

The Heart of the Matter

On the northern coast of Northern Island, lies a community with a beating heart. At its centre is **An Croi**: a heart-shaped stone chapel with a living turf roof. It spirals downward into the earth opening into a circular domed space with seats and cushions in a wide circle.

A small stained-glass window depicts the 'Descent of the Spirit'. A central table has a turf cross, a candle and a Bible. The quietness enfolds the visitor.



Corrymeela was founded in 1965 with the goal of promoting reconciliation and peacebuilding through healing social, religious and political divisions in Northern Ireland. It was given the Coventry Cross of Nails in 1971.

An Croi opened in 1979. 'An Croi' (pronounced 'Cree') is Irish for 'The Heart'. An Croi, like the spiral cochlea of the inner ear, invites us into a space to hear the whispering of the Spirit of Life.

"Here we can take time to listen to the great heartbeat – in a society where there are so many violent and destructive beats, here we can take time to listen to the Heartbeat that guides, inspires and unites us all together." Ray Davey – Founder

Places like An Croi are vital to our wellbeing. Quiet heart-shaped spaces in which our inner ear can hear what our outer turmoil drowns out. Jesus went up a mountain. St Aidan found an island. Where, for you, might be An Croi? You may not have the opportunity to find a mountain or an island. Susanna Wesley (mother of 19 children, including John and Charles) found her heart space by burying her head in her apron – a sign to the children that she was not to be disturbed. Mary Sumner helped to create heart-spaces in her mothers' meetings.

Breathe through the heats of our desire
thy coolness and thy balm;
let sense be dumb, let flesh retire,
speak through the earthquake, wind and fire,
O still small voice of calm,
O still small voice of calm.