

Chapter 3: Kearney the Ecumenist

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one Baptism. (Eph. 4: 4-5)

How did Kearney Navigate the Ecumenical Tides of the past 60 years?

I want to explore what I term the ecumenical problem and the way in which Kearney and others responded to this in Durban from the 1970s. I will do this with particular reference to *Unitatis Redintegratio*.³¹⁸ I argue that the scale and the style of the approach in Durban was different from other parts of the Catholic Church in South Africa and that this was in part because of the personality and approach of Kearney. While Kearney's Catholic identity never appeared to be in doubt to him or to others, he was still able to successfully lead two organisations that had a clear commitment to ecumenism, and inspire others to follow in his footsteps.

This did not mean that he did not face challenges, especially with regard to shared communion and also lack of support from certain quarters, but he seems to have navigated these successfully. One of the ways in which Kearney did so was by anticipating a concept of 'Receptive Ecumenism' which he instinctively espoused many decades before he would encounter it formally at Durham University.³¹⁹ His commitment to ecumenism coincided with, and paralleled his commitment to liberation in South Africa. I argue that for Kearney these two fed each other and provided mutual support because reconnecting with the separated brethren and reconciling with the segregated neighbours were two sides of the same coin.

The opening image for this chapter is unfortunately only in the memory of people now in their 70s or 80s since the school magazine has a report but no photograph.³²⁰ But it is a vivid image from 1967: the chapel at St David's Marist College Inanda, full of white Catholic schoolboys in their dark blue blazers with double yellow stripes; and, at the front, young Br Patrick Kearney in clerical robes introducing Dominee Beyers Naudé. I imagine a look of surprise on the faces of the boys, only to be matched by the look of shock when they later recounted the event to their parents. And one wonders which would have shocked them more?: the presence in a whites-only school of a vociferous and politically dangerous opponent of Apartheid? Or the presence in a Catholics-only school of a minister from the Dutch Reformed Church?³²¹

³¹⁸ This is the 'Decree on Ecumenism' promulgated by Pope Paul VI towards the end of the 3rd session of the Council in November 1964. At over 7,000 words, it is the 8th longest of the 16 documents of Vatican II.

³¹⁹ This concept will be explored in more detail later. It is a way of focusing on ecumenism not in terms of a movement towards unity but rather an on-going process of sharing gifts. Murray, Paul. *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning – exploring a way for Contemporary Ecumenism*. (Oxford: OUP, 2008)

³²⁰ Marist Archives, Johannesburg: *St David's College Review* (December 1967, Page 9)

³²¹ +Hurley had a great respect for Naudé and wrote a tribute about him for Peter Randall's *Not Without Honour* (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1982). Philippe Denis comments that it is a mark of Hurley's respect for Naudé that he affirms him as a Calvinist and a Catholic 'because he has a universality that transcends many barriers'. (Denis, Philippe. *Facing the Crisis – selected texts of Archbishop D E Hurley* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 1997) 144)

What is the Ecumenical Problem?

The words of St Paul above are quoted on the first page of Vatican II's document on ecumenism and set out starkly the challenge of the document.³²² Unity – one Lord, one faith, one baptism – are unquestionably central to the Christian message. And yet the reality on earth is that the followers of Christ are anything but united.

The ecumenical problem is highlighted by an all too visible gap. On the one hand, there is Christ's vision for his Church as voiced to his Disciples at the Last Supper: "that they all may be one; even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be one in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me."³²³ And then there is the reality (painfully enunciated in UR 3) that from the very beginning there have been rifts and divisions between Christians, most starkly characterised in the 11th century 'Great Schism' between the East and the West; and then by the Reformation in which Christian groups in Europe broke away from Rome and then from each other, for political and religious reasons, from the 16th century onwards.

Whilst this is a challenge to the Church anywhere in the world, its impact has been a particularly significant aspect of the history of the Church in South Africa. First of all, the denominational differences (both national and confessional) of Europe were exported to South Africa (and other parts of the continent) by the various groups of European missionaries who carried these distinctions with them. A Nigerian Spiritan priest now teaching in the United States sums it up thus:

The missionary movement transmitted the Christian message in Africa in all the denominational divisiveness. The denominational churches that emerged from the Western, post-Tridentine, post-Reformation conflict were radically anti-Catholic on the one hand and radically anti-Protestant on the other.³²⁴

More specifically, Saayman says: "South Africa has been described as the most over-denominationalised mission field in the world....the [lack of] unity of the Church in South Africa is a serious obstacle to effective mission."³²⁵

Despite efforts to bring together at least non-Catholic Christians, the different parts of the Church were more focused on what set them apart than what they had in common. Thus, over 30 years after the founding of the Christian Council of South Africa in 1936, the Study Project on Christianity in Apartheid Society ('SPRO-CAS'³²⁶), could still condemn the lack of unity in Church for creating a situation in which the Church's message of reconciliation between 'man and man' (sic) is 'compromised and contradicted'. It warned that this not only reduced the Church's witness but also its effectiveness: "The division of the Church into denominations results in an immense waste of its resources of manpower and money".... The report also warned against spiritualising the problem as a way of disguising its reality: "The idea that the Church and therefore its attributes, including its unity, is essentially invisible and not to be visibly realised is ultimately unbiblical."³²⁷

³²² *Unitatis Redintegratio* 2

³²³ Jn 17:21

³²⁴ Urukwu, Elochukwu. "A Theology of Christian Unity for the Church in Africa". *The Church we want – African Catholics look to Vatican III*. Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2016) 114

³²⁵ Saayman, Willem. "Christian Missions in South Africa". *Christianity in Africa*. Martin Prozesky ed. (Bergville: Macmillan, 1990) 34

³²⁶ There were two 'rounds' of SPRO-CAS: the 'Study Project on Christianity in an Apartheid Society' (1969-71) and the 'Special Project on Christian Action in Society' (1972-74). The numbers used refer to the Volume numbers not the rounds of SPRO-CAS and SPRO-CAS2

³²⁷ Randall, Peter ed. *SPRO-CAS Vol 8: Apartheid and the Church*. (Johannesburg: Christian Institute, 1972) 27, 83

Some have gone further and argued that this lack of unity had an active and not just a passive role in diminishing the effectiveness of the Church: “Government took advantage of Christians being conflicted between denominations and also within the same denomination.”³²⁸

There is therefore an ecumenical challenge to any Christian in South Africa who wants to see the Church become what it was called to be by its founder. For someone like Kearney, who describes himself as being born into “a staunch Catholic family”, this poses an even greater challenge.³²⁹

This is because of the self-perception of the Catholic Church that Kearney would have encountered until his 20s. United around the Bishop of Rome, it always saw itself as the unbroken continuation of the Church founded by Christ; thus all other Christians had separated themselves and created disunity. As a result, the traditional Catholic response to disunity had been to call other Christians to ‘return to Rome’ and thus undo the damage that they were seen to have created. Vatican II sets out to change that self-perception dramatically.

Background to *Unitatis Redintegratio*

It is important to note that the modern ecumenical movement substantially pre-dates the reforms of Vatican II. One event often seen as a starting point is the World Missionary Conference of 1910 held in Edinburgh, Scotland and bringing together major Protestant and Anglican missionary organisations from Northern Europe and North America.³³⁰ This was a key moment at which different Christian groups started seeing each other as sharing in a common mission rather than in competition. It was specifically influenced by missionary experience in places like Africa. But the Catholic Church did not send representatives to Edinburgh; and Uzukwu points out that no African church leader was invited to the 1910 Edinburgh Conference.³³¹ The movement then grew to culminate in the creation of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Amsterdam in 1948 – but again the Catholics were notable for their absence from that Assembly. (Indeed, to this day, the Catholic Church is not a full member of the WCC but instead enjoys ‘observer status’.)

Whilst there were pioneers like the Dominican Yves Congar (whose first ground-breaking book on ecumenism appeared in 1937), most of the Catholic Church until the 1960s was still content to see itself as the sole reference of the word ‘Church’, denigrating others who claimed to follow Christ as schismatics and heretics. Rev Frank Chikane, a Pentecostal minister and Secretary-General of the South African Council of Churches (SACC) in the 1980s, confirmed that +Hurley was unusual among the Catholic bishops of his day in *not* using the word Church as the definition of one denomination.³³²

On this self-understanding, there was thus no need for the Catholic Church to engage in ecumenism because the only unity worth achieving would be if all other Christians returned home to the Catholic Church (presumably after due penitence). The Nicene Creed (whose profession has been regarded as a mark of Christian orthodoxy since 325 AD) refers to ‘one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church’: Roman Catholics would equate their Church, united with Pope, as equivalent to the Church

³²⁸ Abraham, Garth. *The Catholic Church and Apartheid 1948-1957* (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1989) 125

³²⁹ Kearney, G Paddy. *Faith in Action* (Pietermaritzburg: KwaZulu Natal Christian Council, 2017) 10 (“Introduction”)

³³⁰ Moorman, John. “Observers and Guests of the Council”. *Vatican II Revisited: by those who were there*. Alberic Stacpoole ed. (London: G Chapman, 1986) 163

³³¹ Uzukwu, “A Theology of Christian Unity for the Church in Africa”, 116

³³² Chikane, Frank. Personal interview by author, 14 September 2021 via Zoom (Secretary General of SACC 1987-94)

mentioned in the Creed, interpreting 'catholic' as the nominator of a group of Christians rather than simply the Greek word meaning 'universal'.

But before Vatican II, steps were slowly being taken to chip away at this rock face of intransigence and to begin to recognise that 'Church' might have a broader scope. Having had no Catholic presence at the WCC meetings in Amsterdam in 1948 and in Evanston in 1955, there was at least a token appearance in New Delhi in 1961.³³³

Evidence of a warming of relations at a personal level can be seen in the meeting in Rome in 1960 between Pope John XXIII and Geoffrey Fisher (Archbishop of Canterbury and so head of the worldwide Anglican Church); and then in Jerusalem in 1964 between Pope Paul VI and the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras ('first among equals' of the leaders of the Eastern Orthodox churches). These high level meetings were increasingly being matched by warmer relations on the ground between local bishops, between local priests and between members of neighbouring church congregations.

So when almost 2,400 Catholic bishops gathered in 1962 for the opening session of the Second Vatican Council, many of them already knew and were beginning to trust Christian leaders from other traditions. Included among these was the still young 46-year-old Archbishop Denis Hurley of Durban who had already built good relations with at least one Anglican bishop of Natal, Vernon Inman. And when they arrived in Rome, the bishops discovered that actually present at the Council (at least as observers) were representatives of the Orthodox and some of the Protestant churches.

Edward Cassidy, who as a Cardinal was President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity from 1989 to 2001, points out that John XXIII chose as the occasion to announce the calling of the Council, the vespers closing the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (25 January 1959). Cassidy claims that the ecumenical theme was a pre-occupation of the Pope in calling the Council and that at one stage he intended the non-Catholics to be on an equal footing with Catholic bishops. In the end they were present only as observers; but though they could not speak directly *in aula* they could mix with the bishops, enjoyed a seat of honour, and could (and did) influence what the bishops finally said.³³⁴

Thus, even before the Council produced any documents, it was sending out an ecumenical message by inviting about 100 observers from 30 Christian denominations. This is described by Girault as "an exemplary gesture" and he points out that throughout the documents of Vatican II, the 'triumphalist' language of the recent Church is missing and replaced by the language of the Church as 'poor and servant'.³³⁵

Larry Kaufmann, a South African priest and fellow-traveller with Kearney, quotes Karl Rahner as saying that Vatican II was the 'first official self-actualisation as a world Church' because present were not just Roman Catholics but also Eastern Rite Catholics, observers from other churches, and also people from different continents.³³⁶

It is often claimed, if unproven, that John XXIII in calling the Council said he was: "opening the windows of the Church so that we can look out and others can look in". The ecumenical orientation

³³³ Girault, René. "The Reception of Ecumenism". *The Reception of Vatican II*. Giuseppe Alberigo, Jean-Pierre Jossua & Joseph A Komonchak eds. (Washington DC: CUA Press, 1987) 137

³³⁴ Cassidy, Edward. *Rediscovering Vatican II – Ecumenism and Inter-Religious Dialogue* (Mahwah NJ: Paulist Press, 2005) 10

³³⁵ Girault, "The Reception of Ecumenism", 138

³³⁶ Kaufmann, Larry. 'Ecumenical and Inter-faith Co-operation in Ministry'. *Serving Humanity – a Sabbath Reflection*. Stuart Bate ed. (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 1996) 211

of the Council was one of the most obvious ways in which windows, which had recently seemed not just shut but locked and sealed, had now been opened.

In support of this image, Marie-Henry Keane, a religious sister and an academic who worked closely with both +Hurley and Kearney, quotes Gerrit Berkouwer, a Dutch theologian of the Reformed Church who was an observer at Vatican II:

The phrase that most interests us is 'open Catholicism'. The phrase is meant to indicate that Catholicism is no longer preoccupied with itself, that it has thrown open the window of its concern to the whole world.³³⁷

An indication of how much Vatican II changed the Catholic Church's relationship with other Christians is seen in two quotations that Girault gives from the famous Swiss Lutheran pastor and theologian, Karl Barth. In 1948, clearly frustrated by the Catholic refusal to engage with the WCC, Barth commented: "The only attitude we can adopt toward Catholicism is one of mission and evangelisation, not of union." But then in 1963, having followed the Council (though ill-health prevented him from being present as an observer) he wrote: "It could very well be possible that we others might find more to learn from the Roman Church than the Roman Church for its part would have to learn from us."³³⁸

When John XXIII summoned Vatican II he called it an 'Ecumenical Council', by which he meant a Council of the Church throughout the world. But because this use of the word was not common among English speakers, some people thought that it meant that the Council was going to be all about ecumenism. One English bishop who attended suggests that this view was not entirely wrong. As one of the first members of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, +Holland points out that it was the only Vatican II body that was created before the Council and outlived the Council, and that some of the most enduring impact of Vatican II has been the radical shift in the Roman Catholic view of ecumenism.³³⁹ He is supported in this by Outler, an American Methodist and one of the 100 or so non-Catholic observers who attended Vatican II:

It is still worth remembering this sense of unbridgeable distance between Catholics and non-Catholics, if only to underscore Vatican II's chief achievement: to alter the ecumenical climate in the Christian world, from mutual indifference to mutual recognition, from forced toleration to cordial co-existence, from wariness to love and trust.³⁴⁰

Key Points of *Unitatis Redintegratio*

The most explicit statement of Vatican II on ecumenism is a decree that was promulgated in November 1964. Its timing is noteworthy. This was the second wave of documents (after two appeared in December 1963) and was issued alongside the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*) and the decree on the Eastern Catholic Churches (*Orientalium Ecclesiarum*). The

³³⁷ Keane, Marie-Henry. "Vatican Council II: Keeping the Dream Alive." *Vatican II: Keeping the Dream Alive*. Denis Hurley. (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 2005) 257

³³⁸ Girault, "The Reception of Ecumenism", 137

³³⁹ Holland, Thomas. "The Council comes of Age". *Vatican II Revisited: by those who were there*. Alberic Stacpoole ed. (London: G Chapman, 1986) 49

³⁴⁰ Outler, Albert. "Strangers within the Gates". *Vatican II Revisited: by those who were there*. Alberic Stacpoole ed. (London: G Chapman, 1986) 172

relationship of the Roman Catholic Church with other Christians is presented as an intrinsic part of the definition of the Church.

+Hurley made more interventions in the Council than any other bishop from the Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference (SACBC).³⁴¹ Sadly, none of them were in the debates about ecumenism and in his own memoirs +Hurley credits Bishop Van Velsen of emphasising an ecumenical aspect in the drafting of *Lumen Gentium* (which paves the way for *Unitatis Redintegratio*): ‘an appreciation of divine elements in non-Catholic Christian communities’.³⁴² Philippe Denis does point out that, in September 1962, two months before the opening of the Council, +Hurley was on the list of 16 bishops whom Congar and fellow Dominican theologian, Marie-Dominique Chenu, saw as allies in the fight for a truly ecumenical event.³⁴³

Part of what makes *Unitatis Redintegratio* possible is the way in which the term ‘Church’ is now understood. *Lumen Gentium* 8 reaffirms the existence of “the one Church of Christ which in the creed is professed as one, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic”. As explained earlier, the schoolboy Kearney would have been taught that this ‘one Church’ was identified with the Catholic Church. But now – in a very subtle but important change of words – we are told: “This Church constituted and organised in the world as a society, subsists in the Catholic Church”. Ruggieri attributes this subtlety to the impact of a dynamic understanding of the relationship between faith and history which is evident in *Lumen Gentium*.

Subsists is a word chosen precisely because it does not mean the same as ‘is identical to’. What is more: “many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside of its visible structure.”³⁴⁴ Outler recalls the choice of ‘subsists in’ as being highly significant.³⁴⁵ But Stacpoole, commenting on this ecumenical language, makes the point that everything is ‘at risk of being minimalised or maximalised’. Thus *subsistit in* can be viewed either inclusively or exclusively and he mentions how Boff was criticised by the Brazilian bishops for too inclusive a reading of *subsistit in* which risks ‘ecclesiological pluralism’.³⁴⁶ Schelkens’ historical analysis of the choice of *subsistit in* adds further nuance to the meaning(s) of this term.³⁴⁷

The document on ecumenism is radical in its approach in both senses: radical because it is such a break with recent practice; and radical because it is a return to the roots (*radices*) of the Church. One good example of this two-fold radicalism is the way in which the document refers early on to the pope. The Bishop of Rome is regarded as the direct successor of St Peter and so enjoying the same primacy that Peter enjoyed over the other Apostles. The foundational text for this – emblazoned by Michelangelo in mosaic around the inside of the dome of St Peter’s Basilica, directly above the heads of the assembled Council – is Mt 16:18 with Peter being linked to images of cornerstones, keys and shepherds. But the Council Fathers, after referencing Mt 16:18, assert that it is “Christ Jesus Himself [who] was forever to remain the chief cornerstone and shepherd of our

³⁴¹ Denis, Philippe. “The Historical Significance of Denis Hurley’s Contribution to the Second Vatican Council.” *Vatican II: Keeping the Dream Alive*. Denis Hurley. (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 2005) 207

³⁴² Hurley, Denis. *Vatican II: Keeping the Dream Alive* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 2005) 43

³⁴³ Denis, “Facing the Crisis”, 155

³⁴⁴ Ruggieri, Giuseppe. “Faith & History”. *The Reception of Vatican II*. Giuseppe Alberigo, Jean-Pierre Jossua & Joseph A Komonchak eds. (Washington DC: CUA Press, 1987) 100

³⁴⁵ Outler, “Strangers within the Gates”, 176

³⁴⁶ Outler, “Strangers within the Gates”, 170

³⁴⁷ Schelkens, Karl. “*Lumen Gentium*’s *Subsistit in* Revisited: the Catholic Church and Christian Unity After Vatican II” *Theological Studies* (2008, 6:4)

souls.”³⁴⁸ The text is radical because it shifts away from the pope as the focus of unity; and back to Christ who is the source of unity.

Having set this tone, the document can then be much more open in how it talks of other Christians. First of all, they are actually Christians: “For those who believe in Christ and have been truly baptised are in communion with the Catholic Church even though this communion is imperfect.”³⁴⁹ They are no longer schismatics and heretics but ‘separated brethren’³⁵⁰; people whom Catholics must treat with ‘truth and fairness’, praying for them and engaging in dialogue with them.³⁵¹ What is even more dramatic is the recognition – and this came to greatly influence +Denis Hurley and Kearney – that unity is to be achieved not by Catholics waiting around for the separated to return (no matter how wide the door might have been opened) but instead that Catholics have to do a lot of the work as well.

The starting point of this is the almost throwaway comment in UR 3 that ‘men’³⁵² of both sides were to blame’ for the separations of the past. Because of this, ‘the Catholic faithful [should] take an active and intelligent part in the work of ecumenism’ and ‘make a careful and honest appraisal of whatever needs to be done or renewed in the Catholic household itself’³⁵³ and be willing to engage in ‘continual reformation’.³⁵⁴

There are still issues to be addressed in terms of praying together and working together, which I shall look at in due course, but these underlying principles set the tone for the rest of the document. They also set the tone for the work of Kearney – especially in the Diakonia organisation – over the next 50 years.

Background to Kearney ‘the staunch Catholic’

How open was Kearney to this new self-view of the Church? As mentioned above, his upbringing was ‘staunchly Catholic’. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that, like +Hurley himself, Kearney’s was ‘a strong *Irish* Catholic background’³⁵⁵; though both Kearney’s parents were born in South Africa, two of his four grandparents were born in Ireland. Henry VIII had broken from Rome in 1534 and within the same decade (1541) had himself declared as King of Ireland (the first Englishman to claim this title). Thus, when Kearney was born in 1942, he had behind him four centuries in which the assertion by the Irish over the English for rule of their own land was intimately bound up with the assertion of a Catholic identity over a Protestant one.³⁵⁶

Typical of his social and cultural background, the young Kearney would have operated in a Catholic ghetto: praying exclusively in a Catholic church (St Mary’s in Pietermaritzburg), attending a Catholic

³⁴⁸ *Unitatis Redintegratio* 2

³⁴⁹ *Unitatis Redintegratio* 3

³⁵⁰ *Unitatis Redintegratio* 1

³⁵¹ *Unitatis Redintegratio* 4

³⁵² Whereas usually I would amend texts to make them gender inclusive, I am assuming in this case that the blame historically does fall squarely with ‘men’ and not with ‘men and women’.

³⁵³ *Unitatis Redintegratio* 4

³⁵⁴ *Unitatis Redintegratio* 6

³⁵⁵ Frederikse, Julie. “Research interview with Paddy Kearney conducted in Durban, 1985”. *South African History Archive* <https://www.saha.org.za/collections/AL2460/a11021.htm> (accessed 19 January 2022)

³⁵⁶ For more on this see Appendix A: “Kearney’s racial identity”

school (St Charles also in Pietermaritzburg³⁵⁷), probably socialising in Catholic youth clubs, confirmed (by +Hurley in 1957) into the Catholic faith, and sharing family rituals that were decidedly Catholic. Aged almost 70, while studying in Durham, his personal diary recalls across six decades fond memories of grandfather Kearney's daily reciting of the Rosary.³⁵⁸

Sr Marie-Henry Keane OP, a Catholic religious sister who knew Kearney's parents described them as 'traditional, conservative, dyed-in-the-wool Catholics'³⁵⁹; Di Oliver, an Anglican who later worked with Kearney at Diakonia called it 'a strict Catholic home'.³⁶⁰

It is therefore not surprising that Kearney's first glimpse of a world outside of South Africa – a month-long trip to Europe in 1958 – was through a completely Catholic lens. Organised as it was by the Oblate priests of his parish, and travelling with the same Irish grandfather, Kearney's experience of Europe is not that of the average 16-year-old. In Italy, he visited Rome and Loreto (not Florence or Venice); in Paris, his main preoccupations were *Sacré Coeur* and *Notre Dame* (and not the *Louvre* and *Pigalle*); and in London, it is the 100-year-old Catholic Westminster Cathedral that drew his attention, not the 900-year-old Anglican Westminster Abbey.

We know all this because a set of hand-written letters home from the teenage Kearney were kept lovingly by his parents and then, after their deaths, were preserved by him in his personal archive. And among those letters is an account of his visit to Canterbury, an unusually non-Catholic part of the itinerary. Is this where we will see the first glimpse of the later renowned ecumenical champion? He described in awe the grandeur of the building, the beauty of the mediaeval stained-glass, the transcendence of the stone vaults. And then commented to his parents: "My blood boils with anger when I remember that *they* stole this building from *us!*"³⁶¹

I quote this comment not to mock the untransformed teenage zealot, but rather to draw attention to the level of conscientisation Kearney would later undergo. He can only have felt sympathy with other Catholics embarking on a similar journey.

The start of that journey would have to wait for another 10 years since Kearney spent the decade after leaving school as a member of the same Catholic religious order that at the time ran St Charles College, the Marist Brothers. Reviewing the documents that would have been key to Kearney's formation as a Marist, there is no recognition at all that there was a Christian life beyond the bounds of the Church of Rome.^{362 363} His time with the Marists (1960-69) straddles the period of the Council (1962-65) but there is little indication from interviews with Kearney's contemporaries that Marist training or practice adapted to the changes of the Council (other than liturgically).

What is more, as a congregation whose full name was 'The Little Brothers of Mary' and who saw the Mother of Jesus as their inspiration of service, its spirituality would have drawn on themes that were unlikely to build common ground with Protestants. For example, whereas priests (and trainee

³⁵⁷ It is a charming coincidence that, 30 years earlier, Denis Hurley had finished his own schooling at St Charles; and 15 years after Kearney was there it was attended by Stephen Tully who later as Priest-in-charge of Emmanuel Cathedral was Kearney's co-founder of the Denis Hurley Centre.

³⁵⁸ SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/D/1 "Morning Pages: April-June 2006" (14 June 2006, Durham)

³⁵⁹ Keane OP, Sr Marie-Henry. Personal interview by author, 16 September 2021 via Zoom (Dominican sister and co-worker)

³⁶⁰ Oliver, Di. Personal interview by author, 2 January 2021 in Cape Town (co-worker at Diakonia)

³⁶¹ SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/C/1 "Kearney's letters to his parents, May 1958 to June 1958" (3 June 1958)

³⁶² Furet, Jean-Baptiste. *Life of Blessed Marcellin Joseph Benedict Champagnat* (Rome: Marist General House, 1989). (Note this is a more recent edition but I am told by Colussi it is simply a reprint of the one that he and Kearney would have used.)

³⁶³ Voegtli, Louis. *Opinions, Conferences, Sayings and Instructions of Marcellin Champagnat* (Paris: Institute of the Little Brothers of Mary, 1927)

priests) would recite the Daily Office of the Church (which is focused on the Psalms), Mario Colussi a co-novice of Kearney confirms that the Marists had what was called 'The Little Office of Mary'.³⁶⁴ Peter Taylor, who joined the Marist Brothers two years after Kearney, gives a sense of how deeply Catholic their formation experience was:

The Marist Spirituality is, obviously, very Marian....but that – in my opinion as a Christian and someone who is no longer a Catholic! – took over too much from the importance of Jesus, a relationship with Jesus, the importance of salvation and what that means.³⁶⁵

Taylor goes on to provide a description of his own time as a Marist schoolboy (St Henry's, 1956-1958) that would have been true of Kearney as a schoolboy (St Charles, 1950-59) and probably still true when Kearney was a teacher at St David's (1967-69):

One of the regular things was for all the Catholics to walk the few blocks ...each First Friday of the month to attend Mass, while the "non-Catholics" or "Protestants" had Bible Study. That gave me to believe, at that time, that the Bible was for non-Catholics, not for Catholics. We had the Catechism – that was enough. And as for salvation, relationship with Jesus, I had no idea what that meant then and it was decades later that I discovered it was for all Christians/ believers. A sad comment on the Catholic school system at the time.³⁶⁶

Nevertheless, even when he was a Marist, we begin to see a few chinks in Kearney's Catholic armour. Between 1963 and 1965, Kearney attended the University of Natal in Pietermaritzburg to study for a B.A. Although he was studying as a Marist, dressed as a Marist, and living with other Marists, he would nevertheless have had some contact, both socially and academically, with other students at UN including many non-Catholics, as Colussi confirms.³⁶⁷ Furthermore, in his teaching experiences, in Port Elizabeth in 1962 and then again in Johannesburg (1966-69), he would have dealt with a few schoolboys (and parents) who were not Catholic. With a Catholic proportion in the South African population of under 10%, and a need to fill paying places, Catholic schools in South Africa (unlike in other countries) have rarely had an exclusive Catholic roll.

In Johannesburg, at St David's, a very respectable and conservative school, the young teacher Kearney began to take ecumenical initiatives that surprised his fellow Marists: I might argue that this is evidence of the start of his conversion. Reference has already been made (Chapter 2) to the series of Lenten lectures that Kearney arranged in 1967 with speakers from the Methodist, Dutch Reformed, Presbyterian and Anglican Churches. (The specific visit by Ds. Beyers Naudé was mentioned at the opening of this chapter).³⁶⁸ Kearney also organised a Bible service in the school open to Catholics and non-Catholics, at a time when the only religious services were strictly Catholic ones, something which Colussi describes as being evidence of Kearney's 'Protestant connections'.

The first decisive indication of Kearney's 'Protestant connections' came when in 1971, having left the Marist Brothers and spent a year studying in Pietermaritzburg, he continued as a teacher but at Inanda Seminary School. St David's had been at a place called Inanda in Johannesburg, but this Inanda school outside Durban could not have been more different: it was for girls, it was for black students, and it was run by the Congregational Church!

³⁶⁴ Colussi, Mario. Personal interview by author, 13 October 2020 in Johannesburg (fellow Marist novice/ brother)

³⁶⁵ Taylor, Peter. Personal interview by author, 1 February 2021 via Zoom (fellow Marist novice/ brother)

³⁶⁶ Taylor, Peter. Personal interview by author, 1 February 2021 via Zoom (fellow Marist novice/ brother)

³⁶⁷ Colussi, Mario. Personal interview by author, 13 October 2020 in Johannesburg (fellow Marist novice/ brother)

³⁶⁸ Marist Archives, Johannesburg: *St David's College Review* (December 1967, Page 9)

This choice of new school might give a clue to the source of Kearney's exposure to ecumenical influences. Already teaching at Inanda Seminary School at that time was an American woman called Mary Emma Kuhn who was a member of 'The Grail'.³⁶⁹ Chapter 2 already mentioned some of the ways in which the Grail was challenging traditional models of religious life and influencing Kearney. One further way was by being ecumenical so that, even if the original women were all Catholic, by 1967 the Johannesburg Grail community had their first Anglican member. Goemans also commented that it was likely that the ecumenical speakers that Kearney invited to St David's in 1967 were via contacts that he made at the Grail.³⁷⁰

Emerging Ecumenism in South Africa

If Kearney's 'staunchly Catholic' life was beginning to open up to ecumenical possibility, what was happening in the wider Church in South Africa?

A reflection by +Hurley himself in his memoirs, quoted by Kearney, gives an idea of how much the situation changed:

In these ecumenical days, subsequent to the Second Vatican Council, it is extremely difficult to recapture the attitude in which we Catholics had grown up and the total non-acceptance of other Christians that characterised our ...religious outlook.... [In] the 1930s and 1940s we were thoroughly un-ecumenical.³⁷¹

Even if other Christian groups were beginning to talk to each other (as mentioned above the Christian Council was established in 1936), the Catholics were still not part of this. Dominican Philippe Denis comments:

Compared to other countries in the world, the South African Church of the early twenty-first century exhibits a fairly high degree of ecumenical cooperation....Half a century ago South African Catholicism...was characterised on the contrary by its aloofness, its stern refusal to engage with other Christian denominations and the unshakeable belief that only the Catholic faith could offer the certainty of salvation.³⁷²

John de Gruchy makes the point that, while 1948 saw the establishment of the World Council of Churches, it was also the year that the National Party came to power in South Africa.³⁷³ Denis remarks that opposition to Apartheid became a major motivation for ecumenical activity and he sees this as a comparable factor, alongside Vatican II and also the growth in the Pentecostal churches 'which makes differences between mainline churches appear increasingly unimportant'.³⁷⁴

There is nothing better for the development of friendship and mutual respect than a common enemy.³⁷⁵

³⁶⁹ Moore, Ann. Personal interview by author, 17 October 2020 in Johannesburg (member of The Grail)

³⁷⁰ Goemans, Loek. Personal interview by author, 15 October 2020 in Johannesburg (member of The Grail)

³⁷¹ Kearney, G Paddy ed. *Memories. The memoirs of Archbishop Denis E. Hurley* (Pietermaritzburg: OMI, 2006) 65

³⁷² Denis, Philippe. "Reunion of Christendom or ecumenism: Catholics and Protestants in South Africa before Vatican II". *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* (2011, 106) 546

³⁷³ De Gruchy, John. "Christianity in 20th century South Africa". *Living Faiths in South Africa*. Martin Prozesky & John de Gruchy eds. (Cape Town: David Philip, 1995) 92

³⁷⁴ Denis, "Reunion of Christendom or Ecumenism", 547

³⁷⁵ Denis, Philippe. "Vatican II in Southern Africa". *Bulletin for Contextual Theology* (1997, 4:1) 1

The Catholic response to ecumenism was beginning to warm up, albeit slowly. It has already been mentioned that the Catholic Church was beginning to engage with the World Council of Churches (even without becoming a full member). Whilst there is evidence of the ecumenical movement being kept at arm's length, the arm is beginning to bend. Thus, there is some progress from 1928 (Pope Pius XI's encyclical *Mortalium Animos* which forbade Catholic participation in the ecumenical movement), to 1948 (the Holy Office stressing that any participation could only be with the Holy See's permission), to 1950 when the Holy Office in *Ecclesia Catholica* now encouraged Catholics to participate in 'the magnificent enterprise of reunion' and allowed local bishops to grant permission for the same.³⁷⁶

In the same way, in South Africa, the Catholic bishops were involved in the national equivalent, the SACC, but still resisted full participation. The body adopted this name in 1968 (in an echo of the title of the 'World Council of Churches') taking over the role of the Christian Council of South Africa which had been founded in 1936. While individual Catholics, like Fr Albert Nolan (the Dominican theologian) and indeed Archbishop Denis Hurley worked with the SACC and had close personal ties to its leading members, it was only in January 1995 that +Hurley finally persuaded the required two-thirds of the Catholic bishops (the SACBC) to vote for full membership of the SACC. (It is notable that the headline of this from *The Southern Cross* was retained by Kearney in his personal archive).³⁷⁷

As in the rest of the world, churches in South Africa outside the Catholic Church were pressing ahead with various forms of collaboration. But even this was not always as fast as some would have wished. In 1956, Anglican priest (and later Archbishop) Trevor Huddleston lamented in relation to attempts to force segregated education on the Church schools:

The tragic mistake lay in the failure of the churches to act together. I am convinced that if, say, the Methodists, Roman Catholics, Presbyterians and Anglicans united for once on this single issue; had they approached the Minister and stated in conscience they could not co-operate in the implementation of the Act, at least some concessions would have been won.³⁷⁸

In 1960, in response to the Sharpeville Massacre, theologians from 10 member churches of the WCC did come together in a suburb of Johannesburg to form a response that is known as the Cottesloe Consultation.³⁷⁹ Whilst Cottesloe failed to reach a shared statement, it did catalyse further ecumenical developments.

One of the NGK Dominees involved, Beyers Naudé, created a close connection in preparing for Cottesloe with ministers from the Anglican and Methodist churches; they and others would soon form the core of the Christian Institute. When this was founded in 1963, it had 150 individual members from a range of denominations and increased to 1000 (drawn from 28 different churches and missionary societies) by the end of 1964. Because it involved individual rather than institutional membership, Catholics were included among the number. In fact, it was the inclusion of Roman Catholics within its membership, seen to be betraying the Protestant confession, that prompted the National Synod of the NGK in 1966 to support a resolution condemning the Christian Institute as 'an

³⁷⁶ Denis, "Reunion of Christendom or Ecumenism", 549

³⁷⁷ Paddy Kearney Personal Archive, Press Cuttings Volume 3: *The Southern Cross*, photocopied extract, insert date

³⁷⁸ Huddleston, Trevor. *Naught for your comfort* (London: Collins, 1956) 171

³⁷⁹ Paton, Alan. *Towards the Mountain* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1980) 215 (Alan Paton poignantly recalls Mandela visiting the Cottesloe Consultation in Sept 1960 during the time of the Treason Trial.)

extra-ecclesial organisation'.³⁸⁰ So it was not only the Catholic Church that was reluctant to embrace ecumenism.³⁸¹

One of the reasons for the NGK's suspicion of the ecumenical movement was its close connection with the Struggle. In fact, linking the two was one of the ways of depicting the Struggle as anti-South African. For example, in 1975 the Schlebusch Commission claimed that both the idea of radical change and of ecumenism are "not of South African origin but ... a concept or ideology introduced from overseas ...primarily by the WCC".³⁸²

The Apartheid Government itself was unintentionally responsible for one significant ecumenical move, the creation of FedSem, a training college for ministers from different denominations. The Group Areas Act forced the closure in 1963 of theological colleges for black students that were situated in 'white' areas and they were replaced by FedSem. This meant that for 30 years, ministers (albeit black ones) from Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregationalist denominations trained side-by-side. At the 1981 FedSem graduation, +Hurley's proposed a vision of bringing FedSem together with the University of Natal and St Joseph's Theological Institute Cedara to form "a programme of Christian vision, Christian common sense and Christian praxis that would constitute the kind of pastoral theology of social change that was needed for South Africa."³⁸³ Sadly, this was only realised in part and many years later.

Nowadays, the Liberation Struggle is closely associated with ecumenism. The late Archbishop Desmond Tutu, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize and seen by the international community as a key player in the Struggle, stressed the role of religious leaders and the list of those he singles out (in at least one book) is suitably ecumenical: Hurley (Catholic), Boesak (the 'coloured' wing of the Dutch Reformed Church), Storey (Methodist), Chikane (Pentecostal) and Naudé (the 'white' wing of the Dutch Reformed Church) without mentioning himself who was, of course, Anglican.³⁸⁴

It is noticeable that +Hurley gets the Catholic mention in this list. He was among the most advanced in the SACBC in fighting the Struggle and also in embracing ecumenism, as Abraham lays out in his book (though he only looks at the Catholic Church and Apartheid up to 1957).³⁸⁵

Abraham quotes from a 1957 SACBC report which shows that the bishops were still ambivalent about ecumenism. "With regard to the question of co-operation with non-Catholic bodies, a number of bishops held that this contact might result in greater friendship and understanding; others stressed that there were disadvantages."³⁸⁶

He mentions various failures of ecumenical collaboration (all from 1949) on the part of the Catholic bishops, which would have been quite typical of the time: not partnering with the Anglican and Methodist Churches in opposing the Mixed Marriages Act; not attending a meeting with the Native Affairs Minister with the Christian Council; not attending the Rosettenville Conference.³⁸⁷ The

³⁸⁰ Naudé, Beyers. "Leadership, Vision, Humanity". *Denis Hurley – a portrait by friends*. Anthony Gamley ed. (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 2001) 65

³⁸¹ Ryan, Colleen. *Beyers Naudé – Pilgrimage of Faith* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1990) 55, 115

³⁸² Regehr, Ernie. *Perceptions of Apartheid – the churches and political change in South Africa* (Scottsdale PA: Herald Press, 1979) 79, 211

³⁸³ Denis, Philippe & Duncan, Graham. *The Native School that Caused all the Trouble – a History of the Federal Theological Seminary of Southern Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 2011) 158

³⁸⁴ Tutu, Desmond. *No Future Without Forgiveness* (Cape Town: Penguin, 2009) 44

³⁸⁵ For more on this see Appendix D: "+Hurley the political priest"

³⁸⁶ Abraham, *The Catholic Church and Apartheid*, 115

³⁸⁷ Abraham, *The Catholic Church and Apartheid*, 42-43

report from this conference is reflected in part in the SACBC's 1952 statement condemning Apartheid, but it is interesting that the Catholic bishops make no mention of ecumenical activity.³⁸⁸

But Abraham does point out two later examples where Catholics came together with members of other churches to protest at legislation which directly affected churches. It is noticeable that both examples involve +Hurley. The 1957 Bantu Laws Amendment Bill would have prevented black people attending church in white areas. In KZN a meeting of a range of 2,000 Christians at Durban City Hall and a meeting of 1,000 at Pietermaritzburg City Hall helped defeat the proposal. Abraham also cites Hurley in 1961 expressing his desire to work with all religious leaders and in May 1962 playing an active role in ecumenical protest against new legislation.³⁸⁹

However, it was actually not +Hurley but Bishop Van Velsen of Kroonstad (a Dominican) who was the most outspoken among South African bishops with regard to ecumenism around the time of the Council. In a history of the Dominicans in Southern Africa, Denis explains:

Few people were influenced by the Second Vatican Council as much as Bishop van Velsen. In 1960 he was appointed to the Secretariat for Christian Unity, an institution created by Pope John XXIII to develop an ecumenical spirit in the soon-to-be-opened Council.... +Van Velsen belonged to the group of bishops and theologians who refused to reduce ecumenism to a search for conversion. Ecumenism, according to them, was an exercise of the Church's catholicity. They were adamant that elements of salvific value could be found outside the Catholic Church. They disagreed with the members of the Theological Commission for whom conversion was the goal of ecumenical activity.³⁹⁰

The fact that Bishop Van Velsen was a prominent ecumenist has an unexpected impact on the subject of this thesis. Kroonstad is a long way from Durban/ Pietermaritzburg and not that close to Johannesburg, where Kearney was teaching as a Marist in the late 1960s, immediately after the Council. But, for reasons that remain unclear, soon after he left the Marists (as explained in Chapter 2) Kearney ended up spending an intense period with +Van Velsen whom Colussi called "one of those progressive Dominicans".

We do not know if Kearney left St David's already planning to exit the Marists or if that was only decided later; we do not know how much time he spent with +Van Velsen or what they discussed; we do not know if Kearney was looking for some personal formation or just a quiet place to think. But we do know that +Van Velsen had a reputation for being a safe haven. Denis comments: "...he was very sympathetic to priests in trouble, and took several requests for dispensation to Rome, even though the priests were from other dioceses."³⁹¹ Kearney was not a priest but, having taken final vows, would need approval from Rome to leave the order so perhaps he fitted into this category as well.

We can only imagine what the impact was on the 27-year-old Kearney, who had been looking for something in the Marists and had not found it, and who was now able to discuss questions of the Church with someone as progressive and learned as +Van Velsen. Kearney's move, one year later, to work in a Congregationalist school, and four years later to start an ecumenical agency surely were influenced by his time in Kroonstad.

³⁸⁸ Rosettenville Conference. *The Christian Citizen in a Multi-Racial Society* (Cape Town: Christian Council of South Africa, 1949)

³⁸⁹ Abraham, *The Catholic Church and Apartheid*, 109-111, 126

³⁹⁰ Denis, Philippe. *The Dominican Friars in Southern Africa (1577-1990). A Social History* (Leiden: Brill, 1998) 198

³⁹¹ Denis, *The Dominican Friars in Southern Africa*, 207

It is assumed that it was +Hurley who was the greatest influence on Kearney's ecumenism. But in fact, in his comprehensive biography of +Hurley, Kearney struggles to mention any significant ecumenical activity in the life of the Archbishop *before* the Council. Only in 1968 does Kearney note a change in Hurley with ecumenical collaboration being part of his response to the Limehill displacements.³⁹² (Interestingly, the book about this incident, Fr Cosmas Desmond's *The Discarded People* was published by the ecumenical Christian Institute in 1971.) It seems that it is once the reconciliation of separated Christians and the reconciliation of segregated South Africans become two parts of the same movement, that +Hurley's influence becomes more marked.

In fact, as the Catholic Church became more forthright in speaking out against Apartheid, so it became more comfortable in its ecumenical role. Thus, although the Catholic bishops were not signatories to the 1968 document 'Message to the People of South Africa' (since they were not members of the SACC who published it), it was later endorsed by the SACBC and used as the basis for establishing an ecumenical research unit in Pretoria in 1970.³⁹³ Speaking in a long interview marking 50 years as a bishop, +Hurley comments: "the ecumenical movement flourished in the face of the joint enemy – Apartheid."³⁹⁴ For more on this see Appendix D: "+Hurley the political priest".

Steadily, the perception that the Catholic Church and other Christians had of each other, and the perception that the Catholic Church had of itself, started to change towards one which allowed greater open-ness.

A shift gradually took place. The *aggiornamento* brought about in the Catholic Church by the Second Vatican Council also affected South Africa. In the 1960s, the proud aloofness which had characterised South African Catholicism since the establishment of the Church in the nineteenth century gradually gave way to a genuine willingness to co-operate with the other Christian churches in the field of ministry, education and political activism. On the Protestant side perceptions changed as well. Traditionally regarded as the *Roomse gevaar*, the Catholic Church came to be seen as a partner in the ecumenical dialogue. The Second Vatican Council attracted attention in the whole theological community.³⁹⁵

While of course captive to its own particular history and demographics, the increased ecumenical open-ness that South Africa was experiencing was also happening in other parts of the Continent. For example, when in 1968 Trevor Huddleston resigned as Anglican Bishop of Masasi (in Tanzania) both Anglican and Catholic clergy recommended that his successor be jointly consecrated by the two bishops (which of course did not happen)!³⁹⁶ Interestingly, not only could the Catholic Church not honour an Anglican bishop, they could not even honour Anglican martyrs. Ugandans were very proud that during his visit in 1969, Pope Paul VI canonised a group of young men who had been killed for their faith – but the locals were baffled that the Anglicans who were martyred at the same time, in the same place and in the same way, were completely ignored by the Pope.

Founding of Diakonia

It was the founding of Diakonia in Durban which became the key reason why both +Hurley and Kearney are remembered as exemplary ecumenists and which also ensured that their lives were

³⁹² Kearney, G Paddy. *Guardian of the Light* (Pietermaritzburg: UKZN, 2009) 52-91, 151

³⁹³ Abraham, *The Catholic Church and Apartheid*, 129

³⁹⁴ SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/H/Press/4 (1988-2002). "Hurley's Golden Jubilee" (*The Sunday Times*, 23 March 1997)

³⁹⁵ Denis, *The Dominican Friars in Southern Africa*, 197

³⁹⁶ Hastings, Adrian. "The Council came to Africa". *Vatican II Revisited: by those who were there*. Alberic Stacpoole ed. (London: G Chapman, 1986) 321

forever intertwined. Writing in appreciation of +Hurley in 2001, the American Jesuit and politician, Robert Drinan quotes Ralph Waldo Emerson: ‘a great institution is but the shadow of a great man’.³⁹⁷ If the ‘great institution’ is Diakonia, then it was a shadow of two great men: +Hurley and Kearney.

As a Catholic in the Archdiocese of Durban, +Hurley had been Kearney’s bishop since he was 4½ years’ old. Goemans believes that Kearney would certainly would have been an altar server when the bishop came to St Mary’s or St Charles.³⁹⁸ As someone joining religious life, even if not as a priest, Kearney would have been more clearly on +Hurley’s radar; and, also through St Mary’s, Kearney enjoyed friendships with priests who were members of +Hurley’s own congregation, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. Later, now a lay man, Kearney joined in 1972 +Hurley’s new Justice & Peace Commission in the Archdiocese of Durban.³⁹⁹

Kearney’s own recollection is as follows: “Archbishop Hurley wrote to me [in 1973 while I was in the US on a Fulbright scholarship] and said he had the idea of setting up an ecumenical organisation and then when I got back would I help him set it up?” In the same interview, Kearney says that he felt he was not suited to the role, but he did not specify if this was because he did not see himself as a leader, or did not feel he had the ecumenical credentials, or some other reason.⁴⁰⁰

That same year, as reported in the *Daily News*, +Hurley was speaking to mark Church Unity Week: “We are realising that somewhere in our history, we lost or failed to acquire any influence over the morality of Christian society in the very important matters of politics and economics.”⁴⁰¹ Is this a hint of him seeing an ecumenical approach as a way of gaining influence?

In Kearney’s own archive he has kept an interesting sequence of the initial presentations of the Diakonia project between January and May 1974: first to the (Catholic) Council of Priests, then the (inter-denominational) Natal Council of Churches, then the (Catholic) Diocesan Pastoral Council and lastly the Archdiocese of Durban Synod. +Hurley also stressed that the idea came from a symposium organised by the Archdiocese of Durban Social Welfare Commission in June 1973. In my opinion this looks like an attempt to safely situate the ecumenical nature of the venture in a Catholic context; and also to ensure that clergy (Catholic and other) have bought into the project before presenting the idea to lay people. But throughout, it is clear that the ecumenical nature of the project was being presented alongside its other key characteristics: a focus on the service of the needy, liberation (in a very specific sense), and a limited geographic focus.⁴⁰²

+Hurley also seemed to be stressing the fact that this was a Catholic-led initiative (unlike many of the other ecumenical projects of the time). For example, fearful that it might take two or three years to get other churches on board, +Hurley suggested that the Catholic Church start funding and identify a suitable director: “I do not think the other churches would be averse to us starting Diakonia and I am sure that, if they think it worthwhile, they will participate in due course.”^{403 404}

³⁹⁷ Drinan, Robert. “A hero and a legend in the USA”. *Denis Hurley – a portrait by friends*. Anthony Gamley ed. (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 2001) 127

³⁹⁸ Goemans, Loek. Personal interview by author, 15 October 2020 in Johannesburg (member of The Grail)

³⁹⁹ Irvine, Doug. Personal interview by author, 12 October 2020 in Johannesburg (chair of the Archdiocese of Durban Justice & Peace Commission)

⁴⁰⁰ Frederikse, “Research interview with Paddy Kearney”

⁴⁰¹ SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/H/Press/2 (1969-1980) “Church Unity Week” (*Daily News*, 14 June 1973)

⁴⁰² SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/E/Diakonia/1 “Various speeches about Diakonia by Denis Hurley” (January-May 1974)

⁴⁰³ SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/E/Diakonia/1 “Speech to Archdiocese of Durban Synod by Denis Hurley” (23 May 1974)

⁴⁰⁴ This contrasts to a position expressed by +Hurley many years later in relation to a South African Teilhardist Association (to honour the Jesuit palaeontologist whom the Archbishop so admired) +Hurley specifically declined the invitation to lead

The first press mention of the new agency was in May 1974 and curiously did not say that the organisation will be ecumenical: “The agency will be called Diakonia and will give direction and drive to the Church’s duty to respond to human need (including material need) according to the conditions and circumstances of the time.”⁴⁰⁵

Both of these descriptions could be resonant of that old model of Church unity which is achieved by Catholics taking the lead and others joining in on Catholic terms.

The Ecumenical Model of Diakonia

But, in fact, the nature of the project and the way in which it was then developed by Kearney are, to me, a clear working out of the ecumenical challenge as laid down by Vatican II. UR 4 lists the sequence in which it believes ecumenism should develop: first mutual respect, then ‘dialogue’ and then “the way is prepared for cooperation between [Churches] in the duties for the common good of humanity which are demanded by every Christian conscience”. Significantly, practical co-operation is listed before prayer in common and only the latter is couched with the proviso ‘wherever this is allowed’.⁴⁰⁶

Throughout the document there is hesitation about common prayer and a strong argument against common Eucharist.⁴⁰⁷ But there is no hesitation about the commitment to shared social action and this is worth quoting in full:

In these days when cooperation in social matters is so widespread, all people without exception are called to work together, with much greater reason all those who believe in God, but most of all, all Christians in that they bear the name of Christ. Cooperation among Christians vividly expresses the relationship which in fact already unites them, and it sets in clearer relief the features of Christ the Servant.

This cooperation, which has already begun in many countries, should be developed more and more, particularly in regions where a social and technical evolution is taking place be it in a just evaluation of the dignity of the human person, the establishment of the blessings of peace, the application of Gospel principles to social life, the advancement of the arts and sciences in a truly Christian spirit, or also in the use of various remedies to relieve the afflictions of our times such as famine and natural disasters, illiteracy and poverty, housing shortage and the unequal distribution of wealth.⁴⁰⁸

This whole list (with the possible exception of ‘the advancement of the ...sciences’) could have been an agenda for the newly created Diakonia.

While the Fathers of the Council – even +Hurley – were not at that point envisaging a specific agency like Diakonia, what they did have in mind was that the implementation of ecumenism needed to happen (and was in fact already happening) at the local level: “in many parts of the world, under the

this for fear that it would be seen as purely Catholic. (Tobias, Phillip. “Evolution and Theology: Teilhard de Chardin and Archbishop Denis Hurley”. *Denis Hurley – a portrait by friends*. Anthony Gamley ed. (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 2001) 97)

⁴⁰⁵ SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/H/Press/2 (1969-1980) “Launch of new Church agency” (*Daily News*, 24 May 1974)

⁴⁰⁶ *Unitatis Redintegratio* 4

⁴⁰⁷ *Unitatis Redintegratio* 8

⁴⁰⁸ *Unitatis Redintegratio* 12

inspiring grace of the Holy Spirit, many efforts are being made in prayer, word and action to attain that fullness of unity which Jesus Christ desires.”⁴⁰⁹

Cardinal Cassidy, in his 40th anniversary review of *Unitatis Redintegratio*, reinforces this: “Agreements at the international level bring great joy to those involved but may remain just beautiful documents unless they become part of the life of the local communities.”⁴¹⁰

Sadly, in his résumé of local implementation, all of Cassidy’s examples are from North America, Europe and Australia. He in fact does not even acknowledge the existence of ecumenical life in Africa (or elsewhere) let alone hold it up as an example. This is ironic given that many of his examples of ecumenical best practice – praying together, Good Friday witness, social action, social justice – were being applied in South Africa by Diakonia (and others).

How did Diakonia live out its Ecumenical Vision?

It is interesting that when +Hurley presented the Diakonia project to his Council of Priests in 1974, he used the language of *Unitatis Redintegratio* in recognising two equal but distinct parts of the Church’s life – prayer and service:

As it is the duty of the Church the community of believers, to meet spiritual needs by prayer and preaching, so it is also its responsibility to help meet other human needs by Christian service.⁴¹¹

The unstated implication was that, while we might not be able to meet spiritual needs as a united Church, that did not mean that we could not meet other human needs as a single community of believers.

In this way, Diakonia was responding to the specific challenge of SPRO-CAS that the Churches must overcome disunity since otherwise any stand on unity between races is ‘gravely weakened in principle and in practice’. SPRO-CAS was itself evidence of a way of responding to this challenge through the composition of its own panel and through the fact that it had been established in 1969 by two ecumenical organisations: the SACC and the Christian Institute.

Two years before the founding of Diakonia, SPRO-CAS was recommending ecumenical action in social change and welfare organisations (alongside education, congregations, youth fellowship, Bible study, publications). It mentioned a principle that has become a watchword of the ecumenical movement: “that churches should commit to doing together all those things which conscience does not oblige Christians to do apart”. In other words, the question is not ‘why should we work together?’ but rather ‘why should we not work together?’⁴¹²

In 1981 a few years after its founding, in a long speech to a Catholic audience, +Hurley used Diakonia as an example of how the combined churches could serve marginalised communities. He saw ecumenical action not just as the most effective response but also the unique opportunity for the churches to work together ‘since there were no problems of Church doctrine or discipline to prevent

⁴⁰⁹ *Unitatis Redintegratio* 4

⁴¹⁰ Cassidy, *Rediscovering Vatican II*, 97

⁴¹¹ SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/E/Diakonia/1 “Speech to Archdiocese of Durban Council of Priests by Denis Hurley” (January 1974)

⁴¹² Randall, *SPRO-CAS Vol 8: Apartheid and the Church*, 72

such cooperation'. "Social problems offer the greatest opportunity to Christians to give witness to their faith."⁴¹³

In this speech, +Hurley reviewed a century of Catholic Social Teaching with the usual discussion of *Rerum Novarum* (1891), *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), *Mater et Magistra* (1961) (as well as *Pacem in Terris*), *Gaudium et Spes* (1965), *Populorum Progressio* (1967), *Octogesima Adveniens* (1971) and now John Paul's 90th anniversary encyclical *Laborem Exercens* (in 1981). But he went further than most Catholic bishops might, by pointing out that the growth in social concerns in the Catholic Church was paralleled in other Christian traditions as seen by the work of the WCC.⁴¹⁴

When people were concerned about the political dimension, +Hurley argued:

There is a difference between political concern, which a religion must have if it wishes to be relevant to political morality, and political activism which tends to identify a religion with a political faction. When people say that the Church should not be involved in politics our reply should be: in action? – I could not agree more; in political concern? – I could not agree less.⁴¹⁵

It is beyond the reach of this thesis to present a history of Diakonia⁴¹⁶. But it is worth highlighting some aspects of its development as evidence of the way in which Kearney was able to use this as a vehicle for putting ecumenism into action.

The notion of such an organisation was first floated in 1973, and then publicly explored (with Kearney working as +Hurley's consultant) in 1974-75; it was only in 1976 that the organisation began to act formally. One of the first events was reported in the *Daily News* as follows:⁴¹⁷

Diakonia, a new ecumenical group centred in Durban, knows that people are deeply disturbed by his death [of Joseph Mdluli], and by the amount of people detained and invites the public to attend a service to be held at Emmanuel Cathedral on 5 April 1976.

It went on to describe the purpose of Diakonia as being "to activate the concern of its member churches in the social field and focus this on problem situations and on welfare development and liberation projects."

I see this as Kearney's response – consciously or unconsciously – to the lengthy call quoted above of *Unitatis Redintegratio* 12. The choice of Emmanuel Cathedral as the venue may have been because it was the largest church in central Durban but also allows Diakonia to show clearly that it enjoys the support and patronage of the Catholics who – unusually for that time – are joining in prayer with non-Catholics. The range of Christian traditions involved also shows that the ecumenical intent is serious: mainline churches such as the Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian, United Congregational and Evangelical Lutheran are joined by the predominately black African Methodist Evangelical (AME).

⁴¹³ SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/E/Diakonia/1 "Speech to the South African Council of Catholic Social Services by Denis Hurley" (16 October 1981)

⁴¹⁴ For more on this see Appendix D: "+Hurley the political priest"

⁴¹⁵ SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/E/Diakonia/1 "Speech to the South African Council of Catholic Social Services by Denis Hurley" (16 October 1981)

⁴¹⁶ In fact, it is curious that for such a significant organisation in the life of the Church and of the Struggle, there is very little written on the story of Diakonia. The only history book published by them is a photographic commemoration of 23 years (sic) of the Good Friday service: Diakonia Council of Churches. *Pilgrimage of Hope* (Durban: Diakonia, 2009)

⁴¹⁷ SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/H/Press/2 (1969-1980) (*Daily News*, 26 March 1976)

Kearney himself explains that these were the seven founding members. The choice of +Hurley as Chair (at this stage for just four years though, in the end, for much longer), and that the main funder was the German Catholic organisation Misereor, might depict the organisation as having a Catholic bias. But the original premises were in the Saint Andrews Centre of the Durban Central United Church. Over time, the membership of Diakonia expanded so that by December 1994 there were six additional churches: Coptic Orthodox Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church (Natal-Transvaal), Natal Baptist Convention, Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa, Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), Uniting Reformed Church.⁴¹⁸

Notably missing from this group (apart from the earlier reference to AME) are African Independent Churches (AIC). The failure to draw them into Diakonia is true of the wider ecumenical movement and, for example, AICs are not even referenced in the Kairos document.⁴¹⁹

Kearney was conscious of this especially since, as he commented in 1994, it was the case that few of the clergy of the member churches were operating in the informal settlements where half the four million people of Durban are living: "We will intensify our efforts to encourage our member churches to make these areas a high priority in their pastoral work and encourage them to do so in close collaboration with the indigenous churches."⁴²⁰

The other historic gap had, for obvious reasons been the Dutch Reformed Church (the NGK). In fact, they finally applied for membership in 1994 (the year of the first democratic elections). Deon Snyman (an NGK minister who joined the Diakonia staff in 2003) comments on how happy Kearney was when the NGK joined Diakonia: he speculates that this could have been for theological reasons, institutional reasons or political reasons – or all three. Snyman adds that Kearney was always interested to hear about the Dutch Reformed Church for example, when their 1994 synod made a public apology to both President Mandela and Ds. Naudé.⁴²¹ But for some members of his team, Kearney was perhaps too quick to forgive past sins: his secretary Vanessa Franks recalls that Diakonia staff were surprised that the NGK was invited to join so soon after the elections.⁴²²

Faced with the criticism, Kearney might have used words similar to those who criticised the speed of change in the Church in the years after the Council. Orsy comments:

The history of the post-conciliar years offers quasi-empirical evidence that the Holy Spirit is indeed in charge and active. ...Attitudes of extreme rigidness that pervaded generations of people and communities have literally melted away – if not everywhere, certainly far and wide – and have given way to a disposition of openness and flexibility.⁴²³

Financial Reasons to be Ecumenical

One of the key reasons to be ecumenical was to be able to access a wider set of resources. In this, Diakonia is achieving a specific goal mentioned by SPRO-CAS: "Churches should be ecumenical and

⁴¹⁸ Kearney, *Guardian of the Light*, 196-198

⁴¹⁹ Petersen, Robin M. "The AICs and the TRC: resistance redefined". *Facing the Truth*. James Cochrane et al eds. (Cape Town: David Philip, 1999) 115

⁴²⁰ Kearney, *Guardian of the Light*, 194

⁴²¹ Snyman, Deon. Personal interview by author, 3 January 2021 in Goedgedacht (staff member at Diakonia)

⁴²² Franks, Vanessa. Personal interview by author, 2 October 2020 in Durban (secretary at Diakonia)

⁴²³ Orsy, Ladislav. *Receiving the Council* (Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 2009) 49

multi-functional to make more money available for community development.”⁴²⁴ Whether the word ‘churches’ in this refers to buildings or institutions, the same point is true.

There are many examples of this in the history of Diakonia. One of the best is the Clermont Community Resource Centre which went on to become a model for 14 Community Resource Centres (CRCs) set up around Durban. On the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of Clermont CRC, Kearney paid tribute to the fact that it had an ecumenical nature even at the local level. He explains that the CRC came out of a Catholic desire for a social justice group; that it was originally based in a Lutheran church, and then a Catholic building and that it had received financial support from the Methodist Hudson Trust.⁴²⁵

At the same time that Diakonia was being created, and involving some of the same Catholic lay people, the Archdiocese of Durban was developing its Justice & Peace Commission. Doug Irvine, soon to be the Chair of this, commented that +Hurley’s idea to make Diakonia ecumenical was both a financial and a theological decision and that he was keen to initiate discussions with the other churches to find a model. He points out that there had been no other ecumenical activity in Durban before Diakonia and that the resources for (Catholic) Justice & Peace work were increasingly the ecumenical resources from Diakonia.⁴²⁶

Michael Nuttall – who as Anglican bishop of Natal was one of the Church leaders to be brought on side – also feels that +Hurley’s first desire was to create an agency for social action and that the decision to make it ecumenical was because it would be more effective.⁴²⁷

It should be stressed that for its first two decades, during the Struggle against Apartheid, the ecumenical advantage locally was not so much funds, as access to buildings and people. But at the same time, the ecumenical profile of Diakonia made it a much more appealing destination for funds from overseas donors (ecclesial and secular) who were generally reluctant to support individual denominations (even their own) for fear of accusations of favouritism.

That changed after 1994. Kearney was commenting in a piece he was writing about Diakonia, that it was not sustainable that 90% of their R3 million annual budget came from overseas and that this would be harder to source in future. It is interesting that his recommendation was that there needed to be a focus ‘on local sources and better collaboration between denominations’.⁴²⁸ Ecumenical continues to be an important key to unlocking resources.

Theological Reasons to be Ecumenical

But as +Hurley is quoted as saying above, the ecumenical motivation was not just financial but theological.⁴²⁹

⁴²⁴ Randall, *SPRO-CAS Vol 8: Apartheid and the Church*, 74

⁴²⁵ Kearney, *Faith in Action*, 102-104 (“Thirty Years On: celebrating community service and benefits”, undated but probably around 2005)

⁴²⁶ Irvine, Doug. Personal interview by author, 12 October 2020 in Johannesburg (Chair of the Archdiocese of Durban Justice & Peace Commission)

⁴²⁷ Nuttall, Michael. Personal interview by author, 23 September 2020 in Howick (Emeritus Bishop of Natal)

⁴²⁸ Kearney, G Paddy. “Diakonia”. *Serving Humanity – a Sabbath Reflection*. Stuart Bate ed. (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 1996) 195

⁴²⁹ For more on this see Appendix C: “Interpreting *Gaudium et Spes*”

Again, the reflections of SPRO-CAS a few years before Diakonia was founded, provide a useful way of exploring this. While there were no Catholics involved in writing this document, it is hard to imagine that it was not read by both +Hurley and Kearney as they were developing the idea of Diakonia. In the report *Apartheid and the Church*, we read: “True reconciliation must involve encouraging the frank, honest, open and often painful articulation of resentments and criticisms in mutual dialogue between the groups concerned.”⁴³⁰

It goes on to add that this will be necessary for groups divided by race and culture; but no less necessary for groups divided by denomination within the Christian family. Thus, there is a parallel here with Vatican II which said something similar, albeit from a negative starting point:

Every effort to avoid expressions, judgments and actions which do not represent the condition of our separated brethren with truth and fairness and so make mutual relations with them more difficult.⁴³¹

Again there is a parallel between what UR 7 refers to as the ‘change of heart’ which is necessary for true ecumenism and the need that SPRO-CAS identifies for the Church to break free from ‘internal ideological captivity’ which prevents it playing its role in South African society because of fear, prejudice, despair, conformism, legalism, authoritarianism, wordiness.⁴³²

The words which UR 7 quotes from Scripture when discussing the sins against unity in the Church could equally apply to disunity in South Africa: “If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.”⁴³³

Looking back on this period with the hindsight of 40-50 years, it seems to me that, as Christians were thinking more and more deeply about how to overcome divisions in the country, the divisions within Christ’s Church would have been more and more embarrassing. In other words, the Church could not hope to show the nation a new way of being a nation, unless it could also show that there was a new way of being Church. Cardinal Cassidy points out that the same idea is presented in 1995 in John Paul II’s encyclical on ecumenism, *Ut Unum Sint*, where he stresses that Christians cannot preach reconciliation when they are not reconciled among themselves.⁴³⁴

Nolan had a significant influence on both +Hurley and Kearney (in fact Nolan commented in his interview that he knew that Kearney read and appreciated his books).⁴³⁵ Connections, through the Christian Institute, the Institute for Contextual Theology and the Kairos document, meant that Nolan was a key bridge to the wider Christian resistance (especially beyond Durban). Nolan recalls, for example, that he helped to set up a meeting between +Hurley and Beyers Naudé in Johannesburg; (Kearney also met Naudé in Johannesburg through his link with the Grail community).⁴³⁶ Both +Hurley and Kearney would have known Nolan’s *God in South Africa*: in fact this author has in his possession the copy of this ground-breaking book that Nolan personally inscribed to +Hurley in 1988.⁴³⁷

⁴³⁰ Randall, *SPRO-CAS Vol 8: Apartheid and the Church*, 43

⁴³¹ *Unitatis Redintegratio* 4

⁴³² Randall, *SPRO-CAS Vol 8: Apartheid and the Church*, 18

⁴³³ 1 Jn 1:10

⁴³⁴ Cassidy, *Rediscovering Vatican II*, 42

⁴³⁵ Nolan, Albert. Personal interview by author, 18 Oct 2020 in Boksburg GP (Dominican priest and liberation theologian)

⁴³⁶ Nolan, Albert. Personal interview by author, 18 Oct 2020 in Boksburg GP (Dominican priest and liberation theologian)

⁴³⁷ Update October 2022”, *Denis Hurley Centre website* <http://www.denishurleycentre.org/page/hurley-centre-newsletters> (accessed 26 November 2022)

In this book, Nolan offers a description of this emerging new Church and some of the experiments in 'new ways of being' that were being tried in practice. Although operating at the other side of the country, Nolan knew what was happening at Diakonia and, though he does not name it, his words could be applied to this Durban agency:

God's saving power, somewhat like sin, is objectified or embodied in new structures: church communities but also political organisations. Structures of true power that embody the right use of power: the power of service, the power of sharing, the power of solidarity and love, the power of faith and commitment, the power of hope.⁴³⁸

While one part of the Church, or one denomination, could try to exemplify this, it is clearly more effective if it is the action of different parts of the Church working together.

Kjell Nordstokke, who was for many years the representative of a Norwegian funder of Diakonia, wrote a retrospective appreciation of the role that the organisation had had in showing what might be possible:

..this indignation implies a vision that the situation can be altered: something can be done about the distress and pain.... Diakonia may be described as a practical effort to change the situation of people in distress. It is an action deeply rooted in the vision of the creative force of action, a principle which is founded in Jesus.....who puts everything right.⁴³⁹

Even someone from outside the Church structures – albeit a man who uses religious imagery as the title of his book⁴⁴⁰ – sees the importance that religion plays in not just calling for, but actually attempting to exemplify, the new society that is sought. In *The Eye of the Needle* Rick Turner writes:

Religion challenges the common-sense tendency to be committed to the present, to see the world as we experience it now as the only possible form of reality. ... The transcendent ethic demands that we question our taken-for-granted ways of behaving that we continually question them.⁴⁴¹

It would be appealing if we could see some culturally *African*, as opposed to specifically *South African*, theological justification for ecumenism. Kiernan asserts that this vision of a united Church is especially appealing to African Christians because he argues: "though divided by denomination these are not divisions of their choosing and that often they are more ready to join in ecumenical undertakings."⁴⁴² But he does not provide clear evidence to support this and the proliferation of African-initiated denominations would suggest there is as much cultural momentum towards fission as fusion.

Two people who worked closely with Kearney at Diakonia elaborate on the theological and philosophical advantages of ecumenism over the purely practical ones. Mike Vorster, a Methodist minister and later the area bishop, worked at Diakonia on and off from 1984 to 2002. He says:

⁴³⁸ Nolan, Albert. *God in South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1988) 115

⁴³⁹ Nordstokke, Kjell. *Through the Mud – reflections on Diakonia* (Durban: Diakonia Council of Churches/ Oslo: Diakonhjemmet Hospital & College, 2000) 43

⁴⁴⁰ Mt 19:23: I have tried and failed to find an explanation for why an avowed atheist chose to draw on a famous Gospel passage for the name of this book. See for example: Egan, Anthony: "Remembering to think critically: Rick Turner 40 years on". *Spotlight Africa*. <https://spotlight.africa/2018/01/08/thinking-rick-turner/> (accessed 24 March 2022)

⁴⁴¹ Turner, Rick. *Eye of the Needle* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1980) 17 (Note that this was first published as part of SPRO-CAS in 1972.)

⁴⁴² Kiernan, James. "African and Christian: from Opposition to Mutual Accommodation". *Christianity in South Africa*. Martin Prozesky ed. (Bergville: Southern, 1990) 24

“Paddy really believed in the ecumenical movement as a force for change; for him it was more than just using a united Church as a means to achieve certain ends.”⁴⁴³

Anne McKay is a Catholic lay woman who worked as communications officer of Diakonia from 1987 commented: “Though Paddy was always 100% Catholic, his ecumenism was hugely inspirational. He worked hard to bring in all faith groups because of the cross-pollination of ideas which was made possible by the Ecumenical Centre.”⁴⁴⁴

Combining the theological and the practical was one of Kearney’s great skills, especially if it could be done in a bold gesture that others could understand. One example of this (recalled by another former Methodist Bishop, Norman Hudson, and his wife Estelle) was the request by Kearney to construct an *mjondolo* (a South African shack) in the vestibule of the Central Methodist Church to house the Holy Family during a Christmas service. The presence of this inside a church, and the requirement that congregants had to walk through this on the way to receiving communion, was something that Kearney would have known a Methodist minister might accommodate but a Catholic priest probably would not.⁴⁴⁵

How did Kearney achieve a Model of Ecumenism at Diakonia?

Vatican II’s document states: “This Sacred Council is gratified to note that the participation by the Catholic faithful in ecumenical work is growing daily. It commends this work to the bishops everywhere in the world to be vigorously stimulated by them and guided with prudence.”⁴⁴⁶

Kearney was foremost among members of the Catholic faithful in South Africa participating in ecumenical work and he was certainly stimulated and guided by his bishop, +Hurley.

He was also not afraid to walk the delicate line that is summarised in the closing paragraph of the document: “Their [the faithful’s] ecumenical action must be fully and sincerely Catholic, that is to say, faithful to the truth which we have received from the apostles and Fathers of the Church, in harmony with the faith which the Catholic Church has always professed, *and at the same time* directed toward that fullness to which Our Lord wills His Body to grow in the course of time..”

How did he achieve this? Catholics who worked with Kearney at Diakonia noticed the way in which he carried his ecumenical mandate.

Fred Cason was on the Board of the Ecumenical Centre in the 1980s while his wife Marylyn worked as a volunteer in the same period. She recalls: “Paddy was so respectful of everyone which is what made him wonderful ecumenically. Anything done at Diakonia was done incorporating different denominations, even to the point of inviting an NGK minister to the building in the 1980s.”⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴³ Vorster, Mike. Personal interview by author, 16 March 2021 in Durban (Methodist Bishop and co-worker at Diakonia)

⁴⁴⁴ McKay, Anne. Personal interview by author, 21 October 2021 in Durban (co-worker at Diakonia from 1987)

⁴⁴⁵ Hudson, Norman and Estelle. Personal interview by author, 18 September 2020 in Durban (Methodist Bishop and wife)

⁴⁴⁶ *Unitatis Redintegratio* 5

⁴⁴⁷ Cason, Fred and Marylyn. Personal interview by author, 21 January 2022 via Zoom (Supporters of Diakonia and friends)

Eric Apelgren first encountered Kearney as a young and zealous Catholic youth worker. He says that Kearney showed him it was not a matter of choosing between being Catholic and being ecumenical: “At Diakonia I learnt a lot about being ecumenical – while still being loyal to my Catholic faith.”⁴⁴⁸

A similar ecumenical ease was noticed by non-Catholics. Paul Graham, as the Methodist youth coordinator in Durban in the 1970s, was working with Diakonia. He points out that because Kearney was a lay person (i.e. not a priest or bishop) he did not come with ‘the trappings of Catholicism’. “As a result, the Methodists never saw Diakonia as a Catholic space.”⁴⁴⁹

Another Methodist, Norman Hudson, in fact at one time the local bishop and chair of Diakonia, commented: “Paddy was never conscious of his Catholic status; we just felt we were journeying together as Christians.”⁴⁵⁰

One Anglican priest, Andrew Warmback, who was a staff member of Diakonia from 2000 but had been involved as a volunteer since the 1980s, pointed out that Kearney created a very attractive organisation which exuded a warm sense of belonging. “Diakonia was a community, a movement, a theology; it was a place of learning, a place of mobilisation, of welcome, of acceptance. We were able to draw in people because they all felt welcome.” Warmback points out that while Kearney was obviously Catholic because of his reputation, he was never sectarian. “He never quoted a Pope; if anything he deferred more to other denominational writings. He never spoke of Church union or reunification; he always focused on common issues.”⁴⁵¹

By acting in this way, Kearney was responding to the words of Vatican II: “Whatever is truly Christian is never contrary to what genuinely belongs to the faith; indeed, it can always bring a deeper realisation of the mystery of Christ and the Church.”⁴⁵²

I believe that Kearney was able to act ecumenically with such ease because he felt in doing so he was moving towards the deeper truth of the faith and not weakening his sense of Catholic identity. In this regard, he had the support of both the letter and the spirit of the Council. In the opening address to the Council, John XXIII stresses (as is customary) the importance of continuity with the past; he wishes “to transmit pure and complete, without attenuations or deformations, the doctrine that for twenty centuries, in spite of difficulties and of struggles, it has become the common heritage of men”.⁴⁵³

But he also offers some room for manoeuvre with a previously unvoiced distinction that could open up opportunities for further discussion. After stressing at length the need for the Council (like all councils) to show ‘fidelity to authentic doctrine’, the Pope then also recognised a distinction between ‘the substance of the old doctrine, the *depositum fidei*’ and ‘the way to formulate its expression’. This difference, if you like, between form and content meant that in the ecumenical field (my example) there could be a recognition of the doctrinal importance of governance in the Church while allowing that its expression in terms of forms of episcopacy could vary between churches.⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁴⁸ Apelgren, Eric. Personal interview by author, 6 October 2020 in Durban (volunteer at Diakonia)

⁴⁴⁹ Graham, Paul. Personal interview by author, 13 October 2020 in Johannesburg (Methodist youth worker)

⁴⁵⁰ Hudson, Norman and Estelle. Personal interview by author, 18 September 2020 in Durban (Methodist Bishop and wife)

⁴⁵¹ Warmback, Andrew. Personal interview by author, 21 October 2020 in Durban (Anglican priest and co-worker at Diakonia)

⁴⁵² *Unitatis Redintegratio* 4

⁴⁵³ *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia* 6

⁴⁵⁴ *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia* 6

Perhaps John XXIII's words inspired +Hurley, as early as October 1962, to argue *in aula* that in the Message to the World (that will be presented as the first document from the Council), 'the reference to papal primacy be dropped to take into account the sensitivities of the non-believers and of the 'separated brethren'.⁴⁵⁵ Vatican I had been almost solely focused on papal primacy; 100 years later +Hurley has the courage to suggest that it should not be highlighted in a key message from Vatican II.

A similar idea then appears in the Council document on ecumenism:

When comparing doctrines with one another, they should remember that in Catholic doctrine there exists a 'hierarchy' of truths, since they vary in their relation to the fundamental Christian faith. Thus the way will be opened by which, through fraternal rivalry, all will be stirred to a deeper understanding and a clearer presentation of the unfathomable riches of Christ.⁴⁵⁶

Faggioli comments that the 'hierarchy of truths' is something which 'played remarkably well with ecumenical observers'.⁴⁵⁷ Although, over 400 years earlier, Erasmus (who never left the Catholic Church) had been using this terminology, Cassidy goes as far as to claim that the adoption of the phrase was something that was a direct result of the influence of the non-Catholic observers on the Council Fathers.⁴⁵⁸ As with the distinction between a fundamental doctrine and its outward expression, this recognition that not all truths are equal provided much rich ground for ecumenical dialogue.

It also, of course, creates scope for confusion and disappointment. Some Catholics (and Paul Nadal hinted at this in his interview⁴⁵⁹) might have felt that Kearney was "not being Catholic enough" in his engagement with non-Catholics. They could have invoked on their side the call of the Council: "At the same time, the Catholic faith must be explained more profoundly and precisely, in such a way and in such terms as our separated brethren can also really understand."⁴⁶⁰

Kearney might have pointed out that document calls on Catholics to help the separated brethren to understand – not necessarily to convert!

Another way of looking at how Kearney lived his ecumenism is in the pattern of who made up the staff base of Diakonia. As Warmback pointed out, Paddy was 'obviously' a Catholic; but the then Anglican bishop, Michael Nuttall, sees Kearney's appointment as director not as a bid by +Hurley to secure the job for a Catholic but rather as 'a prophetic move'.⁴⁶¹

The second employee of Diakonia was also a Catholic (and black and a woman which will be discussed in Chapter 4). But Liz Mkame points out that she was unusual for a Catholic woman of that period in having had some experience of ecumenism from working in the YWCA and with the Youth Department of the Methodist Church. (Indeed she attended a Methodist Synod at which she was invited to share in the sacraments: she explained that she initially felt uncomfortable about this, but then prayed over the matter and received. Later, in 1992, Mkame served a 7-year term on the

⁴⁵⁵ Denis, Philippe. "Archbishop Hurley's contribution to the Second Vatican Council". *Bulletin for Contextual Theology* (1997, 4:1) 9

⁴⁵⁶ *Unitatis Redintegratio* 11

⁴⁵⁷ Faggioli, *Vatican II - the Battle for meaning*, 40

⁴⁵⁸ Cassidy, *Rediscovering Vatican II*, 10

⁴⁵⁹ Nadal, Paul. Personal interview by author, 26 October 2020 in Durban (Vicar-General to +Hurley and Patron/ Trustee at Denis Hurley Centre)

⁴⁶⁰ *Unitatis Redintegratio* 11

⁴⁶¹ Nuttall, Michael. Personal interview by author, 23 September 2020 in Howick (Emeritus Bishop of Natal)

World Council of Churches.) It was Liz's initiative to start a local Social Action Committee (which became the foundation of the Community Resource Centres) and these were formed by drawing together local people from a range of churches.⁴⁶²

Daphne Goad who joined Diakonia in 1986, points out that she was only the 3rd Catholic (after Kearney and Liz Mkame) and that Kearney was keen to keep the balance of faiths so that there were by then 15 staff members from other Christian traditions.⁴⁶³

One of those non-Catholics was Hester Joseph, a woman who had been brought up in the Pentecostal 'Assemblies of God'. When she joined in 1978 (as Ecumenical Centre Administrator) she was the first staff member from a non-mainline church person and she felt that Kearney was especially keen to welcome her because of that.⁴⁶⁴ Jane Argall, an employee from 1990, was an Anglican but one who had had ecumenical experience having been librarian at FedSem before she went to be work as librarian at the Ecumenical Centre.⁴⁶⁵

This mix of staff would have been true of other ecumenical organisations; though perhaps Kearney felt that as Director and with a fellow Catholic, +Hurley, as Chair it was even more important to demonstrate diversity in the recruitment process. The friendships which developed as a result meant that by spending time together some of the fears and prejudices that might have existed between different Christians could be overcome. Again as Philippe Denis put it:

There is nothing better for the development of friendship and mutual respect than a common enemy.⁴⁶⁶

Something similar, though not as intense, happened at Vatican II when the Council Fathers interacted with non-Catholic observers. At a special service to thank them in the final days of the Council (at St Paul Outside the Walls on 4 December 1965), Paul VI commented:

We have gotten to know you a little better...We have recognised certain failings...Our Ecumenical Council has taken steps in your direction in many ways...we have begun to love each other once again. ...Keep in mind that the truth rules over all of us and sets us free, and also that truth is close, very close, to love.⁴⁶⁷

These are words that could easily have been spoken to Diakonia staff by +Hurley or by Kearney.

Fred Cason points out that this was a time when everyone working for an organisation like Diakonia faced real threats to their lives and safety.⁴⁶⁸ Thus, these words from Vatican II as a principle of ecumenical solidarity were coming true: "It is right and salutary to recognise the riches of Christ and virtuous works in the lives of others who are bearing witness to Christ, sometimes even to the shedding of their blood."⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶² Mkame, Liz. Personal interview by author, 17 December 2020 in Durban (co-worker at Diakonia)

⁴⁶³ Goad, Daphne. Personal interview by author, 29 October 2020 in Durban (co-worker at Diakonia)

⁴⁶⁴ Joseph, Hester. Personal interview by author, 17 March 2021 in Durban (co-worker at Ecumenical Centre and Trustee at Denis Hurley Centre). In fact, in 2005, Joseph did become a Catholic.

⁴⁶⁵ Argall, Jane. Personal interview by author, 8 October 2020 in Durban (librarian at Diakonia, co-editor of Hurley's letters)

⁴⁶⁶ Denis, "Vatican II in Southern Africa", 2

⁴⁶⁷ Girault, "The Reception of Ecumenism", 140

⁴⁶⁸ Cason, Fred. Personal interview by author, 21 January 2022 via Zoom (Trustee of Ecumenical Centre)

⁴⁶⁹ *Unitatis Redintegratio* 4

Such mixing (not just between denominations but also between ‘races’) was something that Diakonia in turn promoted in the wider world. The famous exposure immersions, whereby clergy and congregation members would go and spend a week living with a different family, not only crossed the grotesquely named ‘colour bar’ but also the equally hard (if less visible) lines of denomination.⁴⁷⁰ One can only wonder at the sense of shock and, one hopes pleasant surprise, after an Indian Methodist spent a week living with a white Catholic priest, or a coloured Anglican vicar stayed with a black Pentecostal, as Daphne Goad recalls.⁴⁷¹

This not only happened in South Africa but even overseas. Jacques Briard, who worked for the Belgian Catholic agency *Entraide et Fraternité* who were donors to Diakonia over many years, recalls vividly, 30 years after the event, the experience of Diakonia sending an Anglican woman priest Sue Britton to stay with them for several weeks to see democracy in action. “She was an Anglican but one of the good sort!”⁴⁷²

Another reason for the success of ecumenism at Diakonia was the ability of Kearney to live with the humility and open-mindedness that is the spirit of *Unitatis Redintegratio*. The man who went on to lead the KZN Christian Council recalls his first experience of working with Kearney in 1996. Dziva had been appointed to do some research on ecumenical movements including Diakonia, PACSA (see below) and the KZN 1994 Churches election programme. He expected Kearney to be very welcoming, and open-minded to ecumenism and he more than matched his reputation. But he also assumed that Kearney would not want to be part of a new ecumenical initiative because Diakonia had so much experience. Whereas Dziva felt that some of the Diakonia staff were ‘a bit snooty’ about this new venture, he was struck at how humble Kearney was and how open to new possibilities.⁴⁷³

Loek Goemans, a Catholic with a keen personal commitment to ecumenism as a member of the Grail, comments that Kearney went out of his way to find other than Catholic ways to do things and how overjoyed he was whenever Diakonia membership expanded, especially beyond the mainline churches.⁴⁷⁴

Accepting the need both to take initiative and to be open to the initiatives of others, is what placed Kearney in a good position to promote ecumenism. It is a far cry from the drawbridge mentality of the Catholic Church established in the Counter-Reformation and so it is worth quoting (as Cardinal Cassidy does) the conciliatory words of Paul VI when marking the 4th centenary of the Council of Trent in a speech in St Peter’s in March 1964:

Ecumenism – not constituting a frontier, but opening a door; not closing a dialogue, but keeping it open; not blaming for errors, but seeking virtue; not waiting for those who have not come for four centuries, but going to look for them in a brotherly way.⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁷⁰ For more on the Exposure Visits see Chapter 4.

⁴⁷¹ Goad, Daphne. Personal interview by author, 29 October 2020 in Durban (co-worker at Diakonia)

⁴⁷² Briard, Jacques. Personal interview by author, 17 January 2022 via Zoom (manager at *Entraide et Fraternité*, Belgium-based donor)

⁴⁷³ Dziva, Doug. Personal interview by author, 15 March 2021 in Pietermaritzburg (Director of KZNCC)

⁴⁷⁴ Goemans, Loek. Personal interview by author, 15 October 2020 in Johannesburg (member of The Grail)

⁴⁷⁵ Cassidy, *Rediscovering Vatican II*, 121

Links with the wider Ecumenical Movement

Let us then consider the place of Kearney and of Diakonia in the wider inter-church movement in South Africa.

Frank Chikane (a minister from the Pentecostal tradition) was Secretary-General of the SACC from 1987 to 1994. Even though during the period Diakonia was not formally a part of SACC, Chikane saw at first-hand how people participated at Diakonia without thinking about denomination. He calls it 'one of the most ecumenical organisations'. "Kearney symbolised that and the principle that, though you might belong to different denominations, you are working for the people."⁴⁷⁶

At one level, there is a pleasing coincidence of names. Diakonia was by 1978 based in a building renamed the Ecumenical Centre in Durban. Meanwhile, the SACC headquarters in Braamfontein, Johannesburg was called 'Diakonia House' and the Christian Institute had a branch office in the 'Ecumenical Centre' in Mowbray Cape Town.⁴⁷⁷

Nolan says that what stands out about Kearney is that he did not belong to any of the other ecumenical institutions until Diakonia came along. Unlike others involved in the movement, Kearney had not been part of the Institute for Contextual Theology (ICT, founded in Johannesburg in 1981), the Christian Institute (in place since 1963) or even the Young Christian Workers (YCW) or Young Christian Students (YCS).⁴⁷⁸ Nolan is surprised that Kearney, who would have been aware of all of these, had not joined them.⁴⁷⁹ However, Irvine points out that Kearney was involved in the work of the Archdiocese of Durban Justice & Peace Commission's investigation following the 1973 Durban Dock Strikes and that YCW were also part of that.⁴⁸⁰

By 1977, the Schlebusch Commission had outlawed the Christian Institute and placed a banning order on many of its leaders including Beyers Naudé. It is tempting to see Diakonia as a way of continuing the work of Christian Institute in Durban. But Nolan feels that that is not really the case even though there was some similarity in the work and the ethos.⁴⁸¹

A more obvious successor to the Christian Institute in KZN was PACSA (originally called the 'Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness' and many years later becoming the 'Pietermaritzburg Agency for Community Social Action'). Mary Gardner, the widow of Professor Colin Gardner (the last Chair of the Christian Institute) draws the link, pointing out also that the secretary of the CI in Pietermaritzburg had been Joan Kerchhoff and it was her husband Peter who went on to found PACSA.⁴⁸² This is also expressed in a book (and exhibition) on the history of PACSA, on the occasion of its 30th anniversary in 2007.⁴⁸³

+Nuttall confirms this, stating that PACSA was formed in the wake of the Soweto uprising of 1976 and the banning of the Christian Institute in 1977. From its beginning he says that there were close

⁴⁷⁶ Chikane, Frank. Personal interview by author, 14 September 2021 via Zoom (Secretary General of SACC 1987-94)

⁴⁷⁷ Ryan, *Beyers Naudé*, 163, 187

⁴⁷⁸ Both of these movements were inspired by Joseph Cardijn who had in fact visited South Africa in the 1950s. Some credit him with having played an important role on the Commission that drafted the document on the laity. However, he only became a conciliar *peritus* in 1963 and he was, in 1965, several times absent from Rome. See: Worlock, Derek J H. "Toil in the Lord: the Laity in Vatican II". *Vatican II Revisited: by those who were there*. Alberic Stacpoole ed. (London: G Chapman, 1986). 241

⁴⁷⁹ Nolan, Albert. Personal interview by author, 19 October 2020 in Boksburg (Dominican priest and liberation theologian)

⁴⁸⁰ Irvine, Doug. Personal interview by author, 12 October 2020 in Johannesburg (Chair of the Archdiocese of Durban Justice & Peace Commission)

⁴⁸¹ Nolan, Albert. Personal interview by author, 19 October 2020 in Boksburg (Dominican priest and liberation theologian)

⁴⁸² Gardner, Mary. Personal interview by author, 2 October 2020 in Pietermaritzburg (widow of Colin Gardner)

⁴⁸³ Inglis, John. *Journeying for Justice* (Pietermaritzburg: PACSA, 2007)

links between PACSA and +Hurley and to 'the Durban-based ecumenical organisation Diakonia led by Paddy Kearney'.⁴⁸⁴ Tim Nuttall (not the bishop) comments: "Peter Kerchhoff [of PACSA] and Paddy Kearney of Diakonia became close friends and the two organisations collaborated on a number of joint initiatives during these years."⁴⁸⁵

This contribution is in a *Festschrift* celebrating Peter Kerchhoff after his untimely death in a road accident in 1999. Writing in the same book, Kearney calls them 'similar sister organisations' and explains that he and Kerchhoff first met in the early 70s during an ecumenical campaign for domestic workers and were then involved together in the annual Vow Day reconciliation events.⁴⁸⁶

The two went on to be joint secretaries of the Natal Church Leaders Group (CLG) in the 1980s.⁴⁸⁷ But there were some important differences, not least in terms of personality as explained by Joan Kerchhoff, Peter's widow.⁴⁸⁸ Kerchhoff was an Anglican, and later took Holy Orders as a Deacon; Kearney even when a religious was not seeking Orders (see Chapter 2). PACSA was an organisation of like-minded individuals that was directly engaged in social action itself; Diakonia was an organisation of denominations that was generally not directly engaged itself but instead supporting its member churches to take action.

As the Struggle continued, more and more of the energy of the churches in Natal and nationally was directed through ecumenical organisations. Thus, in 1985 when John Paul II invited a South African delegation to the Vatican to brief him especially on the controversy over sanctions, George Daniel recalls that the small group of Catholic bishops was joined by the Anglican +Tutu and the Methodist Khoza Mgojo.⁴⁸⁹

But though Archbishop Daniel (himself a former Anglican) was personally very committed to ecumenism (as evidenced by the title of his cited autobiography), he himself admits that the emergence of ecumenical meetings in Pretoria came only as late as 1989.⁴⁹⁰ Meanwhile in Cape Town, ecumenical activity, according to Sydney Duval, was mostly under the SACC.⁴⁹¹ For example, it is striking to note that a major NGO in Cape Town that was founded in 1970 and covered some of the same areas of concern as Diakonia was specifically not ecumenical which is highlighted by its name, 'Catholic Welfare and Development'.⁴⁹²

To understand why some Catholic bishops were less inclined to prioritise ecumenical activity, the words of +Van Velsen's successor as Bishop of Kroonstad are insightful (as quoted by a politician reminiscing about him): "It is important that Catholicism should not be a crown we wear on our head as a decoration, but rather a very active grappling with the problems that confront the people and

⁴⁸⁴ Note that while their respective dioceses had different geographies, both embraced the two major cities and, though +Nuttall was based in Pietermaritzburg and +Hurley in Durban, the distance between the two is only 75km.

⁴⁸⁵ Nuttall, Tim. "From Pressure Group to Liberation Organisation, 1979-90". *Hope Beyond Apartheid*. Lou Levine ed. (Pietermaritzburg: PACSA, 2002) 11, 20

⁴⁸⁶ Kearney, G Paddy. "Champion of the 'Little People'". *Hope Beyond Apartheid*. Lou Levine ed. (Pietermaritzburg: PACSA, 2002) 218-220

⁴⁸⁷ Mbona, Michael. "The Church as a peace broker: the case of the Natal Church Leaders' Group and political violence in KwaZulu-Natal (1990-1994)", *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* (2011, 37.2) 245-269

⁴⁸⁸ Kerchhoff, Joan. Personal interview by author, 6 April 2022 in Pietermaritzburg (widow of Peter Kerchhoff)

⁴⁸⁹ Daniel, George. *That they may be One* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 2015) 114

⁴⁹⁰ Daniel, *That they may be One*, 118

⁴⁹¹ Duval, Sydney. Personal interview by author, 2 January 2021 in Cape Town (friend over many decades)

⁴⁹² Du Plessis, Tracy. "The Activities of Catholic Welfare and Development". *Serving Humanity – a Sabbath Reflection*. Stuart Bate ed. (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 1996)

trying in all ways possible to make life better for others.”⁴⁹³ Bishop Brenninkmeijer’s words imply that many bishops and lay Catholics are too content to just wear the crown.

Perhaps because of +Hurley, Natal (now KZN) was ahead of the other Provinces in its ecumenical developments. In a front page of *The Southern Cross* from 1983 there is a call by +Hurley for a large scale national Christian conference ‘to promote political attitudes conducive to peace’.⁴⁹⁴ He is clearly looking for a national expansion of the work of places like Diakonia and PACSA. The importance of these two can be seen in a list by Bate who places Diakonia and PACSA alongside national institutions like SACC, TEEC (a distance-learning theological college) and the ICT. Part of his explanation for the paucity of ecumenical activity is that, at the grass roots level, denominationalism persisted leading to wasted duplication of services.⁴⁹⁵

The national conference that +Hurley envisaged never took place, but in 1985 there was a national ecumenical initiative that caught people’s notice. The ICT, a theological think-tank, produced the famous Kairos Statement. Nolan, who was a member of ICT and hugely influential in the Kairos document, compares ICT to Diakonia as a place “where Catholics were at the heart of the ecumenical conversation in a way that they were not at the SACC”.⁴⁹⁶

The initiators of the first version of the Kairos statement were highly diverse according to Philippe Denis who has done extensive analysis of the process of its writing: Frank Chikane (Apostolic Faith Mission), Albert Nolan (Catholic), Bonganjalo Goba (UCC), Allan Boesak (Dutch Reformed), Itumeleng Mosala (Methodist), Smangaliso Mkhathshwa (Catholic). They in turn brought together a collective of over 50 people from across the Christian spectrum to collaborate as authors. And, when issued, Kairos had 155 signatories from a wide range of denominations: Anglican Church (30), Methodist Church (24), Roman Catholic Church (22), United Church of Southern Africa (13), Reformed (25), Lutheran (16), Presbyterian (11), African independent (9) Pentecostal (4) and Baptist (1). [Denis does point that the diversity was less evident in terms of gender (89% male), status (91% clerics) and culture (67% European-sounding names).]⁴⁹⁷

Noticeably missing from that list of signatories were +Denis Hurley and Kearney.⁴⁹⁸ Sadly, Kearney is silent on whether they declined the invitation to sign or if they were never invited. It is worth noting though that the majority of signatories were in the area now known as Gauteng and that – with the only means of remote communication being the phone and post both of which were easily intercepted, caution alone would have argued against spreading the net too wide. However, on a visit to London in 2005 to research the +Hurley biography, he interviewed Maggie Peterson (whom he described as a communist) and in his personal diary notes he comments: “She stressed her and Frank Chikane’s disappointment that the Archbishop declined to be a signatory of the Kairos

⁴⁹³ Lekota, Mosiuoa. “A Shepherd of the People”. *The Bridge Builder - a tribute to Bishop Hans Brenninkmeijer*. Philippe Denis & Kees Keijsper eds. (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 2005) Though referenced by his real first name, Mosiuoa, this anti-Apartheid activist is better known by the name, ‘Terror’ Lekota, a reference to his fierceness not in politics but on the football field. It is interesting to note that his middle names were Gerard Patrick, almost the same as the forenames of Kearney. Despite the difference in age and ‘race’, they were linked by the use of traditional Catholic names of their generation!

⁴⁹⁴ SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/H/Press/3 (1981-1987) (*The Southern Cross*, 10 July 1983)

⁴⁹⁵ Bate, Stuart. “Signs of the Spirit in the New (Southern) Time”. *Serving Humanity – a Sabbath Reflection*. Stuart Bate ed. (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 1996) 24

⁴⁹⁶ Nolan, Albert. Personal interview by author, 19 October 2020 in Boksburg (Dominican priest and liberation theologian)

⁴⁹⁷ Denis, Philippe. “The Authorship and Composition Circumstances of the Kairos Document”. *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* (2017: 158) 12, 15

⁴⁹⁸ For more on this see Appendix D: “+Hurley the political priest”

documents and the Road to Damascus.”⁴⁹⁹ Kearney does, however, point out that +Hurley used the document a year later as a way of trying to galvanize response from the SACBC.⁵⁰⁰

Later, in reviewing the Struggle period, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) is very clear about the role of the churches. They were victims of oppression and they were also among the agents of oppression (through acts of commission, of legitimisation and of omission). And they were also opponents of oppression (on ‘a Continuum of opposition’). The TRC held three days of submissions from 28 faith representatives on 17-19 November 1997 in East London. In addition, there were 70 written submissions from faith groups. It is regrettable that while the ICT, and much smaller organisations like Hatfield Christian Church or Rosebank Union Church made submissions, Diakonia did not (and nor, as individuals, did either +Hurley or Kearney.)⁵⁰¹

When Kearney finally retired from Diakonia in 2004 he might have had an opportunity to extend his ecumenical enthusiasm nationally. Snyman believes that he applied to be Deputy Secretary General of the SACC.⁵⁰² But Kearney was at least able to broaden the ecumenical movement within Natal.

First there was the merger in 1994 of Diakonia with the Durban & District Council of Churches (D&DCC) to form what then becomes ‘Diakonia Council of Churches’. They covered the same geographic area, had the same member churches, had similar constitutions and were engaged in similar work. But, Mike Vorster (who was later Methodist Bishop) points out, since D&DCC was part of the SACC, there had been no Catholic involvement and so this merger was a necessary step towards fuller integration.⁵⁰³ Kearney himself compares the merger with other amalgamations that were happening in South Africa at the time such as between the Provinces and Homelands.⁵⁰⁴

This having been done, Kearney now had the first piece in a jigsaw of creating of what Dziva calls ‘the most vibrant ecumenical framework in the country’: a provincial Christian Council (KZNCC) plus the CLG (mentioned above) and regional organisations covering different parts of the Province (TAMCC, KRCC, SKZNCC and MCC) to join Diakonia Council of Churches (with its focus on Durban). Kearney’s role was not just institutional but also personal, mentoring the leaders and the chairs of the organisations (including new Anglican bishops like +Rubin Philip and +Dino Gabriel). He was able to do this because of his openness and his humility. Dziva draws a contrast with post-Kearney dealings with Diakonia when their Chair and Director were belittling of the KZNCC. He describes Kearney as ‘the shining torch in terms of human relations and ecumenical development and the growth of churches’.⁵⁰⁵

In Kearney’s own 2016 paper about the regional structure, he stresses the importance of ‘subsidiarity’ and calls for decision-making to be devolved to the level that is as close as possible to the communities and people who are served by the structure in question.

In the case of the regional Christian structures in KZN, this would mean that programmes and projects could really respond to the priority concerns of the communities they served. This would give the local church full ownership and full responsibility for this organisation

⁴⁹⁹ SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/D/1 “Morning Pages: May-July 2005” (30 May 2005, London)

⁵⁰⁰ Kearney, *Guardian of the Light*, 239

⁵⁰¹ Cochrane, James et al eds. *Facing the Truth* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1999) 50, 15-80

⁵⁰² Snyman, Deon. Personal interview by author, 3 January 2021 in Goedgedacht (co-worker at Diakonia)

⁵⁰³ Vorster, Mike. Personal interview by author, 16 March 2021 in Durban (co-worker at Diakonia, later Methodist Bishop Natal Coastal and Patron of Denis Hurley Centre)

⁵⁰⁴ Kearney, “Diakonia”, 192

⁵⁰⁵ Dziva, Doug. Personal interview by author, 15 March 2021 in Pietermaritzburg (Director of KZNCC)

and give it their full support. Independence is ultimately a question of deepening democracy which requires decentralised decision making.⁵⁰⁶

As with the creation of Diakonia 20 years earlier, Kearney is creating Church organisations that can provide what he sees as a model for wider South African society: inclusive, diverse, democratic, community-based, decentralised.

The fear of centralisation is something that Kearney sees as an obstacle to growth and something which +Hurley himself highlights. In an interview with the *Sunday Times* +Hurley is asked if the ordination of women (by the Anglican Church in South Africa from 1992) is an obstacle to the ecumenical movement. He replies: “the true obstacle to organic unity between the Catholic and Anglican churches is the centralisation of authority in Rome in recent years.”⁵⁰⁷

Managing difference within Diakonia

In a centralised system – such as the Catholic Church of which +Hurley and Kearney were a part – difference is managed by the dominant voice excluding others. In the decentralised model of Diakonia a different approach was needed.

Dziva and other interviewees stressed Kearney’s remarkable ability to chair a meeting at which different opinions were being voiced. He would not dominate the meeting but instead listen attentively and give each person time to speak their opinion. At the end, he would then sum up and communicate clearly a conclusion that all could buy in to.⁵⁰⁸

In situations where this was unlikely to be the case, he would manage to side-step the area of controversy. Mike Vorster recalls a Presbyterian leader wanting Diakonia to make an anti-abortion stand but Kearney avoiding it fearing that it would cause disunity within Diakonia. Kearney’s position of silence on abortion enabled him to stay friends with all the Church leaders. Another example Vorster gives is how on the issue of condoms and AIDS, Diakonia staff came back from research in East Africa endorsing the ABC response.⁵⁰⁹ But at the same time Diakonia did not promote or distribute condoms knowing that this would alienate Catholic (and some other) supporters.⁵¹⁰

Dina Cormick, who designed artwork for Diakonia over many years, sums this up by saying: “Paddy didn’t want Diakonia to be too radical, to offend people.”⁵¹¹

Praying Together

But one hard-to-avoid area of controversy for any ecumenical organisation was the contentious question of praying together. As was pointed out earlier, Vatican II had already highlighted that this

⁵⁰⁶ Kearney, *Faith in Action*, 34 (“The KZNCC Independence Process”, 2016)

⁵⁰⁷ SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/H/Press/4 (1988-2002). (*Sunday Times*, 7 March 1993)

⁵⁰⁸ Dziva, Doug. Personal interview by author, 15 March 2021 in Pietermaritzburg (Director of KZNCC)

⁵⁰⁹ ‘Abstain, Be faithful, use a Condom’

⁵¹⁰ Vorster, Mike. Personal interview by author, 16 March 2021 in Durban (co-worker at Diakonia, later Methodist Bishop Natal Coastal and Patron of Denis Hurley Centre)

⁵¹¹ Cormick, Dina. Personal interview by author, 21 December 2020 in Durban (freelance designer for Diakonia)

was (at least for Catholics) something where there would be limits: 'and, wherever this is allowed, there is prayer in common'.⁵¹²

The decree devotes many words to trying to define a narrow space between those who think nothing is possible and those who think everything should be:

Yet worship in common (*communicatio in sacris*) is not to be considered as a means to be used indiscriminately for the restoration of Christian unity. There are two main principles governing the practice of such common worship: first, the bearing witness to the unity of the Church, and second, the sharing in the means of grace. Witness to the unity of the Church very generally forbids common worship to Christians, but the grace to be had from it sometimes commends this practice. The course to be adopted, with due regard to all the circumstances of time, place, and persons, is to be decided by local episcopal authority, unless otherwise provided for by the Bishops' Conference according to its statutes, or by the Holy See.⁵¹³

Kearney had the advantage of a local episcopal authority (+Hurley) who was more open-minded than most bishops. He also had the advantage that during the years of Diakonia and beyond there were further developments in the practice of shared prayer and new guidelines issued (such as between Catholics and Anglicans that came from the various statements of the joint Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC). It was a great joy to Kearney that when ARCIC met in 2014 it was in Durban and he was able to give them a tour of the Denis Hurley Centre construction site – and pray together!

The most public form of ecumenical prayer was the Diakonia Good Friday Service instituted in 1985 and this is treated in detail in Chapter 5. Suffice to say that Kearney showed his skill at drawing on the various Christian traditions to produce a service in which all felt they had a place.

But it was not just at big events like this that there was *communicatio in sacris*. Diakonia's second employee after Kearney, Liz Mkame, recalls that every week at the Ecumenical Centre there was a prayer service in the hall with different ministers to pray with Diakonia staff.⁵¹⁴ However, Hester Joseph (a staff member from a non-Catholic background) in recalling these says that the worship sessions were always very Catholic.⁵¹⁵ Loek Goemans (a Catholic) remembers someone remarking to Kearney that the prayers were too Catholic and him replying: "This is what I know; this is where I am from. But I am always open to others." She points out that he regularly asked other members of staff to lead the prayers but that "because Kearney was such a strong character perhaps people might have felt reluctant."⁵¹⁶

Andrew Warmback is one of those staff members who felt that Kearney had an almost deliberate intention to incorporate others and that his devotions were always very inclusive. "It was a generous gesture towards others and showed that Kearney was prepared to learn Protestant ways of doing things."⁵¹⁷

⁵¹² *Unitatis Redintegratio* 4

⁵¹³ *Unitatis Redintegratio* 4

⁵¹⁴ Mkame, Liz. Personal interview by author, 17 December 2020 in Durban (co-worker at Diakonia)

⁵¹⁵ Joseph, Hester. Personal interview by author, 17 March 2021 in Durban (co-worker at Ecumenical Centre and Trustee at Denis Hurley Centre)

⁵¹⁶ Goemans, Loek. Personal interview by author, 15 October 2020 in Johannesburg (member of The Grail)

⁵¹⁷ Warmback, Andrew. Personal interview by author, 21 October 2020 in Durban (Anglican priest, co-worker at Diakonia)

This has an interesting echo of +Hurley's own life. In an address to the South African History Association in Durban in 2006, Kearney retold the story of the young Denis being stuck in a cave with two school friends and praying to be rescued. Kearney said that we cannot be certain that this was the origin of +Hurley's vocation but: "What we do know for certain is that he was very impressed with the spontaneous prayers of the other boys with him—both Protestants. As a Catholic he didn't feel he was nearly as good as they were at such prayers."⁵¹⁸

The Council Fathers do not go so far as to say that Catholics can learn about prayer from other Christians. But they do recognise that ecumenical progress can contribute to the renewal in the life of the Church, and that this is already taking place.

The Biblical and liturgical movements, the preaching of the word of God and catechetics, the apostolate of the laity, new forms of religious life and the spirituality of married life, and the Church's social teaching and activity – all these should be considered as pledges and signs of the future progress of ecumenism.⁵¹⁹

Kearney and Receptive Ecumenism

This is hinting at the concept of receptive ecumenism, something that Kearney seems to have instinctively embraced and which he encountered formally later in life when visiting the Centre for Catholic Studies (CCS) at Durham University. (Kearney was invited to stay as a visiting researcher at Durham from April to June 2006; the first 'Receptive Ecumenism' conference had been held there in January 2006 and many of the protagonists were on the resident staff at Durham). The CCS Director, Paul Murray, describes it as an attempt to go beyond the traditional view that ecumenism should be leading to programmed structural unity.

The solution is Receptive Ecumenism i.e. being open to receive gifts from other traditions (and hoping, though not requiring, that they are open to receive from us) and a Call to Catholic Learning i.e. the role of the Catholics is not to lead or to teach but to learn.⁵²⁰

30 years earlier, Diakonia was practising what Murray later articulated formally i.e. accepting each other where we are:

Is reconciled diversity without structural unity simply the most that can be hoped for and worked towards in this context? Is just getting on with the business of living, working and worshipping together in as creative a way as possible across traditional structural divisions all that really matters?⁵²¹

This approach is in contrast to more traditional ecumenical endeavours whose aim was to identify and then resolve the causes of division. This helps to explain how Kearney dealt with the contentious issue of shared Eucharist. *Unitatis Redintegratio* makes it clear that, while this is a goal of ecumenism, it is one which has not been achieved and implies that it is a long way from being achieved. Until that point, the official Vatican view remains that Catholics may not receive

⁵¹⁸ Kearney, *Faith in Action*, 155 ("The young Denis Hurley: schoolboy, student and priest", 2006)

⁵¹⁹ *Unitatis Redintegratio* 6

⁵²⁰ Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning", 11

⁵²¹ Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning", 11

communion at non-Catholic services (with very few exceptions) and that non-Catholics may not receive communion at Catholic services.

Writing in 2001, +Michael Nuttall challenges the argument against intercommunion:

The teaching is, as I understand it, essentially that the sacrament of unity cannot be shared among us while the Church itself is divided. The alternative view is that the very willingness to share the sacrament is itself an expression of Christian unity and therefore a contribution towards it.⁵²²

Tim Nuttall (not the Anglican bishop) recalls that at PACSA the meetings often involved an *agape*, a sharing of bread and wine which had many of the same features of a communion service even if it was not called that. For him this emerged during that period as an ecumenical form of communion, strongly associated with social justice; but also that it created an awkward question for Catholics as to whether or not they could participate.⁵²³

In telling the story of PACSA, Inglis devotes a whole section to the *agape* as the centre of the spiritual life of the organisation. He notes the use of symbols that, for a Catholic certainly, would look very much like a Mass: candles, bread being broken and passed around, one cup that all present shared. But he then offers this proviso:

PACSA was not a church – the *agapes* were not a Eucharist but a fellowship meal shared in love.⁵²⁴

By contrast, an *agape* meal was not a common feature of liturgies at Diakonia – perhaps because Kearney was conscious of the possible confusion with Eucharist.

As far as inter-communion was concerned, +Hurley does seem to have made exceptions on at least some occasions. Norman Hudson, a Methodist bishop recalls that he took communion from +Hurley who did not object.⁵²⁵ Michael Nuttall, an Anglican bishop recalls that, while +Hurley did not give him communion directly, +Hurley did arrange for him to receive at the funerals of both of Kearney's parents (his mother at St Mary's in 2000 and his father at Emmanuel Cathedral in 2002). (In addition, +Nuttall was given other permissions on these occasions normally reserved to Catholic clergy: to read the *Kontakion* prayer for the departed; to be robed in clerical vestments; and to sit in the sanctuary).⁵²⁶

Larry Kaufmann, a Catholic priest who had been involved in the ICT, recalls +Hurley using his discretion about 'fraternal communion' at ecumenical events. Kaufmann was aggrieved that +Hurley's successor, Cardinal Napier, did not give permission for +Nuttall to receive communion at Kearney's own funeral in 2018.⁵²⁷

The question of communion for many Catholics is something deeply tribal, in the sense of being a cause of strong loyalty but also division. James Sweeney, one of the theologians of Receptive Ecumenism points out that this is not necessarily bad: "The tribe has its place. Too easy a move

⁵²² Nuttall, Michael. "Living through Heady Times". *Denis Hurley – a portrait by friends*. Anthony Gamley ed. (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 2001) 148

⁵²³ Nuttall, "From Pressure Group to Liberation Organisation, 1979-90", 17

⁵²⁴ Inglis, *Journeying for Justice*, 22-25

⁵²⁵ Hudson, Norman and Estelle. Personal interview by author, 18 September 2020 in Durban (Methodist Bishop and wife)

⁵²⁶ Nuttall, Michael. Personal interview by author, 23 September 2020 in Howick (Emeritus Bishop of Natal)

⁵²⁷ Kaufmann, Larry. Personal interview by author, 12 October 2020 in Johannesburg (Redemptorist priest)

beyond the tribal frontier spells danger. Boundaries must first be marked before they can be transgressed; borders are breached only if previously guarded.”⁵²⁸

Even if +Hurley, as the principal guard for the Catholic tribe in Durban, felt that he could occasionally breach the borders, there is no evidence that Kearney felt he could. Andrew Warmback is certain that at Diakonia they never had a Eucharist together.⁵²⁹

Perhaps one of the reasons why the absence of shared Eucharist did not seem to be a pre-occupation for Kearney is that he had fully internalised the work of the Council in upgrading the importance of the Word of God. This is initiated by two documents of the Council: *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and *Dei Verbum* but it has significant implications for ecumenism.

It was commented earlier how in Kearney’s traditional Catholic schooling (both as pupil and teacher), the Eucharist was reserved for Catholics (on the assumption that they *all* believed, and *only they* believed, in transubstantiation); that meant that the Word (the Bible) was seen as the consolation prize for Protestants. But Vatican II upgrades the Word of God, and sees it as being worthy of veneration in the same way as the Eucharist – both of them showing the presence of Christ in the liturgy. This develops into the notion of the table of the Word and the table of the Eucharist – each of them sources of the Bread of Life. Though this parallel is not presented in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, it does appear in *Ad Gentes* 6 and *Presbyterum Ordinis* 18.⁵³⁰ It is defended as being based on Scripture (for example, Jn 6: 25-59) and also traditional devotions (such as the *Imitation of Christ*). One theologian sums it up as follows:

The Church fully embodies its essence and achieves its epiphany in the liturgy, in which scripture and bread reveal their mystery and are transformed into the word and the body of the risen Christ.⁵³¹

This understanding of liturgy, and the complementary roles of Word and Eucharist, would have provided Kearney with a solution to the challenge of shared communion while remaining both faithfully Catholic and faithfully ecumenical.

Another of the theologians of Receptive Ecumenism, Margaret O’Gara, provides the useful image of gift-giving. She argues that ecumenical dialogue allows churches to receive the gifts they need, though they have to be ready to receive them. Thus, ecumenical gift exchange is a form of reception. Looking across the ecumenical movement there are different ways of exchanging gifts. Sometimes (as in the joint Roman Catholic-Lutheran declaration on Justification) the two parties have worked together to prepare the same gift; sometimes (as in the Eucharist) the parties can be seen as preparing complementary gifts; sometimes (as in the very different approaches to just war theory of Roman Catholics and Mennonites) the two parties are preparing different gifts.⁵³²

Again, we can retrospectively apply this lens to the ecumenical space that Kearney created at Diakonia. In their social action work, the Durban churches were working together to prepare the same gift; in their initiatives for public prayer they were preparing complementary gifts; in their

⁵²⁸ Sweeney, James. “Receptive Ecumenism, Ecclesial Learning and the Tribe”. *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning – exploring a way for Contemporary Ecumenism*. Paul Murray ed. (Oxford: OUP, 2008) 335

⁵²⁹ Warmback, Andrew. Personal interview by author, 21 October 2020 in Durban (Anglican priest, co-worker at Diakonia)

⁵³⁰ For example: “The Church which, as the body of the Word Incarnate, is nourished and lives by the word of God and by the Eucharistic bread.” (*Ad Gentes* 6)

⁵³¹ Bianchi, Enzo. “The Centrality of the Word of God”. *The Reception of Vatican II*. Giuseppe Alberigo, Jean-Pierre Jossua & Joseph A Komonchak eds. (Washington DC: CUA Press, 1987) 121

⁵³² O’Gara, Margaret. “Receiving Gifts in Ecumenical Dialogue”. *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning – exploring a way for Contemporary Ecumenism*. Paul Murray ed. (Oxford: OUP, 2008) 26-38

work to form and influence clergy they were using similar approaches but to prepare different gifts. The range of forms of common worship, depending on circumstance and depending on which parties were involved, shows the full range of different ways of exchanging gifts.

In gift exchange what matters is the attitude of the receiver as well as the giver. Thus, the lack of shared communion can be seen as evidence that, even when the gift is offered, the other party is not (yet) ready to receive it. O’Gara applies this principle to the question of the ordination of women: and so instead of seeing it as an obstacle to sharing gifts, it is instead a gift that some churches are not yet ready to receive. One can imagine +Hurley using this answer in the interview mentioned above from 1993.

Receptive Ecumenism also provides a much easier space in which Christians can disagree (even publicly) and yet still respect each other. This is not always a view taken by Church leaders, especially if they feel their own authority is being undermined. An interesting example of this appears in Kearney’s own diary notes (the ‘Morning Papers’ that he wrote during his visit to London in mid 2005) when a controversial issue comes up:

24 June “A disturbing message from Colin Gardner. Tutu accepts to give the +Hurley lecture but he [Colin?] feels we should withdraw the invitation because the Cardinal will be offended. [The Cardinal] has already publicly [?] berated Tutu (for the condom statement and the Benedict election statement) and will surely not be pleased to host him in the diocese. My suggestion was we should take up the matter with Nadal [former Vicar General] and [Barry] Woods (sic) [current Vicar General] to try to work out the way forwards. Tough times ahead, I fear, on the ecumenical front.”⁵³³

Receptive Ecumenism is not uncomfortable with a position of ‘agreeing to disagree’. It seems that in this case there was considerable discomfort: +Tutu did not in the end deliver the +Hurley lecture though in 2008 he did send a letter of support for the Denis Hurley Centre: “Archbishop Hurley was an outstanding Christian leader and the centre will be a gift to future generations.”⁵³⁴

The exposure to Receptive Ecumenism comes from Kearney’s visit to Durham in 2006, as part of the process of writing the +Hurley biography and his archive contains a number of papers related to this. These suggest that he used the visit as an opportunity to reflect on his own ecumenical practice.⁵³⁵ An indication of how much impact this visit had on him is that Dr Paul Murray (editor of the cited work on the subject) is the only UK person who sends a message of support at the launch of the fundraising for the Denis Hurley Centre three years later.⁵³⁶

During this visit, it is very clear how comfortable Kearney is with an Anglican setting, albeit the very Catholic form of Anglicanism that centred around Durham Castle and Cathedral. Throughout his “Morning Papers”, he enthuses about his attendance at Evensong in the Cathedral and in the College Chapel: for example, on 19 May 2006: “The Psalms are joyful and celebratory at Evensong and never dull – I fell in love with Evensong all over again.”

He also regularly seems to attend Anglican Eucharist in the Cathedral but he never mentions receiving (or not receiving) Anglican communion. On one Sunday at least (5 June – Pentecost

⁵³³ SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/D/1 “Morning Pages: May-July 2005” (24 June 2005, London)

⁵³⁴ SJTI Archive: BIO- 11/W/3/Minutes/8 “Patrons”. Although this letter is in the part of Kearney’s Archive that deals with Patrons of the Denis Hurley Centre, there is no suggestion that +Tutu was invited to be a Patron.

⁵³⁵ Paddy Kearney Personal Archive, Box PK01: Paddy Kearney, “Morning Pages during visit to Durham”, April-June 2006

⁵³⁶ SJTI Archive: BIO- 11/W/3/Minutes/1 “2009” (Notes on the Fundraising Launch event, 15 February 2009)

Sunday) he notes that he attended ‘a low Mass at St Cuthbert’s [Catholic] church, followed by a very high solemn sung Eucharist in the Cathedral with the Bishop, Chapter, Choir and ensemble’ (and indeed Evensong later in the day). The admiration with which he describes the Anglican liturgies shows him as not only ready to receive but highly appreciative of this ecumenical gift. He does not seem to be too impressed by the liturgical gifts that the Catholics are offering in return: “10 June – a disappointing Mass in the pro-cathedral [Dublin] when compared to the liturgy from Durham: a garbled Rosary before Mass with everyone saying the prayers at different speeds, and a garbled Mass by an incoherent priest all over in 25 minutes!”⁵³⁷

Betty Govinden, an old friend, recalls that in his final days Kearney was listening to Anglican Evensong Services in England and sums him up as being always ‘ecumenical in his outlook’. “He was quite Catholic in the two and more senses of the word. He was rooted and grounded in his Roman Catholicism, with its sense of tradition and theology and liturgy. And he was able to see it in its expansiveness, and this is what made him so ecumenical to the rest of the Church and to other faith traditions, and beyond.”⁵³⁸

One Possible Example of a Limit to Kearney’s Ecumenism

An interesting test of this is the way he lived out his ecumenical outlook after he left Diakonia in 2004 and so was no longer held by its ecumenical structures (which he had helped to form). The creation of the Denis Hurley Centre is a good test of this. It is significantly not just ecumenical but inter-faith in its outlook (and this will be explored in the Chapter 6). But in reality how deep was the ecumenical aspect of the Denis Hurley Centre under Kearney? We need to distinguish between those matters that were his prerogative, as founder and Chair of Trustees, and the operational issues of the Director (who is also this author) and his team.

When the Denis Hurley Centre was announced in March 2010 much was made of its wide range of Patrons who were all effectively invited by Kearney.⁵³⁹ Looking at the initial set of Patrons and those who were added in the first few years, 7 of the 23 (or 30%) were not Christian, a clear statement of interfaith intent. But of the 70% who were Christian, 2/3 are Catholic with only 1/3 from other Christian traditions.⁵⁴⁰ This, to me, seems to set an unfortunate skew that the organisation is first of all Catholic, secondly inter-faith and only thirdly ecumenical.

Perhaps one of the reasons for this is location. The Denis Hurley Centre emerged from the Cathedral Parish (which is of course Catholic). Then it is next door to major Moslem and Hindu institutions. But it does not have physical proximity to other Christian institutions and, for example, the links with main central Durban Anglican parish of St Paul’s develop much later. The link with the Cathedral Parish meant that 90% of those involved in the initial exploration of the concept are linked to that parish (and so Catholic).⁵⁴¹

This skew was then concretised in the appointment of Trustees. The Deed of Trust (drawn up principally by Kearney) did not specify any religious restrictions on who can be appointed as a Trustee. Three of the Trustees are automatically Catholic because their position on the Trust is linked to other (Catholic) roles. That might have prompted Kearney to seek out non-Catholics to be

⁵³⁷ SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/D/1 “Morning Pages: April-June 2006” (various dates as indicated, Durham)

⁵³⁸ Govinden, Betty. *Tribute to Paddy Kearney* (unpublished but made available to the author, 2018)

⁵³⁹ BIO - 11/W/3/Press/1 (*The Mercury*, 19 March 2010)

⁵⁴⁰ SJTI Archive: BIO- 11/W/3/Minutes/8 “Patrons”

⁵⁴¹ SJTI Archive: BIO- 11/W/3/Minutes/1 “Development Task Team”

Trustees alongside. But, in addition to Kearney himself, all seven of the other Trustees appointed in the early years (2010-12) are also Catholic. An Anglican is finally appointed in 2014 and three more Anglicans in 2018 (shortly before Kearney's death). (Note that the first non-Christian Trustees were only appointed in 2022).⁵⁴² From personal conversations that I had with Kearney there was no specific resistance to non-Catholic Trustees, but there seemed to be an unstated preference in favour of Catholics. Did this in some way reflect frustrations that Kearney had carried forwards from his time at Diakonia?

It is also interesting from examining his papers on fundraising that Kearney's focus on sourcing funds was very Catholic (the Archdiocese of Durban, Durban Catholic parishes, Durban Catholic schools, Misereor, Missio, Pontifical Mission Aid Society, religious orders, Catholic bishops in Italy, USA, UK; governments in Catholic-majority countries, etc). Beyond the Catholic world, the next targets are either Government (KZN Province, Lotto) or corporates. He does not seem to have sought out funding from other Christian sources even though this would have been a significant part of his experience when at Diakonia. Was this an assumption on his part that the project (because of its name) had a more exclusively Catholic appeal? Or a desire to situate the project more firmly in the Catholic imagination. Again the author has no evidence of resistance on the part of Kearney towards non-Catholic funders, but it does seem that they were not treated as a priority.⁵⁴³

Conclusion

So what can conclusions can we draw from Kearney's ecumenism?

Cochrane warns us: "If there is one lesson from observing faith communities in South African history (as many of them admitted) it is that words are easy and accomplish little when not backed up with action."⁵⁴⁴

Kearney certainly learnt from +Hurley the importance of using the right language, of open-ness and acceptance, in ecumenical circles. For example, Amooore says that +Hurley's commitment to ecumenism was not just through Diakonia but also his great respect for other Christian leaders: he described Beyers Naudé as 'a sign of the cross of Christ and the hope of Resurrection'; he said to a Methodist minister: "We failed to seek the truth in love and truth sought us in anger."⁵⁴⁵

But Kearney also learnt that words needed to be backed by action. We see that in specific activities: in the creation of Diakonia as an ecumenical agency which he led for almost 30 years, in the projects and programmes of Diakonia usually built from grass roots ecumenical collaboration, and the ways of operating that he built into Diakonia so that it could be a model of partnership that would set a standard for a denominationally divided church and a racially divided country. He also showed this in his creation and fostering of regional ecumenical structures for KZN and then further, even if with some limitations, with the setting up of the Denis Hurley Centre.

He is always pleased when there is an ecumenical dimension. For example, in May 2010 Kearney wins the annual award for the best theology book published in South Africa in English. In his

⁵⁴² Update October 2022", *Denis Hurley Centre website* <http://www.denishurleycentre.org/page/hurley-centre-newsletters> (accessed 26 November 2022)

⁵⁴³ SJTI Archive: BIO- 11/W/3/Minutes/2 "2011"

⁵⁴⁴ Cochrane, *Facing the Truth*, 72

⁵⁴⁵ Amooore, Frederick. 'Denis Hurley: his witness to love of neighbour'. *Facing the Crisis – selected texts of Archbishop D E Hurley*. Philippe Denis ed. (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 1997) 223

acceptance speech, he makes a point that the 'Murray-Tutu' award being given for a book about a Catholic Archbishop shows the strength of ecumenism: Andrew Murray was a Dutch Reformed Church Dominee and Desmond Tutu, of course, an Anglican archbishop.⁵⁴⁶

It seems to me that, for Kearney, ecumenism was not just a useful means for working towards liberation, nor even just the theological inspiration for liberation, but that it actually provided an on-going source of sustenance on the difficult journey *towards* liberation. The very fact that both were (and continue to be) unpredictable journeys, with some victories but also setbacks along the way, mean that the experience of one can continuously inform the experience of the other. Thus, these words from Orsy, a passionate supporter of the Council but also one who has seen its reception ride like a roller-coaster, could provide comfort equally to those frustrated about progress in ecumenism and those sceptical about progress towards liberation:

We have reached a point where the assessment of the ecumenical movement in function of faith, hope and love reveals its internal cohesiveness and essential soundness. Faith brings an intelligence that no human insight could give. Hope opens the door to enter and blend into the dynamics of a divine plan. Love leads to action that no human strength could sustain.⁵⁴⁷

But Kearney's ecumenism should not be limited to what he did but also how he treated others. Andrew Warmback, an Anglican priest, said that at Diakonia it never felt like the non-Catholics were secondary or were catching up.⁵⁴⁸ Norman Hudson, a Methodist bishop, goes further and says that Kearney was never conscious of his Catholic status and that instead he felt that we were all just 'journeying together as Christians'.⁵⁴⁹

But a story from one of Kearney's nieces, Sarah Kearney, contradicts Hudson. She says that she was always conscious of Kearney being Catholic, that he was always giving her Catholic books to read or saying the Rosary with his mother (Sarah's grandmother). She recalls how she was going through confirmation classes (aged in her early teens so probably in the early 80s) and that she had said that it was ridiculous to believe in transubstantiation⁵⁵⁰. When she asked Kearney, her uncle replied: "Well then, if you do not believe in that, you are not a Catholic."⁵⁵¹

Di Oliver who worked closely with Kearney without being a member of staff, supports this view; quoting Kearney's wife Carmel Rickard, she says: 'Paddy is a Catholic before he is anything else'.⁵⁵² But Oliver goes on to stress that Kearney never made anyone who is not Catholic feel they were any less. She credits this to the idea that he was so stable in his own beliefs that that enabled him to engage with others.⁵⁵³ This is consonant with an image from Receptive Ecumenism: not a melting pot but a mosaic in which the individuality is retained and incorporated into the bigger picture.⁵⁵⁴

It also echoes the words of the Council: "Most valuable for this purpose are meetings of the two sides – especially for discussion of theological problems – where each can treat with the other on an equal footing"; even if it does then add the condition: "provided that those who take part in them

⁵⁴⁶ SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/A/5 "Murray/ Tutu Book Award" (May 2010)

⁵⁴⁷ Orsy, *Receiving the Council*, 50

⁵⁴⁸ Warmback, Andrew. Personal interview by author, 21 October 2020 in Durban (Anglican priest, co-worker at Diakonia)

⁵⁴⁹ Hudson, Norman and Estelle. Personal interview by author, 18 September 2020 in Durban (Methodist Bishop and wife)

⁵⁵⁰ The belief that in the communion service the ritual bread and wine change their substance and actually become the body and blood of Christ and a distinct point of difference in doctrine between Catholics and most other Christians.

⁵⁵¹ Kearney, Sarah. Personal interview by author, 17 September 2020 in Durban (Kearney's niece)

⁵⁵² Oliver, Di. Personal interview by author, 2 January 2021 in Cape Town (co-worker at Diakonia)

⁵⁵³ Oliver, Di. Personal interview by author, 2 January 2021 in Cape Town (co-worker at Diakonia)

⁵⁵⁴ O'Gara, "Receiving Gifts in Ecumenical Dialogue", 30

are truly competent and have the approval of the bishops.”⁵⁵⁵ Kearney had the benefit of knowing that he definitely had ‘the approval of his bishop’ who presumably thought him ‘truly competent’.

Warmback stresses that Kearney was ‘Catholic in a positive sense’.⁵⁵⁶ I would understand this as meaning that Kearney regarded the universality of the Catholic claim not as a crown to be worn but rather as a challenge to be lived up to, in reflecting a universal and inclusive Church, in creating an inclusive organisation and in contributing to an inclusive country. Ecumenism was not a means to an end but an end in itself.

The comments of +Hurley’s successor as Archbishop of Durban, Wilfrid Cardinal Napier are interesting. Some have criticised +Napier as having been less committed to ecumenical matters than +Hurley, although +Napier points out that the main reason he let +Hurley continue as head of Diakonia after his retirement as Archbishop in 1992 was that +Napier was at the time also SACBC President and Administrator of a neighbouring diocese and would not have been able to apply the time. +Napier was happy to admit that, in terms of ecumenism, Kearney was more open than he was but does not present this as a criticism. In fact, he stresses that one of the main reasons for commemorating Kearney is because of his open ecumenical approach.⁵⁵⁷

I was fortunate to interview, only a few months before his death, Mgr. Paul Nadal, who had been Vicar-General (effectively ‘assistant to the bishop’) under +Hurley and the early days of +Napier. Nadal said he felt conflicted about the ecumenical position of Kearney (though he stressed that he greatly admired him). Nadal recalled the Archbishop coming back from the Second Vatican Council fired up by the great breakthroughs in ecumenism – now actually allowed to go into the non-Catholic churches that he had, in fact, already been visiting. Nadal was then critical of the way in which ecumenism got stuck in endless talking, 10 years after Vatican II: “the ecumenical movement became a movement of the bowels!” But he feels that ultimately, the ecumenical vision of Diakonia was Kearney’s endorsed by +Hurley rather than the other way round.⁵⁵⁸ This is not the only time when interviewees who knew both Kearney and +Hurley have wondered if +Hurley started as Kearney’s teacher but then later it was Kearney who was +Hurley’s teacher. This relationship will be explored in greater detail in Chapter 7.

Paul Nadal wondered to what extent for Kearney (and other Catholics who became ecumenists), it might have made them less Catholic. He recognised the conflict for someone who believes that the Catholic Church is the one true Church of Christ, that they have to then insist that all roads lead to Rome when instead all roads should lead to God.

Was there something unique in being a Catholic or, for Paddy, was it simply important to be a religious man and it did not matter which? Perhaps he was right. Light shines brightest in the centre but it still shines more widely.⁵⁵⁹

In this, Nadal was inadvertently echoing the Decree on Ecumenism which refers to the Catholic Church as a source of light and truth but then admits: “yet its members fail to live ..with all the

⁵⁵⁵ *Unitatis Redintegratio* 9

⁵⁵⁶ Warmback, Andrew. Personal interview by author, 21 October 2020 in Durban (Anglican priest, co-worker at Diakonia)

⁵⁵⁷ Napier, Wilfrid. Personal interview by author, 28 September 2020 in Durban (Cardinal Archbishop of Durban)

⁵⁵⁸ Nadal, Paul. Personal interview by author, 26 October 2020 in Durban (Vicar-General to +Hurley and Patron/ Trustee at Denis Hurley Centre)

⁵⁵⁹ Nadal, Paul. Personal interview by author, 26 October 2020 in Durban (Vicar-General to +Hurley and Patron/ Trustee at Denis Hurley Centre)

fervour that they should, so that the radiance of the Church's image is less clear in the eyes of our separated brethren.”⁵⁶⁰

If Nadal saw Kearney as leading +Hurley on ecumenism, Frank Chikane argues the opposite: “the ecumenical dimension reflected who +Hurley was; Paddy followed in those shoes.”⁵⁶¹

An overseas Catholic donor sees a relationship of mutual influence: “Diakonia’s approach was really Catholic but influenced by the ecumenical approach of Hurley. Paddy was more traditional at the beginning than +Hurley; Paddy was challenged by him but Paddy accepted the challenge and exceeded it.”⁵⁶²

This tension – between being truly Catholic and being truly ecumenical – is reflected in Kearney, in +Hurley, and in the relationship between them. It is also something inherent in the Vatican II document itself (as indicated in *Unitatis Redintegratio* 4 quoted above).

Dulles, in reflecting on the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops convened in 1985 to reflect on 20 years since the Council, embraces the tensions that are brought up by the teachings of Vatican II and warns against trying to resolve them by taking one position instead of another. He sets out (from the Synod) six principles for interpreting Vatican II and three of them speak directly to this tension:

1. Although the Council is seen as ‘Pastoral’ this should never be separated from or held in opposition to the ‘Doctrinal’
2. No opposition should be seen as existing between ‘the spirit’ and ‘the letter’ of the Council
3. While there are apparently new insights from the Council these are always to be seen in continuity with the great tradition of the Church including all earlier councils⁵⁶³

If this sounds like a Catholic balancing act on ecumenism, is it one that Kearney seemed to have mastered. I think it is fair to apply to him these words of Faggioli:

For Catholics, Vatican II is not a foil in the self-identification of the ways of being Catholic but a real reference and a given condition of existence.⁵⁶⁴

This creative tension is well understood by an Anglican bishop who knew them both well (and who was not from the Anglo-Catholic wing of his denomination). Michael Nuttall said that Kearney remained a disciplined and devout Catholic and yet also showed great open-ness to ecumenical and interfaith moves because of his unshakeable devotion as a worshipping Catholic.⁵⁶⁵

Paddy’s relationship with the Catholic Church was unshakeable and deep, grounded initially in the belief and practice of his family and, in later life, embraced as a personal conviction of faith and life. From this he never wavered, but change came in his positive acceptance of

⁵⁶⁰ *Unitatis Redintegratio* 4

⁵⁶¹ Chikane, Frank. Personal interview by author, 14 September 2021 via Zoom (Secretary General of SACC 1987-94)

⁵⁶² Briard, Jacques. Personal interview by author via Zoom, 17 January 2022 (manager at *Entraide et Fraternité*, Belgium-based donor)

⁵⁶³ Dulles, Avery. “The Reception of Vatican II at the Extraordinary Synod of 1985”. *The Reception of Vatican II*. Giuseppe Alberigo, Jean-Pierre Jossua & Joseph A Komonchak eds. (Washington DC: CUA Press, 1987) 350

⁵⁶⁴ Faggioli, *Vatican II - the Battle for meaning*, 141

⁵⁶⁵ Nuttall, Michael. Personal interview by author, 23 September 2020 in Howick (Emeritus Bishop of Natal)

other Christians with their particular convictions and, indeed, people of other faiths as well. Paddy became an ecumenist in every sense of the word.

Jane Argall, another Anglican who was aware of his 'Catholic dogged life-long devotion' offers an amusing line from Kearney. She once asked him if he had had a bit of holiday to which he replied: "Yes I went to an Anglican church so that was a bit of a holiday!"⁵⁶⁶

The challenge of how far and fast reconciliation can move is a challenge faced by the ecumenical movement and, in parallel, by post-Apartheid South Africa. It is no surprise that the national process of reconciliation (the TRC) involved a significant number of church leaders and religious language. A theologian reflecting on the Council poses a question which can also be applied to the nation.

It makes a difference if the ecumenical movement consists in working for the reconciliation of separated bodies, or if it is a healing process within one sacramental but internally wounded body. In the former case, negotiations take primary importance. In the latter case, the real work consists in removing external impediments and giving full scope to the internal forces present in the entire body.⁵⁶⁷

It might be said that the failure of South Africa to fully move from negotiation to healing explains why at this point the ending of ecclesial separation has gone further than the ending of racial segregation.

One final image sums up what Murray describes as "Catholic learning because it will make one more Catholic – more deeply, more richly, more fully through a process of imaginatively explored and critically discerned receptive learning from other's particular gifts."⁵⁶⁸

It is the picture (again on the front page of *The Southern Cross* and preserved in Kearney's personal archive) of +Hurley's 1991 re-commissioning service for Diakonia. It shows a Catholic Archbishop in an Anglican church (Saint Faith's) kneeling to receive a blessing from Norman Hudson, a Methodist bishop.⁵⁶⁹ Although Kearney is not visible in the picture, we can be sure that he was present and smiling from the side-lines. We started with an image from 1967 of Kearney front and centre at St David's encouraging ecumenical encounter when it was highly unusual; we end with an image from 1991 of Kearney in the background enabling ecumenical encounter in an environment where it had become the norm.

⁵⁶⁶ Argall, Jane. Personal interview by author, 8 October 2020 in Durban (librarian at Diakonia, co-editor of +Hurley's letters)

⁵⁶⁷ Orsy, *Receiving the Council*, 49

⁵⁶⁸ Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning", 13

⁵⁶⁹ SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/H/Press/4 (1988-2002). (*The Southern Cross*, 16 June 1991)