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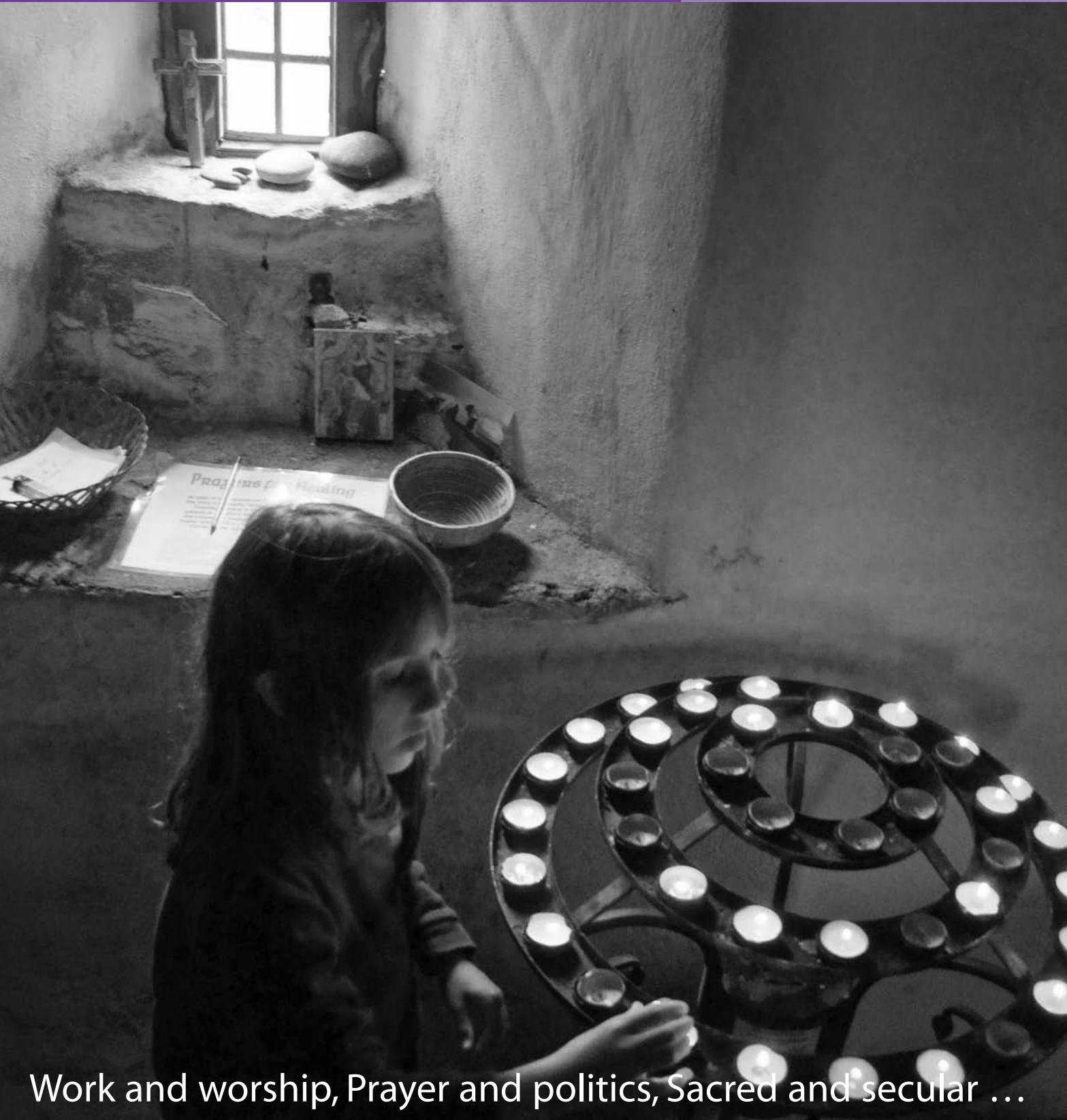
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the magazine of the iona community

# 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 quarterly 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 email or on disk) but cannot always be included.

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Willie Salmond

# From the holy city: Suffer the little children

**Willie Salmond is an Associate member of the Iona Community in Kampala. He is Regional Director of the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation ([www.pedaids.org](http://www.pedaids.org)), which works for the elimination of pediatric AIDS, and holds week-long camps for children who are HIV-positive. The kids at the camps call Willie 'taata wa baana' ...**

I have spent six years in Uganda as Country Director of the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation. My new job is Regional Director for Africa covering six countries: Uganda, Rwanda, Mozambique, Kenya, Tanzania and Ivory Coast. What we are about is the elimination of pediatric AIDS. It has already been achieved in America and Europe and our job is to work with each Ministry of Health to assist each country to achieve this goal. We have the science and the medicine but need to make it available to everyone who needs it. Without preventive medicine HIV-positive mothers will have a 25-30% likelihood of transmitting the HIV virus to their children. If the mother is already on highly active antiretroviral treatment before pregnancy, the transmission rate to her baby is a mere 0.7%. In between these extremes there are a variety of transmission rates depending on which combination of preventive drugs the mother receives, but generally the transmission rate should be as low as 2-4%.

So far we have held five camps for children who are HIV-positive. Here is a little story from one of them:

The only sound I could hear under the forest shade was the creaking of branches in a copse of bamboo. The wind was gentle, blowing in from Lake Victoria, the famed source of the Nile River. Just ahead of me, 35 children from all over Uganda, all of whom were HIV-positive but taking antiretroviral medication, waited patiently in line at the beginning of the jungle gym course, which included swinging bridges and tightrope balancing.

The children were participating in the second annual Ariel Children's Camp, a week-long camp sponsored by the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation. The camp is named for Elizabeth Glaser's daughter, Ariel, who died from AIDS-related illnesses in 1988. Would the campers manage to stay the course? Were they afraid?

The silence was broken as the first girl, Diana, started swaying on tyres hung from ropes and tried to cross from one platform to another. For the next two hours, there were screams of fear, encouragement and laughter. The finale came as each child – I think Agaba was first this time – climbed high into a huge tree platform, and then, in a safety harness, launched along a zip line, down 100 feet to the ground at the far end of the course. The theme of the week was 'Journey of Life: Hope and Peace on the Way', and the zip line represented each of our worst fears as we launched off the tree platform.

The week also included a visit to the source of the River Nile as she begins her 90-day journey to the Mediterranean Sea, as well as many other games and exercises. There was a soccer game that never seemed to end. For me, the most significant event of this year's camp was the exercise 'Journey of Life'. Each child made a linear drawing of his or her life so far. Each drawing looked like a meandering river – along the way were key life events: 'I was born.' ... 'My mother died.' ... 'My older sister died.' ... 'My aunt told me I was HIV-positive.' ... 'No money, so I stopped going to school.' And so on ...

One twist of the river on one boy's drawing said 'suicide' ... I took the young boy aside and we talked. He told me things had been so bad in his life that he had swallowed his whole month's supply of antiretroviral tablets at once. He is still alive despite the dangerous overdose, and luckily feeling much better now.

Just behind the jungle gym at camp, there is a 10-foot anthill. It represented the mountain still to be climbed by each child in his or her journey of life. But Camp Ariel remains for each of us the base camp for reinforcement, renewal and refreshment. The children's prayers each night were for a cure for AIDS and for protection from evil.

With so many negatives in these children's lives, each positive event is momentous. Our camp is a series of positive events. New friends, encouragement, prayer, songs at night around the campfire, silly jokes. At the end of the camp, each camper was asked to name one thing they would take with them, and one thing they would leave behind. I said I would take the memory of the children's animated faces when they danced, and I would leave behind any discouragement.

And so my favourite week of the year at the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation in Uganda came to an end.

The kids called me *taata wa baana* (father of the children). I am looking at a card they gave me now. 'Thanx' it says. Inside, each child has written their name: Mulindwa, Immaculate, Kenneth, Balaba Willy, Rose, Alex, Eric, Asasira ...

The elimination of pediatric AIDS can be achieved. It needs commitment and, of course, cash. Each year as a world we are spending \$10 billion to treat 4 million people, including children who are HIV-positive. Today there are 14 million individuals, including children, who are in need of treatment. Still a long way to go.

Jesus once held a child and said *'Whoever receives this child in my name receives me and whoever receives me receives him who sent me'* (Luke 9:48). Children, especially the most vulnerable, take us a little closer to God and our understanding of what God wants for the world and for each of us. ●

Together at Ariel Children's Camp, Uganda © Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation



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Hal Chorpenning

# Welcoming the stranger? a view from the U.S.

Associate member Hal Chorpenning writes from Colorado, where people of all faiths have been uniting in worship and action in solidarity with sisters and brothers suffering under unjust and oppressive immigration laws ...



The words of The Torah echo loudly in some North American ears these days: *When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.* (Leviticus 19:33–34, NRSV). Unfortunately, that message is not reaching the mainstream media, and it certainly is not on the lips of American televangelists.

In December 2006, a raid at a meat-packing plant in nearby Greeley, Colorado, by US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), resulted in the detention of approximately 300 workers suspected of being undocumented. Many of those detained had children who expected them home after work, and the workers simply did not come home. A national report, commissioned by labour unions, called the raids 'abusive' and pointed out that gun-wielding ICE agents kept both citizens and undocumented workers from water, food, toilets, and legal counsel for hours during questioning.<sup>1</sup>

Recent legislation in the state of Arizona is raising tensions along the US border with Mexico and is drawing fire from the White House. The new law mandates that a law-enforcement officer may stop anyone he or she suspects of being an illegal alien and ask for papers proving legal residency. (Someone commented that the last time he heard an official say 'Show me your papers,' was in a B-movie about Nazi Germany.) The law raises the spectre of racial profiling in Arizona, given the sizeable population of immigrants from Mexico and Central America and the large number of Latino Americans in the state.

A 2009 report from the Pew Hispanic Center estimated that 11.9 million unauthorised immigrants live in the United States, and the study concludes, 'undocumented immigrant population grew rapidly from 1990 to 2006 but has since stabilised'.<sup>2</sup> Though undocumented immigration has leveled off, nearly all agree that significant and comprehensive immigration reform is needed, yet a wide gulf divides those who want to defend immigrant rights and those who wish to build higher walls (both literally and metaphorically) for immigrants to overcome.

In January, members of Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ in Fort Collins, Colorado, organised a six-week adult-education programme featuring speakers from immigrant rights organisations and

Colorado State University, which highlighted the issues of immigration reform in the United States. It was the church's best-attended education event ever, and it stoked the fires of social justice among many who attended. And the programme led people to ask: What's next? We can't just learn and then not act.

One of the class organisers, Paige Noon, comments: *'I deeply believe that the divinity of God and Christ lives in all people and that every person deserves to be treated with dignity and respect and have their life valued. All people are sacred. Undocumented immigrants in our country have few rights and are the most vulnerable. They have no protection from the law because they live in fear of being deported and separated from their families and losing their livelihoods.'*

Direct action by members of the congregation involves a monthly vigil at the ICE Detention Center near Denver. Joining with people from other faith traditions, and led by the American Friends Service Committee, protesters raise their voices in song so that those who are being detained by ICE know that people outside stand in solidarity with them. *'When I saw the first detainee reach for the bars to look outside and wave to us I was shocked at the emotion I felt,'* comments Paige Noon. *'At the last vigil my 18-year-old daughter, known for her toughness, cried out with tears streaming down her face when she first saw a detainee struggling to get a glimpse of us chanting outside. The experience always restores my resolve to work for comprehensive immigration reform.'*

In addition to civil action, the congre-

gation organised an interfaith service for immigration rights and reform in May, which brought together leaders from Presbyterian, United Church of Christ, Unitarian Universalist, Jewish, Zen Buddhist, Episcopal, Roman Catholic, Society of Friends, and independent Christian traditions. In all, 175 people gathered in worship, bringing resources from their own faith traditions (and not watering them down into a least-common-denominator soup) that empowered those in attendance to continue the struggle for justice.

All of us who came together in worship see comprehensive immigration reform as a justice issue that our faiths call us to address. An added component of worship was a time of fellowship and action following the service, during which participants could write letters to congressional representatives, sign up to attend vigils at the ICE Detention Center, or be part of hands-on programmes that reach out to immigrants locally.

As Christians, we acknowledge that ours is a faith sometimes hard to follow, but we agree to accept

the costs and joys of discipleship. On occasion, living our faith involves renouncing our privilege in order to act faithfully, which is clear in the Iona Community's Fivefold Rule.

A question that continues to resonate is whether US Christians are willing and ready to act on their faith at times when it collides with their perceived 'national interest'. Even if it appears to be in the economic interest of the nation to have a system that exploits the labour of undocumented workers, how does that exemplify living out the Kingdom of God – here and now and still unfolding? How can a country with so many avowed Christians ignore the words of the Hebrew prophets: *'Do not oppress the widow, the orphan, the alien, or the poor; and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another. But they refused to listen, and turned a stubborn shoulder, and stopped their ears in order not to hear'* (Zechariah 7:10–11, NRSV).

The story continues to unfold, and the lives of unnamed, uncounted, and undocumented workers continue to be affected by our inaction and our lack of political will to address comprehensive

immigration reform on a national level. I would ask for your prayers for undocumented immigrants and refugees everywhere, and for us as we persist in the struggle for justice and peace.

We call you by many names,  
Holy One.  
AND YOU KNOW EACH OF US  
BY NAME.

In your eyes, none of us is a  
nameless stranger ...  
BECAUSE WE, ALL OF US,  
ARE YOUR BELOVED CHILDREN.

Help us to know you and to know  
one another deeply.  
HELP US TO WELCOME THE  
STRANGER AND CARE FOR THE  
ALIEN IN OUR MIDST.  
FOR TRULY WE ALL BELONG TO YOU.  
AMEM ●

*From an Interfaith service of solidarity*

The **Revd Hal Chorpennig** is senior minister of Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ in Fort Collins, Colorado. He can be reached at [hal@plymouthucc.org](mailto:hal@plymouthucc.org)

#### Footnotes

1. Report Rips ICE's Handling of 'Abusive' Raids, Greeley Tribune, June 19, 2009. [www.greeleytribune.com](http://www.greeleytribune.com)
2. A Portrait of Unauthorized Immigrants in the United States, Jeffrey S. Passel and D'Vera Cohn, A Pew Hispanic Center Publication, 2009.



## A letter to Ella from Apse xo

**Member Peter Millar sent this beautiful letter to his granddaughter on the day of her blessing, a few years back. Peter explains: 'Appa is a Tamil term of endearment meaning dad/father but when the kids were small, and we lived in India, they said Apse, and that has stuck. The grandchildren also just adopted that name for me as I like it, and that's the story.'**

*Dear Ella,*

Today, surrounded by many who love you dearly, you were blessed in Christ's name. With or without a blessing, you are God's child and carry within you the image of the One who created you. I hope you will always treasure that great truth. Your blessing confirms this in a special way. The famous German theologian Hans Kung, who is still very much alive, reminded us many years ago that to be 'in Christ' was to know what it was to be 'fully human'. I hope you will always be a rich, open, self-aware, human being – with a sense of humour and the ability to see your own craziness! I love that insight that we have to take the world seriously, and God seriously, but our own selves more lightly.

When your mum and dad told me about your blessing, I thought about the rich Christian heritage which you have from both sides of your family. For many years I worked on the tiny island of Iona off the west coast of Scotland. Away back in the 6th century, Saint Columba and his monks set up their monastery on Iona and shared the Good News of the Gospel all over the land. They even went as far as modern Russia and Turkey, enduring many hardships along the way, to tell people about Jesus. It may be, Ella, that our own Christian faith (yours and mine) goes right back to these Celtic monks who lived more than fifteen hundred years ago. A wonderful thought! And today all over the world, there are millions of others, tens of millions, who, along with your family, walk on the path of Jesus. That fact came home to me again very strongly a

few weeks ago when I was in Palestine – the country where Jesus was born and carried out his ministry.

Of course I would like you one day to see yourself as a committed follower of Christ in our fragile but still beautiful world. A world filled with both laughter and tears. But if you do become a follower of Christ, I hope it will open your heart more and more to the cries of the world and to the cries of our earth – that good earth upon which we all walk and which sustains us each day and which today is so deeply wounded.

As a theologian, I find it difficult to accept any form of Christianity which is solely concerned about keeping our own lives comfortable. How can we be comfortable, Ella, in a world in which two thirds of the human race live on less than a dollar a day? We cannot be. Jesus has taught us that we are all connected as sisters and brothers on this small planet, and He constantly calls us to work for peace, for lasting justice and to the care of creation itself. All of us are just on earth for a very short time, even if you live to be a 100, but in that short time we can live with awareness, with compassion and with a deep integrity of spirit. I hope that people will be able to say of you in future that you are an inspirational person who accepts people in all of their extraordinary diversity, hope and vulnerability. And you don't need to be rich, nor powerful to be such a person.

You will soon learn that we live in violent times. There are wars and rumours of wars in many parts of our interconnected world. Terrible

poverty touches into the lives of billions of people. Sadly, one of the causes of these wars is religion. So my hope is (my prayer is) that you will always be open to those who walk on a path other than Christian. May you be able to see the beauty and wisdom and truth in other cultures, traditions and faiths, while remaining true to your own understanding. There is no place in our world for religious intolerance – which is why it is crucial for you to embrace both cultural and human diversity in love. I love the prayer which says: *'Stay with us, Lord, for the day is far spent and we have not yet recognised Your face in each of our sisters and brothers.'* Without this wide compassion, the world in which you are growing up will only become a place rent asunder more and more by war, famine and increasing injustice. Never make your God too small or too domesticated.

Some years ago, after Mumbo died, I wrote a book called *Finding Hope Again*. One day you may read that book for yourself. But whether or not you read it, my prayer for you today (and I am sure the prayer of all of us who love you) is that you will in your own life always reflect something of the light, compassion and wisdom of the One who came to this earth to bring us all New Life and Healing and Love. In my own life, despite many failings and false starts and wrong turnings, I deeply believe that Jesus Christ brought these things and many more to our world, and I hope that one day – perhaps long into the future, or sooner – you will believe that too. Long ago, a great man called Saint Augustine said a beautiful thing:

'Our hearts are restless till they find their rest in God.' His words are perhaps even more true today than when he wrote them many centuries ago.

You are blessed in Christ, Ella, and you have already brought many blessings to others even though you will be only three in March. That is just wonderful – a small miracle in fact. Or maybe a big one! Hundreds of years before you came into the world, a good and holy person living in the Highlands of Scotland wrote a prayer which has been loved by millions of people ever since. It is very simple, but also very powerful. It's my prayer for you today – on this day of your blessing:

*May the raindrops fall  
lightly on your brow.*

*May the soft winds  
freshen your spirit.*

*May the sunshine  
brighten your heart.*

*May the burdens of the day  
rest lightly upon you.*

*And may God enfold you  
in the mantle of his love.*

With lots and lots of love,  
your Apse xo●

**Peter Millar** is a global campaigner for peace and an accompanier. His books include *Finding Hope Again: Journeying Beyond Sorrow* (Canterbury Press), and *Our Hearts Still Sing: Daily Readings* (Wild Goose Publications) [www.ionabooks.com](http://www.ionabooks.com)

Helen Boothroyd

## Doing good with your money

**Helen Boothroyd, Community member and Church and Membership Relations Officer at the Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility, reports on the 'Banking on Justice' conference, which was held in Edinburgh, and on positive-impact investment ...**

ECCR (the Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility) has identified a range of priority issues for our work over the next three years. One of these is positive-impact investment: a choice about what to do with your money that is motivated as much by the social and environmental impact of the decision as by the financial return that can be achieved.

The opportunity for positive-impact choices in investment and banking by churches and individuals was a key focus of the partnership conference 'Banking on Justice', co-organised by ECCR and the Church and Society Council of the Church of Scotland in March 2010. The conference, which was well supported by Iona Community members, associates and friends, first considered global finance as an issue of justice, with excellent input from Doug Gay of the Church of Scotland (and Iona Community Associate member), Kathy Galloway (former Leader of the Community and now Head of Christian Aid, Scotland), and Miles Litvinoff, Co-ordinator of ECCR. The second part of the event focussed on how churches and individuals can work towards a fairer future through their banking and investment choices.

Delegates learnt that ethical investment does not need to mean a low rate of return and can enhance financial performance, especially longer term. The consequences of a cavalier approach to environmental and social concerns have been seen all too clearly in recent high-profile examples, such as BP's Gulf of Mexico disaster. Ethical malpractice is risky for the reputation and profit margins of companies – and so the investment community is starting to realise that ethics matter.

Representatives of the Co-operative Bank and Triodos Bank talked about their organisations' strong ethical policies. In the Co-op's case this is customer-led, with views ascertained through regular surveys, and covers the arms trade, human rights, corporate responsibility and global trade, environmental impact, genetic modification and animal welfare. The Co-op Bank has turned away £1 billion of loans since 1992 where applicants would have breached the ethical policy on one or more of these issues, but over the same period commercial lending has grown by £3.8 billion; so customers seem to like this approach. The Co-op also applies positive screening, seeking to lend to beneficial enterprises, including via a £400 million climate change fund, a £25 million microfinance fund and as a provider of financial services to credit unions.

A positive-impact lending strategy is taken further by Triodos Bank, which only finances projects intended to bring about beneficial social, environmental and cultural change. Triodos invests for clients in renewable energy, fair trade, social enterprise, organic farming, recycling and microfinance. Its microfinance fund has a rate of return of 6%-9% a year. Triodos supports pioneering enterprises such as Cafédirect and

**ARTICLE CONTINUED ON PAGE 20 ...**

*May God write a  
message upon your  
heart,  
bless and direct you,  
then send you out -  
living letters of  
the Word.*

*-Iona Abbey  
Worship Book*



Rosemary Power

# Facing the pain

**In Ireland recently, two reports uncovered the extent of abuse of children by priests and religious during the twentieth century. Iona Community member Rosemary Power explores some of the issues they have raised for her.**

In 2009 two official reports were released in Ireland. The Ryan Report concerned the abuse of children in institutions run by Catholic religious orders over several generations. The Murphy Report chronicled sexual abuse of children by priests in the Dublin archdiocese. Both reports also highlighted the ways in which the authorities in the Catholic Church responded, identifying systemic moral and legal failures that resulted in the victims being abandoned and other children left vulnerable to abuse. They also addressed failure by State bodies to protect children and bring perpetrators to justice.

The reports, commissioned by the State but independent of it, did not come unexpectedly but were preceded by a number of court cases and convictions of individual priests and religious, and other dioceses are likely to be the subject of investigations.

Many people were unprepared for the scale and longevity of the violence that had taken place. Some of the public anger may have overflowed from other situations over which people again felt they had no control. The failure of the banks and related financial scandals were also brought about by widespread collusion.

Extreme anger has been expressed publicly not only with the original, widescale abuse of children but with what came to light concerning the cover-ups at high level that protected the Catholic Church at the expense of the abused. However, everyone has some responsibility, in having allowed the culture in which such matters could occur, and all are responsible for ensuring such situations do not occur again.

There are specific questions for Christians of all persuasions, of when to speak out in any unjust situation, when to risk rejection for oneself and others, how to do it effectively, and how to change wrongful behaviour in organisations of which we are part and which we may love dearly.

Modern ecumenical relations mean, further, that we are not alone, and when one Church fails, our ability to share our faith and its consequences with people outside the churches is damaged. We have the shame that fellow church members behaved vilely, and also shame that we have allowed church institutions to go unchecked and act contrary to the common good.

There is a primary duty to those who suffered, of care, compassion and justice, bringing the perpetrators to account if they are still alive, and organising society to best prevent harm to others in the future, matters not only good in themselves but which the survivors identify as part of the healing and serving of others. We have also seen something of the triumph of humanity in adversity, in how formerly abused children have spoken out for the silent.

There are constant moral challenges to Christians in the nature of the relationship between our wish to follow a local tradesman who fell foul of the criminal justice system and is yet the cosmic Christ, and how we deal with the churches through which we have worked out the consequences of loving him, churches that have over centuries enabled massive good to be done in our world and the message of the Christ to be spread through the practical consequences of love.

The circumstances are not peculiar to Ireland nor to one Church, and reflect on ourselves and our institutions, for a mix of spiritual authority and human power can be addictive and explosive, a distortion of the freedom God offers, especially when like-minded people get together and then find themselves on the slope that moves them from creating community which looks outward to serve others, to being a gang which turns inward to preserve itself.

There is another duty, to support people who have given their lives to serving others, full-time or voluntarily, and are now feeling not only the pain of betrayal by the church they have served but the hostility and suspicion that tars them as if they were offenders too. There are also the duties to the perpetrators who were created in the image of God, whom justice requires us to deal with through the legal process, but who are also called to repentance and the fullness of life, and whose stories may help to make abusing less common in future. Then there are the duties to the other offenders, the people in powerful positions who, whatever informed their intentions, put the reputation of the institution ahead of the demands of the Gospel. To react to some of these roles it would be easier to be an outsider, free to respond both justly and compassionately, but few are fully outsiders.

Ireland's Ryan Report identifies outrages inflicted upon thousands of children in the care of the State, who had no one to speak for them. We find again and again the story of the wounded and abandoned on the road to Jericho, of the priests and public servants who passed by without stopping, of the occasional Samaritan who tried to address the issues, was derided and excluded, and found that for these children of God, there was no room at the inn.

History provides some insights. The desperately poor Irish Free State continued the system established by Britain of industrial schools for children without family support, and left their running to the religious orders. They provided a basic education, but food, clothing and housing were insufficient, the teaching of a trade led to exploitation, while emotional neglect and physical violence were common, and the Ryan Report described sexual abuse as endemic in male institutions. Yet few people questioned. Society also connived at the means of recruitment to religious orders. To take a single example of the many public and private conversations that have followed the release of the Reports, a man paused at our Advent display for children, and recalled watching boys of fourteen being beaten onto the trains that would take them to join the Christian Brothers, by farming families who saw themselves as helping their child to enough food and a role for life, an alternative to the all-pervasive emigration, and one that provided status for them all. Suited or not, there were few ways out and no way back for the young recruits and most went through the systems that drilled them through repeated ritual humiliation and placed an emphasis on sin as giving personal offence to God rather than as actions with harmful consequences to others and the community. It seems that too many went with the group mind and did the worst to those in their power.

Many have found the violence hard to believe, as the same religious orders gave them education, sometimes in the same town; the warmth and companionship that religious belonging can provide; and a deep sense of the spiritual that provisions people for life. Yet, while neglect and physical and emotional violence against children were not uncommon in the general society of Britain and Ireland at the time, the misery and desperation of the orphans must have shown that it

was out of control. As a young child in the early 1960s I recall that we knew something was badly wrong. It may be that like Christians in countless other situations, people did not speak out, and therefore share in the collective guilt of keeping silent.

The abuse catalogued in the Murphy Report by priests in parishes follows a pattern found elsewhere. The specific details sear the mind. Some parents complained, but found doors closed against them, and sometimes discovered that an abusing priest had merely been moved to another parish. Unsited and often sexually immature and angry people were put in positions of trust and they found themselves able to do as they pleased with the bodies and dignity of others. The church authorities dealt with the complaints as internal rather than criminal matters and focussed on the repentance of the abuser rather than the needs of the abused. It may be that the church authorities aimed at both avoiding scandal and ensuring that the actions of some should not undermine the good the church did – but it meant that the abused were forced by the authorities to carry the pain alone and in silence. Public representatives, with notable exceptions, colluded. So, it seems, did the media.

On matters of protection we need to be grateful for the wisdom of the secular arm of society, but we also need to look at how spirituality and power have become so entangled in our faith lives.

Church practice is now to comply with the law and to focus on the protection of children and the vulnerable, but process and formal responses still come from within the traditional hierarchical clergymen's model. This means that, while speaking strongly against those members who actually offended, there remains the need to address the structures

and culture that allowed it to happen; and this cannot be done while holding on to power. It is a painful process for churches to recognise that the State not only has the power to enforce the law, and will do so, but is now seen as the higher moral authority.

Further, there is a need to accept that to offer, as the Pope has done, to act pastorally from a position of power, especially power in the Church that has offended, is wrong. This can be particularly destructive when the one who wishes to pastor is actively maintaining the structures of power that allowed it, in effect claiming innocence and superiority rather than acknowledging responsibility.

This brings us back to how we allowed the organisations of our churches, intended to further the work of Christ in bringing life in its richness to all, to become so powerful and sometimes so morally weak. Many of our churches are weak in leadership or in the taking of responsibility, and there are 'closed shops', open only to a selected few, in most of them. But as well as addressing competence and honesty in professional and pastoral roles, we need to acknowledge that as individuals we have within us the desire to hold power, and to wield it. However charitably we think we are acting, it seems that there are dangers for all in church ministry, whether this is formal ministry or the service we each accept at baptism.

We have within us the capacity to allow our faith to become a means by which we dominate others, particularly the young or the vulnerable. By insidious paths we can start to present God as on our side, and ourselves as God's representatives, forgetting the God of justice who hears the cries of the poor.

Against this there are signs of grace, indications that God does not abandon those who suffer. There is the courage, endurance, honesty and raw faith of those who have confronted the presence of evil, have heard the scorn and have persisted in their calling, sometimes to express God's love through being part of church institutions.

While justice as well as law is seen a

role of the secular arm, keeping silent is not an option and ways need to be found to allow public and private figures, parents and police officers, victims and Vatican, to acknowledge the past and find new paths for the future. If enough people accept the invitation, some public forum could be developed, led by those who suffered, to guide us. To hear God's voice and to respond to it, takes the courage to hear again the voices we have stifled; including the voice of the outsider, the wounded, the bewildered who have given faithful service; and perhaps the voice also of the offender. People who were abused should not be asked to carry the weight of the evil others have done to them, but if they agree to join with those who might bear some of the load, it might be possible to prevent a similar burden being placed upon other frail shoulders.

There may be something to learn from the recent work on justice and community remaking in the north of Ireland. The Troubles had an impact on everyone, and people in the most powerless areas suffered repeatedly. Yet, a political settlement was reached and power has been transferred, however imperfectly, to a wider range of people. The transfer was, and is, needed. Moreover, unlike after other similarly bloody episodes in Irish history, this time, many more people have the opportunity for their story to be heard. They can gain access to social if not to legal justice, meet former opponents if they wish, and be part of the process in which a more healthy society is created. In some way, everyone who wishes it can be part of the writing of the history, if not yet of the common story.

Those who have been involved in the delicate negotiations through which this has occurred include people of faith and courage. The powerful were slow to come to the table, but change can come without the powerful.

The Gospels indicate that we cannot ask other fellow human beings to bear the cost, but that the pattern of redemption involves everyone. Just as we cannot retain power and offer pastoring, we cannot forgive on behalf of others. That is for them to do, with the God who was offended and suffered in and with them, and who knows all the consequences. We know how strongly Jesus condemned the abuse of children, yet this is the same God who offers redemption to everyone, abusers of children and abusers of power, and doing so while continuing to bind up the wounds of the victims and offer them, with the scars that may ache again and again, the richness of hope. As Christ's Church we are in some way, while mindful of the suffering, protective of those now vulnerable, called to incorporate everyone.

Those who have suffered deeply come, as much as they will, in their time, and their coming has the power to change us all. The Christian hope is that we change God's world by the process through which we seek to arrive at the place where we can say, in the words of a prayer derived from Russian Orthodox worship:

*Forgive us all.  
Bless us all:  
the thieves and the Samaritans,  
those that fall by the wayside  
and the priests who pass by  
without stopping;  
all our neighbours,  
the villains and the victims,  
the cursing and the cursed,  
those who rebel against you  
and those who abandon themselves  
to your love.  
Take us all  
into you,  
holy and just God. ●*

**Rosemary Power** comes from an Irish diaspora background and works in pioneer ministry in Ireland. She is the author of *The Celtic Quest: A Contemporary Spirituality* (Columba Press). She has also written widely on ecumenics. This article reflects a personal viewpoint.

Ian M. Fraser

## Secularism

Pope Benedict XVI has targeted secularism as a demonic force in our time. In *The Guardian* of 31 May, John Hooper writes on the Pope's letter of March 2010 announcing a top-level investigation into clerical sex abuse in Ireland, and comments: '*In his letter, the Pope appeared to cast much of the blame for sex abuse on Ireland's secularisation.*' Pope Benedict is getting it wrong. But then Popes do.

The meaning and emphasis of the word secular have changed throughout history:

a) Originally the Latin word *saecularis* referred to an identifiable, lengthy period of time which needed to be understood in its integrity without importing ideas and questions which belong to a different era. Some people such as Richard Dawkins ignore this scholarly point, treating the early chapters of Genesis as a crude, false attempt to say how creation started. The interest of the writers and editors was much more practical: how to understand and live significantly the created life bestowed on us. They point to the need to begin with God: 'In the beginning, God.' They then take stock of creation, sorting out the different aspects in hymnic form: 'In the beginning, God created ...', giving God praise. They go on with a parable of a garden with Representative Man and Representative Woman occupying it, indicating relationships to God, to the natural order and the creatures in it, to one another and to the mandate they are given. The Big Bang belongs to a different era.

b) In mediaeval times there was a shift of meaning accompanying a move to the autonomy of spheres of responsibility which had previously come under the church's direct patronage. When Constantine the Great gave legal recognition to Christianity, it meant relief from periods of persecution; but when the Roman Empire collapsed, the church was left to pick up the pieces, to provide a basis of order in spheres of education, health care, social provision, justice,

parish relief, for instance. This issued in a paternalism which was ultimately resented, and which inhibited progress in these areas. Over time the civil sphere achieved independence from the ecclesiastical. These came to represent separate areas of responsibility, whether they were thought of as working in partnership or whether the religious sphere was dismissed and given no credence.

To make the religious way of thinking separate from the rest of life was rejected by Jesus in his time. He said of a centurion who recognised his authority and trusted his word: 'Truly I tell you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith. I tell you, many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of heaven, while the heirs of the Kingdom will be thrown into outer darkness.' He saw that the practice of religion could be both superficial and oppressive. Speaking to religious leaders who resembled 'whited sepulchres' he said, 'You on the outside look righteous to others, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.' What Jesus looked for was faith which stemmed from a tried and tested bedrock of reality and found practical expression in compassionate, committed lifestyle.

Human experience echoes that of Jesus. Fidel Castro had a religious background. He discarded it: As he grew up he became more acutely aware of the church's collaboration with the oppressive and corrupt regime of the dictator Batista. He found in Marxism a reading of life and emphasis on justice which he could affirm. In the early 1970s I just missed him in Chile, when I stayed with members of the recently formed Christians for Socialism. Fidel had met and talked with them long into the night. His conclusion was 'With Christians such as you, Marxists such as I am can have not only tactical but strategic alliances.' True, he invested in the USSR connection, and led

Cuba into membership of COMECON. But he was ill at ease with hardline elements in Cuban communism, and when the USSR collapsed in 1991 it was with some relief that Cuba disengaged and became a lay state. In his recent biography Fidel states his position as that of a Christian whose social analysis is Marxist/Leninist.

There remains a problem if the element of transcendence is missed out in defining 'the human'. That leaves powers-to-be to tidy their favoured understandings into line with their favoured ideologies. For Hitler, Aryans, for Stalin, the Party faithful, for Mao, aficionados of the Red Book, were taken to provide examples of authentic humanity.

c) Secularism may be recognised as a practical resource which insists that the realities which have to be faced in life are addressed squarely without evasion or cover-up, honouring the terms available for getting purchase on situations. This approach found supreme expression in the Incarnation. Jesus Christ came without privilege or protection, exposed to all the vagaries of human nature, enduring its contrasts – 'valiant, ignoble, dark and full of light' as T.S. Eliot put it. He knew what was in human nature and accepted the consequences. His prayer for followers was not that they should be taken out of the world but that, there, they be kept from succumbing to evil. The Incarnation happened because God loved the world. Jesus came announcing not church but Kingdom – the whole fabric of created life transformed so that it is marked by justice, truth and peace. That we take the world seriously, exactly as it is, is accordingly an article of faith.

In the letter to the Colossians, Paul lays emphasis on the claim that Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, is also the Lord of the world. He is presented as the source and sign that commanding forces, 'thrones, dominions, rulers,

powers,' need to change their ways. To validate their existence and to contribute to a world order which is just, they must take 'the form of the servant': 'The rulers of the Gentiles lord it over others and their great ones dominate. That is not to be your way. Whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave: just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many.' Not only persons but institutions, corporations, nations will fulfil their purpose when they learn his servant way of working.

A corollary of this emphasis on the Kingdom, on a world to be transformed under Jesus Christ's Headship, is that religious language is not a requirement for authentic responses, personal or corporate. When it came to true ways of living, the church may instruct the world, but the world may also instruct the church. The church's role is provisional as is the world's. In fulfilled life, depicted as a City, there is no Temple.

I do not know what form of secularism Polly Toynbee of *The Guardian* embraces; but I believe that life is enriched by her determination to dig into and expose the underlying reality of situations, her good judgement in illuminating what should be supported and what combated, her acute concern that justice and truth should prevail.

Don't forget that, in the Parable of the Last Judgement, those whom Jesus affirms do not even recognise him and have no religious words in their response. They exercise straightforward secular responsibilities, feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, giving hospitality to the stranger, caring for the sick, visiting prisoners. That is enough to merit his 'Well done!'

This is not a time to square up to secularism but to recognise and receive the gift that it contains. This is not a time when humanity is ignoring the call for a new world order ('the Kingdom') but when the church is being told, 'You have your part to play, but don't try to hog the agenda. The call goes to all earth's people, and those who respond do so in their own way and language.' ●

Murdoch MacKenzie

# EDINBURGH 2010

Christian songs and hymns from around the globe mingled with the native skirl of bagpipes at welcoming ceremonies for Edinburgh 2010, a five-day conference marking the hundredth anniversary of the World Missionary Conference of 1910.<sup>1</sup> By the start of the conference, 297 registered delegates from 60 nations were joined by more than 100 additional visitors and staff, as well as by 55 journalists from around the world, on the Pollock Halls campus of Edinburgh University. Conference delegates were able to experience local hospitality through visits to local churches for worship and lunch, returning with their hosts for the final celebration in the Church of Scotland General Assembly Hall.

The use of the Internet in preparation for and during the conference, including live streaming of parts of the conference, allowed the event to be truly global. Arul Siromoney, organist and choirmaster of St Andrew's Church in Chennai, watched the sessions live. During the final celebration he skyped his daughter in London, suggesting she might watch it. She skyped him back to ask if he had seen me there! Major '2010 events' took place (and are ongoing) around the world; and in Edinburgh itself, alongside the main conference, a number of events were organised under the heading '2010.local'. These included an ecumenical pilgrimage and an interfaith event; a ceilidh; meetings of WSCF/SCM, the Methodist Women's Network, and the Fellowship of St Thomas. Each of these meetings raised significant issues for the conference, including the criticism that, apart from at the reception at the Scottish Parliament, there were no sisters and brothers from other faith communities present at any of the conference sessions. On Sunday 6th June there was a BBC live broadcast from St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral. In addition, many conference delegates spoke in local churches on the Sunday morning.

Alongside the wonderful team of people from the Scottish Churches, Iona Community members and associates played a significant role, including Mairi Munro, John Bell and Douglas Galbraith with music and worship, Mark Taylor and Mitchell Bunting with administration and arrangements, and seven Family Groups who gave financial support towards the costs of Bishop Devamani of Dornakal attending the conference, and incidentally raising £134 for the Growing Hope Appeal. The bishop stayed with our daughter Ruth and her husband, and I was his chaplain while he was in Edinburgh.

Greetings were received from around the world, including one from Pope Benedict XVI to delegates, visitors and staff attending the Edinburgh 2010 anniversary; and on Saturday 5th June, 2010 (the fiftieth anniversary of the formation of the Roman Catholic Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity), three leaders of prominent traditions of Christianity reflected on the hundred years since June 1910 in Edinburgh, and the half-century since the Second Vatican Council of the 1960s. Bishop Brian Farrell of what is now the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU), Rev. Dr Geoff Tunnicliffe of the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA), and Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC), spoke on the topic 'Christian Unity Today'.

In his opening words of greeting, Dr Tveit said: *'Today in the World Council of Churches we give thanks to God for how this hundredth anniversary of the contemporary ecumenical movement brings us back to where we came from and sends us out to where we need to be ... Christ has called us to*

*witness, to share the gifts of God with one another and with the world, in love and compassion for all human beings and for the whole of creation ... Among the visits I have received I have very much appreciated those of the two leaders of the World Evangelical Alliance and the Lausanne Committee. It has been moving and inspiring for me to realise how deeply we share a holistic understanding of mission.'*

In a statement published at the conference, the twenty-one Pentecostal delegates acknowledged the historical significance of Edinburgh 1910, and rejoiced over the participation of Pentecostals in the centenary celebrations: *'We appreciate that Pentecostals are recognised in a positive way. At the same time we leave with the challenge to find fuller expressions of global Pentecostalism in an ecumenical context. We also noticed a disparity of the language used and concerns expressed between the global North and global South. We must be careful that the academic voices of the North do not wash away the narrative claims of the South. As Pentecostals we are acquainted with both linguistic traditions; we realise that we can play an important role as bridge builders.'* In contrast to 1910, Pentecostals were represented on all levels of the governance of Edinburgh 2010 and participated in the study process leading up to the centenary celebrations.

In a keynote address, Dana L. Robert encouraged delegates to Edinburgh 2010 in their commitment to unity of purpose in Christian mission, evangelism and dialogue: *'We must not allow difficult theological, socio-cultural and political issues, or disagreements over theologies of religion, to discourage us from sharing God's love and salvation through Jesus Christ with all the world. As we celebrate the centennial of the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh, 1910, we seek to deepen and strengthen its prophetic vision of worldwide, multicultural Christian unity – a unity marked by shared*

*passion to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ. The memory of Edinburgh 1910 reminds us that we are ambassadors of hope, confident in the power of God's love despite our limitations in a world of pain and injustice.'*

The youth delegation's verdict on Edinburgh 2010 was enthusiastic: *'We would like to give 'a thumbs up' to Edinburgh 2010 for recognising us as part of the conference. Youth tends to be marginal in most proceedings and that makes their voice be silent. It is high time we move forward as the world and identify youth as the mission practitioners of today. This is the historic moment for young people who came to represent their churches and countries in witnessing to Christ today and to discuss about mission in the 21st century.'*

Delegate Fofu Lerefolo said: *'It's been 100 years since delegates met in Edinburgh to discuss the state of world missions, and many momentous, world-changing decisions were made. I sit now, a young South African, in 2010, part of the centenary celebrations. My presence here shows just how much the times have changed. In 1910, a mostly male, all-Western, all-adult delegation met. I represent the opposite of all that – young, female and African.'*

Of particular significance for relations between the global South and global North was an iconic moment at the closing service of worship in the historic Assembly Hall. This was provided when Bishop Bachu Devamani, Bishop of Dornakal, 7th in succession to the famous Bishop V.S. Azariah, read part of Azariah's speech from 1910: *'Through all the*

*ages to come the Indian church will rise up in gratitude to attest the heroism and self-denying labours of the missionary body. You have given your goods to feed the poor. You have given your bodies to be burned. We also ask for love. Give us FRIENDS.'*<sup>2</sup> Friends were there in abundance from the global South as well as the North, and fittingly the sermon was preached by the Archbishop of York, John Sentamu, who emphasised the crucial importance of our Christian witness. Nor will we ever forget the singing of the African Choir, nor the Indian dancing, interpreting passages from the Bible.

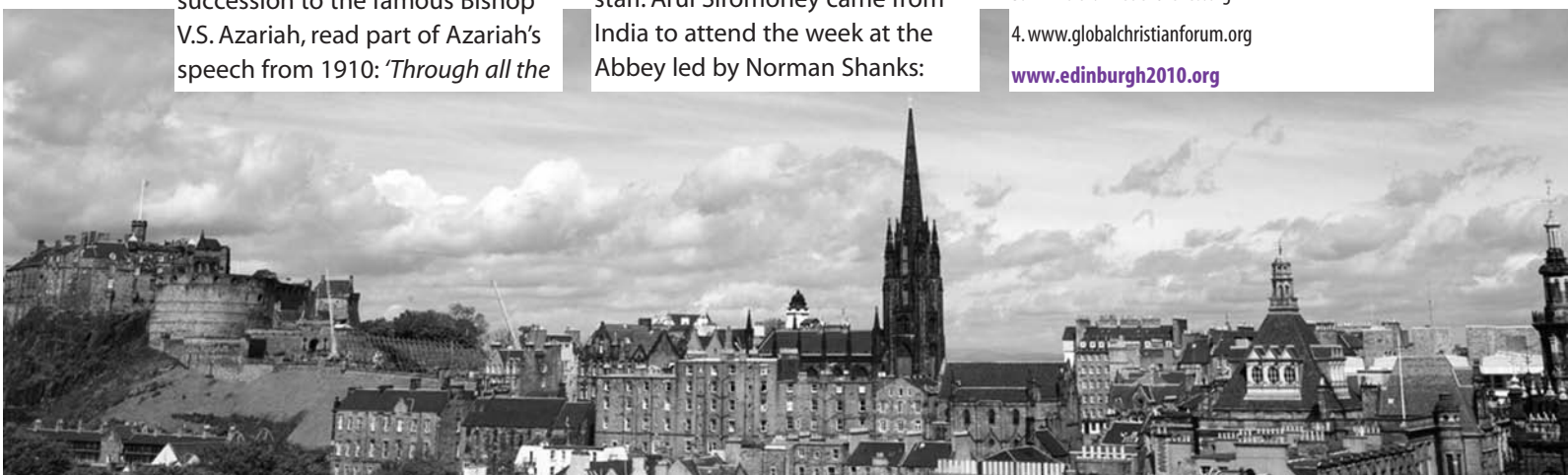
The conference issued a nine-point document called *Common Call*, which ended with these words: *Remembering Jesus' way of witness and service, we believe we are called by God to follow this way joyfully, inspired, anointed, sent and empowered by the Holy Spirit, and nurtured by Christian disciplines in community. As we look to Christ's coming in glory and judgment, we experience his presence with us in the Holy Spirit, and we invite all to join with us as we participate in God's transforming and reconciling mission of love to the whole creation.*

During the conference Bishop Devamani attended the Iona Community AGM and presented an attractive picture of Dornakal Cathedral to our Leader, Peter Macdonald. After the conference Dana Robert and Bishop Devamani visited Iona and met some members of the Community staff. Arul Siromoney came from India to attend the week at the Abbey led by Norman Shanks:

*'Exploring themes of mission, political witness and ecumenism in the light of the legacy of the 1910 Edinburgh International Missionary Conference'. Meanwhile, in Grand Rapids, Michigan, on 18th June, the World Communion of Reformed Churches came into being through the merger of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Reformed Ecumenical Council, representing more than 80 million Reformed Christians worldwide.<sup>3</sup> We now look forward to the Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelisation to be held in Cape Town, South Africa, 16-25th October 2010, in collaboration with the World Evangelical Alliance. There 2000 leaders from over 200 countries will consider issues including other world faiths, HIV/AIDS and persecution, and how such issues relate to the future of the Church and world evangelisation. Alongside all of this we have the Global Christian Forum in which the Roman Catholic Church, the Evangelical and Pentecostal Movements, the Orthodox Churches, the Conference of Secretaries of Christian World Communions and the World Council of Churches have agreed in unequivocal terms their resolve to be part of this 'new ecumenical space'.<sup>4</sup> Thus, globally, we live in exciting ecumenical times, in which Scotland, Iona and Edinburgh have been playing an important role. ●*

#### Notes:

1. See 'Edinburgh 1910 and 2010' by Murdoch MacKenzie, [www.iona.org.uk/ebulletin\\_feature0310.php](http://www.iona.org.uk/ebulletin_feature0310.php)
2. World Missionary Conference 1910: The History and Records of the Conference, Edinburgh and London: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier; New York, Chicago and Toronto: Fleming H. Revel. p.315
3. [www.reformedchurches.org](http://www.reformedchurches.org)
4. [www.globalchristianforum.org](http://www.globalchristianforum.org)  
[www.edinburgh2010.org](http://www.edinburgh2010.org)



David McNeish

# Down in the woods today



**Scottish Wood is a social enterprise founded by Community members Maggie and Jim Birley (above) and run with the Community's economic witness as a founding principle. David McNeish worked at Scottish Wood for a period last year – where he found himself 'in wood' – and interviews the Birleys here ...**

'You find all kinds of things in tree trunks when you cut them open,' says Jim Birley. 'Golf balls, bullets, musket balls. Once we even found some graffiti that had been carved in 1846. The tree had grown around the lettering until it was hidden inside the trunk – we just happened to saw right through it and it was still legible.'

There is a mixture of delight and reverence as he recounts the tale. Scottish Wood, a social enterprise founded by Maggie and Jim Birley, is a sawmill that only sources timber grown in Scotland, most of it less than 50 miles from the Birleys' base in Oakley, West Fife.

At the heart of the operation is the giant orange bandsaw that turns tree trunks into planks. Radiating out from it are the wood-fired kiln that dries the timber, the open-plan office, outbuildings housing a range of saws, planes and other machines that transform the raw planks into finished timbers, and storage containers for the wood that is waiting for sale. Attention is drawn, however, to one final building that is the only one with a name. It says simply 'Showroom'.

Inside it is a cathedral of beautiful wood. Pale ash, creamy sycamore, proud oak, rich elm – just some of the wonderful woods that are on display. Gloriously grained, enormous pieces of mature tree stand to attention around the room, sorely tempting any visitors to come, pay homage and offer them a new life as a mantelpiece, a turned bowl or myriad other possibilities. And there is no shortage of visitors. A steady stream of vehicles arrive throughout the day to purchase timber – from retired miners looking for a hobby to professional joiners and even boat-builders.

The sawmill has been going for twelve years, employs five local men, in addition to Jim and Maggie, and has a turnover five times what was originally envisaged. Maggie was raised in beautiful wooded Perthshire, but Jim is a farmer's son from Orkney, an island famous for its lack of trees. How did they end up running a sawmill?

'Jim was looking after the kids whilst I was at work and he needed a project,' says Maggie, smiling. 'We wanted to renovate a house but ended buying some land with planning permission and living in a caravan whilst Jim built the house. My only criteria were that I didn't have to get out of bed until the caravan was warm, or empty the chemical toilet.' Jim picks up the story: 'We had to cut down some trees on the site of the house and wanted to use the timber for flooring so it wouldn't go to waste. It was then cheaper to build a kiln than pay

to transport the wood somewhere else to dry it and so we had a very small sawmill without really intending it.'

The seeds were sown before this whilst they were living and working in El Salvador, part of a Scottish Churches World Exchange programme. The church there was involved in a reforestation project on community-acquired land and the Birleys' relationship with timber took root. This was also their first contact with the Iona Community – as Scots they were welcomed enthusiastically by the pastor, who had experienced hospitality and kindness from Associates of the Iona Community when he was exiled in Canada.

On returning to Scotland they investigated further; and decided that the sawmill should be run with the Iona Community's economic witness as a founding principle. 'We didn't want a business where profit came before everything else,' says Maggie. 'A social enterprise meant we could pay ourselves the median household income and put any profits back into the mill and the local community.' Jim needed some convincing – a skill Maggie has in spades. 'She was right. It's freed us from a lot worry and helped keep us from being consumed by the business.'

It may not have consumed them but it's still been a huge amount of

hard work. It is only recently that it began to feel as if 'the beast', as Jim calls it, was being tamed. Working a four-day week has been a crucial element in living out a belief in the importance of family as well as work. It seems to have benefited the staff as well, many of whom started through the New Deal programme. 'Initially it was helpful as it left Friday free for job seeking,' says Jim. 'But for the folk we've taken on permanently it's interesting that whilst some thought they would take on other part-time work, in fact no one has. Three-day weekends are hard to beat.'

I first came here last summer, when recovering from an anti-depressant-induced psychosis. I asked if they ever took on volunteers. 'We haven't,' said Jim, and paused with a smile, 'but I suppose we could.' The mixture of tranquility and acceptance, coupled with meaningful outdoor work, has been a major element in my recovery. And always good conversation over a mug of tea:

'We had a phone call from the naval base at Faslane,' said Maggie one day. 'They wanted timber to refurbish the accommodation blocks. I said we would be delighted to supply the wood, on the condition that they stopped harbouring weapons of mass destruction. There was a long pause on the other end of the line

before they hung up.'

Jim and Maggie have found all kinds of things in wood – more than just a sustainable livelihood, they've also found a cause to champion and a creative way of living out the Community's Rule. And in their passion, generosity and encouragement they allow others to find themselves in wood as well.

## WOOD

*We find ourselves in wood.  
In what we make of it.  
Homes of invitation,  
fences of division.*

*Carving out beauty and pain,  
in every trinket box or coffin.  
A boat for a fisherman,  
a cross for a carpenter.*

*It is almost as if  
every tree is a mirror,  
reflecting only soul light.*

*Asking us what we will be  
and whispering testimony  
that growth is found only  
in one place –*

*beneath. ●*

**David McNeish** is a new member of the Iona Community. After work as a hospital doctor, worship musician and campaigner for the CAB service he is finally admitting defeat and has started to train as a Church of Scotland minister. He lives in South Queensferry with his wife, Sally, and three young children.



Dan Glass

# Lessons from our grandparents

**Dan Glass is a young climate activist with Plane Stupid and Climate Camp, who has taken part in non-violent 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. He is Jewish, the grandson of Holocaust survivors. In this article he explains his actions and his motivation to his grandparents, and the significance of his Jewish faith to his commitment.**

Because of you – Oma, Granny and Grandpa, as well as the rest of the family – I have been aware of the lessons of the Holocaust from a very young age.

I have been in-built with an awareness of how people struggle, of human depravity, of the nightmarish effects of calculated destruction, of the depths of people, of how much people can withstand; of the great issues in the world. My eyes were immediately opened to issues of injustice. And once my eyes were opened they could not be shut.

The unspeakable cruelty of the Holocaust is beyond comparison. However, the Holocaust can teach us valuable lessons about the genocides occurring today.

Climate Change is the defining issue of our generation, just as for third-generation survivors the Holocaust has tragic resonance. After the Holocaust, society said that nothing like this would ever happen again. '*Never again,*' they said ...

## **Actions have consequences**

Today we are beginning to witness genocide as never seen before. Eighty-six percent of the scientists on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the most authoritative body on climate change, have recently said that society is likely to soon emit enough greenhouse gases to tip us over the point of runaway climate change: a global increase of 2°C. The consequences of even less than a 2°C increase will be that the Arctic Sea icecaps will disappear, changing the Earth's energy balance dramatically as reflective ice is replaced during summer months by darker sea surface. This is now expected by 2030, or even earlier. Tropical coral reefs will suffer severe and repeated bleaching episodes due to hotter ocean waters, killing off most coral and delivering a hammer-blow to marine biodiversity. Droughts will spread through the sub-tropics, accompanied by heatwaves and wildfires. Worst-hit will be the Mediterranean, the south-west United States, southern Africa and Australia, resulting in 'environmental' refugees in incomprehensible numbers. Already, 300,000 deaths each year are attributable to climate change, according to the Global Humanitarian Forum, headed by Kofi Annan.

We are now so far down the line to irreversible climate change that we are no longer in a position to be morally self-righteous: telling people

that 'they shouldn't fly' or 'to drive less' or 'to shop at certain places'. We have gone from thinking we should do the morally correct activity to acting from plain instinct: 'If we don't act now, it will be too late for us – we need to fight for our survival.' If we know the solutions and yet continue to plunder the planet, we are complicit in this devastation.

The world's top climate scientists state that airports cannot expand and that coal-fired power stations cannot be built if we are ever to meet the CO2 reduction targets necessary to preserve our future. Today carbon-heavy industries can pollute relentlessly with barely a legal challenge, and when ordinary citizens challenge this, they are criminalised. If climate change is indeed the main concern of our courts and government, then this logic must be challenged; and the question must be asked: 'Who are the real criminals?'

Are the criminals the people of this nation who are clearing up this social and ecological mess to prevent devastation for future generations? Or are the criminals those filling their pockets with cash, whilst the poor get poorer and our future is snatched from us? Indeed, the people who are aware of this knowledge and who continue to support the expansion of polluting industries, wholly aware that there are alternatives, are complicit in the crime. As complicit as those who drove the trains to the concentration camps. If we are to stop runaway climate change we need to support the people taking the necessary action, and expose those working to defend a system which protects profit over the planet.

## Turning against the tide

This 'banality of evil' has shown to me how everyone is complicit. How a terrible situation in society can become 'normalised', shows to me that in order to take off our blindfolds to the consequences of our actions, we must stop, take a step back, and go against the madness. Climate change is not an abstract notion or something 'out there' but will hurt us all personally, as genocides in history show us. Climate change is an issue of civil liberties. What we are seeing today is a system where police lash out at young people listening to the climate science, the police thus protecting a state which protects polluting industries and not innocent people. Just as in Nazi Germany, where the spirit of Nazism was enshrined in the German constitution, it is lawful for companies today to pollute relentlessly at the expense of the whole world. So just as people illegally challenged that people were being sent to the Nazi death camps, we must challenge these companies. This approach is both 'radical', as it investigates the roots of the problem of limitless growth on limited resources, and very reasonable at the same time, given the current climate.

So, you may ask (and reasonably I think), if things are so bad why not just withdraw into inaction?

Because, as in the Holocaust, communities facing injustice stick together. It's instinct. Like stopping a child from walking in front of a car. Or not banging your head against a brick wall. Or stopping unnecessary climate change. If you see something you love being destroyed – whether a lover, a trail in your local park, your mates, your community, the planet – you act to protect your beloved. It's natural.

## Faith and human responsibility

Through my faith I have learnt the importance of understanding humanity's role within global

ecology. Judaism teaches us that human diversity arises from ecological diversity. The reason why there are different human cultures and religions is not only or primarily political, it's because each society finds unique ways to teach the generations how to live in harmony with a particular place, through rituals and stories. Hence, the *lulav* (palm branch) and *sukkah* (temporary structure) on the fall of the full moon. Hence, the teaching that Adam (person) is so-called because the human was created from *adamah* (earth or soil). Judaism teaches us that the

## Already, 300,000 deaths each year are attributable to climate change, according to the Global Humanitarian Forum, headed by Kofi Annan.

earth is not ours to use for our own benefit. We are here to serve the earth. Our existence is legitimised not through our subservience to the economy, but through our subservience to the planet. The Old Testament teaches us that the land will get to rest for a full year and on *Shabbat*, no matter what we plan or do. Let her rest and you can rest with her: don't let her rest and you will be thrown into exile, while she still gets to enjoy her Sabbath.

## Standing up to adversity

Most striking of all is how you all have taught me, often subconsciously, about the strength of the human spirit in the face of adversity. From these lessons I have delved into finding out about the amazing resistance methods used during the Holocaust, which inspire strategies for action today. I have learnt about underground fighters in the Jewish ghettos planning escape routes for those caged. I have learnt about the chilling consequences for the brave families who hid Jews, like Oma. I have learnt about soldiers who refused to wave a patriotic flag;

about the men and women who refused to fight; about those involved in the resistance movement who got up every day knowing that they would 'fail'.

Almost every day I notice signs that more and more people are longing for our species to cease its self-destructive war with the earth and each other. Strategies of resistance in the Holocaust speak loudly today. Despite the hype around the brave new 'globalised' world that is supposed to bring all manner of blessings for our generation and the next, an unsettling stench is seeping out through the cracks and those walls in the information superhighway. Beneath the shiny surface of our super-techno, digitalised, genetically engineered, wonder societies, our planet and our humanity is decaying. I don't want to ever look into the bright clear eyes of a child and try to explain why the whales are being killed and the forests burnt. Never, ever. I don't want to have to explain why playing naked in the sun is dangerous and some streams are poisonous. Why some frogs now have five legs, and teenagers blow themselves up in the process of killing other children in the Middle East. I don't want to wonder why some of us work so furiously, while others can't find work, and why, either way, a deep satisfaction and a sense of belonging is so elusive. I don't want to experience these things.

## An inter-generational crime

The younger Jewish generation feel that the issue of climate change is deadly serious. Just as with everyone who will live long enough to see a 2°C increase, we are taking this personally. This makes me very scared: for my generation, for my children's generation and my children's children. The people today who are continuing the plunder of the earth's resources are leaving the younger generations with no option but to clean up their mess. Climate change is an inter-genera-

tional crime. Just as in the build-up and duration of the Holocaust, today we are intrinsically part of a vicious moment in history where we don't know whether we will survive.

I have transferred this knowledge to the situation today, and knowing that whilst I have the (small) window of opportunity before the storm arrives to act, I will. As staying quiet on genocide is as political as speaking out. How will I feel if we can't look our children in the eye and say that we did all that we could? I have to do all I can. Not just hold a banner singing songs about giving peace a chance, or even supergluing myself to the Prime Minister as a publicity stunt – but act in all my capacity to take back control for our generation and stop emissions at their source. Climate change is a 'generational opportunity'. We have a large responsibility on our shoulders. Never before, and never again, will one age-group be burdened with the responsibility of saving the entire human race. The next generation will either thank us for taking the necessary action, or lament us for not doing enough when we had the chance.

### Keeping the faith

I have learnt about having faith in desperate situations. About keeping the faith that change will happen even while it seems that we are living in a lunatic asylum: Scientists tell us we need to stop burning fossil fuels up into the atmosphere and yet the UK as a country continues to fly more than twice on average than any other country in the world! But authentic hope requires clarity. Clarity which witnesses the troubles in the world – and imagines what might lie beyond these situations that are perhaps not inevitable and immutable. Faith that makes the impossible, possible.

I see ourselves as being so gone these days that we've moved way beyond reason and logic in what

we're trying to do – we need to open new places that allow for new forms of thinking to emerge; to work from a place of beauty and truth. Direct action, such as the work that I do, attempts to do this, and this has always been the point of religion also.

The whole structure of religion is set up around trying to create the framework to enable these places of truth to be opened in the practising of them. These spaces then create community and perpetuate a spirit of hope. Both religion and direct action (in the broadest sense) can attempt to speak to the human condition, to the innermost core of people which everyone shares. When we witness these spaces opening, I see opening the critical and fundamental understanding of religion; how faith and hope drive activism and, ultimately, that change is possible.

These inherent ethics and morals of Judaism, of struggle and hope, are what grounds me in my action on climate change. It is this faith that supports young Jewish people not to burnout, to keep grounded and to sustain their action on climate change. For it is not purely my faith, or a leadership generation of upcoming Jewish people that will inspire me, but being involved in a movement which draws out a whole range of backgrounds and diversities.

The last lesson I have learnt is about love and preservation. I have learnt about the importance of preserving what we love, not just resisting what we hate. How life is about both resisting destruction and salvaging what you treasure whilst you can. Waking up in the morning and knowing that everything you love could be gone in an instant, makes you act ever more to save it. ●

This reflection was written at the end of 2009.

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

<http://climatecamp.org.uk>

Euan Stuart

# The Listener

A child at the window.  
His ears tuned  
to the whisper of the sky.

'No more, I ask, please!  
The poison hurts,  
the smoke you feed me.'

A child at the farm.  
His ears tuned  
to the murmur of the crops.

'Stop, stop, please listen!  
The toxin aches,  
the chemicals you bathe me with.'

A child at the beach.  
His ears tuned  
to the mutter of the sea.

'Cease, please, I seek of you!  
The venom burns,  
the oil you coat me in.'

The world cries in pain,  
the boy says.  
But nobody bothers, nobody cares,  
nobody listens.

**Euan Stuart** is thirteen years old.

Photo © David Coleman



## KAIROS PALESTINE

Warren Bardsley

coracle 18  
autumn 2010  
news

In the Fourth Act of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, Brutus speaks of a 'tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune'. It is that sense of the crucial importance of this present time, of a moment pregnant with possibility, which lies behind the meaning of the Greek word *kairos*, distinguishing it from horizontal or chronological time. It is the vertical breaking in of a unique, critical opportunity for transformation. In Mark's Gospel the word is used by Jesus at the beginning of his radical ministry in Galilee: 'The time (*kairos*) has arrived: the Kingdom of God is here.'

Kairos Palestine pulsates with that sense of urgency, of a moment which must be seized; an opportunity to be grasped with both hands. The document to which it refers was launched in Bethlehem on December 9th, 2009. Signed by fifteen leading Palestinian Christians (Orthodox, Catholic and Anglican), priests and lay people, it was fifteen months in preparation. Entitled *A Moment of Truth: a Word of Faith, Hope and Love from the Heart of Palestinian Suffering*, it has the support of Palestinian Heads of Churches and is endorsed by the World Council of Churches. It is a word addressed to Palestinian religious and political leaders and to Palestinian and Israeli civil society. It is also addressed to the international community and 'to our Christian sisters and brothers around the world'. It is addressed to the US. It is the most significant word to come from the struggling Palestinian Christian community for many years; a community which has its roots in the earliest post-Resurrection Church in the Holy Land but now accounts for only 1.5% of the population.

So why now? In the first place, as the authors say, 'we have reached a dead end in the tragedy of the Palestinian people. The hearts of the faithful are filled with pain and with questioning. The problem is not just a political one. It is a policy in which human beings are destroyed and that must be of concern to the Church. Ours is a cry of hope in the absence of all hope.' The document begins by describing without exaggeration or embellishment the present desperate reality of Palestinian suffering, a reality made up of Israeli settlements eating up more and more Palestinian land, controlling natural resources; the daily humiliation of hundreds of checkpoints; the separation barrier keeping apart members of the same family; and severe restrictions on religious freedom. It is the reality of Occupation and Dispossession.

Against the background of this worsening situation for the Palestinian people the authors speak a word of faith, hope and love. The theology contained in the document is straightforward and simple. 'We believe in one God, Creator of the universe and humanity. We believe in a good and just God who loves every one of his creatures ... that every human being is made in God's likeness ... that everyone's dignity is derived from the dignity of the Almighty.' The document critiques and corrects theologies of exclusivity and exceptionalism, based on a flawed reading of the Bible. Despite all discouragement, hope remains strong. Signs of hope are the steadfastness of the people, the increasing volume of Israeli and Jewish voices advocating peace and justice, the vibrancy of parish communities, inter-faith dialogue, and supremely the gospel of resurrection. Love is not passive, but is called to resist evil. The Occupation is a sin and must be resisted with the power of non-violence.

'So what is our word to the Churches of the world?' The authors express their appreciation to Churches and Christians around the world for 'your solidarity with us in deed and presence'. But they also call for repentance for our silence, our unwillingness to face the truth of the essential injustice of their situation, our failure to act. They call on the international community

to stop the principle of *double standards* by which the state of Israel is allowed to break international law with impunity.

What are we calling for? the authors ask. In particular:

- Morally responsible pilgrimage
- Non-violent protest, civil disobedience, including identification with the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign, now a worldwide movement
- Challenging exclusive theologies
- Calling on our own national leaders to challenge the policies of the state of Israel.

Naim Ateek of Sabeel, the ecumenical liberation theology centre in Jerusalem, says: 'Fundamentally this is about justice for both Palestinians and Israelis. We are not in any sense anti-Semitic. The word often translated righteousness (*dikaioisune*) in the New Testament can equally mean justice (Matt 6:33; 5:6). Palestinians today are hungry and thirsty for justice. It is our responsibility as their brothers and sisters to work together for the achievement of justice so that their need shall be filled.'

We need as churches in Britain to engage with this report as a matter of urgency. Jesus in announcing the Kingdom as Good News of God's universal love called for repentance – a change of mind and heart. The document puts the question squarely to us: 'Will you help us to get our freedom back? For this is the only way you can help the two people to attain justice, peace, security and love.' ●

Workshops on the Kairos Palestine document are available from: [w.bardsley39@btinternet.com](mailto:w.bardsley39@btinternet.com) and [miranda.pinch@gmail.com](mailto:miranda.pinch@gmail.com)

**Kairos Palestine – A Moment of Truth: a Word of Faith, Hope and Love from the Heart of Palestinian Suffering is available to download at: [www.kairospalestine.ps](http://www.kairospalestine.ps)**

# Cracking up

Margaret Silf

## Writer and retreat leader Margaret Silf reflects on the differences between being 'saved' – and cracking up ...

A good laugh? A life-changing transition? A destabilisation of the ego? Just a joke among friends, or maybe a cataclysmic cosmic shake-up. What does 'cracking up' mean to you?

I woke up one August morning, some few weeks ago, to find myself transplanted. I felt I had been plucked out of a world where I shared my time between a lively English market town and a series of international airports, and dropped down in the wilds of Ayrshire, where all I can see is cows.

What happened? Not exactly an earth-shattering event, just a house move that I expected to be reasonably routine, given that I spend much of my life 'on the road' in any case. Where I hang my hat shouldn't matter too much, and in any case I have Scottish genes, so why do I feel so dislocated, and why would the feeling of 'cracking up' come to mind?

What a wonderfully ambiguous phrase that is! Visions of crumbling buildings and shaken certainties come to mind, but so do images of omelettes, which of course depend for their very existence on cracked-up-ness. Could that be true for us as well? Having just come through several years of painful transitions in various contexts, I am beginning to think that I and perhaps the whole human family, will only move deeper into God's dream of all we can become, if we surrender to a bit of cracking up.

That, of course, seems to run counter to the conventional religious language, which says a lot about being 'saved'. I wonder why that is? The song 'The Rose' reminds us that 'it's the heart afraid of breaking that never learns to dance'. Is it true that the 'breaking times' in our lives are in fact the points of growth? If so, why do we make such efforts to avoid them? The whole matter of being 'saved' has led me to ask myself: 'Do I want to save my life, or spend it?' Church language keeps on about the saving. Jesus seems to do nothing but spend himself. Why can't I quite connect the two?

In a wonderful Good Friday TV programme some years ago, John Bell interviewed a South African woman who was running an orphanage for the children of HIV/AIDS victims. Asked what legacy she hoped her life would leave for the world, she answered: *'I hope that when I die I shall have completely spent every gift God has given me, and I shall leave nothing behind me but a footprint.'* Life is a gift, and gifts are for spending. Jesus even warns us that anyone who tries to save their life will lose it, but those who are willing to spend themselves will find themselves. To spend ourselves we are going to have to get cracked open. And that usually won't be very comfortable.

Cracking up happens during transitions that pitch us into new situations, sometimes chosen, sometimes not, but always challenging. Times like these shake us up like a kaleidoscope, and bring the pieces down in a different order – a new pattern that we hardly recognise as ours. They destabilise our ego. None of us expects that. None of us wants it. But I guess all of us need it. I know I do, and if I doubted that, some of the issues that have demanded my attention during these years of transition have made it very clear that my ego is still fighting fit and not easily knocked out.

The nursery rhyme reminds us that Humpty Dumpty is a very accident-prone kind of egg. He was there when the first-generation stars met their

spectacular supernova ends, and cracked open in explosions that released all the elements that would eventually make us. He has been particularly vulnerable to the forces of gravity recently, not just in my personal journey, but in our collective human journey. He has tumbled off the wall of ecclesiastical complacency in the face of abuse and other scandals. He has tumbled off the wall of predictable weather patterns. He has even fallen off Wall Street itself. But suppose, just suppose, that the resulting mess isn't the end of something, but an invitation to make a new beginning. Suppose these eggs haven't just broken – but have hatched! What kind of chicks might be emerging? Fresh ways of being church? Enlightened financial systems based on a more just and fair distribution of the world's wealth? Creative and non-violent solutions to world conflicts? An invitation to use our collective intelligence to stop exploiting our planet and to work co-creatively with her instead? These chicks are still very fragile, but they are there because the eggs have cracked up and given them a chance at life. How can we nourish them, so that their potential becomes a reality in our world?

But cracking up doesn't always have to be so heavy. We crack up in laughter too, and laughter is a wonderful midwife of new thoughts and new possibilities. Laughter can crack open our sorrows and give us a new perspective. Two friends of mine lost a dear friend suddenly and prematurely, and were broken in sorrow for her passing. They planted daffodil bulbs at her grave, and grieved for her all winter. In spring they went back to her grave, to discover an abundant crop of – onions! They cracked up. They laughed until the tears came and

## 'Doing Good with Your Money' continued from p.6:

they swear that they heard their friend laughing along with them.

God has to have a sense of humour, and, more immediately, Jesus too! Why do we sit so solemnly through all those stories about trying to take a splinter out of someone's eye when you have a plank in your own, or about camels crawling through the eyes of needles. So many ridiculously exaggerated and caricatured situations that no-one could forget – and we sit po-faced through it all. That must make God cringe! Look again – can't you see the tongue in Jesus' cheek? Or even the cheek in Jesus' tongue?

Something ridiculous that cracks us up can clear out some holy cobwebs and take us to fresh understandings of the immanent power of this man who leads us to God. In the midst of my own post-move disorientation I cracked up over a card I found in a Glasgow store. It had a picture of Jesus standing on the hillside, while a young boy solemnly offered him a basket of loaves and fishes. The picture could have been straight out of a Children's Illustrated Bible. And the caption? 'No. Mine was the herb-crusted cod with rocket and parmesan salad.!

Let's not be so afraid of cracking up. It may be the best thing that ever happens to us, as we follow the one who cracked open the veil of the temple to lead us all through it and beyond it. ●

**Margaret Silf's** books include *Sacred Spaces: Stations on the Celtic Way* (Lion Hudson), *Landmarks: An Ignatian Journey* (DLT), *Taste and See: Adventuring into Prayer* (DLT), and *Daysprings: Daily Reflections* (DLT).

wind farm and hydro energy projects.

Jamie Hartzell, the Managing Director of the Ethical Property Company, described the company's unique business model of developing and renovating buildings for social benefit and with a low-carbon footprint. Social benefits are provided by bringing people and organisations together within the properties to provide charitable services to communities. Business ethics are central, with staff given a fair wage and benefits. Adjustments are made for financially compromised tenants, and those that are shrinking their operations are offered smaller offices to ensure financial stability. Staff are encouraged to reduce their carbon footprint and incentivised through linking remuneration to environmental travel practices.

Ethical Property Company buildings are renovated to high environmental standards, subsequently backed up by tracking of the building's environmental performance. Property managers play a key role in educating tenants to maintain the business ethic. All investments are profitable as well as environmentally sustainable. Properties are specifically selected with the needs of the local community or particular groups in mind, both to match local issues and needs and to secure investors' assets.

The feedback from delegates at the Banking on Justice conference was heartening, with a good number indicating their intention to change their bank and/or look at positive-impact investment options, either for themselves or for their church communities.

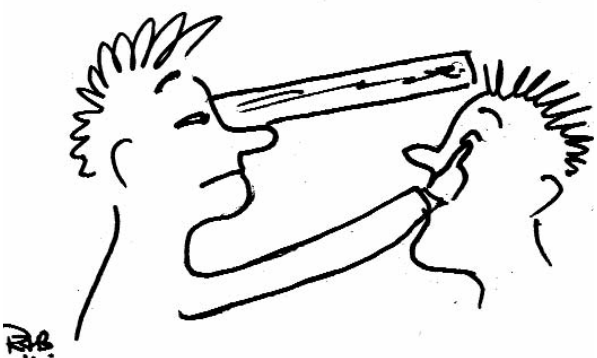
Positive-impact investment decisions need not contradict fiduciary duty for churches and charities. Often their risk/return characteristics mean that they can hold their own on financial grounds alone. A series of 36 studies commissioned by the United Nations Environment Program Finance Initiative examined the link between ESG (environmental, social and governance) factors and financial performance. 20 showed evidence of a positive relationship, while only 3 showed a negative relationship. The evidence that ethical investment does not necessarily diminish financial returns is strong.

Some mainstream funds now specifically look at the long-term environmental and social impact of investments, e.g. Al Gore's Generation Investment Management. Positive-impact investment is possible in the bond markets too, with World Bank immunisation and green bonds having a triple-A rating.

There is a growing body of guidance and information available for those considering positive-impact investment and banking. Look for financial advisers belonging to the Ethical Investment Association. [www.yourethicalmoney.org](http://www.yourethicalmoney.org) is also an excellent starting point for checking out information yourself. ECCR's June 2010 Bulletin (available at [www.eccr.org.uk](http://www.eccr.org.uk)) was themed around this emerging investment sector.

ECCR also encourages churches and individuals to consider social investment, where lower financial returns are accepted as a worthwhile trade-off for the high social benefits that result from the investment. ECCR will run a conference focussing on this type of investment in North East England in National Ethical Investment Week 2010 in partnership with Shared Interest and Oikocredit, which offer investment capital for fair trade and microfinance initiatives respectively in countries of the global South. (Conference date: 13th Nov 2010; contact [helen.boothroyd@eccr.org.uk](mailto:helen.boothroyd@eccr.org.uk) for details.) ECCR plans to further develop advocacy work on positive-impact investment in the future. ●

**Helen Boothroyd** is the Church and Membership Relations Officer at ECCR ([www.eccr.org.uk](http://www.eccr.org.uk)), and co-author of *Holy Ground: Liturgies and Worship Resources for an Engaged Spirituality* ([www.ionabooks.com](http://www.ionabooks.com)).



## Remembering Barrie around the staffroom table: a tribute to Barrie Small, by Carolyn Smyth

'Hello, this is the Iona Community; Bonnie speaking.'

'Hello, I'm just enquiring about when my expenses are going to be paid: I haven't received them yet.'

'Oh, I'm really sorry; I've been led to believe everything is up-to-date.'

'Well, they're not in my bank account yet.'

'Well, if you leave your name, I will speak to my boss on his return and hopefully we'll get something sorted out soon.' ... And then howls of laughter as Barrie revealed it was himself on the line – and not for the first time did Bonnie, his Finance Assistant, find herself on the receiving end of his lively wit!

That was just one of many stories we shared around the Glasgow staffroom table as we tried to take in the sudden death of Barrie Small, the Community's Finance Officer. After many years working in finance for the NHS, then in a similar job for a local children's home, Barrie joined the team at Savoy House four years ago. He was known among the staff for his humour and his loyalty, as well as his commitment to ensuring the finances and accounts were in good order. The last conversation he had with me was to remind me that there was still a little money in the 'Cuba account' for the next trip! I had indeed forgotten but Barrie was like that – he took an interest beyond the figures.

Because he was well known for his sense of humour, it wasn't long before we were laughing round the table, remembering the wee notes he would write to wind people up, or to earnestly inform Gail, the Wild Goose Resource Group Administrator, that there was a time lock on the safe, which meant she absolutely couldn't get in after 4pm! He even e-mailed Bonnie while she was on holiday in Las Vegas. She'd spent the days before departure excitedly saying: 'Four (three, two) big sleeps till Vegas.' So Barrie wrote: 'Four (three, two) big sleeps till you're back at your desk!'

Working with him did sometimes take a bit of getting used to: if you asked him a question, he would go quiet while he thought about it, without telling you that that was what he was doing. If this was your first encounter, it could feel like he was ignoring you but you soon got to know this was far from the truth and that, indeed, Barrie was a very loyal and supportive colleague. He could also speak his mind, however, which wasn't always easy to hear even if there was truth to be told, but sometimes the Glasgow staff were grateful – for instance at the end of one of the staff meetings when he asked: 'Do we have to meet every month?' Funny how many hands went up to second that!

He was also known and much appreciated for his generosity. He ensured the staffroom had a boundless supply of biscuits, cakes and doughnuts (Greggs and the Co-op have surely already seen a dip in their takings); even if he knew there would only be four people in that day, it was still the bag of two dozen that graced the table! And if anyone mentioned a cause they were supporting, Barrie would contribute, whether it was bags of pennies he'd been collecting (at least once, £80 worth), or magazines – or jam jars! And his support of people went beyond the material: he helped many by simply telling them 'believe in yourself'; 'trust yourself for the answer', realising the part self-confidence plays in

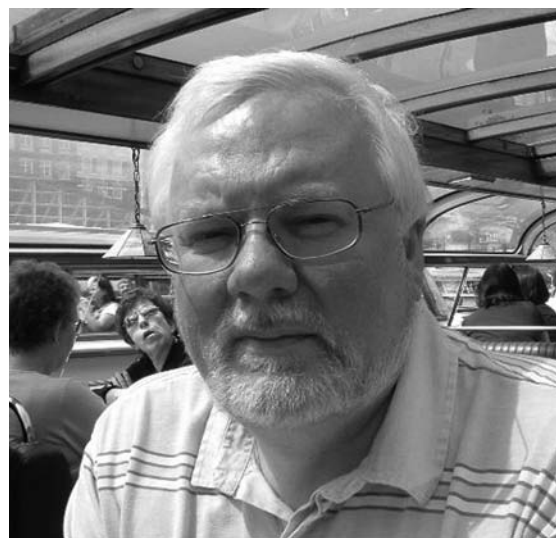
making the most of life.

His job remit took him to Iona of course. With staff there, too, he was patient when asking for something to be done, sensing the oft-unseen demands of island life and not wanting to add to the pressures. He would make a judgement about a deadline, sometimes offering to do whatever was necessary in Glasgow; and always his humour made even an urgent request bearable.

As I left the staffroom, one thing was very obvious: it was bereft of goodies to eat. A tangible sign that he is no longer with us.

It was an unexpected privilege to take Barrie's funeral, to which many, many people came. Tributes were given by a long-standing friend of Barrie's and by Jamie Schmeling for the Community and it was very clear that his generous and loyal nature reached far and wide through his support of colleagues past and present, his local community in Torrance, and of children – whether through his work on the Children's Panel, his generosity to Mary's Meals, or his delight at being Santa.

Barrie was 'a lovely, big man' and 'one of life's nice guys'; he is much missed not only by his family and friends, but also by his colleagues at the Iona Community. The whole Community will always be grateful for Barrie's dedicated labour, beyond the four days a week we paid him for. To Kate, Andrew and Iain, we send our heartfelt sympathies. We are glad to have known him and pray hopefully that the blessings of his generosity and compassion, humour and loyalty will continue to bear fruit.



## WILD GOOSE PUBLICATIONS

### NEW PUBLICATIONS

**All that Matters: Collected Scripts from Radio 4's 'Thought for the Day': Volume 2, John L. Bell (book), £10.99 (plus post and packing)**

This is the second volume of John L. Bell's 'Thoughts For The Day', augmented by three extended essays, 'Indebting the future', 'The love of God and global warming' and 'The beast that is in us'. For many years, John has been a contributor to Radio 4's Thought For The Day, attempting – as the project demands – to offer a religious perspective on matters of current social and international importance. Sometimes affirming, sometimes controversial but always contemporary, these short reflections represent the prickly interface between faith and politics from the perspective of a Christian believer.

**Every Creature a Word of God: Compassion for Animals as Christian Spirituality, Annika Spalde and Pelle Strindlund (downloadable book/e-book), £8.50**

Care for creation includes examining our attitude to all our fellow-inhabitants of Planet Earth, not only the human ones.

Annika Spalde and Pelle Strindlund have put together an authoritative and highly readable book on Christian attitudes past and present towards the animal inhabitants of our world, as well as describing their own work for justice. But this isn't just a book about protecting animals; it is full of wide-ranging insights and experiences which also make it an inspiration towards living an all-encompassing Christian spirituality with compassion at its heart. This is a book about being Christian in a world shared with other beings. We do not live here alone. We have brothers and sisters. 'The animals,' wrote the American monk Thomas Merton, 'are the children of God.' 'What does a spirituality that affirms God's love for all creatures look like? That is the central question of this book ...' From the Introduction

**Bread for the Road: A Month of Daily Readings from Coracle and the Iona Community's e-zine, Neil Paynter (ed.) (downloadable book/e-book), £5.25**

A digital download of a month of readings, taken from Coracle and the Iona Community e-zine, to use in your daily discipline.

Readings by: Kathy Galloway, Peter Macdonald, Bruce Kent, Brian Quail, David Rhodes, Ian M Fraser, David McNeish, Ruth Burgess, Jan Sutch Pickard, Laurence Freeman (OSB), Joy Mead and Satish Kumar, Joyce Rupp, Peter Millar, Elisabeth Miescher, Jim Cotter, Paul Baker Hernández, Reinhild Traitler, Stewart Henderson, Ray Gaston, Daleep Mukarji and others. Royalties from the sales of Bread for the Road will go to Coracle.

**New e-liturgies:** Now Come Two Hearts: A blessing liturgy for a marriage or partnership, by Thom M Shuman, £2.13

A Communion Liturgy from Iona Abbey on the Theme of Hope, by Pat Bennett, £2.13

A Short Liturgy of Hospitality, by John Harvey, £1.91

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## WILD GOOSE PUBLICATIONS

### HOT OFF THE PRESS

**A Heart for Creation: Worship Resources and Reflections on the Environment, Chris Polhill (book), £14.99 (plus post and packing)**

Every day we learn more about the environment and our interaction with it. The science and details are complex and wonderful – but what is clear is that our relationship with the environment is out of balance and that human behaviour must change. We need to learn to live gently and more in harmony with God's creation.

But how do we change? Religious traditions and mystics have used prayer and meditation to bring about change for centuries. Prayer is the powerhouse that inspires us and keeps us from burning out. Prayer helps us to transform our mindsets and to act from a more rooted place.

A Heart for Creation offers prayers, worship resources and reflections to help individuals and groups effect change. From our love for God and love for creation we can grow in our care for the earth as exhorted in the Bible.

Chris Polhill's previous books include Eggs and Ashes: Practical and Liturgical Resources for Lent & Holy Week (with Ruth Burgess), and A Pilgrim's Guide to Iona Abbey (Wild Goose)

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

### CORACLE POETRY CONTEST, 2010-2011

Coracle has always tried to encourage creativity and works of the Spirit: Poetry has been a regular feature of Coracle since its beginning. This contest is a way of continuing that tradition, and of exploring the Iona Community's 'theme' for the next three years: 'Just Sharing'. The contest is also a fundraiser for Coracle.

**Prizes: 1st prize – £100 voucher for Wild Goose Publications  
2nd prize – £75 voucher for Wild Goose Publications  
3rd prize – £50 voucher for Wild Goose Publications  
Runner-up – £25 voucher for Wild Goose Publications**

Winning poems and the runner-up will be published in Coracle.

**Judges:** Nicola Slee, author of Praying Like a Woman (SPCK), The Book of Mary (SPCK), Faith and Feminism (DLT), Women's Faith Development (Ashgate); Joy Mead, author of Where Are the Altars?, A Telling Place: Reflections on Women in the Bible, Making Peace in Practice and Poetry, The One Loaf: An Everyday Celebration (Wild Goose Publications); Alison Swinfen, author of Through Wood: Prayers and Poems Reconnecting with the Forest (Wild Goose Publications); Neil Paynter, Editor of Coracle, author of Down to Earth: Stories and Sketches (Wild Goose Publications), and editor of a number of Wild Goose anthologies.

Write a poem on the theme of 'Just Sharing'. The poem may be up to 40 lines long, written in any style. The competition is open to anyone in the world writing in English. For the £10.00 entrance fee writers can enter up to two poems. **Closing date: December 21, 2010.** To download an entry form and rules, go to:

[www.iona.org.uk/media/coracle\\_poetry\\_contest\\_copy.pdf](http://www.iona.org.uk/media/coracle_poetry_contest_copy.pdf)  
or email [neil@ionabooks.com](mailto:neil@ionabooks.com)

To advertise in Coracle, or in the Iona Community e-bulletin, contact Lorna Rae Sutton:  
[lorna@ionabooks.com](mailto:lorna@ionabooks.com), 0141-332-6292

## A touching place: news and letters

### **IONA COMMUNITY ASSOCIATES IN THE U.S. AND CANADA DEMONSTRATE THEIR COMPASSION IN A POWERFUL WAY – AN UPDATE ON JIM WHITE'S HOUSE:**

*From Associate Israel Nelson in  
Alaska, June 28, 2010:*

The Iona Community Associates in the United States and Canada have demonstrated their compassion in a powerful way. On St Columba's Day I addressed a letter to all of them asking for donations to the building fund for Jim White's house. [Jim White is a double amputee who lost his legs to peripheral artery disease.] Among the financial donations they have forwarded were wonderful letters of support. I am pleased to report to the Community that the house is on the way to being completed.

Today the garage floor and sidewalks are being poured. Already the septic system and the foundation of the house have been completed. The general contractor, assigned by the Mat-Su Home Builders Association, Bob Pevan, is securing donations of lumber and other building materials at cost from Spenard Builders Supply. The Peltier Brothers donated the labour to build the foundation walls and Valley Block and Concrete contributed the bricks and mortar. Jim and Sherry White and their sons are all excited about the emerging new home that will replace the 50+-year-old caravan in which they have been existing in spite of the many leaks that threatened them with flooding and illness from mould exposure. Our hope is to have the house sufficiently completed by autumn so that the family can move into a dry, safe building for winter, even if it is not complete.

Our cash on hand for the project is only \$23,000 US and we need a total of about \$100,000 US. How many times I have listened to Tom Fleming and Ron Ferguson's CD

*Every Blessed Thing: An Evening with George MacLeod!* So I am familiar with how Lord MacLeod was able to secure £5000 for the rebuilding of the Abbey from the warship-builder even though George said he would not give up his pacifism. I love the story of the lady who contributed money for the entire West range after Lord MacLeod suggested a modest gift of candlesticks.

*Update from Israel Nelson,  
September 15, 2010:*

The shell of the house is now completed and roofed. Some applications for grants for funds have been made but we have no assurance of receiving them. We may have to delay the completion of the house, which will mean the White's will live in a leaky caravan for another winter.

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

### **AN INVITATION FROM FRIENDS IN CUBA TO SISTER CHURCHES AROUND THE WORLD**

*From Edelberto Valdés Fleites, a  
pastor and friend of the Community:*

Dear friends, Greetings from Cuba! At the last meeting of the session of our Presbyterian-Reformed Church we were talking about the problems that our world has at the moment and we thought that in many cases they can be solved by just talking and having dialogue among differences. At the same time, we were discussing how our congregation could help to solve some tensions around us, and one of the ideas we had was to ask any Church around the world to have contact with us to share different points of view about any issue, to have contact with other Churches to share experiences in the Church mission and work, and to visit us to spend some time with our congregation, sharing our time and lives. For that reason we are sending you this message, to put in your hands our ideas and to invite you to join us in this plan. God bless you all.

*Rev. Edelberto Valdés Fleites  
Presbyterian-Reformed Church in  
Caibarién, V.C., CUBA*

*Independencia #12, Remedios, V.C. 52700,  
CUBA/malban@enet.cu*

### **A LETTER IN RESPONSE TO JEAN ANDERSSON'S ARTICLE 'WHY TAX HAVENS CAUSE POVERTY'; CORACLE, SPRING 2010, FROM MARTIN DRYDEN**

I hope you will allow me to respond to Jean Andersson's article on tax havens in your spring edition, as it contains a number of claims that could mislead your readers.

I am not surprised that the recent criticism of tax havens, also known as international finance centres (IFCs), has coincided with the financial crisis. They have been blamed along with banks and bankers; multinational companies; hedge fund managers; financial regulators and private equity fund managers. Many intuitively believe that IFCs are secretive places where the wealthy can hide their money away illegally from the taxman on a massive scale. Banning IFCs would unlock billions of dollars which could then be wisely spent by cash-strapped governments, particularly in the Third World. Some say that IFCs are not only immoral but also evil.

The trouble is, the 'facts' quoted by Jean Andersson to support these assertions are wrong. Like urban myths, they have been passed from person to person and from one group to another. However, repeating something often enough does not make it true.

Jersey is not a secrecy jurisdiction as Jean suggests: it has a Companies Registry which maintains details on every company registered in Jersey. You can call in to their offices and conduct a search of the directors and shareholders. You can even visit it online: [www.jerseyfsc.org/registry](http://www.jerseyfsc.org/registry). According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Jersey is among the most transparent jurisdictions in the world as it has entered into Tax Information Exchange Agreements with 15 countries. These mean that our government shares information on foreign tax payers when another country (including the UK and the US) is seeking to enforce its own tax laws. According to the IMF report on Jersey in 2009, it is in the 'top division' of IFCs

(including those in the G20 and the EU): it is compliant or largely compliant with 44 of the 49 recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force. The UK only complied or largely complied with 36. Jersey's laws mean that individuals will be criminally liable if they should have suspected that their clients were money laundering (which includes financial crime such as tax evasion).

Jean's claim, that the cost to the developing world of tax misreporting by multinationals and the use of IFCs amounted to US\$160 billion per annum, is based on the 2008 Death and Taxes report produced by Christian Aid. The data underlying this claim was recently scrutinised in an independent report by Richard Teather, a senior lecturer on taxation at the Bournemouth University Business School. He uncovered serious errors. For example, the US\$160 billion claim is derived from data which includes the export from China to Spain of 66 million fridge freezers (four per family!) in 2006 at a price of less than €1 each! Furthermore, the claim of 350,000 deaths per annum of children aged five or under (1,000 deaths a day) is based entirely on one book, *Capitalism's Achilles Heel* (2005) by Raymond W. Baker, which makes an 'estimate' that '7% of trade volumes is illicit capital movement, by false invoicing between unrelated parties and by abusive transfer pricing within multinational groups.' This figure was based on interviews with 'over 335 bankers, politicians, government officials, economists, attorneys, tax collectors, security officers, and social scientists'. Teather says that 'such anecdotes and opinions lack the robustness or data to support a claim that tax evasion is a killer'. He thinks that the data supports no more than 2.5% of the claims made by Christian Aid, or a maximum of 25 deaths per day, which is statistically insignificant.

I am sorry to tire your readers with statistics and data, but they are at

the heart of the accusations being levelled against Jersey, accusations which threaten the livelihoods of thousands of ordinary people working in our financial services industry, and our government's ability to fund our hospitals, schools, health and social services. Jersey is a small country with a small population and limited resources. Providing high quality financial services to institutional investors in a well-regulated environment plays to our strengths. Jersey can only exist as an IFC because of the goodwill and trust of our trading partners: we cannot afford to indulge in questionable business.

I have two further issues with Jean's article. Firstly, name-calling is unhelpful: Jersey is more of a conduit than a haven: part of the pipe-work of the global economy that channels funds from one place to another. Jersey's tax system is transparent: financial transactions can be routed across international boundaries and not be taxed twice. As a tax-neutral jurisdiction, it helps to oil the cogs of global free trade, something which big countries, with their complex economies and tax systems, are unable to do as efficiently. Richard Teather has concluded (on one analysis of World Bank data) that global free trade has 'helped to save the lives of up to 5,000 children per day by lifting half a billion families out of poverty. Far from being a major source of child death, the sort of multinational transactions criticised in these reports are potentially a major factor in reducing child mortality.'

Secondly, Jean stresses fairness in her critique, but is fairness really a gospel value? It is not fair that the labourers in the vineyard who worked one hour are paid the same as the ones who worked for the whole day (Matthew 20:1–16). It is not fair that the wealthy young man should have to give away everything before he can obtain eternal life (Matthew 19:16–22). It is not fair that the well-to-do benefactors who gave large sums

to the Temple should receive such faint praise from our Lord (Mark 12:41–44). The New Testament displays a radical preference for the poor which all Christians are called to show forth in their lives.

Finally, I hope your readers will not condemn the people of Jersey who work in the finance industry or those who use its services. We do not live in a black-and-white world where all bankers are baddies and all Third World governments are downtrodden. We are all part of a fallen creation. The roots of the financial crisis lie as much (maybe more) in the steep decline in the Savings Ratio as in bankers lending money that people could not afford to repay. Corruption, not IFCs, is the single most significant contributor to Third World poverty, and I see real evidence of Jersey playing its part tackling this global scourge. Jeremiah exhorted the exiles to pray for the peace and prosperity of Babylon (Jeremiah 29:4–8). Please, please, please do not call us names but pray with and for Christians in Jersey that we may be effective agents of the kingdom in an imperfect world.

*Martin Dryden is a minister in secular employment, a member of the Committee of Christians Together in Jersey and a Friend of the Third Order of the Society of St Francis. He was born in Jersey and has worked there in the finance industry since 1980.*

#### **LETTER IN RESPONSE TO MARTIN DRYDEN'S LETTER (ABOVE), FROM JEAN ANDERSSON**

*Companies Registry:* If you visit the registry of companies in Jersey you will find it impossible to track the beneficial owners of most companies registered there. Trusts, and there are thousands of them, are not put on public record.

*Tax Information Exchange:* An enquiring tax authority asking about a specific company faces enormous hurdles of opacity. It is not a question of being presented with a clear/transparent/open book which can be easily read. To even start an enquiry adequate suspicion must exist.

*International Monetary Fund:* The report referred to relates to the trafficking of drugs and terrorist funding – not tax

evading capital or aggressive tax avoidance policies.

*Jersey – haven or conduit?:* Double taxation is of course unfair. Jersey 'assumes' tax is being paid (e.g. in the UK or from wherever the money has come) and does not press to find out. A blind eye is turned. In most cases tax on profits is not being paid anywhere – just a fee to those facilitating this transaction. I claim this makes Jersey a haven.

*Accusations against Jersey:* Thousands of people work in finance because there is very little other employment. Local people are captive to the finance industry to a great extent. Regular finance is, of course, no problem; it's the tax avoidance industry that is unacceptable. Finance dominates all other industry. Diversification is needed.

*What's fair? What's the spirit of the gospel?:* As to what's fair? What's the true gospel spirit? I've said what I've said in my article *Why Tax Havens Cause Poverty* (Coracle, Spring 2010). For our purposes it's not the letter of the law that we're talking about but the Spirit that gives life. Now, it's over to you, reader. The ball's in your court ...

## IONA COMMUNITY YOUTH DEPARTMENT UPDATE

*An wee update on a couple of Youth Department projects (reported by Neil Paynter, Coracle Ed.)*

*The Graffiti Project:* In September, Awards For All, a Lottery grants scheme funding small, local community-based projects, granted the Youth Department £9275 for a second graffiti project. The first graffiti project was with students of Bellahouston Academy in Glasgow; this one will be with 1st and 5th-year students at Holyrood Secondary. The project starts in October. Students will work during their lunch hours on a wall in the grounds of their school. The Youth Department will be working on this in partnership with Bridging the Gap in the Gorbals, who have been doing peer

tutoring work at the school. If you haven't seen the first graffiti project at Bellahouston – you should. It's full of colour and hope and really expresses the spirit and dreams of young people (who are so often portrayed in the media and in our communities in negative light): see [www.transform-tv.com](http://www.transform-tv.com) or [www.iona.org.uk/youth\\_home.php](http://www.iona.org.uk/youth_home.php)

*Anti-sectarian workshops in Scottish prisons:* The Youth Department will be running nine workshops in five prisons, starting in October: in Kilmarnock, Addiewell (where a pilot project took place last year), Greenock Prison, and Barlinnie. Sectarianism remains a big problem in Scottish society and this course, written by Iona Community youth worker Laura McAleese, has received excellent press, notably from *The Herald* (*Tackling Bigotry Behind Bars*, Lucy Adams, 12 March, 2010). Evaluation of the course, conducted by Project Scotland and by the Youth Department itself, has shown encouraging results: a 63% attitude change in Addiewell, and a 58% attitude change in Barlinnie. Not only has there been this transformation; the men have enjoyed the workshops, which have got them talking and thinking about the roots of things.

## FOOD JUSTICE: THE REPORT OF THE FOOD AND FAIRNESS INQUIRY

Community member Elizabeth Dowler, Professor of Food and Social Policy at the University of Warwick, was part of this Inquiry and an author of its report. *The Food and Fairness Report is the result of a year-long investigation into social justice in food and farming, undertaken by a committee of respected and influential figures from across the food sector. The Food Ethics Council set up the Inquiry because we were concerned that issues of social justice were underplayed in debates about food policy. The Inquiry committee's report vindicates this concern. It finds that injustice is widespread throughout the UK and global food system; and it*

*shows how a fairer food system is central to achieving wider sustainability and health goals (from the Food and Fairness website). For more information and to download the report: [www.foodethicscouncil.org/home](http://www.foodethicscouncil.org/home)*

## CREATIVE WORSHIP TOUR

Associate John Leech in the US is on a Creative Worship Tour. *'The Creative Worship Tour is a network of visual, musical and creative worship people discussing and imagining new possibilities for worship. A place for you to find ideas and support, and also a place for you to share your very best thoughts about creativity in worship.'* [www.creativeworshiptour.com](http://www.creativeworshiptour.com)

## Bread for the road

*A poem by member Bryan Owen:*

### On the Victoria Line

*She took a tumble on the Victoria Line,  
my daughter damaged by a faulty gene.  
She wasn't able to step firmly  
from solid ground to moving stairs.*

*I, wrestling with too much baggage and worry,  
was disabled too.*

*A stranger caught her –  
Chinese ... smiling ... as I recall.*

*He waved at me as the escalator  
carried me down, away,  
helpless against the London commuters  
surging, tumbling down towards the trains.*

*I waved back, thankful for his strong hand  
holding my daughter safe in the crowd.  
Two strangers met for a moment  
and knew it.*

*Where does such goodness come from?  
My daughter does not understand  
her gift for bringing people together.*

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

## 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

# Child at heart

Neil Paynter

*Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it. (Luke 18:17)*

I did some different things before I became Editor of *Coracle*: I worked as a security guard (reluctantly), as a 'carny' (fairground worker), as a fruit-picker and farm-worker, as a nurse's aide, as a 'counsellor' with individuals with mental health challenges, as a night shelter worker in King's Cross and in Canada ...

At one time I taught English as a second language to adults and children.

One afternoon (when we were covering verbs, I think), I wrote this on the blackboard for the children to fill in with whatever words they liked:

SOMETIMES I'M HAPPY \_\_\_\_\_.

One Christmastime, years later (when I was working as a nurse's aide), I asked a lively 97-year-old woman, I was sitting with at lunchtime feeding, the secret of a long life .....

'A glass of sherry before bed,' she answered, and I laughed ... 'Believe it or not,' she said seriously ... 'I still feel like a child at heart ... Otherwise, it's hopeless,' she added, after a long silence. It suddenly felt like it was she who was feeding *me*.

Like the 97-year-old woman in the nursing home, I still feel like a child at heart. Often in an immature way – I feel insecure, scared, needy ... But sometimes, I feel a childlike sense of wonder, and joy; and I'm suddenly able to be silly, to laugh, to dance. And it feels like a healing flood of God's infinite grace ...

## SOMETIMES I'M HAPPY

*Sometimes I'm happy in the summertime blue  
Sometimes I'm happy talking to you*

*Sometimes I'm happy dancing the spin-around-dizzy  
Sometimes I'm happy sitting still in the busy*

*Sometimes I'm happy waving to train people  
Sometimes I'm happy leaping  
my mind off the steeple*

*Sometimes I'm happy  
playing my harmonica  
(but my dog isn't)*

*Sometimes I'm happy wearing my straw hat all day  
Sometimes I'm happy watching my cat at play  
(or watching my cat  
knead and purr,  
knead and purr the comforter)*

*Sometimes I'm happy talking to cows  
Sometimes I'm happy taking I'm-the-most-famous bows*

*Sometimes I'm happy eating macaroni and chocolate sauce*

*Sometimes I'm happy using the good cups for tea  
Singing a song that goes Tra la la lee*

*Sometimes I'm happy grabbing Babshe's ears  
Sometimes I'm so happy I'm in tears*

*Sometimes I'm happy swinging my self*

*Sometimes I'm happy running where I  
wanna get*

*Sometimes I'm happy meeting someone new  
I've never met*

*Sometimes I'm happy seeing bottom –  
then a fish*

*Sometimes I'm happy squishing and stirring  
ice cream in a dish*

*Sometimes I'm happy seeing something very  
small  
(like a tiny red spider)*

*Sometimes I'm happy saying favourite words  
like 'mariposa'*

*Sometimes I'm happy collecting stuff  
(like shells and rocks and coins,  
and house and car keys people lost  
in grassy fields  
and car parks)*

*Sometimes I'm happy how the way geese fly  
and honk*

*Sometimes I'm happy hearing a banjo  
plink  
plank  
plunk ...*

*flaiIIIIII*

*Sometimes I'm happy for no reason at all –  
and I think that's the happiest happy of all.*

**Written by a class of children  
and their teacher**





Be with us, God,  
in stone stillness  
and quiet corners.  
Help us to be lights in the darkness,  
lights that burn bravely  
in the circles of your love.

Hear our prayers, God,  
our yearnings, our carings,  
our concerns, our questions.  
Help us to be lights in the darkness,  
lights that burn bravely  
in the circles of your love.

Be in us, God,  
in our work, our calling,  
our journeys, our wondering.  
Help us to be lights in the darkness,  
lights that burn bravely  
in the circles of your love.

**Ruth Burgess**

**Cover photo by David Coleman**

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