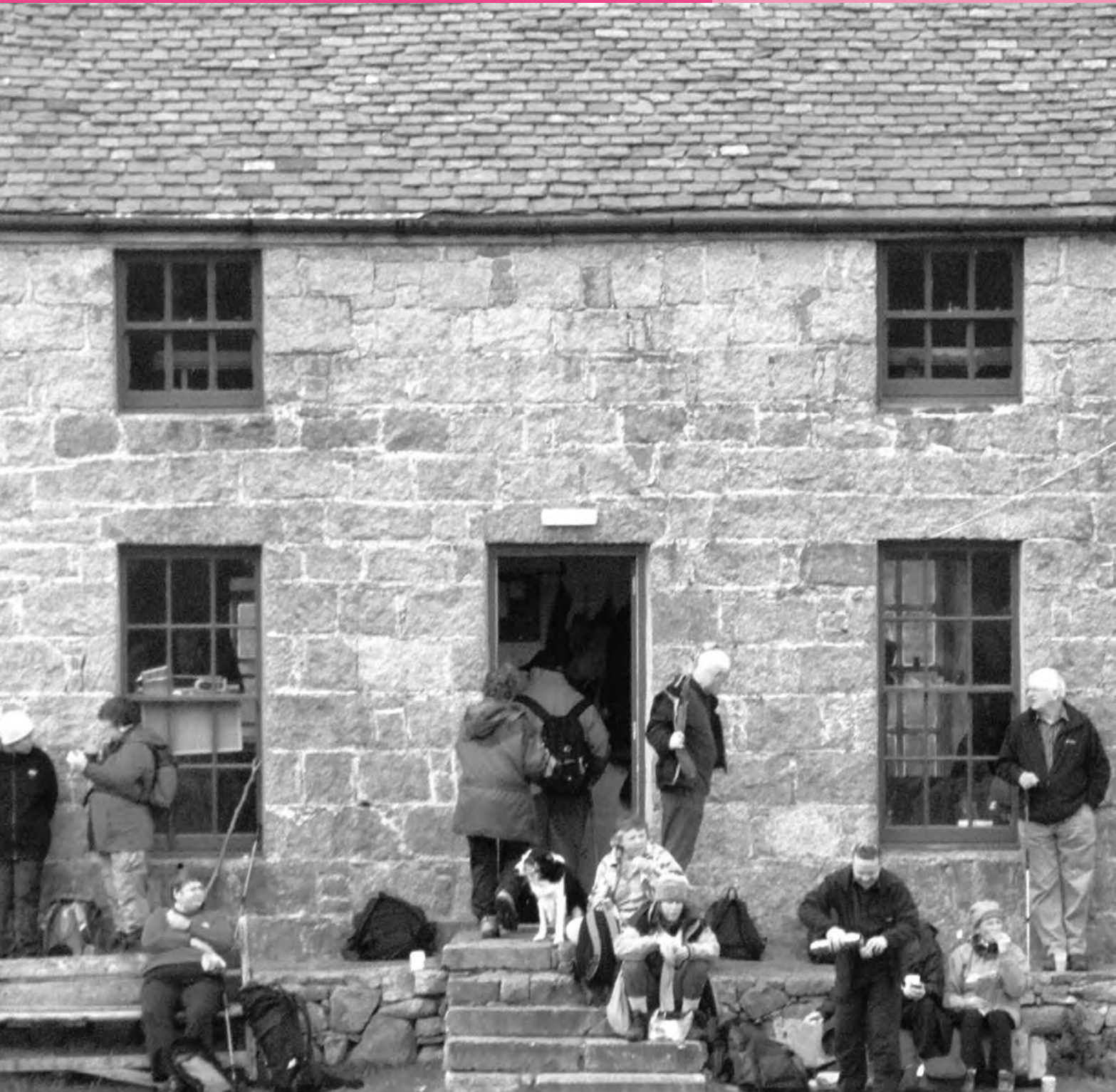
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the magazine of the iona community

# coracle



Work and worship, Prayer and politics, Sacred and secular ...

**The Iona Community is:**

- An ecumenical community of men and women from different walks of life and different traditions in the Christian church
- Committed to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and to following where that leads, even into the unknown
- Engaged together, and with people of goodwill across the world, in acting, reflecting and praying for justice, peace and the integrity of creation
- Convinced that the inclusive community we seek must be embodied in the community we practise

**So we share a common discipline of:**

- Daily prayer and bible study
- Mutual accountability for our use of time and money
- Spending time together
- Action for justice and peace

**And are, together with our staff, responsible for:**

- Our islands residential centres of Iona Abbey, the MacLeod Centre on Iona, and Camas Adventure Centre on the Ross of Mull. And in Glasgow
- The administration of the Community
- Our work with young people
- Our publishing house, Wild Goose Publications
- Our association in the revitalising of worship with the Wild Goose Resource Group

The Iona Community was founded in Glasgow in 1938 by George MacLeod, minister, visionary and prophetic witness for peace, in the context of the poverty and despair of the Depression. Its original task of rebuilding the monastic ruins of Iona Abbey became a sign of hopeful rebuilding of community in Scotland and beyond. Today, we are almost 250 Members, mostly in Britain, and 1500 Associate Members, with 1400 Friends worldwide. Together and apart, 'we follow the light we have, and pray for more light.'

**Coracle** is the bi-monthly magazine of the Iona Community. Views expressed in it are not necessarily the policy of the Iona Community, but the Community seeks the exchange of thoughts and ideas as a basis for finding common ground.

**Letters** are welcome, but may be edited because of space restrictions. For **advertising** or **photography** specifications, please contact the editor. **Unsolicited material** is welcome (by e-mail or on disk) but cannot always be included.

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Alison Swinfen

# From the holy city: On money (from a talk)

A few years ago, with a couple of promotions adding substantially to our income, I decided, with my family, that rather than getting used to ever-increasing amounts of wealth and the standards of living that went with them, we would draw a line somewhere around the national average wage (it varies depending on who you consult, but tends to be around £26K) and that would be our income. The rest we would give away.

This was not a hasty decision but one taken in the light of many conversations about money with friends and in my community. The second aspect of our Rule of life as members of the Iona Community calls us to account to one another for our use of money and resources and this includes a calculation, together, of our baseline commitments and a discussion, in our local Family Groups, about the decisions we have made and about our giving to a common pot, to the Community and to wider good causes. A rule of thumb for us remains the injunction to tithe, to give 10%, but this is not hard and fast and through the process of accounting to one another adjustments are made. Some of our number have chosen to live lives of poverty; some have not, but do because their circumstances place them in poverty. Some of our number are wealthy, and middle-class professions number in the jobs done by members in various parts of the UK and abroad.

The application of this Rule to our lives was one of the structures supporting our decision. A second was a series of pleasant and provoking, somewhat disquieting evenings we had over a year with two other sets of friends exploring the spiritual power of money in our lives. We spent time reflecting on the relationship our parents and families had to money, how it was used to control or to free, to force or facilitate. We considered the experiences we had had of learning to use money, of having it and of not having it. We told stories of first wage packets, of poverty in all our family histories, of mothers going without food to feed children and of surprising acts of incredible generosity. A feature of these stories was often the way provision was made at a point when least expected and most needed, provision that was just that, provision of enough, often anonymous or from surprising, generous sources. We studied the scriptures and especially the Gospels and the sayings attributed to Jesus warning of the spiritual dangers of wealth, and we considered how we might go through the eye of the needle, or store up spiritual treasures, or give a widow's mite or live with the knowledge that the poor are always with us. Such sayings run deeply through us, with their own proverbial power to taunt and test.

Together, in these groups we came to the realisation that money is rather like prayer: it requires discipline and right relationship. It is easy to put off this right relationship for the 'right time' for adjustment or amendment. It's also easy to fall prey, as a giving person, to a certain pride in the giving, a sense of power at supporting good causes with surprisingly sized cheques. Talking about this, accounting to one another, as friends and through the more formal processes of our Iona Community Family Group, means, for me at least, that the power of temptations to pride, to poverty, to greed, to belief in our immunity to the spiritual dangers of wealth could be, at the very least, offset somewhat and held up for scrutiny before others.

Spring is the time of year when we account to one another in our Family

Groups for the use of our money. It fits with the annual tax year end and means looking hard at what we have spent, and what these spending decisions tell us about our lives and our values. As well as giving, which represents our most significant spending, we see how our decisions about food, travel, clothing, hobbies and fitness, books and maintenance are nuanced, expanded through ethical decision-making, and where we have had no easy control. We also see where the surprises come – the sudden, unexpected gifts of generosity to the legal fees we have had as we have tried to keep our adoptive daughter safe from harm, covering, to within £5, the bill from our careful lawyer, *'because we were praying for you and thought you should not be doing this all on your own'*. It's not been easy and we may not be able to sustain the commitment easily every year into the future. Our concern and care for asylum seekers and refugees in our home and neighbourhood means that our resources cannot be easily under our control in the rather too solid way they may have been in the past. The poor are with us and are ours to care for, especially as the state withdraws even the pitiful amounts of support it may have previously given. It is from the much that we have been given that much is expected, hoped for or just needed. We'd like to try to continue in this way though we know that ours is not really in any way a radical commitment. It's just a decision to have the average rather than to unthinkingly take all we are being paid through decisions made by arbitrary others.

Material poverty is a scandal but, as Leonardo Boff has said, faith involves a constant conversion to the way of the poor. I believe our economy needs radical redistribution of wealth. I believe that there is enough for everyone's need but not for everyone's greed. I believe that the wages paid to me as a professor in higher education (towards the lower end of a scale which appears not to have a ceiling) are unnecessarily high, and I'd happily trade some of them in to secure a future that contains people capable of careful, deliberative thinking, capable of speaking many different, even obscure languages, analysing a work of art, understanding the patterns of life in regions of the world remote in time or geographical distance, or spiritual expression. I'd happily trade them in for more days with my family and friends, or digging my garden and away from the treadmill of e-mail production. I believe the research showing that in countries where the gap between rich and poor is lowest the wellbeing of the country is greatest. I believe this is part of what my family have been discovering through our commitment to cap our wealth and give, without strings, to others, perhaps so that others may have benefits that would not otherwise be possible, but far more so that we might know what it is to give and receive from others in due measure. I believe that the poor may well always be with us but that is no excuse for staring wealth in the eye and not blinking. 'We are all in it together,' says David Cameron as he attempts to take money from the poor and slightly above average to give to the already very rich. Money is a political matter but it is also, perhaps primarily for me, a spiritual matter. And that includes my money. I believe that it doesn't matter what I believe about money if I don't find ways of trying to practise it. ●

\* A version of this talk formed part of a discussion organised by Kathy Galloway of Christian Aid Scotland, and with David McNair, of Christian Aid, at the SOLAS Festival. An extract was published in *The Expository Times*: 'And Finally ... On Money' (122:12) 624, 2011

**Alison Swinfen** lives in Glasgow. In August Alison and her husband, Robert, received the good news that their adoptive daughter, Rima, has now been recognised as a refugee by the UK Home Office.

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Peter Millar

# A time of great taking: a global *saqueo*

We hear of comparisons between the recent riots in UK cities and riots elsewhere. Window-smashing in Athens. Car bonfires in Paris. There are parallels: a spark set by police violence, a generation that feels forgotten and marginalised. There have been other mass lootings in recent years – and on a vastly greater scale than those in the UK. In the aftermath of the US invasion, Baghdad witnessed a frenzy of arson and looting that almost emptied the libraries and great museums. In Iraq, ordinary people, having for years watched Saddam Hussein and his family take whatever and whomever they wanted, felt they had earned the right to take a few things for themselves.

In 2001, when Argentina's economy was in free fall, thousands of people living in poor neighbourhoods stormed foreign-owned superstores. They came out pushing shopping carts overflowing with the goods they could no longer afford – clothes, electronics, meat. The government called a 'state of siege' to restore order; the people didn't like that, and overthrew the government.

Canadian journalist Naomi Klein points out that this mass looting in Argentina was called '*El Saqueo*' – the sacking. That was politically significant because it was the very same word used to describe what Argentina's elites had done by selling off the country's national assets in flagrantly corrupt privatisation deals, hiding money offshore, then passing on the bill to the people with a brutal austerity package.

People in Argentina understood that the *saqueo* of the shopping centres would not have happened without the bigger *saqueo* of the country, and that the real criminals were the ones in charge.

We are being constantly told by politicians that the recent riots in the UK were not 'political'. This is said in all seriousness, as if the massive bank bailouts never happened, followed by what have so rightly been described as 'the defiant record bonuses'. And as in other countries, the UK government continues, in response to all of this, to force sacrifices on the most vulnerable, while the elites continue to pursue their insane lifestyles.

At present here in the UK we are witnessing daily: the firing of public servants, the scapegoating of teachers, the closing of libraries, the rolling back of union contracts, the botched up rush to privatise public assets, etc, etc. The list is never-ending, and once again we are being lectured at by the very people who sacked the economy in the first place.

In spiritual terms this is a time of 'great taking' – a 'global sacking' – fuelled by a pathological sense of entitlement. It is, as one commentator said, 'a looting with all the lights on as if there was nothing to hide'.

Of course I am not defending those who destroyed, through their arson and looting, a lifetime's work of a small shopkeeper. Of many small shopkeepers. But we are also failing to examine and to reflect upon these wider lootings which are endemic in our time. The evil (and it is a corporate evil) in these absurd bonuses is just one marker of this pathological belief that we are entitled to as much as we can grab. And the companion to this greed beyond description is the prevailing ideology that in an age of austerity to discipline the vulnerable is

fundamental. We must keep the poor in place while the rich – by foul means or fair – flourish at all costs. Such is modern Britain!

In such an atmosphere of global looting, it is important that people of faith remind society of an alternative narrative. A narrative with which we must reconnect if society is to remain sane. And that narrative – expressed in all the great religious traditions of the world – reminds us of certain basic elements needed to retain our humanity. It tells us that human beings who live only with a sense of 'entitlement' – grabbing all for themselves in their short life on earth – are in fact spiritually impoverished. Or to put it another way: they are not 'fully human', despite the seeming richness of their lives.

For several years, Dorothy and I, along with our three children, lived alongside many poor families in South India. That was a privilege. These Indian families taught us so much about what it means to be a rich human being. In terms of money and possessions they had little or often nothing at all, but in terms of the human spirit their wealth was limitless. Even the poorest family would make sure we had food before we left them. Sharing what they had was not something to be analysed. It was a fact of daily living.

The present belief in grabbing all that we can for ourselves raises many questions. Is it possible in our modern technological societies to reconnect with a culture of giving, of sharing? To move away from this blind belief in entitlement? To ask seriously of society and of one another: what actually are our rights, responsi-

bilities and privileges? Or as the old slogan put it succinctly: 'To live more simply than others may simply live.'

These are political questions, but they are also questions for people of faith. Even within our secular societies many still believe in God and with the understanding that the earth is a sacred place. Many also believe that we are in a fundamental way accountable to each other, and that we are stewards of the earth in all of its diversity, beauty and wonder.

It is also true that our daily living can reflect an alternative narrative. Through our elected representatives and other channels thousands are campaigning against this culture of greed. That is a great hope in such times. We can all do something to express 'another way of living'. We have choices, and – despite its many flaws – most of us who read this are living in a democracy. Our voices can be raised in the public square without fear of persecution.

Gandhi's words are not new, but they are relevant in the struggle to witness for truth and for a renewed understanding of how human beings should interact with one another (and not just in his native India where recently millions have taken to the streets to fight against the rampant corruption at every level of Indian society): *'To recognise evil and not to oppose it is to surrender your humanity; to recognise evil and to oppose it with the weapons of the evil-doer is to enter into your humanity; to recognise evil and to oppose it with the weapons of God is to enter into your divinity.'* ●

**Peter Millar** is the author of many books, including 'Waymarks: Signposts to Discovering God's Presence in the World' (Canterbury Press), and 'Our Hearts Still Sing: Daily Readings' (Wild Goose Publications) [www.ionabooks.com](http://www.ionabooks.com). He is a member of the Iona Community.

Dan Glass

# Business as usual?: on the recent uprisings in the UK

**27-year-old community activist Dan Glass is part of 'So We Stand', which organises to challenge environmental injustices on the frontline: 'This means recognising that environmental injustice disproportionately affects poor and black communities. We think environmental justice, social justice and anti-racism are the same struggle. By this we mean we recognise that environmental injustice intersects with all forms of structural social oppression' ...**

**Dan has also been an activist with Plane Stupid and Climate Camp, and has taken part in nonviolent direct action against airports and power stations. In June 2010 he was convicted, along with eight others, of 'breach of the peace' for blockading a runway at Aberdeen airport, protesting the growth of aviation and its contribution to climate change.**

**Dan reflects on the recent uprisings in the UK ...**

What's left to say? What can be said when a generation is accused of being looting, greedy, violent, reactionary good-for-nothings? When eloquent families, with such great upset, watch as their children are locked up for years. It's been over a month since the uprisings (or 'recession riots') and I'm guessing you've had many conversations about why such a storm of anger broke loose and the political complexity of causes.

In such intense times, as a young person I think it's important that we articulate, to turn the tide of bile set against us, and look for solutions.

I spent the first 18 years of my life in the most affected areas, around Tottenham and Enfield. Since the insurgency, I have been asked to be on support committees for the families of youth being locked up – many people I grew up with at primary school. In my lifetime I have never witnessed such trauma and abandonment by the government. What can youth say when education is now priced out of comprehension; when up to 75 per cent of youth services have been slashed in local boroughs in the first half of 2011 and job prospects are so bleak that one in two young people in Tottenham are now unemployed<sup>1</sup>; when we live with the fastest-growing rich-poor divide since WW2?<sup>2</sup> Today we know that if you're twenty years old and white you will be three times more likely to go to university than if you're twenty and black, and that if you're black you will be twice more likely to be out of work.<sup>3</sup> When the politicians are busily fiddling their expenses, the media is ridden with hacking scandals and the judicial system is swamped with unaccounted for deaths at the hands of the police (Jean Charles de Menezes, Ian Tomlinson, Mark Duggan ...), seriously, who do we turn to? In times like this, we can only look to our

communities to build systems of support amongst this mess.

The grounds for rekindling community must begin.

Of course the damage on the ground was horrific. To understand the uprisings, the plasters must be ditched to look at the root cause of the wounds. I was almost in shock when, the following day, London Mayor Boris Johnson stated, 'I have heard too much sociological explanation and not enough condemnation.'<sup>4</sup> The riots across the UK were not about race, government cuts or poverty, David Cameron said.<sup>5</sup> Uh OK, excuse me for asking: how come all the areas where the uprisings started were in some of the poorest, most polluted areas in the UK? How come Labour MP Gerald Kaufman asked the Prime Minister to consider how these rioters can be 'reclaimed' by society: the same man who submitted a claim for three months' expenses totalling £14,301.60, which included £8,865 for a Bang & Olufsen television?<sup>6</sup> Of course this is undeniably political: the personal is always political. But for the government to accept blame is to accept responsibility.

In 2011, when the institutions we are supposed to trust collapse before our eyes, how do we bring a sense of belonging in our communities; a feeling not of false optimism at this reality, but of true worth and hope? In the age of the 'Big Society', when it is supposedly our duty to help our neighbours, how do we begin to understand these issues and mould society into what we want it to be?

What's needed are solutions.

It can be disheartening to witness the continuation of a carbon-heavy and psychologically unstable system, which is now locking up young people for years for wearing a pair of looted shorts. It is, however, still possible to wade through and pick up floating pieces of community cohesion, of youth support, of celebration of

ethnic diversity, of dignity. The beauty lies in the interconnected nature of justice – once you unravel one string in the massive tangle that is the problem, it makes it easier to understand the rest.

In the UK, fresh evidence highlights that ethnic minorities are more exposed to poor air quality – a social consequence of carbon-heavy industries.<sup>7</sup> As research develops, the battlelines are being drawn. Whether we're talking about communities living daily with pollution from London's major airports, the building of gas plants in many major British cities, inner-city poverty in areas of multiple deprivation across the UK, non-white communities often come off worse. What's more, the economically marginalised are being hit ten times as hard as the rich by the budget cuts, which we are told are 'across the board'.<sup>8</sup>

Living as we do with this fear of fresh daily diagnosis of environmental and social problems, and environmental injustice perpetuated by those in power – what can we do?

A chat with a neighbour over a garden wall, with a stranger in the chip shop or down the market is sometimes all it takes to boot us out of our comfort zones and be opened up to a whole new way of living. Building a movement that addresses intersecting issues of injustice may not happen overnight. But it can come through assessing privileges, combating judgements and lending an ear and standing in solidarity with people's concerns in their daily realities. We may find ourselves occupying a community swimming pool late at night to save it from turning into fancy flats, or standing in between police and a group of black boys when they are being stopped on the street. It is our legal right to patrol police behaviour, hold them to account and help them swerve their line of vision to the real corrupt criminals: those lining

their pockets with profit at the expense of people and the planet.

There's your Big Society.

Striving for a society where everyone can live in a clean environment, regardless of colour, age, ability, sexuality and gender, creates a diverse and beautiful world which most can't deny they would like to inhabit. Embodying a framework in our community-organising which celebrates multiculturalism and actively works to shift power structures will challenge the root cause of the problem at hand – individualism.

Twenty-three years ago, Margaret Thatcher told us '*There is no such thing as society*'; and today we are meant to believe we are one 'Big Society'. Sharing successes, from the insurrections of the '80s to the street occupations of the '90s to the factory strikes and carbon-heavy industry shutdowns of the noughties, reminds us that we need not be debilitated by fear. The state will find it difficult to compartmentalise passions, concerns and divide struggles if we refuse to believe accusations so easily. And if we refuse to believe the simplified myths of 'violence vs. nonviolence': that if you question state behaviour you're a 'domestic terrorist', a 'community of suspicion', and that 'we' (anyone who challenges the law) 'are all domestic extremists now'.<sup>9</sup> Nothing scares the authorities more than unexpected community alliances. They don't know where we are coming from and don't know where to start.

The point is, this is the beginning.

On the ground, 'equal opportunities' policies for young people may continue to be swept to the side. In the sky, the air gets thicker with smog while our generation begins to feel the effects of decades of corporate addiction to unbridled profit before the health of all people. Youth continue to be expected to beg from the government table whilst we continue to be persecuted,



# What can we do about Trident?

Brian Larkin

mocked, and now pushed from our homes.<sup>10</sup> This largely unprocessed trauma of our generation's inability to comprehend the greatness of this treachery by our fellow humans may remain a darkness within ourselves, our children and our children's children.

But this unfurling darkness guides many young people today to strive for a world of light, where all human beings have the right to a peaceful existence. I and so many other young people want equality for all. We hope for liberation for the rich from oppressive behaviours; true liberation which does not come at the expense of others. Being young in Britain today in no means necessitates a desire for wanton destruction – in fact it's the opposite. ●

## Notes:

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2. 'Inequality at highest level since WW2', Ian Dunt, 27 January, 2010, [politics.co.uk](http://politics.co.uk), [www.politics.co.uk](http://www.politics.co.uk)
3. 'Twenty-one Oxbridge colleges took no black students last year', Jeevan Vasagar, 6 December, 2010, [www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk)
4. 'The riots: poverty cannot be ignored', Tracey Shildrick, 23 August, 2011, British Sociological Association website, <http://sociologyandthecuts.wordpress.com>
5. 'David Cameron: UK riots were not caused by race or government cuts', Metro web reporter, 15 August, 2011, [www.metro.co.uk](http://www.metro.co.uk)
6. 'The moral decay of our society is as bad at the top as the bottom', Peter Osborne, 11 August, 2011, [www.telegraph.co.uk](http://www.telegraph.co.uk)
7. 'Environment justice and race equality in the European Union', Christoph Schwarte, Maria Adebowale, Capacity Global, 2007, [www.capacity.org.uk](http://www.capacity.org.uk)
8. 'Coalition cuts will hit poor 10 times harder than rich, says TUC', Polly Curtis and Patrick Wintour, 10 September, 2010, [www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk)
9. 'Police in £9M scheme to log "domestic extremists"', Paul Lewis, Rob Evans, Matthew Taylor, 25 October, 2009, [www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk)
10. 'Eviction of rioters', Jonathan Rayner, 22 August, 2011, Law Society Gazette, [www.lawgazette.co.uk](http://www.lawgazette.co.uk)

[www.sowestand.com](http://www.sowestand.com)

**The abomination that is Trident costs UK taxpayers two billion pounds a year. Following Greenpeace estimates it has cost £45,000 per day since the birth of Christ. Brian Larkin of Trident Ploughshares highlights actions folk can take at this time of an SNP government and of possible future Independence – and invites everyone to the Big Blockade at Faslane in May 2012 ...**

The 1st of October marked four years since the end of the year-long blockade of Faslane during which more than a thousand people were arrested. That year (2007) the newly elected Scottish government passed a resolution calling on Westminster not to replace Trident. And in November of 2007, the new SNP/Green coalition government brought together more than forty civic society and church groups, stakeholders in a future of Scotland without nuclear weapons, in order to hear our views on what they could do to rid Scotland of the abomination that is Trident. At that event Nicola Sturgeon paid tribute to the years of nonviolent resistance at Faslane. She said that Scotland was now in a unique position: Its people and Parliament were required, against their democratic will, to host the UK's deployment of nuclear weapons, weapons capable of many times the devastation of the Hiroshima bomb.

Following the summit, a Working Group was appointed which examined the question of what Scotland could do within the constraints of the Scotland Act. While its Report identified some important areas, such as environmental regulation which might be tightened up, it was disappointing that it concluded, and the Scottish government accepted – despite the 1996 ruling of the International Court of Justice – that the deployment of Trident is not illegal. The illegality of Trident, a weapon which would cause indiscriminate suffering among civilians and devastation to the living earth, is self-evident. For the Scottish government, which came to power with its opposition to Trident as one of its primary campaign pledges, to fail to declare Trident illegal seemed inconceivable.

Trident Ploughshares, along with the Edinburgh Peace and Justice Centre and others, have since made efforts to persuade the Scottish government to revisit this ill-considered position. We wrote a lengthy submission, and met with Bruce Crawford, Minister for Parliamentary Business. The book *Trident and International Law: Scotland's Obligations*, edited by Angie Zelter and Rebecca Johnson (Luath), which specifically addressed Scotland's duty to refuse complicity with the deployment of Trident, was launched at the Scottish Parliament. In it the then President of the International Court confirmed the illegality of a weapon system such as Trident. Following the election in May, we again blockaded Faslane to call upon the new Scottish government to be, as Alex Salmond said in his inaugural speech, bold, and to fulfil its pledge to press the UK government to remove Trident from Scotland. When Trident Ploughshares members met again with the Minister in September they again encouraged the Scottish government not only to pass a resolution calling on the UK to remove Trident from Scotland, or better still scrap it (which would be more than the previous resolution), but to declare that it believes the deployment of Trident is illegal.

Now, with the UK already funding the first phase of construction of Trident replacement (contracts for 15% of total costs have now been signed), it may

# Big Blockade at Faslane: May 2012

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seem there is little we can do. But the emerging debate around independence presents Scotland's citizens with an opportunity to raise the issue of Trident here. Foreign policy and defence, both reserved, will be central to the debate over what an independent Scotland will look like. All of us can get busy in a whole variety of ways, putting pressure on MSPs and their rivals to pin them down on what position they will take with regard to Trident in an independent Scotland. Write them letters, ask them questions in public meetings, get appointments and go and visit them both individually and with your local peace group. MSPs tend to be more accessible than MPs because we are a small country. We need to make them pin their colours to the mast and commit to getting rid of Trident if independence comes. Remind them that polls have shown that in Scotland any party that opposes Trident has an advantage.

And we need to be engaging all Scottish politicians and parties on this question because there will be an enormous amount of pressure on the government of an independent Scotland to let the UK keep Trident here. The announcement by the Secretary to the Treasury that an independent Scotland will be saddled with £65 billion in debt should remind us that the financial pressure to lease Faslane to the UK will be considerable.

But political activity alone may not be sufficient to provide the pressure needed to transform this opportunity into the reality of disarmament. The government depends upon our complicity to continue its deployment of this system of domination. Symbolic nonviolent direct action remains a potent means of demonstrating the truth that threatening mass murder is unacceptable and that we will not remain silent in the face of it. A few of us keep a vigil at Faslane every Wednesday from 4-5pm. Join us there one day if you

are in the neighbourhood. Or consider forming an affinity group and planning a spontaneous blockade. The nuclear weapons are still here, in our country, against both international law and the higher law of creation. I believe that if Jesus drove those who exploited the poor out of the temple, his followers can surely engage in nonviolent direct action against Trident. I know that many friends in the Iona Community have done so, and on more than one occasion. If you have done so before you are invited to do so again. If not, maybe this is the time. Trident Ploughshares are beginning now to plan for a Big Blockade in May 2012 (date to be announced) ●

## Trident Ploughshares blockaders letter to Faslane Commander, 10 May, 2011:

*We are writing to call on you to cease the deployment of Trident, with its 48 nuclear warheads each ten times the destructive force of the Hiroshima bomb, as it is in violation of international law and constitutes a Crime Against Humanity. The deployment of Trident in carrying out the government's policy of 'deterrence' entails the threat and preparedness to use it and is illegal as its use would inevitably violate international humanitarian law through the indiscriminate killing of civilians, the infliction of unnecessary suffering, the inevitable destruction of the environment of the country of any enemy as well as that of neutral countries through radioactive fallout and consequently prolonged suffering and many thousands of deaths of future generations through birth defects and cancers.*

*The 1996 Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice held that the threat and use of nuclear weapons would generally be contrary to international law. Judge Bedjaoui, President of the Court, has stated that the use of a nuclear weapon system such as Trident, with 100kt warheads, would be illegal because 'the use of even a single such warhead in any circumstance ... would inevitably violate the*

*prohibitions on the infliction of unnecessary suffering and indiscriminate harm as well as the rule of proportionality including with respect to the environment ... such a system deployed and ready for action would be unlawful.'* (Trident and International Law: Scotland Obligations. p.92) *And, according to the Advisory Opinion of the ICJ, it is unlawful to threaten to do that which it is unlawful to actually do.*

*We must remind you that the Nuremberg Principles, as adopted by the International Law Commission of the United Nations in 1950, hold individuals who are complicit in carrying out war crimes and crimes against humanity personally responsible for those crimes, even if ordered to do so by a Superior Officer, unless they take affirmative action to prevent those crimes. Furthermore the ICJ held that international law does apply in times of peace. And in any case, we are not in a time of peace as the UK is currently at war in Afghanistan, a war in which the UK's ally the US regularly strikes at Taliban forces inside Pakistan, a nuclear-armed state.*

*A dastardly double standard is evident at this time, when the UK is engaged in the use of force against Libya for the purpose of protecting civilians even as it deploys a weapon system the use of which would inevitably kill civilians in large numbers. That duplicity diminishes international law, the fundamental purpose of which is the protection of civilians.*

*Along with a few others I have kept vigil on Wednesdays from 4-5pm at the North Gate of Faslane for three years now. I have raised these concerns numerous times with MOD Police, only to be told that I am entitled to protest and to my opinion. But this is not my personal opinion. It is the opinion of the International Court of Justice, to which you and all those you command are accountable. I continue to hope that you will see that the deployment of Trident undermines the law and that you will, in keeping with your obligations under the Nuremberg Principles, take action to prevent its ongoing deployment. I seek a response to this request for you to cease these violations of the law. Yours in peace.*

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

Kathy Galloway

# Inspired by love and anger

*Inspired by love and anger, disturbed by need and pain,  
informed of God's own bias, we ponder once again:  
'How long must some folk suffer? How long can few folk mind?  
How long dare vain self-interest turn prayer and pity blind?'*

*From those forever victims of heartless human greed,  
their cruel plight composes a litany of need:  
'Where are the fruits of justice? Where are the signs of peace?  
When is the day when prisoners and dreams find their release?'*\*

In 1947, in the middle of the worst winter of the century, a young Church of Scotland military chaplain with British forces in Germany was approached by a former Luftwaffe bomber pilot, who told him about the plight of 80,000 nearby German refugees, who were nearly frozen to death. Could the minister help? Douglas Lister went with him to see the refugees. He was horrified by what he saw. He found babies wrapped in newspapers. The refugees had very little to eat. He knew he had to help these starving people.

High Command refused permission on the grounds that it would be fraternisation with the enemy. Douglas approached his friend, Captain John Althorp, for his advice. 'Good God,' said Althorp, 'these poor people are no enemies! Fight the High Command!'

He did. 'As my order as chaplain is to serve people regardless of race, colour or religion, I wish to appeal against the rule in question,' he said in his letter to the High Command. 'I consider it my duty to help those people in their need if I possibly can. I would be grateful if you could give me permission to do so.'

He won the appeal. Letters were sent to Scotland asking for support, to help the German refugees survive the winter hardship – all this only two years after a war in which many Scots had lost loved ones. As a result of the campaigning efforts of Mr Lister and Captain Althorp, and chaplains across Europe, many churches rallied to the cause. The lives of hundreds of so-called 'enemies' were saved. As a result of this cooperation, the Inter-Church Refugee Service was born. It developed in time into Christian Aid.

I am grateful to Ron Ferguson for sharing this story. It is a vivid reminder that from the beginning, three things were true of the movement that eventually became Christian Aid. The first is that people inspired by love and anger, disturbed by need and pain, decided something needed to be done, not just felt. The second thing is that they turned to the churches to do it. And the third thing is that theirs was a challenging cause. It called on a war-weary people to do what Jesus asked them to do, to love their enemies, do good to those who had hated them and pray for those who had persecuted them. The task was complex, disturbing, fraught with practical and political and pastoral difficulties. But from its inception, Christian Aid was rooted in the conviction that the gospel commands us to seek peace founded on justice, and that costly reconciliation is at the heart of the gospel.

Today, Christian Aid works in over 40 countries, with and through hundreds of partners. The majority of these are Christian: national denominations, Councils of Churches and ecumenical Christian NGOs. We are part of the ACT (Action of Churches Together) Alliance, a global partnership of churches and related agencies working to save lives and

support communities in emergencies worldwide. Sometimes we work with partners who are of other faiths or no faith to make the greatest impact on overcoming poverty.

It's nearly two years since I completed my term as Leader of the Iona Community and began my new job as Head of Christian Aid Scotland. You can probably tell that in many ways, I feel almost as at home in Christian Aid as I do in the Community, and there is a huge overlap of values, aims and concerns. Many in the Community are already Christian Aid supporters through their churches and ecumenical networks, many support its campaigns and fundraising, and several work or have worked for Christian Aid in the past, such as member Sarah Moon, the Regional Coordinator for NE England. But though I was accustomed to working across several locations and within a global network, it has been quite an adjustment going from a body with 50 staff to one with 800, and to a much more London-centric organisation. And I really miss being part of a work community that sings! Every day I am grateful for our spirituality and practice, for our Rule and the unshakeable commitment to justice, peace and the integrity of creation, for our ability to talk openly about money, for the support of members and for the prayer life of the Community. They really do sustain me in Christian Aid.

I want to share three contemporary stories with you.

Joseph lives in the Mbeere region of Kenya. As in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa, Mbeere has been significantly and negatively affected by unpredictable climate change. This is one of the main reasons why so many rural people have moved to Nairobi, millions of them, unable any longer to make a living and

# 'When is the day when prisoners and dream

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feature

putting enormous pressure on the city's infrastructure, living in vast slums like Kibera. It's one of the reasons there are so many street children in Nairobi. In the Mbeere region, crop yields have been diminishing, and as they have no access to the kind of technological advances in agricultural production that farmers in the West take for granted, they have an over-reliance on ancient farming methods. Never mind tractors, many food producers in Africa don't even have oxen and plough. They farm with hoes and machetes. Nor do they have access to something we take for granted, a simple thing like the weather forecast. This mattered less when weather patterns were predictable; now they are anything but. So the first obstacle that Joseph faces as a farmer is climate change, the second is lack of access to scientific and technological advances. And his third problem is having to rely on middlemen to sell his goods. They are often unscrupulous, which means that he is less likely to get a fair price or make any profit for his very hard work.

Maria lives in the Beni region in Northern Bolivia. Bolivia is the poorest country in South America and Beni is part of the Amazon basin. Maria is another farmer with big problems. Poor and excluded indigenous communities in this region have suffered very badly through logging and deforestation of the rainforest destroying their traditional livelihoods. Though they have lived there since time immemorial, indigenous communities cannot produce the kind of land titles we in the West are used to – in the past, they never needed them anyway. Nor do they have the access to lawyers which could help them claim their land rights. So big logging companies can destroy the rainforest with impunity. The World Bank estimates that 80% of all logging in Bolivia is illegal. The deforestation has also increased

flooding, as it has in many parts of the world. So Maria and her people needed to find new crops to farm that are more resilient to flooding.

Lawrence is a farmer in Ghana. He's had a very hard time in the last fifteen years or so. Since the trade liberalisation of the 1990s (that's when poor countries were forced to open up their home markets to Western goods by international institutions like the IMF, the World Trade Organisation and the World Bank, usually because of the global debt crisis), Ghana's agricultural economy has been drastically affected by subsidised foreign imports. You know that idea that kind-hearted people in the West had about European butter mountains and food surpluses, that the thing to do with them was to send them to Africa – it was a very bad idea indeed! So in Ghana, rice and tomatoes were among the main products, but now, two-thirds of rice growers are operating at a loss, and 90% of the tomato paste is imported. The offloading of European and American surpluses on to African and South American markets simply put local producers like Lawrence out of business. Heavily subsidised Western goods lower prices to such an extent that local traders cannot compete. Stringent regulations placed by Western-controlled bodies like the World Trade Organisation, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank on trade and markets in developing countries forbid subsidies, but these regulations are not observed by the very countries which impose them. It's a question of 'do what we say, not what we do'.

These stories are a direct link with the origins of Christian Aid. Still today, we are promoting contentious causes like climate justice, land rights, tax and trade justice, which are complex, disturbing, fraught with practical and political and pastoral

difficulties. But the cruel plight of Joseph and Maria and Lawrence composes a litany of need, and so we go on in the conviction that profound poverty and injustice is not God's will and that we are called to respond across all worldly barriers.

This is a difficult time financially for many in rich countries. But for those in the poorest countries already living on the margins of destitution, the financial crisis can make the difference between life and death – their export orders are tumbling, investment finance is drying up, money sent by relatives working in the West is falling, unemployment is increasing and aid is already being cut by rich countries. Commodities speculation, now that property is a busted flush, is causing food prices to soar. The money to realise the Millennium Development Goals is disappearing into a global taxation system that allows the world's richest to evade their responsibilities as corporations, as citizens, as human beings, and I commend to you Christian Aid's Trace the Tax campaign.

This is especially a challenging time for fundraising in South and Central America. Earlier this year, the UK Department for International Development cut its funding to Latin America, on the basis that these are middle income countries and don't need it! But three-quarters of the world's poorest people live in middle income countries – the truth is that these are the world's most unequal countries, where hugely wealthy elites live alongside people in the most appalling poverty. So Christian Aid continues to support its partners there.

At Community Week this summer, with Peter's approval, I invited the Community to support Christian Aid's work in the conflict-ridden country of Colombia, where key food security resources, such as water and fertile soil, are seriously compromised by the dominance of extractive industries, mainly oil and coal, who occupy and contaminate significant tracts of land. The

situation is made worse because poor rural people, subject to constant human rights violation, lack effective and peaceful channels for political participation, especially at the local level. This perpetuates a culture of violence, where violence and violence alone is the preferred method to manage differences, advance vested interests or exert public authority. Christian Aid supports grassroots partners aiming to reduce poverty and human rights abuses, particularly empowering women and young adults in local communities. Overcoming violence, increasing human rights, challenging vested interests, supporting women and young people, are not the easiest causes to raise money for. But Christian Aid is rooted in taking up difficult tasks, and these ones are at the heart of the Iona Community's Peace and Justice Commitment. So I invite members, Family Groups, associates and friends to consider supporting this work in your fundraising and disbursement, and to now help to grow hope in a troubled and beautiful country.

*God asks, 'Who will go for me?  
Who will extend my reach?  
And who, when few will listen,  
will prophesy and preach?  
And who, when few bid welcome,  
will offer all they know?  
And who, when few dare follow,  
will walk the road I show?'* \* ●

\*From 'Inspired by Love and Anger', by John Bell and Graham Maule, from 'Love and Anger: Lively Songs of Social Justice', Wild Goose Publications [www.ionabooks.com](http://www.ionabooks.com)

**Kathy Galloway** is the author of many books, including 'Sharing the Blessing: Overcoming Poverty and Working for Justice' (SPCK), and 'Living by the Rule: the Rule of the Iona Community' (Wild Goose Publications) [www.ionabooks.com](http://www.ionabooks.com). She is the Head of Christian Aid Scotland.

## When I tell my story: people's stories of HIV and faith

Tim Aldred

**Associate Tim Aldred is Policy and Communications manager for Progressio, an international development charity with Catholic roots ...**

*'When I tell my story ... I tell it in the third person – as if it is a story about my brother or a friend. Many people cry when they hear this story, both men and women. Then, at the end, I tell them that this story is about me.'* David Ernesto, 28, is living with HIV. He is from one of the most impoverished communities in El Salvador.

The response of religions to HIV remains a matter of topical debate – not least for those of us who work in faith-based charities. But while these are important discussions, the voices of the people who face the reality of HIV in their daily lives can all too easily go unheard within them.

Last year we met with a diverse group of people from poor communities around the world, all affected in different ways by HIV, and invited them to tell their own story. We also asked whether (and if so, then how) faith made a difference to them. These interviews became a publication: *Prayer Alone Is Not Enough* (Progressio, 2011). The title quotes Isaac, 59, a church pastor in Chitungwiza, Zimbabwe. Many members of his church are affected by HIV:

**Isaac:** *'There is an expectation from the members of my church that I should be able to do something for them when they need help. But prayer alone is not enough. These people need medical assistance. We have members who have been sick for a very long time and our caregivers get fatigued looking after them. So sometimes those who are HIV-positive and unwell feel rejected or damned. As a church leader, it pains me to see people suffering.'*

Many interviewees started by describing the impact of finding out that they were HIV-positive, and how the problems of the illness were compounded by stigma and discrimination.

Abisaih, 49, and Simiso, 36, a married couple living with HIV in Hatcliffe, an informal settlement outside Harare, Zimbabwe, were encouraged to test for HIV by the Dominican Sisters:

**Abisaih:** *'There was so much stigma and discrimination in the community I feared we would be rejected if we found out that we were HIV-positive, but my wife insisted that we get tested ... We went for counselling and testing and found out we were both positive. We then told the Dominican Sisters and they helped us with treatment.'*

**Simiso:** *'We were severely stigmatised by our community. No one wanted us near them and people would laugh at us. Our children were not allowed to play with other children ... Last year, my husband found employment as a gardener. However, when he disclosed his status to the owner [because of the need for clinic visits], the owner dismissed him. When my husband was ill, no one would associate with us. His relatives rejected him. I was alone.'*

**Abisaih:** *'We wish we could find work. We are strong now, but because of stigma we cannot find paid work. We have nowhere to live. We have two children whom we are not able to send to school because we have no funds.'*

Some, like Maria Antonia, 39, a single mother living in El Salvador, received poor treatment from medical staff:

**Maria Antonia:** *'When I got tested, I thought the result would be negative. When I found out, I felt like the world was coming down on top of me. The doctor told me I had only a few days left to live. "Don't cry – you have AIDS and you have just a few*

days left to live." This was the director of a government health clinic! ... I started crying. I did not think about my children or my mother, only death ... I was depressed. I had no appetite and I cried many tears, but I was not physically sick. To be admitted [to a support group] I had to get a form showing I was positive ... [The doctor] said, "What do you want it for? Didn't I tell you? You have AIDS." But I got the form and I was allowed to ... join the group. Right now, I am healthy. I am taking HIV medication and I go to a great clinic with great staff.'

We were privileged to record a number of interviews in Yemen, where HIV is of growing concern, but is often a taboo subject. Such taboos increase the risk of HIV transmission. Maha, a woman in her late 20s in Aden, Yemen, contracted HIV from her husband.

**Maha:** 'A few months after our marriage, I got sick ... I soon became pregnant, but I lost the baby in a miscarriage at six months ... I went to the hospital ... This is how I found out that I was HIV-positive ...

'An HIV specialist ... gave me counselling. However, it was not the sort of counselling I needed. He scared me. At the time I went to see him, I weighed 62 kilos. After his counselling, I was so upset, frightened and worried that I lost weight and I was down to 30 kilos.

'I told my husband that I was HIV-positive. He asked me how. I said, "From you." I knew there was no other way. I had never been with another man. I had no other risk factors. My husband at first denied ... that he had infected me; but later admitted to me that ... he was positive when he married me ... I do not know for sure how he got infected, but I think he was infected in Saudi Arabia through sex with men.'

Somia, a *murshidat* (female religious guide) works in the Department of Religious Guidance in Yemen, and described the particular difficulties faced by women like Maha living with HIV:

**Somia:** 'There is tremendous stigma. Some will not speak with them because they are people living with HIV. However, when we see them at the mosque, we speak to them. We tell them that HIV is not a punishment from God ... Women have more fear of stigma and because of Yemeni culture and tradition ... Women may be at risk of being killed by their families because the families assume that the woman has had illicit sex – or some families simply disown the girl who commits adultery. This does not happen to men. Women get more blame.'

In El Salvador, HIV is particularly prevalent amongst marginalised groups, including sexual minorities and poor communities. David Ernesto, 28, is a former gang member from one of the poorest suburbs of San Salvador:

**David Ernesto:** 'I am not sure how or when I became infected with HIV. I entered the army at age 17. When I was off duty ... I would get drunk and have sex. I did not use condoms. After I left the army, I was often sick with the flu and fevers and ... one day a doctor offered me an HIV test. In the army, I was taught to be rough, macho, and to care about nothing. So, I took the test without knowing what it was about. The doctor tried to give me counselling before she gave me the result, but I refused. I was too macho and cool ...

'Two months later ... I was in very rough shape. I recalled that the doctor said there was an HIV support group ... I assumed it was like Alcoholics Anonymous – which at the time I thought was total bullshit. Nonetheless, I decided to go to the meeting. I was surprised by the group. They talked so openly about their experiences. I never imagined that people living with HIV could be so happy and strong – people who seemed to have no problems ... After the meeting, they all hugged me. This was a new beginning. I thought: Shit ... maybe this is not going to kill me. I was amazed.'

Other interviewees also describe receiving similar support from others living with HIV, and

sometimes from faith institutions – but not always. Some interviewees discussed the responses from their religious community, while others, including Maha and David Ernesto, spoke of the impact of HIV on their personal faith:

**Maha:** 'While I do not seek out spiritual counselling from any sheikh or imam, I am a committed Muslim. I accept HIV as part of my life. It is part of my fate, part of God's plan. God willed it and I accept it. In the beginning, I did often ask "why me?" but I do not do this any longer. It is my fate and I will live with it. I have heard that many today live well for over 10 years.'

**David Ernesto:** 'I have a religious faith, but not in any church or pastor or congregation. My faith is that I, myself, am the church. This is something that I feel inside my heart that I can't explain. I say, "Lord Jesus, I feel your presence." I ask God to give me strength, information, and conviction. I say, "God, I know that in every step I take you are walking alongside me and you have been taking care of me. I know you have mercy for me."'

Simiso and Abisaih had praised the support received from the Dominican Sisters. But they felt rejected by their church when Abisaih was hospitalised:

**Simiso:** 'My husband was in hospital for four months. The pastors never visited him. However, when he was discharged, the church leaders were surprised. They insisted that we return to church, but we refused. We went to another church, one that accepted us.'

Khumbulani and Jane are another married couple living with HIV in Zimbabwe. They described how attitudes have been changing in their own church:

**Jane:** 'My relatives never used to allow us to go to clinics or take medicine because this is not the practice of many Apostolic churches. However, last year, the church leaders said those who want to go to the clinic may do so, but those who believe can still be healed by God. But I think we can do both. People living with HIV don't want church members to know because they will be stigmatised.'

**Khumbulani:** 'But it is all up to you. Prayer alone will not work. You must go to the hospital. I have noticed that there is a change in the Apostolic churches ...

*[about treatment for HIV]. Now ... they are saying we ... should go for treatment.'*

**Jane:** *'I want to share my own story. Ever since I found out I was HIV-positive and began going to the clinic, my family members (who do not know I am positive) have been asking each other "what does she have?" But they do not ask me. Those who know I am positive ask "how did you get it?" I wish that God would help them to understand that this was not my choice. I did not choose to be HIV-positive. It just happened. I had no choice or control.'*

There are, then, clear examples where religious beliefs contribute to the difficulties of people affected by HIV. There are also moving interviews which show many people of faith working hard both to tackle stigma and provide practical help.

Abdulla Mohammed El Qadesi, Assistant Director of the Department of Religious Guidance in Yemen, spoke to us of how his own views had changed:

**Imam El Qadesi:** *'My initial views on HIV were old-fashioned and conservative. After I participated in a workshop on HIV, I changed my mind. I used to think HIV was a punishment from God for forbidden relations ... I began to preach sermons with correct messages ... One, delivering the message that HIV is not a punishment – it is a crisis for the human race, Muslim and non-Muslim. Two, promoting HIV prevention. And three, integrating people living with HIV into society ... We must all honour one another for we are all the sons of Adam.'*

Imam El Qadesi's willingness to confront his own assumptions about HIV is striking and inspiring. Along with the other courageous testimonies here, it also challenges: If the stigma of HIV is to be tackled within my faith, or my church, then it must first be named and confronted within me. ●

Extracts from 'Prayer Alone Is Not Enough: People's Stories of HIV and Faith', J. Matarazzo, Progressio, 2011. Read the full report at: [www.progressio.org.uk](http://www.progressio.org.uk)

Iain Whyte

## A return to the Deep South

I was in Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi in the summer of 1964, travelling south by Greyhound bus on the very day the President, Lyndon Johnson, signed the Civil Rights Bill into law.

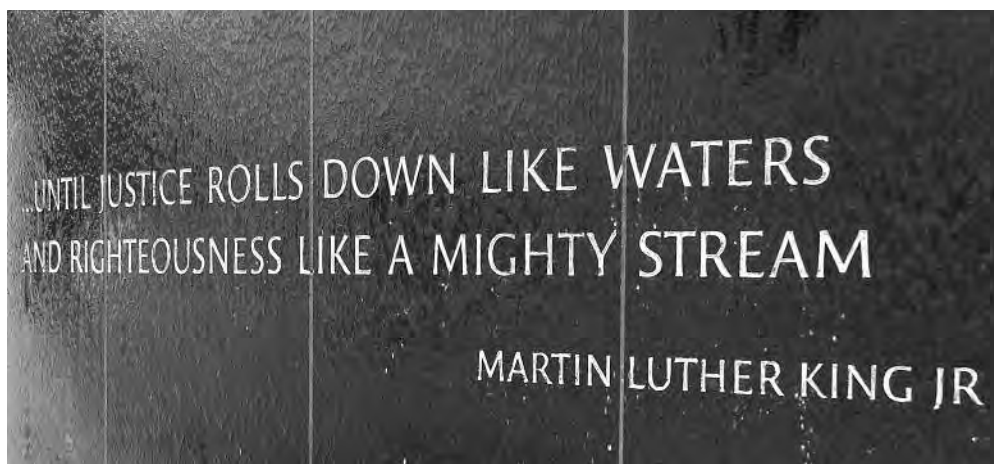
Weekends were spent in pulpit supply and Sunday school classes in poor white segregationist communities in Alabama. For two exhilarating and frightening weeks I stayed with 95-year-old Mr Albert Peters in Mississippi, who introduced me to 'grits' and told me stories of his father's life as a slave, while I taught in Freedom Schools and helped with voter registration. Half an hour was spent with Dr Martin Luther King in the Southern Christian Leadership's ramshackle offices in the 'negro' part of Atlanta. My wife, Isabel, and I have since visited parts of the South, but this spring I was able to combine some historical research on slavery with a revisiting of old haunts.

Several days before setting off, our American computer repair man asked me where we were going. 'Alabama and Mississippi,' I said, 'to see how much has changed in nearly half a century.' 'Not much,' he said, and I kept that laconic comment in mind on our travels. We in Scotland have only recently started to come to terms with our own history of involvement with slavery and it was interesting to see in South Carolina and Georgia whether or not that terrible legacy was being swamped by the events marking the 150th anniversary of the Civil War. There was certainly a contrast between the accounts of antebellum wealth and architecture in the strikingly fine city of Charleston given by a tour guide and the different perspective from Harlan Greene, the City Archivist. Harlan was passionate about the story of William and Ellen Craft, whose escape from slavery is a little known but legendary story.

In Macon, Georgia, I asked local historian Maryell Battin how much social interaction there was between whites and African Americans today.

We had just been to the Harriet Tubman Museum celebrating the heroic ex-slave who led hundreds of colleagues to freedom. The Museum senior staff seemed totally relaxed in each other's company. Maryell, who was born in Edinburgh, reckoned that there was a good deal of official socialising but that very few would experience invitations to each other's homes across the racial divide.

In Montgomery, Alabama we stayed with our friends Diana and John Hodges-Batzka, an interracial couple in ministry, in the city where, in 1956, a young Baptist minister called King led the boycott of buses that marked a watershed in the civil rights movement. Montgomery has some impressive monuments to the civil rights movement, one of which, in Troy University, is an interactive presentation on Rosa Parks' arrest for her refusal to give up her seat to a white man. But not all are enthusiastic about this historic celebration, or even agreed on its accuracy. Some state historical markers



speak of the 'disturbances' of those days, close by Martin Luther King's Dexter Avenue Church where a very different emphasis is given. Our guide at the Rosa Parks Memorial told us that it was her grandmother, fighting segregation through the courts, who was the real pioneer of civil rights and suffered more than Mrs Parks.

An hour away from Montgomery is Selma, scene of a protest march at the bridge in 1965. Following local police violence and the deaths of black and white demonstrators, thousands of marchers came in from all over the States and walked the 43 miles to Montgomery to demand an end to segregation. At one end of the bridge is an open-air memorial to the heroes (and martyrs) of that event and at the other a large Exposition Centre with excellent visuals. The memorial is not kept in trim by the local authority and the Centre is run by the Parks Department of the USA. This indicated to us that even though every town in the South, if not in the whole country, has a Martin Luther King district, street or even boulevard, there is still a long way to go before localities fully own the grim realities of segregation and make the celebration of the struggle against it part of their folklore.

Of course, as in South Africa, history that is within living memory is hard to live with. But it was not all one-way traffic along racial lines in those dark days. In 1964 I stayed with a courageous white couple, Clifford and Virginia Durr, who fought for civil rights through the courts and defended black leaders. They are both dead now but are featured amongst the heroes in the Rosa Park Museum, alongside one of Diana and John's dinner guests, invited to meet us.

In 1956 Bob Graetz ministered to a black Lutheran congregation and was part of the clergy team planning the bus boycott under Dr King – his manse was bombed three times in as many months. As we talked about racial justice today in Montgomery, Bob told me of his current action for human rights. He is in his late 80s.

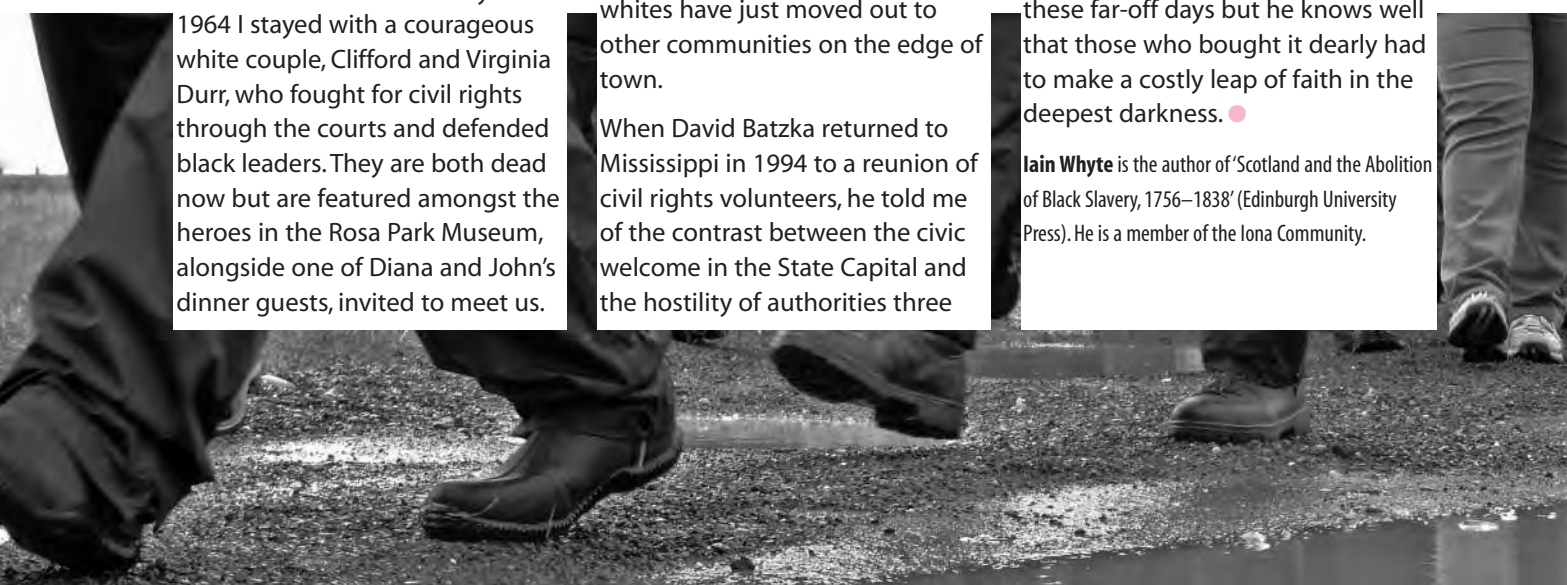
We spent three days travelling in Mississippi with Diana Batzka's mother, widow of my old friend David who spent the whole summer of 1964 teaching and building a community centre in Clarksdale. During his time there three civil rights colleagues were murdered in the state by the Sheriff and his friends in the Ku Klux Klan, an event recorded by the film *Mississippi Burning*. Sadly none of the markers of David's time could be identified now, and when we visited the local Mayor he seemed unwilling to recognise the sacrificial struggle which in fact had enabled him to rise to power. I met two old men in a barber's shop in Greenville who claimed to have known my host Mr Peters, but his house was now a vacant lot and there was no sign of the café where the Freedom School had met. Although the climate of fear in those days has now been finally banished and there is an air of confidence, separation, as opposed to segregation, remains. Town centres show stark signs of economic deprivation in one of America's poorest states and many of the whites have just moved out to other communities on the edge of town.

When David Batzka returned to Mississippi in 1994 to a reunion of civil rights volunteers, he told me of the contrast between the civic welcome in the State Capital and the hostility of authorities three

decades before. We accompanied Vickie to the University of Southern Mississippi to deposit David's papers of that summer in the civil rights archive there. The librarian who met us was enthusiastic and assured us that history students were increasingly being encouraged to resource local history.

I remember David saying that, while he celebrated the new climate that replaced fear and oppression, and the involvement of African Americans at all levels of government and public life, travelling past the cotton fields and seeing communities on 'the other side of the tracks' made him question the effectiveness of change in the economic lives of people. Civil rights leaders used to say that it was no use desegregating a lunch-counter if you had no money to pay for the lunch. Our surface impression from a few days in Mississippi is that the income gap is still as wide as ever. Having an African American President is an incredible contrast to the blocking of black voters by Governor Wallace on the steps of the Alabama State Capitol less than five decades ago. But that President has a huge uphill task to translate the MLK dream of economic justice for the poor amidst recession, the dominance of what George MacLeod called 'the money boys', to say nothing of the Tea Party, the military industry and the pressure to justify oppression in the name of 'security'. Barack Obama may feel that desegregation was a more straightforward goal to achieve in these far-off days but he knows well that those who bought it dearly had to make a costly leap of faith in the deepest darkness. ●

**Iain Whyte** is the author of 'Scotland and the Abolition of Black Slavery, 1756–1838' (Edinburgh University Press). He is a member of the Iona Community.



# Anti-sectarian workshops in Scottish prisons

Coracle Editor, Neil Paynter, chats with Iona Community Youth Projects Coordinator, Laura McAleese, about her work with young men in Scottish prisons ...

**NEIL:** Laura, tell me about the anti-sectarian workshops you're doing. What are they, and where are you running them right now?

**LAURA:** Well, we've been given, this year, 2011-12, funding to target five different prisons in Scotland and have ten different courses. We're doing two courses per prison to different groups. And the prisons that we're targeting this time round are Addiewell, Shotts, which I didn't do last year, Kilmarnoch, Barlinnie and Greenock.

Basically this time round, I'll be running five workshops, once a week, and then the sixth session will be with the Old Firm Alliance, which is a coach from Ranger's Football Club and a coach from Celtic Football Club who come into the prison and do a workshop, and then do a coaching session with the participants.

**NEIL:** Sounds really good.

**LAURA:** So the point of the workshops is basically to raise awareness, and also to see, hopefully, if we can help change people's attitudes.

**NEIL:** Can you describe a little bit about how the course works?

**LAURA:** The first workshop is just an introduction to sectarianism, so it's finding out what the men think it is and doing different exercises. The second week is looking at stereotypes: so how we stereotype different people and how people judge a book by its cover. So in terms of looking at sectarianism, it's quite good looking at Catholics and Protestants and how they differ from each other, if they do at all: why people automatically stereotype a Celtic supporter as being a Catholic, why is a Ranger supporter a Protestant, and the hatred that stems from that. Session three is looking at the

history of Rangers and Celtic, the history of the football clubs. Session four is looking at the history of sectarianism: so all the historical events that have shaped the way society is today, where people still sing about them even though they happened before they were born, but everybody's got such prejudices they've held on to for years. And then the last session is obviously the evaluation session.

**NEIL:** And the Old Firm Alliance, when do they come in?

**LAURA:** The very last week, week six.

**NEIL:** And how do the guys react to the Old Firm Alliance coming in? Sounds like a really original idea.

**LAURA:** They enjoy that actually. And this time round as well, the coach from Rangers and the coach from Celtic will be coming in on session three to do the football workshops, and the history of Rangers and Celtic, so it will be quite good to have the guys with me. And the fact that both clubs are working together: why can't supporters be like that?

**NEIL:** Although you've said in the past that there have been a few problems with the way the workshops have been evaluated, which you're working on now, the results overall have been very good.

**LAURA:** They *have* been good. All of last year's results showed over 50 per cent positive attitude change.

**NEIL:** And there's been a lot of interest from the Scottish government, because the workshops have produced such good results. But other groups have been interested in it too, haven't they, or have noticed it.

**LAURA:** The Church of Scotland,

they've been speaking quite a lot about it in the media. And also the Catholic Church media office, I spoke to them about it as well, because I wanted the course to be recognised by both Churches, because I feel keeping the course impartial is really really important. Because I think that with a subject like sectarianism, as much as I'm flattered that the Church of Scotland are speaking about the course, and that it had a big part in their General Assembly, I feel that both Churches need to know that it's happening. Otherwise, it's going to look like it's a Church of Scotland-type course, and people will automatically assume it's one-sided.

**NEIL:** And the workshops are entirely funded by the Scottish government, aren't they?

**LAURA:** Yes. That's important to make clear.

**NEIL:** You were talking to me a while back about an example of something that happened in the workshops, where people *really* started talking together. You were telling me about an older man who was talking to the younger guys about his past; and about what he was trying to teach them or show them. Can you speak a little about that?

**LAURA:** The course is supposed to be predominantly under-30-year-olds, but I've had a lot of guys that are maybe in their 50s that have been coming. But in a way that's proved to be quite good because they've been able to give some insights that maybe the younger guys that are only in their mid-20s don't really know.

Some of the younger guys aren't sectarian at all, but some of the guys are really really passionate about it. And I was in Barlinnie one time, and there was a guy who had been through it all, he'd been in and out of prison so many times; and when he was younger it was for more violent offences, and it was things associated

with football that were gang-related, just in the area that he grew up in. And he used to just fight with people if he saw someone wearing a different top from the team that he supported. He was a Ranger supporter and if he saw a Celtic supporter he just automatically fought with them. He went along to the Orange walks, even though he didn't actually know what they represented. He admitted all that. He actually questioned the younger guys. He was like: 'I mean, do you even know what it is that you're marching along for?'

And they were all saying: 'Ach, aye, we just go along for the banter.' That whole kinda crowd mentality: 'Oh, it's just a good day out, with a drink and whatever.' And I think that's what fuels a lot of people fighting.

It was quite good to hear *him* questioning them. And he was kind of doing my job, if you like, but instead of me saying, 'Well, look at it from this point of view,' he was looking at it. And it was good coming from him, because he had actually been in prison because of his actions. There was a sort of peer tutoring thing going on. See, when you do that in schools, when it's the older pupils working with the younger pupils, it's really good. So it was likewise in prison with the older prisoners saying to the younger prisoners: 'Well, look at me: I'm 58 years of age and I'm still in prison and just getting out next year. You are a lot younger.'

**NEIL:** So think about it.

**LAURA:** 'You don't wanna spend the rest of your life in and outta jail.' And so that was quite good.

**NEIL:** That's pretty powerful, because you've helped to create that atmosphere where people are really talking.

**LAURA:** Yeah, that's what's quite good about the course. I use a lot of group discussion, group exercises, and then feeding back and discussion. And I find that is a

really important part of the course. 'Cause that's where you get everyone's point of view coming across. And then if groups are mixed it's even better: if you can get a good mix of different supporters in, instead of them being all one-sided. Because then that's where I have to kind of step in and play Devil's advocate, and then they automatically assume that you're related to the other side ...

**NEIL:** And you're taking these workshops to young people too, to some of the schools where you work. Why do you want to do that, and where are you doing it?

**LAURA:** Well, I decided that I wanted to go in and do workshops in secondary schools, but I also wanted to target a children's unit as well. So we've been given money to target schools as well as prisons this year. So the funding was twofold, it wasn't just for prisons. And I had the idea of targeting Kibble, which is a secure unit but it's also an education centre.

**NEIL:** So what age is that?

**LAURA:** Eight to eighteen-year-olds. I just did a group there, and the guys that I've been working with are probably between fifteen and seventeen. And I'm also hoping to do it in St Mary's Children's Unit, which is a secure unit. And I had an idea of working with St Mary's doing three workshops, once a week, similar to what I do in the adult prisons but also making it a bit more youth-friendly for them. Then there's a school, Turnbull High School, which is right next door to St Mary's. It's actually my old secondary school. And I'm gonna do three workshops in there as well, doing it once a week. And then at the end get the Old Firm Alliance in again. And we'll have two coaches working with St Mary's, doing a coaching session with them in the morning, likewise another two coaches in Turnbull High, doing it in the morning. And then in the afternoon bring the

Turnbull High pupils up to St Mary's and have an actual football match.

**NEIL:** So it's bringing the two places together.

**LAURA:** It's breaking down a lot of barriers, as well as doing the anti-sectarian work. Because I can remember personally, when I went to Turnbull High School, the fear of having St Mary's next door, because we all thought it was a prison, and the sort of negativity surrounding it when you're young and don't really understand.

Another idea I've got is turning my workshops into a drama pack. I've decided to do a pilot project in Bellahouston Academy, where we did the first graffiti project. I'm gonna go in and do workshops again. And then, together, we're going to devise a type of play where they get to decide the situation, decide the characters. I don't think it will be scripted as such. It will probably be more of an improvisation, and then we'll produce something, and hopefully video it in the end.

**NEIL:** Brilliant.

**LAURA:** Drama's a really good tool for breaking down barriers and building confidence in some of the kids, and hopefully it will be something they enjoy doing.

**NEIL:** And I guess doing anti-sectarian work in schools helps to get to people when they're younger, helps to get at the roots of things.

Laura, you and the rest of the Youth Department do a real range of work – from workshops in prisons to drama and the graffiti projects and other schools work.

There are certainly lots of ideas popping and positive things happening in the Youth Department! Thanks so much for chatting. ●



# Where dreams come true: snapshots of life in community from the Camas Diary

**Campfires on the beach, dancing dolphins, selkie stories, apple and fresh currant pie, Texas honey, basking sharks – Camas is life in all its fullness. The Camas Diary is a blog written by staff and volunteers of Camas, the residential centre of the Iona Community on the isle of Mull. Camas offers small groups of young people and adults a chance to learn more about themselves, the environment and spirituality, through a variety of outdoor, creative and environmental activities and a simple, sustainable way of living. Following are some extracts from the wonderful Camas Diary ...**

*This week we welcomed a group of kids from a youth club in Edinburgh. One highlight for me was the wild camping trip. We packed our heavy bags full of tents, clothes, sleeping bags and food, walked up the track, then drove to Knockvologan Farm, stopping at Fionnphort's Ferry Shop on the way so they could stock up on some essentials (crisps). Some found the walk from Knockvologan along the coast difficult and it was slow going, but eventually we made it to the lovely beach campsite. We spent a pleasant evening watching the sun set, playing hacky sack and bocce, and sitting around the driftwood fire toasting marshmallows. The next morning we managed to pack up and get going despite the rain, and headed back to Camas, stopping for an involved session of the German Foot Game.*

*The week included a lot of time spent throwing things: the frisbee, the hula hoop over the fishing pole, rocks at the bell, plus the odd tantrum. At other points we had table tennis tournaments, built a raft and a shelter, learnt guitar chords and imitated each other's accents and slang.*

*At the moment the ground around Mull is covered with all sorts of wildflowers, including about 50 different kinds of small yellow flowers that are just about impossible to distinguish from one another ...*

A week has passed since our Sheffield group left us at the top of the track. We had an amazing week!: Fearless adventurers walking down a vertical cliff-face, valiant explorers investigating the area from kayaks, and heroic voyagers marching through the hills to hidden beaches in the middle of the Scottish wilderness.

A week full of laughter, adventure, good company, singing songs.

Peat-cutting was a success. Clean women and men walking up the track, and two-legged, sticky, brown mud-monsters coming down an hour later.

To end the week we had a campfire on the beach with some truly amazing entertainment. Never before has Camas had such a fine jug player present, and never before have the Simpsons been to visit ...

*The wind gradually began to subside and we settled into our preparation for a visit from children from Iona and all across Mull to take part in an array of activities, including storytelling, rock-pooling (exploring the wilds of the sea), games, art and poetry, and a trip to our very own organic garden just at the entrance of Camas.*

*The children arrived on Thursday morning as a cavalcade of stomping feet and excited voices all around Camas, and we had some biscuits ready for them all. We split them all into groups: the Crabs, the Starfish, the Seagulls,*

*the Sharks, the Jellyfish, and the Whales. The sounds of stomping feet everywhere never stopped except for lunch and everything buzzed with curiosity and excitement. It was a thrill to be able to share the experience of Camas with so many children and leave them with memories of here ...*

This week was led by Kathy Galloway, and called Exploring Creation. We had a group of lovely people from all over the world. We went blackberry picking in the pouring rain, while others enjoyed tea in the polytunnel, as well as digging spuds for the tea. This was also a week of trees and their fruit – the plum tree gave us some beautiful plums which were made into an amazing dessert. The blackthorn produced sloes which we will also find good use for.

We went on a few day trips: to Ardalanish, where Aeneas told us the story of how they became organic weavers. We also went to the tidal island of Erraid and, after lunch and selkie stories at the lighthouse observatory, walked to the seal colony to see if there were any sealskins on the shore.

Our last night was filled with good food, songs, comedy and wonderful poems! ...

*This week Camas was visited by one of our longest-running groups: Abercorn School from Glasgow. It was a week of high-fives, arm wrestling, cook-offs and 'made you looks'.*

*Everybody had a great time, except Rob who lost out in the Camas Cook-Off and was forced to wear a beard of shame. Two of the group performed at the Iona ceilidh and almost everybody had a dance.*

*It was a hoot of a week, full of work and play and sunny days and starry nights. To top it all off, on the final evening we paddled out on the calm, clear and ever so magical water. We were not the only creatures out to play in Camas Bay that night. Four dolphins came to dance and dance around our kayaks! Breathtaking really. Here's to Camas Bay and all that dwell here ...*

This week we have had an older group of young people, ages 15-20, visiting us all the way from Harstad in north Norway.

Camas-typical activities went very well, thanks to the beautiful weather: kayaking, abseiling, walking to Trig Point, taking a boat trip to Staffa, camping on the Mac lawn, joining the evening service for peace, ceilidh, pilgrimage on Iona, doing a treasure hunt (with edible treasure, of course), going to Market Bay, a lot of games – shark attack, shipwreck, the Norwegian rope game.

Finally, according to tradition, we let these guys take over Camas for their last evening here. Some decorated our dining room with flowers and flowery napkins on each table, some occupied our kitchen for the evening meal – they served a Norwegian version of Mexican food. Thank you all!

Another precious week has passed

by like that. We all believe that the community and friendship we built this week will last long in our memories and will fill us with bright smiles and warmth throughout our lives forever! ...

*A new discovery! Becky, our gardener, has been harvesting the black and red currants from our garden like nobody's business. Where I live there aren't many currants to speak of, so I have not eaten them hardly at all before. But then – heaven opened – and a glorious thing happened.*

*Becky made pie! Not just any pie – she made apple and fresh currant pie – and holy smokes it was sooo good! I need to apologise to my mother as this pie was better than any I have ever tasted. At first bite, my tastebuds sung with the pure bliss of all that sweet berry goodness. It was a party in my mouth that I never wanted to end. I have never wanted to eat, and re-eat, dessert so much; you can guess that I was definitely hoarding the leftovers of that pie for the next few days – and it never failed to wow me!*

*Now Becky is off on holiday, and there is no more apple, black and red currant pie, but its memory will live on because I have tasted the best darn pie that the world has ever had! And even though that pie is no more, Becky has also seen fit to make black currant jam. I sneak into the kitchen in the morning to eat some because I dream of it at night ...*

We had a youth group from Texas here last week, and we had loads of fun! Let's see: we took these guys to the ceilidh dance on Iona,

we went abseiling, we went to Market Bay, hiked up to Trig Point, and we kayaked, but my favourite bit was on the Thursday evening during our Camas Challenge (for those of you who don't know, this is when we let our guests take over Camas for the evening, and this means they are in charge of decorations, dinner, entertainment, and our evening reflection).

So, for the Camas Challenge these Texans made us some brilliant stir fry, and decorated the common room nice and proper. They also put on a lovely reflection, and even awarded us with a special labyrinth plate from Texas. Then (this is the best bit) they taught us to two-step to some country music, how to do some other group dances, and even wowed us all with some brilliant performances. One very cool chap did a stand-up comedy act that was hilarious; we had a pair of lovely twin girls who sang a beautiful country duet.

These guys were such a fun group. They even left us Texas honey, which we are still nibbling on. We bade them a very fond farewell with lots of 'yehaas' and 'y'all come back now, you here!' ...

*This week we had a group from Penicuik High School. These guys arrived after having just finished up their exams and so were really looking forward to getting away from it all for a week at Camas. On Sunday morning we all walked over to Market Bay for some games and art on the beach. In the afternoon we did some gardening and started*



*to make some cob for our outdoor oven. Cob's made by mixing sand and clay together, and we found the best way was to use our bare feet and dance, twist, shake and boogie on top of it. We also found that coating our faces in clay protects us from the midges (sort of at least). The only way to wash it off, of course, was to take a swim in the sea.*

*Then on Monday it was off to Iona. The teachers generously bought us all an ice cream and we sat down on the grass in the old nunnery. In the afternoon we headed down to Sandeels Bay and relaxed in the sun for while (ah, life is good!). These places are so beautiful and we wanted to do our bit to keep them clean and so picked up flotsam and jetsam as we walked back towards the Abbey. That night we ceilidhed in the village hall. There was also a group of young Swedes there who showed us the flipping freaky frog dance!*

*We came back to Camas on Tuesday after our night's camping. Then there was raft-building and racing and falling apart and getting wet! We also went abseiling down the quarry wall, which caused a few nervous moments and some shaky legs but everyone gave it a go and did their best.*

*One thing the group were keen to try out this week was to experience some solo time. As John Muir said: 'Only by going alone in silence, without baggage, can one truly get into the heart of the wilderness.' So this was some time to be by ourselves and let go of all the usual everyday busyness.*

*Thursday night was Camas Challenge night and our group served up some delicious spicy Mexican food – mucho gracias! We also had a lovely reflection where everyone shared what they enjoyed most about the trip and their high points. It was really great to hear that everyone enjoyed themselves so much and that they felt like they had got to know each other better and formed friendships. During evening*

*entertainment we did comedic aerobics and had an amazing game of sharks versus lifeguards under the kite. We were sad to see everyone go! ...*

Our group of guests were a crew of folk – some from as far away as Australia, some from as 'far away' as Bunessan, and all with an interest in sustainable living and discussing how we can reduce our carbon footprint. The group had come armed with data on how much energy they had used over the previous months, and looked into transport, home, food, to see which area had the biggest carbon impact. We then discussed ways of reducing this to one tonne per year in each area.

We gained inspiration and advice when going to visit the local eco-croft and Ardalanish Farm. The beautiful beach at Ardalanish was perfect for sauntering with our ice creams and spotting all the wildlife, flowers and the native woodland.

So many people have put in a lot of work to set up their own wind turbines and more sustainable ways of heating, insulating and looking after their homes. It was great to share ideas in the village hall, and have guests over for dinner on our last night ...

*This week we had an incredible group of young men from Glasgow come and stay with us. The week was full of tons of activities – and basking sharks! We went out sea-fishing with some of the boys and on the way we had basking sharks come right up to the boat, with their huge fins and humongous mouths; we all watched in awe as we could literally almost reach out and touch these whale-sized sharks! We even had sharks in our bay – the lads from Glasgow and the rest of us loved it! Oh, and did I mention that we all caught loads of fish, and some of us even learned how to gut and clean them!*

*So, we went abseiling, kayaking, hill-walking to Trig Point and Market Bay; there was lots of football, swimming (and those boys were amazing at swimming as they swam in the freezing bay at night without wet suits – they are definitely Scottish, and no mistake!). We went camping twice. First, we took the boys over to Iona and camped on the Mac lawn, and then we went to the ceilidh dance in the village hall – those boys definitely know how to dance! Then, they went wild camping near Tireregan at a beautiful beach, and the weather was definitely perfect for it!*

*Then, these young lads decided to do the Camas Challenge. We played loads of games, like football and ultimate frisbee, with their group going against Camas, and it was a close shot, sort of, but in the end those young men won the trophy (we put up a good fight though). They also cooked us dinner that night, using the local fish we caught – and it was delicious!*

*Finally, one of their leaders let me paint a treasure map on his head. It's kind of a dream of mine, I mean I have always wanted to see a bald man with a treasure map on his head, and well, I guess Camas is just the kind of place where dreams come true! ... ●*

To read more of the Camas Diary: <http://thecamasdiary.blogspot.com/>

To find out what's happening at Camas in 2012: [www.iona.org.uk/camas\\_home.php](http://www.iona.org.uk/camas_home.php)

For individual or group bookings: [camas.bookings@iona.org.uk](mailto:camas.bookings@iona.org.uk)

For more information: Camas Centre, Ardfenaig, Bunessan, Isle of Mull, PA67 6DX, Scotland, UK 01681 700367, [camas@iona.org.uk](mailto:camas@iona.org.uk)

\* **Thanks so much** to all the Camas staff members and volunteers who contributed to this piece. (Ed.)

## A TRIBUTE TO MEMBER COLIN MORTON, by Maxwell MacLeod

The Reverend Colin Morton, who died in June, aged 77, was the Church of Scotland's leading apologist for the Palestinian people and fought a highly respected 23-year campaign on their behalf.

This work was delivered at all levels, from lobbying senior politicians to activating trade links between craftspeople and retail outlets, and he became both revered and loved by many, and considerably feared by his political enemies for his quiet yet effective style of debate.

Colin Morton was born in China in 1933 to Ralph and Jenny Morton, two missionaries known for both their intellectual rigour and their radical approach to missionary work.

After his parents' return to Cambridge, where Ralph taught, the family moved to Glasgow where Ralph became the Deputy Leader of the rapidly expanding Iona Community, whose mainland base was then in a multi-storey community centre in Glasgow's Clyde Street.

This was no ordinary community centre. At its ground floor was a restaurant where several hundred low-cost meals were served each

day (it was located yards from a frantic bus depot), and upstairs Jenny established a library and meeting rooms where the likes of Donald Dewar, John Smith and Jimmy Reid could often be found battling it out with trade union bosses and young ministers. There were also dormitories, a publishing department and active theatrical and film-making studios and the place ran like a 24-hour-a-day circus with God as the ringmaster.

A roll call of the political achievements of the children of the managers of Community House is surely remarkable: Peter Dowding became Premier of Western Australia, Douglas Alexander, a cabinet minister, Hugh Morton, a law Lord, Wendy Alexander, a Labour Leader, and George Morton, a Labour whip in the House of Commons.

Brought up in such a powder keg of political debate, the young, naturally shy, Colin soon learned how to both formulate a political position and defend it; and after an education at Fettes, Cambridge, national service and New College, he added to his arsenal by marrying a feisty young American undergraduate called Carol, who was to become his foil, business partner and above all else his lifelong beloved. Their 50th wedding anniversary was eight days after Colin died.

Joining the Iona Community in 1959, he enjoyed a 2-year assistantship under George Wilkie in Port Glasgow, where he was ordained. His first charge was Linwood, then a small town, which was soon to rapidly expand into the headquarters of the Scottish motor industry, and he was soon in the thick of it, bringing up four children as he ran a busy parish and became involved in everything from trade union politics to playing awful golf and brewing even worse beer.

At Linwood he was involved with a Church Extension charge, taking over a brand-new building and trying to attract the hundreds of

young migrant workers to a Christian way of life.

In 1973 the family moved to a parish at Prestonpans, where he was to serve as both parish minister and, for three terms, Labour Councillor on Lothian Region, before moving in 1988 to what might be regarded as his seminal appointment as the Kirk's representative in the Holy Land, based in St Andrew's Church, a huge establishment that flies the Saltire right in the centre of Jerusalem.

Although he was already suspicious of some of the political actions of the Israelis he resolved on arrival to spend a year 'smoking my pipe and listening', before becoming actively involved in the snake pit of Middle East politics.

This was typically wise as he was soon to become a welcome guest and friend to many Israelis, including the country's President, who was to visit the church on several occasions.

Colin Morton's ministry in Jerusalem is perhaps best characterised by his long chairmanship of the Western YWCA, which aimed to bring together Muslims, Christians and Jews.

Once he became established, Colin was fierce in his condemnation of the Israeli position, which he took as being far from 'defensive', and more illegal aggression:

*'How can we blame the Palestinians for being mildly aggressive if the Israelis constantly flout international law?' he would ask. Professor Yasir Suleiman, speaking at a Celebration Service for Colin, expressed it in this way: 'For Colin, Palestine was not a geopolitical space. It was an ethical landscape in which he navigated with a moral compass that cared equally for all the people of the Holy Land: Israelis and Palestinians; Christians, Jews and Muslims; men, women and children of all ages and all backgrounds.' ...*

He and Carol were to convert a men's lavatory in the church hospice to the headquarters of a trading scheme in which craft workers would sell their wares to customers, both local Israeli and Palestinian, and expatriates, pilgrims and tourists.

Above all, Colin was a pastor and born



# In solidarity with the people of Palestine

reconciler. Sensitivities honed while living amongst folk working in dying industries – shipbuilders on the Clyde, car workers in Linwood and coal miners in Prestonpans – stood him in good stead in Jerusalem when demythologising untruths and charting a path toward justice, whilst honouring each side's history. His ecumenical work resulted in Colin's being made an Honorary Canon of St George's Episcopal Cathedral in East Jerusalem, having, with Canon Naim Ateek, now Director of Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Centre, established the Church of Scotland's first partnership with a Palestinian local church. Such relationships had never before been cultivated in the 60-year history of St Andrew's Kirk nor in other areas of the Church of Scotland's presence in the Holy Land.

On his return to Britain he was to continue this work, becoming increasingly radical in his political views and on one famed occasion taking a group of church leaders into Gaza where they were to see rioting and experience the smell of tear gas. He was instrumental in founding the Scottish Palestinian Forum which hosted the launch of the Boycott Israeli Goods campaign in Scotland. While Focal Person of the Middle East Forum of the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, he set up in London the first meeting which established EAPPI, the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel.

The Iona Community and Iona were of supreme importance to Colin, part of his very being. He rejoiced in being able to have a last holiday on the island about a year before he died.

His views were far from universally popular in the Kirk, but he never faltered and even when in his late 70s he was still involved each day in supporting a cause that he was passionately convinced was just.

He is survived by his wife, four children and seven grandchildren.

## HADEEL FAIR TRADE SHOP, EDINBURGH: CRAFTS FROM PALESTINIAN SOCIAL ENTERPRISES IN THE WEST BANK, GAZA AND LEBANON

*Carol and Colin Morton were instrumental in setting up this fair trade shop in support of the Palestinian people.*

Hadeel aims to provide a sustainable source of income for craftspeople working with social enterprises in the West Bank, Gaza, Lebanon, as well as one in the Galilee and another in the Negev ... Hadeel is owned by the Scottish charity Palcrafts. Any surplus we make on sale of goods is gift-aided to Palcrafts which distributes small development grants to our producers ... We are a member of the British Association for Fair Trade Shops and supply other shops, Fair Traders and local reps throughout the UK. *Hadeel is recruiting local reps; more details from Carol Morton: [palcrafts@phonecoop.coop](mailto:palcrafts@phonecoop.coop). Online shopping: [www.hadeel.org](http://www.hadeel.org)*

## JENIN CULTURAL CENTRE, WEST BANK, OCCUPIED TERRITORIES, by Runa MacKay

In Jenin, a small town on the West Bank of the Occupied Territories, the price of flour has doubled this year. The bakery for biscuits, which Yousef of the Jenin Cultural Centre started with such high hopes of it bringing in some money as well as work for a few of the many unemployed, cannot continue. People do not have money to buy biscuits – they have scarcely enough to buy bread. However, the Cultural Centre has not stopped doing all it can to make life for the people of Jenin and the surrounding villages a bit brighter.

They have run a management training programme. Hamza, who had spent six years in an Israeli jail, took the course, and six months later he told Yousef: 'You gave me a new life.' He now runs a mobile phone repair centre from his shop in his village.

A medical team came from the U.S. and offered free eye tests and spectacles. Old people (there is no pension scheme in Palestine) cannot afford to buy spectacles so many were delighted to be fitted with them and to see again. Ahmed, who is in a wheelchair and whose family is very poor, was also thrilled with his new spectacles, enabling him to see things he had never seen before.

A bus load of young people was collected and taken to a village in the nearby Jordan Valley, in which the houses had been demolished by the Israeli Authorities. They had been built without permits but it is impossible for a Palestinian to obtain a permit, so what can they do? The team from the Cultural Centre helped to make bricks from mud and rebuild the houses – although for how long they will be allowed to remain, who knows?

Palestinians pride themselves on their steadfastness under adversity – shown here in action. *Donations towards the work of the Jenin Cultural Centre can be sent to Iona Community member Runa Mackay: [blyth21@phonecoop.coop](mailto:blyth21@phonecoop.coop)*



Jenin Cultural Centre photo

## WILD GOOSE PUBLICATIONS

### NEW PUBLICATIONS

#### **The Healer's Tree: A Bible-based resource on ecology, peace and justice, Annie Heppenstall (book), £9.99 (plus post and packing)**

A book of 28 short readings and reflections in response to the call back to the garden, back to full relationship with God and all creation.

It reflects on the struggle to make sense of living as mortals who are drawn by spiritual aspirations and a desire for God but are also bound to the earth and one another with a need to find real faith-based responses to the ecological and humanitarian dilemmas facing the world.

Hearing the call and responding, we see life differently. 'Self' loses its power, the illusion of isolation ends, for all creation is interconnected. It is not just we who are renewed; all creation depends on our return for its renewal.

Annie Heppenstall is the author of 'Reclaiming the Sealskin', and 'Wild Goose Chase' (Wild Goose Publications)

#### **Gobsmacked: Daily devotions for Advent, Thom Shuman (book), £8.99 (plus post and packing)**

In this collection of daily readings for the four weeks of Advent, Thom introduces us to, among others, 'Dusty the Church Dog', Mr Pete 'the Drum man', and to his son, Teddy, and wife, Bonnie.

In this collection Mary, the mother of Jesus, goes for a contemplative skate on a frozen pond where 'praises piggyback until her soul topples over', and John the Baptist tries to explain his purpose to a very perplexed Senator and chairman of the board – a collection of personal and universal, imaginative and biblically rooted reflections.

Thom Shuman is the author of The Jesse Tree (Wild Goose Publications). He lives in Cincinnati, Ohio and is an associate member of the Iona Community.

#### **Dirt, Mess and Danger: Liturgies & worship resources, Glendon Macaulay (book), £14.99 (plus post and packing)**

Glendon Macaulay is a parish minister who, throughout the past decade, has been working in an original, grassroots way with congregations, developing and encouraging creative worship styles which are participatory and relevant to the often messy world we live in. All of the material in this collection – liturgies, meditations, reflections, prayers, poems – has been tried and tested with local congregations, often at ecumenical worship events.

Dirt, Mess and Danger celebrates the One who came to earth to live a fully human life, who as a baby suckled at his mother's breast, and as a man suffered an all-too-human death on the cross at Calvary. He lived his life in the midst of dirt, mess and danger, and so understands what it is to be human, and yet rose to bring healing, forgiveness, justice and peace.

The book includes contributions by Sally Foster-Fulton, who also has a great interest in developing fresh worship styles, particularly through the use of story. Sally is Associate Minister at Dunblane Cathedral.

#### **Youth: Readings, prayers and other liturgical resources (download), £7.60**

A wide-ranging, rich collection of reflective and liturgical material for youth groups, youth workers and anyone concerned with youth issues.

'I will pour out my spirit on all flesh . . . your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young shall see visions,' says the Book of Joel, but at the beginning of the 21st century we are living in a time when the voices of young people are being ignored by those in power and their future is being limited.

This download includes voices of young people themselves. The material is realistic, coming from down-to-earth places, but is full of hope.

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For those without phones with an internet capability, you can view the daily thoughts on your computer by going to [www.ionabooks.com/m](http://www.ionabooks.com/m)

## ALTERNATIVE BOAT HIRE, IONA

**Sailing Trips & Boat Hire, Mark Jardine, Lovedale Cottage, Isle of Iona, PA76 6SJ, Tel. 01681 700537**  
**www.boattripsiona.com**

What are Alternative Boat Hire trips about? They are about discovering the coastal world.

About travelling in a fashion, once commonplace on the Atlantic seaboard, which is now largely ignored. About being really close to the sea, its wildlife and the coastal fringe. The smell of kelp at low tide. Watching the swoop of fulmars. Hearing the singing of seals. Seeing the rip of the tides. About the lift of the swell and feeling the boat lean to the wind. About the anecdotes of today and the stories of the past. About red sails in the low sun and the rhythmic sound of the engine on a calm day. The emphasis is on a family atmosphere, with easy communication: a friendly intimate kind of trip.

## JAZZ OF COLOURS IONA GREETING CARDS

Anja Grosse-Uhlmann, a German living on Iona since 1999, has been a passionate photographer for many years. Inspired by the colours and light, and the striking beauty of the Hebridean landscape, she tries to capture the essence of the place in her photographs.

When not taking photos, you can find her being creative in the kitchen, out with her lovely daughter, Freya, or sailing with husband, Mark.

**To view and purchase Jazz of Colours greeting cards: [www.orancrafts.co.uk](http://www.orancrafts.co.uk)**

# review

## The Celtic Quest: A Contemporary Spirituality, by

Rosemary Power, The Columba Press, 2010,  
<http://www.columba.ie>

It would be justifiable to assume that every reader of *Coracle* has been influenced in some measure by the Celtic movement and has been attracted by Celtic spirituality. We may have dipped into the prayers gathered together in Alexander Carmichael's *Carmina Gadelica* and perhaps devised our own prayers in imitation of these hymns. We will almost certainly know something of the writings of David Adam, Esther de Waal, Philip Newell, Ian Bradley or, more recently, John O'Donohue.

But, at the back of our minds, we may well have some lingering uncertainties. George MacLeod was forever on about the Celtic Church but what do we really know about Celtic Christianity? Is what we think we know about it well-grounded in sound historical research? And how far is the contemporary Celtic movement entitled to call itself Celtic?

This book includes a chapter on 'Creating Celtic Community: The Iona Story' and the author notes that the Iona Community has had an ambiguous relationship with the Celtic. While it tapped into the earlier Celtic Revival and has provided a link to the modern Celtic movement, there was often a suspicion that a romantic link with the past might divert contemporary Christians from the pursuit of social justice. It might not be too much to say that some members of the Iona Community were suspicious even of the very word 'spirituality'.

These are some of the issues which Rosemary Power deals with in the thoroughly scholarly and, at the same time, very readable *The Celtic Quest*.

We are offered at the outset a helpful list of some of the defining

attributes of modern Celtic Christianity, with which we are probably familiar and which would include, among other characteristics, orthodox Trinitarian doctrine, the experience of the divine as immanent, living in harmony with the natural world, a spirituality which encompasses every aspect of daily life and work, the importance of art, dance and music in liturgy, and a sense of liminality, of being on the edge.

Rosemary then seeks to uncover how far these attributes can, with authenticity, be traced back to early Celtic Christianity. She concludes that rigorous research on the sources, while being illuminating and immensely worthwhile, need not be a threat to the contemporary movement or diminish the real spiritual contribution which Celtic spirituality has made to the modern Church. Such a spirituality is 'wild but safe'. It certainly has an appeal for 21st-century Christians with a conscience.

Graeme Brown

## A touching place: news and letters

### THE JIM WHITE FAMILY MOVES INTO THEIR NEW HOME, 29th AUGUST, 2011, WASILLA, ALASKA

*From the 'Put Jim in a White House' campaign:*

On a warm, sunny day members of the United Protestant Church and representatives of the Mat-Su Home Builders Association gathered to cut the ribbon and usher the Jim White family into their new house. Jim White is a 58-year-old double amputee below the knees who planned to build a new home for his family before he lost his legs. Their temporary home, a 50+-year-old caravan, was infested with mould and was about to fall in on them. Iona Community associate Israel Nelson began a campaign to raise funds for construction of a new house in 2008. While the house is not complete (it needs to have siding

installed), the interior of the home is complete enough for the Whites to move in. So move in they did – and not a day too soon!

Iona Community members and associates, particularly in the United States, contributed significantly to the success of this project. Israel Nelson addressed letters to everyone, seeking donations. True to our commitment to meet the needs of God's people, the response was wonderful. Iona Community people demonstrated that compassion is never out of season. Thanks to you, the Whites have a warm, dry, mould-free home to protect them from the Alaska winter.

Installation of exterior siding is dependent upon securing about \$5000 U.S. to purchase materials and pay for installation labour. The United Protestant Church is still receiving donations. Your generous donations can be sent to: *Low Cost Housing Fund, United Protestant Church, 713 South Denali Street, Palmer, AK 99645 USA. Additional information is available from: [israel2@mtaonline.net](mailto:israel2@mtaonline.net)*



## CHRISTIAN CAMPAIGN FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT (CCND) CALL FOR NEW MEMBERS

*From Chris Gidden, co-chair of  
CCND and Iona Community  
member:*

I know many members, associates and friends of the Iona Community support the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND). The Christian Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CCND) is a section of CND which has been given annual grants from CND funds. These were used to support pilgrimages to and from nuclear establishments and demonstrations at the seat of government; speakers at churches, putting forth the Gospel's arguments and challenging folk to support the campaign; special services, and especially vigils, at nuclear establishments and on special days, such as during Lent, at Easter, Pentecost and Advent; and to involve churches in significant days of peace.

This grant has now been terminated and we now need to increase our membership and donations, and ask you to consider supporting us in our work. If interested, please go to: [www.ccnd.gn.apc.org](http://www.ccnd.gn.apc.org) for further information and an application form, or e-mail: [christians@cnduk.org](mailto:christians@cnduk.org), or contact me (details in the Members' book).

*Blessings to you all, Chris*

**UPCOMING WEEK ON IONA:  
'KAIROS PALESTINE: THE TIME IS  
NOW', MAY 26–JUNE 1, 2012,  
ABBEY AND MACLEOD CENTRE**

*From member Warren Bardsley:*

This week will be an opportunity to engage with the Kairos Document and to explore ways of practical action.

The main speaker will be Dr Mark Braverman, who comes to us from the United States. Mark serves on the advisory board of Friends of Sabeel North America and on the

Board of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions-USA. He is a co-founder of Friends of Tent of Nations North America, a non-profit organisation dedicated to supporting Palestinian land rights and co-existence in historic Palestine. He consults and writes for the Israel Palestine Mission Network of the Presbyterian Church USA, and has been appointed consultant for Evangelicals for Middle East Understanding. He is a charter member of American Jews for a Just Peace.

Rev Dr Naim Ateek, a Palestinian Christian leader who is one of the signatories to the Kairos Document, will be co-speaker. Dr Ateek is Founder and Director of Sabeel Jerusalem.

There is bound to be a big demand for places on this week and early booking is recommended:  
[abbey.bookings@iona.org.uk](mailto:abbey.bookings@iona.org.uk)

## CHRISTMAS CARDS BY ARTIST AND MEMBER CARRIE GOOCH

*From member Carrie Gooch:*

I am making my first small venture into retail: selling a range of Christmas cards I have designed on a theme of a more contemporary setting for the Nativity story.

There are five designs and they come in packs of 10 with envelopes, A6 size, costing £3.00 per pack. They are printed on recycled card. 30% of any profit will go to organisations working with asylum seekers and refugees.

*To view the cards, go to:  
[carriegooch.wordpress.com](http://carriegooch.wordpress.com)  
Orders: [caroline.gooch@talk21.com](mailto:caroline.gooch@talk21.com)*

## MEN'S RITES: THE DEEPENING OF MEN'S FAITH AND SPIRITUALITY

*From associate Rob Scott:*

Across the world, over 5000 men have taken part in the Men's Rites programme, and the UK Rites are led by a trained and accredited team of experienced Elders. The Rites are not about religion, but

about spirituality, about age-old traditions that guide men into manhood; about coming to trust that there is something much greater at work in their lives than they could ever imagine.

In October 2009, I attended a men's rites at John Knox Ranch, Texas. It was a time of solitude and contemplation; silence to allow God's entry into the painful depths of my life; and a time of experience and learning, led by men, sharing deeply and intimately with men. My world did not fall apart as I opened my heart to God and men. I was deeply blessed with a sense of my own brokenness, my own vulnerability and my heart's communion with Christ on the cross. My transformation from having an intellectual knowledge of faith to experiencing God-centred, male, spirit-filled life had begun.

In July 2010 the first rites of passage in Scotland was held at the Bield near Perth. I had the privilege of joining 44 men from the UK, Ireland and South Africa. This was a major challenge and blessing for these men and for those of us who protected the time and place. The changes that were evident over those five days were uplifting and have continued to shine from the participants.

So why is this so vital to some men? Why can faith for some men be unsatisfied by traditional faith groups? Why is God's greater creation, his Big Book, so important to growth for some?

Male spirituality is not just about going to church, saying prayers and trying to be good.

Fundamentally, it is about an age-old tradition that teaches the things every man must learn and internalise before he can fully engage in the adventure and mystery of living.

At some point during his life, every man will go through an initiation for what lies before him and who he was designed to be. This initiation can happen in many

different ways: through a man's intentional action of seeking to be initiated; by way of a calamity, such as a long-term illness, loss of a job, end of a relationship, diminished vitality; through the instruction and example of a learned mentor; by divine appointment.

The need can be to develop one's own spirituality or to struggle with the social demands of what a man is 'supposed to be', how he is supposed to live his life. Men often mistakenly reject 'the inner journey', seeing it as soft or weak. The Rites offer an opportunity for authentic spirituality that speaks to a man's soul and provide an opportunity to access male wisdom and vision.

Men's Rites of Passage are held at the Bield. Men of all faiths are welcome as are men of no particular religious persuasion. Please consider attending if some of the above rings true.

*Next date: June 13-17th, 2012.  
www.malespirituality.co.uk*

### SHIRATI HOSPITAL ENERGY PROJECT, TANZANIA

The Iona Community's Pentland Family Group recently hosted a presentation and talk by Tom Grassie, of Engineer Aid, who helped to initiate this project. You too might be interested in learning about and supporting this creative, grassroots project which will provide a rural hospital in Tanzania with a dependable power supply.

*For more information:  
engineeraid.com/shirati/*

### HEARTENED: A LETTER

Dear Editor,

I was immensely pleased, when I received the Spring 2011 issue of *Coracle*, to see the picture of the wheelchair user and young girl on its front cover and then to find the poem inspired by the picture on the back cover. This is because over the years I have seen little reference, in *Coracle*, to the marginalisation that people with walking difficulties, particularly

wheelchair users, still experience in trying to have access to places and services that their able-bodied peers take for granted. My wife, a Friend of the Community, uses a wheelchair like the one in the picture to get around and many times our grandchildren, and now great grandchildren, have trotted along beside her, just like the girl in the picture. It was a heartening image from Iona.

I hope that, with this picture on the front of its magazine, the Community will be more aware of the difficulties mobility impaired people, and their carers, experience and give greater prominence to working on their behalf for more equal access. We do what we can locally by consulting with, and advising, our Local Authority and other bodies in access matters, and by running a small Shopmobility scheme in our town, but our experience as a couple is that there is still a long way to go in this matter both in this country and abroad.

Our last visit to Iona was in 2003 and we experienced a certain amount of frustration then at being unable to enjoy a chat and refreshments following an evening service in the Abbey, because the chosen venue was inaccessible to wheelchairs, although the Abbey church itself was fine. Also we found difficulty in securing suitable accommodation for our short stay, although my wife was allowed to take her adapted motor vehicle, with all her necessary equipment, onto the island after special application. However because of the general difficulties with accommodation, whether with the Community or elsewhere, we have felt we have not been able to visit Iona since.

Having been prompted by the cover photograph I raised this matter of access on the island at a recent meeting of our Area Associates Group. I was heartened by the understanding and empathic response of my fellow Associates, who brought me up to

date with improvements for disabled people at the MacLeod Centre, which I was pleased to hear, and who encouraged me to write in order to highlight the matter of access difficulties for disabled people in society generally, and particularly the difficulties for such people who wish to spend time with the Community.

I'd be interested to hear what the situation is now within the Community buildings, what is being done to integrate people with walking difficulties into the social and activity life there, and any experiences of other wheelchair users on the island and when visiting the Community.

*Yours sincerely, David Norman  
(Associate)*

### Reply from Peter Macdonald, Leader:

The Abbey does present a number of difficulties for those who have mobility problems. The Iona Community has been aware of this for many years. However, the historic nature of the building means that it is not possible to adapt the building or upgrade the facilities as we might wish. There may be changes that we can make to our practice to be more inclusive and I will raise this with our islands staff.

I am pleased to hear that improvements at the MacLeod Centre have made a difference for those with disabilities and we hope to make further improvements when 'the Mac' undergoes major refurbishment following its 25th anniversary in 2013.

### Reply from the Editor:

*Dear David,*

*In the about four years I have been Editor of Coracle I have not included a piece on marginalisation that people with walking difficulties, particularly wheelchair users, still experience. I am sorry about that. I would welcome a feature piece reflecting on this, and invite you both to write one for Coracle. Thank you.*

*Maybe the reason I haven't included*

*anything on this issue is because I have spent quite a bit of time writing about physical and mental and emotional challenges over many years in other publications, particularly in Down to Earth, which includes stories from when I worked as a nurse's aide, as a night shelter worker, etc; a time when I – many times very awkwardly – tried to journey alongside people with different challenges.*

*Probably that is not a good reason for not including a piece but maybe helps to explain my thinking and background to a point.*

*Thank you for your letter. Love, Neil (Ed.)*

### **CORACLE ISSUE 4/47: A LETTER**

I was disappointed to find this quotation in the 2010 Annual Report (Coracle issue 4/47): 'Richard Rohr ... comments nothing good or creative emerges from business as usual.' Really? Is this what Community members think? I was brought up to believe that God was as likely to be found in the ordinary as to be encountered on the mountaintop.

I was also struck by the number of 'spaces' to be found in the Annual Report: threshold space, liminal space, ecumenical space and boundary space. Recently family members were on Iona and told me that the service they attended was called 'table space'. I am all for using the language of the day in worship (and some of the finest examples come from the Iona Community) but let's use language that means something. What exactly is table space or ecumenical space?

Over 20 years ago I was given a copy of *The Whole Earth Shall Cry Glory*. These prayers by George MacLeod are amongst the most beautifully written, vivid, challenging and humorous that I have come across. The God addressed in these prayers meets us as we go about our ordinary business. God is there in every shower of rain, in every storm, in every move of light. God is there

each time we meet a friend or encounter a stranger. 'Show to us in everything we touch and in everyone we meet the continued assurance of Thy presence round us.' I wonder what George MacLeod would have made of table space.

Monica Stewart, associate

### **Reply from Peter Macdonald, Leader:**

Monica may be reassured by another quotation from Richard Rohr: *One great idea of the biblical revelation is that God is manifest in the ordinary, in the actual, in the daily, in the now, in the concrete incarnations of life.*

Members of the Iona Community would agree with this but would, I believe, also acknowledge that 'business as usual' can be a barrier to change and growth. As for all the 'space' in the Annual Report I hope I did not convey the idea that this was empty, passive space. Through our ministry of hospitality, the Community is engaged in, to quote Henri Nouwen: ... *the creation of a free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy. Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place.*

I think George would approve!

### **SOME NEW PUBLICATIONS FROM COMMUNITY FOLK**

*George MacKay Brown: The Wound and the Gift*, Ron Ferguson, St Andrew Press (book)

The author draws on previously unpublished letters and original conversations with many well-known writers and friends of George Mackay Brown. He quotes extensively from the poet's writings and weaves a brilliant and enriching narrative. [www.standrewpress.com](http://www.standrewpress.com)

*The Splendour of the House of God: Choral Songs for Public Worship*, John L. Bell & The Cathedral Singers of Chicago, GIA (CD)

A compelling and eclectic collection of material for choirs

from the pen of John L. Bell. The collection also includes songs from others: Wisdom's Table is a fine hymn from Doug Gay, a fellow Glaswegian, but there is also music from very different continents: compositions from Swee Hong Lim of Singapore and William Ramirez of El Salvador. [www.wgrg.co.uk](http://www.wgrg.co.uk)

### **COME TO IONA FOR CHRISTMAS, OR FOR A QUIET WEEK IN DECEMBER**

'Quiet Week': 1-8 December;  
'Celebrating Christmas on Iona':  
December 22-27:  
[abbey.bookings@iona.org.uk](mailto:abbey.bookings@iona.org.uk)

### **Bread for the road**

*If, as a Christian, I believe in a relationship that unconditionally values every person regardless of status, wealth, success or virtue, that conveys intrinsic worth on the worst as well as the best, with no value addition necessary, how am I to regard an economic system, and its underlying spirituality, which determines worth purely by external market forces, which actually relieves people who are poor, disabled, unemployed, single parents, elderly, of their intrinsic worth? We take care of what we value. Ultimately, people know whether and how they are valued by their society, and by its systems and institutions. Who do we give value to?*

Kathy Galloway, from a Christian Socialist Movement 'John Wheatley Lecture'

### **Prayer of the Iona Community**

O God, who gave to your servant Columba the gifts of courage, faith and cheerfulness, and sent people forth from Iona to carry the word of your gospel to every creature: grant, we pray, a like spirit to your church, even at this present time. Further in all things the purpose of our community, that hidden things may be revealed to us, and new ways found to touch the hearts of all. May we preserve with each other sincere charity and peace, and, if it be your holy will, grant that this place of your abiding be continued still to be a sanctuary and a light. Through Jesus Christ. Amen

# Four poems

## HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO PRAY?

How am I supposed to pray  
with that racket going on?  
Don't you realise I have to talk to my Maker  
about important things  
you know nothing of?

How am I supposed to pray  
with you jumping all over me?  
Demanding attention,  
affirmation as I pull the duvet from under you  
to screams of delight.

How am I supposed to pray?  
How would you know?  
You have no religion, just the expectation of  
being heard at any moment.

I love that about you.  
And I hear you, my little teacher.  
I hear you.

## TO DO

Food  
Share

Water  
Share

Shelter  
Share

Warmth  
Share

Health  
Share

Education  
Share

Justice  
Share

Wealth Charity  
Share

Peace  
Share

Poem  
Share

That was the easy one.

## CHANGE

'Be the change you want to see in the world.'  
I want to  
clear the temple, loot the vaults,  
lance every boil, fix all faults.  
Heal the land, clean the air,  
neuter pain, cure despair.  
Restore every broken home.  
Renew every broken vow ...

So much change is needed.  
And Gandhi – I feel a little overwhelmed.  
Must do better, do more, do well.  
Or can I just be?  
Is faith the decision to plough just one furrow  
and trust the rest of the field to others?  
Here is hoping.

## LIFTED

Someone had fiddled with gravity  
and this was no subtle tweak.  
Earth's core was now repelling objects  
and flinging them far into the sky,  
where they gathered, uncertain,  
like adolescents at a funeral.  
Most were not impressed,  
clutching vainly at treasures,  
photos and phones, keys and cameras,  
that spun off without farewell.  
Emptying pockets was hazardous,  
as the pilgrimage of possessions gathered pace.

The people remained,  
tethered to the vacant earth.  
Physicists sat, baffled and glum  
at the selective sifting.  
Losing their grip  
to an alchemist of mass disorder.

Someone had fiddled with gravity,  
I hadn't meant to – it was a careless prayer.  
And yet, as I walked through the pert forest,  
with its stargazing snowdrops,  
whilst birds battled downwards  
to the arcing telephone wires,  
I couldn't help but feel this was manna in reverse,  
and how my heart was lifted.

'Lifted' won 2nd prize in the 2010-11 Coracle Poetry Contest (on the theme of 'Just Sharing'). 'To do' was runner-up. **David McNeish** is a former hospital doctor who is training to be a minister. He is a member of the Iona Community.





**The love of God comes close  
where stands an open door  
to let the stranger in,  
to mingle rich and poor:  
the love of God is here to stay,  
embracing those who walk his way.**

From 'The Love of God Comes Close'  
by John L. Bell and Graham Maule, © WGRG  
from *Enemy of Apathy*  
(Wild Goose Publications)

Cover photo, Camas © David Coleman

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