

Inter-Cultural Insights

*Christian reflections on racism, hospitality
and identity from the island of Ireland*

RESOURCE BOOKLET

*All-Ireland Churches' Consultative Meeting
on Racism/Irish Inter-Church Meeting*

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March 2008

Inter-Cultural Insights:

A series of Christian reflections on racism, hospitality and identity from the island of Ireland.

RESOURCE BOOKLET

Published by
the All-Ireland Churches Consultative Meeting on Racism (AICCMR)

September 2008

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PRINTER:
Dorman & Sons

DESIGN:
Spring Graphics

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Introduction

This series of Christian reflections was assembled by the All-Ireland Churches' Consultative Meeting on Racism (AICCMR) to offer fresh insights into scripture and to highlight:

- personal experiences of racism in Ireland,
- perspectives on the challenge of identity and difference, and
- the need to provide hospitality and to 'welcome the stranger'.

This collection of reflections has been assembled following a national conference organised by the AICCMR in November 2005 entitled "Challenged by Difference: Opportunity or Threat?" Some of these reflections have been modified and edited from presentations made at the conference; others have been submitted by request. These reflections have been further modified and adapted into a training resource over the past year.

In 2000, the Churches' Commission for Racial Justice (CCRJ) of Churches Together Britain and Ireland (CTBI) held a week of discussions with equality bodies, human rights bodies and black and minority ethnic organizations in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. In the course of these discussions it became clear that racial justice issues were often not acknowledged by the churches, and that little systematic work was being done by them in challenging racism and promoting good relations with minority ethnic groups. At present, the role of churches in addressing and combating racism has changed significantly. There is now a general recognition and acknowledgement of the issue of racism throughout society. Church leaders have made statements and commitments to addressing the issue, and various church bodies and projects have been established to combat it. Nevertheless, there is an ongoing need by churches to continue with this work, to develop and deepen it, and to initiate further responses to racism as it arises in society.

As a result of the exploration of the situation in 2000, and the conclusions it drew, the Irish Council of Churches and the CCRJ determined to meet together regularly to attempt to provide information and support for the development of racial justice work in Ireland. These gatherings led to the establishment of the All-Ireland Churches Consultative Meeting on Racism (AICCMR) in 2003. Now in its fifth year, the AICCMR works under the auspices of the Inter-Church Committee on Social Issues (ICCSI) of the Irish Inter-Church Meeting consisting primarily of representatives from the four largest churches but also including members of the Quakers, Redeemed Christian Church of God and the Association of Vineyard Churches.

The All-Ireland Churches Consultative Meeting on Racism (AICCMR)'s aim is to encourage and enable the Churches in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland:

- To acknowledge the need to tackle racial justice issues in a more systematic and holistic fashion.
- To acknowledge the presence of institutional racism – whether intentional or unwitting.
- To be ready to accept the challenge of self-appraisal in order to address issues of tokenism, patronising attitudes and exclusive behaviour in individual organisations.
- To be willing to respond to the possible demands of such assessment by providing a genuine welcome that embraces diversity and difference and that seeks integration.
- To find ways of helping members overcome and move on from feelings of guilt, through positive action in encouraging minority ethnic people/communities/churches.
- To discover and develop ways of empowering and supporting the full integration of minority ethnic communities into society.

Following the publication of the series of Christian reflections, a reprint was considered to offer a useful training resource. Consequently, each reflection has a number of suggested activities for facilitators/trainers/groups to use. The detail of how to use/facilitate the activity or resource may be found in the appendix.

SEEKING REFUGE AND A WELCOME

Sr Joan Roddy

People deprived of familiar rootedness in family, culture, tradition and geography deserve the next best thing, which is welcome, hospitality and compassionate concern in their new environment.

Paul Surlis, "Exile", The Furrow, April, 2000

There is no greater sorrow than the loss of one's native land.

Euripides, 431 BCE

Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience.

Edward Said, *Reflection on Exile and Other Essays*, Harvard University Press, 2000

REFUGE IS A PLACE OF SAFETY, security, peace, protection, home (from home). Everyone has the right to seek a place of refuge based on the 1951 Geneva Convention. Ireland and UK are signatories to this Convention and made a solemn undertaking to receive people who wish to apply for asylum and to process their application according to the criteria laid out in the Convention.

The right to 'seek asylum' implies the right to:

- Make an application for recognition as a refugee (that is, application for asylum)
- Have one's application examined (with legal and interpretative support)
- Receive food and shelter, health care, and education (to the end of secondary school) while one's application is being processed and, in the case of a negative decision, up to the time one is removed from the country.

A person seeking asylum is legally in the country while awaiting a decision on her/his application and, in the case of a negative decision, until removed or deported. People seeking asylum are not allowed to access paid employment but may do voluntary work.

Dispersal and Direction Provision

People seeking asylum in the Republic of Ireland reside in a Reception Centre in Dublin until initial formalities have been completed and are then assigned ('dispersed') to one of some 60 accommodation centres located around the country where they are given 'bed and board' and a cash allowance of 19.10 per week (9.60 for a child).

New asylum applicants in the Republic of Ireland in 2007 averaged 330 per month. After going through the entire process (1st Interview, Appeal, Judicial Review), less than

10% of applicants are recognised as refugees - these are Convention Refugees since their application was made and processed according to the terms of the Geneva Convention. People recognised as Refugees (that is, granted asylum) have largely the same rights – and responsibilities – as citizens of the country.

Leave to Remain (Complementary Protection)

Leave to Remain (LTR) is granted in a situation where a person does not qualify for recognition as a refugee, but is given temporary leave to stay in the country on humanitarian or other grounds (e.g. when civil war in the person's home country would make it unsafe to return there).

While LTR was granted annually (in Republic of Ireland) to less than 100 people, on average, in the 7 years up to 2006, this number increased to some 852 in 2007 as a result of a decision to commit extra resources to dealing with longstanding applications.

In 2007, the Republic of Ireland received 114 Programme Refugees bringing to 640 the total number who came to the country in the eight year period 2000 – 2007. Programme Refugees come as part of a special agreement between the Irish Government and the country of origin of the refugees. Unlike Convention Refugees, they do not have to make an application for asylum and await the government's decision on whether or not they will be allowed to stay in the country.

Family Reunification

This is a provision which allows for people with refugee recognition or other forms of residency to have members of their immediate family join them. This is a very lengthy process and a high proportion of applications are disallowed or, where processed, refused. No clear policies are in place relating to the right to Family Reunification or procedures to be followed when applying.

Return/Removal (Deportation)

Removal/return/deportation after a prompt, fair and transparent asylum process, which had legal, interpretative and other supports in place, can be justified. The same cannot be said after a protracted process, often taking years, where supports are piecemeal at best, and may even be totally lacking. After a number of years in the country, asylum applicants have acquired rights which they may not necessarily have had on arrival. This is particularly true of families with children who may have been born in this country and/or with children attending school here for several years and who have never lived/never attended school in their parents' home country.

Integration

Integration is a two-way process involving the settled community and new arrivals to the country. Here, Churches and Christian communities have a key role to play in providing opportunities for people to meet (particularly important for those in 'Direct Provision'), and in being sensitive to the needs of newcomers to the locality and to the kinds of assistance that would be helpful.

The authentic Christian community must always be asking 'Who is being excluded?'
Archbishop Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury

There is also a role in ensuring that the human rights of people seeking asylum, of refugees and migrants are respected and that, for example, they receive their entitlements. For

those allowed to work, it is important that there is no exploitation whether in relation to wages, working hours, conditions or accommodation.

There is an urgent need to foster the inclusion of black and minority ethnic people in movements seeking to understand and articulate their needs in Irish society. They themselves must be central to efforts to 'include' them in Irish communities. Refugees and asylum seekers will have distinct needs; however, they also need to be included in what is provided for the community as a whole. With the best will in the world, racism cannot be contested unless minority communities are empowered ('nothing about us without us').

Bryan Fanning, "Asylum-seekers, Travellers and Racism", Doctrine & Life, 29 June 2000.

A NORTHERN PERSPECTIVE

Margaret McNulty

NORTHERN IRELAND is unique within the UK in having a land border with another state. Within the island of Ireland this means that we have two immigration and asylum systems, and we need to be aware about what this means for those who come here from other countries, whether they are migrant workers, students, visitors or people seeking asylum. People who hold valid papers in one jurisdiction may be subject to arrest, detention and possible removal if they accept perfectly normal invitations to go across the border, without first applying for, paying for and receiving formal permission from the authorities. This means, for example, that the wonderful Dublin-based Discovery Gospel Choir can easily sing at Croke Park but could only do so at Ravenhill after much expense and paperwork and not everyone would get permission. This is because the choir contains migrants and people who are claiming asylum.

Historically, as in the South, many people have had to wait for years to have their cases settled and have usually not been allowed to work during that time, while receiving just 70% of normal social security benefits (for a single person between 18 and 25 as at April 2007, that was £32.80 per week for their living expenses, plus somewhere to live). Recent asylum legislation speeds procedures but is increasingly restrictive. At the same time immigration regulations have also made it more difficult for people outside the European Economic Area to come here to work.

No matter what representations we may make locally to officials or politicians, issues relating to immigration or refugee status remain solely within the power of the Home Office, in England. This means that people who are felt to have breached immigration regulations, or whose asylum claims are unlikely to succeed or have already failed, are taken to removal centres in Scotland or England. This makes communication difficult for legal advisors, friends and supportive church congregations, and there are fears that it may impede justice in some cases.

On the plus side, Northern Ireland is compact, and the number of people seeking asylum here has been small enough to be housed in Belfast, close to support organisations and facilities. They also mostly live in ordinary family homes or flats, rather than being isolated in special centres. In recent years not many more than 100 people per annum have sought asylum in Northern Ireland, and most applications are unsuccessful. Estimates suggest that there are only 2,000 refugees currently living in Northern Ireland.

Our recent troubled past shielded us from outside influences and has left some communities with a fear of outsiders. Sudden economic and social change and the rapid increase in inward migration have seen a rise in racist incidents. District Councils are responsible for implementing Good Relations policies, and churches are ideally placed to work alongside them, welcoming newcomers and reassuring local people, building social cohesion from the bottom up. With God's grace we can become known, not for the prejudice and aggression of the past, but rather for seeing the potential strength and benefit in our old and our new diversities, both out in the community and within our congregations. 'For he is our peace who has made us ... one and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility'. Ephesians 2:14.

For further information on the UK asylum and immigration legislation, support organisations and ideas for Christian welcome see the web-site of EMBRACE (www.embraceni.org). EMBRACE is a group of Christians, from all the main denominations, who aim to make Northern Ireland a more welcoming place for all people from minority ethnic backgrounds, including people who have migrated here, people seeking asylum and refugees. EMBRACE does this primarily by encouraging, informing and challenging church communities.

GROUP WORK

SEEKING REFUGE AND A WELCOME – Joan Roddy
and
A NORTHERN PERSPECTIVE – Margaret McNulty

AIMS/PURPOSE

- Understanding welcome and hospitality
- Moving beyond ignorance – being informed about people who come to live among us
- Standing with the vulnerable – ensuring that human rights are respected

GAMES

- Name games;
- Icebreakers;
- Energisers;
- Closures

All of these will be important in the group work, as well as hopes/expectations and ground rules – they will be written into the programmes for the groups. For instructions and methodology, see Appendix

POSSIBLE TOOLS/RESOURCES/ACTIVITIES

- Scrapbooks – collecting articles; press cuttings and facts
- Quiz – myths and facts
- Journals – who in our community would benefit from a welcome? from support? And where would that be available?
- Mapping exercises

For instructions and methodology, see Appendix

RESISTING RACISM

In Christ's eyes everyone is someone special

Rev Ken Newell

*"Why are Church people here so cold towards my wife and me?
They're our brothers and sisters, aren't they?"*

WHAT SHOULD I BE DOING? How should I change? How can I look at people who are different through Christ's eyes? How can I honestly see everyone as someone special?

We all wear shades. I'll never be able to look at people through Christ's eyes until I start to get rid of my internal shades and admit to myself my dislikes and prejudices.

I have learned 4 lessons:

1. Don't pass judgement on another faith, culture or outlook without first studying it in depth.
2. Learn to ask questions of people directly; don't trust your own half-baked impressions.
3. Always look for what is best in other people, their cultures, political perspectives, faith and ethnic customs.
4. Put yourself in their shoes: if you had been born where they were born, and taught what they were taught, you would probably believe what they believe and act like they act.

We all wear shades; we are factories of prejudice; examine your emotions about race. When I start trying to remove my own shades, to admit my own coldness, Christ is preparing me to look at others through his eyes. He wants me to reach a point where I can, like Him, see everyone as someone special. But what does this mean?

The Cross is for us the place where we see the love of God for people most visibly demonstrated; sacrificial love, generous love, suffering love, forgiving love, a deeply involved love: "God so loved the world." That's why in Christ's eyes everyone is someone special, whether black, Asian or Arab.

When Christ's love enters us, when we open the doors of our spirits to it, when we pack in cold religion and opt for the warmth of real faith, then everything inside us starts to change; and it effects our eyesight, the way we look at all people whether they are black or Asian or Arab. We start to look lovingly at people – with Christ's Eyes.

Looking at people with Christ's eyes will move us to another level: we will start relating to them sensitively – with Christ's heart.

When we start to build relationships with people from other cultures, ask them about their story; ask them about their emotional pain; ask them about the racial abuse. Relate sensitively – with Christ's heart.

If we walk down the path of looking at people lovingly, relating sensitively, we will also start acting decisively – with Christ's feet.

Faith is much more in your feet than in your mind. When we relate to people from different ethnic backgrounds, observe their personal needs – cold house, little money, dull

furniture, few white friends to turn to in times of crisis, few invitations for coffee or a meal; then act decisively: befriend one or two. Share with them your life, home, social activities, advice and wisdom. If they suffer from abuse or harassment, be the first over the door to help.

How should we respond to the emerging racism around us?

How should we react when a family near us is intimidated and attacked? Refocus on the life God calls you to live in your community. Paul pinpoints it in Ephesians 5: 1-2, "As God's dearly loved children, live a life of love. Christ's love was not cautious but extravagant. He didn't love in order to get something out of us, but to give everything to us – himself! Love like that."

Become more socially inclusive. If you rarely have people from different ethnic, religious or cultural backgrounds to your home for a meal, why not adopt a different approach? Open your heart and your home. Open yourself to the suffering they have encountered here. There is nothing more powerful than your neighbours seeing you enjoy the friendship of people from different ethnic and racial backgrounds.

GROUP WORK

RESISTING RACISM – Rev Ken Newell

AIMS/PURPOSE

- Developing Empathy
- Understanding the lens through which we view our neighbour
- Relating sensitively
- Becoming more socially inclusive

POSSIBLE TOOLS; RESOURCES; ACTIVITIES

- Eyes; Heart; Feet – Draw a picture of your Inclusion Hero/heroine. What sort of eyes; heart feet will they have? Work in small groups and present and compare each other's heroes/heroines; or work individually in journals
- List ways we can open our hearts and homes in paired interviews or in journals
- Community Maps

For instructions and methodology, see Appendix

REFLECTION ON RACISM

Edmund Omagbemi

IN REFLECTING on racism in Ireland, I want to reflect on the way strangers are perceived in the Bible as well as in their role in nation building.

Generally speaking people are looked down upon when they are poor; not only poor economically but generally. The 'haves' see themselves as superior and the 'have-nots' as inferior and this is the origin of discrimination.

Asylum seekers, refugees, leave to remain on humanitarian grounds, legal or illegal migrants etc, the list can go on and on. What is clear is that people in these categories are non-nationals or internationals and could sometimes be referred to as strangers.

As a Christian state, I know the good people of Ireland take the word of the Bible very seriously so as Leviticus 19: 33-36 puts it, "and if a stranger that dwells with you in your land, you shall not trouble him. But the stranger shall be with you as your own born or native amongst you. You shall love him as yourself for you were strangers in the land of Egypt".

Strangers have come to settle and they have come with all kinds of skills and human endowments, and these could be harnessed for the common good of the nation and of mankind. Human beings are known to have various capabilities with huge potential for sustainable development. It is evident today, for example, that most people from other parts of the world who have moved to the United States of America during their time of persecution and depression, are now the point of reference for success in various fields of endeavour. They have not only created wealth for the nation, they have also enabled people to create wealth for the nation. Remember they were at one time tagged with names.

There is a common saying in my country that no man is an island. If not, there would have been no need for international relations, the United Nations, trade, skills exchanges etc. We all need each other and we need jointly to develop each other.

From the beginning of creation, God created man in His image and likeness to be equal. Racism is in the mind of the individual and has now become a global phenomenon. Racism is a man-made monster and is not particular to Ireland but is certainly present here.

Gen. 41:40.

Joseph was a stranger in a strange land. Sold and put to prison but he later found favour in that same land from God. He became a leader of Egypt and according to his word Egypt was ruled.

Matt 2:13-18.

King Herod the great dictator sought to massacre all first-born male children just because the wise men told him a king is born. Just imagine that Jesus Christ was killed in that massacre because of a King who wanted to achieve his towering dreams and dangerous political agenda.

Matt 25:34-45.

Our Lord Jesus Christ demonstrated to his disciples the importance of a stranger in their

midst when he said 'I was a stranger you did not accommodate me, I was thirsty you did not give me water', etc.

The word of God has never discriminated amongst people whether they are in the body of Christ, white or black or not. The word has been persistently used to refer to people of all race and colour where the blessing of God is being distributed. (e.g. John 3:16)

GROUP WORK

REFLECTION ON RACISM – Edmund Omagbemi

Bible refs Lev.19:33-36; Gen. 41: 40; Matt. 2:13-18; Matt. 25: 34-35

AIMS/PURPOSE

- The nature of the stranger – their perception in the Bible – their role in nation-building
- The stranger in the US – their role in that nation
- The need to develop jointly
- Jesus Christ, the stranger in our midst

POSSIBLE TOOLS; RESOURCES; ACTIVITIES

- Bible studies – nation-building strangers – group discussion
- On Being Black – Poem by Sangeetha Satharaj – read and discuss
- Make a list of the strangers who have surprised us
- Puppets – workshop on badges of identity – are our assumptions always right?

For instructions and methodology, see Appendix

ON BEING BLACK

Sangeetha Satharaj

A little boy sitting all alone, no one to play with
Children running around him, few stop to call him names
Others just ignore him
Bewildered, this little boy looks at his hands
They are as dark as the earth around him
He looks at the children who are playing
It is then that it dawns, he is a different colour
He goes home and says
No one to play with, no one cares for me at school
People call me black and a fool
Why is it Mummy? Have I done something wrong?
Or is it because I am black?

A little girl smiled at me yesterday
I gave her a pretty flower
She said 'Thank you' as she looked up
Her mother dragged her away and told her not to talk to me
Mummy, is it because I am black?

I went walking home the other day
And there a group of boys punched me
Beat me and called me names
Then they stabbed me, I remembered no more
God, is it because I am black?

I walked through the pearly gates
Angry with God for making me black
Black as the soil of the earth
Curious to see this God who made people black and white
I looked into his eyes filled with pain, anger and grief
God, why did you make me black?

He looked into my eyes
Tears rolling down his cheeks as he hugged me
Knowing now He felt the pain that I felt
He looked at me again
Holding my shoulders he said
“Son, I too was black”.

THE WOMEN AT THE WELL

Cathleen McDonagh

John – 4: 5-15

IN SAMARIA he came to a town named Sychar, which was not far from the field that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there and Jesus, tired out by the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon. A Samaritan woman came to draw some water, and Jesus said to her, “give me a drink of water” (his disciples had gone into town to buy food), the women answered, “you are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan - so how can you ask me for a drink?” (Jews did not use the same cups and bowls as Samaritans use.) Jesus answered, “if only you knew what God gives you to drink, you would ask God, and God would give you life-giving water.”... Jesus answered, “Whoever drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never be thirsty again. The water I give will become a spring, which will provide life-giving water, and give you eternal life.” “Sir” the woman said, “give me that water! Then I will never be thirsty again, nor will I have to come here to draw water.”

I often think why this passage appeals to me. It is because in the story Jesus is tired; He is resting by the well. I often imagine what must be going through His mind. In the picture in my mind the sun is shining and He is sitting alone by the well. It is at this moment I come into the story. His disciples have left and gone into town and the woman has yet to arrive. He must have welcomed the quiet rest for a little while before people began to arrive. This is the time I need to be with Him. I know I will have little chance to talk to Him when others arrive. I will cease to exist to the others; I am as the outcasts of the time. Who else but Jesus will understand my sorrow and suffering?

I am from a rejected people. As a member of the Traveller Community neither society, nor the church knows me. And in not knowing me they fear and at times despise me. I am so tired of the pain of rejection and ignorance. I too am so much in need of the water from the well. I crave the life giving water that is life from God. I need to be able to carry on and be able to understand. The only hope for me is to be filled with the spirit of love or I will be lost to the despair of the continuous hurt I experience as a Traveller person. Jesus knows what it is to be alone, tired and worn out. I too need to take a restful break on my journey. I too am tired and weary. I see myself at the well. Here is my chance to talk to Him. There is no one to stop me, no one to turn me away. His disciples are not there to block my way as I go to approach Him. I know He will not refuse me; I have questions for Jesus that I need to ask Him. No one else can give me an answer as to why it is so.

I am both angry and anxious as I approach Him but at the same time I know I belong there with Him. I know I will be challenged by Him but also I will experience belonging. I so long to ask Him why, when I followed Him as He asked me to, why is it that I am so lost and alone in the community of believers. I am a Christian but I am also an outcast. The other disciples don't know me. They never see what I have to offer only what they perceive that I take away. Jesus, please help me, I am becoming so angry because I can't keep taking on their ignorance, the prejudice and the fear. I suffer so as a result, I feel pain and I have nowhere to go with it but to you. I experience rejection and insults and I try to understand why this is so. What can I do when I am on the verge of despair? I am no good to anyone

when I can't get beyond my pain. I have tried to make it different but I can't do it alone. I need you to help me to understand, to hope and to continue to follow you no matter how hard it becomes. I need at times to rest on my journey. I need you to hold me when I am so lost in all of it. I need to know that you understand. Because with you I am known, you know me by name.

May I sit with you for a while by the well? Can I close my eyes and rest my head on your shoulder. At times it feels cold and empty in this world of the church. The life giving water you speak of; will it take away my feelings of helplessness and despair? Will it renew in me the hope I felt when I first heard your call. I came as you asked, but the others did not know me, they feared me and rejected me and I am too tired of trying to open closed doors.

I see the woman is coming; will you have time for me when she comes? She too has need of you. But please don't forget me. Is there not a place for all equally at the well? Why do some have to keep striving to be seen let alone to be understood in this concept we call church?

I am so weary I need to rest; please watch over me. Will you give me a drink from the well? Take time to think on what I have said. Do not leave without me.

I am yours now and always.

GROUP WORK

THE WOMEN AT THE WELL – Cathleen McDonagh

John 4: 5-15

AIMS/PURPOSE

- Breaking down barriers – Challenging the culture of exclusion/scapegoating
- Developing empathy
- Understanding rejection and marginalisation and associated feelings ; ignorance and fear

POSSIBLE TOOLS; RESOURCES; ACTIVITIES

- Break into groups to give an account of the story from the perspective of Jesus; the woman; Disciples; Townspeople and Pharisees. Regroup and listen to the stories
- Information sharing on Travellers
- Scrapbooks - collecting articles; press cuttings and facts
- Journals

For instructions and methodology, see Appendix

BEING, IDENTITY AND BELIEF

A Christian Basis for Pursuing Racial Justice

Rev Arlington Trotman

AS CHRISTIANS, whose existence is fixed by faith in a loving God, we battle against the overt and hidden causes and forms of racism. If this endeavour is to be redemptive and sustainable, two principles are vital: One, it is imperative that we resist the mild form of 'neo-colonialism' of merely 'doing-on-behalf-of' marginalised people, despite its importance, and harness the strength of our oneness in Christ as the basis for 'identifying-with' them in all our work to defeat racism. You see, the victim and the perpetrator of racism are fellow human beings. Two, as a consequence, we must take seriously three core features of life which inspire and determine the depth and quality of our work. These are: Being, Identity and Belief, considered as possessing essential and existential characteristics.

Being, Identity and Belief embody without condition our essential distinctive differences; yet respect our unity, which is rooted in God. That is, we recognise the fact that each person exists in common with, and belongs to the nature of the whole human family, having been created in the image of God.

Our created likeness which is manifested in Christ also reveals our true being, or that which commonly unites all humanity, its essential validity: 'He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation' (Colossians 1:15). It is first in the being of God, therefore, that all human beings have ultimate worth and validity, and in Him human beings come to their fullest and truest meaning. Christian teaching and moral precept oblige us, therefore, to appropriate this self-understanding.

It is morally, theologically and anthropologically acceptable, therefore, that we must not merely regard black and minority ethnic people as 'deserving' respect and inclusion, but reject racism as the sin of exclusion by grasping and cherishing the fact that all God's children inherently share in the dignity of the Being of God. As Christians we must affirm our intrinsic unity as people who 'belong' to God, and as such, to His Church, and that all are fully one with human community. This is the essential reality of Being.

On the other hand, it becomes necessary to deal with the existential questions of every day life: our options, preferences, the 'deep yearnings' for meaning and participation. These are often cultural choices people make and could be understood fundamentally as secondary to the essence of what it means to be and belong, but they are necessary for maintaining our vitality. Being and belonging in a society divided along ethnic or cultural lines, however, presuppose and demand the reconciliation of all peoples.

Recognition of and identification with people of minority ethnic heritages can only be genuinely upheld and sustained when each individual is understood in his or her essential nature, potential and promise. The denial of this leads to exclusion and racism.

The acceptance of our oneness in dignity under God and the practice of 'respect and belonging' can assist the church's redemptive purpose also as a single act of reparation, not necessarily monetary reparation, but the recognition of unity of being and identity, which could lead to genuine reconciliation.

Identity is found and validated in Christological concreteness. Here, the Person and Work of Christ, not only underscores the identity of human beings founded upon the likeness, but offers renewal to that identity (1 Corinthians 5:17). We are human beings commonly

because God created us thus, and we are renewed as Christ re-established our new identity in His Being, God's self-giving. But economic, social and political factors have been used to promote, falsely, the notion of separate essential identities. Discrimination on these grounds simply denied people the reality of an identity common to all people.

As human beings we are aware of our existential, ethnic and cultural identities, which can be changeable, but our essential identity is rooted in the Being of God, who identifies with us in His Person as revealed in Jesus Christ. Human beings in their essential identity are not distinct therefore from each other, nor do the existential (religious, cultural, etc.) Characters diminish or damage what is essential. Each may have a different ethnicity: Asian, African Caribbean, white, mixed heritage, but each shares that common identity. This is vital to the Christian belief system (see Acts 17: 24- 28), and must inform why and how we work for racial justice.

It is of course essential for Christians actively to express their faith, their belief; this expression constitutes expression as an aspect of their essential being and identity, (e.g. a Christian may be female and Asian, yet belief does not require a gradation of value in terms of this identity, not least of course, ethnic value). But one may also be Christian and an artist; here identity does not fully constitute the essence of what it means to be, because art is choice and changeable, and being and likeness are founded in the being and likeness of God. The basic form of belief in this regard is an understanding of all our created nature in relation to the nature of God.

Moreover, as image and belief, being, in practice, constitutes the whole person; but personhood is not conditional upon the expressions in our choices in art or careers. Racism emerges often from fear, but as Martin Luther King Jr. stressed, white people must master fear, and 'depend not only on their commitment to Christian love, but also on the Christ-like love which the Negro [black and minority ethnic person] generates towards them'. When we take seriously the tenets of our faith, not only that we love God and are our brother's and sister's keeper, but we love human beings as we love our essential selves - not always our existential wanderings (sometimes we hate our own actions or choices, the non-essential self) - then we are truly ready to defeat racism. When combating racism, it is important, therefore, to acknowledge that racism is a challenge to God's authority, to our being and identity.

It is my view that, taken together, Being, Identity and Belief, therefore, render racism and racial discrimination, or the division or gradation of our essential identity fundamentally un-Christian, illogical and fragmentary. It is a denial of our essence; for all men and women are created equal. Racism flies in the face of this truth.

Being, Identity and Belief enable us to build on our common identity in defiance of racism, and share the responsibility for this task. It is essential.

All forms of racism are ultimately unsustainable because they are not only evil, but also racism tries to subvert the essential identity of all human beings. As Christians we must embrace 'difference' and 'the other' and be enriched by undergoing a measure of cultural integration, recognise our human interdependence, promote social and economic redistribution, and pursue ethnic harmony, so that our Being is being-in-love-for-one-another'.

GROUP WORK

BEING IDENTITY BELIEF – Rev. Arlington Trotman

AIMS/PURPOSE

- Understanding human identity

- Understanding Racism – what is it?

POSSIBLE TOOLS; RESOURCES; ACTIVITIES

- Describe our identity – list the characteristics
- Being Malay and being Christian – a story by Azman Khairuddin. Talk about multiple-identity. In what ways do we all have multiple-identity?
- Definition of racism and tools for understanding it

For instructions and methodology, see Appendix

BEING MALAY AND BEING CHRISTIAN

Azman Khairuddin

I WANT TO START by saying that I have great Malay family and friends. They are Muslim people who have faith and are just great folk who love life.

My people come from a small town where Hari Raya is spent with all the joy of spending time with the uncles, aunties and many cousins. A rambutan tree grows in the garden where the kids play, and a stream flows behind the house, where we would throw stones at the fish. I am proud of my Malay heritage and the history of my family, who stood up to injustice during the days of the British.

I have a father and relatives who are proud of me, and take me for who I am, because they know me, and know I love them. And yet to some, I should be killed because of my beliefs and my beautiful children left without one of their loving parents.

You see, I did not turn my back on my beliefs, but instead turned towards Tuhan sekalian alam, kepada cintanya yang maha agung... Because he searched for me and called me to live for Him... Allah...Isa Al-Masih...

I started my religious studies at the early age of 5, learning the Quran. My mum was a teacher from the UK who embraced Islam upon her marriage to my dad, who's from a typical small town north of Kuala Lumpur. She encouraged me to be strong in my beliefs, and dutifully made fantastic meals for which to break our fasts during the month of Ramadan.

I grew up proud to be brought-up Malay, Bumiputera, Muslim and Malaysian. At school, I joined the Scouts, and sang "Negara Ku" with commitment. On Fridays, I headed with my friends to the beautiful Moorish Masjid Jamek for Friday prayers. Meanwhile, at home, things were not going well for my Mum and my Dad. Their marriage was breaking up, and this took a heavy toll on my family. There was a lot of sadness in our home. My dad took a second wife. I failed ALL my exams and was sent overseas to re-sit. In the UK, I was sometimes referred to as a "Paki" or told to "Go back to China". Meanwhile, through all this hardship back at home, Isa Al-Masih was watching, looking after us and waiting for us to call to Him for help. This would happen soon. My mum was soon to find lumps in her body that might be cancer... I was once the Muslim guy who understood without a shadow of a doubt that:

- 1) All westerners are Christians
- 2) Western culture = Christian culture
- 3) Christians / westerners are loose with their morals, and drink, have loose sex, gamble...
- 4) Only Muslims go to heaven...(but maybe good people go there too...?... wasn't sure)
- 5) Jews are bad, politically

- 6) To be Malay is to be Muslim
- 7) Christianity is a western religion compatible with western living
- 8) What the heck is a “born again Christian”???? Weird or What????
- 9) Jesus was an Islamic prophet who Christians misinterpreted, and he is dead.
- 10) It is easy to be a Christian because you can do what you want.
- 11) Malays are the best people on earth, and certainly the most hospitable, with the best culture and manners and language; better than the rest of the people who live in Malaysia - honestly! (but never admit to this in public). Chinese people eat pork (so unclean) and Indians don't eat with their hands properly.

So what an uninformed, proud, bigoted person I was, even though I thought I was quite a nice guy. That was me. So I understand when people give off about how bad Christians are and how western and fake that religion is. Then things happened which included amazing changes in my troubled family and an encounter with someone I thought was dead for the last 2000 years... Jesus turns-up. I see people healed of illnesses, requests for God to help miraculously answered, Jesus still speaking to people today, evil spirits being told to get out of houses (and sometimes - people!) and stuff like that. People being able to be in God's family and know His love and care... And He is not far away, like the God of my childhood. So things are more than a little different now. And what do I believe now?...

- 1) Very, very few westerners are Christians. Going to church or being born into a church-going or western family does not make you a Christian.
- 2) Western Culture is mostly the complete opposite of Christian culture.
- 3) People all over the world are loose with their morals, and drink, have loose sex, gamble... But God has made a way for us all to be forgiven.
- 4) Only people who are forgiven (through accepting the gift of life that comes from Jesus' death for you and me) go to heaven... (being good would never ever have been good enough to get to heaven).
- 5) Israel is often bad, politically, just like every country in the world. But our creator loves the Jews, the Malays, the Palestinians, the Chinese, the Bosnians, the Africans, even the Americans! God hates injustice.
- 6) To be Malay is to be loved by Jesus. Malay culture is made to reflect the wonderful glory of God, as are all cultures. It's very cool to be Malay.
- 7) Christianity was originally expressed in a mid-eastern mind-set. Christianity is mostly incompatible with what most Asians understand as a “western” way of living.
- 8) I am a “born again Christian”!!!! Weird or What????
- 9) Jesus is God, and he is not dead. He was (for three days), but isn't any more. He is now my God, my King, my friend and my brother. His Dad is my daddy.
- 10) It is easy to be a Christian because you can live in the freedom of knowing God. It is difficult to be a Christian because you can't do all the things you want to do. And Christians are tortured, ridiculed and killed for our faith worldwide.
- 11) Malays do wrong things against God like every person who ever walked this earth, and have a longing inside to know God. I still think Malays are amongst the nicest, most hospitable people on earth, with a wonderful culture and manners and language.

Malays are not better than the rest of the people who live in Malaysia. Chinese and Indians stand equal with Malays and Russians and Senoi and Welsh and Japanese in the eyes of God. I love and am completely proud of my Malay roots. But God knew of me even before the first Malays set foot on Segenting Kra to walk into the northern states of the peninsula... We are all the same. We all need Jesus. Isa. Allah. We all need Him.

GOD'S PEOPLE ARE ALL NATIONS

Yvonne Mefor

“The Lord says to his people, ‘Do what is just and right, for soon I will save you. I will bless those who always observe the Sabbath and do not misuse it. I will bless those who do nothing evil.’ A foreigner who has joined the Lord’s people should not say, ‘The Lord will not let me worship with his people.’ And the Lord says to those foreigners who become part of his people, who love him and serve him, who observe the Sabbath faithfully and keep his covenant: ‘I will bring you to Zion, my sacred hill, give you joy in my house of prayer, and accept the sacrifices you offer at my altar. My Temple will be called the house of prayer for the people of all nations.’”

“The Sovereign Lord, who has brought his people Israel home from exile, has promised that He will bring still other people to join them.”

Isaiah 56: 1-4 and 6-8

MOST TIMES we read the bible without really understanding what the words are saying to us, we take each and every word or passage for granted. Everything about the world and indeed the universe has been laid out and down for us straight through to equality and discrimination of any sort. We are all one under the eyes and laws of God. No one has any right to judge or condemn another. We are reminded here to always do what is right and just.

Being a foreigner in this land has not been easy because people take you as a leper. You are treated as if you have two heads or walk on your head. No matter what you do, you are always an outcast. There is always this feeling of unease and scepticism that I meet in places that I go, even at work. I refuse to believe that God created some greater than others; after all, no man is an island. I believe in God and I believe He has plans for all of us no matter who or where we are.

We have once sat in the church among people of our host country, we smiled as we sat down, but there was nothing in response. They shifted and moved to keep space and distance between us so much that it became embarrassing. I could not help but smart in anger. I decided that we would totally ignore them which we did and they of course noticed that. They became uncomfortable and had to move away altogether, all this in the church too? Was this just? Everywhere we go, it brings home the fact that once you have coloured skin you are regarded as scum and a refugee who has come to take...take...take.. forgetting that in order to take one has to give and as coloured people we have been giving all our lives...SLAVE TRADE, COLONIALISM...remember...? We have been paying the ultimate price of third class citizens all our lives, when will it ever change?

We as immigrants and refugees have a lot to give, but not many people want to give us a chance. In my daily life as a working mother and a small business person, I find it hard

getting the encouragement I need or deserve because either I am not trusted or people do not want anything to do with me; and it's not just me, it's all coloured foreigners. They are so patronising and so two-faced and I have had to contend with that a few times and it's not funny!

We all are given the same chance to serve God and be true to ourselves. God's people are all nations. In God's household we are all the same. I have always had a just and open mind to mankind and as an immigrant in a foreign land with coloured disposition I will always try to be my brother's keeper so as to be a part of God's increasing household. That's all I can do, what about you?

GROUP WORK

GOD'S PEOPLE ARE ALL NATIONS – Yvonne Mefor
Isaiah 56:1-4 and 6-8

AIMS/PURPOSE

- Unity in diversity
- All one in God
- Equity
- The wrongs of the past in our global relationships – Slave Trade and Colonialism and righting those relationships - interdependence

POSSIBLE TOOLS; RESOURCES; ACTIVITIES

- Scrapbooks – gathering information about our past global relationships – slave trade etc on this 200th anniversary of abolition
- World Map and projections – Mercator's and Peter's – discussing differences
- World Development – the slave trade today and what we can do about it.
Organisations we can support – WDM; Amnesty etc.
- Simulation game

For instructions and methodology, see Appendix

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

Tim Foley

I MEET A BLACK MAN regularly at the school gates where both of us pick up our kids. He always welcomes me with a broad smile and we swap stories about essay deadlines and the trials of life (kids, study, weather). I don't know many black people well and have a terrible habit of getting nervous when I speak to them: Am I being over-familiar in an attempt to cover up my nervousness? Is my too broad smile just an obvious thin veil over my racism? Does he think I am trying to make him my nominal black friend so I can show off my multiculturalism? Racism is an awful thing, and I am a recovering racist as much as I am a recovering sectarian, if my markedly different reactions to loyalist and republican culture is anything to go by.

I often wonder where the seeds of racism were sown during my southern childhood. Was it my relatives, newly returned from the Bronx with their stories of the black ghettos and the negative characteristics of "those people"? Or low quality American TV programme imports during my childhood where the black man was always the bad guy? Or just the inwardness and indifference of being part of a small community hostile to others, whether British or Black? The damage was done early and my definition of neighbour narrowed, just like the Lawyer in Luke 10.

Who is my neighbour? How easy it is to love people like me - educated, open-minded, warm and white. But if my neighbour is too different (in religion, class or colour) I don't find it so easy. I seem to need the security of people like me in my circle so I can be safe and secure and not reminded of how poorly I handle the challenge of difference. Life is complex enough and my personality fragmented enough without the bother of racial difference.

The good news in all of this is that I have been given what I need most to move beyond racism – an awareness of my sin and the means to be forgiven and transformed – this is nothing less than the gospel. The freely-chosen death of Jesus, made extraordinary by his lack of vengeance and love for his executioners, is saturated with my problem. Here on the cross the scapegoat mechanism is unmasked. This is how we know God is on the side of the victim, the neighbourless, those on the margins of society. The dividing walls between people groups have been really destroyed. Baptism really marks a new identity where ethnicity does not make one inferior.

Neighbourliness is complex. Let's not condemn the priest and the Levite too quickly. That cry for help may just be a robber in disguise. Stopping to help may reduce our capacity to help someone else. Choices have to be made. That victim may not need our direct help but to get up and walk for themselves. That alcoholic may yet need to come to the end of their road rather than have their agony prolonged. That homeless person may not be helped by our money – or so we're told – but rather the shelter organisation has more need of it. Who said neighbourliness was straight-forward? Yet still the parable won't easily let us off the hook.

Who is my neighbour? A good question. Where can I draw the line at which my responsibility stops and my compassion ends. I can't support every charity or help every needy person can I? While the parable does not help us with some of these complexities it does warn us against making neighbours of only nice safe people like us. It tells us to risk

and expand our circles. It tells us that God comes to us in unexpected encounters with strangers that we should not ignore; that the best of us can find excuses not to be involved in the pain and brokenness of others; that the face of God appears in the least likely of people, even people we fear, even our enemy.

The lawyer in the story wants to keep talking theology and show Jesus just how messy this all is. Like me, the lawyer knows that he can make things even more complicated, stall for time, and walk away. Have you ever done that? But Jesus won't cooperate. It seems that the Lawyer does not need any more discussion or understanding. It turns out that it matters less what we know, think, feel or say about love - but what we do about love, that brings life.

GROUP WORK

THE GOOD SAMARITAN – Tim Foley

AIMS/PURPOSE

- Understanding Racism as a system
- Understanding the seeds/roots of racism
- Understanding the scapegoat mechanism
- Understanding neighbour/neighbourliness

POSSIBLE TOOLS; RESOURCES; ACTIVITIES

- Definition of racism; Line of racism
- Models to help us understand it
- Puppet play – Good Samaritan
- Expanding our circles

For instructions and methodology, see Appendix

EVEN IF ALWAYS A STRANGER

Florence Muthoni Hegarty

"...Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

Esther 4: 14

ESTHER LIVED in the kingdom of Persia, the dominant kingdom in the Middle East after Babylon's fall in 539 B.C. Esther's parents must have been among the Jewish exiles who chose not to return to Jerusalem, even though Cyrus the Persian King had issued a decree allowing them to do so. Some of the Jewish exiles chose to remain because they had great freedom in Persia and many had even established themselves there or were not ready to return to Jerusalem because they were afraid to do so.

Those Jews in exile were actually slaves. Esther was born a slave in captivity. Normally where one is born becomes the country of origin, and one attains the nationality of that country and citizenship. Esther was born in Persia but she was a stranger, a Jewish slave. She must have felt out of place, yet she became a queen even if a stranger.

The Book of Esther begins with the fall of Queen Vashti from grace for refusing to obey an order from her husband, King Xerxes. During the search for her replacement, Esther, then a beautiful young Jewish woman, was among those chosen to be brought to the royal harem. Because of her beauty the pagan king Xerxes made her one of his wives. The king was so pleased with her and her beauty that he made Esther his queen to replace Vashti.

When Haman, an ambitious self-serving man was appointed second-in-command in the empire, he plotted to have all the Jews killed for refusing to bow in reverence to him! Though Esther might have felt out of place in the kingdom as a Jew, there is nowhere out of place when God has placed the person there. Esther was pre-positioned there by God to save the Jews. Esther only discovered her life's purpose when her uncle Mordecai asked her "...who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14). Queen Esther realised God-given opportunity and she seized it by acting courageously to save the Jews. Her life made a difference to the Jewish nation.

There are many 'foreigners' some who are born here in Ireland but will never belong here, either because we are not accepted among the local citizens or because we left 'home' hoping to find a better life in Ireland and cannot return because we have established ourselves here, intermarried with children going to school or are afraid to return for various reasons.

We may have 'leave to remain' or even EU passports, but we, especially Africans, are always strangers because our colour is distinct. The colour does not blend at all when among the local citizens.

To take the case of economic migrants of whom I am one of them, we came here for further studies and job opportunities in order to improve our lives and those of the people we left behind. Even after qualifying with degrees backed with past work experiences, we still cannot get jobs and when we do, it is not anything to write home about. This is because we get jobs that lucky school leavers with no working experience get; work that only

requires that we speak good English and have a good personal reference.

I thank God for the job I am currently working at because I am sure God has placed me there for a purpose. This is because, one time I was disappointed and wanted to leave and even wrote a resignation letter but it was not accepted. Instead, I was offered a week's break and an option to choose where I wanted to work at the same level. That was something to thank God for. After a week of working, there was an urgent request from home for finances and I thank God I was in a position to send some money home.

Even as I write this I know God has placed me where I am - here in Ireland 'at such a time as this', but I am yet to realise the purpose of my being here. I actually do not even enjoy the job that I am doing, but it brings income that is meeting my needs here and I am in a position to send money home regularly. That is something to thank God for.

There are many lessons we can continue to learn from Esther:

Most times we do not realise God's timing or His plans for our life, but that does not mean God does not care for us even as strangers, just because we cannot comprehend His plan at any moment in time. We need to seek Him constantly so that He reveals it to us step by step.

Even if we are always strangers (foreigners), when we truly believe and know for a fact that God is in control and has placed us where we are, it enables us to overcome each obstacle as it arises.

Even if always strangers in Ireland, in God's eyes we belong. It is not easy but by faith when we place ourselves in God's hands, we have hope to face another tomorrow.

GROUP WORK

EVEN IF ALWAYS A STRANGER – Florence Muthoni Hegarty
Esther 4:14

AIMS/PURPOSE

- Understanding Slavery
- Understanding the characteristics of the stranger
- Understanding God's relationship with the stranger

POSSIBLE TOOLS; RESOURCES; ACTIVITIES

- Reading the story of Esther.
- Break into groups to give an account of the story from the perspective of King Xerxes; Esther; Haman and Mordecai. Regroup and listen to the stories
- Stranger in a Strange land by Nathalie Taylor – definitions of the stranger/foreigner and the poem – discuss

For instructions and methodology, see Appendix

STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND?

Nathalie Taylor

STRANGER

n. person in a place or company that he/she does not belong to.

To be a stranger or to feel a stranger ... two different things. Anyone can feel like a stranger in his/her own country. Feeling like a stranger and feeling estranged can leave you with queer feeling of being misplaced or a misfit ... Being a stranger or foreigner to a region or a nation can be a refreshing and positive experience for both stranger and the strange land ... for a while ... "You are not a stranger in a strange land" God says. Sometimes the strange land can increase the feeling in the stranger of not really belonging.

FOREIGNER

n. person born in a foreign country or speaking a foreign language; foreignship, imported animal...

Sometimes being approached as a "zoo animal" increases the foreigner's feeling of not belonging to this place, of obviously not belonging if his/her colour of skin or different way of speaking is made obvious by the staring or the constant reminder: "You're not from here!!!" Then the stranger finds him/herself thrown back on an island on his/her own, and it makes it more and more difficult for him/her to regain footing. "You are not a stranger in a strange land" God says. The attitude of the God who came to earth from heaven, of the One who died on the cross because men rejected him and told him, "You don't belong!" ...is undivided ...

His eyes want to see people free, embracing one another and not observing one another through bars of prejudice, mockery, condescension or starry eyes of fantasy. His heart is all-loving - there is no shadow of mistrust and rejection – all-accepting and does not differentiate people through race, colour of skin, ways of speaking, languages or cultures.

No.

He came as your peer.

An outsider looking in

Can bring an unbiased opinion to a problem,

A fresh view into a situation

Because of his different cultural experience and some acquired-in-another-land knowledge.

An outsider can speak his/her mind - He or she can speak of the "elephant in the room" ...the obvious that nobody dares say and shuns away or ignores...

He or she can reflect the distant eye of the one who sees without belonging, the horizon and distant shores that is not yours, the red kite over the ocean of fear

The albatross wounded

Washed ashore with a story

That is not yours.

Listen, As into the shell combed on the strand.

Listen to the sound

Of the seas,

The orchards, the nectar of
The pomegranates,
The untold story,
With the gritting taste of sand in the mouth,
The story yet-to-be,
Do not rush it, do not stop it, do not laugh at it,
Neither judge it nor throw it on the deserted island of common
understanding,

But let it reach the point when the story unfolds,
The truth about them,
The truth God gave to them,
The treasure of a different approach.

Listen...
Forget looks and accents,
The obvious difference,
And see the beautiful gift of God in their eyes, their heart and soul,

The murmur of the seas, faraway horizons, half-hidden or yet-to-be revealed...
Look and see

What God has,
In His wonderful craftsmanship,
His mercy,
To us from all nations and creeds,
Us from different idioms and voices,

Hear us O creator and saviour,

You friend of the weak,
You befriender of the friendless,

The God of the universe and each man and woman of every shore
and nation,

Keep us from harm,
and harming each other,

Keep us in
Peace
understanding
and harmony
Amen.

BELONGING CONNECTED NOTICED

Fr. Bobby Gilmore

*Today, nobody noticed me and I have not lived.
You have noticed me and I live again.*

Chekhov

THIS WORD, integration, from the Latin words, integer - whole or entire, subsumed into, and tangere - to touch, has captured a lot of interest and usage of late particularly in relation to immigrants. Integration is hardly ever related to the settled or indigenous population; however, it is a challenge that everybody is confronted with in many other aspects of life's journey. Integration is taking place from the day a child enters a family, goes through the various aspects of development, education and socialisation until reaching a point where one feels integral to, belongs to a particular place, identifies and is identified.

There is a difference between belonging and being subsumed. The latter almost denotes losing all character, individuality and personality, when in actual fact integration is the ongoing formation of an amalgam between calling bits and pieces of the old story and continuously becoming acquainted with the unfamiliar, starting a new story. It is a process that for some happens unnoticed and is taken for granted, but for many that is not the case. In adolescence, it frequently happens that a young person does not feel in touch or integral to his or her surroundings, indeed may feel alienation, rejection and marginal. But, it seems that in discussing a solution to a person's isolation that may be arising from a confused identity, alienation or rejection seldom does one hear the words integration and participation as a solution to a person's rehabilitation. Really, integration is being able to connect the old and the new in a way that is empowering and fulfilling.

Sometimes in prison situations solitary confinement is used as punishment for disorderly behaviour. Prisoners who have experienced solitary confinement have no hesitation in admitting that it is the most severe form of punishment. So, this poses the question, if isolation is the lowest point of the human spirit; what is the highest aspiration of the human spirit? Obviously, it is the nature of human beings to aspire to be in association with others, to belong, have an identity, be participants and decision-makers, love and beloved, be responsive and responsible. If this is so, how then can integration be facilitated by society, particularly in the case of immigrants who are from different cultures or between citizens of the member states of the European Union?

The character of migration in its various appearances implies that people leave familiar surroundings of home and enter new and unfamiliar environments. While the new can be exciting and invigorating, sooner or later an experience of anomie sets in that will continue while a person feels the loss of the old identity and the discomfort of the pain of the unfamiliar and strange. If there are no facilities in place that understand dislocation and

enable a move from liminality to connect with the networks of life, the probability is that immigrants will become submerged in loneliness, meaningless and be marginalised.

Every Irish person should be aware of the loneliness of immigrant life. Irish music is dripping with both the loneliness of the immigration and the grief of those left behind.

Loneliness and homesickness are normal emotions that a person on leaving home experiences as disintegration of a previous identity sets in and a realisation of not being at home anymore emerges. Many people unfortunately think that this is a personal fault or weakness that does not happen to others. Also, some carry this unresolved loneliness with them through life. It leaves a person hanging between home and away and curtails an immigrant's future development and settlement.

Marginalisation, feeling or being kept apart from the normal political, social, economic and cultural interaction in the life of society stunts an immigrant's settlement, sense of belonging and development. It is as if being consigned to a separate life, that coerces a person to constantly look inward rather than push the boundaries of outer skylines and horizons. Being on the margins robs a person of a sense of having anything to contribute and be seen as an asset by the wider society. Also, more painful still, is being criticized and branded as an immigrant as if the isolation and separation was one's own making. This situation forces immigrants to constantly look over their shoulders to remnants of home for cultural nourishment and identity.

How are immigrants moved on from the initial shock of the unfamiliar to being new lives of belonging, fulfilment, feeling connected as participants to what is happening around them? The cultural network by the very presence of people from other cultures implies that culture will always be dynamic, never static. Here probably lies the greatest challenge in migration, learning about and from a new culture. The easiest thing to do is to roll up, hedgehog fashion and become isolated and indifferent to the local way of seeing and doing things. Children associate and make progress easily enough. They gradually look for an identity under their feet. However, parents are inclined to get their cultural nourishment from over their shoulders and try to reinvent a mental "home" in exile that bears little resemblance to what "home" actually was on leaving. It is the protective shell of the tourist brochure memory of home that copes best with the initial confusion of the new, but in the long term, if imprisoned by it, is impoverishing to all concerned. Disengagement with the new world may seem a safe haven or a sanctuary from the tension of involvement but one cannot healthily work in one place and mentally and emotionally live elsewhere.

Of course the xenophobia of the new environment, a common problem throughout Europe at present, frequently leaves immigrants with few options. There is a hesitancy to assert one's presence and participation if the covert (sometimes overt) message being received is one of being unwanted and being perceived either as a burden or a risk to local security, culture and identity. In the recent past many new voluntary organisations and support groups have emerged and are effectively counteracting the indifferent and ambivalent attitude to immigrants in the European Union member states. Settled people are personalising their own homelessness due to both formal and informal contact with immigrants in the various networks of life. It is these efforts at a local level that enables both the immigrant and the settled to meet each other in friendship and understanding. Also, it is those seemingly insignificant human touches that advance the process of integration, belonging and connectedness that enable different people to feel at home with each other and be recognised in a new and renewing world.

An integral part of an immigrant's baggage is religious expression. If it fits in with the local expression of faith, immigrants find this an integrating experience. However, there may be no space in the new culture that caters for their religious expression. In such cases

immigrants initiate their own churches where they can find expression for their beliefs that give them a soul-warming experience way from home.

Immigrants are initiating and reinvigorating faith communities abroad by their presence. Many on returning home seek out similar faith communities that gave them a welcome when they were strangers.

Immigrants take back a religious experience they find abroad. This frequently happens in ways that may not be immediately obvious and which begins with being welcomed by people in their new social environments. The impact of the contents of an immigrant's luggage is as mysterious as the energy that impels them to set out on a journey of hope.

GROUP WORK

BELONGING - CONNECTED – NOTICED – Fr. Bobby Gilmore

AIMS/PURPOSE

- Understanding/defining belonging as distinct from assimilation or being subsumed.
- Redeeming identity and belonging
- Understanding migration – the gains and loss

POSSIBLE TOOLS; RESOURCES; ACTIVITIES

- What's in a name? Names; meanings; country of origin
- Journals – What people; events; personal tastes; traditions and beliefs support or create identity? Figure/outline
- or draw around a member of the group (outline) and label - G
- How do different peoples' 'otherness' shape our identity? Understanding partnership – the old and the new – challenges and struggles in e.g. marriage – read A Holy Dream by Iva Beranek
- Scrapbooks – understanding migration and practical ways of reaching out

For instructions and methodology, see Appendix

A HOLY DREAM

Iva Beranek

Just recently, an image of marriage came to my mind when thinking of the Catholic and Evangelical churches. If only we would long to be one as a couple to be married longs for each other! If only we would look at each other with eyes that are in love with the other. If only...

I know Jesus would rejoice. Only prayer can lead us there. That kind of longing comes from a heart that is close to the Heart of Jesus, and prayer provides that closeness.

Let us dream for a while. Imagine a young bride sitting in a lap of her groom; imagine the look in their eyes. It is their wedding day. They are one in that vision, and still so other and new to each other. Imagine a bride being the Catholic Church, and a groom being the Evangelical church. Imagine the Spirit in and around them melting their hearts, minds, and bodies into one. Imagine a dream come true. Can we imagine that or we are too afraid it is only a dream?

A dream dreamed by a Holy Heart, a holy dream. However, a painful reality of our

divisions does not let us dream. Reality often votes for a divorce. Decision is ours – dreaming with God or waking without hope. Dreaming requires discernment in order for it to be directed properly. Discernment is a struggle, but if guided by the Holy Spirit we will eventually win the battle for the right direction. God will reveal His plans slowly to us. Dreaming with God can never fail, even though it brings disappointments. We see in a dream the way it should be and in waking we try to reach the ideal. However knowing the Spirit holds the reality of a holy dream as something more than real in His realms may create new wings ready to fly again; fly to a new land of a heart awakened to the depths of love and unity. Awakened heart will always choose to dream with God, even when eyes will not see or ears will not hear of all that might be, that heart will dream, and so will we if we come closer to the Holy Spirit and His Holy dream.

CHALLENGED BY IGNORANCE: THE PHARISEE AND THE TAX COLLECTOR

Rev Dr Sahr Yambasu

“God, I thank you that I am not like other men... or even like this tax collector”
Luke 18:11

ARE ALL HUMAN BEINGS not ultimately the same: embodied creatures, who feel hunger, thirst, fear, and pain; who reason, hope, dream, and aspire; who are vulnerable? Do not all human beings as individuals, groups, and societies have their shortcomings and strengths? Was the Pharisee in this story any different? Granted, as he himself claimed, he was a good man, was he also not a self-righteous man, uncharitable in his representation of other fellow human beings?

In uncritically assuming that he was not like other men, was this man being truthful? Was he also revealing his ignorance of the true and total reality of what it means to be human? Did his being a human being not imply that he was like all other human beings in every sense of the word?

These are some questions that this man's assertion about himself might raise in one's mind.

But was this man also not right in recognising and saying that he was not like other men? After all, he was a Pharisee. And, like other Pharisees, he was intent on keeping the Jewish religious tradition meticulously and scrupulously pure. So, the Pharisee was, after all, what he said he was. He was unlike others who were different from him - others who were not Pharisees - and so did not necessarily see their life's goal as one of guarding and preserving Jewish orthodoxy.

This acknowledgement of his uniqueness, and by implication the uniqueness of the group he represented vis-à-vis other people in Jewish society and beyond, is something that the Pharisee should be congratulated for. In acknowledging his own particularity, this man put his finger on a reality that describes and is a part and parcel of all human existence – the need for boundaries of distinction.

The creation of boundaries of distinctions between oneself - as group or individual – and others is not bad in itself. It is, in fact, necessary and essential to life. As Miroslav Volf rightly points out, Without boundaries we will be able to know only what we are fighting against but not what we are fighting for... The absence of boundaries creates non-order, and non-order is not the end of exclusion but the end of life... in the absence of boundaries, we are unable to name what is excluded (what is not acceptable)... Vilify all boundaries, pronounce every discrete identity oppressive, put the tag 'exclusion' on every stable difference – and you will have aimless drifting instead of clear-sighted agency, haphazard activity instead of moral engagement and accountability and, in the long run, a torpor of death instead of a dance of freedom.

Yes, the Pharisee was not like other men because he did not do the evil that other men did: steal, murder, commit adultery, and so on. Indeed, his own sin, though he did not know, was called by other names: self-righteousness, pride, self-centredness, and critical spirit.

That is not all. He described his goodness in terms of: obedience to the law, discipline in fasting, and generous in paying tithes; but not in terms of humility or acknowledgement of need – both of which constituted the Tax Collector’s ‘goodness’. Yes, in these – the difference in names of their sins and virtues they had - there were boundaries between the Pharisee and the Tax Collector.

Also, the Pharisee, unlike the other men he condescendingly condemned, was the only one who was not aware of his own shortcomings. But neither was the Tax Collector aware of his own strength for which Jesus recommended him - humility. That was another significant boundary that divided these two men.

Add to that the fact that one was a Pharisee - with all that meant - and the other was not; and you see how very right the Pharisee was in saying that he was not like other men. Important boundaries distinguished him from the other men he had in mind.

But for the Pharisee to move from acknowledging the existence of boundaries between him and others – to move from saying “I am different from others and cherish my particularity” – to wishing, at least by implication or insinuation, that all other boundaries, particularities, and ways of being different from his should not exist, was to deny to others what he believed, and rightly so, was essential for true humanity.

It was to say (1) that he was ignorant of the fact that those he roundly condemned also had invaluable human values he and the way of life he represented did not have; (2) that he was ignorant of the shortcomings of his own particularities, and, finally, (3) it was to say that he was ignorant, as I have already noted, that he too, like the Tax Collector and others, was a person with needs, strengths, and weaknesses.

For, while there were differences between the Pharisee and the Tax Collector, the differences were not in what kind of people they were, but in how they were what they were. Both represented true humanity in which ‘fair is foul and foul is fair’.

The recognition of this would have freed them both from any delusions of total goodness and so self-righteousness (on the part of the Pharisee), or of total depravity and so self-depreciation (on the part of the Tax Collector). Evil is among the good, and good among the evil. The strangeness we see in others that make us discriminate against them, is a strangeness that also resides within us, if we cared to look for it. This parable of Jesus clearly demonstrates this. In the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector, Jesus put his finger on what I believe is the perennial issue at the heart of human responses to other humans beings as different: the uncritical acceptance of our own particularities as normal and essential while we seek to deny or ignore or even label other people’s boundaries as abnormal, and wish, consciously or otherwise, that their own differences should give way to our own.

Taking this stance, we (1) display our ignorance of the weaknesses that might be present in our own taken-for-granted selves, worldviews, beliefs and practices; and (2) display our ignorance of the strengths and values that other people’s worldviews, beliefs, and practices may have that we could benefit from.

Jesus recommended the self-view of the Tax Collector not, I would suggest, because he was better or worse than the Pharisee in actual fact; but because he had the attitude of mind and heart that in the end, mattered most.

His disposition characterised him as a man open towards new ways of seeing and being. In this man reposed the humble recognition that he is nowhere near being what he could be as a human being created in the image of God. In this man was real hope for change for the better. You see, we never begin to be good till we can feel and say that we are bad.

The Pharisee, on the other hand, no longer saw anything good in different others to emulate; at least not in the Tax Collector whom he perceived as being below him; perhaps

not even in God because he sounded totally self-liberated and self-dependent. He had arrived so to speak. His standard was himself, and no other. The Pharisee saw himself as the master exemplar that everyone else must imitate. Such a person would find no reason to learn from others, or change for the better.

This Pharisee, I would say, had the stuff from which ethnic, national, religious, gender, age, economic, cultural, political, and skin colour discriminations, exclusions, and conflicts are made. The stuff is called ‘superiority complex’. It is the “I am better than you” syndrome that has always plagued this world and continues to do so. It is the attitude that says unless you are like me, or until you become like me, I am not prepared to value you as a human being like me, nor the way of life you represent. Backed up with money, military might, policy-making power, and control, this prejudiced Pharisee had in him the seeds from which injustice of every kind is born: slavery, colonisation, the holocaust, apartheid, ethnic cleansing, sectarianism, the oppression and exploitation of women and non-white people, and religious intolerance in our world.

GROUP WORK

CHALLENGED BY IGNORANCE – THE PHARISEE AND THE TAX COLLECTOR

– Rev, Dr. Sahr Yambasu

AIMS/PURPOSE

- Acknowledgement of both uniqueness and distinction and social inclusion
- Understanding the power games we play in our relationships
- Understanding more about the boundaries/lines we draw – their strengths and weaknesses

POSSIBLE TOOLS; RESOURCES; ACTIVITIES

- Journals - On the Way of Freedom – diagrams
- Group discussion of the diagrams – mimesis; rivalry; and transcendence - G
- Bible reading of the Pharisee and the Tax-collector – understanding the diagrams about rivalry, mimesis etc in the context of the story. Sharing out own stories - G
- Definition of racism – boundaries and challenge – maintaining our identity and including the other.

For instructions and methodology, see Appendix

JESUS THE REFUGEE

Rob Fairmichael

Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, "Out of Egypt I have called my son."

Matthew 2:13-15 and 23

EVEN THOUGH some of us are aware that Jesus, Mary and Joseph were refugees, we may not have considered what that meant beyond the fact that they had to leave their homeland and live 'abroad' for a few years until Herod died.

Jesus and His parents were not even at home when Joseph had the dream to flee. They had prepared themselves to travel to Bethlehem for the census, taking what they felt they might need for that journey, and no more. They were not prepared to go into exile. The first thing that Joseph would have taken, to allow him to make a living to support himself and family, would have been what carpenter's tools he could have carried; but these were at home, not with them in Bethlehem. This would have been a big worry since getting his own tools would be a major financial outlay, and being abroad and dealing with people not speaking your language would have been a huge obstacle too. If they did have to go, and they did, it was a very bad start.

For Mary to have to travel so soon after giving birth and with a new born baby to feed and look after would have been harrowing and physically demanding. It would have been extremely tiring, and travelling at night time would have been difficult and dangerous. Were they up to the journey? Initially there would have been the fear that Herod's men would catch them and kill Jesus. But as they fled the long and often dangerous journey to Egypt, the safer they were in terms of distance, the more lonely they would have become, as they got further away from their homeland, their village, their language and customs. There are various ways they could have travelled through Palestine and Sinai into Egypt and all of them would have been dangerous. They must have felt very alone and afraid, not knowing what their future was, not knowing where they would get their next meal or lay their heads, or take shelter from the heat or the cold at night. Uncertainty would have been their constant companion. But they were doing what they knew they had to do to survive, and hope of return was for another day.

As they got used to life in Egypt, their homeland would have still beckoned to them. How were their loved ones at home? They would have had no idea. The Coptic Church in Egypt has various traditions regarding the stay of the Holy Family in Egypt, some based on a dream of a fourth to fifth century Patriarch (Pope Theophilus, 23rd Patriarch of Alexandria), as to where the Holy Family journeyed and stayed during their time in Egypt. The Coptic Church (which is a member of the inter-church structures in Ireland) celebrates each 1st June the entry of the Lord Jesus Christ into Egypt – and it is indeed a wonderful

thing for your country to have provided refuge to the baby Jesus. But undoubtedly the Holy Family would have met both kindness and unkindness in their journeying. One thing which they acquired was knowledge of another country and ways other than their own.

We do not know what age Jesus was when Mary and Joseph received the news of Herod's death and headed home. Even if they implicitly trusted the angel's message that Herod was dead, and they should return, they must have had doubts about their safety which were well placed, as verse 22 details. And how had things changed in the period they had been away? Other questions on their minds would have included worries about establishing a home, and whether there was work for Joseph in Nazareth.

When they did get a home established, perhaps Jesus had vivid memories of his time in exile, or perhaps his early childhood memories faded. But their time in exile would have been a common point of reference in family life – "Remember that time we were in Egypt when.....", Mary or Joseph might have begun, sharing an often remembered snippet or a half-buried detail. The experience must have had a profound effect on them all.

So Jesus would have grown up with knowledge not just of his own society, and the divisions and debates therein, but also with knowledge of elsewhere. He would have known that there were 'good' and 'bad' in all societies and that these categories were not the simple ones that society and the culture of the time dictated. He was willing to sit down with anyone. He did not have barriers. And his message was not just for one society but for all.

The profound effect of forced migration and refuge is still, unfortunately, having an effect today. Travel may be easier but it is, paradoxically, harder to get into many countries, particularly rich ones. Mary and Joseph with their baby Jesus would not have had to worry about passports, travel documents, how to get into a country and whether their claim for asylum would be granted. The profundity of the effect on people cannot be overestimated; being a stranger in a strange land can be bad, but to go through humiliation, hardship and possibly danger in getting to your country of choice is still an everyday occurrence now.

And some people today may not be as tolerant as the Egyptians were in Jesus' time. If Joseph was a good worker he would probably have found work straight away in Egypt, despite language barriers; if he arrived in Ireland today he would not be allowed work. Jesus and Mary arriving in Ireland today would be closely questioned as to whether this story about Herod killing firstborn boys was really just a scam to get status, their interviewers would perhaps decide it was just a cock and bull story with no corroborating evidence – and the fact that Joseph had referred to being told to flee in a dream made it even more unbelievable.

Jesus was a refugee. He knew a lot about that experience. Christians who do not understand that experience cannot understand the early life of Jesus and his formative years.

GROUP WORK

JESUS THE REFUGEE – Rob Fairmichael
Matt 2:13-15 and 23

AIMS/PURPOSE

- Understanding exile
- Understanding the refugee
- Learning about our connection with refugees as Christians

POSSIBLE TOOLS; RESOURCES; ACTIVITIES

- Reading the story of the Holy family's exile.
- Relate our own experiences of the refugee/exile – share our own stories and compare with the Bible story
- Break into groups to give an account of the story from the perspective of King Herod; Joseph; Mary. Regroup and listen to the stories

For instructions and methodology, see Appendix

THE RUTH STORY

Beate Kowalski

How to live as a stranger in a strange land? Among others the book of Ruth deals with this subject and it may give us some thoughts for our question. As men and women have different perspectives on life and enculturation, it might be useful to have a look at Ruth from the gender perspective. Therefore I have decided to let two biblical figures speak who are involved in the Ruth story. Naomi and Boaz, the two other main characters.

Naomi speaking:

You asked me to tell you something about Ruth. Well, where shall I start? At the beginning of our joined story or at the end? Maybe it is more useful to characterise her beautiful personality and to speak about her deep kindness, her authenticity, her faith and her love to God and his people.

When I met her the first time, I noticed her huge openness towards our family, towards myself and my two boys who were living as Jewish strangers in Moab. My husband had died and we had to stay there because of the famine at home. Ruth, a Moabite married one of my sons and it deeply impressed me that she had the courage to do so. She could have married a man from her own culture and religion, which would have been much easier for her. But there was an openness in her and a tolerance. She took a high risk, and maybe it was her first step to become a stranger and at the same time a step towards enculturation into our Jewish traditions.

Perhaps it was this marriage which prepared her to decide once and for all to leave her home when I moved back to Bethlehem. She joined me and I never will forget her words: "Entreat me not to leave you or to return from following you; for where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God." What a faith, and what a trust! I was deeply impressed by her words. But in secret I wondered, if she really knew the full meaning of the words she spoke. Did she know that she had to accept the lowest position in our society? As a foreigner, a woman, a widow and belonging to another religion she would be a nobody. Did she know that she had to adapt to another culture, another lifestyle, another religion? That she had to leave her family, her friends, her home as Abraham did? "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you."

(Gen 12:1) Did she really know what she promised?

Was that the reason that God called her to Israel? To challenge us with her deep faith? To lead us closer to God? I am ashamed to admit that my own faith was not strong enough to believe in God's gentle providence. I persisted in bitterness towards my God who had taken away my husband and my two sons. It was unbelievable for me that he could work through my daughter-in-law and give hope to my life again.

Well, Ruth challenged me because of her deep faith. It was the main part of her personality which kept her going on and facing the difficulties as a stranger. Beside her faith there was a great love and concern for myself and others. She was humble enough to do the lowest work. Unconditionally. Really, without expecting any reward. Just doing what was necessary. And we all know that God loves this attitude. Her empty hands were filled,

unexpectedly. I believe, that it was this unconditional love that helped her finding her way in our country. That was part of her identity, independent from where she lived. She had to learn the rules of our tradition and culture, but her huge love and openness towards people helped her to overcome all difficulties.

From my point of view, Ruth would advise us: Living as a stranger in a strange country is possible as long as you keep your faith and trust in God. Listen to Him, every day He will open your ears. Just follow Him, do what He reveals to you to do in life. Unconditionally. Nothing more. He will open the doors for you as you are his best messenger.

Boaz speaking:

I am not a man of huge words, nor do I like preaching. But anyway, you asked me about Ruth, my wife. How I met her first and what kind of person she is. And what it means to be married to a stranger.

Well, I am a man of wealth, belonging to the family of Elimelech, Naomi's husband. I am an owner of a large estate. There are always poor people gleaning in my fields after the reapers and I never would say anything against them. After all I am a Jew, following the commandments of God. And it is the right of the poor to glean. Actually, it was nothing special when Ruth came to my fields. But something struck me when I noticed her the first time. Therefore I asked my reapers, who she was. I was informed about her story, a Moabite following her mother-in-law, Naomi, after the death of her husband. As I was informed who she was – and to be honest, her decision to follow Naomi seemed very courageous to me, I would not have done that in her case – I protected her from any evil. And of course, because of my generosity, I extended the rules and offered her more material benefits. I had enough, and it is good in the eyes of God, to help the poor.

But there was a little bit more, I did not notice it first, but after reflecting on it later, it came to my mind that I was emotionally challenged by Ruth. Something in her personality struck me. How can a young widow who has no security in our society, follow her mother-in-law to a foreign country? What huge courage must this woman have – or faith? And it was obvious, that she was free, just following – sorry, for interrupting my own train of thoughts, I am not quite sure, whom she followed. Her mother-in-law? No, that would not be reason for such a decision. There was something more, there was a power and energy in her that kept her working on my fields. Day by day. She was following – should I say - her vocation in life? But can a woman have a vocation? As a Jew reading my Bible know the vocation of Abraham, of the judges and prophets. But a woman? God – our God of Israel – calling a woman? Why?

To be honest: I kept myself busy with reflecting on that strange woman Ruth. And I did not want that. But she came back to my thoughts again and again.

After a time I noticed, that I opened the doors for her in her new society. I took care of her, first with blessing her, then with protecting her, and not exposing her after her nightly visit at the threshing floor. Finally, I agreed to a levirate marriage. Following God's commandments and taking care for the next generation. I am a righteous and just man – but I surprised myself with this decision. It was Ruth's faith that challenged me and guided me to love her. Faith and love seem to belong together.

O sorry, you have asked me about my view on strangers in a strange land. And I am talking about faith and love. Sorry for that, that's another issue. Or are faith and love essential and necessary to live as a stranger in a strange land? Well, I never would have done what Ruth did. Leaving my security, my home, my family and friends behind me, just to help my mother-in-law and follow the voice of faith. I am not Abraham. But Ruth did it. And my respect for her and my love grew every day. She did, what I was not able to do. I learned

from her, that deep trust in our God enables you to be part of a new society. Without losing her own identity. Quite the reverse! Being married to a stranger is a challenge every day. I learned, that enculturation is not a one-way-street of communication in that sense, that the stranger, thus Ruth, has to be integrated into our society. It includes a process of learning for us citizens too. During the first part of our marriage I tried to teach Ruth how to live in our world. But that was only one-sided. It takes ourselves seriously but keeps the foreigner with all his or her own rich tradition small and dependent. We have to learn openness to other attitudes, other behaviour, other traditions. And we can notice its wealth. A society that is too closed, cannot survive. As Jews we were used to being in touch with so many different cultures, that it should not be a problem at all, to learn from each other. Or am I wrong?

Ruth:

You can live as a stranger in a strange land if you fully trust in God's word. It does not return to him empty, it accomplishes that which he purposes. It is God who said to me:

“Entreat me not to leave you
or to return from following you;
for where you go I will go,
and where you lodge I will lodge;
your people shall be my people,
and I am the God in whom you can set all your trust.
I am with you wherever you go
all the days of your life.”

GROUP WORK

THE RUTH STORY – Beate Kowalski

AIMS/PURPOSE

- Understanding risk-taking as an essential ingredient of faith
- Understanding the relationship between faith and love
- Learning about openness to others whilst maintaining integrity within our own traditions

POSSIBLE TOOLS; RESOURCES; ACTIVITIES

- The genealogy of Jesus – Read the 'Five Women' (by Yvonne Naylor in *Moving beyond Sectarianism*). What do we learn about Jesus' identity? Compare with our own – share stories
- Break into groups to give an account of the story from the perspective of Ruth; Naomi; Boaz; Relatives. Regroup and listen to the stories
- Share our own responses to the story of Ruth and how this relates to exiles/refugees today
- Scrapbooks – stories of refugees and NGO's and individuals who work with them

For instructions and methodology, see Appendix

APPENDIX

GAMES

1. ICEBREAKER GAMES

Games that help to 'break the ice.' They may be used to break the ice and help us to meet/welcome new people, or to get ready to meet people we already know in a new way. They are very good for bringing different people together at the same level.

ALL CHANGE

AIMS

- To reduce tension and encourage co-operation
- To create a good atmosphere where everyone is mixing and on the same level
- To learn more about one another
- To have fun and affirm difference

METHOD

- The person starting the game is without a chair and standing in the middle of the circle. It is their aim to find a chair in the circle
- The person in the middle says (for example) 'everyone who has a sister/brother/dog etc, change your seat'. If wanting to know more about the individuals in a group, it is helpful if you agree to ask about things you cannot see – therefore 'everyone who has been to a place of worship other than their own; has been to the United States, etc.'
- Everyone 'who has a sister...' has to leave their seat and cross the room in order to find a seat on the other side of the circle
- The last person to find a seat in the circle will be the next one to stand in the middle and make another request.

PAIRED INTERVIEWS

AIMS

- To help people to share information about themselves
- To help people to share information about something new that they have learnt

METHOD

- Members of the group pair up with someone they don't know so well.
- They find out 2-3 pieces of information about one another that they don't think others in the group know and that they don't mind the rest of the group knowing about
- Each person in the group, introducing their partner, shares their partner's information with the others.

2. NAME GAMES

Games that help us learn and remember each other's names. Participants can decide by what name they wish to be known by the other members of the group and communicate that in a fun way.

MY NAME IS.....AND I LIKE

AIMS

- To learn and memorise names
- To help concentration

METHOD

- A subject like food may be chosen as that helps people decide quickly
- The first person introduces themselves saying their name and something they like beginning with the same letter as their name e.g. 'My name is Betty and I like butter'.
- The person on their right goes next and so on around the circle with everyone repeating the name/names of the group members that have been introduced before them finishing with themselves.

AFFIRMATION CHAIRS

AIMS

- To affirm one another as we learn each other's names
- To encourage movement, interaction and inclusion

METHOD

- Have people sitting in a circle with one seat empty
- The person sitting to the right of the empty chair names someone in the circle and invites them to sit in it, so affirming that person.
- The person sitting to the right of the newly vacated chair now invites someone different.
- The game continues until everyone has moved and been named/ affirmed. Remind the group that once someone had been named and moved they don't move again. Everyone moves just once.

3. ENERGISER AND MIXING GAMES

Games that mix people up, prevent cliques forming and prepare the group for discussions relating to diversity and inclusion.

CLUMPS

AIMS

- To help the group to interact
- To observe competition & co-operation; inclusion & exclusion

METHOD

- Invite the members of the group to walk around the room
- Call out a number 4; 6 etc. whereupon the people have to get into 'clumps' of that number. Invite the group to move again, and call out a different number and so on
- Ask people afterwards how inclusive/exclusive they were. Did they look out for friends or accept the 'stranger'. How did people who didn't find a place in a clump feel?

GATE GAME

AIMS

- To help the group to experience 'multiple identity,' being members of different sub groups within the big group
- To experience being members of a minority or majority subgroup
- To introduce thinking about stereotypes; discrimination

METHOD

- The facilitator stands/sits in a chair and the rest of the group lines up in front of him/her.
- The facilitator has thought of a category by which s/he will 'sort' the members of the group e.g. gender; wearing/not wearing glasses; hair/eye colour (light; dark) etc.
- The group members go into the sub groups designated by the facilitator until all are 'sorted'.
- Can group members work out the category?
- Repeat the game using a different category. People have been sorted into different groups.
- Talk about feelings; minority/majority; multiple identity; discrimination; fair/unfair; stereotypes

4. TEAM/GROUP BUILDING AND SHARING GAMES

Games that encourage a group to build a relationship around a task, to work as a team and to develop trust. They can also provide an opportunity to share and exchange information/learning.

COMMUNITY OF ENQUIRY - PENNIES EXERCISE

AIMS

- To share information quickly
- To take turns/have fun

EQUIPMENT

- A box of pennies
- An old cap

METHOD:

- Give each person in the circle three pennies.
- Explain that each person may only speak (a sentence) when they put a penny into the cap in the centre of the circle. Once they have spent their pennies they may not speak again until the end of the exercise. Everyone in the circle needs to encourage one another by being prepared to wait for quieter members of the group, take turns etc.
- The group leader calls out a sentence. This can be a question or a statement presenting a problem or opening a topic for the community of enquiry. This might be:
"Walls are necessary to keep the peace"
"All schools should be integrated"
- This exercise has a number of benefits.
It gives every individual the right and responsibility to speak
It emphasizes the value of listening/ provides equity
It provides a wide range of views in a very short time
It provides discipline for those who like to talk/speak out a lot
It encourages quieter members of the group to speak

GREETING

AIMS

- To encourage us to share a greeting and to welcome one another
- This game also helps us to remember names
- This game encourages us to share different types of greeting/ customs in different languages/mother tongues

METHOD

- The leader turns to the person on his/her left and says, 'Hello (in whatever language and with whatever greeting – handshake etc) I am (name)'
- This is repeated the whole way around the circle, each person greeting the one to their left and saying their name.

HANDS IN THE MIDDLE

AIMS

- To help the group to settle
- To help them to focus
- To help them to learn more about similarity and difference

METHOD

- Ask the group to sit in a circle on the floor with their hands spread in front of them palm down.
- Everyone raised their right hand and places it to the right of the left hand of the person on their left.
- Everyone takes turns to tap each hand in turn in the circle. If the group is able to manage this, a double tap reverses the direction of the tapping.
- OR everyone looks at the pair of hands in front of them and takes turns to talk about the similarity/difference.

5. CLOSURE GAMES

Games that enable a group to bring a session to a close in a way that affirms the group identity and the positive relationships that have been built within the group.

PASS THE CLAP

AIMS

- To encourage co-operation and teamwork
- To get ready for another activity or for closure

METHOD

- All standing in a circle
- Leader begins by facing the person on their right.
- They clap hands once at the same time
- The person to the left of the leader turns to the person on their right and repeats the action.
- The clap is passed on to the next and so on around the circle.
- With practice the action will get faster until there is a continuous clap with little or no time in between each one!

WOOL WEB

AIMS

- To gather feedback about a programme
- To affirm the group

EQUIPMENT

- A ball of wool

METHOD

- Sitting in a circle, the facilitator holds a ball of wool, and holding the end, throws it to someone in the circle whom they also name.
- They may thank the person, and/or the group as a whole, and name something that they have learnt, will remember, have enjoyed.
- The person with the ball of wool is the next person to throw it to someone else and repeat the process. This continues until everyone has received the ball of wool and passed it on once so that it ends up back with the facilitator. A web pattern results connecting everyone up about which the group may talk.

SCRAPBOOKS

It is a useful exercise to have a scrapbook in which to collect press cuttings; headlines; stories and facts about racism and sectarianism in your local community and beyond. You may like to cut and paste press cuttings into a regular 'scrapbook' or use poly pockets and a ring binder. You might include:-

- Headlines such as
 - '900% rise in race hate crimes';
 - 'Ulster bill for asylum seekers £900.000';
 - 'Sandy Row and Whitehall' and
 - 'Racists use war pictures in new drive'.
- Articles – press; magazine
- Stories
- 'Anti-racism' leaflets; fliers; posters; 'passports'
- Letters
- Campaigns
- Cartoons
- Pictures; photos
- Badges

They can be kept to:-

- remind you of the problem and challenge of racism in our own community
- inspire you with stories of courage; hope
- resource you with ideas and suggestions
- challenge you with campaigns
- equip you with resources

JOURNALS

The journal could be a companion to the scrapbooks; either incorporated into them or separate.

The journal can be used for:-

- Recording our group's purposes and ground rules
- Writing down new words; key points; ideas; references; or definitions
- Describing any learning points; myths and truths
- Reflecting on what you did at the end of a meeting
- Drawing life/faith maps
- Writing poems
- Describing rites of passage
- Charting feelings – blob tree
- Charting your own journey, moving beyond racism; sectarianism
- Points to remember for the next meeting
- Commitments and pledges
- Addresses and contact details of other group members and support organisations – staying in contact

FIRST THOUGHTS

Exercise to find assumptions/stereotypes

MATERIALS:

Paper; Pencils; The list of words

A comment box (This can be a shoe box, or smaller, with a slot in the top, decorated with paper and the label 'Comment Box')

METHOD:

- Give everyone a pencil and a piece of paper
- Tell them that as you call out 12 descriptions, fairly quickly
- Tell them to write down the first thing that comes into their heads when they hear these words called out.

They are:

1. Person seeking asylum
2. Irish Traveller
3. American woman
4. Muslim youth
5. Reggae singer
6. Red head
7. Big Issue seller
8. Migrant workers
9. Chinese doctor
10. Jewish Rabbi

- When you have finished, read them again. If some of the participants haven't been able to think of anything to write for some of the words, that's okay. Tell them the pieces

of paper are anonymous.

- Ask the participants to post their pieces of paper into the Comment Box in the middle of the circle.
- As you lift them out, look for common assumptions/stereotypes in the first thoughts.
- Talk about these.

INCLUSION HERO/HEROINE

This is a good exercise to help us focus on the appearance and attitude; body language and facial expression; characteristics and behaviour; skills and training; facts and information someone who is inclusive might have!

METHOD

- Break the large group into a number of smaller groups of 4-5
- Give each group a large sheet of paper and pens
- Give the group 10 minutes to draw their inclusion heroine/hero as they consider:-
 - What sort of eyes they have. What would Christ's eyes see?
 - What sort of heart will they have?
 - How will the feet move; the arms etc?
 - Consider gender; appearance etc.
 - What language might they speak/sign?
 - What badges might they wear?
 - Special skills; abilities; knowledge and information they have at the ready
 - Resources they might be armed with
- Find a representative from your small group to introduce your Inclusion Hero/Heroine and Report back to the large/full group
- What have they all in common?
- Do we know any in our local and wider/global community?

LIFE MAPS

We might well ask ourselves at some stage during our study of inter cultural insights, 'what brought me to this group; meeting?' There may have been an event in our past or a chance conversation; a memory from childhood or a recent event on the news that spurred us into going. What part of our life story is bringing us here?

METHOD

- Explain that a 'life map' is a pictorial representation of our life story and in particular that aspect of the story that has brought us to an interest in inter-cultural insights and a meeting with others to pursue that interest.
- Explain to participants that they have 10 minutes in silence to reflect and draw a life map in their journals.
- Show some life map examples, if possible
- After the ten minutes, ask the group to gather into smaller groups of four making sure that the groups are mixed.
- Each person has five to ten minutes to tell his/her story. They can share as much or

as little as they wish.

- Everyone should have equal opportunity to speak so ask each group to appoint a time keeper to tell each person when they have one minute left (i.e. after 9 minutes).
- This activity helps us practice both speaking and attentive listening.
- After 30-40 minutes, invite participants to display their life maps in a central place on a table or floor and walk around reading/viewing each other's maps.
- Gather in the large group; acknowledge and thank people for the sharing and invite reflections, either in the large group or personally in the journals.
- Finish with an affirmation – see closure games.

QUIZ

- Start with getting into small/er teams of 4-8
- Ask the teams to choose a name by which they will be known
- Take turns to ask each team a question. If they get it wrong offer a bonus to the next team
- Let the teams complete the answers on a piece of paper
- With the Drama/puppet round, award points for the effort of each team member 'taking the stage'
- Try to mix the rounds and use any number of the following:-
 1. True or false round
 2. Events round
 3. Tick the number round
 4. Symbol round
 5. Faiths in Ireland round
 6. Drama/puppet round
- Award prizes as appropriate
- Group discussion

ROUND 1: TRUE OR FALSE

1. Minority Ethnic communities make up nearly 10 per cent of the population of Northern Ireland **True/False**
2. The largest ethnic minority group in Northern Ireland is the Chinese community **True/False**
3. The Chinese Community was the first ethnic minority community to settle in Northern Ireland **True/False**
4. Muslims eat Halal meat **True/False**
5. The Chinese community is largely secular **True/False**

6. Some asylum seekers are here illegally **True/False**
7. Asylum seekers receive extra benefits **True/False**
8. There are nearly 2,000 applications each year made for asylum in Northern Ireland **True/False**
9. All members of the Indian community in Northern Ireland are Hindus **True/False**
10. 66% of people in Northern Ireland would not accept an Irish Traveller as a colleague **True/False**
11. Nearly two-thirds of the world's refugees are now living in Britain **True/False**
12. In the UK 30 per cent of the workforce are foreign born **True/False**
13. Migrant workers are costing the country money **True/False**
14. Migrant workers are getting everything on social security **True/False**

ROUND 2: EVENTS ROUND

When do the following events occur and to which community are they particularly significant?

EVENT	DATE (approximate)	COMMUNITY
St Patrick's Day		
Ridván		
Purim		
Diwali		
Christmas		
Hanukkah		
Ramadan		
Vaisakhi		
Easter		
Eid Al-Fitr		

EVENT	DATE (approximate)	COMMUNITY
Pesach (Passover)		
Holi		
Chinese New Year		
Wesak		
Remembrance Sunday		
Assumption		

ROUND 3: TICK THE RIGHT NUMBER

- The largest number of 'illegal' immigrants in Australia are from which two countries?
 - A Africa
 - B England
 - C Indonesia
 - D Ireland
- What is a migrant worker?
 - A A sponger
 - B Someone from outside UK and Ireland seeking to take up work
 - C A black Person
 - D Someone fleeing from trouble
- Which is the largest black/minority ethnic group in Britain?
 - A Pakistani
 - B Irish
 - C Chinese
 - D African
- How many different languages do you think are spoken in N. Ireland?
 - A 10
 - B About 20
 - C About 30
 - D More than 50
- Why do you think people leave their own countries to come to N. Ireland?
 - A To escape war
 - B To get rich
 - C To escape famine
 - D To get married
- Migrant Workers in Northern Ireland currently work in which professions?
 - A nursing, medicine, academics
 - B factories, agriculture

- C building
- D meat plants

7. What percentage of UK asylum seekers were suspected of involvement in terrorism last year?

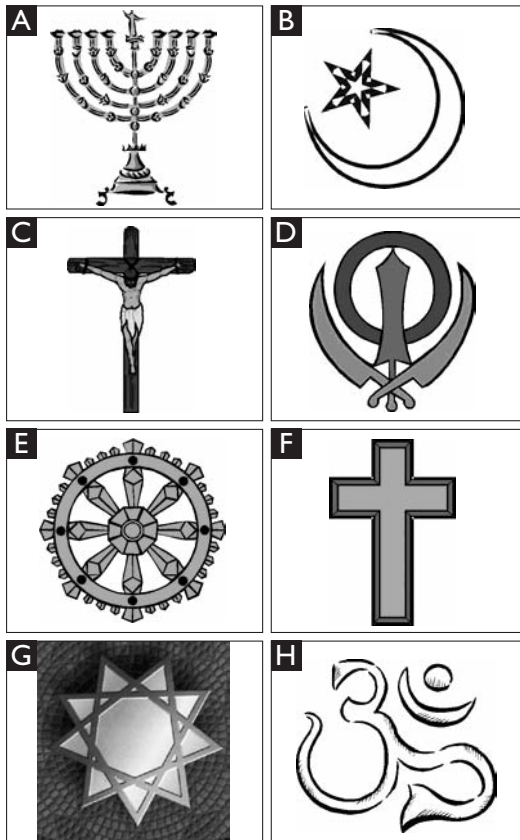
- A Less than 1%
- B 10%
- C 20%
- D 50%

8. Who were the first groups of refugees to arrive in the north of Ireland?

- A Africans
- B French
- C Chinese
- D Indians

ROUND 4: SYMBOLS ROUND

Match the symbol to the faith/denomination



- Bahá'í
- Buddhism
- Christianity - Catholic
- Christianity - Protestant
- Hinduism
- Islam
- Judaism
- Sikhism

ROUND 5: FAITHS IN N.IRELAND

1. How many identifiable religious groups (with 10 or more members) exist in NI?

- A Over 10
- B Over 50
- C Over 100

2. What percentage of the NI population described themselves as having no religion in the 2001 census?

- A 2%
- B 10%
- C More than 10%

3. How many Muslims are estimated to live in NI in 2006?

- A 100
- B 1,000+
- C 3,000+

4. According to the 2001 census, what is the largest Christian denomination in N. Ireland?

- A Catholic
- B Presbyterian
- C Church of Ireland

ROUND 6: DRAMA/PUPPET ROUND

You will need about 6 pictures for this round if you choose to do it – one for each team.

- Let the pictures/puppets represent a different faith tradition or denomination within Christianity. Suggestions are:-
 - A picture of someone/puppet wearing a Kippah and Tsitsit;
 - One wearing a Hijab (as illustrated);
 - One wearing a turban;
 - One wearing a habit or collar and rosary beads;
 - One wearing a Scripture Union badge;
 - One wearing a cross
 and all with different coloured skin
- Invite each team to choose a puppet;
- Tell the class that all the puppets live in N. Ireland; that they have to introduce their puppet to the class; give the puppet a name; say where they are from and how they feel living here.
- They can have 5 minutes to discuss it in their teams appointing the puppeteer etc

ANSWERS

ROUND ONE: MYTHS AND FACTS

1. False – Current estimates would suggest the Ethnic Minority Population makes up just 4% of the population
2. True - Estimated at 6-8,000
3. False – Travellers have lived in NI for centuries; the present Jewish community from about 1864; the Muslim community since 1930's and the Chinese Community only since 1960's
4. True - However not all Muslims follow the Koran to the letter in the same way that not all Christians follow guidance from the Bible religiously
5. True – The Chinese Community is largely secular
6. False - Asylum Seeker is a legal term and process
7. False – In the UK, people seeking asylum only receive 70% of basic income support
8. False – 166 applications were made last year in NI and not all of these were successful
9. False - Members of the Indian community in Northern Ireland are from different faiths and none
10. True - 66% of people in Northern Ireland would not accept an Irish Traveller as a colleague
11. False – According to the refugee council nearly two thirds of the world's refugees are found in the Middle East and Africa. UK hosts 2% of the refugees in the world
12. False – Only 8% of the workforce in Britain are foreign born
13. False – Opposite is true. Since May 2006, it is estimated that migrant workers contribute £4 million/week to UK GDP; £0.5 million/week in tax and National Insurance
14. False – most migrant workers are not eligible for most benefits, despite paying full taxes.

ROUND THREE: TICK THE RIGHT ANSWER

1. B – England; and D – Ireland
2. B – Someone from outside UK and Ireland seeking to take up work
3. B – Irish
4. D – There are currently over 70 different languages spoken in NI

5. A and C – To escape war; religious and political persecution; torture; famine; enforced exile; and because they were involved in trade union activity or truthful journalism
6. All of these
7. A – Less than 1%; too small to calculate – 2 of 88,000
8. B – Protestant French Huguenots in 1685

ROUND FIVE: WORLD FAITHS IN N.IRELAND

1. C – According to the 2001 Northern Ireland census there are 118 identifiable religious groups with 10 or more members present in N.Ireland, 85% of which are Christians of various kinds
2. C – About 14% refused to answer the question about religion or said that they had no religion
3. C – According to figures supplied by the faith communities themselves, 3,000+
4. A – Catholic – 678,462 recorded; 348,742 Presbyterians; and 257,788 Church of Ireland

MAPPING EXERCISES

These help us to be aware of significant places:-

- within our own neighbourhood
- in the wider community
- and beyond (global community)

These significant places could be:-

- Places of worship - Churches; Mosques; Temples; Synagogue; Gurdwara; Tent missions; Gospel halls etc
- Places of refuge from the global to the more local – Red Cross and UN to Simon Community; Salvation army; Women's Aid; Intern etc
- Locations of organisations offering support – e.g. embrace; NICRAS etc.
- Places in the world with the highest proportion of refugees and people seeking asylum – colour coded perhaps according to the numbers fleeing as a proportion of the population
- Places in the world most likely to receive them – colour coded according to the numbers received as a proportion of the population

- Police stations; holding centres
- Memorials – cemeteries; crosses; roadside wreaths; plaques; war memorials; gardens of remembrance; stained glass windows
- Places of pilgrimage – archaeological sites; natural sites (hills; wells stones; trees etc); statues; cribs; shrines; significant sites
- Territorial markings – painted kerbstones; arches; murals; gable texts; flags; posters
- Shops selling: particular foods, religious books and artefacts of various types

COMMUNITY MAPS

Time: 1 hour

METHOD

- Find a place for yourself beside the large sheet of paper on the floor and choose some crayons; chalks or markers with which to work
- Think about your community
- Decide how you would like to illustrate/represent it on the large sheet of paper using the crayons etc.
- Consider the things that you like most about your community.
- What about things you don't like? Include those as well
- Work for about 30 minutes

DISCUSSION

- Look at each other's work.
- Ask questions and invite one another to describe their own communities, as far as they feel comfortable to, using their illustrations to help.
- What people do you consider would find themselves most 'at home' in your community?
- Are there aspects of your community that you consider might make people feel uncomfortable? What are they?
- How did the communities meet/merge or not on the big sheet?
- How did you feel about this activity?

MAP PROJECTIONS

The earth is round. The challenge of any world map is to represent a round earth on a flat surface. There are literally thousands of map projections. Each has certain strengths and corresponding weaknesses. Choosing among them is an exercise in values clarification: you have to decide what's important to you. That is generally determined by the way you intend to use the map. To compare and contrast a number of projections, see <http://www.diversophy.com/petersmap.htm>

The mapmaker's dilemma is that you cannot show both shape and size accurately. If you want a true shape for the land masses you will necessarily sacrifice proportionality, i.e., the relative sizes will be distorted. On the Mercator projection, directions are true but dis-

tances, shapes, and areas are not. Mercator's projection, created at a time when navigators were sailing on the oceans in wooden ships, powered by the wind, and navigating by the stars, was particularly useful because straight lines on his projection were lines of constant compass bearing. The distortion of areas increases as you move away from the equator however e.g. Greenland and Africa appear to be the same size, where in fact, Africa is fourteen times larger than Greenland. Yesterday's world voyagers and colonizers have become today's industrialized nations. Coincidentally, these regions - North America and Europe - look much larger than they actually are. Also coincidentally, most of the third world is situated in the equatorial regions where the size distortion is the least.

In a world where might is right and bigger is better, it can and has been argued that the Mercator projection has the psychological impact of demeaning people who are already downtrodden, while enhancing a position of superiority for the first world nations. The fact that most students around the world use the Mercator map exacerbates the issue. Though many teachers do explain the inaccuracy of the Mercator map, over 90% of our sensory input is through our eyes - as the proverb goes: seeing is believing and that is the problem.

In 1973, Arno Peters, a German historian, released his map of the world. The Peters Projection is one type of equal area map. It is only one of hundreds of others, but only a handful of others are in common use. World mission and aid-giving agencies use the Peters map because it serves to represent the developing countries at their true proportion. People feel pride in their country when its relative size is shown accurately. The Mollweide projection, developed in 1805, is commonly used for displaying distributions - people, telecommunications equipment, the world's religions, etc. He challenged the dominance of the Mercator projection with the charge that the popularity of the Mercator view stems largely from the fact that it exaggerates the sizes of white-dominated regions and thus reflects a racist attitude. This was a serious charge and one that precipitated a debate that is still alive and well today.

In his projection, Peters chose to make areas accurate. Direction, distance, and shape are sacrificed but the resulting map does provide a much more realistic view of the actual relative sizes of the various regions of the planet. The scientific community has heaped much criticism on the Peters map, seeing themselves on being objective, factual, non-political, and non-religious.

Almost all maps put the North Pole at the top (Australia is a noteworthy exception). Many respected organizations maintain that there can be a negative psychological impact of the Mercator size distortion. Having Europe and North America on top all the time seems to be adding insult to injury.

LINE OF RACISM/WALKING DEBATE

1. Telling 'Irish' or other jokes
2. Introducing a law banning the wearing of hijabs; turbans; kippahs in school; at work
3. Holding an 'an antiracist' meeting

4. Shopping
5. Teaching history from the perspective of the 'west'
6. Teaching geography using the Mercator projection map
7. Labelling people 'racists'
8. Refusing to give someone a job because of the colour of their skin/their accent/language over a local person less qualified
9. Checking that books in the library are inclusive of people of colour; and written by authors from different backgrounds; countries; ethnicity.
10. Having a welcome sign in a work/school entrance in different languages
11. Doctrines within the three main Christian churches
12. Wearing a Rangers or Celtic football top
13. The way the schools system is organized
14. Going to mass
15. Holding an orange Order service in church
16. Playing GAA sports
17. Wearing a Hijab/turban
18. Flying any flag
19. Painting kerbstones
20. Being a member of the Ancient Order of Hibernians
21. Building a Mosque
22. Attending a Diwali celebration at the Indian Community Centre
23. Shopping
24. Teaching Irish history/politics
25. The Religious Education syllabus in Northern Ireland

DEFINITION OF SECTARIANISM

Sectarianism... is a system of attitudes, actions; beliefs and structures

- at personal, communal and institutional levels
- which always involves religion, and typically involves a negative mixing of religion and politics
...which arises as a distorted expression of positive human needs especially for belonging, identity and free expression of difference
...and is expressed in destructive patterns of relating:
- hardening the boundaries between groups
- overlooking others
- belittling; dehumanising or demonising others
- justifying or collaborating in the domination of others
- physically or verbally intimidating or attacking others.

DEFINITION OF RACISM

(Based on the 'Definition of Sectarianism')

Racism... is a system of attitudes, actions; and structures

- at personal, communal and institutional levels
- which always involves ethnicity
...which arises as a distorted expression of positive human needs especially for belonging, identity and free expression of difference
...and is expressed in destructive patterns of relating:
- hardening the boundaries between groups
- overlooking others
- belittling; dehumanising or demonising others
- justifying or collaborating in the domination of others
- physically or verbally intimidating or attacking others

USING PUPPETS

Here are instructions for making the puppet:-

THE KNITTED PUPPET – Use up oddments of wool

- Cast on 32 stitches
- Knit 6 rows in stretchy moss stitch or garter stitch (plain and purl)
- Knit 6 rows in stocking stitch (plain one side and purl the other)
- Decrease 1 stitch (Knit 2 stitches together) at the beginning and end of the next row
- Repeat the last 7 rows two more times
- Knit 8 rows on 26 stitches
- Cast on 6 stitches at the beginning of the next two rows for the arms
- On 38 stitches knit 8 rows
- Cast off 11 stitches at the beginning of the next two rows for the shoulders
- On 16 stitches change wool to the colour you want the puppet's skin to be
- Increase one stitch at beginning of next 10 rows

- On 26 stitches knit 10 rows
- Decrease on stitch at beginning of next 10 rows
- Cast off 16 stitches
- Knit another piece the same
- Knit an extra head
- Sew eyes, a nose and mouth onto the puppet's face
- Put some stuffing between the back of the face and the extra headpiece. This makes the head less floppy. Sew together at the neck.
- Sew the puppet right sides together
- Make hair from wool
- Decorate with puppet with extra clothes, badges, ribbons, buttons etc. as appropriate.

METHOD

- Look at all the puppets in the suitcase.
- Choose one and try it on. You can choose two if you like! Take your time choosing.
- Think about the character/s. Give her/him a name. Where does s/he live? What is life like for him/her?
- Take about 10 minutes with your character/s. Talk with them or through them with other puppets. Have fun
- When you are all ready, take about 5 minutes each to introduce your puppet, or if you feel confident, to speak through your puppet telling the others a story about them, who they are; where they live; what life is like for them etc.
- When everyone has had some time to introduce their character, consider how the puppets might relate to one another and what sort of story they together might tell.
- Talk about how you might use these in class/circle time
- How did you feel about this activity?

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

This play was written by Yvonne Naylor for the resource pack *Moving Beyond Sectarianism*, (Belfast; Irish School of Ecumenics) 2001, pp160-161. It seeks to put the biblical story from Luke 10; 30-37 into a more contemporary and local context.

NARRATOR: *In response to a question from a lawyer about who his neighbour was Jesus told a story about a good Samaritan. A similar story could be told today in Ireland about a man who was going from Coshquin to Newtowncunningham.*

ANNIE: Here love, will you be all right? It's very dark and I hate you having to cross the border especially the way things have been recently and that road's wild dangerous. Could you not wait 'til the morning?

WILLIAM: I'll be fine Annie. Sure I'll be there and back before you know

ANNIE: I just hope the car doesn't break down – And don't be stopping to talk to

anybody – we have to be careful – whatever you say, say nothing

WILLIAM: Yes dear...goodbye

ANNIE: I know you. Just get back here as quick as you can

NARRATOR: *About half way into his journey, the man stopped to pick up two people who were hitch-hiking. They beat him up, took his car and all the money he was carrying and left him by the side of the road half dead. Now by chance a minister was passing. He was returning from a presbytery meeting where they had been talking about the problems of paramilitary violence, drugs, joy riding, and punishment beatings.*

MINISTER/PRIEST I don't know what this country's coming to. What sort of peace is this? That guy's probably dead already ...ah, there's probably not much I can do for him. He might even be one of the hoods waiting to take the car off me. I'll report it to the police when I get home...but they would only want me to make a statement.... and what are they going to do about it anyway? Maybe somebody else will see to it.

NARRATOR *He went home, complained about the lawlessness in society, the uselessness of the politicians and the peace process and went to his bed. Likewise an elder was passing. She had been to the same meeting.*

ELDER/LAY LEADER Now what do I do? I'll stop the car and see is he moving? Wait, what am I doing? That guy could be anybody. I'm taking no chances. It's far too dark. Better safe than sorry. I don't want to get involved – what if he's a paramilitary? Let them shoot each other, that's what I say. I can come back in the morning sure, if he's still here.

NARRATOR: *Ali was a young man from Afghanistan, not long in Ireland. He was a migrant worker, engaged in some seasonal employment for the local farmers, and staying at a pub/hostel. He was walking home after working late when he heard the groans.*

ALI What's the matter with you? Allah help us, look at the state o' you. I'll have to get you to the pub. Can you walk?

NARRATOR: *Ali cleaned up William's wounds, and finding that he wasn't able to walk too well, set him down while he ran on to the pub and fetched one of the pub owner's donkeys. He set the wounded man on the beast and brought him to the pub.*

ALI Are you still up Mickey? I've a man here – He's badly beaten up. Can I bring him in?

DONKEY I: Well that was a different load from the usual turf

DONKEY 2: It certainly was. Poor man, he was badly beaten up. Life seems to be so complicated for some people. Can they not just live together like the rest of us?

DONKEY 1: They have a lot to learn from us beasts about living simply. Their religion doesn't seem to do them a great deal of good does it?

DONKEY 2: Yes. I'm glad I'm not one of them!

NARRATOR: *Ali comforted the man, rang his wife to reassure her he was alright, and paid for a night's lodging. Jesus asks 'Which of these three do you think proved a neighbour to the man who fell among the robbers?' When the reply from the lawyer was 'The one who showed mercy on him', Jesus answered 'Go and do likewise'.*

ROOTS – THE FIVE WOMAN

Yvonne Naylor

This play focuses on the only five women mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus – Bible reference Matthew 1 v 1 - 17. It could be read to help us understand more about multiple identity and the inclusiveness of God. It was written by Yvonne Naylor for the resource pack *Moving Beyond Sectarianism*, (Belfast; Irish School of Ecumenics) 2001, pp146-147.

TAMAR: I am a Canaanite woman

RAHAB: I am a citizen of Jericho.

RUTH: I am a Moabite woman.

BATHSHEBA: I am the wife of a Hittite

MARY: I am Jewish.

TAMAR: I played the harlot in order to ensure Judah's line.

RAHAB: I am a harlot who helped two spies

RUTH: I am a widow loyal to my mother-in-law

BATHSHEBA: I was taken like a harlot by a king

MARY: I am a virgin

TAMAR: I was faithful to the law of Israel, and God has blessed me with twin sons.

RAHAB: I was faithful to the God of Israel, the true God, and have been blessed with a son.

RUTH: I was faithful to Naomi, and to the God of her people Israel, and have been blessed with a son

BATHSHEBA: I have been faithful to king David and God has forgiven him and blessed me with a son

MARY: I have been faithful too and found favour with God and have been blessed with a son.

TAMAR: I trusted God and received justice and mercy

RAHAB: I trusted God and received justice and mercy

RUTH: I trusted God and received justice and mercy

BATHSHEBA: I trusted God and received justice and mercy

MARY: I trusted God and the fruit of my womb will bring justice and mercy love and hope into the world.

TAMAR: I am Tamar

RAHAB: I am Rahab

RUTH: I am Ruth

BATHSHEBA: I am Bathsheba

MARY: I am Mary

ALL: All of us are related to Jesus through the ancestral line

Find out more about these women in:- Genesis 38 ; Joshua 2 and 6 v 17 – 27; Ruth; 2 Samuel 11 and 12; Matthew 1 and Luke 2

FORUM THEATRE

is an interactive theatre form invented (or discovered) in the early 1970s by Augusto Boal. Seeing it happen as a 'third party' allows participants to observe the conflict or difficulties and make suggestions as to how to resolve them. The facilitator may stop the scenes at any point to elicit help and get suggestions from the audience as to how to reach a successful conclusion.

METHOD

- Divide the class into smaller groups (6-8)
- Give one of the plays to each of the groups
- Each group takes it in turn to present their play to the rest of the class/audience
- During the first enactment, each drama is played through without any interruption (around 3 minutes). Students are asked to watch the scene carefully and note critical moments, actions taken, consequences and an alternative action that might bring about a very different outcome.
- Each group can use a storyboard if this is helpful.
See <http://www.mercedes.wa.edu.au/Media/howto.html>
A technique used in the film industry, this is where you draw/sequence a number of scenes representing the main parts of the story; locate the scene/critical moment in the story where sectarianism intervenes and raises the conflict; and edit by introducing another scene with an additional character or the same characters reacting to the sectarian provocation in a different way. How does this extra scene change the story? How will it end? What skills are required?
- Each group takes it in turn to present their play to the rest of the class as before - but this time, whenever a member of the class recognises the critical moment when the protagonist might usefully try a different strategy, s/he can stop the action, take the character's place, or give that character an instruction that might make a difference to the outcome of the story.
- The other characters in the play will react in this new situation accordingly. What happens?
- In this way, through forum theatre, a 'theatrical debate' takes place where our experiences of sectarianism, understanding of how it generates conflict and ideas for challenging it can build solidarity and a sense of empowerment.

DARTBOARD EVALUATION

Show people the dartboard evaluation; invite them to put a dot in the correct section of each wedge for each category and ask them to think about:-

- What they most valued in the session
- One particular learning point that struck them as significant
- Anything they would like to change
- Further thoughts or comments. Invite them to write these on some 'post its' which they can stick to the dartboard, and if possible by the appropriate wedge.