

Ireland Retreat

OCTOBER 16TH-24TH, 2024
KILKEEL & CULTRA,
NORTHERN IRELAND

A FEAST FOR THE SENSES AND NOURISHMENT FOR THE SOUL, LED BY FRIENDS WHO ARE EAGER TO SHARE THEIR STORIES WITH YOU, AND INVITE YOU INTO A NEW WAY OF TELLING YOUR OWN STORY.

You're warmly invited to join us on a journey of hope, healing, creativity and community - staying in historic restored rural accommodation including cottages in lovely natural surroundings and a retreat centre on the grounds of a converted country house by the sea on the edge of Belfast with a group of friends old and new.

We'll enjoy the landscape on amazing walks, hear music and story, meet locals, experience the peace process in encountering people directly involved in activism and change, and get to know the culture of northern Ireland, immersed in a community rooted in the depths and creativity of Celtic spirituality.

Good food, inspiring art, and beautiful journeys on foot will form the heart of this soulfully unique and transforming experience. Hosted by warm-hearted and thoughtful guides including northern Irish writer and peace activist Gareth Higgins and spiritual director & educator Brian Ammons, with special guests Kaitlin Curtice and Micky ScottBey Jones, this magical retreat will dive into storytelling, Celtic spirituality, music, reflection, connecting, and fun.

Read on for more information on how you can join us!

AN INVITATION FROM OUR HOSTS BRIAN AMMONS & GARETH HIGGINS

Many people have taken trips to Ireland, but few have wandered off the beaten path, forming communities of pilgrims who wanted to experience Ireland in authenticity rather than the more antiseptic/corporate tourist trip where feet don't touch the ground and souls might as well have stayed on the plane. Growing up in northern Ireland I (Gareth) often wished I could share with folks the beauty of our landscape, and the depth of our stories, not to mention the hard and rewarding task of peace-building.

We've been privileged to co-lead a few similar trips over the last decade in my home place around Belfast and beyond with amazing musicians, writers and spiritual teachers including Kathleen Norris, David Wilcox, Karen Moore, Brian McLaren, David LaMotte, Christine Ruth, Over the Rhine and Eric Elnes. We're delighted to be joined on this upcoming trip this October with our great friends Micky ScottBey Jones and Kaitlin Curtice to hear stories, create relationships, lean into wisdom, deepen our souls, write new narratives, and explore the legacy of Northern Ireland's conflict and peace process - and its invitation for our lives.

Our trip is full of surprises, but we can tell you that mornings will often feature gathered conversations, afternoons we will explore the landscape, and in the evenings there might be music, storytelling, and maybe even a touch of mischief! You'll meet friends and colleagues with whom we have been honored to travel some of the journey, peacemakers and poets and politicians, you'll walk by the sea and on mountains, and there'll be plenty of time to take by yourself to seek whatever you need.

**A Note on our Special Guests: Kaitlin and Micky will be with us for the duration of the retreat, participating along with the rest of our community. This retreat will include parts storytelling, Celtic spirituality, music, reflection, connecting, pilgrimage, and adventure.*

OUR SPECIAL GUESTS: MICKY SCOTTBey JONES & KAITLIN CURTICE



Micky ScottBey Jones, a former birth doula, now accompanies people as the Justice Doula, supporting the birth of more love & belonging into our world. As a womanist thinker with a MA in Intercultural Studies from North American Institute for Indigenous Studies & Portland Seminary, innovative certified enneagram teacher & coach, compassionate facilitator and nonviolence practitioner, Micky develops innovative ways to support changemakers in their desire for sustainable leadership strategies, healing and resilience practices and embodied liberation through inner and outer change through tools like individual and team enneagram work, resilience skill building and transformative travel experiences.

Micky is the author of *Keep the Fires Burning: Conquering Stress and Burnout as a Mother-Baby Professional* and contributing author in *Becoming Like Creoles: Living and Leading at the Intersections of Injustice, Culture and Religion* and *Keep Watch With Me: An Advent Reader for Peacemakers* and has contributed to the Journal of NAIITS: An Indigenous Learning Community and the Oneing Journal through the Center for Action and Contemplation. Her writing has also been featured on many online platforms including Christians For Social Action and The Porch Magazine and she's a sought after guest on many podcasts including CTZNOWELL, Their Wildest Dreams? and From Armor to Ease. Her most recent writing project, *The Stony Road Pilgrimage: The National Museum of African American History and Culture as a Site of Spiritual Pilgrimage* will be available through Christians for Social Action in 2024. Micky is a regular co-host on the podcast, Bruce Reyes-Chow and Friends. You can find out more about Micky at mickyscottbeyjones.com.

OUR SPECIAL GUESTS: MICKY SCOTTBEY JONES & KAITLIN CURTICE



Kaitlin Curtice is an award-winning author, poet-storyteller, and public speaker. As an enrolled citizen of the Potawatomi nation, Kaitlin writes on the intersections of spirituality and identity and how that shifts throughout our lives. She also speaks on these topics to diverse audiences who are interested in truth-telling and healing.

As an inter-spiritual advocate, Kaitlin participates in conversations on topics such as colonialism in faith communities, and she has spoken at many conferences on the importance of inter-faith relationships.

In 2023, Kaitlin released two books, first, *Living Resistance: An Indigenous Vision for Seeking Wholeness Every Day*, which examines the journey of resisting the status quo of hate by caring for ourselves, one another, and Mother Earth, and second, her first children's book called *Winter's Gifts: An Indigenous Celebration of Nature*, which is the first in a series of four books on the four seasons coming out with Convergent, RandomHouse Books.

Besides her books, Kaitlin has written online for Sojourners, Religion News Service, On Being, SELF Magazine, Oprah Daily, and more. Her work has been featured on CBS and in USA Today. She also writes at The Liminality Journal. Kaitlin lives near Philadelphia with her partner, two dogs, and two kids.

OUR HOSTS

Gareth Higgins, Ph.D. is a writer, storyteller, and community leader who grew up near Belfast during the northern Ireland Troubles, and now lives in North Carolina. Author of *How Not to be Afraid and Cinematic States*, and co-author of *The Seventh Story: Us, Them, and the End of Violence* and *Religion, Civil Society and Peace in Northern Ireland*, he writes and speaks about connection to the earth, storytelling and the power of dreams, peace and making justice, and how to take life seriously without believing your own propaganda. He was co-founder of the Wild Goose Festival, [The Porch Magazine](#), and www.moviesandmeaning.com. Gareth leads trips to his native Ireland every year, inviting participants to go beyond the beaten track, to experience the landscape and history through the lens of a story about people learning to live at peace with one another. You can find more about Gareth's work at www.garethhiggins.net



OUR HOSTS



Brian Ammons, M.Ed., M.Div., Ph.D. is an educator, spiritual director, coach, writer and ordained minister. A former faculty member in Duke University's Program in Education and for over eight years Chaplain & Director of Spiritual Life at Warren Wilson College in Asheville, NC, Brian was named Interfaith Youth Core Outstanding Educator in 2017. Brian holds a PhD in Education with a certificate in Women's and Gender Studies from UNC-Greensboro, and is a minister in the Alliance of Baptists tradition. Brian is trained as coach in an International Coaching Federation accredited program jointly sponsored by Pinnacle Leadership and The Center for Congregational Health and formed as a spiritual director through Shalem Institute's spiritual guidance program.

Brian has written and spoken widely on themes of vocational discernment; interfaith work in higher education; and the intersections of gender, sexuality, and spirituality.

Find out more about Brian's work at www.theporchmagazine.com/coaching-spiritual-direction

Listening at the Edges: Healing for Our Broken World

Stories mean different things depending on who's telling them, who's listening, and where we come in. Who belongs in the story, who has the power, whose voices are heard, who seems to gain and who seems to lose.

The story of northern Ireland has contained more than its share of light and shadow, but a centuries-old conflict is being transformed through a different story into one where the common good is beginning to take center stage.

Many of us elsewhere are daring to hope that such a story can emerge where we are.

What has been called *stick-shift consciousness* is awakening in many of us: a metaphor of "driving in different gears" as we navigate the near-daily experience of what seems familiar and what seems completely alien. Many of us who perceive that our voices are "from the edge" may have felt the need to ask for a place at the table; and while we're happy to go wherever we are invited, we also believe that perhaps it's time just to build a bigger table, and live a better story, wherever we are.

This retreat - an eight day immersion in stories of landscape, culture, music, activism, and community - aims to nurture healing for our own ache for cultural wounds, and inspiration toward a better story wherever we may lead. Join fellow travelers - not "experts" but lovers of that which is life-giving to ask what stories need to be laid down, which need to be picked up, and where you are called to serve a story of courage, creativity, and the common good.

Who's invited?

Anyone aged 18+ seeking to co-create their next chapter.
This is an LGBTQ+ inclusive retreat.

Do I have to believe in God?

Absolutely not, but we will be doing some spiritual, soul-work.
All faith (or non-faith) orientations are welcome.

Do I have to drink Guinness?

No.
We invite those in recovery and those who choose not to drink, for any reason, to fully participate in this retreat

What People Say

"I am so grateful for the incredible experiences of our Ireland Retreat. It was a deep, rich, educational, spiritual, and personally challenging time that I will hold dear for life. It was a true delight!" - *Donna, Arizona*

"Words can't express my gratitude for the experience you provided for all of us. What a gift to the world." - Sharon, Nebraska

"It was a lovely, valuable, very interesting adventure. I look forward to next time."
- *TG, North Carolina*

"This retreat was a beautiful, creative, and transformative experience. The leaders and participants were some of the loveliest people I have had the opportunity to know. In my own nation of many divisions, it was good to hear stories of peace-making, transformation, and hope. Thank you for these meaningful, powerful, and playful days." - *Michael, Pennsylvania*

"This trip was **on the short list for best experiences of my life**. I will never forget the beauty, love, joy, and acceptance I found here."

"The **perfect combination** of vacation, retreat, education and sight-seeing."

"The Ireland Retreat is a unique and transforming travel experience. The retreat offers plenty of important Irish sights and places but the retreat gets you closer to the land and lives of "real" (not just tourist) Ireland through a well crafted balance: breathtaking nature, and powerful learning from voices and places shaped in the crucible of struggle and turmoil in Northern Ireland. The retreat brings new awareness of our common humanity and creates friends out of strangers."

"Impressed by how affordable this trip was compared to others I have looked at. Thank you for building community, feeding us, transporting us - all without any glitches and making this spiritually rich and soul relaxing!" - *Susan, Illinois*

"The spiritual immersion in Ireland was sublime. Ancient Celtic spirituality, local culture and beauty, and the combined wisdom of the leaders was soulfully transformative. I highly recommend!"

"The experience opened doorways to find my spiritual anchors at this stage of life. I discovered myself through the eyes of other loving attendees and was able to return that gift to others."

"Seekers of mystery, magic, beauty, and uncertainty... This is for you. But for those who are cynical, it's especially for you."



Silent Valley



Tropical Ravine, Botanic Gardens



"This is a fabulous opportunity to experience the physical beauty, the political culture and history and the warm, friendly people of Ireland. Also an opportunity to slow down, reflect and connect with interesting, diverse people in substantive, heart-level ways."

Trip Details

The trip takes place Wednesday, October 16th - Thursday, October 24th, 2024. The retreat ends in time to return to the US by the evening of October 24th, although many of our previous guests have extended their stay in Ireland before or after the retreat - we're happy to advise on itinerary. We also recommend flying to Dublin as it is often cheaper, and we will pick you up from the airport.

Applications are open now, and places are strictly limited - we can accommodate approximately 25 guests, and expect the trip to be over-subscribed. If you're interested and ready to apply, or have any questions, visit us at irelandretreats.com. We are eager to welcome you to Belfast in October!

Cost (excluding airfare) of \$3300 per person* includes:

- The services of all guides and retreat leaders, support staff, and guests from the world of arts, politics and peacemaking.
- Four nights in historic restored rural accommodation including cottages in exquisite natural surroundings
- Four nights in a retreat centre in the grounds of a converted old country house by the sea on the edge of Belfast.
- Breakfast (including traditional Irish options) every day, and lunch or dinner most days.
- Transport from Belfast hubs to accommodation, and on organized trips throughout the tour.
- All admission fees to sites such as cultural centers, museums, etc.
- The use of all accommodation facilities including lounges, gardens, etc.
- A life-changing experience of spirit, imagination, and community.

When You Apply with a Friend or Family Member, Full Registration is discounted to \$3,125 per person.

Payment plans are available to spread the cost.

Learn More & Apply at irelandretreats.com



Wandering the North Coast



Retreat Group at CS Lewis Square, Belfast



Belfast Peaceline





"This retreat truly was magnificent. Beautifully planned, it filled both mind and soul with beauty, historical context and perspective and rollicking good times. It was a prescient reminder of why we must all remain vigilant and committed to respectful dialogue across seemingly unbridgeable gaps in our own lives and in our country." -
David, Nebraska



A final note: In order to make the tour widely accessible, we're glad to help people raise financial support to join the retreat, including folk with continuing education and sabbatical funding. If the cost of the tour is a stretch, please let us know, we'd love to hear from you! We'd be glad to help you find ways to join us if we can. **Just visit irelandretreats.com to be in touch or to apply.**

Landscape photos taken on Ireland Retreat courtesy of Scott Griessel & Creatista



www.irelandretreats.com