

## Welcome...

**Reflection! It's what we see when we look at ourselves in the mirror. When we look at our reflection we see ourselves as we are, not as we imagine we are.**

It is a dynamic combination when we have the courage to look at ourselves in a mirror and to use the opportunity to carefully consider what we have seen. It becomes an even more powerful experience when we then have the courage to act on the basis of what we have seen.

The Hard Gospel Project has been asked to hold a mirror up to the Church of Ireland. Northern Ireland is emerging from a time of violent conflict. The Republic of Ireland has experienced phenomenal economic, social and religious change within the last decade. Both communities are on a journey to something.

It is a moment of opportunity and challenge for the Church of Ireland. What does dynamic and authentic Christian witness look like in such a time? As we hold up a mirror to ourselves at every level of our church life - what do we see?



There are three questions for a process of reflection and action:

- Who do we say that we are - what is our deepest sense of identity and greatest passion as a Church?
- How do we do what we do - what is the relationship between our activity and the mission we have been called to fulfil?
- What is the culture of our organisation - are we a body that believes that openly addressing difficult issues is always better than 'whatever you say... say nothing'?

Reflect and Act aptly describes the work of the Hard Gospel Project. It is a process that is taking place at all levels of our church. As Archbishop Eames, President of the Hard Project says **"We are in other words doing unto ourselves as we have asked of others"**.

When the Standing Committee of the General Synod established the Hard Gospel Project it was displaying a core belief - any organisation is strengthened by an ability to ask itself difficult questions. It is a courageous thing to do. It is about affirming what is good and having the courage to act when action is needed.

This first edition of the **Hard Gospel Bulletin** will tell you what the Hard Gospel Project means in practice.

**Earl Storey, Director**

## 'Reflect & Act' Course

### What does it mean to love our neighbour in 21st century Ireland, north or south?

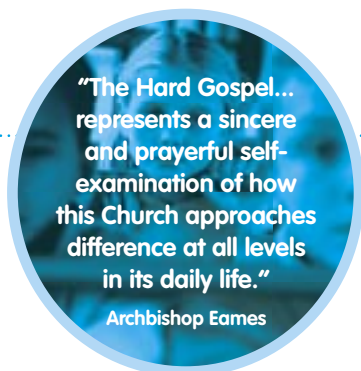
- A Five-week course that assists parishes in building better relations with all peoples in their locality.
- A course designed to help parishes engage with needs in their community.
- A course that is suitable for parishes wishing to look at issues such as sectarianism, racism, integration or any issue affecting the wellbeing of their community.

Courses have already taken place in:

- Parishes of Monkstown, (nth Belfast), Navan, Castlerock, Ballycastle and Clondalkin.
- Dublin & Glendalough (youth event).

Want to know more - contact:

**Stephen Dallas** - [stephendallas@hardgospel.net](mailto:stephendallas@hardgospel.net) or  
**Philip McKinley** - [philipmckinley@hardgospel.net](mailto:philipmckinley@hardgospel.net)



## Immigration

### Immigration has been one of the key features of life in our communities over the past decade. We live in increasingly diverse communities.

How can we respond to the new situations that immigration offers? What questions does an increasing diverse population pose for the Church of Ireland in how we 'do' church at every level.

These are some of the questions which a new Hard Gospel initiative addresses by:

- Facilitating Diocesan **Immigration Consultation Evenings** - an opportunity to come and talk through experiences, interests or ignorance on issues of immigration.
- Planning a **National Conference**
- Building on the work of the Diocesan consultation evenings.
- Focusing on appropriate pastoral responses to immigration.
- Encouraging the use of **'Reflect and Act' courses**.
  - To stimulate parish reflection that translates into sustainable action.
- Encouraging participation in **Racial Justice Sunday**: (Sept 11th 2007).
  - Parishes that have used the 'Reflect and Act' course will be encouraged to celebrate their initiative on Racial Justice Sunday.
- **Analysis** of the exploration undertaken by the Church of Ireland to respond adequately to the challenge of immigration.

## Engaging Communities

Two projects have been developed to encourage church engagement with Protestant unionist loyalist communities.

One is designed to address the needs of rural Protestant communities. The other addresses the needs of marginalised disengaged loyalist communities in an urban area.

The urban project aims to support Church of Ireland parishes in proximity to loyalist communities to reflect and act on local issues, in partnership with local stakeholders.

The purpose is to develop stable vibrant and confident communities that view church as a relevant institution with a role to play.

The rural project embodies a number of values:

- That a diverse community is to be desired.
- That a sustainable and engaged Protestant community is to be desired as part of the greater good.
- That a project is not just concerned with the needs of the Protestant community but with the wellbeing and cohesion of the wider community as a whole.

## The Future - Friend or Foe?

**A seminar for members of the Church of Ireland to reflect on changes that have taken place in the Republic of Ireland over the past ten years, and to assess how effectively the Church of Ireland has responded or reacted to this change.**

7th December 2006 - 10.30am - 1pm

**Speakers:** David McWilliams (Author of *The Pope's Children*) and Patsy McGarry (The Irish Times).

**Venue:** Emmaus Conference Centre, Swords, Co Dublin. Booking for this event is necessary as space is limited.

To register please email: [info@hardgospel.net](mailto:info@hardgospel.net) or contact **The Hard Gospel Project team** (see overleaf).

## Where would Jesus be?

If Jesus lived in your area:

- Where would he be?
- Who would he be engaging with?
- How would he be doing it?

Look out for a new Hard Gospel initiative in 2007. Using artwork and some stark facts about life on our island... it will ask the question, **Who is my neighbour - Where would Jesus be?** This is a Hard Gospel contribution to the Archbishop's Poverty Forum on Child Poverty.

## 'Beyond the Box' seminars

**Public events designed to facilitate new thinking and energetic public debate on key issues - both inside and outside the Church.**

An initial series has been planned in partnership with The Junction in Londonderry. **Venue:** The Junction, 8 Bishop Street, Derry / Londonderry. **Time:** 10.30am - 12.30pm.

### 7th Dec 06

**Remembrance... whose story is it anyway?**

- How is our community to come to terms with the events of the Troubles?

- How might dealing with the past bring healing or increased division?

**Speakers:** Alan McBride (WAVE) & Gerry O'Hara (former Sinn Fein Mayor).

### 23rd Jan 07

**Grassroots Leadership in the Protestant community... withered or blooming?**

- What is the state of civil society within the Protestant community at present?
- What are the key needs of the Protestant community at grassroots / community level?

**Speakers:** David Stevens (Director of Corrymeela) & Margaret Lee (Managing Director of The Cresco Trust).

### 6th Mar 07

**Racism... the new sectarianism?**

- Population changes brought about by economic immigration have brought profound changes in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. What are the challenges?
- What challenges, and opportunities, do the Protestant and Roman Catholic communities face in countering racism within our community?

**Speakers:** Daniel Holder: ANIMATE (Action Now to Integrate Minority Access to Equality). Robbie McVeigh: Author of "The Next Stephen Lawrence?" - examining the problem of institutional racism in Northern Ireland.

A 'Beyond the Box' event may be coming to a venue near you. It might be addressing an issue that is relevant to the wellbeing of your community. Watch this space!



## Looking at ourselves in the mirror...

### As the Church of Ireland... who do we say that we are?

This is not just important for us. It shapes how we relate to our 'neighbours', both old and new.

#### Archbishop Eames says of the Hard Gospel Project:

"It involves examination of attitude, organisation, activities, contact with society, influence and leadership. It asks hard questions - and expects hard answers... it represents for me the sincerity and integrity of internal examination on the same basis the

Church has often demanded of society."

The Hard Gospel Project is devising a process that will enable the Church of Ireland to examine its policies, practices and structures. It is examination with a purpose - what is their effect or impact on the promotion of good relations between ourselves and people of different:

- religious belief
- ethnic / racial groups
- marital status
- sexual orientation
- gender

## Facilitative Leadership Course for Clergy

How do you go about developing a vision that makes sense?

How can you translate a vision into practical action that brings about change?

How can you develop your leadership skills for the good of your parish?

These are just some of the questions that a Facilitative Leadership Course for clergy aims to address. A pilot course for clergy from three dioceses will take place in early 2007.

The course takes the form of a three day residential facilitated by WEA (Workers Educational Association).

**Venue:** Lusty Beg Island, Co. Fermanagh

## Our team on the Road...

### There have been opportunities for members of the Hard Gospel team to speak at churches and groups in every part of the Church of Ireland.

There have also been many openings to speak to organisations outside the Church of Ireland. Opportunities have included:

- Diocesan Synods
- Youth Groups
- Cross community dialogue groups
- Summer schools and conferences
- Leadership Training events

There have also been opportunities to meet with a wide range of voluntary organisations, interest groups and political parties.

### Contact details:

Director  
**Earl Storey**  
**Mob:** 0044 (0) 775 284 1802  
**Email:** earlstorey@hardgospel.net

Project Officer (Belfast based)  
**Stephen Dallas**  
**Mob:** 0044 (0) 783 499 2895  
**Email:** stephendallas@hardgospel.net

Project Officer (Dublin based)  
**Philip McKinley**  
**Mob:** 00353 (0) 871 325 531  
**Email:** philipmckinley@hardgospel.net

Chair of the Hard Gospel Committee  
**Very Rev P Rooke (Dean of Armagh)**

President of the Hard Gospel Project  
**The Most Reverend R.H.A. Eames**

Visit our website [www.hardgospel.net](http://www.hardgospel.net)