



5 SUDANESE STORY

story collected in 2004

What made you come to Northern Ireland?

I was on the Doulos ship before I came. I went home for a while and prayed for God's guidance. Things and places kept dropping off the list and I was left with 2 options – stay home and marry and carry on my ministry or come to Northern Ireland. I realised the importance of God's word. God gave me a vision about being in Northern Ireland and I knew it was God's will for me to come here. He sent me for further training. I can see that over the past 3 years. There was also a prophecy from a guy when I was on the ship in Papua New Guinea (an Australian). He told me God was going to send me to a foreign country. I'd had offers from Moody, South Africa, and South Korea etc. and until then hadn't known which one it would be.

What were your expectations in com-

ing here?

I expected a long bridge connecting Northern Ireland to the mainland. I hadn't expected to fly here but to go on the train. Because of the news and the paramilitaries etc, people had told me about Northern Ireland, but it didn't influence me for some reason, maybe because of my vision. I expected a green peaceful place. I'd no expectations about the people, I didn't know what to think.

Has Northern Ireland lived up to your expectations?

It's 100% green! As for peaceful, to some extent it's peaceful, but not as perfect as the greenness, because they are people. I've been here 3 years and haven't come across a violent situation where I've felt threatened though.

What about the people?

I've found them funny, in many respects. They are friendly to some extent and hospitable (compared to

the English. I was told that people in rural England are the same as here). They are hospitable to some extent because in my culture we are hospitable to large numbers of our family and friends, but there is Britishness here so that is not really done in the same way.

I have come across some racial remarks and verbal abuse. During my placement with Nightlight, two guys at different times, came over drunk. They expressed hostility towards not just blacks, but all foreigners. They didn't like asylum seekers and saw them as taking their benefits. The other guy was talking to a female team member and he expressed his hatred to foreigners to her. Racism is a very human thing, it's in all of us to some extent.

Racism and hostility don't affect me that much. I feel sorry for them and their narrow-mindedness. I pray for them. Sometimes I do want to

be white, if I was only white, people would accept me more and would integrate into the community. I did like the people and culture of Northern Ireland.

The Church here has made me feel at home. I used to go to Banbridge Presbyterian Church, and they invited me for lunch, on outings and look after me particularly in the service, like lifting the offering and doing the children's talks. This has helped me a lot to settle into the country and to keep the peace!

What can Churches do to help the 'stranger'?

The main thing is to keep them in their prayers, to give them wisdom and strength in dealing with racism, abuse etc. They should participate in welcoming them, it's easy to do for me because I came through the college which gave them trust in me. It's harder for asylum seekers etc. as this is a very individualistic culture and it's hard to welcome people into your home if you don't know them. It is Biblical to be hospitable to everyone, especially foreigners and you can win souls for Christ. The Church should go out and welcome people, make them feel at home.

A Sudanese Muslim invited me for tea. He's an asylum seeker who's been accepted into Northern Ireland, he has his papers and everything. A paramilitary group wrote on his door and he felt threatened. He feels afraid. He asked me if I had come across the same thing. I've a Nigerian friend who was threatened by a hoax bomb and was told by the paramilitaries he'd to leave. He was thinking about going back to England, I'm not sure if he did. It made me aware of the sad, painful reality foreigners go through. It made me feel blessed.

This man continues to study in Northern Ireland.

Doulos is a ship which visits port cities

throughout the world supplying vital literature resources and sharing a message of hope in God wherever there is opportunity. Nightlight is a pioneering outreach started by the Presbyterian Church in the entertainment area of Belfast.