



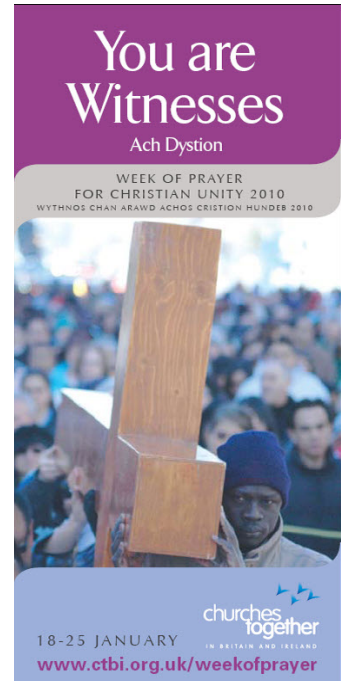
Dear Friends

This year we are celebrating the centenary of the ecumenical movement, which had its roots in the first worldwide missionary conference held in Edinburgh in 1910. And this month, as usual, churches will be observing the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. In the West it has become something of a tired old expression of the earnest and passionate prayer of Jesus on the night before he died that we, his followers, might be one so that the world would believe. How many of us are truly convinced that where sisters and brothers dwell together in unity, there God actually commands a blessing? (Ps 133) If we were, then people would be flocking to gatherings that witnessed to the unity that is already ours in Jesus Christ, not only during eight days in January but at every possible opportunity – and even risking involvement in those events that, to many at the moment, don't seem possible! How many blessings have we, as church, as nation, as world missed out on because we, as Christians, have not been generous enough, humble enough, or courageous enough to 'live together' in a spirit of unity. We are not called to uniformity. That would be very boring and would certainly not be a proclamation of Good News, of the fact that it is God himself who created diversity and saw that it was good. Our loving allegiance is not, in the end, to an institution, however dear, nor to a doctrine or dogma, however cherished, but to a God who loved the world, in all its diversity, so much that he came in the person of his Son to reveal to us that we are ever and always his beloved? The theme for this year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is 'You Are Witnesses.' How can we be witnesses to Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, the beloved Son of the Father, unless we ourselves let go and allow ourselves to be transformed by the knowledge that we are loved and lovable? Out of that there comes a whole new sense of identity and a freedom to be with others who differ from us but are also made in the image and likeness of God.

At the beginning of 2009 and at its ending we lost two dear friends of Restoration Ministries, both of whom, in their own way, were pilgrims of unity. One was Terry Donaghy who was on our Board of Directors and who died on the Feast of the Epiphany. It is fitting that this year during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity there will be a celebration of Terry's life and the launch of a booklet that pays tribute to this remarkable man. The other was Cardinal Cahal Daly, a former patron of Restoration Ministries and a great encourager. He died as the old year wore to its close, on New Year's Eve, at the grand age of 92. Prince of the Church, philosopher, theologian, I shall remember best his humility, prayerfulness and quiet friendship.

Both men were prophetic, Terry through his quiet, faithful, committed actions and Cardinal Daly through his courageous words and fearless stance for peace with justice. Both knew themselves to have feet of clay but also to be the beloved of Jesus. That identity enabled them to be bearers of hope, makers of peace and to see both life and faith as a pilgrimage. They were witnesses.

In the chaos of these days in Ireland - severe weather conditions, economic crises, political traumas and stalemates, disillusionment with institutional church, we, too, as the people of God, are called to be witnesses, image bearers of Jesus, makers of peace, prophetic voices, pilgrims of unity. This is our time and it is all we have been given. We are being challenged to dream dreams and see visions and then to let our lives be used to make those dreams and visions a reality. Perhaps above everything else, this island



needs to see us as those who have been seized by an outrageous hope that, no matter how things may appear, because of Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, all will be well. If that is true for us here in Ireland, then it is true for our friends around the world also. I do not speak of an easy optimism that disappears when the first winds of adversity blow, but a hope tried and tested in the furnace of hard times, a hope that affirms a promise given long ago,

‘Surely his salvation is near to those who honour him;
Our land will be filled with his glory.

Unfailing love and truth have met together.
Righteousness and peace have kissed!
Truth springs up from the earth,
and righteousness smiles down from heaven.
Yes, the Lord pours down his blessings.
Our land will yield its bountiful crops.
Righteousness goes as a herald before him,
preparing the way for his steps.’ (Ps 85: 9-13)

It is with that outrageous hope that I dare to wish you all a happy New Year!

Ruth

Monthly Meeting

January 25th at 8.00 pm

As part of Church Unity Week that runs from 18th - 25th of January the title for our meeting will follow the national theme:

‘You are Witnesses’

Facilitator: Rev Ruth Patterson

Lenten Day of Reflection

Restoration House

February 20th - 2.00 pm - 6.00 pm

The title for this day is:

Outrageous Hope

Facilitator: Rev Ruth Patterson

All Welcome

THE CHURCHES’ COUNCIL FOR HEALTH AND HEALING IN IRELAND.

An invitation to all Clergy, Church Workers and Prayer Group Members

**The Spring Seminar –
“GOING DEEPER!” -**

Ruth Patterson The Deeper Journey

David Jardine Healing and Forgiveness

The seminar will conclude with a special liturgy for healing.

At Cooke Centenary Presbyterian Church
216 Ormeau Road, Belfast.

Thursday, 18th February 2010, 10.15 am to 12.45 pm.

This event is free - please contact
Rev Dr Jim Campbell by telephone – 90709113,
by e-mail at jcampbell@presbyterianireland.org
or by writing to 20 Rodden’s Cres, Belfast BT5 7JN.

Restoration Ministries
4 Thornhill Road
Dunmurry
BT17 9EJ

Tel No: 028 90621867

Email: office@restorationministries.co.uk

Web: www.restorationministries.co.uk

