

# FELLOWSHIP OF RECONCILIATION

A SHORT HISTORY

## The Overseas Beginnings

The Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) arose within the century of total war. Its birth was almost within sound of the opening guns of World War I.

Two men, in the heartbreak of a peace conference shattered by the last swift forerunners of that conflict, conceived the idea. Friedrich Siegmund-Schultze, pacifist Lutheran chaplain to the Kaiser, and Henry Hodgkin, English Quaker, gripped hands on the platform of Cologne railway station on August 3rd 1914, one day before their countries formally declared war on one another. They vowed not to fight against each other and to support others who took the same decision. They parted, each to work out the implications of that promise.

Henry Hodgkin initiated the Fellowship of Reconciliation at Cambridge with 128 members as 1914 drew to its close. Friedrich Siegmund-Schultze was arrested 27 times during the war but eventually saw the formation of the *Versöhnungsbund* in Germany.

Members of the Fellowship agreed:

1. That Love, as revealed and interpreted in the life and death of Jesus Christ, involves more than we have yet seen, that it is the only power by which evil can be overcome, and the only sufficient basis for human society;
2. That, in order to establish a world order based on Love, it is incumbent on those who believe in this principle to accept it fully, both for themselves and in their relation to others, and to take the risks involved in doing so in a world which does not as yet accept it;
3. That, therefore, as Christians, we are forbidden to wage war, and that our loyalty to our country, to humanity, to the Church Universal, and to Jesus Christ, our Lord and Master, calls us instead to a life of service for the enthronement of Love in personal, social, commercial and national life.

After the war, in October 1919, fifty men and women from ten countries, including Hodgkin and Siegmund-Schultze, set up the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR) at a conference in Bithoven, Holland. Today it has branches in over 40 countries and on all continents and includes adherents various faiths as well as Christians.

## The Origins of the South African Fellowship

A town in the Free State is named after the heroine of South Africa's oldest peace movement. A courageous English woman, Emily Hobhouse of the Society of Friends (Quakers) crossed the sea to champion the cause of Boer women and children in concentration camps as her peacemaking response to the Anglo-Boer War. Such is the blinding nature of nationalism that a later government, with no conception of her pacifism, ironically named a submarine after her!

Later, after World War I, two British Quakers, William Henry and Harriet Alexander, visited South Africa on a mission to dispossessed Boer farmers with seed to start afresh and with their family Bibles that had been looted by British soldiers during the Anglo-Boer War. Influenced by these two, scattered individuals linked up with the British FOR and one of these, Olive Warner, published a pacifist magazine "The Ambassador" from Johannesburg.