

Chapter 4: Kearney the Activist

Whoever claims to love God, yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen.

(1 Jn 4:20)

Introduction

Philippe Denis describes +Hurley as being ‘by far the most visible’ South African Bishop during the Council. In total, he gave 10 speeches *in aula* plus four written interventions.⁵⁷⁰ His first speech was on 19 November 1962 and concerned what he described as ‘an absolutely fundamental issue, the purpose of the entire Council’. Whilst thanking God that all the bishops agreed that the purpose of the Council was ‘pastoral’, he pointed out that there was a ‘but’:

...and it is a very big ‘but’ – there is extreme disagreement about the interpretation of this word ‘pastoral’.⁵⁷¹

It would only be three years later with the promulgation of *Gaudium et Spes* that this question was conclusively answered. The document was unique in the history of 21 Ecumenical Councils and was called a ‘Pastoral Constitution’ to show that it was intended to be a twin to the Dogmatic Constitution of *Lumen Gentium*.⁵⁷² (According to +Hurley and others this was the idea of Suenens).⁵⁷³ It sets out to describe the role of the Church, not in relation to itself or even in relation to God, but in relation to the world: the Church *in the* Modern World. It thus becomes, for +Hurley, for Kearney and for many others, the blueprint that justifies and motivates how they work, for the rest of their lives, in engaging with the modern world.⁵⁷⁴

This document is the culmination of the Vatican II project of looking outwards at the world and not just inward at the Church. In an intervention that +Hurley makes at the Council on 5 October 1965 (with the signatures of 70 other bishops attached), he declares:

In the past we have perhaps insisted too much on the rights of the Church... Please God in the future we will be concerned with at least as much as zeal for human rights. Defending the freedom of the Church regarding human rights we will hardly be able to avoid conflict with civil authority. The difficulty will be to conduct ourselves in such conflicts as witnesses to the love of Christ.⁵⁷⁵

+Hurley himself describes *Gaudium et Spes* thus:

⁵⁷⁰ 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. By comparison, McCann (who was President of the Bishops Conference) can claim four speeches and five written interventions; Van Velsen one speech and one intervention; three other SACBC bishops only one each.

⁵⁷¹ Hurley, Denis. *Vatican II: Keeping the Dream Alive* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 2005) 162

⁵⁷² Lavin, Margaret. *Vatican II – Fifty Years of Evolution and Revolution in the Catholic Church* (Toronto: Novalis, 2012) 32

⁵⁷³ Page, John. “Denis Hurley interviewed about the Council.” *Vatican II: Keeping the Dream Alive*. Denis Hurley (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 2005) 181

⁵⁷⁴ Appendix C explores at more length, and with reference to various commentators, some of the key relevant themes in the interpretation of *Gaudium et Spes*.

⁵⁷⁵ Hurley, *Vatican II*, 174

The greatest revolution in the thinking that the Catholic Church has ever experienced, a conversion (in the fullest sense of the term) in the attitude of the Church to the world: from being an environment to be feared as a danger to salvation the world has become something to be loved, saved and sanctified.⁵⁷⁶

His successor as Archbishop, +Napier, says that it forced +Hurley's detractors to 'grudgingly admit that in fact what he had been doing was consistent with the Church's teaching'.⁵⁷⁷ Kearney himself comments that it was the strong backing of Vatican II and especially *Gaudium et Spes* which meant that the Archbishop was now moving in an increasingly activist direction.⁵⁷⁸

And where +Hurley led, Kearney followed. One early example from their shared journey indicates this. In March 1975, +Hurley was presenting to a Catholic audience some of the outcomes of the 'Diakonia Consultation' that he had engaged Kearney to conduct. What is interesting is the model of this paper. +Hurley did not start with a quotation from Scripture or even from Vatican II. Instead he started by talking about three local events that involved disadvantaged communities and their lack of power or lack of access to resources. In doing so, even if he does not use the phrase, +Hurley is drawing on the 'signs of the times': a phrase originally from Scripture (Mt 16:4) but adopted by John XXIII when he convened the Council and which he repeated in other encyclicals (e.g. *Pacem in Terris*).

We renew our confidence in our Saviour who has not left the world he redeemed. Instead we make our own the recommendation that one should know how to distinguish the signs of the times ...⁵⁷⁹

Ruggieri argues that, even though the Council documents only explicitly use the phrase four times, they implicitly reference it throughout.⁵⁸⁰

In this same 1975 speech, +Hurley goes on to quote Mt 25 (the sheep and the goats) and imagines that the response of most individuals is to say "I cannot do enough". He points out that the individuals that make up the Church, however, can do something and, moreover, that they must if "the word and worship of the Church are not to remain empty formulas, they must overflow into Christian living, Christian action, Christian love".⁵⁸¹ These are words spoken by +Hurley but almost certainly in part written by Kearney. The challenge to transform 'empty formulas' into 'Christian action' is what we see Kearney doing throughout his life, working with +Hurley and then continuing after +Hurley's death.

As with other chapters, I want to start with an image of Kearney (following the idea presented by McClendon).⁵⁸² There are, in fact, so many photographs from which to choose of him (with or without +Hurley) engaging in 'Christian action'. The one I choose to open this chapter is curiously simple. It shows a group of people standing around in a meeting room, holding sheets of paper,

⁵⁷⁶ Denis, *Facing the Crisis*, 150 (Hurley, Denis. 'Beyers Naudé - Calvinist and Catholic', *Not Without Honour*. Peter Randall (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1982)

⁵⁷⁷ Napier, Wilfred. "The Stature of the Man". *Denis Hurley – a portrait by friends*. Anthony Gamley ed. (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 2001) xv

⁵⁷⁸ Kearney, Paddy. "Courageous and Consistent Witness". *Denis Hurley – a portrait by friends*. Anthony Gamley ed. (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 2001) 7

⁵⁷⁹ *Humanae Salutis*, 3 (Bull of John XXIII convening the Council, 25 Dec 1961)

⁵⁸⁰ Ruggieri, Giuseppe. "Faith & History". *The Reception of Vatican II*. Giuseppe Alberigo, Jean-Pierre Jossua & Joseph A Komonchak eds. (Washington DC: CUA Press, 1987) 95

⁵⁸¹ SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/E/Diakonia/1 "Speech at Assumption Parish, Durban by +Hurley" (19 March 1975)

⁵⁸² McClendon, James W. *Biography as Theology: how life stories can remake today's theology* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1974) 193

possibly singing a hymn or reciting some statement. There are four men and seven women and, if one did not know the context, the image could be taken for a church group (one of the men is in a clerical collar) or a school staff room. But once it is clear that this photograph is from South Africa in the late 1970s the image becomes shocking: because the people have different skin colours. A multi-racial group socialising together, working together, singing together was anything but simple back in those days. To use (though not endorse) the racial classifications of the day, three of them seem white, two coloured, one Indian and five black. The picture is of an ordinary staff meeting at Diakonia; but what seemed ordinary at Diakonia was deeply shocking to the South African authorities of the time. And the seeming tranquillity of the photograph gives no hint of the threats of intimidation, harassment and arrest that these people were facing because of their work.

It is perhaps a mark of Kearney's effectiveness as an activist that he manages to make something so revolutionary appear so ordinary, by taking ordinary people and inspiring them to start a revolution. Not one that involved violence – though such revolutions were also taking place in South Africa at the time; but rather a turning around (a *metanoia*) in the hearts and minds of Christian leaders and ordinary Christian people of the time.

As Marie-Henry Keane puts it – a Dominican sister who worked closely with both +Hurley and Kearney:

The Church's *aggiornamento* would consist not in solemn proclamations but in a spirited and imaginative application of the Council's teaching. The Church was calling not so much for the changing of some laws but for a full renewal of minds and hearts.⁵⁸³

Growing interest in Social Justice

Given the new outward perspective of the Church, endorsed by *Gaudium et Spes*, but also the all too apparent challenges of South Africa, one would expect any Catholic leader to be keenly interested in social justice. Not all of them were, and certainly not with the same level of zeal. But +Hurley came back from Rome committed to ensuring the Reception of the Council: he was inspired by this new vision of the Church and wanted to share it with others. To do this he needed lieutenants like Mgr. Paul Nadal and later Kearney who could join him in the promotion of Reception.

Kearney's own archive includes press reports on events that he himself did not attend but which shaped their later collaboration.⁵⁸⁴ For example as early as 1968, +Hurley organised the first synod for the Archdiocese of Durban, the first in Africa; Kearney's archive also includes a report from the second session held at St Anthony's church hall Greyville in 1970. This was attended by 250 priests, lay men and women (though probably not Kearney). This was shocking enough – but even more so that it contained people of all races with the proceedings held in English and Zulu. A pertinent quote from the Archbishop:

⁵⁸³ Keane, Marie-Henry. "Vatican Council II: Keeping the Dream Alive." *Vatican II: Keeping the Dream Alive*. Denis Hurley. (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 2005) 261

⁵⁸⁴ SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/H/Press/2 (1969-1980)

The function of the Church today was not to draw man away from his worldly interests but to encourage him to immerse himself in them as vigorously as possible in the light of the Gospel.⁵⁸⁵

The same folder contains a report of +Hurley addressing a Rotary Luncheon and saying that 'talk is not enough and that problems needs to be tackled practically'.⁵⁸⁶ There is also an article he wrote for the Sunday paper in which he draws comparisons with Thomas Becket and Thomas More and says that conflict between Church and State is traditional and valuable:

The starving, thirsty, sick and naked Christ is the black man, hurt and humiliated by 500 years of white exploitation. Not to be concerned about such people is not to love God. This is the Christianity of our age. The committed Christian knows in the marrow of his bones that the survival of the Faith depends on the witness that he gives to fraternal love in situations that really count....Gone are the days when the good Christian kept his hands clean and saved his soul.⁵⁸⁷

Language like this is in marked contrast to what Alan Paton described as the general approach of white Church members in the 1950s and 1960s where, he feels, people were looking for magic not for the truth.

I mean a magic solution where you don't have to give up anything, you don't have to yield anything, you don't have to suffer anything, yet everyone would be happy.⁵⁸⁸

Part of what +Hurley is trying to challenge is not just complacency but the excuse that the individual Christian does not have to address structural problems because he or she is not personally culpable. This concept of structural sin was a theme of Liberation theology in Latin America and is something that, by the 1980s, Nolan and others are bringing to the fore in South Africa. He warns against an approach whereby social sin is somehow degraded because it does not involve individual guilt.

The Bible does not make a distinction between two kinds of sin, personal sin and social sin. ... The personal and the social are two dimensions that are present in every sin. All sin is personal [because] only individuals can be guilty. However, all sins also have a social dimension because sins have social consequences....⁵⁸⁹

It is into this growing recognition of social justice that Kearney emerges from his life as a Marist and re-enters the life of the Archdiocese of Durban under the leadership of +Hurley. This has a huge impact on his dedication to helping the Church to engage with the modern world. He was fortunate that it was +Hurley who was there to guide him.

⁵⁸⁵ SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/H/Press/2 (1969-1980) (*The Southern Cross*, 5 May 1970). There is an irony, seen from the vantage point of our more 'enlightened' age, that progressives in the Church like +Hurley were happily using gendered language while in the very act of calling on people to challenge some of the injustices around them. One of the best (or worst) examples of this is a book written by a very forward-thinking Jesuit just after the Council – and almost certainly known to +Hurley and later to Kearney – which asserts the importance to the Catholic Church of solidarity in the social, economic, political and international communities. And yet, his chosen title twice excludes 51% of the world's population: Drummond, William. *Every Man a Brother* (Cleveland WA: Corpus Books, 1968)

⁵⁸⁶ SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/H/Press/2 (1969-1980) (*Daily News*, 16 September 1970)

⁵⁸⁷ SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/H/Press/2 (1969-1980) (*Sunday Tribune*, 4 October 1970)

⁵⁸⁸ Paton, Alan. *Journey Continued* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1988) 58 (Writing in 1984, Paton is reflecting on a speech he made in 1952).

⁵⁸⁹ Nolan, Albert. *God in South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1988) 43

The influence of +Hurley on Kearney's activism cannot be underestimated: it was one of the earliest ways in which the young Kearney was exposed to social issues; it was a benediction of his emerging exploration when many others would have deterred him; it enabled Kearney to engage with social issues within the context of his faith tradition rather than outside; it was a direct source of influence when Kearney worked for +Hurley at Diakonia; it was a form of mutual support when they were facing difficult situations together (such as their respective encounters with the Apartheid legal system in 1985); it provided further validation as Kearney researched more about +Hurley's life; and after the Archbishop's death it gave Kearney an on-going motivation to continue the legacy.

It is thus a nice coincidence that the young Fr Hurley, as junior curate at the Cathedral, in the very year of Kearney's birth, gives this sermon which Kearney later quotes in a short biography:

We have met together and discussed it and deplored with great eloquence and feeling, but we have done very little about it. Others have seen too, but they have been wiser than us, they have been quicker to act; and when they have acted, we have sat back to criticise. They move from the realm of principle to the realm of application, whereas we appear not to."⁵⁹⁰

Kearney goes on to explain that the sermon ended with a call to professionals, students, teachers, members of the business community, every Catholic with 'enthusiasm to get things done' to meet in committees drawn from different racial groups to understand each other, to try to solve each other's problems, to join forces to find solutions. Had Fr Hurley been speaking the words over the cradle of the infant, they could not have been more prescient for how Kearney would dedicate his life.

Early experience of raised awareness

Before I return to Diakonia and the way in which +Hurley and Kearney used this as a way of putting *Gaudium et Spes* into effect, we might start by asking where Kearney's awareness of the needs of the marginalised came from. At his funeral, his brother Jack (who after all had had the same upbringing but did not follow the same path) recalled how, even as a child, Kearney had shown greater sensitivity to boys at school who were on the fringes and wondered if that had been prompted by Kearney's own experience of being bed-ridden with rheumatic fever when young.⁵⁹¹

There were plenty of white middle-class South Africans, like Kearney, who could completely isolate themselves from the reality of Apartheid and so not feel a need to respond in any way. That could also have been the fate of +Hurley but – as Kearney himself describes in his biography – the Archbishop's early exposure to Fascism in Rome (even while 'protected' within Vatican institutions) set the seeds for his own consciousness being raised.⁵⁹² We even have +Hurley's own contemporaneous comments on Fascism in letters from 1993 and 1934.⁵⁹³

Similarly, +Hurley's exact contemporary but from the Dutch Reformed Church tradition, Beyers Naudé, describes in an interview how it was early exposure to the reality of black people's lives that awakened him. He talks about it as his 'conversion': through exposure to students at Pretoria, seeing what was happening in other parts of Africa, a self-study on the biblical justification of Apartheid; then later a tour outside South Africa and confrontation with black clergy. We actually

⁵⁹⁰ Kearney, "Courageous and Consistent Witness", 6

⁵⁹¹ "Paddy Kearney", Denis Hurley Centre website <http://www.denishurleycentre.org/page/paddykearney> (accessed 27 September 2022)

⁵⁹² Kearney, G Paddy. *Guardian of the Light* (Pietermaritzburg: UKZN, 2009) 33

⁵⁹³ Denis, Kearney, Argall *A Life in Letters*, 48, 85

have Kearney's own copy of this book where he has under-lined this section and added in the margin 'exposure'.⁵⁹⁴

Naudé comments:

When eventually I got the opportunity, I went out of my way to visit the parishes, the areas concerned. I discovered for the first time in my life what was happening and I was shattered! To discover what Apartheid was doing to human beings created in me a tremendous moral crisis....

The problem in my country is that the Church in the past has made a very serious mistake by presenting the Christian faith as primarily a rational belief ...not realising that faith is meaningless unless it becomes contextualised. ...

If you talk about hunger, go and see where hunger is. If you talk about injustice, go and view what kind of injustice. If you talk about human dignity, go and see where human dignity is being violated. If you talk about racial prejudice, go and meet with the people who know themselves and experience themselves to be the victims of that prejudice. ...

Unless you are willing to do that, you can never discover the full truth of the gospel. That was the example of Jesus himself. But it's much easier to sit in your study and preach about it. Or to be in your theological school and theologise about it...

Dare yourself to be challenged by a faith that is real. ...But it's painful, because once you've set foot on that new road, it is a continuous process of conversion. What makes that faith so threatening to many people is that you never know where God is going to lead you next, what new challenges lie ahead, what new sacrifice, what new problems may arise.⁵⁹⁵

Awareness for Kearney would have been triggered by a few small moments: perhaps a conversation as a child with the black domestic staff in his parents' house; perhaps noticing the absence of non-white faces in the school he attended; perhaps becoming aware of the marginal place of black people in the church he went to.⁵⁹⁶ He himself recalls in an interview:

This was a very ordinary South African upbringing, you know, with very little contact with black people other than the domestic workers but totally white schooling. Church was 99.9% white, one was aware of other races, aware of things happening.

One of the things that made a big impact on me was the 1949 so called, you know, African-Indian riots and I don't really... In Pietermaritzburg and there were things happening there. I can just remember people running in the streets and it was all rather scary you know, for a seven-year-old boy, ja. I didn't know what was happening but I could see there was some problem and it was my first experience of well, this is not very a happy country you know, there are big issues here.

And then from Archbishop Hurley, you know, there were pastoral letters that were read in the church which made it clear that he was very opposed to Apartheid ...this is a policy of the government but our Church has got another policy. And then I think another influence

⁵⁹⁴ Wallis, Jim and Hollyday, Joyce. *Crucible of Fire: the Church confronts Apartheid* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 1989) 104-05

⁵⁹⁵ Wallis and Hollyday, *Crucible of Fire*, 106-107

⁵⁹⁶ For more on this see Appendix A: "Kearney's racial identity"

for me was when my eldest brother [Jack] went to university in Pietermaritzburg. He then began to come home with quite a lot of information that they were receiving at the university about the effects of Apartheid and about resistance to Apartheid.⁵⁹⁷

A near contemporary, Tim Dunne has a similar recollection of pastoral letters:

I doubt whether I understood the contents, but their impact was to give me a fervent sense that everyday goodness in human relations, and ordinary people's witness against Apartheid, truly mattered.⁵⁹⁸

Since he went straight from school to the Marists, Kearney would not have experienced the consciousness-raising at university of his brother Jack or of a later friend, Colin Gardner. Gardner recalls the Catholic chaplain Fr Diego Connery 'electrifying' the Catholic student movement in the mid-1950s with the views of Congar and de Lubac: "Vatican II more than 10 years before the event".⁵⁹⁹

But even while with the Marists, Kearney's level of awareness started to increase. Colussi recalls that the experience of being a novice in Australia was eye-opening. For the first time they, as white men, were doing manual labour (having been brought up to believe that this was only by done by black people); they were exposed (albeit infrequently) to uncensored news about South Africa; and, most dramatically of all, they lived with non-white people (the Australian Marist Province included the Pacific Ocean and so in each cohort there were a few Pacific Islanders who were fellow novices).⁶⁰⁰

Colussi also specifically recalled Beyers Naudé as an influence and the talk that he gave at St David's in 1967 in which he mentioned that he had been converted by his visit to a mine on the Rand and seeing the quarters for the men who were not allowed to have their spouses with them.

In Chapter 2, Ines Ceruti from the Grail has recollected how she and Kearney had smuggled their way into Soweto in the late 1960s to teach young black children: "We just decided it was crazy that they did not have the opportunities that other people had." She recalls that the teenagers would give Kearney a lot of inside information about what was going on and how poor the people were.⁶⁰¹

Colussi adds that, in fact, there were a number of occasions when there were links with Soweto, in part because the Mercy sisters (who ran the sister school to St David's in Rosebank) had a primary school there. For example, he recalls taking a Junior Sodality from St David's to Soweto to play football and mixing up the teams (so that the softer white boys 'would not be walloped'). On another occasion, the Matric class was taken to Soweto to raise money to support students there as part of a *Rand Daily Mail* campaign) and that 'the boys were very silent on the way back in the bus'. He confirms that it was the Principal, Br Anthony McDocherty, who would have encouraged such

⁵⁹⁷ Houston, Gregory. "Interview with Paddy Kearney". *Unsung Heroes and Heroines of the Liberation Struggle* (Cape Town: Human Science Research Council, 2013) 2-3

⁵⁹⁸ Dunne, Tim. "Who shall dwell on your Holy Mountain?" *Denis Hurley – a portrait by friends*. Anthony Gamley ed. (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 2001) 177

⁵⁹⁹ Gardner, Colin. "A Profoundly Integrated Being". *Denis Hurley – a portrait by friends*. Anthony Gamley ed. (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 2001) 163

⁶⁰⁰ Colussi, Mario. Personal interview by author, 13 and 16 October 2020 in Johannesburg (fellow Marist novice/ brother with Kearney). (There is an interesting parallel here since an old friend of +Hurley recalls that for him living and studying with Oblates from Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) was an eye-opener in Rome in the 1930s. See Flanagan, Bridgid. "A 60-year Friendship". *Denis Hurley – a portrait by friends*. Anthony Gamley ed. (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 2001) 26)

⁶⁰¹ Ceruti, Ines. Personal interview by author, 8 April 2019 in Johannesburg (member of The Grail)

links and especially Kearney's 'progressive tendencies': "When [Br Tony] volunteered to come from Scotland, he thought that he would be teaching poor black kids."⁶⁰²

So Kearney was increasingly aware of the wider situation; but awareness is only a starting point; then as now there is a danger that it fails to move beyond a response of mere sympathy. In a self-deprecating moment, Alan Paton (admired by both Hurley and Kearney), having bumped into Ruth First on a plane and reflecting on his own failings, describes himself thus: "I was, like so many other liberals, useless but decent."⁶⁰³ So how was Kearney motivated to be more than just decent?

Another section of the Naudé interview, partially underlined by Kearney, is his answer to this question: "how did you go from a liberal to a radical?" Naudé's reply is:

I don't know what happens to other people; I can only describe what happens in my own life. First of all, I felt that I wanted to commit myself to the truth, and therefore to an expression of the real love of Christ towards all human beings, I had to make myself open to others' feelings, concerns, pains, suffering and joy. In order to do that I had to set aside time, in order to make myself available to them, to move into where they are.⁶⁰⁴

That is exactly what Kearney did after he left the Marists when he chose to teach in 1971 at an all-black school, possibly influenced by a Grail member, Mary Emma Kuhn, who was already teaching there:⁶⁰⁵

Inanda Seminary here in Durban, was a real education for me. I don't know how much I taught the girls but it was an education for me because you couldn't help being aware of how they were reacting to what was happening in South Africa. For example, every week, once a week, teachers would take turns to summarise the news, you know you have to read up from all the newspapers and kind of give a 15-minute summary of the main stories and so interesting to hear the reaction, very audible reaction when you told people about what was happening.

Reverend Bheki Dlodla of the Congregational Church, he was like the chaplain of the school and he would come there very often and speak at the morning worship and I had never met a black person like that before. Now this man is highly educated, he had been in America for a long time. Very impressive physically you know, a big man and very articulate and eloquent. So that was another big influence, I mean when you only meet domestic workers, you're not really seeing all the abilities that there are.⁶⁰⁶

We have Kearney's recollections of this experience fifty years after the event; but we also have his considered reflections at the time since he chose to make Inanda Seminary the focus of his B.Ed. dissertation which he completed while he was teaching there in 1971. (The indented quotations within the citation are from alumnae of the school):

The staff at Inanda Seminary has almost since the inception of the school been multiracial, and visitors of all races are constantly welcomed. This aspect of the school's life exists

⁶⁰² Colussi, Mario. Personal interview by author, 13 and 16 October 2020 in Johannesburg (fellow Marist novice/ brother)

⁶⁰³ Paton, *Journey Continued*, 106

⁶⁰⁴ Wallis and Hollyday, *Crucible of Fire*, 107

⁶⁰⁵ Moore, Ann. Personal interview by author, 17 October 2020 in Johannesburg (member of The Grail)

⁶⁰⁶ Houston, "Interview with Paddy Kearney", 4

largely unselfconsciously and it is probably not strange that so few commented on it. To those who did comment, it appears to have been of some importance:

‘The school taught me to have self-confidence in what I do, so much that I easily mix with different people, regardless of colour, race and creed.’

‘Before I came to the school, I was scared of talking to a white person. Thereafter I got used to them.’

One paid high tribute in few and simple words when she spoke of ‘the beautiful and Christian atmosphere as regards race relations.’⁶⁰⁷

One of the girls specifically quoted in his research is Hixonia Nyasulu who later went on to become the Chair of SASOL and a generous supporter of the Denis Hurley Centre. She recalled him being a kind teacher but regretted that she did not have any specific memories of him.⁶⁰⁸ At Inanda, Kearney was mixing not only with the girls but also with their parents. On the one hand, he was surprised to meet so many middle-class black families (71% of the girls’ fathers were in ‘white collar’ jobs compared to 3% in the urban African male population as a whole). On the other, he was impressed by the success of the 11% of girls who came from families who were labourers: “considering the adverse conditions under which African education operates in South Africa, it is quite an achievement for a child to reach Std VI.”⁶⁰⁹

The conclusions that Kearney draws from his research offer some interesting indicators of the work that he will later pursue at Diakonia and beyond:

- “tremendous dedication to secondary education on the part of an African elite”
- “a sophisticated, elitist group, very much committed to tertiary studies, particularly in nursing and the university; and aiming for careers of high professional status, though having to make use of careers of lower status in their progress toward these aspirations”
- a gender bias (in the attitudes of the girls and of the school) with almost none aspiring to professions that were open to them (law, science, commerce) “these careers were probably still regarded as careers ‘for men’.”
- Practical understanding of economic reality
- Value of better counselling services in broadening the aspirations of the girls (not just teachers and nurses)
- All would have studied more given the chance
- While teaching was seen as ‘helping the nation’, it suffered because of low salaries and hard working conditions
- Social work: ‘high professional status and also the considerable scope it offered for individual initiative’
- Looking back on their school life, students valued independent study, character formation, religious and social life, problem-solving, high academic standards
- “Only a very small number commented that Inanda Seminary had trained them in leadership which was surprising in view of the fact that the school had set this as one of its most important aims.”

⁶⁰⁷ Kearney, G Paddy. “A Study of School Leavers from a High School for African Girls”, B.Ed. dissertation (Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand, 1972) 91-92

⁶⁰⁸ Email to the author from Hixonia Nyasulu, 14 April 2022

⁶⁰⁹ Kearney, “A Study of School Leavers from a High School for African Girls,” 94-98

Kearney's B.Ed. research was clearly thoughtful and reflective. But was there also a 'road to Damascus moment'? In fact, in South African history this might be better termed the 'rail to Johannesburg moment' after the famous incident from Gandhi's life when in 1893 the smartly suited young barrister was thrown off a train in Pietermaritzburg because he refused to move to an 'Indian carriage'.⁶¹⁰ Kearney's moment happened when teaching at Inanda in 1971, as he later recalls:

I was teaching *Macbeth* to my Std VIII class and the play was being performed at the Alhambra Theatre (now Durban Christian Centre) which featured artists from abroad. My students were not allowed to attend the performance because it was not opened out to black students. So I wrote a letter to the *Daily News* regarding this incident. After reading the article, the actors from the play became very upset. They were unaware that Apartheid was being applied to the play. The cast of the play contacted me and said that they would come out to the school and perform the play and I could also invite other black schools in the Durban area to attend. Thousands of children came and sat on the lawns of the school and enjoyed the wonderful production. In a way, I also felt discriminated against when I was not allowed to take my students to watch the play.⁶¹¹

Thus in 1971 Kearney's awareness of the world is being increased by his involvement at Inanda Seminary and the need to understand the reality of students' lives. He had similar experiences when in 1973 he was working in the United States while pursuing his Masters studies. He recalls:

In Ohio I worked on multi-cultural projects for inner city schools which prepared teachers to respond sensitively to the needs of Afro-American and Hispanic students.⁶¹²

Kearney's social conscience was growing and also his sensitivity about how to respond to the problems of which he was increasingly aware. This was the informed zeal that he now brought to his work at Diakonia. But he would have been aware that he was not the first keen young white liberal who believed he could make a difference.

Tony Morphet had described the Liberal Party (which Paton led until it was effectively banned in 1968) as pursuing 'the politics of innocence'.⁶¹³ He wrote the Foreword to Rick Turner's *Eye of the Needle* (recall that Kearney was working alongside Turner at the University of Natal in the mid 1970s); he quotes from a memo written in 1976 by Turner about the changing attitudes of the average white critic of racialism. Though this does not describe Kearney, one can imagine him reading this and fearing that it could be him:

His school and home background fills him with racialism. He starts with certain ideas about the mental and social inferiority of blacks, certain emotional reactions to blacks, reactions which go beyond his intellect into his reflexes, and certain habitual ways of behaving towards blacks.

One day he discovers, perhaps at university, that it is factually incorrect to believe in the biological inferiority of blacks. He begins to think that, after all, 'they' are at least potentially educated, civilized and intelligent, like 'us'; that 'they' are not irreducibly different but can become like 'us'.

⁶¹⁰ In fact, Mahatma Gandhi had a great influence on +Hurley and Kearney as is explored in Appendix E.

⁶¹¹ Pillay, Indhrannie. "Paddy Kearney – Icon of Peace and Nonviolence". Satyagraha – in Pursuit of Truth. <https://www.satyagraha.org.za/word/paddy-kearney-icon-of-peace-and-nonviolence/> (accessed 3 May 2022)

⁶¹² Pillay, "Paddy Kearney – Icon of Peace and Nonviolence" (accessed 3 May 2022)

⁶¹³ Paton, *Journey Continued*, 117

This is, of course, great progress in comparison with his old position but it is only relative progress. He still assumes that everybody essentially wants to be like him. He still sees history through 'white' eyes, as whites civilizing the rest. Very often, when he has made the first step, he thinks he has gone the whole way. He is still very confused about race but thinks that he is not.

He therefore behaves with a mixture of arrogant paternalism – deriving from his view of history – and of over-polite timidity – deriving from his emotional confusion – towards the blacks he meets. This is the situation of many liberal white students.⁶¹⁴

Turner was writing as part of the SPRO-CAS project to which Michael Whisson also contributed a section in which he was disparaging about the liberals because their numbers were small and so was their influence. Again this could be both a criticism of Kearney (and +Hurley) but also a call to action:

They think they are more significant because they are concentrated in small groups and also because the security forces take such an interest in them. But they do have a role in the promotion of change: ideological (presenting alternative policies), human contacts and informational.⁶¹⁵

Liberals will have to learn to listen rather than to lead, to develop the same sympathy with the aspirations and fears of the non-voters as they have developed with the aspirations and fears of the whites, to recognise that they have little more in common with the goals of Black power than they have with the reality of White power, and that agreeing with people in a patronising attempt to ingratiate oneself is seen swiftly for what it really is.⁶¹⁶

The willingness to be open to learn, with humility, 'to listen rather than to lead' is what marks out Kearney's time at Diakonia. He summarises it thus:

I mean those 30 years was a very rich experience for me. I mean I was just, it was just all learning. You know, white boy who knows just about nothing and I mean you know within the first two or three weeks I was invited to go on a tour of the informal settlement in Durban. I had no idea of how many people were living in shacks without... it's this tour, I mean it was a whole day, just seeing the vast areas of Durban where people living in shacks without water, electricity, sewerage, schools, shops, any facilities. I mean it was really shocking actually and this was, it seemed like half the population of Durban was living in shacks.

So we held a big service in the cathedral [in March 1976] and it was called 'An Evening of Reflection' on the death of Joseph Mdluli.⁶¹⁷ I got that idea from Theo [Kneifel] a German priest who said they were doing this kind of thing in German churches, an Evening of Reflection on some social issue and there were about a thousand people there and that put us on the map. Put us on the map with the black community, you know, creating expectations that possibly, this was going to be a more radical group than we thought we

⁶¹⁴ Morphet, Anthony. 'Foreword'. *Eye of the Needle*. Rick Turner (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1980) xii

⁶¹⁵ Whisson, Michael. 'Social Organisations and Change'. SPRO-CAS. Vol 6: Towards Social Change. Peter Randall ed. (Johannesburg: Christian Institute, 1971) 104

⁶¹⁶ Whisson, 'Social Organisations and Change', 105

⁶¹⁷ An ANC activist in Natal, Mdluli was detained by the Special Branch and died in custody one day later on 19 March 1976. The nature of the injuries from which he died triggered multiple accusations that there was a conspiracy to cover up the cause of his death. See: 'Joseph Masobila Mdluli', *South African History Online* <https://www.sahistory.org.za/people/joseph-masobila-mdluli> (accessed 24 Oct 2022)

were or than we were and also with the cops. Ja, I mean they began to do, you know the usual kind of things, opening letters and following people around and bugging phones and so on.

I remember there was a kind of meeting at the Beatrice Street Congregational Church ... and Fatima Meer was chairing this meeting and she was saying over the phone, I mean I couldn't believe this, she said, she was talking to Manas Buthelezi in Soweto, Lutheran pastor, "Manas, you've got to spread this down here, you've got to bring what's happening in Soweto, bring it to Natal" and she organised a big protest meeting and that was banned and then she was banned, so ja and I was beginning to see quite what I was getting into.⁶¹⁸

Kearney is moving quickly from analysis to involvement. Wallis and Hollyday quote Jan de Waal:

The difference between liberals and radicals is more than just analysis. It's the difference of involvement. Whites involved in the Struggle live as foreigners in their white areas, with almost all their social contact in the black community.⁶¹⁹

While it could not be said of Kearney that 'all his social contact was in the black community', he was certainly becoming increasingly a foreigner in the white area where he was living.⁶²⁰ People close to him recall how he was changed by these experiences. One niece recollects:

I was proud of what Uncle Paddy was doing; I was conscious of what he was doing. But he never talked to me about political stuff. Brian [her father] and Jack [her other uncle] were anti-Apartheid but they were not involved. They were involved in their academics. They wanted to keep their heads down.⁶²¹

His other niece recalls that there was a streak of resistance in the family: for example, she and her parents staying seated at a school prize-giving during the singing of *de Stem* [the old South African anthem]. But Kearney went further:

Paddy gave me my first doll – it was a black doll from Swaziland. When I was five years old he told me about Apartheid and that the maid should sit at the dining room table with us. He was able to bring together the political work and family time so he used to talk to me about all kinds of things: the Biafran war [1967-70], the Holocaust, the famine in Ethiopia [1973].

He wanted us to be aware of other people's suffering and pain. He said that only a few of us knew the truth – and it was up to us to do something. We knew so we had no excuse – but he told me in a such gentle, soft way. I remember he quoted Victor Frankl to me: 'I saw and I did nothing'. He would say to me: 'Do you realise that black people are suffering?'. I was called k*ff*r-lover by my school friends – they would scribble it on my diary. I was certainly radicalised by Paddy. But then my brothers went in the completely opposite direction.⁶²²

Mary de Haas was an academic anthropologist and fellow activist with a renowned focus on violence monitoring; she was also a friend of the Kearney family and indeed her son married Kearney's niece, Ursula. Her recollection was that the Kearneys were not a radical family but rather liberals. She

⁶¹⁸ Houston, "Interview with Paddy Kearney", 6-7

⁶¹⁹ Wallis and Hollyday, *Crucible of Fire*, 15

⁶²⁰ The theme of Kearney's own racial identity is explored in more detail in Appendix A.

⁶²¹ de Haas, Ursula. Personal interview by author, 27 October 2020 in Durban (niece of Kearney)

⁶²² Kearney, Sarah. Personal interview by author, 17 September 2020 (niece of Kearney)

recalls that Kearney's brother Brian (an architect who was regularly a consultant for the Archdiocese of Durban) had been building rural churches and so was exposed to poor black communities. "I don't know if Paddy was more radical."⁶²³

Raising awareness in others

As Kearney's own level of awareness grew, he started to take on the task of raising awareness in others. In this, he was driven by +Hurley; for example, this 1974 address to the Archdiocese of Durban synod which takes on a more interventionist tone:

This is one of the tragedies of human social situations, the blindness of the 'haves' to what they are inflicting on the 'have-nots', just by being what they are and doing what they think they have every right in the world to do. They must be made aware of the injustices and privations for which they are responsible.

In the opulent world of the West, the call to self-sacrifice and service could be just what is required to rouse Christian people from the paralysis of overindulgence. Amid the poverty and privation of the Third World, the challenge of a Christianity that inspires human development could be a great hope for the future.⁶²⁴

It is from this Synod that the idea of Diakonia first emerges and is presented (as explained in Chapter 3) as an initiative by +Hurley which aims to combine ecumenism and social justice.

Kearney's archive retains a copy of a long article reporting on the 1982 Archdiocese of Durban synod making the point that it is the only diocese in South Africa to hold a synod, and among the few in the world to do so, and stressing the interracial mix of the group. The Synod voted a motion of support for the SACC 'for its prophetic work', calling on the SACBC to sign up, and also condemned detention without trial and the Mixed Marriages Act. It also says that it must not only make statements to send to government ministers but also resolved to set up education programs to raise awareness about these issues.⁶²⁵

+Hurley speaking at the University of Cape Town in 1988 voiced something which was of great concern for Kearney: getting awareness of justice issues into the mainstream of religious life.

The day-by-day, week-by-week life of the Church goes on without a ripple of the kind of social concern I am speaking of here.⁶²⁶

+Hurley's intent to expose the churches to reality was one of the drivers behind Diakonia and, in turn, also improved +Hurley's own ability to talk with authority. Yeats comments:

⁶²³ de Haas, Mary. Personal interview by author, 30 September 2020 in Durban (fellow activist and mother-in-law to Kearney's niece)

⁶²⁴ SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/E/Diakonia/1 "Address to the Archdiocese of Durban Synod on 'Service and Sharing'" (23 May 1974)

⁶²⁵ SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/H/Press/3 (1981-1987) (*Daily News*, 27 May 1982)

⁶²⁶ SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/H/Press/4 (1988-2002) (*Cape Times*, 28 July 1988)

Diakonia helped cut out the waffle forcing the churches in Durban to engage with the complex realities of Apartheid. With Diakonia as his prophetic word, so to speak, it could never be said of Denis Hurley that he was 'generally speaking'.⁶²⁷

Yeats stresses the importance of this because he worries that while the Church may claim to be 'an expert on humanity', the reality often belies the claim. By contrast, in Yeats' opinion, +Hurley does demonstrate that he is an expert by challenging Apartheid's defective understanding of humanity *and also* challenging the Church in her understanding of what it means to be human.⁶²⁸

The Diakonia archives provide countless examples of the talks and pamphlets that Kearney and his team developed to try and raise awareness among ordinary white church-goers. One example will suffice. Fred and Marylyn Cason were part of a reflection group at their Catholic parish and Kearney came to speak to the group about prejudice.

He encouraged us to look at the needs of the parish. And then Paddy showed a movie about [the nearby] St Wendolin's [a black residential area that was being reclassified as industrial]. He got us involved in the 'Save St Wendolin's' campaign. We asked 'What do we do now?' and we were selected to be trained to promote the campaign. In his quiet way, Paddy could get you fired up. He could instil you with a vision but you knew he was always there to support you. He was completely steeped in Gospel values and then shared that motivation with others. He clearly understood what was right and what was wrong.⁶²⁹

Getting people fired up, but 'in a quiet way', was the paradox for those who wanted to harness the potential of the churches to bring about change. With students – a group that Kearney knew well – the danger was in going to the other extreme. Cabra Dominican, Sr Margaret Kelly, when reflecting on +Hurley, makes a comment about J&P which might not have applied to Kearney but perhaps to those who followed after him:

Many of those involved in Justice and Peace groups were young adult Catholics who were not always clear where, and if, there was a line between being a political activist against Apartheid and a Christian believer championing liberation theology. They needed the theological and spiritual wisdom and experience of +Hurley to provide guidance."⁶³⁰

Whisson comments that the churches needed to find programmes for change without arousing fear. He contrasts the Reform churches (principally NGK) where the leaders might recognise the need for change but dare not challenge their members; and the English-speaking churches whose leaders are overwhelmingly progressive or liberal in outlook, and who do challenge their members, but do not necessarily convince them.

As vehicles for the conversion of voters, the English churches are obviously of great importance, but in hauling their congregations up the gradient of self-denial, there is always

⁶²⁷ Yeats, Charles. "He Stayed on to Support Me". *Denis Hurley – a portrait by friends*. Anthony Gamley ed. (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 2001) 121

⁶²⁸ Yeats, "He Stayed on to Support Me", 119. (The phrase 'expert on humanity' was coined by Paul VI when addressing the United Nations in 1965.)

⁶²⁹ Cason, Fred and Marylyn. Personal interview by author, 21 January 2022 via Zoom (co-workers at Diakonia)

⁶³⁰ Kelly, Margaret. "Gravitas and Conviction". *Denis Hurley – a portrait by friends*. Anthony Gamley ed. (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 2001) 159

the possibility that the lead engines will become detached from the trucks, or that the cargo of voters will have leaked away before significant change can be achieved.⁶³¹

Whisson knew that this was a weakness that could be exploited by those who were against change, quoting one National Party candidate during the 1970 elections:

They [Church members] talk Progressive, vote UP, and thank God for the Nats!⁶³²

Nolan was also aware of the problem of people not being aware of their need to change and compares the Biblical image of blindness to the modern concept of false consciousness and therefore the need to be cured of blindness.⁶³³ In a section called 'the blind leading the blind', Nolan talks about how the white community is deceived by separation, propaganda and education.⁶³⁴

Whites (and all those who are co-opted onto their side) are blinded, numbed, isolated and cut off from reality. In the end they are alienated not only from black workers but from themselves. As Boesak has pointed out: "Apartheid does not only prevent Whites from understanding Blacks, it also prevents them from understanding themselves."⁶³⁵

Nolan – having been a student chaplain – is also aware of how early in the process whites could be prevented from seeing properly:

Education in our country has become a way of preventing children from ever thinking for themselves and conditioning them from an early age to accept what they are told.⁶³⁶

This resonates with the work of Illich (quoted by Kearney) who, in condemning institutions like schools, says:

Schooling prepares for the alienating institutionalisation of life by teaching the need to be taught. Once this lesson is learnt, people lose their incentive to grow in independence.⁶³⁷

Illich's solution – to de-school society – is a radical one. In his thesis, Kearney argues that there are many flaws in his approach.⁶³⁸ Nevertheless, this does help Kearney to see that simply working with existing institutions without changing them – and churches are no less institutionalised than schools – will not bring about fundamental changes in the outcomes.

Morphet, again in the foreword to Turner's book, warns against change which appears to be making a difference but actually is not:

This English milieu, which is still largely intact, produced and continues to produce a double influence upon its members. At one, relatively superficial level, it generates an attitude which is critical of existing social relations; but at a deeper and more powerful level it serves

⁶³¹ Whisson, 'Social Organisations and Change', 85

⁶³² Whisson, 'Social Organisations and Change', 103

⁶³³ Nolan, *God in South Africa*, 39

⁶³⁴ Nolan, *God in South Africa*, 77

⁶³⁵ Nolan, *God in South Africa*, 81 (Rev. Allan Boesak was a Dutch Reformed minister from the 'coloured' branch of the Church).

⁶³⁶ Nolan, *God in South Africa*, 79

⁶³⁷ Kearney, G Paddy. "Towards a Critical Analysis of Ivan D Illich's *Deschooling Society*", M.Ed. dissertation (University of Toledo, 1973) 38

⁶³⁸ Kearney, "Towards a Critical Analysis of Ivan D Illich's *Deschooling Society*", 126-129

to insulate its constituents from knowledge and a critical understanding of the fundamental power relations between the groups in the country.⁶³⁹

Exposure Visits

So Kearney's aim is not just to raise awareness but also to foster 'a critical understanding of fundamental power relations'. He does not underestimate how much anxiety and ignorance needs to be overcome. He would have been aware, as Randall mentions, of how the lack of social mixing between blacks and whites has made them strangers to each other and that this reinforces fear.

The factor of fear is intertwined in the patterns in our society and contributes to their rigidity and resistance to change.⁶⁴⁰

Kearney's chosen tool is an 'exposure visit' – initially a short visit by a group from one church to another church. Thus, there is an article from 1981 describing how Diakonia, 'in its campaign to educate whites about the plight of the blacks', was organising a bus tour of KwaMashu, Inanda and Phoenix.⁶⁴¹ But such an approach runs the risk of being a kind of cultural, or worse still racial, safari. It is not enough to just see how other people live: you need to get some deeper understanding.

Loek Goemans recalls the Justice & Peace group running a weekend Marriage Encounter course which brought together Catholic couples from different parts of the Archdiocese of Durban and thus from different racial groups. Kearney was invited to help raise the consciousness of the attendees. He played a game with them called 'Star Power' in which some are given more money than others and so they are gaming the experience of being rich or poor. Goemans explains that this was an early attempt at imagining oneself in the shoes of another. But over time, she and Kearney became bolder in facing people's concerns about actually spending time in the townships (where there were legal restrictions as well as potential problems of language and culture).⁶⁴² The fact that these might be difficult was, in a way, a proof of their effectiveness, and Christians were in a unique position to make these happen. As Buthelezi wrote:

It is very often said that points of race contact are points of friction. What is unique about the Gospel is that it changes points of contact into points of fellowship. ...Any deliberate elimination of points of human contact is a calculated sabotage of the essence of Christian fellowship.⁶⁴³

Thus the exposure visits eventually became an opportunity for people from one church to go and live with people from another church for two weeks and then reciprocate the visit. There are four key issues being addressed by these:

- First, that people from one cultural group (or 'race') are spending extended time with people from a different one
- Secondly, that this goes in both directions: it is not just that white people get to see non-white people but vice versa (to avoid the cultural safari)

⁶³⁹ Morphet, "Foreword", ix

⁶⁴⁰ Randall, *SPRO-CAS 6: Towards Social Change*, 22

⁶⁴¹ SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/H/Press/3 (1981-1987) (*The Leader*, 20 March 1981)

⁶⁴² Goemans, Loek. Personal interview by author, 15 October 2020 in Johannesburg (member of The Grail)

⁶⁴³ Buthelezi, Manas. "Black Christians must liberate Whites". *Reality: a journal of liberal and radical opinion* (1973, 5:3) 4

- Thirdly, that this reaches the intimacy of actually hosting: one might wonder which was harder for a white family? To live with a black family; or to host them in their own home?
- And fourthly that this was not only crossing a racial divide but also a denominational with, for example, the priest from one parish staying with the minister from another

The reason why the exposure went in both directions is that Diakonia explicitly had a programme to raise black consciousness and white consciousness. Lawrence Schlemmer writing for SPRO-CAS in 1971 had specifically listed strategies for within each community.⁶⁴⁴ For the white community, he mentions: change attitudes, mass media, work within existing structures (Church rather than political), work within the cultural differences between whites (in this case ecumenical), leverage external influence, protest.⁶⁴⁵ Meanwhile, within the black community he lists: increased literacy, experience of working together, sense of pride, community leadership, not aiming always for acceptance by whites, solidarity within the community across class divisions, positions of responsibility.⁶⁴⁶ It is interesting that many of these become part of Diakonia's two programmes.

Liz Mkame, who was programme director for black churches, recalls:

We were keen to make people uncomfortable about the life that others are leading. Otherwise they cannot participate in what God is expecting of them. It was great because people responded practically – now that they were conscious of what they could do. I remember one old lady having seen how hard it was to access water saying: 'I am going to get a plumber to install more taps!'.⁶⁴⁷

Andrew Warmback's initial work was organising exposure visits working with white communities:

We were nourished by the spirit of Diakonia. The exposure methodology was effectively an educational philosophy. The word conscientisation was not used but that is what it was. I remember Paddy saying: 'When you go to a township, those people are your professors'.⁶⁴⁸

Writing much later, Bishop Kevin Dowling – who has a personal reputation for engaging with the most marginalised – says something very similar:

Only as the people of God receive the stranger, the sinner, and the immigrant – those who don't play our game our way – so we discover not only the hidden, feared and hated parts of our own souls, but the fullness of Jesus himself. We need them for our own conversion.⁶⁴⁹

Daphne Goad, who is Catholic and 'coloured', recalls her exposure immersion of going to stay with the 'Indian' Anglican vicar Rodgers Govender at St Mary's in Greyville for 2 weeks.⁶⁵⁰ The Casons, recall the exposure visits as an experience of being 'open and apostolic, looking at the life of the Church and asking questions you hadn't thought about'.⁶⁵¹ Marilyn Aitken recalls the power of

⁶⁴⁴ Schlemmer, Lawrence. "Strategies for Change". *SPRO-CAS Vol 6: Towards Social Change*. Randall, Peter ed. (Johannesburg: Christian Institute, 1971) Chapter 6

⁶⁴⁵ Schlemmer, "Strategies for Change", 168-179

⁶⁴⁶ Schlemmer, "Strategies for Change", 182-183

⁶⁴⁷ Mkame, Liz. Personal interview by author, 17 December 2020 in Pinetown (co-worker at Diakonia)

⁶⁴⁸ Warmback, Andrew. Personal interview by author, 21 Oct 2020 in Durban (Anglican priest and co-worker at Diakonia)

⁶⁴⁹ Dowling, Kevin. "Bishops as Theologians: Listening, Discerning and Dialogue". *The Church we want – African Catholics look to Vatican III*. Agbonkhanmeghe Orobator ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2016) 3

⁶⁵⁰ Goad, Daphne. Personal interview by author, 29 October 2020 in Durban (co-worker at Diakonia)

⁶⁵¹ Cason, Fred and Marilyn. Personal interview by author, 21 January 2022 via Zoom (co-workers at Diakonia)

increasing intimacy: “When you meet people who are oppressed, the closer you get, the more you become aware of the injustices.”⁶⁵²

Kearney’s successor as Director of Diakonia, Nomabelu Mvambo-Dandala, recalls that the exposure visits made an impact but that working with the Church was not always easy. Those who were active were always just a small group and they realised that they needed to devise strategies of how to reach people better. She was sure that one of the things that really mobilised Kearney was his own exposure, being confronted with the poverty of Inanda having lived in town. He was unusual in having seen both worlds. “Most people were not aware of the harsh reality of how people were living.”⁶⁵³

As well as the exposure visits, there were more and more opportunities for people to meet each other and to learn together, as Kearney describes:

In ‘Facing the Future with Hope’ courses, small numbers of delegates, both black and white, have come together for weekends, sharing their hopes, fears and hurts, and have begun to realise their common humanity and how other people experience life in South Africa.⁶⁵⁴

By having different ways of engaging people, Kearney recognised that different people’s tolerance for having their consciousness raised varied. Turner attempts an analysis of the white population of South Africa. He concludes that, among the English, 30% are *verlig* (enlightened); 50% pragmatic and 20% *verklampt* (rigid and conservative) whereas among the Afrikaners 20% *verlig*, 25% pragmatic and 55% *verklampt*.⁶⁵⁵ The Diakonia exposure activities in their various forms would certainly attract the enlightened and might also attract some of the pragmatic.

Turner argues that such a shift in consciousness only occurs when people are involved in action. He describes what he sees as needed for democracy in South Africa (and is also perhaps prescient about what has failed):

There is an intimate relationship between change in consciousness and organisation. To be effective, organisation must be related to the way in which people see the world and help them to see the world in a new way. I must come to see the world as able to be changed. I must come to see myself as having the capacity to play a part in changing it. And I must see that my capacity to do this can be realised only in cooperation with other people. ⁶⁵⁶

He has most hope in the Church because of its international position (which means that it is sensitive to pressure from the international community) and because of the number of blacks who are present (and could be in positions of leadership). But, even then, the hierarchy tends to be liberal but the white congregations are not.

[The leaders] think it is more important to ensure that their white congregations continue to come to church than to ensure that they begin to behave in a Christian fashion.

⁶⁵² Aitken, Marilyn. Personal interview by author, 23 September 2020 in Howick (member of The Grail)

⁶⁵³ Mvambo-Dandala, Nomabelu. Personal interview by author, 26 May 2022 in Durban (Kearney’s successor as Director of Diakonia and sometime Patron of Denis Hurley Centre)

⁶⁵⁴ Kearney, G Paddy. *Faith in Action* (Pietermaritzburg: KwaZulu Natal Christian Council, 2017) 7 (Address to Kloof Methodist Youth, 16 February 1986)

⁶⁵⁵ Turner, Rick. *Eye of the Needle* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1980) 134

⁶⁵⁶ Turner, *Eye of the Needle*, 85

Turner's conclusion is less than optimistic about all three liberal institutions (media, universities and Church):

White liberals remain Whites first and liberals second. They are offended by the barbarities of South African society but not sufficiently outraged to be willing to risk sacrificing their own privileged positions. This is not merely a question of cowardice it also represents a lack of imagination and ignorance.⁶⁵⁷

The challenge of how to truly be an agent for change is one which I think always stands hauntingly in the background for people like Turner, +Hurley and Kearney. This is clearly true of Methodist minister, Peter Storey:

To most whites, I was a dangerous radical; but to the most ideologically driven activists, I was at the best an irrelevant liberal. They saw their role as pushing leaders like me into more aggressive positions, or writing us off.⁶⁵⁸

Schlemmer levels this accusation at those who feel that protest will achieve something:

They might convert a few individuals in the white groups but it is to be doubted if the number is significant. Protest might hearten some blacks, but there is a considered opinion freely expressed, that many younger blacks either despise or feel pity for conscience-stricken whites who persist in fruitless activity of this nature. The accusation is often levelled that this is a way in which some whites can salve their over-burdened consciences and little else.⁶⁵⁹

Nolan fears that one of the reasons for the lack of real change is that Christians are still using 'guilt' as the measure of how serious a sin is.

Guilt always has to be present for a sin but it is hard to measure. Because of self-deception and blindness, people may not be aware of the suffering that results, but that can be measured. Moreover, guilt is not a productive feeling. Whites who get involved in the Struggle for liberation out of a sense of guilt tend to be more of a hindrance than a help.⁶⁶⁰

Reflecting on the experience of Gandhi, and in turn his influence on +Hurley, as explored in Appendix E, Kearney was aware of the need for change of heart followed by action:

All too often the pious, even the saintly person, pursues a path of spiritual perfection that brings results merely in the field of personal holiness, albeit a personal holiness that is deeply marked by the love and service of others. ...[Gandhi's] was the sort of mind that saw with startling clarity that if you wanted to be true to yourself, and true to the people you loved, you had to put that love into practice to change political, economic and cultural factors hurting people, stifling their freedom, and impeding their growth and progress.⁶⁶¹

⁶⁵⁷ Turner, *Eye of the Needle*, 138

⁶⁵⁸ Storey, Peter. *I Beg to Differ – ministry amid the teargas* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2018) 338

⁶⁵⁹ Schlemmer, "Strategies for Change", 179

⁶⁶⁰ Nolan, *God in South Africa*, 96

⁶⁶¹ Kearney, G Paddy. "Gandhi's Influence on a Catholic Archbishop". *Gandhi Marg – Quarterly of the Gandhi Peace Foundation* (2010, 31:4) 606. For more on Gandhi's influence on Kearney, see Appendix E.

Resistance against Apartheid

So how did Kearney, through Diakonia, put that 'love into practice to change political, economic and cultural factors'? The list is very long and it is outside the scope of this work to provide a comprehensive history of the activities of Diakonia. I intend instead, over the next few sections, to focus on a few examples that for me give a flavour of the approach and some of the challenges they faced.

The reason why the whole Church – and so that means all the various denominations of Christianity – should stand up against Apartheid might seem obvious now in retrospect. Writing about Diakonia's sister organisation PACSA, Inglis comments:

Everything about the Christian religion screamed against what was happening in South Africa...The contradiction was just overwhelming. One felt there needed to be action."⁶⁶²

But it was not always so clear at the time. Even +Hurley, who is lauded as a 'Struggle hero' feels that "we did too little too late."⁶⁶³

In fact, in various speeches +Hurley is not complimentary about the role of the Church in resisting Apartheid:

Generally speaking, South Africa is a church-going country... But neither Christianity as a faith nor the churches as faith communities broke down Apartheid. At the most, a number of dedicated Christians accompanied the process which was essentially and effectively political.⁶⁶⁴

The irony for +Hurley and for other Christian leaders who did stand up against Apartheid is that there was a simple theological argument that could be deployed: the equality of all human beings as children of God. For example, this is presented repeatedly by +Desmond Tutu, Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town. Kearney in reviewing a book which recounts the role of the Anglican Church in the Struggle, says this about the Nobel Peace Prize laureate:

Tutu in his youth was profoundly influenced by Huddleston. He echoed these words some years later. 'I have tried to show that Apartheid is intrinsically and irremediably evil. For my part, its most vicious, indeed its most blasphemous aspect, is not the great suffering it causes its victims, but that it can make a child of God doubt that he is a child of God. For that alone it deserves to be condemned as a heresy.'⁶⁶⁵

Again, the interviews that Wallis and Hollyday conducted with Christian leaders in the Struggle in the mid 1980s provides useful insight. In the Foreword, Allan Boesak states:

The struggle for freedom in South Africa has dimensions beyond mere politics. There is a spiritual force at work in this struggle. And because the fields have been moistened with the blood of so many martyrs, a gathering cloud of communing saints energises our efforts.

⁶⁶² Inglis, John. *Journeying for Justice* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 2009) 17

⁶⁶³ Denis, "The Historical Significance of Denis Hurley's Contribution to the Second Vatican Council", 197

⁶⁶⁴ Denis, *Facing the Crisis*, 188 (Hurley, Denis. 'From Acceptance of Segregation to Rejection of Apartheid: Fifty years of Christian Evolution in South Africa', a lecture delivered in Bologna in 1993)

⁶⁶⁵ Kearney, *Faith in Action*, 244 ("Review of *Anglicans against Apartheid 1936-96*, by Bob Clarke", *The Southern Cross*, 16-22 December 2009)

The leaders of Apartheid accuse us of being unfaithful because we are political. What they fail to see is that we are political because we are faithful. If we were not faithful, we could turn our backs on the suffering and oppression and accept Apartheid as it is today.⁶⁶⁶

1988 saw the banning of 17 organisations and the bombing of two church headquarters (of the SACC and the SACBC). Wallis and Hollyday conclude:

At this moment in history, the Church in South Africa remains one of the few institutions with any means of working for peaceful change. And the Church leaders have accepted the challenge. In the political vacuum created by the silencing of the other groups, the churches have moved to the front lines of the freedom struggle, calling for a campaign of non-violent direct action aimed at the system of Apartheid. They are armed only with the moral force and promises of the gospel – and the deeply embedded hope that South Africa will one day be free.

There is now the real possibility of a martyred Church in South Africa. That reality places a new responsibility on the rest of the Church worldwide. A suffering Church has a moral claim on the rest of the Body of Christ.⁶⁶⁷

It is the willingness to face sacrifice and risk safety in the face of Apartheid that gives the Church its moral right to challenge. Beyers Naudé comments on white involvement:

You must be willing to risk your income, your security and your very life. You have to be prepared to be ostracised by your own people and walk by faith with God. Until they come to that point, whites will be unwilling.⁶⁶⁸

And this is contrasted with the unwillingness of most whites to face any sacrifice:

Few whites have taken responsibility – or have given up their privilege. One youth in Mamelodi told us: “The whites don’t believe in our ‘one man, one vote’. They believe in ‘one man, one pool’ – and they use their vote to keep their pool.”⁶⁶⁹

For Christians, the Struggle is to provide liberation to everyone, black and white. In his copy of this book, Kearney has under-lined one section and added the word ‘human’ in the margin:

Freedom is coming even for you Mr PW Botha [National Party President at the time]. We want you to be free. We want you to be here with us. We want you to put away the casspirs [armoured vehicles used against civilians]. Those chaps ought to be with their wives and children this afternoon.⁶⁷⁰

One of the approaches used by Diakonia was to identify a particular event and challenge those who were uncomfortable with Apartheid – even if not fully opposed – to join others in showing resistance. This was an especially important tactic when successive waves of ‘States of Emergency’ put restrictions on what was permitted as political protest. Thus, for example, on 1 June 1981, the Nationalist Government was planning big celebrations (among the white community) for the 20th

⁶⁶⁶ Wallis and Hollyday, *Crucible of Fire*, xii

⁶⁶⁷ Wallis and Hollyday, *Crucible of Fire*, xv-xix

⁶⁶⁸ Wallis and Hollyday, *Crucible of Fire*, 15

⁶⁶⁹ Wallis and Hollyday, *Crucible of Fire*, 16

⁶⁷⁰ Wallis and Hollyday, *Crucible of Fire*, 39

anniversary of the declaration of a Republic. +Hurley guided by Kearney – or Kearney guided by +Hurley – decided to use this as a platform for protest.

In March, +Hurley urged all Catholics to boycott the Republic Festival that was being planned (and he was openly opposed in public by some of the Durban priests such as Fr Rodney Moss).⁶⁷¹ In early May, the wider SACBC and the Anglican Province both backed the campaign against the Republic anniversary festival.⁶⁷² Later in May, 2,000 anti-Republic Day pamphlets were seized from the Diakonia office and Kearney admitted that 13,000 had already been given out.⁶⁷³ In another newspaper, Kearney defended the pamphlets:

It was a very factual analysis of the inequalities in our society and was in no way emotive. The aim of the leaflet was to help black and white people understand why the majority of people in this country don't want to celebrate.

He was supported in this action by Anglican and Methodist leaders.⁶⁷⁴ Finally, there was a proposal by Diakonia that people be invited to gather for prayer in churches on Monday June 1 when the military parade was being held in Durban.⁶⁷⁵

This is a perfect example of Kearney's creativity in action. I see a number of key elements here which he will use in other situations and which I believe demonstrate his underlying theology:

1. He chooses a platform which is significant and visible (and bound to draw attention).
2. It is not actually a direct confrontation (like a protest march) and so harder to attack.
3. It is presented as a prophetic act (one which aims to change how something is viewed) and not afraid to court opposition.
4. It quickly enables other religious leaders to show their support.
5. It provides an opportunity for every person to respond if they wish (without asking too much of them: to boycott is to effectively ask people *not* to do something).
6. It is backed by a factual presentation of a case and thus is educational.
7. It can be a platform shared by all racial and religious groups if they wish.
8. It is based on a principle of non-violence (and in stark opposition to the implicit violence of a military parade).
9. An alternative is offered which is presented as a dissenting act of loyalty but immersed in religious faithfulness: instead of cheering for the military, people are invited to gather in churches and pray for the country.

In Chapter 5, we will see many of the same elements at work in the Good Friday Service.

+Nuttall recalls another example of Kearney's creativity with the founding (in 1983) of the United Democratic Front (UDF) as a network of civil society organisations. Most opposition political parties having been banned, exiled or silenced, the UDF was attempting to provide a way for those who opposed Apartheid to come together and make their voice heard, particularly to oppose the planned Tri-Cameral Parliament. +Hurley (and Diakonia) was taking a strong stance against the weak political reforms being offered and initially Diakonia decided to join the UDF as a formal member. While +Hurley did not see a problem, his Anglican counterpart did because he was concerned about conflict between the UDF and Inkatha. His fear was that Inkatha (and in particular Mangosuthu

⁶⁷¹ SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/H/Press/3 (1981-1987) (*The Citizen*, 12 March 1981)

⁶⁷² SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/H/Press/3 (1981-1987) (*Sunday Tribune*, 10 May 1981)

⁶⁷³ SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/H/Press/3 (1981-1987) (*The Citizen*, 28 May 1981)

⁶⁷⁴ SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/H/Press/3 (1981-1987) (*The Natal Mercury*, 28 May 1981)

⁶⁷⁵ SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/H/Press/3 (1981-1987) (*Daily News*, 29 May 1981)

Buthelezi who was an Anglican) would see the UDF as a front for the ANC and that this would make it hard for Diakonia to act as independent mediators with Inkatha.

In a later article in 1988, Kearney reflects on how the Church can hold the middle ground:

The problem is how the Church can reveal the truth about a conflict and at the same time promote dialogue between the conflicting parties. As soon as revealing the truth means making known the atrocities committed by one or other of the parties, the 'accused' party will see the Church as biased and will therefore refuse the good faith of the Church – a fundamental requisite for successfully promoting talks.⁶⁷⁶

Kearney's solution to the UDF question was the alternative of Diakonia joining as an 'associate member', finding a third way which kept both +Hurley and +Nuttall happy (though, in the end, not Buthelezi).⁶⁷⁷ But Philippe Denis, a Dominican theologian who was involved in Natal activism at the time, recalls that 'a third way' was controversial.⁶⁷⁸

I remember Diakonia being criticised at FedSem and elsewhere for not taking a clear stance in the late 1990s. Ironically Diakonia's mediation plan did not work. One had to choose between two and not three options. Buthelezi identified the churches with the ANC/UDF anyway. ... When we were working on Hurley's correspondence, Paddy was still afraid of Buthelezi's reaction. I had to tell him to calm down. In the end Buthelezi never said anything (in public at least) about our book.⁶⁷⁹

Alternative to Apartheid

Part of Kearney's approach at Diakonia was to provide an alternative to what was being offered by the Nationalist Government: for example, a prayer service rather than a military parade. The approach is always one that stresses conversion and transformation rather than opposition and defeat. Kearney explains this in the Diakonia newsletter in 1979:

We have tried to help white people see the radical change that is needed in this society not as total loss, but as providing them with the possibility of more secure and happy lives, and greater community with their black fellow South Africans. This has been stressed in programmes held in parishes and youth groups. A Self-Tax fund has been established in which wealthier people are challenged to tax themselves as a form of restitution of money that has become theirs through an unjust economic system. Grants are made from this fund for the establishment of self-help projects.⁶⁸⁰

This is adopting an approach which is based on *metanoia* (conversion) as a way of opening up, rather than acceptance or refusal, and is in accord with the Council and with the Gospel. It is hardly coincidental that this is very similar to the approach taken by Kearney at Diakonia in terms of

⁶⁷⁶ Mbona, Michael. "On embassy to Ulundi: the Natal Church Leaders Group's mediation attempts in war-torn Natal 1987-1990", *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* (2010, 36.1) 150 (Quoting Kearney)

⁶⁷⁷ Nuttall, Michael. Personal interview by author, 23 September 2020 in Howick (Emeritus Bishop of Natal)

⁶⁷⁸ Balcomb, Anthony. *Third Way Theology: Reconciliation, Revolution, and Reform in the South African Church During the 1980s* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 1993)

⁶⁷⁹ Email to the author from Philippe Denis, 24 October 2022

⁶⁸⁰ Kearney, *Faith in Action*, 9 ("Were you there when they crucified my Lord?", *Diakonia News*, December 1979)

ecumenism. In fact, Girault uses language in describing ecumenism which could also be applied for anti-Apartheid initiatives and so then could also give these a religious perspective:

The interior conversion called for...required not only the conversion of individuals but also the transformation of the community and, if need be, the renewal of structures.⁶⁸¹

We used to live under the 'sign of separation'; we are trying now to live in a new fellowship and under the 'sign of communion' wherever possible.⁶⁸²

A good early example of this 'sign of communion' is in a 1969 Pastoral letter sent by +Hurley to all parishes in Durban:

We must know clearly, and be brave enough to admit openly, that the most important thing about a human being is not their race. The most important things are the common nature each shares with the other and the own unique gifts and abilities given to each person by God's grace. If we say that a person's race is more important than their own Human Nature, more important than their uniqueness as an individual, we reject our own humanity and the humanity of others.⁶⁸³

+Hurley was not afraid to follow through on his principles and showed Kearney early on that opposition to Apartheid would even have an impact on Catholic traditions. One important Durban tradition was the *Passion Play*, performed by the Durban Catholic Players Guild every five years. This was especially dear to +Hurley since he had secured permission for the script in 1951 from the Mayor of Oberammergau but only on the strict condition that audiences would not be segregated. But by the late 1960s, laws on 'mixed use' of recreational spaces had become stricter so by the time of the 1973 production, only segregated performances were permitted.⁶⁸⁴ In April 1973, the Archbishop resigned as Patron of the Guild, and he and other clergy boycotted the opening night. In the local newspaper, +Hurley comments wittily: "Jesus died on a Friday but Indians can only see him on a Wednesday and Africans on a Tuesday!"⁶⁸⁵

Hurley, supported by Kearney, can also show pleasure at those Catholic organisations who are resisting Apartheid. For example, in 1984 when he received a certificate of affiliation to the Marist Brothers, he said that he had always been proud as an old boy to be a member of the Marist family and never more so than in recent years when they had opened their schools to all races.⁶⁸⁶ Kearney as a fellow Marist alumnus, and indeed a former Marist, will have shared this pride.⁶⁸⁷

So the approach of Diakonia is to be a source of hope in challenging times and work to establish genuine community with people of other races. In a talk in 1988, Kearney explains:

⁶⁸¹ 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) 162

⁶⁸² Girault, "The Reception of Ecumenism", 165

⁶⁸³ SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/H/Press/2 (1969-1980) "Pastoral letter from +Hurley to all parishes of Archdiocese of Durban" (*The Southern Cross*, November 1969) (gendered language altered)

⁶⁸⁴ Extract from a history of the Durban Passion Play due to be published in 2023 by Dawn Haynes (Email to the author, 25 October 2022)

⁶⁸⁵ SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/H/Press/2 (1969-1980) (*Natal Mercury*, April 1973)

⁶⁸⁶ SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/H/Press/3 (1981-1987) (*The Southern Cross*, 22 January 1984)

⁶⁸⁷ It is, however, interesting to note that, according to Kearney's fellow Marist Jude Pieterse, the orders of brothers were generally more timid about de-segregating their schools than the congregations of sisters. See: Pieterse, Jude. *The Open Schools Era (1976-1986)* (Johannesburg: Marist Brothers, 2020) 18

It is in such a context of hopelessness and fear of the future that ‘the Lord calls us as Christians, as members of the Church to be a community’. This means that God wants us to be a living demonstration that people of different races can live as a community in peace and justice. God wants us to be a sign of the sort of community He wants for all His people. ‘Seeing is believing’, we like to say.

Often this is rather superficial with the white parish appearing to be like Father Christmas or Lady Bountiful, bringing gifts, making us feel that we have done something. But we don’t stay to listen to what the other group really needs from us and what they want to give us. Remember that Ezekiel spent seven days with exiles at the River Chibar before he even opened his mouth and said anything to them.⁶⁸⁸

Reminiscences from people who were aware of the work of Diakonia at this time, reinforce Kearney’s focus on providing spaces where people could come together and listen to each other.

Doug Irvine was leading Justice & Peace in the Archdiocese of Durban; he recalls that, even if the parishes were not usually multi-racial spaces (because of geography), the Church itself was and, because of its priests, even had multi-racial officers.

J&P had to demonstrate that the Church can be a multiracial model for our society. We had to promote a vision and practice of multi-racialism. So we would use church occasions to bring people together such as having a joint Corpus Christi procession involving different parishes. It helped that the Cathedral parish was always multi-racial.⁶⁸⁹

Kearney actually references a Corpus Christi event in a television interview with him that was screened about a year before he died.⁶⁹⁰ He recalls that there were 24,000 people in King’s Park stadium from all the parishes of the Archdiocese of Durban and so it was a completely multi-racial gathering and that +Hurley said to them:

Look around you. These are all your brothers and sisters. How can you discriminate against them?⁶⁹¹

Doug Irvine also remembers events each year for 16 December which was marked until 1994 as the ‘Day of the Vow’ and was an important Afrikaner holiday which began with services in Dutch Reformed churches.

Instead of that, Diakonia used to hold an annual ‘service for reconciliation’. It was J&P who coined the idea that 16 December should be the ‘Day of Reconciliation’ which was a term picked up by the Natal papers.⁶⁹²

⁶⁸⁸ Kearney, *Faith in Action*, 39 (“The Lord calls us to be a community within our neighbourhood”, address to St Thomas’ Church Musgrave, 4 September 1988)

⁶⁸⁹ Irvine, Doug. Personal interview by author, 12 October 2020 in Johannesburg (personal friend and Chair of Archdiocese of Durban Justice & Peace)

⁶⁹⁰ “Update December 2017”, *Denis Hurley Centre website* <http://www.denishurleycentre.org/page/hurley-centre-newsletters> (accessed 26 September 2022)

⁶⁹¹ “The Light with Paddy Kearney”, *SABC2*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J58-oBGtvqM> (accessed 28 September 2022) 24 min from start

⁶⁹² Irvine, Doug. Personal interview by author, 12 October 2020 in Johannesburg (personal friend and Chair of Archdiocese of Durban Justice & Peace); this significant memory is confirmed by another contemporary: Dunne, “Who shall dwell on your Holy Mountain?”, 180

Mary de Haas has a different memory of 16 December as playing host to an explicitly multi-racial Mass at the Cathedral (though it is possible that both events happened, perhaps in different years).

One of my memories is that Diakonia became a place for ordinary decent interaction between race groups. The sandwich bar was driven by Patti Gertz from Black Sash to encourage people [of different races] to eat together.⁶⁹³

Similarly, the Casons recall that Marriage Encounter retreats were racially mixed. “Suddenly we were meeting people across the divide.”⁶⁹⁴

Paul Graham, a Methodist youth worker who was involved with Diakonia, remembers a more political way in which Diakonia presented an alternative to Apartheid. The old policy of Bantustans meant that some black residential areas very close to the city of Durban (such as KwaMashu and Umlazi) were actually outside the city’s jurisdiction and part of KwaZulu. In effect, Durban was interpenetrated by the homelands. Diakonia took the radical decision to make the political statement of thinking of all Durban residents as part of the same place. They coined the phrase ‘Greater Durban Functional Area’ and repeatedly used it in their Annual Reports. By doing this, they were following Anderson’s idea of the “Imagined Community” which is based less on borders or mutual knowledge and more on the shared commitment to an ideal:

...the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.⁶⁹⁵

The impact of this is demonstrated in that, post-1994, the new Metropolitan Municipality of eThekweni more or less matches Diakonia’s ‘Greater Durban Functional Area’: their imagined community became a reality. Incidentally, Graham points out that this problem actually still persists in some cases with Church territories: thus the Catholic dioceses in the area do tend to skew towards historic race groups (with the Diocese of Mariannhill incorporating mostly black areas and twisting right past white areas that were retained for the Archdiocese of Durban).⁶⁹⁶

In the various ways listed above, Diakonia was trying to use its imagination, and spark the imagination of others, to anticipate the Kingdom. Dulles, in reflecting on Faith and Justice, captures this well:

We will never, of course, fully insert the Kingdom of God into historical time. But the Biblical concept of the Kingdom stimulates our creative imagination so that we find ever-new ways of provisionally realising, within history, signs and anticipations of the promised Kingdom.⁶⁹⁷

⁶⁹³ de Haas, Mary. Personal interview by author, 30 September 2020 in Durban (Fellow activist and mother-in-law to Kearney’s niece)

⁶⁹⁴ Cason, Fred and Marylyn. Personal interview by author, 21 January 2022 via Zoom (co-workers at Diakonia)

⁶⁹⁵ Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 2006) 6

⁶⁹⁶ Graham, Paul. Personal interview by author, 13 October 2020 in Johannesburg (Methodist youth worker)

⁶⁹⁷ Dulles, Avery. “The Meaning of Faith considered in relation to Justice”. *The Faith that does Justice - examining the Christian Sources for Social Change*. John C Haughey ed. (New York: Paulist, 1977) 37 (For more on Dulles’ view see Appendix C).

According to Abrahams, +Hurley's concern was that faith and social action were too often seen as different and even opposites. That attitude contradicted the Conciliar teaching that the human person is one entity and that salvation occurs within history.⁶⁹⁸

One commentator who is in a good position to reflect on how effective Diakonia was is Professor Bonke Dumisa. Post-1994 he became a business leader and well-known economist but had been an activist in the Soweto uprising of 1976. In an article in 2008, he uses Diakonia as an example of presenting a vision of a truly non-racial South Africa where one can ask the question: 'Who is my neighbour?':

I yearn for a future South Africa where the rainbow nation will comprise people of different colours who will mix to form a true non-racial South Africa. That will be the day I will be happy to say that every South African citizen is my neighbour.⁶⁹⁹

Workers' Rights

Chapter 5 will look in detail at the most visible aspect of Diakonia's work which was the annual Good Friday service and explore this in the context of a theology of suffering.

But there were other focuses for Diakonia and one of them was workers' rights. Even after Vatican II, the Catholic Church's position on some justice issues was sometimes still unclear or only recently formed or phrased in very general terms. But the very origins of what is termed 'Catholic Social Teaching' (CST) goes back to Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical *Rerum Novarum* which was specifically about working conditions. Of course, the 85 years from then until the founding of Diakonia, or indeed the further 45 years that have elapsed since then, do not mean that Catholic individuals (or even Catholic organisations) are more likely to be just and fair employers than anyone else. But there is at least a firm body of Catholic teaching at the highest level that argues that they should be.

Despite that, +Hurley was one of the few South African bishops to take this issue seriously and so he is quoted in 1983 as saying that the Church has been 'painfully slow in highlighting the ethical and moral issues involved in the labour field'.⁷⁰⁰ Perhaps he felt that, while the general principles had been made clear by the Church, their application to the specific situation was lacking.

Thus, when *Gaudium et Spes* talks about the dignity of work and of workers' rights (even to the point of recognising that women working outside the home may need special protection), it is drawing on a long tradition. It is noticeable that early on in *Gaudium et Spes* the list of infamies, alongside the expected 'murder, genocide, abortion, slavery and prostitution', includes:

...disgraceful working conditions, where people are treated as mere tools for profit, rather than as free and responsible persons.⁷⁰¹

Later on *Gaudium et Spes* makes a statement which could have been a direct description of the South African economy then (and would not be much different now):

⁶⁹⁸ Abrahams, Mervyn. "Denis Hurley and the Reception of Vatican II" *Vatican II: Keeping the Dream Alive*. Denis Hurley (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 2005) 246

⁶⁹⁹ SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/E/Diakonia/ 1 (*The Mercury*, 10 August 2008)

⁷⁰⁰ SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/H/Press/3 (1981-1987) (*Natal Mercury*, 18 October 1983)

⁷⁰¹ *Gaudium et Spes* 27

Extravagance and wretchedness exist side by side. While a few enjoy very great power of choice, the majority are deprived of almost all possibility of acting on their own initiative and responsibility, and often subsist in living and working conditions unworthy of the human person.⁷⁰²

It is the link between work and human dignity that is the recurrent theme of Catholic Social Teaching on this subject. That means that to understand work, one needs to understand the human individual and this is clear in the approach that Kearney takes to workers' rights. There is evidence of this from his awareness from a young age of the real person whom others would just see as a domestic worker. He later realised that in every white middle-class home at the time, domestic workers provided an opportunity both to become aware of the true effects of Apartheid but also to make some small gestures towards justice.

It seems that Kearney was already getting publicly involved in this issue when he was living in Pietermaritzburg, even before Diakonia. Joan Kerchhoff showed me a newspaper interview (from the *Natal Witness*, 30 Oct 1975) about her and the founding of the 'Domestic Work Action Committee' with which Kearney was involved.⁷⁰³ Perhaps it is not surprising that it is the women in Kearney's life who raise his awareness of these issues. Colleen Irvine recalls how the emerging Durban Justice & Peace Commission started interviewing a lot of black women who were in the church congregations to find out about their working hours and pay.

For example, we had Bella who worked for us and I realised I really did not know very much at all about her living conditions. It was a way of us wanting to change things that we could change.⁷⁰⁴

Outside the domestic environment, Kearney began to get an insight into labour issues from the 1973 Durban Dockers Strikes with which the Young Christian Workers were very involved. Doug Irvine (Colleen's husband) recalls that Justice & Peace organised the first meetings between Durban business people and black trade unionists and also became patrons of the Urban Training Project. Since Justice & Peace was initially conceived of as playing an internal role to teach Catholics about CST, this was a logical extension. They set up a Wages Commission to investigate conditions of employment. Doug commented:

Church structures were able to provide a channel for transformation in the absence of political structures. But the Church also gave a rationale, a philosophy, a social teaching, a genuine freedom.⁷⁰⁵

At various times throughout the 1980s, Diakonia played a role in voicing the concerns about workers, promoting a focus on the conditions of domestic workers and raising awareness of specific abuses of workers' rights. And just as Diakonia was celebrating 16 December and the annual Day of Reconciliation long before it became part of the official national calendar, so they were celebrating 1 May as Workers' Day and promoting Workers' Sunday through their churches.

But, +Nuttall points out, whilst it was important to establish meetings with workers and show concerns about workers' rights, it was also important to consider the question of the managers,

⁷⁰² *Gaudium et Spes* 64

⁷⁰³ Kerchhoff, Joan. Personal interview by author, 6 April 2022 in Pietermaritzburg (widow of head of PACSA)

⁷⁰⁴ Irvine, Colleen. Personal interview by author, 12 October 2020 in Johannesburg (personal friend and involved in Archdiocese of Durban Justice & Peace)

⁷⁰⁵ Irvine, Doug. Personal interview by author, 12 October 2020 in Johannesburg (personal friend and Chair of Archdiocese of Durban Justice & Peace)

especially since many of them – all male and all white – were members of those same churches. +Nuttall recalls that Kearney supported this approach, despite the risk of being misconstrued, because he could see that there was a role for honest mediation. They set up monthly breakfasts in the bishop's home which were later also attended also by Nomabelu Mvambo-Dandala, whose initial focus at Diakonia was on employment and economics.⁷⁰⁶

In 1987, in trying to get endorsement from the Anglican Durban Central Regional Council for a Workers' Rights Statement, Kearney explains the reasoning behind Diakonia's commitment to promoting the rights of workers. He starts with a dramatic scenario:

What would you do if you came across a man beating up another man? ... What would be a Christian response to this situation? Would it be to move away and say there's nothing one can do? Would it be to ask the two people to sit around a table and discuss the issue? Or would it be to intervene on the side of the person under attack and to stop the attacker? The Workers' Rights Statement is based on the third of these options.

Diakonia believes that the issue of workers' rights, just wages, just working conditions has everything to do with our faith. We all believe that Jesus is Lord, Lord of all life, Lord of all situations. His lordship must extend to the question of wages and conditions of service. The values of the Gospel must penetrate every aspect of life. In fact, God's concern about justice in the workplace is perfectly clear from the Bible.

The whole idea of human rights and workers' rights stems from the creation of the human person 'in the image and likeness of God'. An infinite dignity stems from that creation. And though that image has been sullied by sin it has been wonderfully restored and enhanced by Jesus' incarnation, death, and resurrection.⁷⁰⁷

Kearney talks about the extensive consultation, through an initial workshop of 100 people, interviews by a trade unionist with 40 clergy, and a drafting process involving all the member churches; he sets out what is happening in the worker or trade union scene, what workers are asking from the Church, Church relations with trade unions, what the Church can gain from the unions and how the Church will have to change if it is to be supportive of workers.⁷⁰⁸

One comment he makes offers opportunities for the Church not just in this area but many other areas of the 'temporal order':

The group [of people who] compartmentalises Church and the rest of life is a very interesting group because, although they are not expecting much from the Church, they are open to surprises! They give the Church many opportunities for involvement, identification and solidarity, but it is sad to see how these opportunities are ignored by a Church that is either not interested or actively hostile.⁷⁰⁹

Because of his role in the background, surprisingly few photos include Kearney alongside +Hurley but there is one from 1988 which shows them with Mary Mkhwanazi (of the SA Domestic Workers

⁷⁰⁶ Nuttall, Michael. Personal interview by author, 23 September 2020 in Howick (Emeritus Bishop of Natal)

⁷⁰⁷ Kearney, *Faith in Action*, 12 ("Diakonia's Worker Rights Statement", Addington, 17 October 1987)

⁷⁰⁸ Given that he was speaking on behalf of Diakonia, and addressing an Anglican gathering, the reference to 'Church' in Kearney's speech is presumably the broad definition.

⁷⁰⁹ Kearney, *Faith in Action*, 12 ("Diakonia's Worker Rights Statement", Addington, 17 October 1987)

Union) speaking at a conference to celebrate Workers Day.⁷¹⁰ The article explains that leaflets about the rights of workers, especially the right to decent housing, had been distributed in over 50 parishes and in some churches workers had been invited to preach. A link is made between the value of family life and the impact on families of migrant work and workers' housing. A contrast is drawn between the way the domestic workers live and the style of the houses in which they serve. For Durban, they quote a number of 1.7 million people living in shanty towns plus 390,000 made homeless by recently flooding.⁷¹¹

This is just one example among hundreds in the Diakonia archive which show Kearney's approach: identify an issue which people will understand (almost every white middle-class parishioner would have had a black domestic worker); present facts that draw attention to the scale of the problem; provide a personal dimension (such as the stories of specific domestic workers) in order to humanise the problem; and place it into a religious context both to connect it theologically but also to provide a 'safe place' in which to show solidarity.

Kearney's personal archive, and comments from some of his friends, indicate clearly that his commitment to helping workers, especially domestic workers, was one that he took very personally. For example, there is a random file of requests which shows people approaching him because they want jobs or they need help with money especially school fees. Though many of these date back many years, it is noteworthy that he kept them on file, perhaps as way of granting dignity to the request even if he could not always grant the request.⁷¹²

It seems that Kearney took steps which, compared to others at the time, would have seemed generous (perhaps too generous) in helping people who worked for him personally, providing financial assistance and advice. A member of Special Branch visiting Diakonia once said to Kearney: 'You are a communist who actually lives like a communist'; it seems that he was also a Christian activist who actually lived like a Christian.

Of course, while not a communist, it was inevitable that being involved in worker's rights and indeed celebrating 1 May, would have brought Kearney into close collaboration with communists. His niece, Sarah Kearney, recalls that when her uncle was detained (she would have been 15) her classmates mocked her saying: "Your uncle is a terrorist, a communist". Even the nuns at schools, she explained, were afraid of talking about such things: "they all swallowed the line that the ANC wants communism."⁷¹³ The Casons also recall being called communists by their parish council chairman because of their involvement with Diakonia.⁷¹⁴

One avowed communist (and atheist) was the trade union leader Alec Erwin.⁷¹⁵ He has nothing but positive memories for the role that Kearney played:

We met in the context of the Diakonia building because we used church facilities for trade union meetings, also the Institute of Industrial Education. Paddy was so supportive of the union movement. To be honest, I had not expected that to be the case. Paddy played a key

⁷¹⁰ In her tribute to +Hurley on his Golden Jubilee, she draws attention to another issue of human rights: the ordination of women. See: Mkhwanazi, Velisiwe Mary. "A Dancing Archbishop". *Denis Hurley – a portrait by friends*. Anthony Gamley ed. (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 2001) 110-112

⁷¹¹ SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/H/Press/4 (1988-2002) (*The Southern Cross*, 8 May 1988)

⁷¹² SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/P/2 Kearney/Personal/2 "Random file of Requests"

⁷¹³ Kearney, Sarah. Personal interview by author, 17 September 2020 (niece of Kearney)

⁷¹⁴ Cason, Fred and Marylyn. Personal interview by author, 21 January 2022 via Zoom (co-workers at Diakonia)

⁷¹⁵ Later, in an act of 'poacher turned gamekeeper', Erwin went on to become Minister of Trade in Mandela's Cabinet.

part. He was a dam good organiser – we drew on him more than most. He could get things done.⁷¹⁶

When asked about co-operation between a Christian and a communist, he was very amused:

Our working relationship was exceptional. Paddy was always sympathetic, we never clashed on religious matters. He said to me once, or perhaps it was +Hurley: ‘I know you are not a Christian but you act like one’.

In the same way, we all instinctively accepted that Paddy was a comrade though he did not see himself as such. I know he would not have been favourably disposed towards communism because of the anti-religious associations. But +Hurley and Paddy could talk to everyone. +Hurley had a good grasp of Marxist theory but neither he nor Paddy were particularly radical – they were always profoundly sensible and non-dogmatic.⁷¹⁷

Under John Paul II, any association between Catholic liberationists and communists (whether in South Africa or in Latin America) was looked at askance, hardly surprising given that for John Paul the communists were the enemy not the ally.⁷¹⁸ But Pope Paul VI was not so blind-sided. Curran points out that Pope Paul went out of his way to find a positive interpretation of Marxism because he was keen to open up and work with communist regimes: that was the reality of *Ostpolitik*.⁷¹⁹ And of course, in workers’ rights and other fields, there were common causes between the Catholic Church and communism.

Kearney would certainly have been familiar with a famous Catholic poster of the time distributed by CAFOD (who were major UK-based funders of Diakonia) that featured the Brazilian Archbishop Hélder Câmara. It is also quoted for example by Johnson⁷²⁰ (and misattributed by De Gruchy to +Oscar Romero)⁷²¹:

When I feed the poor they call me a saint; when I ask why are the poor hungry they call me a Communist.⁷²²

One final insight into Kearney’s sympathy with workers comes from his visit to the USA in 2005 and the notes he makes in his journal about seeing an exhibition of hand-made quilts from Alabama at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.⁷²³ He was clearly deeply moved by the exhibition and by the stories of the workers that lay behind them:

⁷¹⁶ Erwin, Alec. Personal interview by author, 19 August 2022 via Zoom (trade unionist and later Cabinet Minister)

⁷¹⁷ Erwin, Alec. Personal interview by author, 19 August 2022 via Zoom (trade unionist and later Cabinet Minister)

⁷¹⁸ For more on this see Appendix D: “+Hurley the political priest”

⁷¹⁹ Curran, Charles. *Catholic social teaching 1891-Present: A Historical, Theological, and Ethical Analysis* (Washington DC: Georgetown, 2002) 202

⁷²⁰ Johnson Elizabeth A. *Consider Jesus: Waves of Renewal in Christology* (New York: Crossroad, 1990) 88

⁷²¹ Haddad, Beverley. *Keeping Body and Soul Together: Reflections by Steve de Gruchy on Theology and Development* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 2015) 150

⁷²² There is actually no original reference for this very famous quote. This author was told by Julian Filochowski, then head of CAFOD, about the trouble they had confirming the citation when preparing the poster in the 1980s. Filochowski explains that eventually he phoned +Câmara to ask him where the line originated. The Archbishop went silent on the other end of the phone and, somewhat panicked, Filochowski asked him: “Monsignor, you did say those words, didn’t you?” In a thick Brazilian accent he replied: “When I feed the poor they call me a saint; when I ask why are the poor hungry they call me a Communist. There, now I have said it!”. As the Italians would say: “*Se non é vero, é ben trovato!*”

⁷²³ “The Quilts of Gee’s Bend”, *MFA Boston website*. <https://www.mfa.org/exhibitions/quilts-gees-bend> (accessed 29 September 2022)

[They were] sacraments of real poverty, quilts made from whatever cloth was available including from workers denims. The sight of these slightly dirty, very worn, slightly stained quilts brought tears to my eyes as I thought about all the poverty and depression they represented and yet transformed into beautiful objects with many notes of joy and transformation of pain and suffering. And how these quilts had kept people warm and covered, those who made them, generating new life even in such bleak circumstances – new life from love-making but also just after the weariness of each day’s work. New life that made the next day possible.

Some wonderful quotes accompanied the quilts about the process of making them and, one that I found most moving, about the effect of hearing Martin Luther King as being like being in a darkened room and someone coming and putting the lights on: ‘MLK put the light on for me.’ There was a video to help one see some of the people who had made these quilts and hear them speaking and hear them singing.⁷²⁴

Other Areas of Focus

In closing the account of how Kearney worked through Diakonia to demonstrate a Church that was engaged with the modern world, I want to mention one other area of focus (among many others). This shows that Kearney was not afraid to challenge – sometimes Government leaders, sometimes Church leaders, sometimes both – and also the seemingly inexhaustibly broad passion he had for issues of justice. This was applauded by a man who had been fighting with Kearney against the old regime and then became a Government leader under the new one. Pravin Gordhan delivered the 2022 Paddy Kearney Memorial lecture at the Denis Hurley Centre and he captured the breadth of Kearney’s interests by using the description that Robert Bolt gave to Thomas More (‘The Man for All Seasons’) and called Kearney ‘An Activist for All Seasons’.

Paddy’s democratic activism transitioned through so many different periods of our history. The repressive climate of the 70s and late 80s, the mass struggles and open campaigns of the late 70s/early 80s, the transition to democracy of the early 90s, and the past two decades of consolidating democracy and combatting the capture of the state and entrenching corruption.⁷²⁵

One example of Kearney’s breadth actually involved Gordhan who was a member of the Durban Housing Action Committee in the early 1980s. There was great anxiety about the impact on the poor of proposed rent increases by the Durban City Council. Diakonia organised a meeting with the Mayor, Sybil Hotz, and the residents’ committee. Kearney urged the leaders of churches to use Sunday sermons to pray for a change of heart by the city council over its decision to increase rents.⁷²⁶

Kearney was able to speak out at the highest level and marshal church forces to back him up. But he was always conscious of the need to work with the people on the ground as well. As part of the same incident, there is a press report about +Hurley speaking at a community meeting in Newlands East in response to a crisis about a housing scheme and the rent increases. He used words that

⁷²⁴ SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/D/1 “Morning Pages: May-July 2005” (26 June 2005, Boston)

⁷²⁵ Gordhan, Pravin. “Paddy Kearney Memorial Lecture 2022”, *Denis Hurley Centre website*, <http://www.denishurleycentre.org/page/memorial-lectures> (accessed 29 September 2022)

⁷²⁶ SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/H/Press/3 (1981-1987) (*The Leader*, 20 March 1981)

sound very much like Kearney's to talk about how Diakonia had failed to educate people to be their own saviours and campaigners for justice.

We have been examining our conscience and found that we have failed you in your hour of need by not giving you the kind of direction in your fight against higher rents.⁷²⁷

Being close to people in their struggles – especially in terms of their living conditions – is a recurrent concern of Kearney. In the local paper, he gives a first-hand account of staying for one week in 1991 at KwaMakhutha (a black township near Amanzimtoti). He makes the comment that the place is well-known but only because of the violence that had taken place there in 1987. But Kearney's focus is not on the big news of political violence but rather the everyday problems the community faces. His list of complaints – about roads, erratic electricity, the community hall being unavailable because it was full of refugees, people being attacked at school and so poor attendance, no phones, no post office – is from 30 years ago but could almost be from now!

As is typical of Kearney he takes trouble to get to know the community and shows great empathy for them:

The residents have fled and are too scared to return or simply don't have the cash or the basic repairs to make their homes habitable again.

You might wonder whether KwaMakhutha's residents have done anything about these problems? They have no faith in the community council system, which they saw was imposed on them, and simply doesn't have the power of resources to do anything about the problems. The council no longer functions and all the power is in the hands of a township superintendent who seems to feel no need to consult the residents. They feel he goes about his duties blissfully unaware or un-interested in what the residents are thinking or feeling.

They must be fully involved in local government or the process of changes will be repeatedly set back by outbursts of frustration of it may even be totally derailed.⁷²⁸

Not only is he engaged in a personal exposure visit but he is also encouraging others to find out for themselves what is happening. In an article in November 1990 he talks about the impact of the local violence which he lists as over 4,000 dead, 6,000 houses destroyed, 60,000 people displaced.

Diakonia is encouraging its member churches to organise exposure tours to see the level of destruction in the areas affected by the violence.⁷²⁹

I do not plan to detail all the various activities of Diakonia up to Liberation. Under Kearney's leadership the organisation was involved in developing Community Resource Centres that provided neighbourhood advice and assistance to people who were unlikely to get help from Government officials;⁷³⁰ they supported the bishops in their tricky negotiations with Chief Buthelezi;⁷³¹ they acted as mediators (directly, and indirectly by supporting Church leaders) in some of the violent conflicts

⁷²⁷ SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/H/Press/3 (1981-1987) (*Natal Mercury*, 13 March 1981)

⁷²⁸ South African History Archive: AL 3119 E5.34 "Kearney nomination for Truth & Reconciliation Commission" (*Natal Mercury*, 21 Mar 1991)

⁷²⁹ South African History Archive: AL 3119 E5.34 "Kearney nomination for Truth & Reconciliation Commission" (*Natal Mercury*, 16 Nov 1990)

⁷³⁰ Mkame, Liz. Personal interview by author, 17 December 2020 in Pinetown (co-worker at Diakonia)

⁷³¹ Temkin, Ben. *Buthelezi – a biography* (London: Frank Cass, 2003) 259

between Inkatha and those who did not support Inkatha;⁷³² they educated people about the 1994 elections,⁷³³ and they were involved in the peace-monitoring programme during the elections.⁷³⁴

Kearney gives his own summary of the whole of his period at Diakonia when he later retired in 2004.⁷³⁵ He lists various activities in what he calls ‘a kaleidoscope of memories’: detainees defended; worker rights proclaimed; victories against forced removals; conscientious objectors supported; various ways of protesting, informing, challenging; buildings bought and refurbished; briefings; hospitality and exposure visits; theological students challenged; striking workers; helicopters thundering overhead; security police, Saracens in the street and guns pointed at the Centre; the amalgamation with Durban District Council of Churches; people trained in trauma healing, technical skills, advocacy, reconciliation; Social Justice Seasons in parishes; admin staff; evaluations to help develop fresh vision;

and, of course, I think of the Good Friday Service—a symbol or icon of all we stand for, something like a massive Annual General Meeting of our member churches.⁷³⁶

Mention has already been made of the book celebrating 24 years of the Good Friday Service; it is presented with un-named authors but we know that Kearney wrote the introduction.⁷³⁷ Kearney also in 2016 wrote a reflection on the 30 years of occupation of what had been the Ecumenical Centre and then became the Diakonia Centre.⁷³⁸ All of that and more needs to be the focus of a history of Diakonia itself which is certainly a story worth telling.

After Liberation

But once Liberation came, with the election of Nelson Mandela as the first President of a democratic South Africa, what would Kearney do? This question is interesting for two reasons.

First of all, that a good number of religious leaders who had been involved in the Struggle soon became part of the new regime. Rev Frank Chikane stepped down in 1994 as head of the SACC and in 1997 became a high-ranking member of the ANC and then a Cabinet minister in 1999. Rev Allan Boesak also became a high-ranking member of the ANC and then an Ambassador. Ela Gandhi became a member of the first post-Apartheid parliament. Fr Smangaliso Mkhathshwa also became an MP in 1994 and then Mayor of Tshwane in 2000. Sr Bernard Ncube also became a 1994 MP and then Mayor of the West Rand in 2002.

There were, of course, many others that Kearney knew who also gained high office – in fact at the time of his death three members of President Ramaphosa’s cabinet (Pravin Gordhan, Zweli Mkhize and Thoko Didiza) were people who had worked closely with him. But they were political players. The individuals first listed were all people with strong religious commitments who one might not have expected to be involved in politics. They clearly felt that they could work with the ANC and

⁷³² Denis, Philippe. “The churches’ response to political violence in the last years of Apartheid: the case of Mpophomeni in the Natal Midlands” *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* (2013, 39) 13-34; Mbona, Michael. “On embassy to Ulundi: the Natal Church Leaders Group’s mediation attempts in war-torn Natal 1987-1990”, *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* (2010, 36.1) 141-162

⁷³³ Dziva, Doug. Personal interview by author, 15 March 2021 in Pietermaritzburg (Director of KZN Christian Council)

⁷³⁴ Graham, Paul. Personal interview by author, 13 October 2020 in Johannesburg (Methodist youth worker)

⁷³⁵ Kearney, *Faith in Action*, 17 (“Farewell to Diakonia”, April 2004)

⁷³⁶ Kearney, *Faith in Action*, 18 (“Farewell to Diakonia”, April 2004)

⁷³⁷ Diakonia, *Pilgrimage of Hope*, 2

⁷³⁸ Kearney, *Faith in Action*, 20 (“The Ecumenical Centre – 30 years of service to the people of Durban”, 2016)

effect change from within the system. And they also believed sincerely that doing so did not go against their religious principles (though it did not turn out well for some of those listed). For those who were ordained ministers, there might have been good reasons not to enter politics. But Kearney (like Ela Gandhi) was a lay religious leader and there was certainly nothing to stop him following a similar path.

In fact, *Gaudium et Spes* specifically encourages Catholics to become involved in politics (a far cry from Pius IX's condemnation of democracy):

Those who are suited or can become suited should prepare themselves for the difficult, but at the same time, the very noble art of politics, and should seek to practice this art without regard for their own interests or for material advantages. ...They should dedicate themselves to the service of all, with sincerity and fairness, indeed, with the charity and fortitude demanded by political life.⁷³⁹

The other significant trigger for Kearney to do something different might have been the fact that +Hurley, his mentor and patron, had just stepped down as Archbishop of Durban in 1992 (past the usual retirement age for Catholic bishops of 75).

But Kearney was not tempted into politics; nor was he tempted to a life of rest or academic contemplation (he was only aged 52). Instead, he continued as Director of Diakonia (and would do so for another 10 years). But note that +Hurley was also not tempted to a life of rest or academic contemplation (and he was aged 77!). Rather he worked from 1992 to 2002 as Administrator of the Cathedral (similar to a Dean in Anglican structures) and witnessed the area around the Cathedral, and the congregation attending the Cathedral, undergo a massive transformation as the segregation created by Apartheid started to erode. This is bound to have influenced Kearney's decision to stay at Diakonia and to stay involved in the Durban CBD.

It is intriguing to see what people close to Kearney thought was his motivation after 1994. Nolan (who was himself offered a political position) thinks that Kearney probably was offered posts by the new Government:

But Paddy's motivation was always to keep true to his Christian faith. He certainly did not want to be one of the boys, to be recognised as a leftie. By staying out of politics, he kept his freedom to say what he thought of the new Government. He was able to speak his mind.⁷⁴⁰

Kaufmann feels that in a sense nothing changed for Kearney in 1994:

For Paddy it was all about action on behalf of justice which was constitutive of preaching the Gospel. He saw this as his vocation. It did not matter what regime was in power, what system was in place.⁷⁴¹

Priscilla McKay, a fellow activist and a lifelong friend of Kearney, became a member of the KZN Provincial Legislature for the ANC:

⁷³⁹ *Gaudium et Spes* 75

⁷⁴⁰ Nolan, Albert. Personal interview by author, 18 Oct 2020 in Boksburg GP (Dominican priest and liberation theologian)

⁷⁴¹ Kaufmann, Larry. Personal interview by author, 12 Oct 2020 in Durban (Redemptorist priest and activist)

I recall saying to him: 'Paddy, why not join the party? There are some good people in it.' But he was disillusioned by the party even if he still respected some individuals such as Zweli [Mkhize], Cyril [Ramaphosa], Senzo [Mchunu], Pravin [Gordhan]. He felt that all idealism had vanished. He would have turned down any position he was offered in 1994.⁷⁴²

Erwin – who has close links to all the elements of the Tri-partite Alliance of the ANC, COSATU and the SACP – is not surprised that Kearney remained aloof from politics:

He was never an underground or an open member of the ANC [in contrast to Peter Kerchhoff and Albert Nolan who were]. He saw his work as his contribution to the Struggle. And he was certainly well regarded by the party. It speaks for itself that the ANC's first office in Durban [after the unbanning in 1990] was opened in Diakonia. They respected his position. There was no obligation on him to join the party or show public affiliation....

I would have hoped that he was never approached – the role of Diakonia was too important to try and take him into Government. The mistake post 1994 was ours - not to keep close to organisations like Diakonia. There were many times when we should have asked for help. But the relationship was not as close as it had been before – we were sucked into the formal state structures.⁷⁴³

But there was one formal state structure in which Kearney could have comfortably served and indeed – with an Archbishop as Chair – he would have felt very at home: the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). In fact, he was considered as a possible Commissioner but not appointed. Stuart Bate, in providing notes on contributors to his 1996 book about the pastoral plan, says that Kearney was 'on the list of original nominees for the TRC'.⁷⁴⁴

It looks as if Diakonia was already anticipating the need for such a programme as early as 1990. A newspaper report describes a workshop organised by them called 'the Church and Negotiations' which draws 70 delegates including visitors from UK, Germany and USA. An ANC delegate reports on the talks with the then President; the SACC under Frank Chikane has drawn up a Code of Conduct to curb violence in Natal. Kearney sums up the workshop as follows: churches should urge their members to pray for all those involved; clergy and congregations should be kept informed; the Church should educate members on the repentance, restitution, forgiveness, tolerance and the promotion of democratic values and lead by example which is more important than words; the Church has a role in healing and reconciling; it should also act as a conscience; and potentially Church leaders may have to intervene as facilitators. In the latter part of this list, there is an adumbration of what was to become the TRC.⁷⁴⁵

In his autobiography, Peter Storey, the Methodist minister, talks about his role on the Truth and Reconciliation Selection Panel in October 1995 to deliver a list of 25 recommended names (out of 299 nominations) so the President can choose 11 to 17. He explains that the bill required commissioners:

⁷⁴² McKay, Priscilla. Personal interview by author, 18 September 2020 in Durban (Fellow Catholic activist)

⁷⁴³ Erwin, Alec. Personal interview by author, 19 August 2022 via Zoom (trade unionist and later Cabinet Minister)

⁷⁴⁴ Bate, Stuart ed. *Serving Humanity – a Sabbath Reflection* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 1996) 304

⁷⁴⁵ SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/H/Press/4 (1988-2002) (*The Southern Cross*, 27 July 1990)

... to be of moral integrity with a commitment to human rights, reconciliation and the disclosure of truth; not a high-profile member of a political party; be able to make impartial judgements; and should not be an applicant for amnesty.⁷⁴⁶

Kearney would certainly have fulfilled this list of criteria and it has been possible to prove that he was indeed proposed as a candidate. SAHA (the South African History Archive at Wits University) has some copies of extracts from the TRC archive obtained under the Freedom of Information Act. Most of the TRC archive is at the National Archives but Deborah Matthews, SAHA consultant, told me: "It is problematic to access the rest of material."⁷⁴⁷ The extracts that I was able to see confirm that Kearney accepted the nomination (attaching a short CV which interestingly does not mention his time with the Marists, only his role as a teacher). There is also a letter of endorsement (dated 28 Sept 1995 and addressed to Sue Britton) from Bishop Nuttall who had after all been 'number Two to Tutu'.⁷⁴⁸

I am happy to support the nomination of Kearney for membership of the TRC. It would be another very costly assignment for him but I believe he has the inner strength as well as other necessary gifts for this crucial work.⁷⁴⁹

Also in the file is a selection of newspaper clippings that touch on Kearney's recent experience in reconciliation: one is his experience cited earlier of living for a week in a township (KwaMakhutha). Another (*Natal Mercury* of 16 November 1990) describes his Christmas Peace Focus campaign 'to help people understand the link between Christmas and the themes of reconciliation, repatriation, reconstruction and peace in Natal'. The third is from the *Mail & Guardian* (7 April 1994) about Kearney's involvement in the Education for Democracy Forum and his fear that ANC/ Inkatha rivalry is preventing this work. There are also two extracts from Amnesty International reports looking at his own experience as a victim: one about his release from detention and another end-of-year report from 1986 mentioning Kearney, Richard Steele and other members of ECC.⁷⁵⁰

Kearney would seem to have had excellent credentials to be a member of the TRC. At the time, there was not the automatic exclusion of white men from Government panels which is now prevalent – in fact, four of the final 17 commissioners were white men (with an additional two white women). And certainly, coming from a religious background would not have counted against him: four of the final commissioners were ordained ministers (eclipsed only by the lawyers of whom there were six).⁷⁵¹ In that context, a comment by Storey about the difficulty of finding more than one KZN candidate seems surprising and we must assume he did not include Kearney in his scope:

Maybe it was because the region continued to be wracked by violence that people were still unwilling to be transparent but, apart from human rights lawyer Richard Lyster, we had found the candidates interviewed in Durban to be uniformly unimpressive; some were evasive and others downright dishonest. KZN remained a minefield in all sorts of ways.

Storey goes on to explain that Mandela introduced his own name from KZN, Methodist Bishop Khoza Mgojo. Moreover, because of that, the President removed from the list presiding bishop Stanley Mogoba to avoid having too many Methodists (Mandela himself was Methodist and Alex Boraine,

⁷⁴⁶ Storey, *I Beg to Differ*, 426

⁷⁴⁷ Personal conversation with the author, Johannesburg, 28 April 2022

⁷⁴⁸ Nuttall, Michael. *Number Two to Tutu* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 2003)

⁷⁴⁹ South African History Archive: AL 3119 E5.34 "Kearney nomination for Truth & Reconciliation Commission"

⁷⁵⁰ These subjects are explored in more detail in Chapter 5.

⁷⁵¹ *Truth & Reconciliation Report* (Vol 1; Chapter 3: Page 44)

<https://www.justice.gov.za/trc/report/finalreport/Volume%201.pdf> (accessed 29 September 2022)

another Methodist, was to be appointed Deputy Chair). +Mgojo was in fact very well known to Kearney since he was closely involved with Diakonia (Kearney would later invite him to be a Patron of the Denis Hurley Centre). Perhaps the inclusion of +Mgojo prompted Kearney to remove his own candidacy – a typically self-deprecating act – since the spirit of Diakonia would now be part of the TRC. Without access to the National Archives, we will never know. Incidentally, some of the TRC hearings in Durban were held at Diakonia and when the report was published in 1999, Kearney's name was included among the list of 'Victims of Gross Violations of Human Rights'.⁷⁵²

There is another role that Kearney applied for and did not get. After he left Diakonia in 2004 (which we will return to) according to NGK Dominee Deon Snyman (with whom Kearney was close at that time) he applied to be Deputy Secretary General at the SACC.⁷⁵³ The Lutheran Dr Molefe Tsele was Secretary General then and would also later reappear in Kearney's life as someone who organised a major donation for the Denis Hurley Centre. +Phillip recalls having to pass on the news to Kearney: "The SACC have said 'no', not a strong no; but they think you would be of greater value where you are in Durban."⁷⁵⁴ One wonders, had Kearney got the job at the SACC and stayed for 5 years or so, whether by then aged almost 70 he would have started the Denis Hurley Centre project.

Although political liberation was achieved in 1994 – at least in theory – and in 1996 a Bill of Rights which promised rights that had previously been violated, the work of Diakonia in helping churches to uplift communities continued with the same attention to housing, work, and access to services. The themes of the Good Friday Service during the Struggle are explained in Chapter 5. The themes in the years since democracy are a good indication of what continued to preoccupy Kearney (and Diakonia): 1995 – peace-making; 1996 – life; 1997 – the wounded healer; 1998 – life; 1999 – hope; 2000 – poverty; 2001 – violence against women; 2002 – healing wounds; 2003 - children (this was effectively the last one that Kearney supervised).⁷⁵⁵

The repeated references to 'life' and 'healing' indicate a new challenge that South Africa (and so Diakonia) had to face from the 1990s, on top of all the other ones that still had not been solved: the pandemic of HIV and AIDS. Whilst this affected the whole country, KZN was among the worst affected of the Provinces. On the one hand, this was a perfect opportunity for a grassroots organisation like Diakonia – with a network that extended to every community, a reputation for speaking the truth even when uncomfortable, and with access to respected leaders. On the other, the link between HIV infection and sex (inside and outside marriage) as well as drug use meant that even talking about it was something that some church leaders were slow to do.

Kearney outlines in his biography of +Hurley the important role that the Archbishop played in being one of the first KZN religious leaders to speak openly about HIV.⁷⁵⁶ Two books also describe in very positive ways how the Catholic Church responded to AIDS in South Africa.⁷⁵⁷ But while some parts of the Christian community did work to challenge stigma, to provide honest education and to help those affected, the attitude of many parts of the Church towards sex (especially extra-marital sex

⁷⁵² *Truth & Reconciliation Report* (Vol 5; Chapter 2: Page 41)

<https://www.justice.gov.za/trc/report/finalreport/Volume5.pdf> (accessed 29 September 2022)

⁷⁵³ Snyman, Deon. Personal interview by author, 6 January 2021 in Malmesbury (Dutch Reformed Church Dominee and co-worker at Diakonia)

⁷⁵⁴ Phillip, Rubin. Personal interview by author, 25 May 2022 in Durban (Emeritus Bishop of Natal; Patron and sometime Trustee of Denis Hurley Centre)

⁷⁵⁵ Diakonia, *Pilgrimage of Hope*, 5

⁷⁵⁶ Kearney, *Guardian of the Light*, 269-271; there is also relevant correspondence included in Denis, Kearney & Argall, *A Life in Letters*, 454 (to Ted Rogers), 478 (to Geoffrey Chapman), 481 and 505 (to Liz Towell), 494 and 498 (to the Editor of *The Southern Cross*, 496 (to Daisy and Wolfgang Losken).

⁷⁵⁷ Bate, Stuart & Munro, Alison eds. *Catholic Responses to AIDS in Southern Africa* (Pretoria: SACBC, 2014); Goemans, Loek & Wilson, Hilary. *In the Service of Healing: a History of Catholic Health Care in Southern Africa* (Johannesburg: CATHCA, 2011)

and same-sex relations), the judgemental language that was often used, plus the specific Catholic refusal to promote the use of condoms as one means of prevention, meant that the Church was at the very least compromised in its response.

Through Diakonia and the wider work of the Archdiocese of Durban – as well as association with +Hurley – Kearney was involved in the response to HIV. But his personal archives (which include a file marked 'HIV') is not very revelatory and the fact that it is quite small is itself interesting.

Kearney was part of an international reference group that was overseeing an education process working with the churches for which he attended a meeting in Kenya in September 2003 (uncharacteristically for a man who did not usual care about material things, he kept some flyers from the hotel including a menu). As part of this meeting, he met and kept information about Canon Gideon Byamugisha, a Ugandan Anglican Cathedral Dean who was openly living with HIV (the first religious leader in Africa to do so). He also includes from July 2004 an article in which Mangosuthu Buthelezi talks about losing his own son to HIV. And a leaflet from the Church World Service about the need to tackle stigma related to HIV.⁷⁵⁸ Given his earlier commitment to raising awareness and combatting prejudice (such as the exposure visits) it is not surprising that challenging stigma is one of his main pre-occupations in the field of HIV.

The problem of tackling AIDS in a scientific way while leading a Christian organisation (especially a Catholic one) comes up for Kearney later when setting up the Denis Hurley Centre (which includes a clinic). Having seen the way that the Church treated Teilhard, +Hurley was conscious that scientific rigour was not always allowed to triumph over theological prejudices. Page quotes +Hurley as saying at the Council:

Brothers, let us avoid another trial of Galileo. One is enough for the Church!⁷⁵⁹

Kearney had on file a 2012 letter to the KZN Minister (MEC) for health, Sibongiseni Dhlomo, which talks about a partnership with the Department of Health and how this is linked to possible public-private funding from the Anglo-American Corporation. Kearney is clearly responding to a concern expressed about Catholic Church policy on access to reproductive rights (including condoms) and tries to reassure the MEC.

His response is discrete since he would have been aware at the time of Rome's strong stance against condoms (promoted in South Africa by Cardinal Napier and others) but also of the dissenting voices of a few bishops (notably +Kevin Dowling, +Hurley's second cousin), and the more nuanced practice of some Catholic agencies, and the wider non-reception of Vatican teaching on condoms. As a response to the MEC, Kearney gives as an example the positive relationship that already exists between the Department of Health and the last remaining Catholic hospital in KZN, Mariannhill.⁷⁶⁰ This is a curious choice since I know from my own work with the head of the hospital, Dr Doug Ross, at that stage the relationship was anything but positive and one of the (several) points of tension was indeed access to reproductive rights. It is unclear if Kearney was naïve, optimistic or disingenuous.

As Diakonia, post Liberation, moves more and more into the work of community development – with the Church network as the means of delivery – Kearney has to recognise the danger that when delivering what others NGOs are delivering the essential difference of the Christian message might be lost. This is, for example, something that Gifford cautions against and is a problem faced by the

⁷⁵⁸ SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/P/6 "HIV and AIDS"

⁷⁵⁹ Page, "Denis Hurley interviewed about the Council", 183

⁷⁶⁰ SJTI Archive: BIO- 11/W/3/Minutes/2 "2012"

various Catholic development charities (CAFOD, Misereor, *Entraide et Fraternité*) whom Kearney knew because of Diakonia funding. When access to the Catholic Church is really access to Western resources, the result can be the 'internal secularization of Christianity':

Thus, Christianity brings not so much redemption as development. It is associated less with grace than with science and technology. It operates with a vocabulary not so much of atonement, sacraments, conversion as one of micro-finance, capacity building and women's empowerment. The virtues it promotes are accountability, transparency and good governance as much as faith, hope and charity. It operates as much from human rights reports and poverty reduction strategies as from scriptures and creeds. Its sacramentals are as much computer software and SUVs as bread, wine and oil. Its register is not so much theology as social science.⁷⁶¹

Gifford also cautions that, when the Church is dependent on the local political elite, it would tend to praise politicians rather than criticise them: thus 'buying their silence'. As one specific example, he criticises the SACBC 2013 statement on corruption because it draws attention to petty corruption in which everyone is involved and avoids reference to the mega-corruption of ANC. He concludes that the "evasion must have been deliberate".⁷⁶² It is worth remarking that the logistics of the Good Friday Service after 1994 relied more and more on funding from the Municipality and that this coincides with a time when the themes become more generic and uncontroversial – for example, corruption is not one of them.⁷⁶³

Gifford is worried that increasingly bishops become involved with development because that is what the donors are willing to fund. He memorably refers to this as 'the NGO-isation of the African Church', 'Oxfam with incense'.⁷⁶⁴

Departure from Diakonia

Kearney's first involvement with Diakonia – exploring the concept for +Hurley, setting it up, recruiting the first staff – was covered in Chapter 3 on Ecumenism since it was essentially an ecumenical project. I want to cover here the *end* of his relationship with Diakonia. That is because the end of Kearney's time there was not entirely positive – nor indeed what has happened to Diakonia since then – and it is well looked at through the 'activism' lens of this chapter.

Diakonia was set up with the best of intentions as a way of helping the different denominations of the Church in Durban, not just to work with each other, but also to engage with the world. But in that act of engaging, Kearney discovered that issues would come up that were not easily resolved. Paton's words were cited earlier in a different context but I think that they are worth recalling again here:

⁷⁶¹ Gifford, Paul. *Christianity, Development and Modernity in Africa* (London: Hurst, 2015) 103

⁷⁶² Gifford, *Christianity, Development and Modernity in Africa*, 136-137

⁷⁶³ One of the ways that the ANC has deflected accusations of corruption is to claim that they come from a colonial mentality. Perhaps a reworking of Câmara's line is called for: "When I ask why are the poor hungry, they call me a colonialist."

⁷⁶⁴ Gifford, *Christianity, Development and Modernity in Africa*, 151

The statements of intent came straight from heaven but they had to be carried out by earthly man.⁷⁶⁵

Chapter 1 provided a short summary of the timeline of Kearney's departure from Diakonia. We have (in his own anthology) the speech that he made on his retirement. It is full of humour, affection, exhortation and nostalgia – as one might expect after almost 30 years.

During the past week I was being thanked by one of Diakonia's innumerable committees. After they had finished saying nice things, one of the members said: 'You know, Paddy, you've been here longer than Robert Mugabe has been president of Zimbabwe.' I had to thank that committee member for this remark, because it convinced me that I was doing the right thing in 'moving on'!...

I suppose I stayed on for 30 years because I couldn't find anything else nearly as interesting to do with my life. What a vision it gave me of the powerful network the Church provides!⁷⁶⁶

He then lists various activities in what he calls 'a kaleidoscope of memories' as listed earlier.

There is another relevant speech, not in his anthology, which he gave in 2006 on receiving the Diakonia Human Rights Award (which he himself had initiated). It is a Gala Dinner with the Deputy State President attending. He says that 30 years ago that would hardly have been imagined, let alone that the Deputy State President would be a black woman (Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka). He points out how far they have come from Diakonia's first meeting, when the only contact with Government was to send a letter to Prime Minister BJ Vorster about the death in detention of Joseph Mdluli.

These are public tributes. On such occasions, the sentiments are usually laudatory. But this was going to be even more true of Kearney who had achieved so much and been so widely liked. There is thus a danger that we get an unbalanced view of Kearney's time at Diakonia, seen through rose-coloured glasses. I was anxious about this and so made sure that I interviewed a good number of his Diakonia colleagues – in fact 17 people, more than from any other part of Kearney's life. But it must be said, that even after probing, they were all very appreciative of Kearney's contribution to the organisation.

In order to balance this, below is quite a long description, with several verbatim quotations, about less positive comments made by Diakonia staff when Kearney retired which were actually in Kearney's own archive, and thus something he knew would be found and read. It is mark of Kearney's humility and his open-ness to criticism that it was he who archived this material and that he clearly had empowered his team to speak candidly about him. So I feel that there is a balance. If the overwhelming tenor of comments about Kearney was positive, it is I suspect because he was a genuinely well-regarded person.

In his personal archive, Kearney kept a notebook in which staff had written comments on his departure. This contains the sentiments of thanks and wishes for a happy retirement one would expect. However, in addition, there is a two-page typed letter (dated 30/4/2004) that has been stapled into the book. It was written up by Zolile Machi the librarian – partly voicing his own thoughts but also claiming to be speaking on behalf of others. According to Hester Joseph, he was

⁷⁶⁵ Paton, *Journey Continued*, 72

⁷⁶⁶ SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/E/Diakonia/1 "Speech on receiving Diakonia Award" (25 March 2006)

seen as a spokesperson for the black staff members since he was the most articulate.⁷⁶⁷ The letter expresses some of the mixed feelings from the staff about Kearney's departure.⁷⁶⁸ There are predictably positive sentiments:

'never be the same without you'

'remain an inspiration to many of us'

'not work but social justice ministry...you put aside personal glory and material gratification in solidarity with the marginalised...you are a Christian in deed.'

'In a world where everything changed, your roots kept you firmly on the ground'

But then there are also very frank expressions of the feelings of staff on the announcement of his departure:

'paralysing emotions'

'you exposed yourself as another human being'

'the internal state of balance was disturbed'

'Some felt a sense of loss, some felt rejected, some saw it as time for a change of scene, others felt pity for you, others felt guilt (what did I do?), some wanted out.'

And finally there is a series of comments which suggest a deep feeling, at least among some staff, of racial resentment in this home of Christian social justice:⁷⁶⁹

'African staff felt that they had a historical duty to step in and rescue the ship but feared they would not get the support of white funders'

'White and coloured staff withdrew, much like others do in this country because they were less wanted, did not want to look as if they were claiming leadership, did not want to rock the boat'

'[For] staff who have been here for longer...the issue was defending the organisation and its legacy'

'Staff who were always referred to as new became more assertive in calling for a shake-up in the organisation...while asking for changes this group struggled to articulate a new vision'

'In your absence the leadership team felt under pressure... also snubbed and undermined by the Chair who was focused on finding a replacement'

⁷⁶⁷ Joseph, Hester. Personal interview by author, 17 March 2021 in Durban (co-worker at Diakonia)

⁷⁶⁸ SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/D/1 "Farewell to Paddy from Diakonia staff" (30 March 2002)

⁷⁶⁹ See Appendix A for more on Kearney's sense of racial identity.

'Staff's negative perceptions of the Leadership team worsened. Staff saw managers as being inaccessible, aloof, rigid, uninterested, incoherent, uncommunicative, unsure of their roles, arrogant and disempowering. Stability, confidence and trust hit rock bottom.'

The author concludes by saying:

I would be exaggerating if I were to say that all of these problems only started during your absence [Kearney had in fact been on sabbatical since September 2003]. All of us must be ready to give up something in order to take this organisation forward. ... I think we must put ourselves in your shoes when this organisation was started....Way back in the heady 70s when Diakonia was born, your team then only had two things available which seem to have disappeared now – that is imagination and faith.'

And he then ends with a sincere expression of gratitude:

Thank God for your selflessness and dedication to this organisation during the last thirty years. The spirit of your vision will ring through these corridors long after you are gone.

The letter is remarkable and all the more so because Kearney kept it. It is a mark of his authenticity that, when he could just have kept all the positive comments and cards and plaudits and allowed this letter to recede into memory, he retained it alongside the rest.

There is an interesting parallel between Kearney's perhaps awkward relationships with some of his black staff and a similar situation with his hero, Beyers Naudé. In her biography, Ryan talks about his overly generous attitude to black staffers. She says that he defends this because it was difficult for him to say no when he had to come to terms with his guilt as a white person who for so many years had been part and parcel of oppressing blacks. His Dutch colleague Horst Kleinschmidt says of Naudé:

For him the dividing line of keeping a good and honourable relationship with black people was something that he still had to learn about.⁷⁷⁰

These mixed emotions on Kearney's departure are supported by comments that some of his friends made in interviews. For example, Aitken shared that Kearney felt out of step with more and more of the staff at Diakonia.

He discovered he was not in the same struggle as they were. That their values were not the same. People used to say to him: 'I didn't join the struggle to be poor'. And he would reply: 'Yes, but I hope you didn't join to leave the poor behind.' He could not connect with them. I wonder how close Paddy really was to the majority of people in SA?⁷⁷¹

Snyman, who was close to him in his final years at Diakonia, says that Kearney had doubts about whether staff at Diakonia were as sharp or as dedicated as he wanted them to be.

He felt that sometimes there was a low quality of skills but then there was lower financial support so he could not recruit people as good as he needed. He started to realise that the output was not as strong as it should have been. He got fed up with the staff and the mediocrity. I also noticed that, increasingly, it was the black staff who were critical of Paddy.

⁷⁷⁰ Ryan, Colleen. *Beyers Naudé – Pilgrimage of Faith* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1990) 160

⁷⁷¹ Aitken, Marilyn. Personal interview by author, 23 September 2020 in Howick (member of The Grail)

And in turn Paddy became tired of Diakonia – there were lots of staff who were not connected to Church.⁷⁷²

Kearney's successor was less critical of the team, but was critical of the change in the political situation.

We had high expectations when they moved into Government. Of course, we were aware that things were not going to change overnight. But then we saw that many politicians had forgotten what the Struggle was all about. The Struggle was not over in 1994 – it was multi-faceted. But it was harder than it was before, when there was a clear enemy. There is still a lot of work to be done. Paddy would have been extremely frustrated.⁷⁷³

Kearney must have felt so many conflicting emotions in 2004: a great loyalty to Diakonia but also a recognition that he needed to move on; a great loyalty to his staff but also an increasing dissonance with some of them; a great loyalty to +Hurley who died at the beginning of the year but whose memory Kearney treasured; a great loyalty to the Struggle and to his fellow activists but also a disappointment about how some of them were now behaving. He might have received some comfort from these words of Vatican II which recognise the internal conflict:

The truth is that the imbalances under which the modern world labours are linked with that more basic imbalance which is rooted in the heart of every human. For in people many elements wrestle with one another. Thus, on the one hand, as creatures they experience their limitations in a multitude of ways; on the other they feel themselves to be boundless in their desires and summoned to a higher life. ...

Indeed, as weak and sinful beings, we often do what we would not, and fail to do what we would. (Rom 7:15). Hence each person suffers from internal divisions, and from these flow so many and such great discords in society. ...

Thinking they have found serenity in an interpretation of reality everywhere proposed these days, many look forward to a genuine and total emancipation of humanity wrought solely by human effort; they are convinced that the future rule of humanity over the earth will satisfy every desire of the heart. Nor are there lacking those who despair of any meaning to life and praise the boldness of those who think that human existence is devoid of any inherent significance and strive to confer a total meaning on it by their own ingenuity alone.⁷⁷⁴

Having laid out the paradox, Vatican II offers these words which, one hopes, were a reassurance to Kearney and all who see this dilemma:

The Church firmly believes that Christ, who died and was raised up for all, can through His Spirit offer humans the light and the strength to measure up to their supreme destiny. ...The Church also maintains that beneath all changes there are many realities which do not change and which have their ultimate foundation in Christ, Who is the same yesterday and today, yes and forever. Hence under the light of Christ, the image of the unseen God, the firstborn of every creature, the Council wishes to speak to all people in order to shed light on

⁷⁷² Snyman, Deon. Personal interview by author, 6 January 2021 in Malmesbury (Dutch Reformed Church Dominee and co-worker at Diakonia)

⁷⁷³ Mvambo-Dandala, Nomabelu. Personal interview by author, 26 May 2022 in Durban (Kearney's successor as Director of Diakonia and sometime Patron of Denis Hurley Centre)

⁷⁷⁴ *Gaudium et Spes* 10

the mystery of humanity and to cooperate in finding the solution to the outstanding problems of our time.⁷⁷⁵

My conclusion is that it is hard to pinpoint *why* Kearney left Diakonia at that particular moment. While it was his own decision, it seems that there were also subtle pressures. Although he soon started work on +Hurley's biography, that does not seem to be his main preoccupation at the time. Though he left a few months after +Hurley's death, the signs of his departure pre-date that. Similarly, he was having health problems but they do not stop him from continuing to work intensively in other fields after his departure. He does indeed express some feelings of personal inadequacy, and also a belief that a black person should head Diakonia, but to be fair he had also expressed these when Diakonia was founded 28 years earlier. I suspect that the reality is a mixture of these factors – with his own heart attack in August 2003 and +Hurley's death in Feb 2004 finally triggering a decision in April 2004 which had been brewing for some time.

But Kearney's departure from Diakonia does not mean retirement or a quiet life because he had two major projects left to complete: the biography of +Hurley and the creation of the Denis Hurley Centre.

34 years after he left the Marists, perhaps these words from the Common Rules were still ringing in Kearney's ears"

The Religious life being, by its very nature, a life of penance, mortification and labour, nothing is more opposed to it than idleness, which leads to all vices, combats and destroys all virtues. ... Brother Director must never allow the Brothers, especially the Junior Brothers, to remain idle; but must keep them constantly and usefully occupied, and require an account of their work and employment of their time.⁷⁷⁶

Denis Hurley Centre expressing an Option for the Poor

In closing this chapter, I thus want to describe one other way in which Kearney lived out the Council's commitment to the preferential option for the poor. After he left Diakonia, Kearney's main focus for a few years was the completion and publication of books about +Hurley, as well as work across KZN to establish an effective structure of regional ecumenical organisations alongside the Provincial one. It is often the lot of experienced activists and NGO administrators – unless they retire or become academics – to become consultants assisting other organisation or being deputed to sit on panels of the great and the good. Kearney did that as well, sitting alongside Bishop Phillip and Vasu Gounden (both of them people with whom he worked earlier in his life) on a Social Cohesion Panel created in 2014 by the then Premier of KZN Willies Mchunu in the wake of waves of xenophobic violence.⁷⁷⁷ Both Gounden and Phillip admit that the output and the implementation of this Panel left Kearney frustrated.⁷⁷⁸ Perhaps again he is realising (to re-quote *Gaudium et Spes* 10) that since 'such great discords in society' flow from 'the internal divisions' from which each person

⁷⁷⁵ *Gaudium et Spes* 10

⁷⁷⁶ Marist Brothers of the Schools. *Common Rules of the Institute* (Rome: Little Brothers of Mary, 1947) 80

⁷⁷⁷ SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/D/SRG/1 "Social Cohesion"

⁷⁷⁸ Gounden, Vasu. Personal interview by author, 18 February 2022 in Durban (Executive Director of Accord); Phillip, Rubin. Personal interview by author, 25 May 2022 in Durban (Emeritus Bishop of Natal; Patron and sometime Trustee of Denis Hurley Centre)

suffers, those same divisions and conflicts would be experienced by the Panel members and the politicians who appointed them.

Kearney's desire to engage with the world was not, however, dimmed by retirement or frustrations and I think it is significant that in many ways the final vehicle that he established, the Denis Hurley Centre, enabled him to approach problems on his own terms: in partnership with Government but not in any way dependent on them. That his focus was the poor was of no surprise to Eric Apelgren, another former colleague (who, unlike Kearney, has tied himself to Government structures in the hope of having some impact):

I remember for example when Paddy spoke about the arrogance and insensitivity of Government towards the poor such as Abahlali baseMjondolo (the shack dwellers' movement). He was always looking out for the poorest of the poor; he was always consistent.⁷⁷⁹

Kearney's concern for the poor was informed by a Liberation theology approach which did not see feeding the hungry as a purely external act but one which was integrally connected to all aspects of being a Christian, to quote Gutiérrez:

To give life then means giving bread to the poor, helping a people to organise, defending its rights, being concerned with the health of the most marginalised, preaching the Gospel, forgiving one's brothers and sisters, celebrating the Eucharist, praying, and giving one's own life.⁷⁸⁰

This could easily be a manifesto for the Denis Hurley Centre – for which, knowing how poor his state of health was, it can be argued that Kearney 'gave his own life'.

In Chapter 6, I will talk in more detail about the founding of the Denis Hurley Centre and its strategy of working not just with all Christians but with all faiths. But just as Diakonia combined ecumenism with a commitment to social justice, so the Denis Hurley Centre combined inter-religious dialogue with a commitment to social justice. So in exploring Kearney experience of social justice we can look for precursors for the DHC that sowed a seed in Kearney's mind.

One of the main Christian responses to homelessness in Cape Town 'The Carpenter's Workshop' involved Dee Wills, the wife of Kearney's lifelong friend Tim Dunne (who died in 2016).⁷⁸¹ By coincidence a precursor to this organisation is mentioned by Storey who recalls some of the progressive ministry he was involved in in District Six in Cape Town in 1967 at a Methodist Church which became called 'The Carpenter's House', welcoming people of all backgrounds and races: homeless people and passers-by enjoying a meal together. The words he uses to describe this experience could well be ones that Kearney would use 50 years later about the Denis Hurley Centre.

Church members were shocked out of their belief that faith was about being respectable and began to learn that it was about extravagant compassion and hospitality instead.⁷⁸²

⁷⁷⁹ Apelgren, Eric. Personal interview by author, 6 October 2020 in Durban (Volunteer at Diakonia; later local Government official)

⁷⁸⁰ Gutiérrez, Gustavo. "The Church and the Poor: a Latin American perspective". *The Reception of Vatican II*. Giuseppe Alberigo, Jean-Pierre Jossua & Joseph A Komonchak eds. (Washington DC: CUA Press, 1987) 191

⁷⁸¹ Kearney, *Faith in Action*, 132 ("Tim Dunne 1948-2016 — memorial tribute", Rondebosch, Cape Town, 22 April 2016)

⁷⁸² Storey, *I Beg to Differ*, 143

Also, when he was interviewing people for the biography about +Hurley, in 2005 Kearney visited Cathy Corcoran in London who had been a key contact when CAFOD was funding Diakonia.⁷⁸³ By this stage, she was running the Cardinal Hume Centre for homeless youth. But though in other places, Kearney writes about how much he is inspired by Cardinal Hume and the parallels he sees with +Hurley, there is no mention in his journal of any influence on him from the Cardinal Hume Centre (or The Passage Homeless Centre which Hume himself set up).⁷⁸⁴ (By coincidence, this author when living in London knew and worked with Cardinal Hume and The Passage).

While he might have sought to learn lessons from other cities, Kearney's theology was always contextual and so he was motivated to create the Denis Hurley Centre by the simple expedience of 'See, Judge, Act'. In a lecture to seminarians in 1993, +Hurley commends this method of Joseph Cardijn and the YCW from the 1920s.⁷⁸⁵ Paul Nadal recalls that Cardijn had a great influence on +Hurley and so on Kearney.⁷⁸⁶ Campbell confirms this.⁷⁸⁷

In his personal archive, Kearney kept a number of documents which highlight the focus on the poor which is the driving force of the Denis Hurley Centre. For example, in 2009 on the fifth anniversary of +Hurley's death, at the first of the 'Hurley weekends' and as a way to launch fundraising for the Denis Hurley Centre, Kearney's choice of readings while flowers are laid at +Hurley's Shrine is from Isaiah 58: 6-10

Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of wickedness,
to undo the straps of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?
Is it not to share your bread with the hungry
and bring the homeless poor into your house?⁷⁸⁸

As will be detailed in Chapter 6 there is also an interfaith element with a speech from Fatima Meer about helping the poor by, using quotes from the Qur'an about poverty. Stephen Tully, then Administrator of the Cathedral, appended a letter:

As explained today, it is our hope that the Denis Hurley Centre will be a beacon of hope to the people of Durban. The launch is an important step in our journey of faith towards realising this vision.

An article about the launch appeared in a South African Catholic magazine *Trefoil* and a woman had clearly written in response to that asking if the centre will be 'too grand and expensive for the underprivileged people of the area'. Kearney kept a note of the reply to her:

Fr Stephen mentioned that some people do have difficulty with the concept of expensive installations in disadvantaged areas...His opinion was that the poor should also be entitled to

⁷⁸³ Corcoran, Cathy. Email sent to the author, 24 January 2022 (CAFOD manager with responsibility for South Africa)

⁷⁸⁴ SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/D/1 "Morning Pages: May-July 2005" (24 May 2005, London)

⁷⁸⁵ Denis, *Facing the Crisis*, 181 (Hurley, Denis. 'The Second Vatican Council', lecture given at St Joseph's Cedara, 1993)

⁷⁸⁶ Nadal, Paul. Personal interview by author, 26 October 2020 in Durban (Catholic Monsignor, Vicar-General to +Hurley and Patron/ Trustee of Denis Hurley Centre)

⁷⁸⁷ Campbell, Alex. Personal interview by author, 18 January 2022 via Zoom (former Oblate priest)

⁷⁸⁸ SJTI Archive: BIO- 11/W/3/Minutes/1 "2009" (Launch of Denis Hurley Centre fundraiser, 15 February 2009)

have access to things of beauty, and the furnishings, whilst being durable and sustainable, should be as aesthetically pleasing as possible.

While the homeless are one focus, Kearney recognises that 'See, Judge, Act' requires him to be aware of the needs of all those in the area. Thus, in the FAQ distributed at that 2009 event, the views of local street vendors and taxi drivers were also addressed and it was stressed that they would be accommodated and included in the consultation. In a 2010 'Brief History of the Denis Hurley Centre' Kearney refers to how the previous building had been used in May 2008 "to provide accommodation for almost 500 refugees for a period of about six weeks during an outbreak of xenophobic violence".⁷⁸⁹ Refugees' needs were included in the planning for the Denis Hurley Centre. However, rather counter to this, the 2009 file also contains a letter from the Metro Police Commissioner to Fr Tully confirming that 100 Tanzanian 'vagrants' had been removed as requested.⁷⁹⁰ This seems odd considering the commitment to the homeless and to refugees. Kearney had kept the letter but not commented on it.

As mentioned above, while Kearney did not want to be dependent on Government, he also wanted to give them an opportunity to be involved. Throughout his archive it is clear that he was actively courting Zweli Mkhize who from 2009 to 2013 was Premier of KZN. It is clear that Kearney admired Mkhize and considered him as someone who was fighting for good within the ANC.

Paddy always supported Zweli; he thought he would be President of the country.⁷⁹¹

He was very drawn to people like Zweli (as I was); and there were others in the [ANC] party. They saw Kearney as someone they could go to for advice.⁷⁹²

He was disappointed with Sbu Ndebele [KZN Premier 2004-2009]; he was much more comfortable with Zweli.⁷⁹³

Napier says that, compared to Kearney, he would have been 'much more sceptical, less comfortable' with politicians such as Zweli Mkhize, even though he was Premier at the time.⁷⁹⁴

Kearney retains with pride a copy of Mkhize's 'State of the Province Address' from February 2011 which mentioned this new project:

The Denis Hurley Centre will play a crucial role in the fight against poverty and provide a hub for social economic development for poor and disadvantaged communities to enjoy. The establishment of the centre should be celebrated by all people of this province.⁷⁹⁵

Furthermore, a year later Mkhize announced the plan to honour Liberation Heroes in the year of the centenary of the ANC with statues planned for 12 of them of whom Hurley is the only white person mentioned.⁷⁹⁶ This did not in fact happen – the statue of +Hurley at the Denis Hurley Centre was funded by a Catholic sodality – but the Premier's fine words were later matched by finance when a

⁷⁸⁹ SJTI Archive: BIO- 11/W/3/Minutes/1 "2010" (A Brief History of the Denis Hurley Centre)

⁷⁹⁰ SJTI Archive: BIO- 11/W/3/Minutes/1 "2009" (Letter to Stephen Tully from Metro Police, October 2009)

⁷⁹¹ Ntamubano, Jean-Marie. Personal interview by author, 14 September 2022 in Durban (manager of Denis Hurley Centre)

⁷⁹² Phillip, Rubin. Personal interview by author, 25 May 2022 in Durban (Emeritus Bishop of Natal; Patron and sometime Trustee of Denis Hurley Centre)

⁷⁹³ Snyman, Deon. Personal interview by author, 6 January 2021 in Malmesbury (Dutch Reformed Church Dominee and co-worker at Diakonia)

⁷⁹⁴ Napier, Wilfrid. Personal interview by author, 28 September 2020 in Durban (Cardinal Archbishop of Durban)

⁷⁹⁵ SJTI Archive: BIO- 11/W/3/Minutes/2 "2011" (State of the Province Address, February 2011)

⁷⁹⁶ SJTI Archive: BIO- 11/W/3/Minutes/2 "2012" (State of the Province Address, February 2012)

major grant from the Provincial Government (of over R4 million) was approved by Mkhize for the Denis Hurley Centre and implemented by his successor.⁷⁹⁷

One of the reasons for the close link was the mentorship role that +Hurley had played for Mkhize, both as a young activist in the 1980s and then as MEC for Health responding to AIDS in the 1990s. Mkhize spoke about this at two Hurley Weekends when he took the trouble to come back as a Cabinet Minister to be guest of honour at the Denis Hurley Centre.⁷⁹⁸ In addition, his wife May Mashego was initially a Trustee for the Denis Hurley Centre and then, when she moved away from the Durban area, continued as a Patron (until 2021). Such collaboration is again endorsed by Vatican II – in contrast to the Church’s view in the 19th century that Government was encroaching on the work of the Church in providing certain social services:

The Church and the political community in their own fields are autonomous and independent from each other. Yet both, under different titles, are devoted to the personal and social vocation of the same people. The more that both foster sounder cooperation between themselves, with due consideration for the circumstances of time and place, the more effective will their service be exercised for the good of all.⁷⁹⁹

But working with politicians is never without its risks. Kearney did not live to see the downfall of Mkhize who in 2021 was forced to resign as Minister of Health in a corruption scandal (though at time of writing his political career may not yet be over). Kearney was alive to see the downfall of Ben Ngubane, a previous (IFP) Premier of KZN (1997-99) who had also been invited by Kearney to be a Patron of the Denis Hurley Centre (after he had left politics). He had a less than successful career as head of both SABC and Eskom when those organisations were mired in scandal.

Even if Kearney had to work with (flawed) politicians, he remained clear what the goal was of this new centre – to serve the poor, and to be a living legacy to +Hurley. This was, for Kearney, another way of honouring the poor: it is noticeable that in the prayer that Kearney initiated and was approved by Cardinal Napier, three aspects of +Hurley’s ministry are presented as equally being reasons to be inspired by him: ‘his work for justice and peace’, ‘his loving care for the poor and marginalised’ and ‘his vision for a reformed and renewed Church’.⁸⁰⁰

This prayer was established by Cardinal Napier when, to Kearney’s delight, he gave permission for the +Hurley grave at Emmanuel Cathedral to be marked out as a ‘shrine’ and for people to be encouraged to invoke his intercession: a preparatory step towards the opening of his cause for canonisation. It was the auxiliary bishop, +Barry Wood, a fellow Oblate of +Hurley, who preached at the inauguration of the Shrine in March 2017. He used words with strong Vatican II resonance describing +Hurley as ‘a prophet of a new age not afraid to discern the signs of the times and then take action’ but then adding:

That's wonderful but we are also called to be wonderful, to take our vocation seriously as people not afraid to speak out, as prophets called to do the right thing.⁸⁰¹

⁷⁹⁷ SJTI Archive: BIO- 11/W/3/Minutes/3 “2014”

⁷⁹⁸ “Update February 2017”, *Denis Hurley Centre website* <http://www.denishurleycentre.org/page/hurley-centre-newsletters> (accessed 26 September 2022); “Update February 2019”, *Denis Hurley Centre website* <http://www.denishurleycentre.org/page/hurley-centre-newsletters> (accessed 26 September 2022) (The latter event, of course, was after Kearney’s death).

⁷⁹⁹ *Gaudium et Spes* 76

⁸⁰⁰ “Hurley prayer of intercession”, *Denis Hurley Centre website* <https://www.denishurleycentre.org/page/hurley-prayer> (accessed 26 September 2022)

⁸⁰¹ SJTI Archive: BIO- 11/W/3/Minutes/6 “2017” (+Wood at inauguration of the Shrine, March 2017)

+Wood also recalled a woman who had visited the cathedral in 2016 as part of the Holy Year of Mercy and her comment:

All my life I have been reading Matthew 25, about feeding the hungry and welcoming the stranger, but finally at the Denis Hurley Centre I have seen Matthew 25 come to life!

Like Mary of Nazareth before him, Kearney 'treasured these things in his heart' (Lk 2:19), and also in his archive. He was conscious that any legacy in +Hurley's name had to be a living legacy. 10 years before the Denis Hurley Centre opened, a good friend of both +Hurley and Kearney, Sr Marie-Henry Keane set this challenge:

If there is to be any discussion of getting up a memorial in honour of our dear Archbishop let that monument be our passion for holiness and renewal, driving us forward as God's Pilgrim people.⁸⁰²

Shared Citizenship/ Solidarity

The Denis Hurley Centre was focused on the practical action ('the corporal works of mercy') of Mt 25: feeding the hungry, tending the sick, welcoming the stranger etc. But it also had a hidden if strong socio-political dimension. Kearney had spent his time at Diakonia helping develop a sense of solidarity across divisions of denomination and of 'race'. Kearney now saw it as the role of the Denis Hurley Centre to help people develop a sense of solidarity across divisions of faith (as discussed in Chapter 6) but also of class.

In conversation with the author, who after all was new to South Africa, Kearney would often deplore the way in which post-1994, middle-class people (now black as well as white) lived in a fortress situation. This was partly because, fearful of robbery, they were living behind high walls (and I recount in Chapter 5 examples of Kearney's seeming fearlessness in the face of danger). But more than that, he deplored the fortress mentality of closing oneself off from others. This is actually something that Paton predicted many years earlier (though he seemed to think it would get better once democracy came, not worse):

In 1952 the Afrikaners were undoubtedly building for themselves a fortress. Today in 1987 some of them are beginning to understand what it means to live a fortress-life. It means that you are, day in and day out, year in and year out, on guard. It means that if you don't go out in peace, others will come in in war. One thing is certain the day of the fortress is done.⁸⁰³

Solidarity is an underlying principle of many Vatican II documents based on the assertion of shared human dignity that is expressed in the very title of the document on Religious Freedom.⁸⁰⁴ It is, not surprisingly, a recurrent theme of *Gaudium et Spes* – solidarity within the family, solidarity within the political community, solidarity across international borders. Given its themes and the approach that it takes, it is not surprising that +Hurley (and Kearney) seem to have been only positive about the text of *Gaudium et Spes* (though this was not true of all bishops).

⁸⁰² Keane, "Vatican Council II: Keeping the Dream Alive", 265

⁸⁰³ Paton, *Journey Continued*, 58

⁸⁰⁴ *Dignitatis Humanae*

From the beginning of the document, solidarity is presented as a key goal of the Church and of the Council:

Hence, giving witness and voice to the faith of the whole people of God gathered together by Christ, this Council can provide no more eloquent proof of its solidarity with, as well as its respect and love for, the entire human family with which it is bound up, than by engaging with it in conversation about these various problems.⁸⁰⁵

Hinze comments:

Gaudium et Spes introduced a particular way of framing social effects as an acting social mission that is one of its most important and, especially in the affluent North and West, still un-developed legacies. A scarlet thread running through this Pastoral Constitution is a growing recognition of Solidarity, or as I will call it Incarnational Solidarity, as an essential key for authentically Christian and human living in today's world.⁸⁰⁶

Though nowhere systematically developed, the notion of Solidarity saturates the text; it emerges in the document as a fact, a norm and an embodied vocation.⁸⁰⁷

The Solidarity *Gaudium et Spes* urges cannot remain simply an ideal or an interior attitude. It involves the immersion of bodies, the expenditure of time and energies in the midst of the blood, sweat and tears of the real world, in practices of presence and service. Incarnational Solidarity entails cultivating concrete habitual ways of acknowledging our we-ness by being with the neighbour, especially the suffering and needy neighbour.⁸⁰⁸

This is the very opposite of the fortress isolation that Kearney experienced in South Africa – during and after Apartheid – and also that had been the attitude of much of the Catholic Church for centuries. The Council Fathers are now proud to say:

As God did not create humans for life in isolation, but for the formation of social unity, so also 'it has pleased God to make each human being holy and save them not merely as individuals, without bond or link between them, but by making them into a single people, a people which acknowledges Him in truth and serves Him in holiness.' ...This communitarian character is developed and consummated in the work of Jesus Christ. For the very Word made flesh willed to share in the human fellowship.⁸⁰⁹

Importantly, this 'sharing in human fellowship' is not then explicated by *Gaudium et Spes* with recourse to the abstract existential language of Nicaea, but instead by listing some of the ordinary human things that Jesus of Nazareth did. The Church that Christ founded is also presented as a sign of human solidarity but in a way that still allows for the inclusion of those who are not Christians:

As the firstborn of many brethren and by the giving of His Spirit, He founded after His death and resurrection a new brotherly community composed of all those who receive Him in faith and in love. This He did through His Body, which is the Church. There everyone, as members one of the other, would render mutual service according to the different gifts bestowed on each.⁸¹⁰

⁸⁰⁵ *Gaudium et Spes* 3

⁸⁰⁶ Hinze, Christine. "Straining towards Solidarity in a Suffering World – *Gaudium et Spes* after 40 Years". *Vatican II – 40 years later*. in William Madges ed. (Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 2006) 168

⁸⁰⁷ Hinze, "Straining towards Solidarity in a Suffering World" 173

⁸⁰⁸ Hinze, "Straining towards Solidarity in a Suffering World" 174

⁸⁰⁹ *Gaudium et Spes* 32 (quoting *Lumen Gentium* 9)

⁸¹⁰ *Gaudium et Spes* 32

Moreover, the action of Christ in creating human solidarity is not something just in the past, but also in the present and in the time still to come:

This solidarity must be constantly increased until that day on which it will be brought to perfection. Then, saved by grace, human beings will offer flawless glory to God as a family beloved of God and of Christ their brother.⁸¹¹

(Note that it is ‘human beings’ – or ‘man’ in the standard translation – who will ‘offer flawless glory to God’, not just Christians – the family referred to is clearly the family of all humankind.)

Such a commitment to the profound equality of all human beings is one that, according to +Tutu, was reinforced for +Hurley by his study of Teilhard; it was for him ‘almost intoxicating to see the cosmic Christ in these dimensions’.

The consequences of this Christology was the realisation of the infinite worth of each single person as being created in the image of God.⁸¹²

Promoting this sense of being in radical solidarity with each other becomes a key theme for Kearney at the Denis Hurley Centre. For example, while raising funds for the project, he distributed a prayer in 2013 (in English and Zulu) which stresses the importance of over-coming divisions:

God of love and compassion, justice and peace, truth and freedom, as we construct the Denis Hurley Centre we pray that you will build in us these core values of your kingdom so strongly promoted by Archbishop Hurley.

Help us to ensure that this centre will bridge all the divisions of our society, that it will serve the poorest and most vulnerable whatever their race or faith, and that in this centre all will find their God-given dignity, honoured and valued.⁸¹³

This does not mean that Kearney was not also sometimes one who inadvertently reinforced divisions. In private notes from a meeting in 2012, there is a surprising reference by him to how ‘vagrants are getting into the old building’ now that it has been left empty for eight months before it was demolished.⁸¹⁴ The use of the term vagrants is one that he would not condone once the Denis Hurley Centre was up and running.

The approach instead has been to describe homeless people as ‘citizens of Durban’, albeit ones who do not have a permanent place to sleep. Sadly, Kearney did not live to see the triumphant way in which this was visibly demonstrated through the Denis Hurley Centre’s partnership with the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC). For the general election in May 2019, and again municipal elections in November 2021, the Denis Hurley Centre became a place where homeless citizens could

⁸¹¹ *Gaudium et Spes* 32

⁸¹² Tutu, Desmond. “Foreword”. *Denis Hurley – a portrait by friends*. Anthony Gamley ed. (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 2001) page x. +Hurley had actually named Teilhard in a debate at the Council on 22 October 1964 calling him ‘that loyal son of the Church’. This was radical indeed since the Vatican had forbidden the Jesuit from publishing on theology for the last 11 years of his life though there is evidence that he still did albeit discretely as explained in more detail in Prats, Mercè. *Une parole attendue: la circulation des photocopies de Teilhard de Chardin* (Paris: Salvator, 2022). See also: Hurley, *Vatican II*, 172.

⁸¹³ SJTI Archive: BIO- 11/W/3/Minutes/2 “2013” (Prayer for the +Hurley centre)

⁸¹⁴ SJTI Archive: BIO- 11/W/3/Minutes/9 “Team Co-ordinators 2012”

register as voters, could meet and challenge political candidates, and then could vote alongside the other citizens who lived in the area.⁸¹⁵

But Kearney did witness – and support and sometimes initiate – a number of activities of the Denis Hurley Centre that helped build a sense of solidarity. For example:

- in August 2015, the Sharks (local cup-winning rugby team) invited homeless people to King’s Park stadium
- in June 2016, at an event for Father’s Day, wealthy children from Kloof parish baked and shared cakes with the homeless men who were fathers
- also in June 2016, an art project was part of the World AIDS Conference in Durban in which street children and learners from private schools worked side by side
- in December 2017, a fundraising campaign (the Social Meal Project) connected tourists in restaurants visiting Durban for the holidays with the homeless people they saw on the streets
- in March 2018, a play produced at the Denis Hurley Centre by Empatheatre connected the experiences of four women (South African and foreign) who moved to Durban.

Summaries of all of these can be found in the relevant monthly newsletter ‘Update’ of the Denis Hurley Centre.⁸¹⁶

Kearney was also keen to promote the mixing of volunteers so that the act of volunteering itself would be a way of overcoming barriers. Chapter 6 will describe how he ensured that the kitchen was a place where people of different faiths could comfortably work side by side. Kearney was also keen that among the volunteers were homeless people themselves so that, while peeling vegetables, the distinction between who was homeless and who was not would disappear. I recall one older, middle-class white lady confessing to me that when she first started volunteering she was nervous about driving into town because she was intimidated by ‘the homeless at the robots’. “But are you,” I asked her, “intimidated by Vusi?” (a young man from the streets who had been working alongside her that morning). “Of course not,” she immediately replied, perplexed. “I don’t see him as homeless, I see him as Vusi.” Her simple response expresses the principles behind Chapter 1 of *Gaudium et Spes* (12-22) on the Dignity of the Human Person; and also every Gospel parable in which Jesus affirms the identity of the individual (e.g. Lk 19: 1-10).

One particular event was the ‘Dare to Share’ Sleep Out in front of City Hall in May 2016 at which homeless and non-homeless citizens slept on the pavement side-by-side. In Kearney’s report about this to the Cathedral PPC (May 2016), he highlighted the phrase ‘shared citizenship’.⁸¹⁷ Then, in a report to the PPC later in the year (September 2016) he expressed concern about a missed opportunity to show ‘shared citizenship’. He was commenting on an event that was held for Heritage Day:

⁸¹⁵ “Update May 2019”, *Denis Hurley Centre website* <http://www.denishurleycentre.org/page/hurley-centre-newsletters> (accessed 26 September 2022); “Update November 2021”, *Denis Hurley Centre website* <http://www.denishurleycentre.org/page/hurley-centre-newsletters> (accessed 26 September 2022)

⁸¹⁶ “Update”, *Denis Hurley Centre website* <http://www.denishurleycentre.org/page/hurley-centre-newsletters> (accessed 26 September 2022)

⁸¹⁷ SJTI Archive: BIO- 11/W/3/Minutes/5 “2016” (Report to Cathedral PPC, May 2016)

Despite lots of work put into this event, both by the parish and the centre, the lunch didn't work out as well as we had hoped.⁸¹⁸

This was a diplomatic way of him drawing attention to the lack of success in serving food to parishioners and homeless people side by side. Since lunch would usually be served to the homeless on a Sunday, and the Cathedral wanted to serve food to parishioners to celebrate Heritage Day, it was decided jointly that there would be only one process of distributing food. However, in the event, parishioners pushed homeless people out of the queue telling them that they should go elsewhere. Kearney was clearly pained by this experience but also saw it as an opportunity to learn: he blamed the failure on 'a lack of clear agreement on the goals, lack of oversight by the committee, poor anticipation of numbers' but at least he hoped 'this is a learning experience and that next time we start with a smaller scale project'. At time of writing, the Cathedral parish has still not been persuaded to try to make this event happen in the way envisaged.

However, there is one eating-together event at the Denis Hurley Centre that Kearney helped inaugurate and which is evidence of the solidarity he was so keen to espouse. It also has links back to his days at Diakonia when they anticipated the reimagining of the Day of the Vow as the Day of Reconciliation. The event is explained by this author in a paper which describes the ways in which faith communities 'share the table':

Let me end by describing an annual event, which is a culmination of our vision as an organisation. In South Africa, 16 December is a day that was laden with divisive symbolism; since 1994 it has been promoted as a unifying event: the Day of Reconciliation. Most faiths have at their core a meal as a symbolic act of reconciliation – the Christian Eucharist, the Jewish Passover, the Muslim *iftaar* during Ramadan.

But, by definition, these meals are all reserved for people within each religious tradition. None of them offers the heavenly vision of a meal in which all the righteous join together in one communal gathering. So for the Day of Reconciliation, we have established an annual Meal of Reconciliation. This is not a meal in which the rich serve the poor; this is a meal at which the rich and the poor are served together and share the same meal at the same table.

We are not yet in heaven, so it is far from perfect. The conversation is awkward. Housed people want to run around and help – partly to be useful, but also to avoid talking to others. Homeless people, so used to 'eating and running', need to be encouraged to stay for a dinner party. Differences of faith are usually not a problem but, this being South Africa, differences of colour are, at least to begin with. But, each year the atmosphere is more relaxed, and 'reconciliation' becomes not a big theological act but a small human gesture of a shared conversation or a song or a dance. We are not disguising the differences that exist between people but, we hope, we are providing a context in which those differences do not get in the way and people discover what they have in common.

We are each nourished by our own faith roots – but the tree that we all inhabit has wide branches, big enough to accommodate even those who thought they had no place to call

⁸¹⁸ SJTI Archive: BIO- 11/W/3/Minutes/5 "2016" (Report to Cathedral PPC, September 2016)

home. 'The Lord of hosts will prepare a lavish banquet for all peoples on this mountain' (Is 25:6).⁸¹⁹

Vatican II, consistent with Catholic tradition, describes 'the Lord [leaving] behind a pledge of this hope and strength for life's journey' in the form of the Eucharist that will 'provide a meal of brotherly solidarity and a foretaste of the heavenly banquet'.⁸²⁰ As was discussed in Chapter 3, Kearney was keenly aware that Christians cannot always share with each other the Eucharist as 'a meal of brotherly solidarity' – and certainly not with people of other faiths. This Meal of Reconciliation was thus an alternative but still sacramental way of providing 'a foretaste of the heavenly banquet'. It was certainly an event at which I saw him take great pleasure every year.

Concluding Image

As in other chapters, I want to end with an image of Kearney: one which, for me, captures how radical his commitment was not just to assist 'those who are poor or in any way afflicted' but also to be in solidarity with them in 'their joys and hopes, their griefs and anxieties'.⁸²¹

Around August 2015, I was waiting for Kearney to join me for a meeting and, uncharacteristically, he was late. I started asking around the building if anyone had seen him. And eventually I found him sitting on a bench outside (in an area which since his death has been officially re-named 'Paddy Kearney Way') chatting to some of the homeless men. It turned out that our new social worker, Khulekile Mdiniso, who had not met Kearney, had seen a dishevelled old man walking towards the building, in his shabby clothes and carrying two old plastic bags. Not realising he was the Chair of the Trust, she assumed he was homeless and invited him to sit down with the others and wait for lunch. When I explained the mistake to Kearney he replied, with a twinkle: "It is an honour to be taken for a homeless person."

I think his reaction – not just to this situation but to many of the bizarre and unjust situations through which he lived – express these words that Morphet uses about Rick Turner but which could equally be about Kearney:

The value of Turner's life lies in its triumphant demonstration of autonomous value-creating thought and action. The demonstration involves a coherent dialectic of action and reflection which has the capacity to transcend all limitations placed upon it by the irrational situation in which the life was lived.⁸²²

⁸¹⁹ Powell, Caroline, Perrier, Raymond and le Roux, De la Harpe. "Sharing the table: Reflections on the engagement of faith-based communities with homelessness in three South African cities". *Facing Homelessness*. Stephan de Beer and Rehana Vally eds. (Durbanville: AOSIS, 2021) 234

⁸²⁰ *Gaudium et Spes* 38

⁸²¹ *Gaudium et Spes* 1

⁸²² Morphet, "Foreword", xxxiii