

The Celtic Way

Order, Creativity, and the Holy Spirit in the Celtic Monastic Movement

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Abstract

The Celtic monastic movement lasted hundreds of years and is responsible for much of the spread of Christianity to the West. Much of the movement's success can be attributed to the Celtic Christians' understanding of the importance of the role of creative culture and order as well as an openness and responsiveness to the leading of the Holy Spirit. It is these three things working in tandem that influenced the success of the Celtic monastic movement. Although the movement ended a thousand years ago, it can offer guidance and wisdom for carrying out ministry today. A case study of Cuirim Outreach will be discussed and conclusions drawn as to what can be learned from the Celtic Christians concerning modern ministry. Cuirim Outreach is creative, modern day expression of many of the same ideas that drove the Celtic monastic movement.

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In the Celtic Monastic Movement

The Celts had a unique name for the Holy Spirit: *An Geadh-Glas*, or the Wild Goose. This imagery communicates the mysterious nature of the Holy Spirit, who “much like a wild goose...cannot be tracked or tamed. An element of danger and an air of unpredictability surrounds Him” (Batterson, 2008, p. 1). The Celtic Christians saw much of life as somewhat of a wild goose chase. While the phrase “wild goose chase” often refers to some purposeless endeavor, chasing the Wild Goose that the Celtic Christians chased is anything but pointless. They believed that in chasing the Wild Goose, he would lead them to places they never imagined going. The Celtic Christian seemed to have tapped into something that institutionalized Christianity has missed out on (Batterson, 2008, p. 1).

The Celtic church, between the fifth and ninth centuries, offers a model that shows an understanding of the importance of order and structure. However, it also places an emphasis on hearing from the Holy Spirit and making room for the creativity of individuals and cultures. The Celtic Christians followed God as He led them to expand Christianity throughout Britain and mainland Europe. Many were like nomads, traveling from place to place and forming monastic communities wherever God lead them. The Celtic monastic movement lasted over four centuries and is responsible for much of the spread of Christianity to the West (Shelley, 2008, p. 116). Much of the success of this movement can be attributed to the Celtic Christians’ understanding of the role of creative

culture and order as well as an openness and responsiveness to the leading of the Holy Spirit in individual lives and in their communities.

The non-profit, Cuirim Outreach, is a modern example of a ministry that exemplifies some of the aspects that led to the success of the Celtic monastic movement in reaching the West with the gospel during the fifth through ninth centuries. A case study of this organization will be discussed and conclusions drawn as to what we can learn from the Celtic Christians concerning modern ministry.

History of the Celtic Monastic Movement

Monasticism took many different forms throughout the early centuries of the Christian era but would be a powerful means by which Christianity would spread through the Celtic tribes and to the West. Monasticism began as a way of removing oneself from society in order to escape the materialism and corruption of the world. Monasticism, however, eventually took the form of more of a way of life in the midst of society wherein the monks and nuns would share their faith with pagan neighbors (Johnston, 2000, p. 2). It is this form of monasticism that the Celtic Christians adopted in the fifth century and would be a powerful means by which Christianity would spread through the Celtic tribes and into Western Europe.

Christianity is first recorded to have emerged in England and Wales with the Roman occupation in the second century. It was likely spread through Christians in the Roman army to the native people, the Celts. England, Britain and Ireland were mainly inhabited at the time by people who spoke in Celtic languages and who were known as the 'Celtic' people. They were organized in tribes and shared a common language-group, traditions, and pagan religions (Thomas, 1981, p. 34).

In 407 AD, the last Roman soldiers vacated Britain. In the fifth and sixth centuries, the Saxons, Angles, and Jutes invaded southern and eastern England and eventually conquered most of England. However, Christianity continued to thrive in Wales and spread to Ireland by the fifth century. In the following centuries Christianity also reached much of Scotland. Monasticism was the means by which Christianity was spread through the Celtic tribes in Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. However, monasticism did not originate with the Celtic people in this region of the world. According to Finney (2011), “Legend obscures the beginning of Irish monasticism” (p. 53). However, since monasticism originated in the Eastern Mediterranean and Egypt, the Celtic Christians’ understanding of monasticism likely came through Christian traders from Egypt and Syria (Finney, 2011, p. 54). During the fifth through ninth centuries, as monasticism became the form through which the Celtic Christians spread the gospel, monasticism took many different forms. The early Eastern forms of monasticism looked very different from the later Celtic forms of monasticism.

Monasticism as Hermit Life

Christian monasticism did not begin with people living together. Instead, it began with people seeking solitude. The first form of monasticism was inspired by John the Baptist, who roamed the desert alone. By the second century, Christian hermits were found all throughout the present-day Middle East. Anthony, born in 250 AD in Egypt, is regarded by many as the first monk. In response to Jesus’ words to the rich young ruler—“Go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me” (Matthew 19:21, English Standard Version)—at age twenty,

Anthony gave all his possessions away and took up a life of solitude (Shelley, 2008, p. 118). Subsequently, many followed Anthony's example and took up lives as hermits.

Monasticism as Communal Living

While hermit life in Egypt continued, monasticism took a different turn around the year 320 AD. In that year, Pachomius, a former soldier, established the first Christian monastery. Instead of the monks living alone or in small groups of hermits, Pachomius encouraged a common life together. Monks and nuns worked, ate, and worshipped together. Their daily rhythm had fixed hours, manual labor, uniform dress and discipline. This form of monasticism was an "immense improvement over the hermit's life with its dangers of idleness and eccentricity" (Shelley, 2008, p. 119). Pachomius' reform brought monasticism into a system of order. From these beginnings in Egypt, the influence of this form of monasticism spread through Eastern Europe and eventually through Western Europe. This type of life was adopted and encouraged by Eastern Christianity. The Eastern monasteries were formed as a protest to, or an escape from, the materialism of the world and corruption of the modern Church. Eastern monks would withdraw from the world to seek solace and safety for their own souls. These monasteries were located in isolated places far from civilization (Hunter, 2010, p. 16). Today the influences of the Eastern monks are seen in the Greek, Eastern Orthodox, and Catholic Churches.

Monasticism as Life in the Community

The early Celtic Christians likely learned about monasteries from Eastern Christianity. It is important, however, to distinguish between the Eastern concept of a monastery and that of the Celtic monastic communities. The Celtic monastic communities were organized to penetrate the pagan world and extend the Church. The

Celts sought to save other people's souls. The Celtic monasteries were built in places that were immediately accessible to traffic (Hunter, 2010, p. 16). It is clear that the Celtic Christians thought about where to place their monasteries so their influence would penetrate society.

There were monks and nuns that lived in monasteries and engaged in a rhythm of life: work, study, communal prayer, and outreach into the community. However, it is these monks and nuns that were also the ones sent out on mission to establish monastic communities in different areas of the region. The monks and nuns would come into an area, continuing their lifestyle of prayer and reflection, and then engage in evangelism. If people embraced the lifestyle and truth of Christ, a monastic community would form (Mitton, 2010, p. 5). These monastic communities repeatedly formed in surrounding areas and thus spread the influence of the Celtic Christians.

The Celtic monastic communities were more diverse than the Eastern monasteries. The Celtic communities included people from all walks of life: "priests, teachers, scholars, craftsmen, artists, cooks, farmers, families, and children as well as monks and/or nuns..." (Hunter, 2010, p. 16). All of these people lived together under the leadership of an abbot or abbess. They were committed to a rhythm of life: of work, study, prayer, and outreach, yet they still held everyday jobs.

Their days were divided in a threefold manner: worship, study and work. These monastic communities hummed with busyness throughout the day with a range of different activities. Each community looked different, but one would find children going to school, young men and women preparing for Christian vocations and Christian scholarship being fostered. Some people copied old books onto new parchment papers,

some wrote reflections on the Scripture, and other made arts and crafts. Other people could be found herding cattle, sheering sheep, making cloth, growing crops, cooking meals or caring for the sick or guests. While individuals were kept busy with their own tasks throughout the day, two or three times a day, the community would worship together. This time sometimes consisted of memorizing Scripture together, specifically the Psalms (Hunter, 2010, p. 17). While these communities hummed with the busyness of day to day life, the rhythm of their day wherein they would pause to focus on God kept their hearts focused of their reason for daily life.

The way that the Celtic Christians spread the gospel and established community with people was done either by living among them and reaching out to them or by inviting them in through hospitality to experience the Christian community of faith. This form of monasticism that valued life in community quickly took root in the culture of the Celtic people who also placed an emphasis on the importance of life in community.

The Holy Spirit, Creativity and Order in the Celtic Monastic Movement

The Celtic Christians that lived between the fifth and ninth centuries understood the importance of order within ministry. However, they also placed an emphasis on hearing from the Holy Spirit and the creativity of individuals and cultures. The influence of the Celtic Christians through their monastic communities led to the expansion of Christianity throughout Britain and mainland Europe. Much of the success of this movement can be attributed to the Celtic Christians' understanding of the role of creative culture and order as well as an openness and responsiveness to the leading of the Holy Spirit in individual lives and in their communities.

Listening and Responding to the Holy Spirit

Before Christianity came to the Celtic tribes in Britain, an awareness of the divine pervaded all aspects of life. Through their pagan religions they understood, although in a twisted form, that the Divine wanted to interact with his creation. Although they did not possess the whole truth of who this God was and that there was only one God, their openness to spirituality allowed the Celtic people to be receptive to the Gospel. The Celtic Christians understood the importance of listening to and responding to the Holy Spirit in their individual lives and in the context of community. They were willing to follow the Wild Goose wherever He led them to spread the gospel.

Transformed pagan beliefs. The Celtic people believed that spirits were everywhere, filling the trees, mountaintops, rock formations, and rivers. They also believed that they could communicate with these spirits. The moon, oceans, sun and wind were worshipped as manifestations of the divine. This type of religious thinking is called animism. The Celts held a deep love of nature and friendship and awareness of the sacred in all the ordinary aspects of life. They were organized into hundreds of independent tribes, each with broadly similar languages and religious customs. The Celtic priests of society were called Druids. Druidry was a spiritual tradition that emphasized the sacredness of relationships, philosophical knowledge, creativity, and all the wonders of the earth. Although their ideas were based on animism and pagan concepts, the Druids taught concepts that reflect some similarity to Christian ones. The Druids taught the Celtic people about the immortality of the soul and the Otherworld. The Celtic people believed that their souls were immortal and survived death, passing into the Otherworld. They also believed that, in their pagan spirituality, they could have a direct experience

with the spirits of the world and could know them (Davies & Loughlin, 2013, p. 41).

These beliefs and openness to the spirit realm made the Celts very receptive to the truth of Christian teaching.

Because of the Celtic peoples' openness to spirituality, when Christianity reached their tribes, they were very receptive. The concept of a God that interacts with his creation and desires relationship with them resonated deeply. The concept of the Holy Spirit and being able to hear from him also resonated and they quickly embraced the truth of the Gospel (Bradley, 1999, p. 1). The Celtic Christians understood the importance of listening to and responding to the Holy Spirit in their individual lives and in the context of community. In addition, the daily rhythm of work, study, prayer and rest, created a habit of constantly returning to God throughout the day. A rhythm was created wherein they received from God and then were released to act upon what was received. This posture of receiving and then doing, in that order, kept them in tune and in step with the Holy Spirit. St. Patrick was an early monk who learned to hear from the Holy Spirit and then acted on what he heard. Throughout St. Patrick's life, he constantly returned to the Holy Spirit, both in daily rhythms to receive his daily bread and in the rhythms of life to receive direction for where God was leading him next.

St. Patrick. The story of St. Patrick offers an example of a man who listened to the Holy Spirit and learned to act in response to what he heard. His story begins in the late fourth and early fifth centuries AD when he was growing up in what is now northeast England. His people were the "Britons," but due to the Roman occupation of England, he was more culturally Roman than Celtic. His family was Christian; his grandfather was a

priest (Davies & Loughlin, 2013, p. 91). Patrick had received some Christian teaching, but he did not understand its relevance for daily life.

When St. Patrick was sixteen, he was captured by a band of Celtic pirates who invaded the region. He was forced onto a ship, sailed to Ireland, and was sold into slavery. St. Patrick was put to work herding cattle. During his enslavement, he experienced three profound changes. First, while isolated in the wilderness, he encountered God in a new way. Some might call this “natural revelation.” He connected the presence of God that he felt out in the fields while working with the things he had learned about God while at home with his Christian family. St. Patrick became a devout Christian, and the change was obvious to his captors. Second, St. Patrick came to understand and appreciate the Irish Celtic people, their culture and their language, with an intuitiveness that only comes to someone on the “inside.” Third, St. Patrick came to love his captors and to pray for their reconciliation to God (Hunter, 2010, p. 2). Little did he know that one day, he would feel they were his people.

One night a voice spoke to St. Patrick in a dream saying, “You are going home. Look! Your ship is ready!” St. Patrick escaped to the shore and stowed himself aboard a ship. Years later, by means of a dream, God would call him back again to this very place. At the age of forty-eight, St. Patrick experienced a dream in which the babies of Ireland were pleading with him to come back to their country and tell them about Christ. St. Patrick spent years in reflection and prayer, asking for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, before moving forward on mission to Ireland (Hunter, 2010, p. 3). St. Patrick put himself in a posture of listening and receiving from God before stepping out in action. He learned how to hear, and then do, instead of the reverse. This listening to the Holy Spirit is not,

however, a one-time occurrence that happens on someone's life. It must occur and re-occur, thus forming a rhythm of returning to the Holy Spirit to listen. St. Patrick engaged in the rhythm of returning to the Holy Spirit to receive and hear from him, which kept him in tune with the movement of the Holy Spirit throughout his life.

From this account of St. Patrick, his responsiveness to the calling of the Holy Spirit to leave his home and spread the Gospel and his consistent returning to hear from God can be seen. St. Patrick listened and obeyed the voice of the God. At this point, the accounts of St. Patrick end, but a century later, the entire structure of the Church in Ireland was monastic (Shelley, 2008, p. 156). Subsequently, Ireland became the base for the evangelization of Britain.

The Spread of Christianity through the “wanderers.” The monastic style of life and evangelism, which fit the community of the Celtic people, spread all throughout Britain, Europe and North America in the centuries to follow. Strong Christian communities rose up with a focus on pursuing Christ in the rhythm of life: work, prayer, study, and outreach (Shelley, 2008, p. 116). The monastic style of evangelism played an enormously important role in the evangelism of the Western world from the fifth through ninth centuries. Moreau, Corwin, and McGee (2004) write, “The Celts travelled far by sea and by land, back and forth between Britain and Ireland, as well as into mainland Europe, travelling as far as Central and Eastern Europe” (p. 170). The Celtic Christians “went where others would not go, without credentials and without material support, self-reliant, trusting in God, and accomplished much more than their numbers would warrant” (Moreau, Corwin and McGee, p. 170). It is this willingness that led the Celtic people to the far reaches of the world with the gospel message.

Because of this willingness to go where others would not go, the Celtic monks were given the name *peregrinati*, which means wanderers. The deeper meaning of this name communicates the Celts' willingness to travel far by land and sea to accomplish God's purposes. The translation of *peregrinatio* is, "seeking the place of one's resurrection" (Bradley, 2004, p. 77). It communicated that the monks were also on a sacred journey towards deeper faith and greater holiness as they followed God.

Christianity to the Picts, the Anglo-Saxons and other barbarians. While the movement in Ireland begins with accounts of St. Patrick, within a century after his death, the Irish Celtic Christians opened their eyes to the need for the gospel message beyond Ireland. Just like St. Patrick, many Celtic Christians obeyed the calling of the Holy Spirit and were willing to leave their homes and journey to other places with the Gospel. In 563 AD, an Irish monk named Columba landed in Iona, an island off the coast of Scotland, to begin a monastery with a group of bishops, priests, deacons and students willing to risk it all for the sake of the gospel. Iona became a home base for reaching the Picts of Scotland and beyond with the gospel. The Celtic Christians invested much to adapt to the culture of the Picts in hopes of sharing the gospel. They had to learn the culture and the language. Given time, monastic communities rose up among the Picts and within a century, the Picts were substantially Christian (Hunter, 2010, p. 25).

By the seventh century, the demographics of England were changing due to an influx of Angles, Saxons, Jutes and other Germanic peoples, known collectively as the Anglo-Saxons. In 633 AD, An Irish monk, Aidan, was sent out from Iona to bring the gospel to these barbarian people. Simultaneously, the Christian leaders in Ireland were convinced that God had chosen them as a people to reach the continent of Europe.

Therefore, they commissioned Columbanus and a group of apostolic monks to depart for Europe. In following decades, Columbanus founded many monastic communities throughout what is modern day France, Switzerland and Italy. His people spent much of their time learning languages of the barbarian tribes, engaging people and planting churches. This resulted in a significant Christian movement throughout Europe (Hunter, 2010, p. 26).

The *peregrinati* or wandering nature of the Celts led to the spread of Celtic Christianity in a rapid manner. This was done through the formation of monasteries and monastic communities. It is evident that the Celtic Christians were willing to risk it all and follow the Holy Spirit wherever He would lead. Their influence is observed in how far Christianity spread during the fifth through ninth centuries. They formed monastic communities as far as Germany, Switzerland, and even in northern Italy.

The Holy Spirit and the creative imagination. The Holy Spirit speaks to Christians in a number of ways. One of the oft-neglected ways is through the imagination. When the Holy Spirit makes His home in the heart of a believer (incarnation), the will, intellect, imagination, feeling and sensory being are all sanctified and enlivened. Christians are then able to truly participate in “the eternal, the immutable, the indestructible” (Payne, 1995, p. 11). The imagination enables us to use our faith to understand the unseen realities and meaning of God’s creation. Paul communicates the need for eyes to see the unseen reality when he prayed “that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called us” (Ephesians 1:18, New International Version). He again communicates this in 2

Corinthians 4:18: “So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”

Through the influence of centuries of philosophers, the soul is often reduced to its power to think and rationalize. Christians have become so materialistic that they have lost three quarters of the capacities of their souls. Payne (1999) states,

they [have] lost or denied that part of the soul capable of seeing God. I saw that due to this, Christians, just as their unbelieving neighbors, suffered an awful rift between head and heart; between head knowledge and heart knowledge. It is with the heart that we see God. (para. 10)

The imagination is the power of the heart to “see” and communicate with God. If Christians are cut off from the imagination, they are unable to really receive from God and all that He has made. The Celtic Christians understood the significance of hearing from God through the imagination. They discovered meaningful ways to communicate the gospel through creative images and stories; they engaged people’s emotions and energized their response by utilizing their imaginations. It is with this imagination that the prayer life was cultivated. An eighteenth century Scottish rhetorician, George Campbell (1776, p. 57), explains how the imagination plays a very important role in the communication process. Engaging the imagination is often a means of achieving any or all of the three goals of speech he identified—“to enlighten the understanding,” “to move the passions,” and “to influence the will.”

Creativity moves in two directions and the imagination is often the medium through which it moves. The Holy Spirit gives creativity through the imagination to his people. However, creativity through the imagination also moves from person to person.

The Celtic Christians understood and deeply valued this exchange, thus creating a culture that valued creativity and receiving from the Holy Spirit.

The Importance of Creativity and Culture

An important aspect of the Celtic Monastic movement was the Celtic Christians' expression through creativity. This was a large part of how they connected with one another in community as well as how they connected with God. The Celtic people cultivated a culture that placed value on the creativity of individuals and the creativity of society.

In the latter centuries of the movement, it is documented that the Celts enjoyed intellectual learning, however they were not overly doctrinal or theological. Instead of focusing on theological and doctrinal issues, the Celtic Christians celebrated nature as a good gift from God and a means through which they could connect with him. They recognized the sacredness of all creation and saw little division between sacred and secular. Their culture placed an emphasis on the imagination, the intuitive and the nearness of the spiritual realm in every day life (Power, 2006, p. 3). They saw the Holy Spirit as integral to filling people with creative ideas. The culture made room for people to discover their own unique gifts and how to use them to bless others and expand God's Kingdom.

Value of creativity. Creativity can be described as the ability to produce work that is original, unexpected and useful (Sternberg, 1999, p. 3). Creativity has significance both at the individual and societal level. At the individual level, creativity can be discovered within every person. Because each person has been created in the image of God, he or she has the unique capacity to create. Humans may not be able to create in the

sense that God created in Genesis 1:1, where He created something out of nothing, but humans have the capacity to “reshape what exists into something genuinely new” (Crouch, 2008, p. 22). In this capacity, humans hold a unique creative ability.

Creating culture. Adam and Eve arrived in the world in the midst of a story that had already begun. Humans cannot escape the fact that the world came before us. In the same way that God commissioned Adam and Eve to care for the earth, God has given man countless materials to form and reshape within the world they find themselves. They begin “making something of the world” (Crouch, 2008, p. 23) Ken Myers, Christian cultural critic, describes this as the beginning of culture: “Culture is what we make of the world” (Crouch, 2008, p. 23). Culture is the human effort to take the world as its been given to us and make something out of it. Because humans are made in the image of God, just like the original creator, they are little creators.

Value of the creativity of society. The Celtic Christians placed an emphasis on the imagination, the intuitive and the nearness of the spiritual realm or the incarnational (Power, 2006, p. 3). It is in the context of these that Celtic stories, legends, symbols, rituals and language emerged. These things created a culture of their own. These creative elements were an important part of their culture and the Celtic missionary monks learned how to use these as tools to spread the gospel.

The Irish and other Celtic people were predominately right-brained. The left hemisphere of the brain accounts primarily for the mental functions like speech, reasoning and computation, while the right hemisphere accounts for the mental functions like imagination and artistic expression. Hunter (2010) asserts that “some people are predominately ‘left-brained’ analytical, and some people are predominately ‘right-

brained' artistic'" (p. 66). Furthermore, some cultures can tend to be more left-brained or right-brained and over time a culture can even shift in their orientation (Hunter, 2010, p. 66). The Celtic Christians understood that the culture of the Irish people was imaginative, creative and artistic and, thus in reaching them with the gospel, adapted from their earlier Roman reliance upon the word, propositions, concepts and theological abstract concepts.

Creativity in communicating the Gospel. Celtic Christianity was focused more in the imagination than on the intellect and communicated more in images than in abstract concepts. The Celtic Christians:

excelled at expressing their faith in symbols, metaphors and images, both visual and poetic. They had the ability to...paint pictures in words, signs and music that acted as icons opening windows on heaven and pathways to eternity...They have much to teach Christians today seeking to rekindle their imaginative faculties.

(Bradley, 2004, p. 84)

The Celtic Christians sought to communicate from their imaginations to the imaginations of others. While the Roman model of communicating the gospel message placed an emphasis on apologetics and rationally proving the validity of Christian truth, the Celtic Christians "believed that if you could make a Christian truth claim clear to the people's imaginations, the people and the Holy Spirit would take it from there..." (Hunter, 2010, pg. 68). Therefore, the Celts frequently used analogies. Celtic tradition holds that St. Patrick used a shamrock plant to communicate how God could be both three and one at the same time. The Celtic Christians also used the traditions of poetry and storytelling to communicate the gospel message to the barbarian people. Both the Celtic people and the

barbarians valued their oral traditions. Thus the Celts shared much of the biblical message through storytelling (Hunter, 2010, p. 68).

It is evident that the Celtic people valued the creativity of individuals as well the creativity of their society, as reflected in their culture. Through their own culture of creativity, the Celtic Christians used the mediums of creative and historical storytelling, poetry and symbols to share the gospel message in ways that the barbarians could understand. Crouch (2008) says, “Human creativity images God’s creativity when it emerges from a lively, loving community of persons and, perhaps more important, when it participates in unlocking the full potential of what has gone before and creating possibilities for what will come later” (p. 105). The creativity employed and the means the Celtic Christians used to communicate the gospel message unlocked the potential the barbarians had to make sense of their past as well as discover how they could expand God’s kingdom too.

The Importance of Structure and Order

It is evident that the Celtic Christians embraced the influence of the Holy Spirit as the source of direction for their lives. It is also evident that they valued the creativity of individuals, saw how it enriched the life of their communities and understood how it could be used to communicate the gospel. While these aspects of the Celtic Church help define the richness of their culture and legacy, the Celtic Christians also understood the need for order. Creativity cannot exist without some semblance of order. A structure is needed within which creativity can happen.

Genesis 1 gives a picture of how the Creator brings order to a universe that lacks it. Genesis 1:2 (English Standard Version) says, “The earth was without form and void,

and darkness was over the face of the deep.” Then God spoke things into creation, thus bringing order to the universe. He put limits on his creation in some ways, yet in other ways He opened up opportunities for his creation to create, grow and multiply. He put the physical limitations of a day with a rising and setting sun; yet, he commissioned Adam and Eve to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it” (Genesis 1:28). God gives man the freedom to create. Then he gives them the ability to bring their own order to the universe: “have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (Genesis 1:28). God gives man the ability to be a little creator in the world and bring order to the things around him. On the cosmic level, God creates order then releases creativity to us, thus giving us the ability to bring order and again release creativity. There is a rhythm of ordering and creating on the cosmic level. Crouch (2008) explains

On a cosmic level the extraordinary profusion of species could never survive if the world were an undifferentiated soup of elements. This is true of human creativity too. Without the darkened box of a theatre, films would lose their compelling power. Without the lines and spaces that make up written English, this book would be a soup of letter. Creativity requires cosmos—it requires an ordered environment. (p. 11)

One of God’s greatest gifts to his creation is the gift of structure. This structure is not one that freezes the world into “eternal mechanical repetition” (Crouch, 2008, p. 11), but one that provides freedom.

It is very difficult to find the balance between the need for organization and structure, yet not relying so heavily on it that creative ideas are suppressed. It is common

for structure and order to squeeze out creativity. In an attempt to streamline a process or attain efficiency, structure and organization can crush individual creative ideas. However, if a culture that values creativity is present, ideas are given a context to move and grow. While structure and organization are good, it is important to discuss how they can find their place yet not overpower the creativity of people and the voice of the Holy Spirit. People are made in God's image with an innate creative ability. Because every person is different and unique with different creative ideas for life, too much structure in a movement can squelch their ideas. However there is a need for some structure because without any framework or structure whatsoever, people can run wild with their ideas.

The Roman model vs. the Celtic model. When Augustine was sent out from Rome in 597 AD, he was commissioned to “found twelve dioceses, with archbishops at London and York, following the pattern of government left by the Roman legions nearly two centuries before” (Finney, 2011, p. 87). The basic expansion and formation of the Roman Church was with dioceses and bishops. The Roman administrative system was largely based in cities. The bishop, who resided in the city, was the dominant figure (Ferguson, 1998, p. 30). While the Roman way of evangelism meant establishing a skeleton structure and subsequently evangelizing, the Celts would come into an area, continuing their lifestyle of prayer and reflection, and then engage in evangelism. If people embraced the lifestyle and truth of Christ, a monastery would be formed (Mitton, 2010). In Ireland and Scotland, the monastery was a natural center of ecclesiastical authority because of their farming communities. The style of Celtic evangelism had a more organic approach.

As missionary monks entered an area, they did not impose their own ideas upon those in the villages into which they went. Instead, they continued their lifestyles of work, study, prayer and outreach, respecting the culture of the locals and intentionally learning about the people while developing relationships (Hunter, 2010, p. 88).

When Patrick arrived in Ireland in the fifth century, the church structures present were very similar to the Roman structure. However, by the middle of the following century, these structures had mostly been replaced by monasteries. The reason for this is not clear, yet it seems to have much to do with the Celtic cultural emphasis on community and kinship. Celtic culture was based around small social units, instead of abstract structures. They were formed within the communities and were led by an abbot (MacCulloch, 2011, p. 333).

Celtic Christianity can be observed as much more of a movement than an institution. The movement featured laity over clergy in ministry. It was much “more imaginative and less cerebral” (Hunter, 2010), focused more on nature and its creatures, and emphasized the providence and closeness of God over His transcendence. The Celtic church broke the Roman mold. Instead of the use of an institutionalized structure like the Romans utilized, the Celtic Christians used the rhythm of work, study, prayer and rest as a framework.

Celtic organization and structure. Monasteries were places for prayer, study, manual and administrative work, and community. These communities were sustained for hundreds of years as centers for deep spiritual growth and safe havens for Christians. Before Celtic Christians were commissioned and sent off to follow the Holy Spirit wherever He may lead to form new monastic communities, they often spent time learning

an growing in these communities. This kind of community was likely made possible by the use of some form of organization that lent order to the bustling community.

According to Bitel (1994), through extensive research of the management structures utilized in a number of monasteries, it seems that there was no standard strategy for the management of monasteries. The monastic communities were formed where there was a growing population of believers and they took on much of the local culture. Therefore, there was not a one size fits all strategy for how monasteries were formed and operated (p. 17). Each monastery looked different within its own local context.

While it is evident that there was not a specific systematic approach to monastery-planting, the Roman way of mission, wherein the leaders were centrally commissioned and resourced, stands in stark contract to the Celtic way. The Celtic way was not systematic, but there were indeed aspects of organization and structure that can be identified in the monastic communities that allowed them to function in an orderly and sustainable manner. This order lent a framework within which individuals could explore their individual gifts and discover how they could contribute to the overall purpose of expanding God's Kingdom.

Mission and vision lend order. St. Patrick had a vision to see Ireland reached with the gospel and a church planted in every tribal village. St. Patrick's mission to Ireland was "unprecedented and was widely assumed to be impossible" (Hunter, 2010, p. 5). After years of prayer and reflection as to how the Irish might be reached, he moved into mission. It is through the lens of his vision and mission that he made decisions that led him and his apostolic band all throughout Ireland. In 432 AD, there was no indigenous Christian movement to the Irish, but St. Patrick and his people launched such

a movement. It is recorded that in his lifetime, thirty to forty of Irelands one hundred and fifty tribes became substantially Christian (Hunter, 2010, p. 6). Even after St. Patrick's death in about 460 AD, the movement grew and carried forth the vision and mission that St. Patrick held. This mission and vision was a framework within which Celtic Christians had much freedom to discover ways to expand God's kingdom. This mission and vision also gave the Celtic Christians something to align their decisions and actions with; thus a continuity of purpose can be seen throughout the movement.

The relationship-oriented team lends order. It can be seen in the Celtic way that the Celtic Christians saw the value of evangelizing in a team. They did not uphold well-known approaches such as one-on-one evangelism, confrontational evangelism, or even a public preaching crusade. Instead, they sought to relate to the people in their local contexts, identify with them, and engage them in friendship, conversation and witness. This was all with the goal of raising up a church in that area.

Finney (2011) noted that the Celtic Christians knew the "...importance of the team. A group of people can pray and think together. They inspire and encourage each other. The single entrepreneur is too easily prey to self doubt and loss of vision" (p. 67). The Celtic monastic communities were less individualistic and instead chose a more community-oriented approach to the Christian life and ministry. This affected the way that families, tribes and communities supported one another, drew together, upheld one another in prayer and worked out their salvation together (Hunter, 2010, p. 34). They desired to learn and grow in the context of relationship. Creativity and listening to the Holy Spirit was also not only done on the individual level, but in the context of community. This context created a framework within which creative ideas could flourish

but not run wild. Their ability and desire to live and work together as a team and in community was evident in all the ways they lived out their Christian lives together.

The Movement Dissolves: Synod of Whitby

By the late seventh century, the two missionary movements of the Celts and Romans were converging in England. The Celts were moving toward the South and the Romans were moving towards the North. In the year of 664 AD, at the Synod of Whitby, a decision was made that would alter forever the appearance of Christianity in Britain and perhaps throughout the Western World. Those in attendance at the Synod of Whitby represented both converging missions: the Celtic and the Roman. The Celtic mission came through Iona and Columba's influence and deferred to the authority of St. John. The Roman mission came through Augustine of Canterbury and previously through Rome, which recognized St. Peter as authority.

Newell (1997) purports, "It is a tragedy that a decision was taken in favor of only one of these missions, so that the spirituality of the other began to be displaced" (p. 1). The synod had been gathered by King Oswy of Northumbria in whose kingdom the Celtic and Roman missions had collided. There were apparent differences of form and style, but the essential conflict was that of a spiritual nature. Newell (1997) describes the Celtic mission: "inspired by John, [the Celtic Christians] remembered him as the beloved disciple who leaned against Jesus at the Last Supper. He had become an image of the practice of listening for the heartbeat of God. This spirituality lent itself to listening for God at the heart of life" (p. 1-2). The Roman mission, on the other hand, claimed the authority of Peter as the rock on which Christ had promised to build His Church. Peter was a symbol of faithful action. Newell (1997) adds that "this spirituality favored a

listening for God in the ordained teaching and life of the Church” (p. 2). The issues ran deep into the cultures and heritages of both the Roman and Celtic missions.

On the surface level, it may have appeared that the issues discussed at the Synod of Whitby were of a superficial nature, concerning matters such as the date of Easter and style of tonsure to be worn. Underlying these issues, however, was a much more significant debate. It was the collision of two wings of the Church that were in conflict and “vying for supremacy” (Newell, 1997, p. 31). While both represented biblical truths, the collision reflected a stark contrast in perspective.

At the Synod of Whitby, it appears that the Romans had arrived better prepared and a decision was made in favor of the Roman mission. The real issues ran deeper than the debates concerning hairstyles for priests and monks and the date for Easter. One of these issues was indigeneity versus cultural uniformity. The Celtic Christians had adapted to the barbarian people’s cultures, but the Roman’s wanted Roman cultural forms to be imposed upon all churches and people. This, however, was very foreign to how the Celtic Christians carried out their mission. Another issue was one of control and conformity. It was of utmost importance to the Romans that everyone do church the Roman way:

once any society accepted Christianity, the politically dominant Roman wing of the church insisted that the young churches organize in the Roman pattern of diocese led by bishops and learn to worship in Latin, follow the liturgy from Rome, sing music from Rome, and so forth. (Hunter, 2010, p. 30)

The Synod of Whitby presumably settled the disagreements. The decision was that the Roman way should be followed everywhere. Celtic priests who refused to do church the Roman way were banished and Roman Rule was forced on Celtic monasteries. Thus, the

Roman way became the authorized religion of the land and the Celtic mission began its decline. The style of evangelism of the monastic orders, rooted in relational living and community, would never again recover in the same way (Johnson, 2012, p. 78).

While Celtic Christianity was formally rejected by the Church at large of the seventh century, a stream of Celtic spirituality and way of thinking survived. Its influences can be seen weaved in and out through history since the time of the Synod of Whitby. There is much that can still be learned from the Celtic monastic movement in terms of how it employed aspects of organizational structure for the purpose of functionality, while still leaving room for the movement of the Holy Spirit and creativity of individuals.

Informing Ministry Today: A Case Study of Cuirim Outreach

The emphasis that the Celtic Christians put on listening to and responding to the Holy Spirit, valuing the creativity of people and understanding the need for order and organization led to the success of a movement that spread the gospel throughout the West during the fifth through ninth centuries. The following case study of the non-profit Cuirim Outreach explores a modern example of an organization that drew its inspiration from the Celtic way of ministry and is successfully implementing some of the concepts learned from the Celtic Christians of the earlier centuries.

The Cuirim Story

The Cuirim story begins with Donohue and his wife meeting in Chicago. From the beginning, they both dreamed of being involved in cross-cultural missions. During long walks around Lake Michigan, the framework for Cuirim Outreach was explored and developed. In the summer of 1995, Donohue and his wife accepted an invitation to start a

youth ministry program at a church in Virginia. For the next ten years they would invest in people through Bible studies, camping trips and youth events. Many of these people would become partners in establishing Cuirim Outreach. In 1996, the Donohues bought a farmhouse in Virginia. At the time, it was an old auto junkyard, but after years of renovation and hauling truckloads of garbage to the dump, it would become a beautiful farm. The vision that God gave them to see what could become of a place that looked like a dump was a foretaste of what would come in their ministry (Cuirim Outreach, 2014).

In the fall of 2003, the Donohues purchased a plot of land in a slum neighborhood in Nogales, Mexico. This would become the context for their ministry. The ministry took off and by the following summer, Cuirim House was established and in full swing and until this day it has not stopped. The Donohues invited groups from churches to come for a week at a time during the summer and participate in a Celtic rhythm of life in the slums of Mexico. Just like the early monastic Christians, days consist of a rhythm of work, study, prayer and rest, all interlaced with a focus on community and relationship building. Short-term teams work in the neighborhood doing humanitarian aid work, yet stop three times a day to pray together and study or memorize Scripture. In the afternoon, all work ceases for a time of siesta and rest before teams return to the neighborhood for work projects (Cuirim Outreach, 2014).

In 2005, after the first summer of ministry in Mexico, the Donohues rented out their farm in Virginia, stepped down from youth ministry at their church, sold most of their possessions and drove across the country to move to Cuirim House in the slums of Nogales, Mexico. A year later, a soup kitchen was built in the neighborhood and a local Christian stepped up to run it (Cuirim Outreach, 2014).

In the years that followed, the ministry grew rapidly. New groups from all over the United States came to Cuirim House to serve each year. The soup kitchen opened, a sports park was built, and a drug rehabilitation center was established. New national Mexican leaders emerged and Brian sought ways to give these leaders opportunities to share the gospel with their own people. At the same time, the Donohues kept a house on the Arizona side of the border and built relationships with Arizonan churches. These relationships turned into friendships and new partnerships.

In the midst of all this success, in 2009 the perfect storm arrived. The economy dropped, the swine flu emerged and drug cartel activity in Mexico gained increased attention in the news. These three factors caused almost all of the summer volunteer teams to cancel and quickly dissuaded new groups from inquiring about trips to serve at Cuirim House. While Cuirim House remained virtually unharmed by any of these issues, Donohue and his wife could not change people's perceptions. They had a decision to make. They could stay along the border and ride out the storm or use this time to build for the future. The board of directors encouraged Brian and Kirsten to take this time to build for the future. That year, they pulled back a little bit from ministry in the neighborhood of Cuirim Outreach and pursued ministry deeper in Mexico (Navojoa), visited ancient monastic sites in Ireland which were much of the inspiration for their model of ministry, and returned to their farm in Virginia to establish a more permanent home base (Cuirim Outreach, 2014).

After a quieter season of refocusing their vision and continuing to seek God's direction for the coming years, by 2013, the volunteer summer teams that had previously stopped coming to Cuirim House in Nogales had returned. Cuirim House was expanded

with much of the design inspired by the Irish, monastic movement. At the center of the hockey rink sized property, is positioned a little chapel where the groups return from their daily work projects to gather to pray, worship, study, and memorize Scriptures. In Virginia, the farm is renovated and used as a little retreat center. Guests are invited to worship in a little Celtic chapel and enjoy the peaceful farm life (Cuirim Outreach, 2014).

The Importance of Listening and Responding to the Holy Spirit

Rhythms are an essential part of how the Celtic Christians did life. Jesus also lived in rhythms; he taught, ate and worked with his disciples. Rhythms are also an essential part of life at Cuirim House. Groups work, eat, sleep, and worship together. These rhythms help humans to understand the power of God in all things through the day. Brian Donohue also describes these rhythms as a way of keeping humans returning to a focus on God throughout the day. Listening to the Holy Spirit is not a one-time event. It is something we must continue to return to in the rhythm of a day and in the rhythm of our lives.

In the ten years that the Donohues served in the youth program at the church in Virginia, years before they would ever buy property in Mexico to start Cuirim House, Donohue and his wife sought direction for their ministry by spending time in prayer and reflection. Brian says, “For several years I would spend Thursdays as a prayer day at [a local] retreat center. [Vision for ministry from the Holy Spirit] comes out of that rhythm of stopping and pausing and seeking the Spirit. That rhythm has to be in your life...You have to be willing to slow down a little bit or you don’t get those bursts of creativity” (B. Donohue, personal communication, January 28, 2015).

Psalm 37:4 (ESV) says, “Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.” Donohue describes these years as time where he and his wife learned to delight in the Lord. After years of patiently seeking God and dreaming of what could be, He had planted desires in their hearts that would soon become a reality. Donohue outlines these desires in seven key streams. First, they desired to serve cross-culturally. Second, they desired to serve among the poor and impoverished. Third, they desired to design buildings and structures that incorporated inspiration from the Celtic monasteries. Fourth, they desired to develop a ministry model where many people could engage in ministry according to their gifting in hopes that some would become leaders and create their own expressions of ministry. Fifth, they knew they were willing to risk everything for the sake of following the Holy Spirit wherever He was leading because they desired to be in total obedience to God. Sixth, they desired to weave their work in with the local church. Seventh, Donohue and his wife deeply valued the community within which they had received their vision for Cuirim Outreach and desired that these people, with whom they had held long-standing relationships, be a part of the work (B. Donohue, personal communication, January 28, 2015).

Out of this season of reflection and constantly returning to the Holy Spirit, the Donohues began to dream about a practical expression of this Celtic monasticism that they had read about in history books. In March of 2003, with these seven desires in mind, they began looking at opportunities through this framework that God had given them. An opportunity arose in Mexico and God made it clear that after the season of patiently waiting and receiving vision, it was time to act. At this point, Cuirim House was established. (B. Donohue, personal communication, January 28, 2015).

Donohue also describes how he and his wife received from the Holy Spirit through their creativity and imaginations. He says, “God gave Kirsten and I the ability to see beauty where others only saw...wreckage” (B. Donohue, personal communication, January 28, 2015). The years of renovation at the “auto-junkyard-farmhouse” in Virginia were a training ground for years later at Cuirim House where God would again give them creative imagination and vision to see the potential of a little corner in a slum neighborhood of Mexico. This corner would soon display a beautiful Celtic chapel where people would gather to pray and worship and a stone waterfall where baptisms would take place. However, years prior, God had given them the creative imagination and vision to see the potential that the farm had to become a place of beauty if they were willing to be patient and do the hard work.

The Importance of Creativity and Culture

The Celtic Christians adapted to the culture of the barbarians in order to communicate the gospel message in a way that could be understood and received. Today it is still important to discover ways to communicate the gospel message in ways that people will understand it. Creativity is a means that God gives humans to communicate the Gospel in ways that it can be understood and received. This can be seen in the way that Cuirim Outreach does ministry.

A culture of creativity. One of the key desires that God put in the Donohue’s hearts, in those early days of dreaming, was the desire to develop a ministry model where many people could engage in ministry according to their gifting, in hopes that some would become leaders and create their own expressions of ministry. Their ministry seeks to encourage and empower national leaders, whether in the US or in Mexico, to discover

their own gifts, use their God-given creativity, and expand God's kingdom however the Holy Spirit leads. The Donohues encourage people to discover their own gifts and hear from the Holy Spirit how to use these gifts to share the gospel in their own communities and to expand God's kingdom. Their desire is for there to be room within their ministry for individuals and families to contribute in meaningful ways, according to their gifts, so that many people can leave a fingerprint on the work that God is doing through Cuirim Outreach in Mexico and Virginia.

Carlos Vargas is one of those people leaving a fingerprint. Donohue and his wife met Vargas in 2004. He was one of the men that Cuirim Outreach was paying to lay cinderblock for the dorm rooms that volunteer groups would sleep in during their times at Cuirim House in Mexico. Vargas became a believer that year through the local church and began to emerge from a deep alcohol addiction. He shares that he remembers the days, before he knew Christ, of being passed out drunk in the ditch in front of Cuirim House. Vargas was hired as a day laborer but, as time went on and he grew spiritually, he began to have more of a role in actually designing Cuirim House. Donohue asked him if he would build the first chapel at Cuirim House with an inspiration from the Celtic monasteries. Vargas shares that he saw this chapel as his first tangible offering to God. With the creative design of the structure and the laying of every stone, he saw this as a physical act of worship to God (B. Donohue, personal communication, January 30, 2015).

As Vargas grew spiritually and in understanding of his gifts, God gave him eyes to see beyond himself and he began looking for ways to expand God's kingdom in his very own neighborhood. In 2009, Vargas began seeking out the families in the

neighborhood of Cuirim House that were most in need of a new cement floor or a door on their home. He soon took on the role of choosing the projects that the summer volunteer teams from the US would do for their daily work projects. In connecting with these needy families and providing an extra hand up, there was room for Vargas and his family to share the gospel with families that he otherwise may never have come in contact with. At the same time, he began leading the children's ministries at the local Mexican church and using his creativity to develop children skits that would share the gospel at church and in vacation bible school (B. Donohue, personal communication, January 30, 2015).

Over the course of a few years, Vargas went from a cinderblock layer by day and a drunkard by night, to a man after God's own heart discovering ways to express his creativity to bless others and expand God's kingdom. Vargas' story communicates the importance that Donohue and his wife place on creativity within their ministry. This creativity is a way that people can be a part of God's Kingdom expansion and leave meaningful fingerprints according to their specific gifts.

Creativity in communicating the gospel message. For as long as Brian could remember, he always wanted to live on a farm. However, as a suburban kid growing up in Baltimore, this dream was far from reality. As newlyweds living in a tiny Chicago apartment, Donohue describes his range of agrarian expression as "limited to a fish tank" (Donohue, personal communication, January 30, 2015). When God led Donohue and his wife to a church in Virginia to start a youth program, they began looking for a place to have a farm and start a family. When they finally discovered and bought their farmhouse, they knew they were home. This farm would be a place where Donohue and his wife could express their creativity. For Donohue, it sometimes took the form of discovering

how to reclaim the auto-junkyard, making fence posts from locust trees found in the woods, and raising farm animals in the space God had given them. For his wife, it sometimes took the form of renovating and repainting the 1800's farmhouse, homeschooling their children, and hosting neighbors for dinner. It is in the context of simple farm life that Donohue and his wife discovered more of how to live and share the Kingdom message.

In 2000, Donohue met with Dallas Willard, an American philosopher known for his writings on Christian spiritual formation. Willard is best known for his book, *The Divine Conspiracy*, wherein he seeks to communicate the heart of the Kingdom message:

As far as the content of what I try to present is concerned it focuses on the gospel of the kingdom of God and becoming a disciple of Jesus in the kingdom of God. So it doesn't merely have an emphasis on the forgiveness of sins and assurance of heaven as you are apt to find in most evangelical circles. I think that is vital but it is not the whole story. The issue is whole life; other issues are subordinate to that. After all Jesus said, "I came that you might have life to the full," which is more than life beyond death. (Willard, 2002, para. 5)

Around the dining room table at Willard's home in Los Angeles, Willard encouraged Brian to write his own book using plain language and farm stories and metaphors to share the Kingdom message. Willard noted that few Christians will read and truly understand a theologically intense book like *The Divine Conspiracy*, but many more need to hear the message and will understand it if communicated in plain language and story form (B. Donohue, personal communication, January 30, 2015).

The following year, Donohue began to write. He used the art of storytelling, just like the Celtic Christians did, to communicate the gospel message in language and stories that people could understand and apply to their lives. Each chapter explores a different parable of Jesus and uses stories and analogies from farm life to communicate the truths that Jesus came to share. During the daily rhythm at Cuirim House, when the volunteer groups pause from their work projects and gather in the little chapel that Vargas built to pray and study, these are the same stories that Brian uses to teach the Kingdom message. They are powerful enough to impact the lives of not only unbelievers that find themselves at Cuirim House, but in the live of believers who are seeking to discover how Jesus' teachings, from two thousand years ago, should inform the way their lives are lived today in the context of their own communities.

Just as the Celtic Christians used creativity in storytelling to communicate the gospel message in culturally understandable ways in the earlier centuries, Brian can be found sitting in a little Celtic chapel in the slums of Mexico using his creativity to do the same thing some twelve or more centuries later.

The Importance of Structure and Order

The Celtic Christians understood the need for order on the cosmic level as well as on the human level. Rhythms were an essential part of how they brought order to their creative environments. In Genesis God shows the rhythmic cycle of bringing order and releasing creativity that takes place on the cosmic and human levels. When He commissioned man to care for His earth, he released them to have say over a small corner of it. He gives them charge over creatively ordering what he has given them. This small corner of the earth can be described as an individual's little kingdom. Each human is a

little ruler with say over his kingdom. God gives man the freedom to manage that kingdom any way he chooses. He can manage it for God's glory or he can manage it for his own glory. This is the message that Jesus came to share in his teachings and parables on the Kingdom of Heaven (Donohue, personal communication, January 30, 2015). Jesus came to teach man how to manage his kingdom for God's glory.

Cuirim Outreach seeks to help people discover their giftings and how to govern and manage their little kingdoms in ways that glorify God. Donohue says, "Cuirim uses the rhythms of work, study, prayer, and rest as a framework to form people in Christ-like image, helping them to grow in their gifting and maturity. We use that rhythm as a constant returning rhythm [to the Holy Spirit] and creativity comes out of that" (B. Donohue, personal communication, January 28, 2015).

From the beginning, Cuirim Outreach has been a part of "going into disorder, creating order, releasing creativity, bringing order, releasing creativity, et cetera" In 2003, when Donohue and his wife first bought that little plot of land in the slums of Mexico, they entered an environment of disorder and, practically speaking, created order by fencing in their property. They then used the Celtic rhythm of life, work, study, prayer and rest, as a structural framework to life and daily living at Cuirim House. Within this framework, there is room for people to manage their kingdoms with creativity and freedom, with the order necessary for everyone to live happily in very close quarters for the duration of a week.

Donohue says, "Cuirim House is a picture of that order and creativity with a focus on prayer" (B. Donohue, personal communication, January 28, 2015). He describes the chapels that were built based on a model of a Celtic monastery, as a big part

of what they do. They are located in the center of the physical property and they have remained central to the rhythm of the day by providing a place to return focus to the Holy Spirit.

At Cuirim House, on any given week during a summer, there may be fifty different people from volunteer teams bustling around, going back and forth between work projects and chapel times and meal times. The Celtic rhythm of the day gives an order to the daily chaos. Yet, on the daily level as well as in the ministry as a whole, Donohue notes, “its not all figured out, which allows room for someone to rise up and do something that they are good at. Cuirim Outreach tries to involve a lot of people with meaningful tasks that are in accordance with the time and energy they have and their gifting. We try not to ask anyone to do anything that is not in accordance with their gifting.” Providing a structured framework that lends order is important in ministry, yet it is essential to leave room for the Holy Spirit to move in people and for people to use their gifts to add something new to the picture.

Mission and vision lend order. From the visionary standpoint, the seven streams of key desires that God put in the Donohue’s hearts, during the initial season of prayer and reflection, provided a framework for the Donohues to pursue ministry in Mexico. It is through this lens that they made decisions to move towards opportunities in Mexico and through the years it is with these desires that they constantly aligned their direction. These desires included serving cross-culturally and among the impoverished, getting to design physical structures as well as a model of ministry based on Celtic monastic inspiration where many different people could be involved in hopes of raising them up as leaders. It also included weaving the work in with the local church and the involvement

of people with long-standing relationships. These streams have flowed in and out of their ministry in many different ways through the years. It began as a framework in which they dreamed of what they would do to expand God's kingdom in years to come. Much creativity has filled in the gaps to bring about what can now be seen as Cuirim Outreach with a Cuirim House in Mexico, a farmhouse in Virginia, and seeds planted inside of hundreds of people who have come through both locations throughout the years.

Wisdom from the Celtic monastic movement. Cuirim Outreach is a creative, modern day expression of many of the same ideas that drove the Celtic monastic movement and led to the Christianization of the West. The Donohues embraced a season of prayer and reflection wherein the Holy Spirit planted visions and desires in their hearts for a future ministry. They received creative ideas from God and used their imaginations to develop these ideas and believe what they could not yet see in the physical. Through their ministry, they made room for people to be creative and discover their gifts and how to use them to expand God's kingdom. The rhythm of life that the Celtic monastic movement embraced also provided a framework within which the Donohues and anyone they invited in could receive from the Holy Spirit and leave their creative fingerprints on the world. There are many other lessons that could be learned from the Celtic monastic movement that would undoubtedly shed light on how ministry can be carried out today. These ones discussed here, however, are essential to the success of the movement and bring richness when applied in today's context.

Conclusion

The Celtic Christians' pursuit of the Wild Goose led them from their little tribes in Ireland all throughout Europe and the West. Their vision to see the West reached with

the gospel carried their influence far. The story of the Celtic monastic movement is a treasure within Christian history. C.S. Lewis (2009) writes,

The church exists for nothing else but to draw men into Christ, to make them little Christs. If they are not doing that, all the cathedrals, clergy, missions, even the Bible itself, are simply a waste of time. God became man for no other purpose. It is even doubtful, you know, whether the whole universe was created for any other purpose. (p. 171)

The Celtic Christians spent their entire lives in service of the gospel and making disciples or little Christs that would also follow God's call to wherever he led. Although the Celtic monastic movement ended a thousand year ago, how they lived still has deep relevance for today. Their focus on listening and responding to the Holy Spirit, valuing the creativity of people and society, and allowing these to flourish within the bounds of order offers guidance for carrying out ministry today.

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