You’re invited to join us on a journey of hope, healing, creativity and community. Staying first in 400 year old thatched cottages in Mourne country and then a lovely old country house by the sea outside Belfast, with a group of friends old and new, enjoying the landscape on amazing walks, hearing music and story, meeting locals, experiencing the peace process in encountering people directly involved in activism and change, and getting to know the culture of northern Ireland, immersed in Celtic culture ancient and new. Good food, inspiring art, and beautiful journeys on foot will form the heart of this soulfully unique and transforming experience. Led by two warm-hearted and thoughtful guides, northern Irish writer and peace activist Gareth Higgins, with special guest the distinguished activist and writer John Dear, this will be an eight day experience - for 25 guests only - that might just last for the rest of your life.

Read on for more information on how you can join us!
AN INVITATION FROM OUR HOST
GARETH HIGGINS

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

I’ve been privileged to co-lead a few similar trips in the last couple of years in my home of Northern Ireland, with the amazing musicians and spiritual teachers David Wilcox, Karen Moore, Brian McLaren, David LaMotte, and Eric Elnes. I’m delighted to be joined on this upcoming trip next June once more with my great friend John Dear whose gifts for expanding our ideas about living courageously to transform violent conflict and make peace will animate us beautifully.

Our trip is full of surprises, but I can tell you that mornings will often feature gathered conversations, afternoons we will walk the landscape, and in the evenings there might be music, storytelling, and maybe even a touch of firewater! You’ll meet friends and colleagues with whom we have been honored to walk some of the journey, peacemakers and poets and politicians, you’ll walk by the sea and on mountains, and there’ll be plenty of time to take by yourself for whatever you need.
Rev. John Dear is an internationally recognized voice and leader for peace and nonviolence. A priest, activist and author, he served for years as the director of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the largest interfaith peace organization in the U.S. After September 11, 2001, he was a Red Cross coordinator of chaplains at the Family Assistance Center in New York, and counseled thousands of relatives and rescue workers. John has traveled the war zones of the world, been arrested some 80 times for peace, led Nobel Peace laureates to Iraq, given thousands of lectures on peace across the U.S., and served as a pastor of several churches in New Mexico. He arranged on many occasions for Mother Teresa to speak to various governors to stop an impending execution, and recently helped draft Pope Francis’ World Day of Peace message on nonviolence. He is a co-founder of Campaign Nonviolence and the Nonviolent Cities Project. From 1997-1998, John lived in Derry, Northern Ireland, and worked at a human rights center in Belfast.

His 35 books include The Beatitudes of Peace, The Nonviolent Life, Thomas Merton Peacemaker, A Persistent Peace, Jesus the Rebel, Peace Behind Bars, Lazarus Come Forth! and Disarming the Heart. He has been nominated many times for the Nobel Peace Prize, including by Archbishop Desmond Tutu. More at www.johndear.org
Gareth Higgins, Ph.D. is a writer, storyteller, and community leader who grew up near Belfast during the northern Ireland Troubles, and now lives in North Carolina. Author of How Movies Helped Save My Soul, Cinematic States: A Journey Through the American Dreamlife, and co-author of Religion, Civil Society and Peace in Northern Ireland, he writes and speaks about connection to the earth, cinema and the power of dreams, peace and making justice, and how to take life seriously without believing your own propaganda. He was co-founder of the Wild Goose Festival, The Porch Magazine, and www.moviesandmeaning.com, he's happy to be a work in progress. He leads trips to his native Ireland every year, inviting participants to go beyond the beaten track, to experience the landscape and history through the lens of a story about people learning to live at peace with one another. You can find more about Gareth's work at www.garethhiggins.net
What People Say

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Impressed by how affordable this trip was compared to others I have looked at. Thank you for building community, feeding us, transporting us - all without any glitches and making this spiritually rich and soul relaxing!" - Susan, Illinois
"The spiritual immersion in Ireland was sublime. Ancient Celtic spirituality, local culture and beauty, and the combined wisdom of the leaders was soulfully transformative. I highly recommend!"

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

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

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

The trip takes place June 12th -20th, 2019. You will need to depart the US by June 11th to arrive on the morning of June 12th, flying into Belfast or Dublin (often much less expensive than Belfast); the retreat ends in time to return to the US by the evening of June 20th, although many of our previous guests have extended their stay in Ireland - we're happy to advise on itinerary. **Applications are open now.** If you're interested just contact us and we'll send you the information and application form. **Places are strictly limited** - we can accommodate 25 guests, and expect the trip to be over-subscribed. So, if you know this is for you, or if you have questions, **contact us at retreatireland@gmail.com.** We are eager to welcome you to Belfast in June!

**Cost (excluding airfare) of $2440 per person includes:**

- The services of all guides and retreat leaders, support staff, and guests from the world of arts, media, politics and peacemaking.

- Four nights in 400 year old thatched cottages with traditional Irish breakfast foods.

- Four nights in 140 year old country house by the sea on the edge of Belfast with traditional cooked breakfast.

- Lunch or dinner most days.

- Transport from Belfast hubs to accommodation, and on organized trips throughout the tour.

- All admission fees to sites such as cultural centers, museums, etc.

- The use of all accommodation facilities including lounges, gardens, etc.

- A life-changing experience of spirit, imagination, and community.

**To request an application form,** or if you have any questions, just email retreatireland@gmail.com. There are only 25 spaces available on this wonderful adventure, so please apply soon! Thank you!
Wandering the North Coast

June 2018 Retreat Group at CS Lewis Square, Belfast
Belfast Peaceline
"This retreat truly was magnificent. Beautifully planned, it filled both mind and soul with beauty, historical context and perspective and rollicking good times. It was a prescient reminder of why we must all remain vigilant and committed to respectful dialogue across seemingly unbridgeable gaps in our own lives and in our country." - David, Nebraska

A final note: In order to make the tour widely accessible, we're glad to help people raise financial support to join the retreat, including folk with continuing education and sabbatical funding. If the cost of the tour is a stretch, please let us know, we'd love to hear from you! We'd be glad to help you find ways to join us if we can. Just email retreatireland@gmail.com with any questions, or to request an application.

Landscape photos taken on Ireland Retreat 2018 courtesy of the huge generosity of Scott Griessel & Creatista.